



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1605

Fort Wayne, Indiana

November, 1971

JOHN E. BURTON LINCOLN COLLECTOR

Dr. J. L. McCorison, Jr., in an article entitled "The Great Lincoln Collections And What Became of Them," *Lincoln Herald*, Dec. 1948 — Feb. 1949, gave considerable attention to the "Big Five" collectors, namely, Daniel Fish, William H. Lambert, Judd Stuart, Charles McLellan and J. B. Oakleaf. He wrote, "Together, they dominated the field of Lincolniana, almost but not quite — to the exclusion of serious outside rivalry. Unknown to them, another giant was in the making in the person of John E. Burton, of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and later of Milwaukee, who had been gathering quietly his own fine and extensive library of materials relating to Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War."

McCorison continued, "These five men, with Mr. Burton, owned libraries which approached completeness, as none has since. But Burton was a late comer and had purchased his collection independently of the collaborationist activities of the Big Five. The latter came to respect Burton as a rival, but they never fully accepted him as one of their group and Fish was to raise doubts as to the extent of legitimate Lincolniana in Burton's holdings."

In a want list issued by Burton in 1905 (M1453), he revealed that he owned 2,360 bound volumes on Lincoln and Lincolniana "which has been the restful and happy labor of twenty-eight years." He went on to explain that, "All pamphlets obtained have been cherished and reverently bound in fine bindings, and all secured in future will receive same honor and loving care and preservation. If my pocket-book was as large as my love for the MAN OF MEN, I should be possessed of many more works than at present; but the labor of love in collecting and reading has been a source of almost di-



John E. Burton (1847-1930) was known as "King Midas of Lake Geneva." He began his career as a school teacher, newspaper editor and Equitable Life Insurance agent, but soon branched out into real estate, business and industry. He became owner or major shareholder of a typewriter company, preparatory school, Lake Geneva steamboat line, fibre-producing factory, a business block, a large Chicago bookstore, two banks, residential properties and owned thousands of acres of prime farmland. He purchased gold and crystal mines in California, silver mines in Colorado and Mexico, tin mines in Alaska and a mahogany forest in Honduras. In 1898, Burton's empire began to crumble and he was compelled to sell his Lincoln Library in 1915, fifteen years before his death.

vine comfort to me and had made my library my harbor and refuge in time of storm and trouble until Lincoln has become a living inspiration in my constant and daily thought."

Burton explained how he became an ardent admirer of Lincoln: "It was my good fortune when a boy, in New Hartford, Oneida County, N. Y., to go to Utica in February, 1861, and see Abraham Lincoln and hear his voice, and as my lot was cast in a strong Republican family, I grew up to believe Lincoln the one pure, patient, patriot of the generation, and when his sad death was told I saw my father weep, filled with mingled grief and revenge, as did many another strong man in the home of Roscoe Conkling and James C. Clark."

It was a mistake to question the quantity and quality of the Burton collection of Lincolniana, even though as a young man, he was "once compelled . . . to stand powerless and see (his) library swept away under the auctioneer's hammer, including every book on Lincoln (he) had ever owned up to that time."

The voluminous extent of Burton's second collection of Lincolniana is revealed by the two auction catalogues issued by The Anderson Galleries, Inc., of New York, N. Y., in 1915 and 1916. Priced copies of both catalogues, namely; Part I, October 25-29, 1915 (M2173), and Part VI, March 6-7, 1916 (M2218), are in the Foundation's collection. The 2,170 items or lots were sold for a total of \$11,126.35. Burton had hoped "to secure the most complete collection of Lincolniana ever brought together anywhere or by anybody." He wrote, "when this is accomplished I intend to take several years of my life and devote to giving to the lovers of Lincoln and literary men not over critical, a Bib-



A ledger page from Part II of Burton's Lincolniana. According to a news story published in the *Standard Democrat* in July, 1915, Burton's collection was placed in 106 wooden boxes, size 21" x 24" x 36", which were made to order. The total shipment weighed tons. The collection was sent to The Anderson Galleries, Inc., in New York City, for disposal at auction at two separate sales.

liography which, though it may show madness in spots, shall be full of genuine and useful information to real book lovers." Unfortunately Burton was never able to fulfill this dream.

