

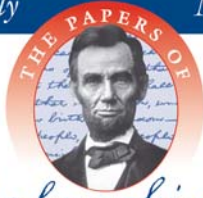
LINCOLN EDITOR

The Quarterly

Newsletter of

January - March 2008

Volume 8 Number 1



Abraham Lincoln

"a great honor and a great labor" A. Lincoln, October 26, 1863

SOTHEBY'S PROVIDES IMAGES OF ROBERT SMALL COLLECTION

In early April, Sotheby's will sell the Dr. Robert Small Collection, which includes twenty-two documents written or signed by Abraham Lincoln. In February, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln contacted Sotheby's to obtain images of the documents. Senior Vice President Selby Kiffer of Sotheby's was most helpful in providing the images at the project's technical specifications, and we gratefully acknowledge his assistance.

Among the documents are seven previously unpublished Lincoln letters from his presidency, including letters to Henry W. Halleck, David Hunter, and Gideon Welles. Among the most interesting and valuable are the April 1864 letter to Mrs. Horace Mann, thanking her for sending him a petition signed by children asking that he free all slave children. Although the text of this famous communication has been known from lithographic copies, Basler and his colleagues did not know the location of the original letter when they compiled *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Another unique document is a collection of autographs, including that of Lincoln, gathered at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863. It may be the only

document signed by Lincoln on the day he delivered his famous address.

The new letter to Gideon Welles (pictured and transcribed below) demonstrates the lawyer-president at work, using a discrepancy in the required age of midshipmen to assist a young man.

This most recent auction of Lincoln's letters demonstrates once again the importance to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln of the cooperation of manuscript dealers. Without the cooperation of Mr. Kiffer and Sotheby's, the project would be unlikely to determine the owners of each of the documents, contact them, and convince them to allow the project to scan their documents. By obtaining the documents directly from Sotheby's, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln has ensured that the entire Small Collection will be included in the new edition of Lincoln's papers.

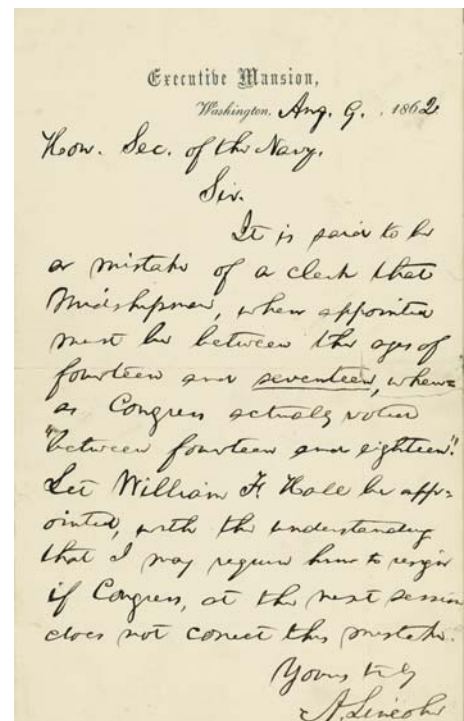
Abraham Lincoln to Gideon Welles

Executive Mansion,
Washington, Aug. 9., 1862.

Hon. Sec. of the Navy,
Sir,

It is said to be a mistake of a clerk that midshipmen, when appointed must be between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, whereas Congress actually voted "between fourteen and eighteen." Let William F. Hall be appointed, with the understanding that I may require him to resign if Congress, at the next session does not correct this mistake.

Yours truly
A. Lincoln



TRAVEL

In February, Tom Leahy of Chicago and John Bokum of Oak Park, Illinois, brought their Lincoln documents to the project offices in Springfield where Research Associate Kelley Clausing scanned them. Thanks to both gentlemen.

Also in February, Director Daniel Stowell and Assistant Editor Ed Bradley visited ten repositories and private collectors in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. For their assistance, the project would like to thank Jack Gumbrecht at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; Linda Wisniewski of the Library Company of Philadelphia; Margery N. Sly of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia; Nathan Raab, Jonas Raab, and Steven Raab at the Raab Collection in Philadelphia; John Pollack and Marissa Hendricks at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; Louis Kessler at Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia; Richard Rizzo in Edison, New Jersey; Julia Telonidis and Maureen O'Rourke at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark; Michael D. Freda in Belleville, New Jersey; and Jude Pfister at the Morristown National Historical Park in Morristown, New Jersey.

In March, Daniel Stowell scanned a Lincoln document owned by Michael Zecher at Zecher's home in Harlan, Iowa. The project thanks Mr. Zecher for his assistance. Also in March, Assistant Editor Chris Schnell scanned two Lincoln documents owned by Jeff Deremiah of Decatur, Illinois. Thanks to him as well.

