

Honesty

Drawer

3A

Personality

7/2009 025 03441

Abraham Lincoln's Personality

Honesty

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

HONEST OLD ABE. The Life and Public Services of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, with a portrait on steel, to which is added a biographical sketch of Hon. Hannibal Hamlin. The Reason Why of Natural History, by the author of Inquire Within, etc. Travels in Europe, its people and scenery, embracing graphic descriptions of the principal cities, buildings, scenery, and most notable people in England and on the continent, by Geo. H. Calvert, Esq. ~~How to~~ Had Disease, by the editor of Hall's Journal of Health. Travel and Study in Italy by Norton. Memorials of Thomas Hooker. The Barbarism of Slavery, by Charles Sumner. The Mill on the Floss, by the author of Adam Bede, etc.

For sale by **REDDING & CO.,** 1860
 aug 7 1860 18 State street.

MR. LINCOLN'S EARLY STRUGGLES.

He who observed Abraham Lincoln's life from boyhood to manhood might have appropriately applied to him Tennyson's expressive phrase, "And breasts the blows of circumstances." The blows were severe, for the circumstances were hostile. The poverty of his parents allowed him to attend school only at intervals, when he could be spared from the log cabin and the corn-patch. His father and mother encouraged him to learn, but they could not give him a school attendance of more than a single year during his whole boyhood. But he made the best use of his rare opportunities.

"One of his teachers," says Mr. Chittenden, in his "Personal Reminiscences," "remembers him as his most eager and diligent scholar, arrayed in a buckskin suit, with a cap made from the skin of a raccoon, coming with a worn-out arithmetic in his hands to begin his studies in the 'higher branches.'"

He was intense and thorough. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," was the counsel that controlled him. He took the first steps in writing and speaking correctly by memorizing a book on grammar. Meeting the word "demonstrate," he found that it meant to prove so as to exclude doubt.

"What is it to prove?" he asked. He had never heard of a work on logic, but he got hold of "Euclid," and solved all its problems. When he had gone through its geometrical demonstrations, he knew what it meant to prove a thing.

A book on land-surveying fell into his hands. He became interested in it; then he studied it, and became a land surveyor.

He had acquired the mental habit, a rare one, of doing thoroughly whatever he undertook. But at twenty-two he had no trade or occupation, and he had failed in every business he had undertaken. He had been a farm hand, a ferryman, a flat-boat-man, a clerk in a country store and the superintendent of a flour mill. He had been sold out twice by the sheriff—once while keeping a country store, and again when doing business as a land surveyor.

But in spite of his failures, he was known as "Honest Abe Lincoln." He gained the reputation by the integrity which marked his dealings. The man who, at the last sheriff's sale, bought Lincoln's horse, compass and other instruments was almost a stranger; but he sent them all back to him with the kindly message to "pay for them when he was able."

Once a woman, living four miles from his store, bought several articles and paid for them. After she had departed, Lincoln discovered that he had overcharged her thirty cents. Instead of waiting until she had complained of the overcharge, he walked to her home and returned the three dimes.

Mr. Chittenden tells this anecdote to illustrate the scrupulosity of the man. A new post-office was established, and young Abe was appointed postmaster. So small was the amount of money received that the government neglected to call for its payment until he had relinquished the office and was a lawyer in Springfield.

A friend, thinking it might be inconvenient for Lincoln to pay the money, offered to advance the sum. Lincoln declined the kind offer, and to satisfy his friend, drew out from his desk an old stocking containing the identical coins which he had received in payment of postage. The friend was surprised, for Lincoln was then very poor; but he was not poor enough to use one penny of the money which belonged to the United States.

Town collectors who lend the money received for taxes and pocket the interest; trustees and treasurers of churches who deposit trust funds to their private account and bank thereon, may think Lincoln Quixotic; but men of old-fashioned integrity will say, "He did just as he ought to have done."

We knew one of these old-fashioned men. His firm, during the panic of "Black Friday," was paying eighteen per cent. for money; yet he had in his safe fifty thousand dollars of trust funds.

"I was sure of myself," he said to the writer, "but I was not sure of my partner—therefore I did not tell him."

Subsequently Lincoln began to travel on the highway of success. "His luck has turned," said his friends. Tennyson expresses the idea in a more poetic form—"And grasps the skirts of happy chance." But had he not been *thorough*, and had he not breasted "the blows of circumstance," he would have been, what hundreds complain of being, the creature of circumstances. He made circumstances his creatures, and he became the nation's leader and the slave's emancipator.

1895

Lincoln's Honesty

By Addison G. Procter

WHEN the army of the frontier, composed largely of Kansas troops, under command of General James G. Blunt, moved south from the Kansas border in the early days of the war, it found along the entire route of march, from Fort Scott to Fort Gibson, immense herds of cattle peacefully grazing, and absolutely without owners, visible or invisible. They were mostly cattle that had been owned by the Cherokees and other Indian tribes, who had lost control of them during the war. They had wandered away from their regular ranges, were not worth hunting up, and were practically as free as the buffaloes.

One of the scandals that followed this campaign, and which, at a later day, reached Washington, was to the effect that by the connivance of officers high in authority, thousands of these cattle, within easy reach of the army at all times, had been driven in by squads of our own soldiers, acting under orders from somebody, and delivered to the officers of the quartermaster or commissary department, who in turn had receipted for them to some imaginary "contractor" for "furnishing the army with fresh beef," these officers issuing vouchers for large amounts, to be paid by the government, for cattle taken by our own men from nobody. In short, we had used our own troops to steal the beef, and the "contractor" and his friends had sold them to the army that had stolen them. At least this seemed to be the fact.

Many officers fell under grave suspicion in this affair, and its effect was extremely demoralizing.

The attention of Mr. Lincoln was called to the matter, and, after satisfying himself that General Blunt was either dishonest or criminally negligent, he ordered his dismissal from the command.

General Blunt was very popular in Kansas. He had been active in Republican politics, and had a host of very influential friends. He was a good fighter, had the army influence at his call, and knew how to use it effectively. His friends, both in civil and military life, were strenuous in their endeavor to have him reinstated. Petitions in his behalf were circulated all over Kansas, and every influence, personal and political, was invoked.

About that time I happened to be in Washington, and calling one morning on our Congressman, who was a close personal friend, I found him busy arranging and assorting a pile of papers, which, he told me, were petitions and personal requests to the President from all over Kansas, asking that General Blunt be returned to the command of the "Army of the Frontier," which papers he had arranged to present to Mr. Lincoln that morning. "Come with me," said Wilder, "and let's see what Mr. Lincoln has to say."

We went directly to the White House, met with no delay worth mentioning, and were soon informally seated near Mr. Lincoln's table, only waiting the setting aside of some papers, which he seemed to be considering as we entered. It seemed to me like a plain business call on a plain country lawyer, as with kindly glance and feet in slippers he greeted us.

Wilder placed the bundle of papers on the table, and without any preliminary said that he had brought with him petitions and requests from all over the State of Kansas, asking for the restoring of General Blunt to the command of the Army of the Frontier. "The petitioners include," he said, "our Republican Governor, every State officer, our Senators, Representatives, our judges, our State Central Committee, and the letters are personal requests from your personal friends in the Republican party. In fact, it is an urgent request to you from the Republicans of Kansas, my party and your party, and I urge you to give the petition your friendly consideration." At the same time he opened the papers to show Mr. Lincoln the signatures.

"Never mind opening the papers, Wilder," said Mr. Lincoln, "I will not look at them. I don't doubt that they represent all you claim; that they represent the Republican

Was Abraham Lincoln Capable and Sincere?

Comments and Vindication.

(By Henry B. Rankin)

20. State Register.

2-11-23

I have a letter from the publicity department director of a prominent film company at Hollywood, California, enclosing a clipping from the Daily Californian, Berkeley, California, with the request that I would "dictate an answer to it, as it seems that you are the logical person to answer this in an authoritative way." The clipping reads as follows:

John Cowper Powys confirmed his power and versatility as an actor by his vivid depiction of Lincoln, the democrat, in direct contrast to Napoleon, the imperialist.

Powys asserted that the peculiar idolatry of the Americans for Lincoln makes it difficult for a real understanding of him. The prevalent "Sunday school attitude" towards the man, Powys declares, "is ethical propaganda and should be suppressed. Lincoln was not a Christian, but a free thinker and a fatalist. The story about the great number of books he read is purely mythical—he read few books, in fact no great man ever read fewer.

"Lincoln was a loafer", says Dr. Powys. "He loved contemplation and doing nothing at all. If it had not been for Mrs. Lincoln who dragged him out of his platonic loafings and made him ambitious

he would probably never have been president. Contrary to belief Lincoln simply liberated the slaves as a military expedient, and not from any personal feeling as to its injustice.

"Lincoln has no parallel in the history of the human race in his keen sense of humor and contemptuous benevolence for his enemies. He may be regarded as the greatest of all politicians, because of his sense of humor."

As this clipping has been extensively copied I deem it no impropriety to give it further publicity by asking the Illinois State register to publish it with the following comments.

It would be unnecessary to refute or comment on the several statements in this clipping regarding Abraham Lincoln for any one at all familiar with creditable biographies of Lincoln. With the one exception that,—"Lincoln liberated the slaves as a military necessity," the whole article is so manifestly false that it merits no attention. But it is the task and a dutiful service of respect to the memory of Lincoln that those who knew him and had lived through the strenuous days of his life long services for our common country, should not shrink the call or occasion to defend his character and vindicate the esteem he is worthy of in history.

If the writer of the clipping sent me will read the constitution of the United States as it existed then, he will discover Lincoln had no executive power to do so only as the commander-in-chief of all military power and as a military measure. Under what authority does Powys-Mercer affirm that Lincoln had no "personal feeling as to slavery's injustice" when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation? His political foes, no less than his own words from 1856 down to the hour he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, record his personal feeling on the injustice of slavery. These were his closing words in that proclamation:

"And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

In his boyhood he expressed his strong "personal feeling" at the sight of a slave auction in New Orleans. In 1856 in a speech at Petersburg, Illinois, which I heard, he expressed his "personal feelings" in these words before a large turbulent audience who were all his political foes except the six who voted that year in Menard county for Fremont. I quote from my "Personal Recollections of Lincoln", Putnam's Sons, New York, page 215:

"When I see strong hands sowing, reaping, and threshing wheat and those same hands grinding and

making that wheat into bread, I cannot refrain from wishing and believing that those hands some way, in God's good time, shall own the mouth they feed!"

The assertion that "Lincoln was not a Christian", and the uncalled for sneer about "the prevalent 'Sunday school attitude' of ethical propaganda about Lincoln that should be suppressed",—is unworthy of serious mention. The two quotations above given and a reference to the fact that of all our presidents, none have left half so many, nor such explicit references to a Divine Providence and his personal dependence on God, nor, such repeated appeals to the sympathy and prayers of all Christian people as did Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's own speeches, letters and state papers are the surest sources and sufficient evidence revealing his religious belief to be presented at the bar of History.

What Powys-Mercer means in this sentence is beyond my comprehension.—"Lincoln has no parallel in the history of the human race in his keen humor and contemptuous benevolence for his enemies." "Contemptuous benevolence?" That certainly is something new about Lincoln I turned to my Century dictionary for definitions and an understanding of this newly discovered quality in Lincoln. This found me even more confused. It offered us a mixture of qualities that could not mix. I gave it up.

That "Lincoln was a loafer and loved contemplation and doing nothing at all"—"that he read few books, in fact, no great man ever read fewer", was news to me. In the years when I was a student in his office, Mr. Lincoln when in Springfield and not at the office, was generally at the state library. He did much reading there, and there he spent many hours, chatting with the state officials and his friends and visitors he met. He always appeared at the office before going home to lunch, to see if anything there required his attention. The office to him was a work shop, not a loafing place. He never neglected a client's case, and was precise and exact in preparing it. Of the nearly two hundred cases Lincoln & Herndon were attorneys for and that were appealed to the Illinois supreme court, the briefs were all prepared by him and carefully written by Lincoln's own hand.

His mind under protracted mental strain gave him little bodily wear or fatigue. In this respect he was exceptional and above any man I ever met. His physical endurance was one of his great assets at the bar and in long protracted lawsuits and political campaigns that wore out his colleagues and opponents. This physical and mental endurance equipped him marvelously for the unparalleled strain of his presidential years. Few men were so modest, few so humble in their own opinion of themselves, as he; and few in all history have shown the bravery to stand unflinchingly firm by their political opinions and moral convictions on national questions, as Abraham Lincoln.

I cannot, in view of the surprising clipping sent me, refrain from telling of the last time I saw Lincoln, and quote a few sentences from the short address

he made the morning he left Springfield. Almost at the last moment before the train was to start for Washington from the Great Western, now the Wabash railway depot, Lincoln appeared on the rear platform. The black hair, which was only beginning to turn grey, rolled back from the lofty brow. He rested one hand on the brake, and, pausing a brief moment, beginning in a calm voice, unusually tender, he made his memorable farewell address. I will copy his last three paragraphs. These he delivered with unusual solemnity:

"Without the aid of that Divine Being who ever aided him, (Washington) who controls mine and all destinies I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will be well.

To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you, friends and neighbors, an affectionate farewell."

Were these the words of an "Infidel?" Were these the words of a man not a Christian? Were these the words of a hypocrite? "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Be just to the dead. That was the kind of faith in God's eternal justice that sustained Lincoln through the terrible years of the war as he guided his country through blood and fire and tears.

The train started as he spoke his last words. The president-elect stood without moving his hand from the brake until the train passed quietly away and he was lost to view. That was Lincoln's last view of Springfield.

Four years later, they brought him home from Washington,—home through tears and broken hearts. Those lips were now voiceless in a casket that bore a mighty conqueror. He was ours, when he left,—but was not now, ours only. He came home belonging to all mankind wherever hearts beat loyally for God, for fidelity, for law, for liberty. His life, illustrious by his faith in God and man,—his character, his example, have not departed forever from us. He remains in the grateful and reverent memory of our country and among all races and conditions of people, with an inspiration of which there will be no end.

Henry B. Rankin.

Springfield, Illinois, Feb'y 11, 1923.

A Story of Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln, while a resident of New Salem, Ill., followed various avocations. With all the rest he was "storekeeper and postmaster." On a certain occasion one of his friends, having learned that an agent of the postoffice and a drummer were in village—the former to collect what was due the government from Lincoln, as postmaster, the latter to receive from him, as trader, what he was owing the firm represented by himself—and knowing that Lincoln was never overburdened with spare funds, went to the store and offered to lend him a sum sufficient to meet the claims he was so soon to be called upon to settle. "You are very kind," said Lincoln, "but I do not think that I shall require your assistance." Within a few minutes the agent entered their presence, and Lincoln took an old stocking from a drawer, out of which he poured a lot of copper and a silver coin—the latter mostly in pieces of small denomination. "There is the very money I have taken on account of the postoffice," he remarked to the agent. "and I think you will find it the exact amount due it." It was to a cent. This business had hardly been concluded when in came the drummer. Lincoln had recourse to another old stocking, with similar results. So soon as the two were again by themselves the friend said: "I suppose were a third creditor to present himself a third stocking would enable you to settle with him," smiling. "Yes", returned the future president. "Look here," and he held up three other stockings. "Each of these is the sum I own to three parties, the only persons in the world to whom I am pecuniarily indebted. I see you are amused at my method of transacting business. I never allow myself to use money that is not mine, however sorely pressed I may be, and I intend to be prepared to pay my bills when they become due, without delay or inconvenience to those whom I owe. The simple system which I have adopted—using a stocking to represent each creditor, and placing in it the money to be passed on to the creditor himself at some future day—renders the former unnecessary and the latter possible.—April 23, 1884.

