

HEAD

DRAWER

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APPEARANCE

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# Abraham Lincoln's Appearance

Head

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE POSTURE OF LINCOLN

The height of Lincoln and the size of his head, his hands, and his feet are questions which are discussed periodically with the appearance of each new feature article on any one of the above subjects. Not long ago a columnist made the statement that George Washington was the tallest of our presidents and that Lincoln's hat size was six and seven-eighths.

### Stature

The names of Washington and Lincoln are associated more often than the names of other presidents, and many debates have taken place on the subject of their respective contributions to the United States of America. There should be no difference of opinion, however, as to which one was the taller of the two, as Lincoln easily wins this crown.

Henry Cabot Lodge in his *Life of Washington* quotes a letter written by David Ackerson, of Alexandria, Virginia, in which Ackerson states that Washington's exact height was six feet, two inches in his boots. George Mercer, a close friend of Washington, claimed that he was "six feet, two inches in his stockings." There seems to be no description of Washington available which places his height at more than six feet, two inches.

Those contemporary with Abraham Lincoln who have written about him have consistently used six feet, four inches as his height. While some of his friends claim he was six feet four in his stocking feet, the claim has never been made that he was more than six feet four.

Five months before Lincoln was nominated for the presidency he was invited to prepare an autobiographical sketch. In the concluding paragraph he said, "If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly, lean in flesh weighing on an average of one hundred and eighty pounds."

From the statements about Washington and Lincoln both before us, it is evident that the railsplitter was two inches taller than the father of the country.

Washington and Lincoln both changed very much in their physical appearance during the years; Washington grew heavier and Lincoln lost weight. When Washington took his seat in the House of Burgesses in 1759 at twenty-seven years of age, he is said to have weighed 175 pounds, but at forty years of age, he weighed 210 pounds. Herndon claimed that when Lincoln first came to Illinois at twenty-one years of age he must have weighed over two hundred pounds. By the time he was fifty his weight was reduced to 180 pounds and during the next five years he is said to have lost twenty pounds.

### Head

The size of Lincoln's head never came in for much discussion until the late Senator Beveridge measured a hat in Chicago said to have been worn by Lincoln and claimed that the size was but six and seven-eighths. This conclusion by Beveridge as to the size of the hat Lincoln wore was given further circulation by other writers.

Robert H. Hitt was one of the official stenographers during the Lincoln and Douglas debates. He had this to say about Lincoln's hat, "Yes, I remember that Mr. Lincoln's hat was very large. He was a man of large head, and the style at that time was to wear high and full crown silk hats. The one he wore towards the last of his life looks enormous as compared with the hats seen now days." Evidently Hitt was not under the impression that Lincoln's head was exceedingly small.

Nicolay, one of Lincoln's secretaries, in describing Lincoln's head, said it was "large with a high crown of skull"; and another contemporary said, "His forehead is high and full and swings out grandly."

Lamon, a close friend of Lincoln, who had access to the notes gathered by William Herndon, had this to say about Lincoln's head, "His head was long and tall from the base of the brain and the eyebrow, his forehead high and

narrow, but inclining backward as it rose. The diameter of his head from ear to ear was six and one-half inches and from front to back eight inches. The size of his hat was seven and one-eighth."

Henry C. Whitney in his reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln states, "His head was high, but not large; his forehead was broad at the base, but retreated, indicating marked perceptive qualities, but not great reflective ones and in this phrenology is sadly at fault. He wore a hat measuring seven and one-eighth."

The hat which Lincoln is said to have worn on the last day of his life was in the Oldroyd Collection at Washington some years ago. One who examined the hat at that time had this to say about it, "I tried it on recently and found it very heavy and cumbersome. It fitted me loosely, and was a good 7¼ in size. In addition to the heavy black band around it, there was another tiny band with a dainty buckle. This hat is in a remarkable state of preservation, and the maker's name on the lining inside shows it to have been manufactured by J. Y. Davis, of Washington, D. C."

### Hands

There has never been very much discussion over the size of Lincoln's hands, as we are fortunate in having casts of both the right and left hands made at Springfield, Illinois, the day after he was nominated for the presidency. The cast of the left hand is an excellent one, but the right hand was very much swollen, due to the congratulatory hand shaking which Lincoln had received during the day on account of his nomination.