Burton's private library consisted of 14,000 volumes of which 2,460 were devoted to Lincoln. This may explain why catalogues Part II, Part III, Part IV and Part V of the Anderson Galleries, Inc. are not included in collections of Lincolniana.

In April, 1969, the Foundation received as a gift from Mr. Burton's granddaughter, Mrs. Vern F. Hackett, of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, two large ledgers in which the collector recorded his purchases of Lincolniana. Volume One bears the handwritten title "List of Lincolniana in the Library of John E. Burton at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, Part I, April 12, 1903, Alphabetically Arranged With Cash Valuations." Ledger, Part II bears a somewhat similar title.

Burton was the President and Treasurer of The United States — Alaskan Tin Mining Company of Milwaukee and on the stationery of the above mentioned firm, dated October 23, 1908, and addressed to T. B. Smalley (his agent), he went into considerable detail regarding the "gems" in his library and closed with the statement that the "whole collection" was worth \$25,000.

Mrs. Hackett wrote that, "Grandpa had to sell everything due to the loss of his fortune." In her letter of January 30, 1968, she related an interesting story about a lock of Lincoln's hair in the Burton collection: "A soldier stood guard at the undertaker's door when Lincoln was being prepared to lie in state. The soldier watched the undertaker cut hair away from the wound, and drop the strands into a small basin. The soldier asked the undertaker if he could have a few fragments to send to his old Aunt in Illinois, because she had known Lincoln well. Permission was granted; and the man wrote a letter to his Aunt explaining the circumstances. He pinned the little bunch of hair to the letter. The pin was not shiny as our present day chromed ones; but dull, like pewter. Grandpa had the letter and envelope." The lock, consisting of about 30 strands of the martyred President's hair, was contained in a small stamped leather case.

Burton recorded in his ledger a somewhat similar, but more detailed story: "Lincoln Lock of hair — Secured by the Union Soldier (Government Secret Service) Justus Chollar, while on guard in White House night of April 15 — 1865 while Lincoln's body was being embalmed by Brown and Alexander of Philadelphia through their chief embalmer Harry Cattell who cut the hair away to cleanse and get clear entrance to the wound — verified by many letters Secured through W F Barker a nephew of Chollar's . . . (and now) living at Farmington Minnesota — verified by Byron E. Chollar son of Justice and also by Harry Cattell." Burton's ledger reveals that he paid \$40 for the relic. It sold in 1915 for \$71. Brentanos made the purchase.

While the prices obtained by The Anderson Galleries, Inc. in 1915 and 1916 are very low in light of present day values, the two ledgers of Burton reveal that he was able to make significant purchases of Lincolniana at unbelievably lower figures.

One of the most expensive books purchased by Burton was described by him in the ledger as follows: "Douglass & Lincoln Debates 1860 Unique copy from Lincoln's own library—Presented by him to John H. Littlefield, his law student on the 25th of April 1860 one month before nomination to Presidency & also his unique due bill for \$5.00 inserted — Valued at \$375. I paid \$150 Contains Littlefield's card as Lecturer The \$5.00 due bill was given him by Lincoln Nov. 30 — 1860 after his election to the Presidency — Book also contains silk marker. J. H. L. being Littlefield's initials." This copy of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Foster, Follett and Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1860, brought \$395 at the auction. The purchaser was George D. Smith.

Part I of the Anderson Galleries catalogue (which contains no general description of the items being offered for sale) listed the major items of the Burton collection. While many rare books and pamphlets appear in the Lincolniana section, the real gems appear under Autograph Documents and Letters. Two pages from Lincoln's Sum Book brought \$240 and \$115, which were purchased by George D. Smith. One item, No. 95, supposedly in Lincoln's handwriting (forty-three words including his signature), brought \$4.50 at the auction. P. F. Madigan was the purchaser of the letter: ". . . T. J. Pickett, Esq. My dear Sir. Yours of the 13th is recieved (sic). My engagements are such that I can not at any very early date, visit Rock Island to deliver a lecture, or for any other object. Yours Very truly, A. Lincoln." This letter bears the date of April 30, 1859. (See *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. III, page 377.) This letter was a spurious copy of the original dated April 16, 1859.