HOW HE BECAME KNOWN AS HONEST ABE

1821

As a grocery clerk at New Salem Lincoln was scrupulously honest. This trait soon became known, but the two following incidents are particularly responsible for the appellation of "Honest Abe," given him and by which he has been so familiarly known. He once took six and a quarter cents too much from a customer. He did not say to himself, "never mind such little things," but walked three miles that evening after closing his store to return the money. On another occasion he weighed out a half-pound of tea, as he supposed, it being night when he did so, and that having been the last thing he sold in the store before going home. On entering in the morning he discovered a four-ounce weight on the scales. He saw his mistake, and shutting up shop, hurried off to deliver the remainder of the tea. These acts of his, as well as his thorough honesty in other respects, soon gained for him the now famous title of "Honest Abe."

* * * * *

Abraham Lincoln was a lawyer, a politician, a statesman, an executive, an emancipator of slaves, the guiding hand that saved a nation to itself, a martyr.

But as the years go by all of these attributes and all of this honor assume their proper secondary positions to the great luminous fact that Abraham Lincoln was of the plain people and he was honest.

Other men, scores of them, have worn the same titles that were Lincoln's. Statesmen, martyrs, military leaders, welders of nations, emancipators of slaves, presidents, have existed by the score.

But towering above them all in the hearts of his own countrymen, and in the increasing reverence that foreign people hold for his memory, is the example of Abraham Lincoln.

It is so because he is thought of today, as he was lovingly known by his contemporaries, as "Honest Abe." *Washington D.C. "Evening Times"*

By the term honesty is not meant the narrow definition that he would not steal. *2.12.1913*

By that is meant that he was honest with his word—he did not speak with a double tongue or use weasel words—not though he was master politician.

By that is meant that he was honest with his convictions and honest with himself. He did not palter with his conscience or waver from what was right, no matter if it was inexpedient to be honest or meant temporary defeat to be true to principle.

By that is meant that he was honest in his effort to represent the people, so honest that he sometimes represented their best interests at the time when they were most loudly denouncing him.

A dishonest man would have drifted with the public current of opinion. A demagogue would have wrecked the nation in order to secure the popular applause for the nonce. *1913*

Abraham Lincoln was so honest that he sacrificed a seat in the United States senate to Douglas, ruined his political future and disappointed all of his friends rather than compromise with what he knew was right in regard to the greatest issue of his day.

It made him president later, but at the time he did not know that it would or have the remotest idea that it would bring him anything but oblivion. He did not care. He was honest.

He was so honest that he could, and did, compromise on all things unessential, on methods, on detail. The dishonest man haggles over quibbles.

He was so honest that he played fair with those who he knew were secretly plotting against him, and even with those who were openly denouncing him.

He was so honest that neither wealth, nor power, nor influence could sway him one hair's breadth from what he knew was right and his duty.

He was so honest that he wore out his life and finally sacrificed it, in behalf of the common man and the underlying principle of democratic government.

Greater honesty hath no man than this.

That is why Lincoln's name is engraven upon the tablets of a nation's reverence and memory.

He was simply "Honest Abe."

"Honest Old Abe"

HONESTY IS THE LESSON THAT THE LIFE OF LINCOLN SHOULD TEACH US.

ONE hundred and four years ago today there was born America's greatest son Abraham Lincoln. "Honest Abe," his friends back in Illinois called him when he was a lad working hard with his hands for his daily bread. "Honest old Abe," it was when with bursting heart and clear head he led this country through the hell of fraternal strife. And "Honest old Abe," he was when, lying dead with God's peaceful smile on his rugged face, a great nation dropped its tears into his grave. *DES MOINES, IOWA*

Honesty is the quality that makes the world hold in reverence the name of Abraham Lincoln. *DAILY NEWS*

Honesty is the lesson that the life of Lincoln should teach us. *2-12-13*

Honesty is the virtue for the lack of which we are suffering most of our evils today.

As a boy Lincoln walked weary miles after a hard day's work to make right the little matter of a mistake in change. He did not have two standards of morality—one for his friends, and one for his customers. Greed never led him to short-weight his sugar, to adulterate his butter, to enslave little children, to employ men and women at starvation wages to water values.

America needs to look at the example of Lincoln! Our great land needs honesty in its business!

As a lawyer Lincoln said: "Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbor to compromise whenever you can. Point out to him how the nominal winner is often a real loser in fees, expenses and waste of time." A lawyer discouraging litigation!

How many criminal lawyers, how many corporation lawyers, but must blush at these words of "Honest Abe."

As a president Lincoln never grew conceited. He never bition so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow-men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem!"

As a president Lincoln never grew conceited. He never felt that he was wiser than the people that elected him. Amidst experiences that would shake the faith of any but the stoutest heart, Lincoln uttered the words engraved on every school boy's heart:

"That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Honest to himself, honest to the people, honest to God, was Abraham Lincoln. And even as honesty is the essence of democracy, so was Lincoln the great democrat.

Lincoln fought and died that black slavery might be erased from our land. He felt the danger to coming generations of the subtle poisons of cruelty and injustice.

Today we are suffering from the effects of increasing industrial slavery. The same invidious poisons are creeping into our national life.

Knowing these dangers, let us thank God for the life and ideal of Abraham Lincoln.

Shakespeare hit the nail on the head when he said:

"To thine own self be true;

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Lincoln was true to himself. And his neighbors called him "Honest Abe."

Is there a greater praise than this?

CHIEF TRAITS OF LINCOLN.

Qualities That Won for Him the Title of "Honest Abe" Enabled Him to Keep in Touch with the People and Later Be a Leader of Men.

If I were asked to enumerate the principal traits which went to make up Mr. Lincoln's great character and qualify him for the part which he was destined to play in the preservation of his country, I should mention as among the most important his strong individuality and sterling personal integrity; his sensitiveness, combined with self-control; his hatred of wrong and devotion to the right, as, in his own language, "God gave him to see the right"; his unerring logic and political sagacity, which enabled him to forecast events with such surprising accuracy; his intense humanity and unselfish patriotism, which made him the friend of the humblest and ready to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the nation. "It was these qualities which, early in life, won for him the title of "Honest Abe" and, later, enabled him to rise to the full measure of the demand made upon his abilities, either upon the stump or in the Presidential chair, whether in dealing with questions of international policy or protecting the life of the republic. They enabled him, while keeping in touch with "the plain, common people," to be a leader of men.

No one who ever heard Mr. Lincoln upon the stump or in the delivery of his more important public utterances could fail to be impressed by his earnestness and the conviction that he spoke from a heart and a conscience which impelled him, first of all, to seek to be right.

It was my privilege to hear probably the most historic speech of his life—that known as the "house divided against itself" speech—delivered in Springfield on the evening of June 11, 1858. I have a vivid recollection of his appearance on that historic evening, in the old Hall of Representatives in Springfield, when he startled his friends and foes alike by the utterance of truths which were confirmed, a few weeks later, by the inexorable logic of events, in which he was the chief instrument. I remember the deliberation and emphasis with which he spoke, as if he realized the full weight of the startling conclusions to which his unerring logic had led him. Less than seven years later I saw his lifeless form lying in state almost on the identical spot on which he stood when he delivered that historical address—a victim of the demon of slavery at the hands of one of its fanatical devotees, yet the victor in the face of death itself and the savior of the republic.

PAUL KELLY.

KNOWN FOR HIS TRUTH.

I lived in the same block with Mr. Lincoln, he at one end and I at the other, for a long time. I never was so surprised over anything in my life as his nomination for the Presidency. It had seemed impossible to me in the contest before the convention that so honest a man as Mr. Lincoln could be nominated. I knew that he would have cut off his right arm rather than say anything that was not true.

GEORGE N. BLACK.

Chicago Tribune
2/12/1920

MUSTY RECORDS DISCLOSE NEW STORY OF LINCOLN'S HONESTY, HAD POST OFFICE MONEY READY

1123

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12.—A musty volume in the archives of the post office department in which is recorded the appointment of Abraham Lincoln as postmaster at New Salem, Sangamon county, Illinois, May 7, 1833, recalls on his birthday anniversary today, an interesting story of his postmastership which is said to be a tradition of the service.

As related in a memorandum made public by the department, it was several years after the post office at New Salem had been closed in 1839, that one of the special agents then assigned to that duty called on Lincoln, then a struggling young lawyer, of 27, to close up finally the accounts of the office. The former postmaster in accordance with departmental routine had waited for the agent's visit. The latter, according to the story, presented Lincoln with a statement showing a balance due the government from the post office amounting to about \$17.

"Lincoln" as the memorandum

relates the story, "responded by rising from his chair, crossing his office to an old trunk in the corner and taking from it a cotton rag tied with a string. Untying it, he produced the exact amount of money demanded by the post office agent, indicating that he had held the sum intact and untouched ever since his retirement. "I never use any man's money but my own" he ejaculated.

NEW STORIES OF HONEST ABE GRIP 350 FOR 2 HOURS

Only Living Delegate, 86, Tells of Nomination.

(Picture on back page.)

For nearly two hours yesterday 350 persons gathered in the rooms of the Chicago Historical society listened intently to a Chicago story of sixty-four years ago. It was the "true story of Lincoln's nomination for the presidency," as told by Addison Procter, the only surviving delegate to the Republican convention of 1860 in Chicago's famous "wigwam." And after Mr. Procter had finished this and other stories of Lincoln his audience clustered about him, vying for a chance to get a word with him.

The occasion was the historical society's formal observance of Lincoln's 115th birthday anniversary. In the audience were several persons who had been privileged to attend the 1860 convention. Among these were Miss Katherine D. Arnold, Sidney C. Eastman, Frederick B. Tuttle, Henry E. Hamilton, Nelson Thomasson, William H. Bush, and Dr. O. L. Schmidt, president of the historical society.

Mr. Procter, who is 86 years old, and a resident of St. Joseph, Mich., is visiting his grandson in Chicago.

True Story of Lincoln.

"I've never seen the true story of Lincoln's nomination in any of our histories," he said in beginning his talk, "but I can remember every detail of it.

"I was one of six delegates from Kansas. We came ready to support Senator William H. Seward of New York, as did most every one. Managing Seward's campaign was Thurlow Weed, and no political boss of later years could touch Thurlow when it came to putting things over. He was a wonder. I remember when he called on us—one introduction was enough for him; after that he knew every one by first name.

"Seward's nomination seemed certain. Under Weed's dominance, the convention took only a day and a half for preliminary business. On the night of the second day the backroom conferences began.

Border States Held Key.

"First Gov. Andrews of Massachusetts came to see us. Then came Weed, George William Curtis, Gov. Andy Curtin of Pennsylvania, Gov. Blair of Michigan, Gov. Kirkwood of Iowa, Gov. Lane of Indiana, and dozens of others. Gradually it became apparent that the border states—between the north and the south—held the balance of power. They kept telling every one they wanted a nominee among them—one who understood them. In return they would send men to the union army, if and fight secession. They did both.

the night Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune joined the

conference. 'What do you say to Abe Lincoln?' we asked.

"Well, boys," he answered, 'Lincoln is a pretty adroit politician. He has lots of friends here who see something in him the rest of us haven't seen. Trouble is, he has no experience. We face a crisis. We want a man of experience.'

Vermont Starts Break.

"Then delegates began leaning toward the border states.

"If there is one spark of unionism left in the south, let's hold it," they said. Some one remarked, 'But that would mean we must nominate Lincoln.' 'And what of it?' was the answer.

"Well, on the first ballot Lincoln had only 80 out of 466 votes. Seward had only fifty fewer than he needed to win the nomination.

"Vermont broke away first, swinging to Abe. Then came Pennsylvania and then Indiana. On the third ballot Lincoln needed only three or four votes to win. As the result of this ballot was about to be given, Ohio announced it had switched four votes from Seward to Lincoln—and that nominated him."

Honesty Greatest Virtue.

Mr. Procter looked on honesty as Lincoln's greatest attribute.

"I remember when I was in the Indian department," he said. "There was quite an army stationed in the west, for it was at the time of the Cheroke troubles. Now, there were graft and crookedness in those days just as today. It developed that the soldiers would be sent out every day or two to round up cattle and slaughter them. Then the carcasses would be turned over to a private contractor

and he would sell the meat to the army. Lincoln knew that couldn't go on. He relieved the general in command.

"The general was a brave man and a good fighter. His friends rallied around him. Some time later a senator went to Lincoln with numerous petitions.

"As he started to undo the petitions, Lincoln said:

"You needn't undo them, senator. I investigated thoroughly. The general was not honest. If you had a petition from every man in the United States I would still refuse even to see them. Good day."

City Gets Rare Relics.

Preceding Mr. Procter, Frank G. Logan formally presented the Historical society with many rare relics related to the lives of Lincoln and John Brown, thus making the Chicago institution's Lincoln collection one of the most notable in the country. The gray shawl which Lincoln wore from Springfield to New York when he made his famous Cooper Union speech, a worn whittling knife, a lock of hair, and a black stock were among the Lincoln treasures.

In tendering these Mr. Logan apostrophized the Emancipator as follows:

"Great son of Illinois, great in nobility of character, common sense, tenderness of heart, power of expression—these are but the trappings you wore while performing immortal deeds."

Elsewhere in the city, particularly from pulpits, tribute was paid to the memory of Lincoln yesterday.

The Historical society, which is at 632 North Dearborn street, will as usual hold a Lincoln day "open house" for children from 9 to 5 o'clock.

Chicago Daily Tribune 2-11-24

Lincoln's Birthday: "Honesty"

By Rev. Marion G. Gosselink

Honest in the sight of all men.

(Rom. 12:17.)

I knew a minister about whom one of my college professors said, "He is so honest that when he opens his mouth you can look down into his heart."

Such a man was Abraham Lincoln. That is why they named him "Honest Abe."

Many stories are told to illustrate that great virtue of his.

As a boy he was very eager to study and learn, and books were scarce in the part of the country where he lived. He borrowed a copy of the *Life of Washington* from a neighbor. At night he put it between the logs of his bedroom wall. It rained and the book was ruined. He felt very badly about this and went to his neighbor and explained that his neglect had caused it. Not having money to pay for the damage, he offered to "work out" the price of the book. So for two days he "pulled fodder" to make it right.

When he clerked in a store in Salem, Illinois, he was known for his honesty. One afternoon a woman came in to buy a bill of goods amounting to two dollars, six and a quarter cents. When she left, Lincoln added the bill again, to make sure that it was correct, and found that he had charged

her six and a quarter cents too much. At night, when he had closed the store, he walked three miles to return the overcharge, and went home happy.