While the left hand is closed normally, Volk advised Lincoln to secure something to hold in his right hand, so he cut off about five inches of his wife's broom stick which he clenched. His hands measure ten inches in circumference following the glove fitters process of determining size.

### Feet

In 1891 Dr. P. Kahler of New York published a small book on "Dress and Care of the Feet." In this book he presented drawings of both of Lincoln's feet showing the various measurements necessarily used for fitting. The right foot was twelve and one-quarter inches long and the left foot twelve inches. Lincoln's signature and the date December 13, 1864, appear on the diagram, evidently written by Lincoln.

Dr. Kahler made the following comments with reference to his contact with Lincoln:

"Abraham Lincoln was six feet and four inches in height, and had a very large foot. He knew the importance of proper clothing for the foot, and hearing Dr. P. Kahler, he sent for him and procured a pair of shoes made upon the Kahler last.

"At a recent session of the Health Association the original model of Mr. Lincoln's foot as drawn by Dr. Kahler was exhibited. Visitors to the establishment of P. Kahler & Sons, 813-815 Broadway, can see the original order given by Mr. Lincoln for the admission of Dr. Kahler to the White House in Washington, and the drawing of Mr. Lincoln's foot made from life by Dr. Kahler, from which his shoes were made."

Many years ago a newspaper in Lynn, Massachusetts, published an article in which it was claimed that the boots Lincoln wore at the time of his assassination were in that city, having come into possession of the owner through William Clark who occupied the room where Lincoln was taken after his assassination. This brief description of the boots was given:

"The boots are old-fashioned, long-legged affairs, with square toes. They are much narrower than one would suppose a man his height would wear. The upper part of the legs are made of a heavy reddish-brown leather, but the rest of the foot is of a fine black material. They show considerable wear, although not worn at any part."

Capital Illinois, Madison, Ill.  
6 Home Owned—Home

## Old Days

Abe Lincoln's Bumps

Shown in Old Study

Phrenological Lore

[By ALBERT O. BARTON]

ABRAHAM LINCOLN has been studied from many points of view and it would seem little more could be added to the store of lore and legend surrounding his name. However, in a Madison attic was recently found a pamphlet which is not only a rarity in itself but considers the martyr president from a rather unusual angle of study, that of the "bumps on his head." A copy of a phrenological journal published a year after Lincoln's death has come to light and the opening article deals with him from the standpoint of the phrenologist. Phrenology was a popular fad of the Civil war period and the years following. Civil war veterans say they sometimes amused themselves in camp studying the "bumps" of their fellows and drawing conclusions from such diversion.

The discussion of Lincoln as presented in the phrenological journal of 70 years ago follows herewith:

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE MARTYR PRESIDENT

"Mr. Lincoln had a tall, spare, large-boned frame, with which his prominent features and long, high head perfectly corresponded. His ample but not ponderous forehead, very prominent at the base, shows the large development of the perceptive faculties which gave him the practical matter-of-fact turn of mind for which he was distinguished. Individuality, form, size, order, eventuality, and locality were among his largest organs.

"The size of the head, was in fair proportion to that of the body. It was not of the largest class, though quite large enough for the vital energies of the body. Nor was it in any important respect deficient. It was not the head of a fighter, and he could take no pleasure in combat or contention.



A. O. Barton

"He had large benevolence, large conscientiousness, and large hope. His veneration was full, and his spirituality average. His religion consisted more in kindness and justice than in faith, humility, or devotion. To do right and to do good were his leading moral characteristics. Socially, he was strong in his attachments, constant in his affections, and well adapted to wedded life. Intellectually, there was nothing wanting. His casualty was full, comparison large, and nearly all the perceptive large and active. He was open to conviction, true to his higher nature, and governed by moral principle rather than by policy. He was firm, persevering, generous, kind-hearted, affectionate, intelligent, with a high degree of strong, practical common sense. If not a great man, he was something better—a good one. He was a type of the better class of Americans.

"Abraham Lincoln was born on the 12th day of February, 1806, in Hardin county, Ky., where, at 7 years of age, he was first sent to school to a Mr. Hazel, carrying with him an old copy of "Dillworth's Spelling Book," one of the three works that formed the family library. His father, Mr. Thomas Lincoln, soon after removed to Indiana, taking young Abraham with him. Until he was 17 his life was that of a simple farm laborer, with only such intervals of schooling as farm laborers get. Probably the school instruction of his whole life would not amount to more than a year.