The most outstanding item in the catalogue (but not the rarest) is the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward whose signatures are attested by John G. Nicolay, Secretary to the President. This is one of 50 authorized copies. Hart's bibliography gives the following notice: "At the time of the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair, in June, 1864, twenty copies of this proclamation were beautifully printed on parchment paper, and signed, at the request of two gentlemen prominently connected with the movement, by the President and Mr. Seward, which signatures were afterwards attested as genuine by Mr. Lincoln's private secretary, Col. John G. Nicolay." The cataloguer states that: "The two gentlemen here referred to, were Charles Godfrey Leland and George H. Boker. Mr. Leland in his *Memoirs*, writes: 'Because I had so earnestly advocated Emancipation as a war measure when even the most fiery and advanced Abolition papers, such as the *Tribune*, were holding back and shouting pas trop de zale — and as it proved wisely, by advocating it publicly — merely as a war measure — the President, at the request of George H. Boker, actually signed for me fifty duplicate very handsome copies of the Proclamation on parchment paper, to every one of which Mr. Seward also added his signature. One of these copies is now hanging up in the British Museum as my gift . . . The copies I presented to the Sanitary Fair to be sold for its benefit, but there was not much demand for them; what were left over, I divided with George Boker.'"

The Anderson Galleries catalogue featured the Emancipation Proclamation as its frontispiece. The document sold for \$515 and was purchased by George D. Smith.

ILLINOIS STATE JOURNAL

(Missing Numbers)

Burton wrote in his ledger, "I value this unique and Historically Valuable document (Emancipation Proclamation) at \$2,000." He obtained the document "from Shepard & Co Salt Lake City Utah who secured it through the famous London private broker who took it as security for loan to the heirs of Charles Godfrey Leland." Burton paid \$75 for the document he valued at \$2,000. After securing it, he sent it to Washington, D. C., to be personally examined by John Hay who was then Secretary of State in the Roosevelt Cabinet. Hay pronounced the document genuine in letters dated October 15th and 24th, 1903.

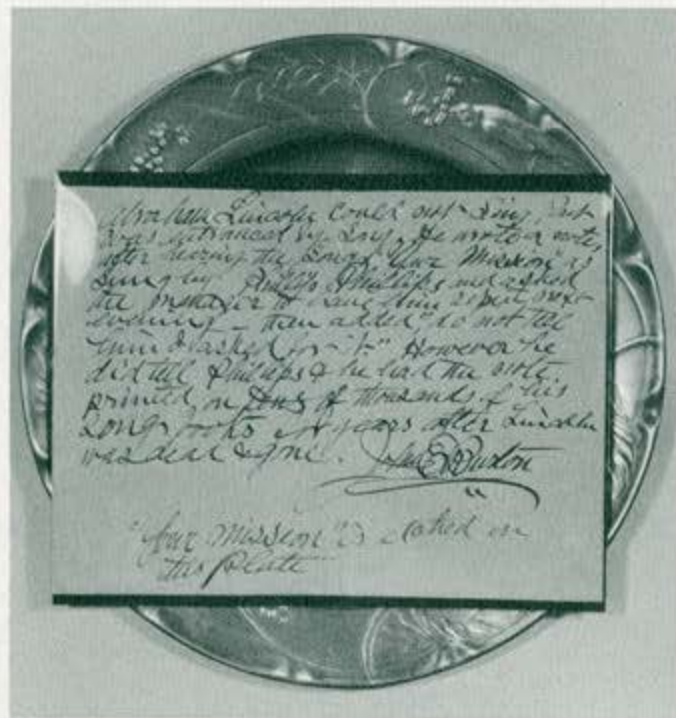
The Anderson Galleries catalogue, Part IV, provides a general description of the Burton, Lincoln collection: "Scarce Broad-sides; Confederate Imprints; Books from Lincoln's Library, including a book which he (Lincoln) inscribed and presented to General Banks; an Autograph Letter by Lincoln; the rare edition of the Life of Lincoln by Scripps, and the suppressed edition of Herndon's Life are among the rarities.