At another time a woman ordered half a pound of tea. Lincoln weighed it correctly, as he thought, and the customer departed. It was closing time, and Abe went home. The next morning, when he came to sweep out, he noticed a four-ounce weight on the scale. He realized that he had made a mistake with the tea, so he weighed out four ounces more, shut the store, and took a long walk to deliver it.

No wonder that this honest, conscientious young man became our beloved President. Every one had confidence in him. They knew that he could be trusted. During the dark days of the Civil War he was just as honest and conscientious as he was in the store when he was a young man.

We sometimes hear this proverb quoted, "Honesty is the best policy," but in the life of our martyred President, we can see that, "Honesty is the only policy."

Some one has also said, "An honest man is the noblest work of God." We can say that Abraham Lincoln was a noble man of God.

He was honest in the sight of all men. Let us follow his example, remembering Jesus, about whom Peter said, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

Let us also heed the advice of David, "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile. — *Presbyterian.*"

William Examiner

2 - 1 - '34

The Boy Called "Honest Abe"

By Orin Crooker

THE more one knows about the boyhood of Abraham Lincoln the more wonderful it seems that he ever could have overcome the many handicaps he had to face. The Lincoln family was very poor. Their one-room log cabin in which Abraham was born had only a dirt floor. There was no furniture except a few stools, a crude table, and an excuse of a bed. The boy and his sister had to sleep on leaves, or brush, piled in one corner of the room.

In the Lincoln cabin there were, however, three books, one of them being a Bible belonging to the boy's mother. But there were no pencils for him to use in making his first letters; no slate or paper on which to copy his A B C's. The lad overcame both of these difficulties. He found a flat slab of wood and marked on it with a burned stick. In this way he learned to make his letters and also to spell words and to figure.

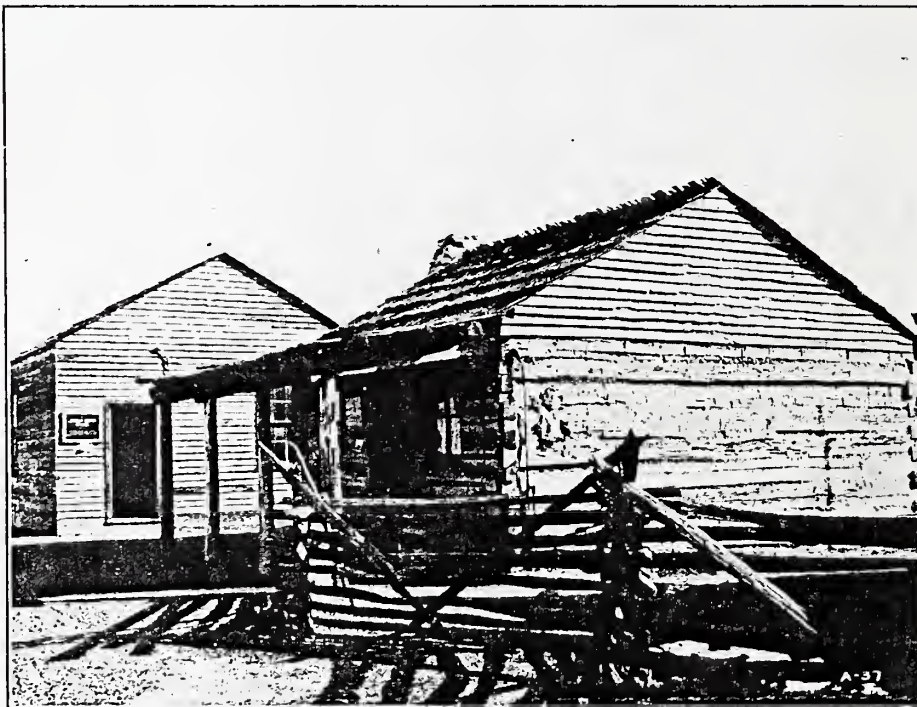
The boy's mother died when Abraham was still quite young. Later his father married

studies. He also borrowed books, whenever possible, in order to learn all he could. By this time he was a tall, lanky lad, who could do almost a man's work in splitting fence-rails.

Young Abe Lincoln was liked by everyone. He had a keen sense of humor and a great fund of witty stories. He also could recite many books of the Bible. Any speech he heard he could repeat almost word for word.

When the boy was sixteen he had grown to be six feet tall and strong as an ox. His neighbors liked to employ him since he now was able to split as many fence-rails in a day as two ordinary men. He could be trusted to do anything well, and folks began to call him "Honest Abe," a name that always clung to him. He was a homely youth. But everyone who knew young Lincoln valued him for his heart and gave no heed to his looks.

Midway of his teens, some years after the family had moved from Kentucky to Illinois, the boy became ambitious to become a lawyer. Finally he succeeded in this and became well-known. In time he was elected



Paul's Photos

AT A CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXPOSITION

The Lincoln-Berry store (left), where Abraham Lincoln clerked in New Salem, Ill., a hundred years ago, and Lincoln's boyhood home in Indiana, reproduced in the Lincoln Group in Chicago's 1933 World's Fair.

again. The new stepmother brought three children of her own to the small cabin, which was thus filled to overflowing. A larger cabin had to be built. The stepmother also brought some real furniture: chairs, beds, and tables. Abraham was proud, indeed, of these new things. They seemed very wonderful to him.

After a time a school was opened not far away, to which the boy was sent. But the teacher left in a few months, and from then on Abraham's new mother looked after his

President. Thus the boy who was born in a log cabin that even had no floor went to Washington and lived in the White House.

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

No. 384

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 17, 1936

INFORMAL PAINTINGS OF LINCOLN

At least one hundred and fifteen original photographs of Abraham Lincoln are known to be in existence and possibly many others will come to light as time goes on. These portraits have been the sources for hundreds of reproductions of various kinds which have made the profile of Lincoln known throughout the world.

Photography was confined almost wholly in Lincoln's day to the taking of picture gallery portraits and motionless objects. One had no worry of being snapped by a staff photographer while making a speech or greeting friends. All the original pictures of Lincoln are therefore very formal and reveal little of the spirit of the man.

Upon Lincoln's nomination to the presidency a swarm of portrait artists swooped down on Springfield, Illinois, for the purpose of putting Lincoln's likeness on canvas. Even then most of them had photographs of the nominee made to assist them in their work. After Lincoln's election a still larger group clamored for sittings but few dared to portray him in other than conventional pose. The result is that we have an exceptionally large number of paintings said to have been made of Abraham Lincoln from life.

During the political campaign, however, the cartoonists and caricaturists who worked with pen, pencil, charcoal, etc., were very active in reproducing Lincoln, due to the fact that they had a character who was an excellent specimen for their art.

With Lincoln's growing popularity throughout the years there has been scarcely an artist of note who has not used the method of reproduction in which he excelled to create a Lincoln. The engraver and lithographer has utilized these studies until a catalogue of different Lincoln prints most certainly would reach over 5,000.

There is one field, rich in possibilities, which has been sadly neglected, especially by the portrait painter. It will be impossible to visualize Lincoln in his many occupations and experiences until the canvas brings him back to life in episodes which reveal his outstanding human characteristics.

There is scarcely a painting available today, which might be called an informal presentation of Lincoln, which stands among the great works of American art, if Carpenter's "Lincoln and His Cabinet" be excepted. One will search a long while before he finds a single study in

oil which is not based on one of the better known photographs of the President.

The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company has in years past found a need for various informal studies of Lincoln for cover designs, outdoor advertising, etc., but in every instance has relied upon drawings to serve its purpose. The artists engaged have used the Lincoln National Life Foundation Library for source material and have also had the cooperation of its office staff in making these studies historically correct.

It is now the thought of the Company to have the researches made for some of the future studies put on canvas by recognized portrait painters. This issue of Lincoln Lore gives the reader some idea of the initial effort to present a purely interpretative picture. "Abraham Lincoln—The Honest Clerk" has just been completed by Frederick Mizen of Chicago. It is the first attempt to visualize on canvas the most striking characteristic of the martyred Lincoln.



Lincoln is represented as a clerk in a grocery store at New Salem, Illinois, in the act of weighing some produce for a customer. The scene is based on the earliest known incident which gave rise to the nickname "Honest Abe." The story goes, that Lincoln had waited on a customer late in the evening and upon opening the store the next morning noticed that he had placed the wrong weight on the balance scale in weighing the purchase of the day before. He is said to have shut up shop immediately and proceeded to deliver a few ounces of goods due the purchaser.

The short weight incident was closely followed by the short change experience which contributed still further to Lincoln's reputation for honest dealings. Clarissa Hornbuckle is said to have purchased from Abraham Lincoln a bill of goods in October, 1831, for which she paid cash. Before closing the store that evening he discovered that he had made a mistake of 6¼ cents in figuring her bill, and immediately set out for the Hornbuckle cabin three miles away and returned to his customer the amount he had overcharged her.

Lincoln's reputation for honesty followed him through both his legal and political careers; and, when he became a presidential nominee in 1860, it was the slogan "Honest Abe" which did much to win the election for him.

Abe Lincoln's Honesty

LINCOLN could not rest for an instant under the consciousness that he had, even unwittingly, defrauded anybody. On one occasion, while clerking in Offutt's store, at New Salem, Ill., he sold a woman a little bill of goods amounting in value, by the reckoning, to two dollars, six and a quarter cents. He received the money, and the woman went away. On adding the items of the bill again, to make sure of its correctness, he found that he had taken six and a quarter cents too much. It was night, and closing and locking the store, he started out on foot, a distance of two or three miles, for the house of his defrauded customer, and, delivering over to her the sum whose possession had so much troubled him, went home satisfied.

On another occasion, just as he was closing the store for the night, a woman entered, and asked for a half pound of tea. The tea was weighed out and paid for, and the store was left for the night. The next morning, Lincoln entered to begin the duties of the day, when he discovered a four-ounce weight on the scales. He saw at once that he had made a mistake, and, shutting the store, he took a long walk before breakfast to deliver the remainder of the tea.

These are very humble incidents, but they illustrate Lincoln's perfect conscientiousness—his sensitive honesty—better perhaps than if they were of greater moment.

F E B R U A R Y 1 3 , 1 9 3 7

Young Soldier

Solid Honesty of Lincoln Advocated for Politicians

Buffalo Times 4/12/38

"If politicians of today would try some of the plain, solid honesty of Abraham Lincoln, they would find it would serve their best political interests," Dr. William Mather Lewis, president of Lafayette College told members of the Lawyers Club of Buffalo at their annual Lincoln dinner in the main ball room of Hotel Lafayette last night.

"Lincoln taught us to go back to the sources," he said. "He lived in a critical time just as we do. Every period in the history of the world is a critical period, with civilization always on trial.

"Half of the trouble with America today is that our political leaders have the jitters."

William J. Flynn, president of the club, and Paul J. Batt, county attorney and secretary, spoke briefly. Guests of honor included Dr. Robert P. Bapst, superintendent of schools; Rabbi Joseph L. Fink of Temple Beth Zion and the Rev. Francis A. O'Malley, president of Canisius College.

Some 300 lawyers of Buffalo and nearby Western New York attended the dinner.

Why Lincoln Was Called "Honest Abe"

By PEARL BROWN BRANDS

THE earliest known incident which caused Abraham Lincoln to be nicknamed "Honest Abe" occurred while he was clerking in a grocery store at the little village of New Salem in Illinois.

Just before closing time one evening, Lincoln gave to a customer half a pound of tea instead of the pound which she had purchased. He made the mistake by placing the wrong weight on the balance scale.

Shortly after he opened the store the next morning, Lincoln noticed that the weight still on the balance scale was not the one he should have used in weighing the tea the evening before. Immediately he wrapped up half a pound of tea, then closed the store and walked a long distance to deliver the package.

Lincoln was twenty-two years old at the time the "short weight" incident occurred—a young man with little schooling or business experience. Only the year before he had left his parents' home to make his own way in the world.

Splitting rails and doing farm work had been his chief occupations until he had helped take a flatboat of produce down to New Orleans. During that trip he had been engaged by Denton Offutt, owner of the flatboat, to work in the store which he was opening at New Salem, a town containing about twenty log houses and one hundred persons.

The "short weight" incident soon became known to all the people of New Salem and it gave the young grocery clerk a reputation for square dealings. A "short change" incident which occurred soon afterwards contributed further to his reputation.

ACCORDING to this story, Lincoln sold to a lady named Clarissa Hornbuckle a bill of goods which amounted to \$2.37½. However, this amount was really six and one-fourth cents too much. Before closing the store that evening, young Abe discovered the error. And he walked to the Hornbuckle cabin three miles away to return the overcharge.

After the Offutt store in which Lincoln had clerked was closed because it was not successful financially, Lincoln served for a short time in the Black Hawk War. Then he returned to New Salem to be "among his friends." He was at that time without money and without a job. But because of his reputation for honesty he was able to give notes and buy a half-interest with William Berry in a store in the little village.

The man who sold his interest in the store to Lincoln said of the deal: "I believed he (Lincoln) was thoroughly honest, and that impression was so strong in me I accepted his note in payment of the whole. He had no money, but I would have advanced him still more had he asked for it."

When the partners could not meet their financial obligations in connection with the store debts, they sold out to the Trent Brothers, accepting notes in payment. However, the Trent Brothers disappeared about the time they were supposed to pay their notes. Then creditors seized the few groceries left in the store and closed its doors. Just at that time, William Berry died. Thus Lincoln was left to face the situation alone. He could take upon himself responsibility for all the debts incurred by the store, or he could divide the responsibility of the debts and so avoid paying all of them. What he did was to promise to pay all the creditors of the store in full if given sufficient time. And he actually did pay them, even though it took him *seventeen* years to do it. The debt amounted to eleven hundred dollars—a large sum at that time in New Salem, where town lots were selling for only ten dollars each and skilled labor was paid only fifty cents a day.

Because Lincoln took upon himself the responsibility of all the debts of the Lincoln-Berry store, his reputation as "Honest Abe" increased. And this nickname was to be still more firmly established.

Lincoln was postmaster at New Salem from 1833 until 1836. When the post office was closed in 1836 on account of lack of business, Lincoln had seventeen dollars which was due the government from postal receipts. However, the government agent did not come until three years later to collect the money from Lincoln. He found Lincoln in his new law office in Springfield. As soon as the agent told why he had come, Lincoln walked over to a small trunk and took from it a package containing the very coins that he had received from postal receipts at New Salem. From 1836 until 1839 Lincoln had never

touched the money although at times he had been terribly poor. "I promised my mother before she died that I would never take a cent of money that did not belong to me," he told his law partner. "This money did not belong to me, and I could not touch it without breaking this promise."

When Man Can Put Love First

By ESTHER FRESHMAN

When man can put love first,
And give with generous hand,
When he can tolerate the other's view—
Then peace can thrive in every land.

Lincoln Won Nickname While Clerk in Grocery

Abraham Lincoln won his nickname of "Honest Abe" as a grocer's clerk in Salem, Ill.

