



# News Release

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **New Manuscript of Lincoln’s original Second Annual Message to Congress found at National Archives**

*Message contains some of Lincoln’s most memorable quotations about the Civil War*

WASHINGTON, DC – President Abraham Lincoln’s Second Annual Message to Congress dated December 1, 1862 contains some of his most memorable quotations about the reason for continuing to fight the Civil War. Now, as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that message approaches, the first of two previously missing pages of the document and a complete second copy signed by Lincoln have been found at the National Archives in Washington, DC by researchers with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) in Springfield, Illinois.

The whereabouts of the first two of the 86 pages of Lincoln’s Second Annual Message to Congress had been a mystery for more than a century. Researchers with the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, a project to identify and publish all documents written or signed by Lincoln or written to him, solved part of that mystery recently during an ongoing search at the National Archives.

The message, written by several clerks, is among Lincoln’s most famous official communications to Congress. It is a forerunner of the modern State of the Union address. Although a Congressional clerk, and not Lincoln himself, read the message to the assembled Senators and Representatives, Lincoln’s words resonate with us today. It closes with the admonition, “Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves....The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.... We—even we here—hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to

the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, this last best, hope of earth....”

“I was very excited to learn that once again researchers have mined the National Archives to discover important documentation that was previously unknown,” said Archivist of the United States David. S. Ferriero. “The staff of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln project has not only found the first page of President Lincoln’s second address which was misfiled by the U.S. Congress in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but have also discovered other important documentation relating to Lincoln. These finds add to the historical record and will allow future researchers to gain a fuller picture of the Lincoln Presidency.”

Papers of Abraham Lincoln Assistant Editor Chandler Lighty has been searching the records of the United States Senate at the National Archives for several months. As he examined records from the Thirty-seventh Congress, Lighty found a cross-reference sheet that gave locations for reports from the War, Navy, and Interior Departments in a set of volumes. Although not part of his originally intended search, Lighty decided to request those volumes anyway. Archivist Rodney Ross retrieved them from the stacks, and within them, Lighty found the first page of one official copy and an entire second copy of Lincoln’s Second Annual Message, both of which were signed by Lincoln.

One copy of the 86-page message is signed on the last page by Abraham Lincoln and safely resides in the vault at the National Archives, but the first two pages had long been misfiled, until now. The first page contains the observation, “And while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time, and wise way, all will yet be well.” The second copy signed by Lincoln was not known to exist.

In addition to finding the missing page and new copy of the Second Annual Message, Lighty found two dozen letters from Lincoln to the second and third sessions of the Thirty-seventh Congress. Again, they were written by a clerk and signed by President Lincoln. The text had been available through a government publication but the whereabouts of the originals was unknown.

“These exciting new discoveries demonstrate the value of our careful and thorough approach,” Director Daniel W. Stowell of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln said. “Chandler Lighty and our other colleagues are searching tens of thousands of records, and these discoveries are a testament both to Lighty’s skill as a researcher and the importance of this process.”

The Papers of Abraham Lincoln Project is a long-term documentary editing project funded in part by the National Archives through its National Historical Publications and Records Commission. It is dedicated to identifying, imaging, transcribing, annotating, and publishing all documents written by or to Abraham Lincoln during his lifetime (1809-1865). The discovery of these documents came as part of the project’s comprehensive search of National Archives holdings.

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