"The Sale also embraces a very large and interesting collection of Portraits of Lincoln and there is a very large number of Lincoln relics, among these being flags, walking-sticks, tools, book-case, inkstand, spectacle case, jewelry, wood from the house in which he lived, and a writing desk."

Quite a number of Burton's, Lincoln books and pamphlets have found their way to the shelves of the Foundation's Lincoln Library. In addition to the two ledgers which were acquired in 1969, still another Burton relic is on exhibit in our Museum — A large pewter plate on which is engraved five verses of the song entitled "Your Mission." Above the verses is the title "Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Song." Accompanying the plate is an identifying statement in Burton's handwriting: "Abraham Lincoln could not sing, but was entranced by Song. He wrote a note after hearing the song *Your Mission* as sung by Phillip Phillips and asked the manager to have him repeat next evening — then added 'do not tell him I asked for it.' However he did tell Phillips & he had the note printed on tens of thousands of his song books for years after Lincoln was dead & gone.

John E. Burton

"Your Mission is etched on this plate."



Pewter plate engraved with five verses of the song *Your Mission* which bears the title "Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Song." This relic is recorded in Burton's ledger, a page of which is reproduced for this article. The purchase price is not given.

The newspaper files of the *Illinois State Journal* in the Illinois State Historical Library has some missing numbers during the period of Abraham Lincoln's residence in that state. These numbers extend from September 14, 1843, through December of the same year, June 20-30, 1855, and July 1-9, of the same year. The staff librarians of the state library have just about concluded that no copies of the missing numbers are today extant.

Perhaps it was the above missing numbers of the *Journal* files that prompted the Springfield attorney, Clinton Conkling, to write Robert T. Lincoln in 1916 or 1917. Undoubtedly, the gaps were more extensive then, than today. The President's son in turn addressed a query to Helen Nicolay, the daughter of President Lincoln's secretary. The letter written from Washington, D. C., on March 23, 1918, follows:

"Mr. Clinton Conkling, of Springfield, Illinois, has asked me on behalf of the Springfield Historical Society whether I could learn anything about some of the files of the *Illinois State Journal*, which your father borrowed (as I understand from the publishers of the *Journal*) for use in the History. The papers which came to me finally occupied seven steamer trunks and in examining them with some care, I think it quite certain those newspaper files are not among the papers. There is in the papers so very little of anything of the probably great quantity of material which your father and Mr. Hay must necessarily have procured outside of the documents left by my father himself that it is not to be expected that these Springfield files would be found in the papers I now have. I am writing, therefore, to ask whether it happens that your father's papers are in such shape that you could without undue trouble say anything about the *Illinois State Journal*. They are desired of course to complete the records of the Historical Society. That, of course, is not the most important matter in the world, but if it would easily be done, the officials would be gratified."

On March 26, 1918, Helen Nicolay answered Robert T. Lincoln's letter as follows:

"I am sorry I cannot be of help in locating the files of the *Illinois State Journal* supposed to have been borrowed by my father. My belief is that they were returned by him and no record made of the . . .

"I received a letter last May from Mr. Jesse W. Weik asking the same question, but . . . the date of the missing file as 1860. The gap in the file seems to increase with time.

"I have no newspapers, having turned over the few that were among my father's papers to the Library of Congress. To make sure that I had not unwittingly done this with one that should have been returned to Illinois I yesterday examined the file of the *Springfield Journal* at the Library of Congress. They seem to have been acquired from the State Dept. Library as the names of Clayton, Webster and Seaward appear written on the margins — during the years those gentlemen were Secretaries of State."

Miss Nicolay's letter to Robert T. Lincoln prompted his reply written from Washington, D. C., on March 27, 1918:

"I have your note and greatly appreciate your kindness, but I am really annoyed at having put you to so much trouble. Mr. Conkling, interested in the State Library, asked me a year or more ago to keep an eye open in my examination of my father's papers for any files of the *Illinois State Journal*, saying that he was told at the office of the paper that the missing files had been loaned to your father. I do not remember that he spoke of any particular year. In cleaning up my father's papers recently, I bore in mind Mr. Conkling's request. That is all there is of it, and I do not fancy that the lack of them in the State Library will be any great public misfortune.