He was waiting on a customer late one evening, weighed out half a pound of tea, and gave the customer the merchandise. Next morning, when he opened the store, he noticed that he had placed a four-ounce weight on the scale instead of an eight-ounce weight. The story goes that he shut up shop immediately and proceeded to deliver the amount of tea due.

Shortly after that he had another experience that added further to his reputation for fair dealing. In settling a bill he made an error of six cents. He discovered the error that evening. He walked four miles that night to make good the overcharge.

Lincoln's career as a grocer began in 1831. The flatboat on which he was sailing down the Sangamon River got stuck on a dam at Old Salem, Ill. Lincoln liked the town and decided to stay there. He be-

came the clerk in a store opened by Denton Offut.

For a time the store prospered, due to Lincoln's popularity. Politics soon absorbed the young Lincoln, however. Along came the Indian wars, and he served as captain of the local infantry. On his return he ran for the Illinois Assembly, but was defeated.

He then went back into the grocery business as a partner of William F. Berry. The firm of Lincoln & Berry absorbed three of the four stores in the town and was soon doing most of the town's grocery business.

However, Lincoln's partner was a failure as a business man, and Lincoln himself had little interest in selling food.

Before long the stock was gone. There was no money for new merchandise. The partners sold the store, on notes. But the purchaser absconded, Berry died, and Lincoln had paid off all the debts. Lincoln was left with a large indebtedness.

him an opportunity to read the newspapers and their accounts of the exciting debates between Webster and Hayne and many others on the questions of slavery and secession. Mail came only once a week, and he carried it around in his hat until it was called for.

The business continued to ebb, and finally it was sold to the Trent brothers, who offered promissory notes in payment. Berry drank himself to death. The Trent brothers left town for parts unknown, without paying their notes; and Lincoln remained with the store's debts as well as his own. He might have slipped quietly away, as many another bankrupt has done. But he thought it all through and decided to stay. He did not know that it would take him twenty years to make the full payment. But he did feel that he must pay these debts, every dollar of them.

Replacet from a people
Persevering in Honesty

LINCOLN'S twenty-fourth year was a dark one. The firm of Berry and Lincoln had begun to fail. Berry used liquor, and Lincoln was neither a good salesman nor a successful collector. Some days he closed the store and wandered down to the river to watch his fisherman friend, Jack Kelso, and listen to him recite Shakespeare. At night and before breakfast, Lincoln would read history, poetry, fiction, essays—anything he could lay his hands on.

As a result, though his education enlarged, his meager income contracted. His debts piled up. They worried him sick. He took on odd jobs, splitting rails or helping in harvest fields and sawmills. Money was scarce and wages low; men usually received as pay deer-skins, potatoes, or meat. His debts mounted higher. He took on the job of postmaster, partly because nobody else desired it (because of the insignificant pay), and partly because it gave

ause.

Lincoln Gained 'Honest Abe' Title After Death, View

CHICAGO—(P)—Abraham Lincoln's famous soubriquet, "Honest Abe," was put in print only after his death, University of Chicago research workers disclosed today.

Lincoln's friends used the term in conversation but the first known printed reference to it appeared in 1865 after the president's assassination.

The reference was found by researchers engaged in compiling the dictionary of American English at the university. The first "Honest Abe" quotation listed by the dictionary was "all about the country people began to ask about this 'Honest Abe Lincoln'".

The quotation was found in Albert D. Richardson's 8-volume work, "The Secret Service, the Field; the Dungeon, and the Escape."

2-12-41

*Kr. - Lincoln News
Albany (N.Y.)
2/12/41*

Abe Became 'Honest Abe' After Death

Chicago — (AP) — Abraham Lincoln's famous soubriquet, "Honest Abe," was put in print only after his death, University of Chicago research workers disclosed today.

Lincoln's friends used the term in conversation, but the first known printed reference to it appeared in 1865, after the President's assassination.

The reference was found by researchers engaged in compiling the dictionary of American English at the university. The first "Honest Abe" quotation listed by the dictionary was: "All about the country people began to ask about this 'Honest Abe Lincoln'."

The quotation was found in Albert D. Richardson's eight-volume work, "The Secret Service, the Field; the Dungeon, and the Escape."

Lincoln's Honesty Acquired

By GARRY C. MYERS, Ph. D.

It is not easy to be a good step-mother. You and I have seen some who are really wonderful and we admire them. Abe Lincoln's step-mother was one.

At the age of eight Abe Lincoln's mother died. His father, Tom Lincoln, about two years later, leaving Abe and his sister Sarah alone for several weeks, walked over a hundred miles back to Kentucky where he had grown up, and married Sarah Bush Johnson, whose husband had died a few years before, leaving her with three children. No one knew how much these children contributed toward the personality and education of Abe Lincoln—undoubtedly a great deal.

Tom Lincoln did not walk back home. Four horses drew them along with considerable furniture. "Here's your mammy," said Tom Lincoln to Abe and Sarah. The new Mrs. Lincoln took the corn husks Abe had been sleeping on, piled them in the yard and said they would be good for a pig pen later; and Abe was given a feather pillow and feather mattress.

The Proposal

When Tom Lincoln proposed to the widow he got quickly to the point. "I have no wife and you no husband. I came a-purpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal and you knowed me from a boy. I have no time to lose and if you are willin', let it be done."

She replied, "I got debts." He asked her for a list of these debts, paid them, then bought a license.

At about the age of 14, Abe borrowed a book from Josiah Crawford. The book was badly soiled one night by the rain that beat through the cracks of the cabin. Abe went to the owner and volunteered to work in order to pay for the book.

Honest Abe

When he was 20, Lincoln kept a store, and he discovered one evening that a woman had paid him six cents too much. That night he walked six miles to pay back the six cents to the woman, earning the title "Honest Abe." No university degree could equal that in value. Let parents lead children to want to be honest when they don't have to.

Of the sense of humor of Lincoln's second mother, Carl Sandburg writes: "His step-mother told him she didn't mind his bringing dirt into the house on his feet; she could scour the floor; but she asked him to keep his head washed or he'd be rubbing the dirt on her white-washed rafters. He put barefoot boys to wading in a mud puddle near the horse trough, picked them up one by one, carried them to the house upside down and walked their muddy feet across the ceiling. The mother came in, laughed an hour at the foot tracks, told Abe he ought to be spanked—and he cleaned the ceiling so it looked new." Have you even seen more commendable behavior in any parent?

She understood the adolescent boy as few parents do. "If he broke out laughing when others saw nothing to laugh 'at, she let it pass as a sign of his thoughts working their own way. So far as she was concerned he had a right to do unaccountable things."

She understood and so did he. Of Abe she said in later years: "He never spoke to me a cross word in his life since we lived together."

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 697

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 17, 1942

THE SOBRIQUET—"HONEST ABE"

Some weeks ago there appeared a widely distributed article, released through the Associated Press, claiming that "the famous sobriquet 'Honest Abe' was put in print only after his death." The statement was given some credence due to the fact that the discovery originated with "University of Chicago Research Workers who were engaged in compiling the Dictionary of American English." The press dispatch states that Lincoln's friends used the term in conversation but that the title did not appear in print until after April 15, 1865.

In commenting on this claim there is no attempt made to discover the earliest time that the term "Honest Abe" appeared in print as this would involve a tremendous amount of reading and searching. The purpose of this bulletin is to reveal that Lincoln was not only referred to in print as "Honest Abe" long before his death, but that the sobriquet was widely used on all types of 1860 campaign publicity; and mentioned in print as early as the Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858.

Mr. A. H. Chapman, who married a granddaughter of Abraham Lincoln's step-mother and knew the President well, was asked why he was called "Honest Abe." Chapman replied in part that in his law practice he was noted for "his unswerving honesty," and then gave this illustration to support his conclusion:

"I remember one case of his decided honest trait of character. It was a case in which he was for the defendant. Satisfied of his client's innocence, it depended mainly on one witness. That witness told on the stand under oath what Abe knew to be a lie, and no one else knew. When he arose to plead the case, he said; 'Gentlemen, I depended on this witness to clear my client. He has lied. I ask that no attention be paid his testimony. Let his words be stricken out, if my case fails, I do not wish to win in this way.' His scorn of a lie touched the jury; he laid his case before them magnificently, skilfully, masterly, and won in spite of the lie against him. From such work came his 'Honest Abe'."

There are those who believe the term "Honest Abe" originated as early as 1837 in Springfield when Lincoln settled his account with the government inspector for the money taken in while he was a postmaster. Others feel that still earlier two business transactions while he was in the store at New Salem were responsible for his nickname, as he walked some distance to reimburse a woman whom he unwittingly overcharged, and also delivered merchandise to a customer whom he learned he had given short weight.

It would appear that outside of Lincoln's circle of Illinois friends that the name "Honest Abe" had little use until the Lincoln-Douglas debates and then it was but one of several nicknames applied to Lincoln in an attempt to match the sobriquet "The Little Giant."

A reporter of the debates at Jonesboro, Illinois presented the result of the speeches in the senatorial race made by Lincoln and Douglas in the form of scoring heats in a horse race:

"'Old Abe' entered by the people 1-1-1

"'Little Doug' entered by S. A. D. 0-0-0"

Douglas was called by the opposition press "Little Dug," "Short Boy Senator," and "The Little Dodger." It might be of some interest to learn how Douglas is said to have acquired his title, "The Little Giant." The Peoria (Ill.) *Transcript*, for September 13, 1858, gives the following version:

"It is not generally known how Stephen A. Douglas received the sobriquet of 'Little Giant.' He is indebted to Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet, for first applying it to him. It was elicited during an exciting discussion in the Illinois Legislature upon the Mormon difficulties, in which Douglas cut a conspicuous figure in the defence of the saints, when their great leader, in giving vent to his unbounded admiration for Douglas called him the 'Little Giant'."

It was necessary to find some term to apply to Lincoln to set off against "Little Doug" or "The Little Giant," and while "Old Abe" seems to have struck a more popular chord, these appellations were also used on banners and news references to Mr. Lincoln: "The Giant Killer," "Long Abe," "Tall Sucker." One of the opposition papers summed up the attempt to find a name for Lincoln as follows: "Abraham alias Old Abe, alias Abe, alias Spot Lincoln."

It is the same Peoria *Transcript* of about a month later, October 18, 1858 that we have one of the early references to "Honest Abe Lincoln" in this notation with reference to the debates just past:

"We predict that Douglas, giant though he has the reputation of being, will never again consent to meet honest Abe Lincoln in joint discussion."

Apparently the general use of the term "Honest Abe" was due more directly to Lincoln's straight forward and earnest manner in presenting his arguments during the debates than to any historic episodes of his early days. By November 11, 1858 *The Chicago Daily Democrat* suggests that, "It is not only in his own state that Honest Old Abe is respected."

While the term "Honest Abe" might have been used occasionally during the debates it was in the political campaign of 1860 that it was utilized along with "The Rail Splitter" as an appellation woven into song and story about "Honest Abe of the West." The former title appeared in the *Wide Awake Vocalist*, a campaign song book published in 1860—quickly thumbing through the book these lines were observed in different songs:

"'Old Abe' he is honest and truthful.

"Honest Lincoln's our watchword.

"And visit Honest Lincoln in his western home.

"There is an old hero and they called him Honest Abe.

"Honest Old Abe is our choice.

"We're for Honest Old Abe Lincoln."

It was in the campaign of 1860 that the sobriquet "Honest Abe" was displayed to greatest advantage, especially political posters and badges carried the insignia. A political rally at Edwardsville, Illinois for July 7, 1860 used this line on a broadside, "Rally for Honest Old Abe The Workingman's Candidate." A campaign ribbon badge bore this inscription: "Peoples Badge/Lincoln/Honest Old Abe/The People's Choice." An advertisement in the August 8, 1860 issue of the *Boston Transcript* for a Lincoln campaign biography refers to "Honest Old Abe." *Harpers Weekly* for October 27, 1860 presents a cartoon with this inscription: "So you say you are well acquainted with the illustrious Abraham: Honest Old Abe—Eh?"

It is difficult to understand why any one or any group of people qualified to do historical research work could escape running into the term "Honest Abe" if at all familiar with the 1860 campaign literature. To assume that the sobriquet "Honest Abe" did not appear in print until after he was dead rather indirectly implies that possibly he was not so honest while he lived.

Lincoln Opposed Rash Promises

Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday we honor today, was a steadfast believer in keeping promises, whether in business, politics or any other relationship. To him, a promise made was a debt to be satisfied in full.

Practical man that he was, Lincoln urged that all promises be kept within the bounds of reason. He cautioned his friends not to make rash or unwise promises, lest they be called upon to perform the impossible.

Not only did Lincoln preach that principle but he constantly practiced it himself. Political success might have come to him much earlier in life had he chosen to be less scrupulous about the pledges he made. But it wasn't like Lincoln to give false assurances. His life-long policy of honesty and fairness kept him from making exaggerated statements even in the heat of ballot campaigns and amid the fury of war.

Honest Abe's insistence upon making reasonable promises, and keeping them, stands as a gleaming example to all persons in public life today.

Dime With Which Lincoln Paid Debt Is Still Prized

KENNEBUNK, Maine (AP) — To the back inside cover of a yellowed diary an old coin is sealed with wax. Beneath it is this faded notation:

"Dime A. Lincoln used to pay last bill in Springfield, Ill., before he left for Washington."

The diary belongs to Fred Rouleau, a longtime collector of Lincolniana. He told the weekly Kennebunk Star that the 1854 dime is quite likely the only coin in existence that can be traced to Abraham Lincoln's possession.

Rouleau got the dime when he bought a trunkful of old books 25 years ago.

One of the books was a diary kept by an elderly spinster, Miss Ann Walker Curtis. Her entry of Feb. 23, 1886, told of meeting Daniel Morse, a former Springfield storekeeper who had recently moved to Maine.

"Like all the others who ever knew him," the entry says of Morse, "he seemed to love Lincoln, and Lincoln's children, too, and he did not speak unkindly of his wife.

" 'Uncle Abe,' he called him. He (Lincoln) said he came to pay a trifle which he owed him — ten cents — the morning he left for Washington. I told him, said Mr. Morse, that is no matter. I haven't put it down.

" 'I have paid every other bill,' said Lincoln 'and this is the last ten cents I owe.' "

How Honest Was Abe? Rare Letter Gives Clue

A little known letter attesting to the meticulous honesty of Abraham Lincoln will be placed on exhibit Sunday in Freedom Hall at 1253 N. Harlem in Oak Park.

Lincoln scholars prize the letter as a rare discovery. E. B. Long, Civil War author and expert on Lincolniana, said that to his knowledge it has not previously been exhibited.

The letter, written by an un-

identified clerk, was corrected and signed by Lincoln. It was dated from the President's executive mansion April 5, 1861, and addressed to Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury.

Saved U.S. \$273 A Year

The letter referred to the starting date of Lincoln's salary as President. Although he was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, he stipulated that the salary should not begin until March 5.

The clerk had written that the salary be paid "the first" of each month, but Lincoln crossed out "first" and wrote "the fifth." By so specifying the date on which he apparently considered that he went to work, Lincoln saved the country \$273.97, according to Long. The President's salary then was \$25,000 a year.

