



Lincoln Lore

June, 1978

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor. Published each month by the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1684

THE LOUIS A. WARREN LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The Lincoln Library and Museum celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. The celebration not only marks the passage of a significant milestone but also provides an opportunity to publicize a number of important changes and innovations. The Library and Museum has a new name, we are in a new home, all of our exhibits are new, we have initiated a lecture series on Lincoln, and we have installed our first exhibit to use modern audio-visual techniques.

Lincoln National Life founded the Lincoln Library and Museum in 1928, inviting Lincoln scholar Louis A. Warren to become the first Director. From that date until 1956, Dr. Warren, with the generous support of Lincoln National Life, built the collection and through prodigious writing and public speaking spread the word about Lincoln and about the Lincoln collection in Fort Wayne. In 1977, Thomas A. Watson, then chief executive officer of Lincoln National Life, reflected



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 1. Entrance to the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

that he had always had a pet peeve well exemplified in New York City. There, despite the untold thousands of dedicated teachers who had worked in the public school system, they insist on naming their schools merely P. S. 1, P. S. 2, and so on. He thought that achievements like Dr. Warren's should be recognized, and in honor of his contributions to this institution as well as to the Lincoln field in general, Lincoln National Life renamed the institution the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Dr. Warren, who turned ninety-three shortly before the official opening of the new Library and Museum this May, remarked that he considered it a form of immortality to have his name linked with Lincoln's.

Lincoln National Life showed its continuing commitment to the Lincoln field in a spectacular way by moving the Lincoln Library and Museum to the newest building in its corporate headquarters complex. The important decision was not just to pick the collection up and carry it across the street but to redesign the museum and library in keeping with the philosophy that such institutions have, above all else, an educational role.

Too often, museums ask too much of their visitors. They demand not only that they come but also that they already know a great deal about their subject so that they, the visitors, freight the artifacts with the proper significance. Art museums are the worst offenders: they simply collect the objects; put them on the walls; tell the title, painter, and date; and let the gallery's visitor do all the rest. Even a museum devoted to a subject as famous as Abraham Lincoln has an obligation to do more. It should educate. It should explain why Lincoln is important. It should attempt to acquaint its patrons with matters of interest and importance in Lincoln's life that they may never have dreamed of. The goal should be to have the visitor leave the museum saying, "Gosh, I didn't know Lincoln said this or thought that or was involved with this policy or had a plan to accomplish that."

To instrument this museum philosophy, we employed Victor Hogg, of Interpretive Development Planning in Williamston, Michigan, a specialist in designing what are called "interpretive museums." The Lincoln Library and Museum then carefully sketched the outlines of Lincoln's life



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 3. Victor Hogg at work on a museum exhibit.

and suggested items from the collection which would help illustrate important points. The staff of Interpretive Development Planning then designed a sequence of sixty exhibits, chronologically arranged, which constitute a short biography of Lincoln.

The results are illustrated in these pages. By treating as nearly as we could the whole of Lincoln's life, we were able to fulfill what we regard as an important obligation: to appeal to all kinds of visitors. We have attempted to give appropriate emphasis to the monumental events of that great life — the Great Debates, the Gettysburg Address, and the Emancipation Proclamation, for example — and also to bring to light less-well-known aspects of Lincoln's life — his interest in inventions and technology, his economic philosophy, and his Indian policy, for example. To suggest the flavor of Lincoln's times, we reconstructed copies of parts of three rooms in which Lincoln spent important hours of his life: the Indiana log cabin, the Illinois law office, and the War Department telegraph office.

The library still maintains its important status in our institution. Books previously in storage because of the healthy growth of the collection have rejoined the main collection, and the library is for the first time physically separated enough from the museum displays to allow quiet study at all times.

Two special events marked the official opening of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum in May. Professor Richard N. Current, of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, delivered the first annual R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture. Honoring the achievements of Dr. McMurtry, who guided the Lincoln Library and Museum through the years 1956-1972, the lecture will bring a Lincoln scholar of national reputation to Fort Wayne each spring to deliver a paper on Lincoln. We will publish the paper thereafter in longer annotated form. Professor Current's lecture, entitled "Unity, Ethnicity, and Abraham Lincoln," was a provocative study of the effects of the movement for ethnic consciousness among white Americans of other than English descent on Lincoln's image as the immigrant's hero. About a hundred people attended Professor Current's splendid inauguration of the



Courtesy Stedman Studio

FIGURE 2. Louis A. Warren.

FIGURE 4.
Exhibits:
The War
Years.