"I am sending your note to Mr. Conkling to let him know of your kind effort."

To be sure, the loss of the missing *Journals* is not a great public misfortune, however, their loss is a constant annoyance to the student. For example, the following

statement appears in *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1579, September, 1969, Lincoln's Law Offices In The Tinsley Building 1843-1852: "When one attempts to define the precise location of the Lincoln-Herdon law office during the entire period of the firm's existence, there is some confusion. This is due to the fact that several . . . issues of the *Illinois State Journal* are missing which would have shown a change, if they had moved, in their business card."

Even the Micro Photo Division of Bell & Howell, who have micro film of the *Illinois State Journal* from June 16, 1848, to December 30, 1865, (35 reels) available for sale, advises its prospective customers that missing from the files are the numbers from September 14, 1843, through December and June 20-30, 1855, and July 1-9, of the same year.

Editor's Note: For a more complete description of the files of the *Illinois State Journal*, consult the publication titled, "Newspapers in the Illinois State Historical Library," edited by William E. Keller, reprinted from *Illinois Librarians*, June, 1970, by the Illinois State Historical Library, page 543.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S SEAL (A Good Investment)

On October 25, 1967, Abraham Lincoln's Official Seal of the United States sold for \$12,000. It was a part of the Justin G. Turner collection sold at the Charles Hamilton Auction (see catalogue No. 22) at the Waldorf Astoria. The seal was used by Lincoln while president.

The item is described as follows: "the seal $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter and inscribed in brass, mounted on a carved ivory handle (age yellowed and with a few tiny cracks), bearing a circular design on its top. The overall height is about $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". Contained in a special folding case made by Atmore Beach of brown morocco with inner linings of beige moire silk, gilt stamped on spine, 'Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Seal,' and on front cover, 'Justin G. Turner Collection.'" The pre-sale estimated value of the relic was \$2,000.

The seal had previously been sold by the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. on February 19-20, 1952, at the time of the disposition of the collection of the late Oliver R.

Barrett, of Chicago, Illinois. The item listed as Number 284 on page 122 of the sale catalogue gives the following description: "Seal of the United States used by Abraham Lincoln while President, ivory handle with brass seal. Height $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. With card inscribed: 'Seal used by Abraham Lincoln when President. W. H. Crook'. Accompanying is a printed invitation of Mr and Mrs Abraham Lincoln to 'Mrs. Goddard' in an envelope, with a wax impression of the above seal. The envelope is defective. Illustrated in Sandburg, *Lincoln Collector*, facing p. 145."

The Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. did not estimate the value of the various items offered for sale, which appears to be no longer the practice of most auction houses. The seal sold for \$650.