"Such was the early training of this man of the people, whom the people made the ruler of a great nation.

"In 1834 he commenced his political career as a member of the legislature; was admitted to the bar in 1836; sent to congress in 1846; elected president in 1860; re-elected in 1864, and died by the hand of an assassin Apr. 14, 1865. The reader knows how much these bare outlines embrace—how large a space they must necessarily fill in history.

"Mr. Lincoln earned the love of his countrymen to a greater degree, perhaps than any other person who filled the president's chair, scarcely excepting the 'Father of His Country.' For Washington the universal feeling of love was toned to a grace and profound awe by the imperturbable dignity of his character and the impressive majesty of his presence. No one could approach him, even with those deep and lively sentiments of admiration which the grandeur and disinterestedness of his career always awakened, without being impressed with a certain solemn veneration. Next to Washington, Pres. Jackson had taken the firmest hold in the popular mind, by the magnanimity of his impulses, the justice of his sentiments, and the inflexible honesty of his purposes. But the impetuosity of Jackson, the violence with which he sometimes pursued his ends, made him as ardent enemies as he had friends. But Mr. Lincoln, who had none of Washington's elevation, or none of Jackson's energy, yet his kindness, his integrity, his homely popular humor, and his rare native instinct of the popular will, has won as large a place in the private heart, while history will assign him no less a place in the public history of the nation."

# Lincoln, As Boy, Suffered Blow On Head Which May Have Altered Personality

NEW YORK, May 24. (AP) — A kick in the head by a horse apparently fractured Abraham Lincoln's skull in boyhood, causing permanent brain injuries.

The injuries may have partly shaped his personality, and indirectly affected his career.

This new viewpoint on Lincoln comes from a psychiatrist, Dr. Edward J. Kempf of Wading River, N. Y., writing in the AMA Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry.

The fracture affected Lincoln's eyes, causing double vision and making him neurotic, he suggests. It could have caused a tendency to sink into dull, melancholy blues whenever Lincoln's mind was not being mentally stimulated.

## Strove To Keep Alert

To fight back, Lincoln perhaps strove to keep mentally alert. His passion for justice and love of humor could have been ways of doing this, Dr. Kempf writes.

Some of his clues came from a study of Lincoln's photographs, and a life mask made in 1860.

The mask shows an unusual depression in the forehead, right over the left eye. Dr. Kempf thought it might mean a skull fracture. He looked for evidence of such a serious accident, and found it when Lincoln was 10 years old.

## Was Driving Horse

"He was driving an unshod horse hitched in a circular mill for grinding corn or sugar cane; and, growing impatient of her slow pace, he shouted, 'Get up, you hussy,' and gave her a whack with a stick. She kicked back, hitting him in the forehead.

"He was knocked unconscious for many hours and was thought for a time to be dead. He seems to have recovered without appar-

ent serious after-effects, since he received no special medical attention for the head injury, the doctor living many miles away."

But brain hemorrhages and blood clots from the blow could have left permanent damage, Dr. Kempf says.

## Left Eye Weakened

Lincoln's left eye was weakened. It would turn upward, showing more white in the eyeball. It gave him a slightly staring effect. It caused double vision, which in turn brought headaches, nausea, indigestion and depression.

The psychiatrist cites other possible signs of brain injury, in weakness of some face muscles, especially on the left side.

Lincoln, he says, would repeatedly lapse into a state of mental detachment, with a dull, sad, melancholic look. Then, when he was stimulated by something someone said or did, his expression would change quickly to animated interest, and he would often smile or laugh.

## Brain Injury Hinted

A certain type of brain injury could explain this tendency, Dr. Kempf says.

A person who has it, would, in order to keep alert, have to be involved or keep involved in "emotionally stimulating situations by cultivating special stimulating interests and objectives, such as a

passion for legal justice for all people."

"Lincoln did just this, as a humorist seeking happiness and as a humanist seeking justice, in an endless fight to overcome the tendency to lapse into a rut of sad, gloomy, suicidal preoccupations."