What Letter Said

The letter follows:

"Dear Sir: On to-day and on the fifth of each month, please to send me a Warrant for the amount of my salary as President of the United States. Your Obt. Servt., (signed) A. Lincoln."

Corroborating the delivery of the letter, Long said, is the fact that Lincoln opened an account with Riggs & Co., Washington, on April 5, 1861, and deposited his first salary warrant there.

The letter was acquired recently through a dealer by Philip D. Long of Lake Forest, a collector of Americana and a co-founder of Freedom Hall.

Executive Mansion
April 5th 1861
Hon S. P. Chase
Secretary of the Treasury.
Dear Sir
On to-day, and on the
~~first~~ fifth of each month, please to send
me a Warrant for the amount of
my salary as President of the
United States
Yours Obt. Servt.
A. Lincoln

Letter signed by Abraham Lincoln, which will be on exhibit Sunday in Freedom Hall at 1253 N. Harlem in Oak Park.

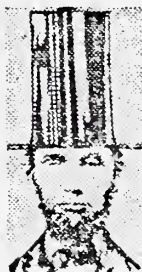
Herguth's People



Honest Abe on tax forms as a hint to Youknowwho

By Jon Hahn Chi. News - 12-5-1975

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT of Revenue, apparently hoping he'll be an inspiration, has put a black-and-white sketch of honest Abe Lincoln on the cover of the state income tax forms now being mailed out. Abe, of course, never had to pay any income taxes. He was assassinated in 1865 — 48 years before the federal income tax was adopted and 104 years before Illinois began collecting its income tax.



BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
STATE OF
ILLINOIS

Illinois
Department
of Revenue

1975
State Income
Tax Form
IL-1040

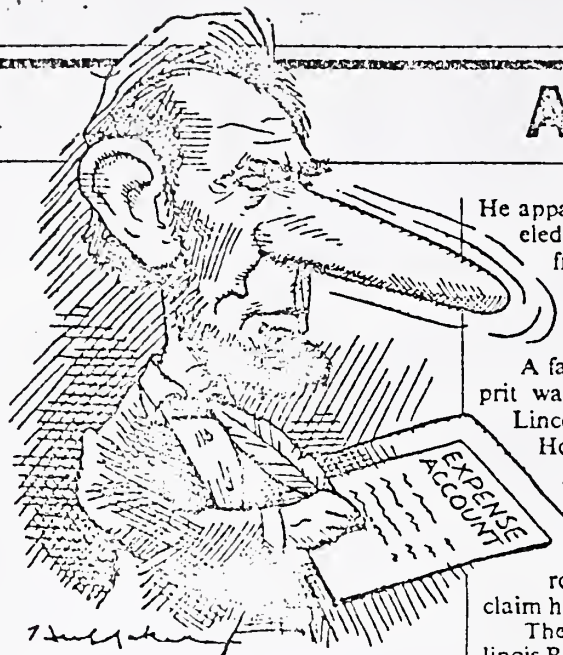
You can SPEED YOUR REFUND

by using Page **7**

and this check list:

- ☐ Double check your SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.
- ☐ SIGN your return.
- ☐ Include your W-2 statement.
- ☐ Use the enclosed PRE-ADDRESSED envelope.
- ☐ MAIL TODAY TO:
Illinois Department of Revenue
P. O. Box 3386
Springfield, Ill. 62726
- ☐ Call us TOLL-FREE if you have questions:
in Cook County, 641-2150; elsewhere in
Illinois, 800-252-8972.

Americana



He apparently claimed that he had traveled a total of 3,252 miles round trip from Washington, nearly double the actual mileage, producing a reimbursement of \$2,601 for two trips home.

A familiar ploy, perhaps, but the culprit was none other than Honest Abe Lincoln, who served one term in the House from 1847 to 1849. And he got away with it. The House Committee on Mileage specified that Congressmen could return home by "the most usual route," thus allowing Lincoln to claim he took the long way home.

The accuser in this case is another Illinois Republican, Rep. Paul Findley, who has just written a book about Lincoln's years in Congress. He discovered the details of Lincoln's padded expense account in muckraking stories written at the time by Horace ("Go West, young man!") Greeley of the New York *Tribune*. Findley is less than outraged by Honest Abe's exaggerations. He points out that the future President only earned \$4 a day for his service in the House.

Dishonest Abe

The Congressman from Illinois felt strapped. The pay and perquisites seemed inadequate for duties so important to the health of the Republic. Worse, he had to travel home each year to visit his constituents, and the allowance was a meager 40¢ a mile. What did he do? He padded his expense account, of course.

Happy Birthday!

The declaration of war was one of those "comic" greeting cards. Over the years, the war escalated. Sam Matar, a car dealer in Monterey, Calif., shipped off 25 such cards to his brother John, making fun of John's being seven years older. Sam got back 50 cards making fun of his weight.

Sam hired two models in bikinis to stroll into the Chicago printing plant where John worked to sing him a happy birthday. Belly dancers appeared at Sam's auto business to perform. A plane hired by Sam streamed greetings past John's

house. A high school band hired by John played *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*. An elephant was delivered to John's home.

Sam shipped a 4,000-lb. "Pet Rock" to John. John returned with ten tons of happy birthday pebbles and a message: "The 'Pet Rock' was pregnant. Now you take care of the kids." Two weeks ago, 4,000 lbs. of manure were dumped on John's lawn, courtesy of Sam. Said the accompanying sign: THE BABY ROCKS YOU SENT WERE NOT HOUSEBROKEN.

Sam's 33rd birthday is not until Feb. 7, but John is already thinking hard. Says Sam: "The neighbors think we're both kind of weird."

Support Your Local Police

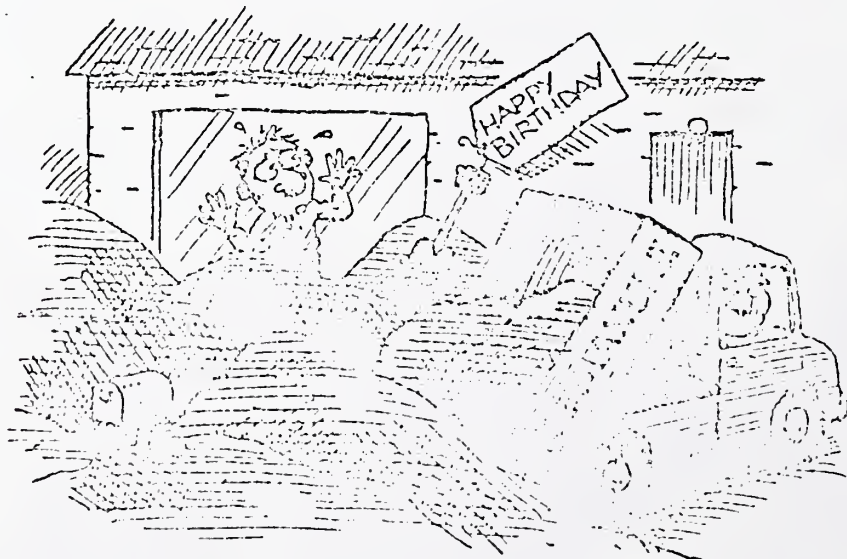
An ounce of marijuana used to cost \$5 in Marlow, Okla., and when police were trying to catch a dealer, they just dipped into their own pockets to make the buy. Like everything else, the price of grass is growing. It is \$30 an ounce these days, and that is a lot of petty cash for officers who earn \$636 a month. Their solution: a fund-raising drive to provide a \$1,500 Special Police Fund from which to buy narcotics and pay informants. So far businesses, churches and citizens of Marlow have chipped in \$1,000. Last week, using some of their new cash, police paid off an informer, then arrested a suspected dealer and confiscated \$2,500 worth of narcotics. Proving once again, as St. Paul observed, that charity rejoiceth not in iniquity.



Kind of Crooked

"The whole object of direct mail is to maximize personalization, and this machine does just that." Thus did William Ratigan, a top deputy to direct-mail political Fund Raiser Richard Viguerie, explain a little device that seems to have arrived on the merchandising scene. Viguerie's organization sends out 80 million letters a year, mostly on behalf of conservative politicians and organizations. Since people are more likely to respond to mail that has been prepared by hand, Ratigan said, a machine was used to paste stamps on the envelopes. To add to the verisimilitude, the device even sticks the stamps on slightly crooked.

Well, if too many people hear that the crooked stamps come not from a dedicated volunteer's weary hand but from a dedicated robot, the purpose of the exercise is defeated. Later, Ratigan reconsidered. He declared that the machine did not exist, but did concede that the stamps are deliberately pasted on askew. That personal touch!



Action time

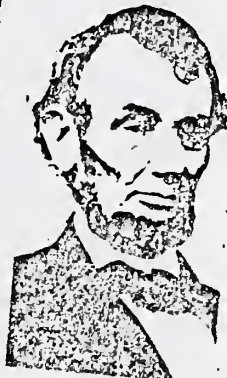
Editor: Thomas H. Sheridan
Staff: Charles McWhinnie, Bill Conniff, Roy Smith

Q. My boys and I are into model trains. Our setup is pretty good, too, but there's one thing that would make it even better: a record or tape of Amtrak's current advertising jingle.

A. Amtrak came through with a cassette of it's "America's Getting into Training" theme, but with a string attached: If any of your friends also want the ditty, please let them copy yours. Amtrak doesn't have enough money to get America into training and the model railroaders into cassettes, too.

Q. You can't discuss politics without starting an argument. I mentioned this country's finest president, Abraham Lincoln, and even that provoked a debate. My friend said as a lawyer, Lincoln was a crook and had arranged a few shady Chicago lakefront land deals. He said a magazine told the real story on our 16th President. How can I defend Abe or (gulp) is my buddy right? R.W.

A. Dishonest Abe? Not so, says James T. Hickey, curator of the Lincoln collection of the Illinois State Historical Society in Springfield. Hickey provided you with a detailed list of every case, most quite minute, concerning Lincoln and land deals. "Lincoln never owned any land on the lakefront in Chicago. [Your friend may have referred to] Lincoln representing William S. Johnston vs. William Jones and Sylvester Marsh in the U.S. Court in Chicago over title to land north of the Chicago River, known as the 'Sandbar Case.' Lincoln was involved in the case from March 14 until April 4, 1860, when the jury found in favor of Lincoln's client. On his return to Springfield the next day, he deposited his fee of \$325, hardly a large sum for an important case. Lincoln's life was so well documented that if he was involved in any other land deals we would certainly now about them now." For those who like to attack heroes, there is a critical book on Lincoln written by ultraconservative University of Dallas professor Melvin Bradford. But Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), also a Lincoln author, has called Bradford's charges preposterous.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Tight-lipped Abe Lincoln too honest

By ROBERT HERTZBERG
Staff Writer

Presidents come and go, and their reputations are often altered by information that emerges after their deaths. In January, for example, it was revealed that Franklin D. Roosevelt used a concealed device to record news conferences and private conversations in the Oval Office.

Three weeks later, the John F. Kennedy Library in Cambridge, Mass., announced that Kennedy, too, recorded conversations with people without their knowledge or approval.

"I sort of ignore the moral questions and want to know what they (the presidents) said," admitted Mark Neely, who has a Ph.D. in history from Yale. "The only thing I can think of is how much I would give if there were even a minute of tape with Abraham Lincoln's voice on it."

Neely, director of the Lincoln Library and Museum in Fort Wayne, said he believes Lincoln would have been too honest to record conversa-

The Lincoln Library and Museum, in the new annex of the Lincoln Life Building at 1300 S. Clinton St., is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday. The museum has nearly 6,000 portraits of Lincoln.

tions secretly even if it had been possible in his day. He also doubts whether anything could come out at this late date that would affect Lincoln's reputation as Roosevelt's and Kennedy's tapes might affect theirs.

"Lincoln was a famous man from the day he died," Neely said, "and people have been collecting Lincolniana really from April 16, 1865. That means not only there have been a lot of people searching but that also

tends to pull the supplies out of the attic. You wouldn't think anything of monumental proportions could have survived that scrutiny. For example the draft of the Emancipation Proclamation — that sold for \$3,000 while he was still alive. Spiro Agnew's papers appear to be so inconsequential that no one's even bothering to catalogue them. Nobody cares. In Lincoln's case, everybody has cared so long that I find it highly doubtful there could be anything that would make a significant dent."

Lincoln, Neely said, did not even keep records for history. Not only are there no tapes, there are no letter books either. What scholars know of him they know largely through the testimony of his friends and contemporaries — and Lincoln was "the most shut-mouthed man," his law partner, William Herndon, once said.

"Different things matter to different people," Neely said when asked what skeletons might emerge from the closet in a Lincoln tape. "For ex-

to record conversation



STAFF PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN MUSSEY JR.

ample, there would be people who would be shocked if it turned out he told risqué stories — smutty jokes. Did he tell them or didn't he? We know good and well that many of his friends did; there are letters in which

his friends tell him smutty stories. But the record on him is pretty silent."

"Then I suppose the real dynamite thing would be what are Lincoln's opinions on race when he is not in public. It would be interesting to know if in private he spoke about race differently from the way he did in his speeches and letters. I personally don't think he did. But if it went one way or the other, that would affect his reputation."

Ironically, it was another president's tapes — Richard Nixon's — that helped Lincoln regain his reputation, which plummeted about 1968. The reason Lincoln lost popularity at that time, according to Neely, is that American blacks were disappointed with civil rights progress.

"The Watergate crisis pulled Lincoln right out of it," Neely said. "People were shocked. When they were floundering about, wondering 'Is there any model of rectitude left?' they said, 'Sure, there's Honest Abe.'"

Living/Leisure

Lincoln's legendary honesty & integrity

By

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

One of Abraham Lincoln's most admirable qualities was his fervent desire to attain excellence of mind and character. This nation's 16th president sought to improve himself morally, spiritually and intellectually not only to achieve his ideal of "the good man," but also so he could better serve his fellow man.

One story about Lincoln's honesty provides an important insight into the kind of man he was. Once when he was working as a clerk, he sold a woman some goods, which amounted to two dollars and six and a quarter cents. Upon checking his addition at the end of the day, he discovered that he had overcharged the woman by six and a quarter cents. Some clerks would have put the money aside to give to the woman if and when she returned; others would have pocketed the money, and have conveniently forgotten the incident. Lincoln, however, chose to walk two or three miles through the night to the woman's home to return it.

This nation's 16th president also displayed moral and intellectual courage and integrity by his steadfast opposition to the extension of slavery and the U.S. Supreme Court's preposterous Dred Scott ruling, which denied the personhood of blacks. He also manifested courage and integrity in the manner in which he articulated, defended and persisted in his position.

During the Lincoln-Douglas debates, for example, Lincoln sharply rebuked the U.S. Supreme Court's Chief Justice, Roger Taney, and his arguments in support of the Dred Scott decision. Lincoln quoted Justice Benjamin Curtis' dissenting opinion, which pointed out that in five of the original thirteen states — in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey and North Carolina — free Negroes had the right to vote, undoubtedly played a significant role in the ratification of the Constitution, and most assuredly were included in

the preamble, "We the People."

