



News Release

76-10
April 14, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS:
Daniel Stowell, Springfield, IL (217) 785-9131
Holly Snyder, Providence, RI (401) 863-1515
Daniel Meyer, Chicago, IL (773) 702-8714

Pieces of earliest known Lincoln document reunited

Two halves of teenage Lincoln's homework in Chicago and Providence electronically joined after 145 years of separation

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The dog didn't eat it, but until now it was a mystery what had happened to a page of Abraham Lincoln's homework as a teenager in the 1820s, a part of the oldest known original Lincoln document.

Researchers with the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, a project of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, have identified and electronically matched two pieces of a page from Lincoln's arithmetic copybook, one piece at the University of Chicago and the other at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

"The Papers of Abraham Lincoln is delighted to have been able to reunite these two fragments from a page of Lincoln's homework as a teenager," said Daniel W. Stowell, Editor of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. "Although the two original fragments are in repositories nearly 1,000 miles apart, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln has reunited them digitally into a single page."

The oldest existing manuscripts in Abraham Lincoln's own hand are pages from an arithmetic copybook that Lincoln created in the mid-1820s while living in Indiana. Lincoln's stepmother Sarah Lincoln gave the copybook to his third law partner, William H. Herndon, after Lincoln's death in 1865. Herndon subsequently distributed the pages among friends and acquaintances. Ten pages or partial pages from the copybook are known to have survived and were published in facsimile form in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* in 1953.

When Stowell and Research Associate Kelley Clausing scanned Lincoln-related documents at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library in November 2009, they began the process that led to the reunion of two parts of a page from the copybook. Among the items they

scanned was a fragment of approximately seven inches wide by seven and one half inches tall with math problems on one side and a series of questions and answers on the reverse. While processing the images at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library later, Stowell discovered that the fragment fit neatly with a smaller fragment that the project had scanned at the John Hay Library at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in 2003. Although the fragment from Brown University had been published in the *Collected Works*, the other portion of the page at the University of Chicago had not. Using the digital images, Stowell compared the fragments and digitally reunited them into a single image for the front and another for the back of the page.

“This new discovery revives a part of what was lost to scholars when William Herndon dissected Lincoln’s ‘sum book’ and portioned it out in pieces to libraries and collectors as a memento of Lincoln. We are grateful to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln for their detective work, which restores the context of Brown University’s own fragment of this earliest known written work by Abraham Lincoln. It is our hope that this effort will underscore the benefits of the growing body of digital scholarship on Lincoln,” said Brown University North American History Librarian Holly Snyder.

"The University of Chicago is pleased that its fragment of the Lincoln sum book has now been reconnected with another surviving piece from the same manuscript. By carefully reviewing the whole body of Lincoln's writings, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln project is reconstructing not only the life and career of the 16th President, but the original documents that form the basis for our understanding of his significance," said Daniel Meyer, Associate Director of the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago Library.

Further research revealed that the questions and answers were from *The Schoolmaster’s Assistant, Being a Compendium of Arithmetic, Both Practical and Theoretical in Five Parts* by Thomas Dilworth. The math problems on the back of the sheet were from the “Examples” section of the same publication. Both the questions and the problems related to the “Single Rule of Three,” a mathematical method for solving proportions. Dilworth’s volume was first published in London in the 1740s. An American edition appeared in 1769, and additional American editions appeared regularly for the next sixty years. Which edition Lincoln may have used to create his copybook remains unknown.

Although the *Schoolmaster’s Assistant* provided the answers to the problems, it did not detail the necessary calculations. Reflecting the textbook’s British origins, the problems referred to money in pounds, shillings, and pence, even in editions published in the United States in the 1820s. “If 3 oz. of silver cost 17s.,” one problem read, “what will 48 oz. cost?” The answer is £13, 12s. or thirteen pounds, twelve shillings.

The reunited images, as well as other images of Lincoln documents, may be seen at http://www.papersofabrahamlincoln.org/New_Documents.htm.

The Papers of Abraham Lincoln is a project of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. The Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Springfield and the Abraham Lincoln Association serve as the project’s cosponsors. They have completed *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal*

Documents and Cases, published in 2008 by the University of Virginia Press; and *The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln, Second Edition* published online in 2009, which may be accessed at (www.lawpracticeofabrahamlincoln.org). Researchers and editors are currently at work on documents relating to Lincoln's Illinois Papers and his Presidential Papers.

Additional Links

The University of Chicago

"Seeing Lincoln Face to Face"

<http://lib.typepad.com/scrc/2009/01/seeing-lincoln-face-to-face.html>

William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/barton.html>

Brown University

Image of the Brown University fragment

<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/repository2/repoman.php?verb=render&id=1213724355593750>

Brown University's Lincoln Collection

<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/lincoln/index.html>

#