*From the
Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library
and Museum*

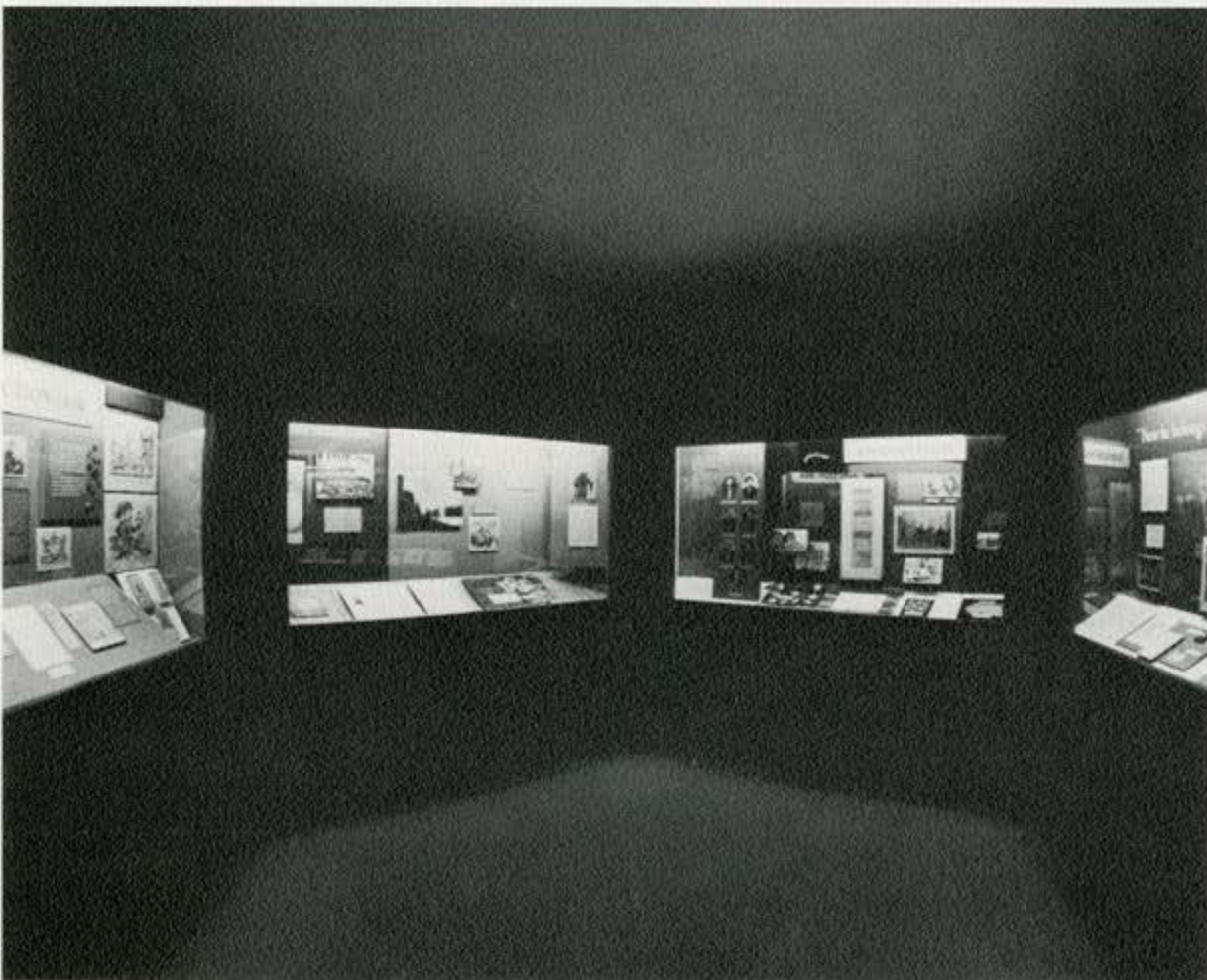


FIGURE 5.
Exhibits:
Election
of 1864-
Assassination.

*From the
Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library
and Museum*



FIGURE 6.
The library.

*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

McMurtry Lectures.

Richard J. S. Gutman of Dover, Massachusetts, provided the second event, the first showing of a four-projector slide program entitled "The Lincoln Nobody Knows." Adapted from Professor Current's classic book of the same name, the show utilizes several hundred prints and photographs ingeniously programmed and coordinated with a recorded narrative. Not only is it visually attractive, but it also utilizes the images to suggest that Lincoln was an enigmatic figure about whom there are still many mysteries. The show's ability to remind viewers of the wealth of visual materials available in this and other Lincoln collections is remarkable. Likewise, the mood of inquiry and wonder which it creates seemed so appropriate as an introduction to an exhibit on Lincoln that it is now permanently installed as the introduction to the new exhibits in the museum.

It has been a time of excitement and innovation at the Lincoln Library and Museum. More important, it has been a time of grateful reflection. We recall with profound gratitude the steady and conscientious support of Lincoln National Life over the last fifty years. The opportunity to note the achievements of two great collection-builders and Lincoln publicists, Louis A. Warren and R. Gerald McMurtry, has been most welcome. Victor Hogg proved that the union of modern design techniques with the prodigious accumulation of materials on the most important figure in American history can lead to a stimulating and truly educational experience in a museum. Richard Current's ability to show that Lincoln's image is, as always, a powerful stimulus to reflection about the meaning of the American experience gave reassurance of the continuing importance of the Lincoln theme, even as he documented a new threat to Lincoln's relevance for the present. Richard Gutman, by using old pictures in new ways, showed that the future of the ability of the Lincoln theme to stimulate public curiosity and interest is assured. For all these things and much more, the staff of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum is grateful.



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 7. R. Gerald McMurtry (left) and Richard N. Current (right).