Regarding blacks and the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln observed that those who signed the document did not intend "to declare all men equal in all respects." To be sure, said Lincoln, human beings are not equal in size, color, intellectual capabilities, moral development or social capacity. But, Lincoln firmly insisted, the signers of the Declaration were united and correct in their belief that all men — black and white — are equal in their inalienable and God-given rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. "This they said," observed Lincoln, "and this they meant."

THE POWER WITHIN

3

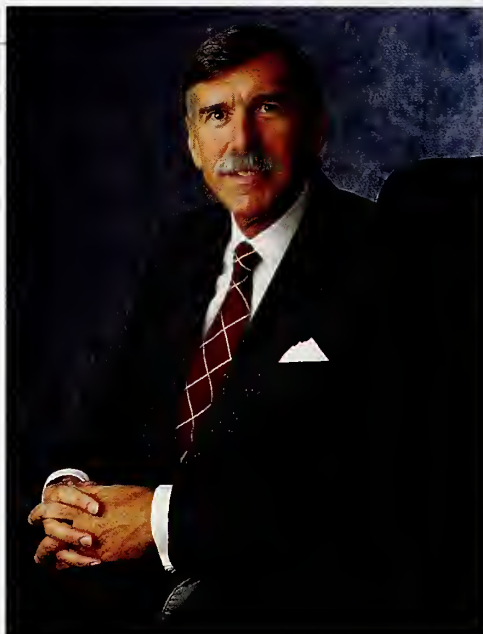
This month, the United States honors two of its presidents. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln set new standards of decency and courage, leaving us with valuable lessons on how to lead lives of integrity.

Time has a way of scrutinizing our heroes. Some reveal their true colors in the sharp light of history, while others become even more brilliant. Through the years, the reputations and accomplishments of the United States' first and 16th presidents have stood the test of time. Even today, these remarkable individuals can teach us a great deal about living lives of integrity and compassion.

As the "Father of our Country," George Washington proved a resourceful and dignified leader when the Continental Army battled for independence. But even more significant, Washington demonstrated deep wisdom and skillful diplomacy when the battles moved to fronts both philosophical and political. This gentleman farmer held the reins of a nation, guiding and serving as the unifying force in the creation of America. His first act as president—urging the adoption of the Bill of Rights—demonstrated keen judgment and a strong commitment to individual freedoms.

Abraham Lincoln became president when forces once again threatened to destroy the union. His efforts to keep the states united bridged great political chasms. Lincoln's struggles redefined the notion of equality and led to improvements in the treatment of all people.

Lincoln's legacy is great because his achievements were incomparable. But as Walt Whitman wrote following the president's death, the strength of his character is an even greater gift to those who followed: "He leaves for America's history and biography, so far, not only its most dramatic reminiscence—he leaves, in my opinion, the greatest, best, most characteristic, artistic, moral personality."



*United Airlines Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Stephen M. Wolf*

It is Lincoln's and Washington's inner characteristics we should uphold on Presidents' Day, as well as their noble achievements. As we continue to study their accomplishments, we also can continue to learn from the inner conviction and ideals that drove them to become two of our greatest leaders. In today's world, we face many difficult challenges. It seems at times that only if we have the wisdom of Washington and the courage of Lincoln can we find acceptable ways to confront our own problems of crime, racism, pollution, and poverty.

I believe we have the resources we need. The United States is an extraordinary country. Our strengths come not just from our leadership—although that certainly plays a part—

but from the efforts of each citizen, using his or her wit and wisdom to live each day with dignity and respect for others. Within these individuals rests the heart and soul of America. As teachers, parents, business people, laborers, they confront challenges daily that would test anyone's limits. Although not holding exalted positions, they call upon the same reserves of strength, integrity, and judgment that guide our leaders.

Thomas Jefferson said, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves." I believe it is more than abundantly clear that "the people themselves" have the ability to handle that power, trusting in our leaders to do what is right, but trusting in ourselves to know what "right" really means.

Honoring George Washington and Abraham Lincoln on Presidents' Day is important. Recognizing and respecting the dignity and integrity that lies within each other is what makes us a strong and honorable nation.



3 Minutes A Day

By FATHER KELLER

Lincoln's first pay check as President saved taxpayers \$273.97.

In April, 1861, Lincoln was asked to sign a letter requesting that his salary "as President of the United States" be sent to him on the "first of each month."

With his own pen, Lincoln crossed out the word "first" and substituted "fifth." Since he had been inaugurated on March 4, 1861, he felt his annual salary of \$25,000 should start the next day, March 5.

This pen-scratch speaks volumes. It is convincing proof of how conscientious Mr. Lincoln was in his public as well as private life.

By refusing to accept pay for the first four days of March, on the grounds that he was not entitled to it, "Honest Abe" set an example for us all.

Help promote the conviction that honesty in government and in every other place can start with each of us. God will bless your efforts and you will render a much needed service.

"Blessed are they that keep judgment and do justice at all times."

(Psalm 105:3)

Help me to be scrupulously honest, O Holy Spirit, in everything that does not belong to me.

(Distributed by McNaught Syndicate Inc.)

Emulate Abe Lincoln

Feb. 12 was Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Abe worked many years to develop a talent for getting to the real essence of a matter and communicating it to others. In one situation that occurred before his involvement in politics, he inadvertently shortchanged a woman of a penny and later walked several miles to return it. This was not a "photo op"portunity but was a character indicator, for he believed that if he rationalized little things as being unimportant, it would not be long before he might be tempted to rationalize larger.

Today, some are prone to point out the failures of some of our past leaders, presumably to show they were human. Could this be rationalization of their own faults? Many believe that these examples or "stories" can motivate us to try harder, knowing all too well how easy it is to rationalize our faults as human.

Everyone talks about the lack of children's role models. Why don't we resurrect these? As another famous American leader has said, each must be judged by the strength of his character.

Robert P. Prudlow
Spencerville

FWNS 2-23-96

• *TRUTHFULNESS*

IN THE CLASSROOM

Tell the Truth

Encourage Truthfulness

Don't Cheat or Steal

Face the Facts

Don't Exaggerate

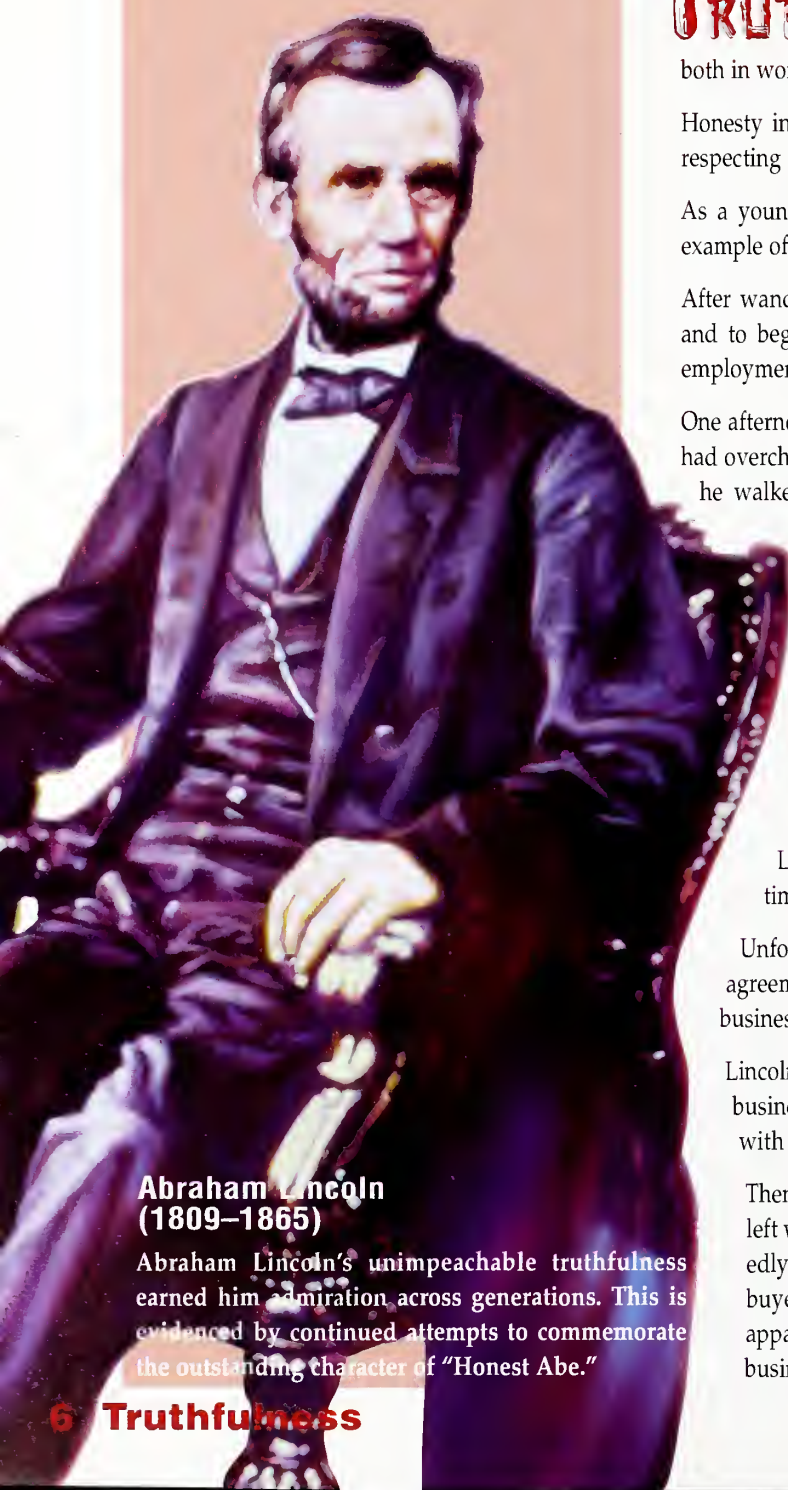


Abraham Lincoln

Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts



Abraham Lincoln



**Abraham Lincoln
(1809–1865)**

Abraham Lincoln's unimpeachable truthfulness earned him admiration across generations. This is evidenced by continued attempts to commemorate the outstanding character of "Honest Abe."

TRUTHFULNESS IS ACCURACY

both in word and in deed.

Honesty in word means speaking the facts accurately. Honesty in deed means respecting the property and rightful interests of others.

As a young shopkeeper in New Salem, Illinois, Abe Lincoln was a particular example of truthfulness in deed.

After wandering aimlessly for some years, Lincoln decided to go into business and to begin studying law in his free time. Settling in New Salem, he found employment as a shop clerk.

One afternoon, while balancing the books for the day, Lincoln discovered that he had overcharged one of his customers by about 6 cents. That evening after work, he walked several miles to the customer's house to return the overlooked change.

On another occasion, Lincoln weighed out a pound of tea for a customer and later discovered he had used the wrong size weight in the scale. Preparing another package of tea to make up the difference, he delivered what was due to the surprised customer.

Truthfulness is taking personal responsibility for accuracy in all my dealings. Stated more simply, to be truthful is to never cheat or steal, even when an "innocent oversight" affords the opportunity.

Lincoln faced perhaps the greatest test of his honesty in 1835. By that time, he had purchased a store, in partnership with William F. Berry.

Unfortunately, Lincoln and Berry fell deeply into debt. They also had disagreements about how to run the company and finally decided to sell the business and pay off their debts.

Lincoln and Berry located a buyer in 1833. However, the buyer operated the business for a time, made no profit, then disappeared—leaving the creditors with nowhere to turn but back to Lincoln and Berry.

Then in 1835, Berry died, leaving a total estate of \$60.87½. Abe Lincoln was left with debts totaling \$1,100, a weight so heavy in that day that he repeatedly referred to it as "the National Debt." Lincoln might have blamed the buyer who skipped town, or he might have blamed his partner who (as was apparent to Lincoln by this time) had not been completely honest in his business dealings. He did neither.



Abraham Lincoln's father and grandfather had moved to Kentucky in the first wave of settlers to cross the Appalachian Mountains. He was born there—on a bed of poles, cornhusks, and bearskins—and lived his early years in this log cabin.

Over the course of several years—it may have taken him as many as 12 years—Lincoln paid off the entire debt. He took responsibility for having incurred the debt, and he made certain the creditors were paid in full.

It was because of this reputation for straightforward honesty in word and, especially, in deed that the people of New Salem began to call Lincoln "Honest Abe"—an epithet that stuck with him through the rest of his life.

These seemingly insignificant examples of Lincoln's truthfulness shaped his true character. Later, when he ran for political office, he established his platform on speaking the truth. At times, he was encouraged to focus on the issues assuring audience appeal and to delete controversial remarks—even when he believed such remarks expressed the critical issue of the election. Yet he stood firm.

"[I]f it has been decreed that I should go down...then let me go down linked to the truth—let me die in the advocacy of what is just and right." Even in defeat, he stood firm. And, ultimately, he did win his place in politics—in the White House.

Classroom Quizzers

- In his early twenties, Abraham Lincoln became Postmaster of New Salem, Illinois, selling stamps for the government and delivering mail. He continued until postal service to New Salem ceased. Some years later, a government agent approached Lincoln in his law office to collect approximately \$17 in stamp money. Lincoln withdrew a rag from one of his trunks. Inside were the exact coins he had collected from selling stamps years before, coins that had never been collected by the government. Though the money was in his possession, though for years it was unaccounted for by the government, and though he was deeply in debt, Lincoln knew it was not his money. And he never used it. Discuss the importance of earning the trust of others through both words and actions.

When he was asked to make "a few appropriate remarks" at a dedication ceremony on the Gettysburg battlefield, President Lincoln delivered in about two minutes what was destined to become the "single greatest speech in American history."

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have gathered here to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have dedicated to the great task before us, the final results of their devotion. It is for us the living, the unfinished work that they have carried on, that we must carry on. It is for us the living that the great battlefields of this war are to be a living example of devotion to the cause of liberty and justice for all men. We must not allow ourselves to be divided by party lines. We must stand together as one people, united in our purpose and our faith. We must not allow ourselves to be divided by party lines. We must stand together as one people, united in our purpose and our faith. We must not allow ourselves to be divided by party lines. We must stand together as one people, united in our purpose and our faith.



Lincoln suffered numerous political defeats and overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles to win the highest office in the land in 1860—President of the United States.



In July 1862, President Lincoln signed the bill creating the Medal of Honor, to be awarded "to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action."

BIBLIOGRAPHY RESOURCES:

- Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr. et al., *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1992).
- Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1989).



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Providing Ideas in Service to Our Nation Since 1955

Footnotes

The Newsletter of FPRI's Wachman Center

Honest Abe: Abraham Lincoln and the Moral Character

by Daniel Walker Howe

June 2008

Vol. 13, No. 16

 Search

Daniel Walker Howe is Rhodes Professor of American History Emeritus at Oxford University and Professor of History Emeritus at UCLA. His books include *What Hath God Wrought* (2008 Pulitzer Prize winner) and *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. This essay is based on his presentation at the FPRI **Wachman Center's** May 17–18, 2008 history institute on **America in the Civil War Era**, held at and co-sponsored by Carthage College, Wisconsin.