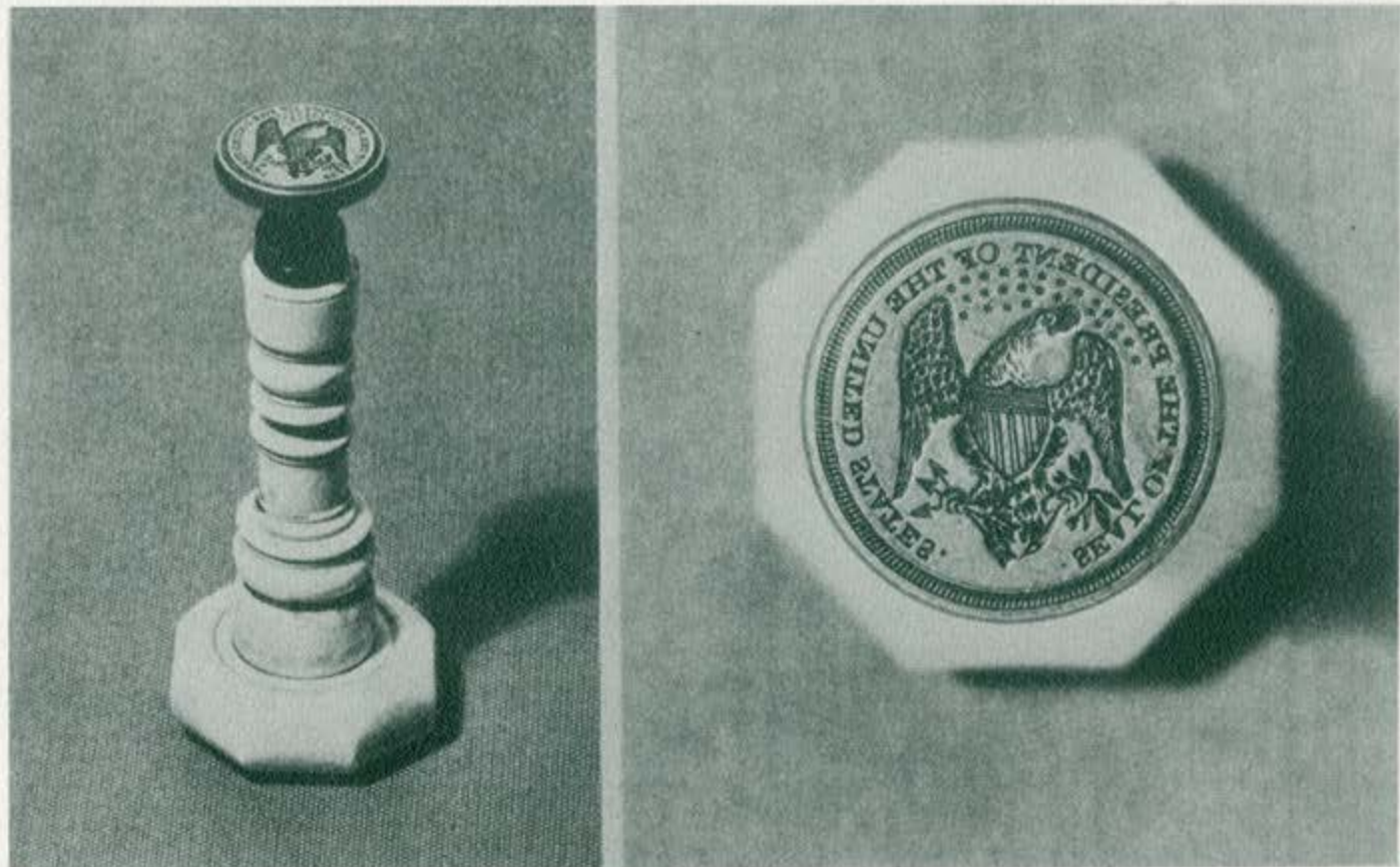
Thus the purchaser of the relic at the Barrett sale realized a 1746% gain on his investment. Perhaps the same can be said of the estate of the late Anna Thompson Dodge, who sold through Christie's on June 24, 1971, a French 18th century writing table for \$415,800.

Mrs. Lincoln Among The Sick And Wounded

Among the many ladies who visit our sick soldiers with cheerful words and offices, none are more indefatigable than Mrs. Lincoln. She, yesterday, visited the Odd Fellows Hall Hospital, Navy Yard, much to the gratification of the sufferers there, and kindly administered to their wants in various ways — bestowing gifts, kind words and, among others, Mrs. Lincoln visited the bedside of one old soldier, over sixty years of age, who had expressed a desire to see her. After some conversation, she bestowed upon the old soldier a handsome donation. Her visit will long be remembered by the invalids.

Washington Star
August 29, 1862

Note: On August 12, 1862, Mrs. Lincoln received from a Boston merchant a donation of \$1,000 for relief work in military hospitals. On August 16, 1862, a request was made of Hiram Barney to buy \$200 worth of lemons and \$100 worth of oranges for Mrs. Lincoln to distribute to hospitals. *Lincoln Day By Day - A Chronology 1809-1865*, Volume III: 1861-1865, pages 133-134.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Two different views of Lincoln's official seal which, if price is an index, must be one of the most valuable Lincoln relics in existence today.