Core history institute support is provided by The Annenberg Foundation; additional support for specific programs is provided by W.W. Keen Butcher, Bruce H. Hooper, John M. Templeton, Jr., the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The next history weekends: **What Students Need To Know About America's Wars, Part I: 1622–1919: A History Institute for Teachers**, July 26–27, 2008 (Wheaton, IL); and **Teaching the History of Innovation: A History Institute for Teachers**, October 18–19 (Kansas City, MO).

No story in American history has captured the popular imagination better than that of Abraham Lincoln's youth. A poor boy growing up in what was then a remote area, enduring the tragic death of his mother at an early age, confronting the realization that he had no inclination to become a farmer like his father. Abe was a thoughtful boy, independent but not rebellious, tall and strong but not a bully, sensitive but not a sissy. We like the story of a poor boy who made good. But I wonder how much longer his story will seem comprehensible to young Americans. The means by which he achieved his goals may seem foreign to twenty-first century Americans. Lincoln did not get ahead by going to the right schools, or by cultivating the right patrons, by achieving high standardized test scores, or by seizing upon a popular fad. He did not seek celebrity. What is more, not only the means but even the end itself of Lincoln's quest for self-realization may not be readily comprehensible to us anymore.^[1]

Lincoln and his contemporaries lived in a world where, since time immemorial, boys had followed in their fathers' footsteps and pursued their fathers' occupational calling. America's open society brought the new opportunity for boys to leave home—often their father's farm—and seek to find themselves, as Abraham Lincoln left Thomas Lincoln's farm and pursued a vocation more in line with his own inclinations and talents. The revolutions in transportation, commerce, and industry that the United States underwent during the nineteenth century multiplied the occupational options available. Girls as

well as boys began to have the chance to leave home, earn their own money, and enjoy a kind of personal independence they did not have in their fathers' households—at least until the women married and became part of their husbands' households. All this was exciting to the young people of Abraham Lincoln's generation, as the historian Joyce Appleby records in her wonderful book, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans*.^[2] What made it so exciting was not simply that young people had a wider variety of economic opportunities, but that they could choose what kind of person they wanted to be, and then, through conscious, serious effort, make themselves into that person they had chosen.

Abraham Lincoln was a self-made man in a way that we no longer use the term “self-made.” When we use it, we usually have in mind a businessperson, and we use it to mean they have achieved upward social mobility, specifically in financial terms. If we go back to Lincoln's time, we find the term “self-made” used in a different, much more comprehensive way, one that does not exclude success in business, but is by no means restricted to it. Lincoln's idol Henry Clay seems to have invented the expression “self-made man.”^[3] What Clay and his contemporaries meant by self-made was not the same thing as upward social mobility, nor was it confined to monetary rewards. What they had in mind was a self-conscious development of one's human potential. In 1858 Charles Seymour wrote a collection of biographical sketches entitled *Self-Made Men*. Of his sixty subjects, very few were newly rich entrepreneurs. Instead, most of them were scientists, inventors, and statesmen. They represented the kind of individuals, Seymour believed, who were making the world anew during the era of industrial revolution, geographical expansion, and knowledge explosion. (If we use the term “American Victorian” to characterize this age, it reminds us that its expansionism and dynamism were transatlantic.) For the characters in Seymour's book, the creation of their own identities had been the first step in their energetic innovation and constructive accomplishments. They had been able to remake their world because they had first made themselves.^[4] Abraham Lincoln was such a person.

Better remembered than Seymour as an author is Horatio Alger, Jr. Where Seymour wrote biographies of real people, Alger wrote inspirational fiction about poor boys who made good. Reading Alger's stories today, we are struck by the element of luck that seems to come into play: Ragged Dick saves a little boy from drowning, and the child turns out to be the son of a wealthy man who gives Dick a good job. But these turns of fortune are not what the stories are really about. They are really about the protagonist's formation of character and self-discipline. This is why young people read the stories for generations—until comparatively recently. The moral of Alger's stories is that if you make yourself into the right kind of person, you will be prepared for the luck when it comes. If Ragged Dick hadn't disciplined himself to be alert and courageous, he wouldn't have jumped in when the little boy fell off the riverboat.^[5] Abraham Lincoln's life told a similar story, if not one with a climactic single moment of moral trial. Like Horatio Alger, Lincoln determined to prepare himself for the right moment when it came along.

With no formal schooling available to him, the young Lincoln set out to shape his own character. Without the visual media of today, Lincoln developed himself through reading. Conscious as he was of the limitations of his rural environment, he might have read for escape—but he did not. Instead he read for discipline. He read not only to learn what others had thought and said, but to find out how they did it: he read in order to learn how to think and speak and act for himself. Accordingly, he read classic accounts of individual struggle: *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. He sought out books about thinking—books about geometry and grammar and the hard conundrums of free will and determinism. He read the same few books over and over, making a virtue of necessity, of course. This way, he absorbed their lessons into his very being.^[6]

Lincoln's contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson lived in America's cultural heartland, not on a still-

primitive frontier. In metropolitan Boston, in the college town of Cambridge, and within the intellectual community of Concord, Emerson preached the virtues of “self-reliance.” He said that we readers should treat books as provocation for our own thinking. He called for the emergence of independent thinkers and actors, for what he called “the American scholar.” No better example existed for Emerson’s ideal American scholar than Abraham Lincoln. After the Civil War, Emerson could have added a postscript on Lincoln to his book *Representative Men* (published in 1850) with perfect appropriateness. Indeed, Lincoln would have illustrated the self-reliant democratic leader far better than the example Emerson actually chose, Napoleon Bonaparte.^[7] When Emerson came to Springfield to give a set of lectures in 1853, Lincoln was in town, not away attending to his duties on the legal circuit. He probably heard Emerson speak on the subject of “Power” in the Old Illinois Capitol building before attending a dinner given there by the women of the First Presbyterian Church, who included his wife, Mary. Lincoln might also have heard the other two lectures Emerson gave during his stay.⁸ By this time, of course, Lincoln’s own views on reading, self-reliance, and self-realization had already been formed and acted upon.

Without having to read Emerson, Lincoln put into practice the philosophy that Emerson propounded. Among Emerson’s circle of friends this practice was known as “self-culture.” The person who was probably Emerson’s best friend, Margaret Fuller, applied the same principle to women, making use of group “conversations” with other women to bring them to a consciousness of their own potential. Countless kids on the frontier, or in city slums, have encountered a blunt question: “Do you think you’ll ever amount to anything?” Lincoln answered that challenge with more than just ambition. What he undertook was to engage in self-construction, in search of self-fulfillment.

Moral integrity occupied the core of the kind of person Lincoln made himself. Financial honesty represented one important aspect of this integrity. When his partner in a grocery business, William Berry, died in 1835, leaving behind serious debts, Lincoln worked long and hard to pay off not only his own share but Berry’s as well, going beyond his legal obligation in doing so.^[9] Lincoln carried his financial honesty into his politics as well as his personal life. As a member of the state legislature, he worked hard to get the state capital moved to Springfield. As part of this campaign, he succeeded in getting the legislature to stipulate that whatever community became the capital must contribute \$50,000 toward the cost of the public buildings to be erected; Springfield could meet this requirement, but it would force some smaller towns out of the competition. The \$50,000 was payable in three installments, and the third one fell due after the Panic of 1837 had initiated a prolonged economic downturn. Stephen Douglas, the newly elected Register of the Land Office, had recently moved to Springfield, and proposed that Springfield find a way to repudiate its obligation and let the state shoulder more of the cost of the buildings. Lincoln objected: “We have the benefit,” he is quoted as saying. “Let us stand to our obligation as men.” Money to pay the third installment was borrowed from the State Bank of Illinois and paid off over an eight-year period by leading citizens of Springfield, including Lincoln himself. The liquidated promissory note for \$16,666.67 remained on display in a Springfield bank for many years.^[10]

There was more to Lincoln’s integrity than just *financial* honesty, however. As a lawyer, Lincoln combated, both in word and deed, his profession’s reputation for dishonesty. Lincoln won his nickname “Honest Abe” (sometimes “Honest Old Abe,” though he was only in his forties at the time) while practicing law in the circuit courts of Illinois during the 1850s. Colleagues ranked him “at the head of his profession in the state” in part because of their absolute confidence that he never told a lie. In his notes for a lecture on the law, Lincoln advised his audience to dismiss from their minds the “popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest.” Honesty should be the top priority of the young when they selected an occupation. “Resolve to be honest at all events; and if, in your own judgment, you can not be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some

other occupation.”[11]

There are many examples of Lincoln’s extraordinary intellectual honesty in his political career. One of my own favorites is a speech that he gave to an agricultural society in Wisconsin in 1859. At a time when politicians routinely praised the virtues of yeomen farmers, Lincoln quite candidly informed his audience that he would *not* “flatter” them by praising the peculiar virtue of their occupation. Instead, he told them in all honesty, on the average farmers “are neither better nor worse than other people.”[12]

Lincoln’s consistent honesty when dealing with the explosive subjects of slavery and its expansion into the western territories deserves extended analysis. For present purposes I shall instead discuss another of Lincoln’s speeches illustrating the high value he placed on honesty. This speech is very little known, despite its great interest both at the time of its delivery and today. It comes from his term in Congress as Representative from the Congressional District around Springfield. It was delivered on January 12, 1848, and it constitutes a rebuttal on behalf of the opposition to President James Knox Polk’s Annual Message to Congress of December 7, 1847. (Nowadays presidents deliver these messages in person, and we call them the state of the union addresses.)

President Polk, a Jacksonian Democrat, had devoted most of his message to defending his conduct of the war against Mexico. Polk repeated his insistence that Mexico had started the war by invading the United States and, as he put it in his war message to Congress, “shedding American blood on American soil.”[13] Members of the Whig party, like Lincoln, did not accept this account. They pointed out that the area where fighting began, between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande, was in dispute between the two countries following the United States’ annexation of Texas. President Polk had sent an army, commanded by General Zachary Taylor, into the disputed area, and after repeated protests Mexico had sent an army of its own there too in response. The Mexican advance was neither unprovoked nor an unmistakable invasion of United States territory.

On December 22, when Lincoln had been in Washington only three weeks, he had assumed a leadership role among the new Whig majority in the House and had introduced a set of resolutions challenging Polk’s claim that the war began on U.S. soil. With the logical organization characteristic of him, this freshman Representative ticked off his points: The “spot” where the armed clash took place had been an acknowledged part of New Spain and Mexico since the Transcontinental Treaty of 1819, the local population recognized no allegiance to the United States and fled before Taylor’s approach, and the U.S. citizens whose blood the Mexicans shed were soldiers in an invading army. The House did not adopt Lincoln’s lucid “spot resolutions,” but on January 3 a party-line vote of 85-81 amended a resolution thanking General Taylor for his services with a statement that the war had been begun by President Polk “unnecessarily and unconstitutionally.”[14] (Of course, the Democrat-controlled Senate did not agree with the amendment.) Lincoln’s “spot” resolutions are well known. His next speech against Polk’s war management is not. But it is interesting for its invocation of the principles of honesty and conscience.

On January 12, 1848, Lincoln took up where the “spot resolutions” had left off. The Texan people’s right of revolution, to declare their independence of Mexico and join the United States, extended only to areas where they enjoyed popular support, Lincoln argued. But the people in the area southwest of the Nueces River were Mexicans who wanted their homes to remain part of Mexico. Polk’s justification for war, Lincoln indignantly proclaimed, “is, from beginning to end, the sheerest deception.” A powerful condemnation, coming from Lincoln. Honesty was just as indispensable to the historical Lincoln as to the “Honest Abe” of popular mythology. Polk should “remember he sits where Washington sat,” and tell the *truth* about the origin of the war, as, of course, Washington was famous

for always telling the truth. Lincoln declared: "As a nation *should* not, and the Almighty *will* not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion—no equivocation." Addressing the president in tones worthy of the Prophet Nathan addressing King David, Lincoln declared that Polk *must* be "deeply conscious of being in the wrong"—that he must realize "the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to Heaven against him." Not having been truthful about the beginnings of the war or its objectives, Polk can provide no leadership regarding its ending. Lincoln's manuscript of his speech reads:

It is a singular omission in this message, that it, no where intimates when the President expects the war to terminate.... [A]t the end of twenty months during which time our arms have given us the most splendid successes... this same President gives us a long message, without showing us, that *as to the end*, he himself, has, even an imaginary [sic] conception.... He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man.^[15]

Lincoln does not interpret Polk as a wicked man. He interprets him as a confused man. Why is he confused? Because he does not listen to what his conscience tells him. Lincoln is confident that Polk's conscience is the same as his own; it demands truthfulness and honesty. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lincoln believed in the universality of conscience. All our consciences are alike in content, Lincoln and Emerson agreed, but some are strong and some are weak. Conscience, like other powers, whether physical or mental, needs to be strengthened by practice. Polk had not habitually listened to his conscience and therefore now has difficulty finding and following its guidance.

The historian, alas! must agree with Lincoln about Polk's failures of conscience. As president, Polk betrayed the confidence of so many other politicians so many times that he became a byword for secrecy, double-dealing, and duplicity. For a long time Polk did not avow a plan for bringing the war to an end because he didn't want to admit that he was waging the war to conquer more territory—specifically, California. Eventually the truth came out indirectly, as knowledge of the purposes of the Polk administration generally did. In the end a faction of his own party, feeling misled and betrayed, rose in rebellion against his administration. Much to Polk's chagrin, the Whig candidate Zachary Taylor won the presidency in 1848.

The contrast between President Lincoln and President Polk is highly instructive. Despite his astonishing achievements in expanding the domain of the United States, Polk has never been a hero to the American public, never been a moral exemplar to schoolchildren. His material accomplishments have not been sufficient, in the absence of demonstrated moral integrity, to earn the coveted designation "Great President." Where Lincoln was known as "Honest Abe," James K. Polk's contemporaries nicknamed him "Polk the Mendacious."^[16]

Notes

1. ▲ The present concept of the "self-made man" has almost nothing to do with that held by Lincoln's generation, if one can judge by a study of its contemporary literary and popular uses: James Catano, *Ragged Dicks: Masculinity, Steel, and the Rhetoric of the Self-Made Man* (Carbondale, Ill., 2001).
2. ▲ (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).
3. ▲ William Craigie and James Hurlburt, *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* (Chicago, 1938-44), IV, 2065; Henry Clay, "The American System" (1832), Works, ed. Calvin Colton (New York, 1904), VII, 464.
4. ▲ Charles Seymour, *Self-Made Men* (New York, 1858). I have addressed this subject in *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), esp. 136-41.

5. ▲ Horatio Alger, Jr., *Ragged Dick and Mark the Match Boy*, intro. by Rychard Fink (New York, 1961), 208-09.
6. ▲ See Richard Carwardine, *Lincoln* (London, 2003), 4-5.
7. ▲ On Emerson's use of Napoleon, see Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 82-87.
8. ▲ Sunderine Temple and Wayne C. Temple, *Illinois' Fifth Capitol: The House that Lincoln Built and Caused to be Rebuilt* (Springfield, Ill., 1988), 117.
9. ▲ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York, 1995), 54.
10. ▲ *Ibid.*, 64; Alonzo Rothschild, "*Honest Abe*": *A Study in Integrity* (Boston, 1917), 222-23.
11. ▲ Quoted in Donald, *Lincoln*, 149.
12. ▲ "Address Before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin" (1859), *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy Basler (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-55), III, 471-82.
13. ▲ James K. Polk, War Message to Congress, May 11, 1846; and Third Annual Message, December 7, 1847, in *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, ed. James D. Richardson (Washington, 1901), IV, 437-43; 532-64.
14. ▲ Abraham Lincoln, "'Spot' Resolutions in the House of Representatives," *Collected Works*, I, 420-22. *Congressional Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 95.
15. ▲ "The War with Mexico," *Collected Works*, I, 431-42. See also Gabor Boritt, "Lincoln's Opposition to the Mexican War," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 67 (1974), 79-100; and Mark Neely, "Lincoln and the Mexican War," *Civil War History* 24 (1978), 5-24.
16. ▲ Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist* (Princeton, 1966), addresses Polk's disingenuousness in many places; particularly relevant is the description of how his deception of Benton and other Democratic senators over Texas annexation led to self-deception: pp. 217-20.

You may forward this email as you like provided that you send it in its entirety, attribute it to the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and include our web address (www.fpri.org). If you post it on a mailing list, please contact FPRI with the name, location, purpose, and number of recipients of the mailing list.

If you receive this as a forward and would like to be placed directly on our mailing lists, send email to FPRI@fpri.org. Include your name, address, and affiliation. For further information, contact Alan Luxenberg at (215) 732-3774 x105.

• **Become an FPRI member**

Copyright © 2001–2010 Foreign Policy Research Institute, All Rights Reserved.

Site developed by **Argo Potomac**

(McClure's Magazine for January.)

LINCOLN showed soon that if he was unwilling to indulge in "woolling and pulling" for amusement, he did not object to it in a case of honor. A man came into the store one day who used profane language in the presence of ladies. Lincoln asked him to stop; but the man persisted, swearing that nobody should prevent his saying what he wanted to. The women gone, the man began to abuse Lincoln so hotly that the latter finally said, coolly: "Well, if you must be whipped, I suppose I might as well whip you as any other man;" and going outdoors with the fellow, he threw him on the ground, and rubbed smartweed in his eyes until he bellowed for mercy. New Salem's sense of chivalry was touched, and enthusiasm over Lincoln increased.

His honesty excited no less admiration. Two incidents seem to have particularly impressed the community. Having discovered on one occasion that he had taken six and one-quarter cents too much from a customer, he walked three miles that evening, after his store was closed, to return the money. Again, he weighed out a half-pound of tea, as he supposed. It was night, and this was the last thing he did before closing up. On entering in the morning, he discovered a four-ounce weight on the scales. He saw his mistake, and closing up shop, hurried off to deliver the remainder of the tea.

"HONEST ABE" LINCOLN



It was while clerking for Offutt that Abraham Lincoln began to be called "Honest Abe." Many stories are told of his walking miles after shutting up the store at night, or early in the morning before opening it, to give a woman an ounce or two of tea, or a few pennies which he found to be her due.

Offutt soon failed and disappeared only to be heard of again as a horse trainer, when his former clerk had become famous. Then Lincoln worked at anything he could get to do till an opportunity offered for him to go into partnership with a young man named Berry, who drank himself to death, while Lincoln was reading a set of "Blackstone" he had found in a barrel of old rubbish. Lincoln tried to carry on the business with the incubus of a drunken partner. But, after all, the store "winked out," as its owner whimsically expressed it, leaving Lincoln with a lot of notes on his hands which he never should have paid, and which custom and public sentiment did not require him to pay. But he had agreed to take them up and the obligation, so large that he ruefully called it "The National Debt," burdened him for nearly twenty years before he had paid "the uttermost farthing" of principal and interest.

While he was storekeeping for himself he was appointed postmaster of New Salem. This office paid a very small salary, but the postmaster was allowed to read the newspapers before delivering them, which was a "perquisite" highly appreciated by the young postmaster, hungry for news and knowledge of the great world around him.

Surveying, also, was added to his labors. Being offered a chance to become deputy to the county surveyor, he procured a copy of Flint and Gibson, and, with the aid of Schoolmaster Graham, mastered the science of surveying in a few weeks. He laid out many of the towns of central Illinois, and in some villages all business closed in order that the delighted denizens could go out into the fields to help Surveyor Lincoln, in order to hear and laugh over his many quips and jokes and stories.

While Lincoln was acting as deputy surveyor a creditor, holding an old store note, seized his horse and surveying instruments and, as he could not then pay the notes, sold him out. A friend bought the necessities in and returned them to their struggling owner.

After the young storekeeper, postmaster and surveyor had become a "starving attorney" in Springfield, and the New Salem post office and even the village had gone out of existence, an officer of the government came into the office and asked for the man who had once been postmaster of New Salem, as he had a claim against that office for seventeen dollars and some odd cents. The friends who overheard the inquiry were alarmed, for they knew of the poverty and hardships Lincoln had lately passed through.

But the poor young attorney went in silence to a corner of the office, pulled out his little old trunk from under the lounge on which he slept, took out a cotton rag, opened it and counted out the exact sum required by the government, paying it over to the official in the very coins he had received years before in New Salem, and saying briefly:

"I never use anybody's money but my own."



The very coins he had received

Lincoln Called Honest Abe As Early As 1860

Springfield, Ill., Feb. 15 (AP)—Lincoln, it developed Saturday, was identified in print as "Honest Abe" as early as 1860.

University of Chicago research workers reported recently that the sobriquet had not appeared in type until after the Civil War President's assassination in 1865.

But Gov. Dwight H. Green produced a printed poster Saturday advertising a Lincoln campaign rally at Edwardsville, Ill., July 7, 1860, and urging the electorate to support "Honest Old Abe, the workingmen's candidate."

WHIG CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT LINCOLN ORDINARY BUT HONEST

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (A.P.)—To a Whig contemporary, Abraham Lincoln "was not a great man, but a commonplace individual whose outstanding trait was honesty.

Orville H. Browning, senator from Illinois during Lincoln's presidency and later a cabinet member, has left a diary covering the years from 1850 to 1881, soon to be published by the Illinois Historical Society.

Browning and Lincoln were contemporary leaders in Illinois Whig politics. Browning succeeded Douglas as senator and was secretary of interior under Andrew Johnson. He thought Lincoln less capable than Charles Seward, his secretary of state, and scarcely abler than Andrew Johnson, his successor.

The Peypasian chronicle, kept until his death in 1881, throws light on Lincoln. Although holding Lincoln's friendship dear, Browning differed with him on slavery, and believed its "abstract injustice" too little reason for its abolition.

Opposed Nomination.

He favored Judge Edwin Bates, of Missouri, independent Whig, for the presidential nomination given to Lincoln in 1860, and made no secret of his views to Lincoln:

"February 7, 1860—At night Lincoln came to my room and we had a free talk about the presidency. He thinks we may be right in supposing Mr. Bates to be the best man we can run."

After Lincoln's nomination Browning supported him reservedly: " . . . I believed before the convention and believe now that he

(Judge Bates) could have carried the entire Republican party and the old Whig party besides, and I think others are beginning to suspect the same thing, and that we have made a mistake in selection of candidates."

Against Emancipation.

At Washington, Browning was in the President's confidence until their gradually diverging slavery views parted them. Then came the emancipation proclamation and Browning sought to dissuade Lincoln from making it final, but—

"The President was fatally bent upon his course, saying that if he should refuse to issue it there would be a rebellion in the north and that a dictator would be placed over his head within a week . . . There is no hope. The proclamation will come—God grant that it may not be productive of the mischief I fear."

Of Lincoln's assassination, Browning wrote:

"He was disposed to be very lenient with the rebels . . . and to smooth the way for their return to allegiance. I thought him the best friend they had . . . This atrocity has blasted all our hopes . . . I have never feared what the rebels could do to us; I do fear what we may do to ourselves."

REMINISCENCES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN. — A correspondent, writing from Springfield, gives the following incidents in the early career of Mr. Lincoln, obtained from his law partner, Mr. Herndon:

"Mr. Lincoln came to Sangamon County in 1831. He cut the timber for a canoe at the mouth of Spring Creek, on which he floated down to Sangamon town, seven miles north-west of Springfield. In April of that year he went to New Orleans on a flat-boat, and returned the following August. He was at this time fine and noble-looking, weighed two hundred and ten pounds, was six feet three or four inches in height, and of florid complexion. Going to the town of New Salem, the judges of election being minus one clerk, and impressed with the good appearance of the young man, chose him as the clerk of election.

"Mr. Herndon said that Mr. Lincoln approached more nearly the angelic nature than any person he ever saw, women not excepted. He had, he said, more of the angel-looking eye and face than he had ever seen. Yet he was not without passions. These in Lincoln were powerful; but they were held under control by a giant will. He was, said Mr. Herndon, a great animal, but a great angel was ingrafted upon it. He had a towering ambition, but that ambition was directed to the attainment of power with which to elevate man.

"He seems to have retained very vivid impressions of his mother's virtues, and a tender sense of his obligations to her. Familiarly he once said to his partner, 'Billy, al that I am I owe to my blessed mother.'

"Because of his transparent honesty, he was taken as a clerk in a store by a man named Offutt. This Offutt reposed all confidence in him, and in no point was he deceived.

"He obtained the name of 'Honest Abe' as follows: A lady came to pay him for a dress she had purchased of him; and in computing the amount, he made it come to two dollars and thirty-seven and a half cents; whereas it was six and a half cents too much. In the evening, after business hours were over, he took the six cents to the woman and corrected the mistake. At another time, a lady came to buy a pound of tea. By mistake a half pound weight was placed in the scale. After Lincoln discovered the error, he closed the store about sunset, and took the half pound of tea with him to the lady.

"In addition to this business integrity, he was extremely humorous, sociable, and agreeable, becoming everybody's friend and nobody's enemy. By these qualities people came to know him thoroughly. He was taken into every man's house as one of his own household. From his nature, honesty, purity, &c., people termed him 'Honest Abe.'

"When he first came to Springfield, he was extremely poor, having not a shilling in his pocket, and with but a very scanty wardrobe. He would stop a while with one, and then with another, going from neighbor to neighbor, all esteeming it a favor to have him in their houses. At that time he had read well and thoroughly everything he had touched, including the Bible and Shakspeare, which were his leading books at the time of his death. He was, said Mr. Herndon, a good biblical scholar. When he was twenty-three years of age, he had read history and biography considerably, and he had mastered Burns when he was twenty-five.

"He never, while engaged in his profession, accumulated much property. He seemed not to

have had much care to gather wealth. When he did a service professionally, he would charge accordingly as he estimated the value of the work done, and not according to the standard of other men's fees. If he regarded a service worth a dollar, he charged only that, although other men might charge twenty dollars for doing the same thing.

"His strict fidelity to principle was illustrated by his partner by the following incident: He said, when Mr. Lincoln collected any money belonging to the firm, he would always take half the amount received, and fold up the other half, write upon it the word 'Billy' (the name he familiarly called his partner), and lay it away in his pocket-book. One time Mr. Herndon said to him:

"'Why do you do that? Why not take the whole of the money, and use it?'

"'Because,' said Lincoln, 'I promised my mother never to use anybody's money. Should anything happen to me, that money would be known to be yours.'

"Mr. Herndon took me into the law office where Mr. Lincoln used to sit and toil. It is plain and unpretending. Indeed, everything about the man was indicative of the simplicity of his

character. And yet, though so transparent and unassuming, he was sagacious. His friend told me that he was a man of profound policy. His neighbor, to whom I have referred, said he was a great thinker — that he was accustomed to think much on the affairs of the nation. Sometimes he would pass his friends on the street without a sign of recognition — lost in his deep musings. Again, as a neighbor approached him, he would cast up his eye, smile, and remark, 'I've been thinking,' and then proceed to unfold the subject of his thoughts.

"Assassination cast its shadow on the hearts of his friends as early as the Presidential election of 1860. Mr. Herndon told me that himself and two other friends guarded Mr. Lincoln to the polls in Springfield on that day to prevent a stiletto from being aimed at his heart. At length he fell, but not until his great work was done, and he was enthroned among the chiefest of the illustrious benefactors of humanity."

STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE

LINCOLN'S SCORN OF A LIE.

From The St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Mr. A. H. Chapman, a step-nephew by marriage of Mr. Lincoln, has this to say of him as to why he was called "Honest Abe":

"In his law practice on the Wabash Circuit he was noted for his unswerving honesty. People learned to love him ardently, devotedly, and jurors listened intently, earnestly, receptively to the sad-faced, earnest man. He was never blamed for bribery; nothing could move him when once his resolutions were formed. There was nothing scholarly in his speeches and he always rested his case on its merits, only asking for simple Western justice, and the texture of the man was such that his very ungainliness was in his favor before a pioneer jury. His face always wore a sweetened and kindly expression, never sour, and burning to win them, his tall frame swaying as a pine, made him a resistless pleader. I remember one case of his decided honest trait of character. It was a case in which he was for the defendant. Satisfied of his client's innocence, it depended mainly on one witness. That witness told on the stand under oath what Abe knew to be a lie, and no one else knew. When he arose to plead the case, he said:

"Gentlemen, I depended on this witness to clear my client. He has lied. I ask that no attention be paid his testimony. Let his words be stricken out, if my case falls. I do not wish to win in this way."

"His scorn of a lie touched the jury; he laid his case before them magnificently, skilfully, masterly, and won in spite of the lie against him. From such work came his 'Honest Abe.' I never knew Abe to have a coat to fit him, all were ill-fitting, but underneath was a big, hot heart that could adjust itself to all humanity. He had at his tongue's end the little items that make up the humble world of the pioneer farmer. Once at a hotel, in the evening during court, a lawyer said:

"Our case is gone; when Lincoln quit he was crying, the jury was crying, the Judge was crying, and I was a little damp about the lashes myself. We might as well give the case up."

W 131

Ill. St. Register Centennial

Claim 'Honest Abe' Term Originated in Trial at Postville

LINCOLN, Ill.—Postville residents claim the term "Honest Abe" applied to Abraham Lincoln, originated in 1844 when Lincoln was defending a client at Postville courthouse. The defendant deceived Lincoln who unknowingly appeared before Judge Samuel Treat in an effort to collect a note for the second time.

Lincoln was missing when time came for closing arguments. Found at the town well washing his hands, Lincoln said:

"Tell the judge I can't come; my hands are dirty."

"Honest Abe," remarked Judge Treat. The name stuck.

Lincoln Volume Teaches Thief Honesty Lesson

St. Joseph, Mo., Feb. 20 (U.P.)
—The missing volume of Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln "The Prairie Years" was back on its shelf at the public library today.

On a fly leaf was this penciled notation:

"I stole this book, but when I read how honest Lincoln was, I was ashamed. I ask you to take it back."

The note was signed "A Sinner."