LINCOLN'S RELUCTANT RECOMMENDATION

The editors of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln periodically check online auctions for new documents that fall within the project's scope. Occasionally, we find surprising new documents in unlikely places. In February, a new document appeared on eBay from a private seller in Providence, Rhode Island. According to the listing, the seller found the letter in a bundle of others in an attic in Newport. We were unable to contact the seller, but the winning bidder, Gary McAvoy of Seattle, Washington, graciously provided the project with a high-resolution color image of the document he had purchased.

The document is interesting for several reasons. First, it is a relatively early Lincoln letter, written in December 1849, after Lincoln had finished his one lackluster term in Congress. Second, it is a long-lost enclosure to a known Lincoln letter. Third, it demonstrates both Lincoln's magnanimity in agreeing to provide a recommendation for someone whom he believed had openly criticized him and Lincoln's caution in the rather muted letter of support.

On April 25, 1849, George W. Rives wrote to ex-Congressman Abraham Lincoln, asking for his assistance in obtaining an appointment as an Indian agent in Minnesota. Rives was a 34-year-old farmer living in Paris, the county seat of Edgar County in east-central Illinois bordering Indiana.¹ Lincoln responded on May 7 that Rives overrated Lincoln's "capacity to serve you. Not one man recommended by me has yet been appointed to any thing, little or big, except a few who had no opposition." Since President Zachary Taylor's inauguration in March, Lincoln had been trying to get an appointment for Anson G. Henry in Minnesota, without success. He declined to risk Henry's chances by supporting another candidate for a position in Minnesota.²

During May and June of 1849, Lincoln actively campaigned to become the Commissioner of the General Land Office and asked many friends for their support. His primary opponent was Chicago attorney Justin Butterfield. The contest between Lincoln and Butterfield revealed and exacerbated divisions among Illinois Whigs, and Rives may have supported Butterfield. President Taylor appointed Butterfield to the post, and Lincoln was disappointed personally and worried that the appointment would undermine the Whigs in Illinois.

On November 7, Rives wrote to Lincoln asking for a letter of recommendation. Lincoln hesitated before replying, then sent the following letter on December 15.³

Springfield, Dec^r 15, 1849

G. W. Rives, Esq
Dear Sir:

On my return from Kentucky, I found your letter of the 7th of November, and have delayed answering it till now, for the reason I now briefly state. From the beginning of our acquaintance I had felt the greatest kindness for you, and had supposed it was reciprocated on your part. Last summer, under circumstances which I mentioned to you, I was painfully constrained to withhold a recommendation which you desired; and shortly afterwards I learned, in such way as to believe it, that you were indulging open abuse of me. Of course my feelings were wounded. On receiving your last letter, the question occurred whether you were attempting to use me, at the same time you would injure ^me,^ or whether you might not have been misrepresented to me. If the former, I ought not to answer you; if the latter I ought, and so I have remained in suspense. I now enclose you a letter which you may use if you think fit.

Yours &c.
A. Lincoln

Roy P. Basler and his colleagues included this letter in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1953, and noted that the letter of recommendation that Lincoln mentions in the last sentence was "presumably not

extant.”⁴ This long-lost letter is the one that appeared on eBay in February.

The text of Lincoln’s letter of recommendation (pictured below), written to Secretary of the Interior Thomas Ewing, is as follows.⁵

Springfield, Ills. Dec^r 15, 1849.

Hon: T. Ewing.
Secretary &c.
Dear Sir

I understand M^r G. W. Rives of Edgar county, Ills. is an applicant for an Indian Agency; and I wish to say that, while I think his appointment will be generally acceptable to the whigs, it will certainly be gratifying to me.

Your Ob^t Serv^t
A. Lincoln

Editors from the Papers of Abraham Lincoln scanned Lincoln’s letter to Rives at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia in May 2007. Mr. McAvoy sent the project a scan of Lincoln’s letter to Ewing in March of this year. Now, after more than a century and a half of separation, the two letters that Lincoln sent to Rives, one now in Philadelphia and the other in Seattle, are reunited virtually in the Papers of Abraham Lincoln.

George W. Rives was an active supporter of Lincoln’s bid for the United States Senate in 1858. After the election of a majority of Democratic representatives to the state legislature in November, Rives immediately wrote to Illinois Secretary of State Ozias M. Hatch, “now I am for Lincoln for the nomination for president in 1860!” A few days later, Rives wrote to offer Lincoln a “word of consolation & comfort.” Rives was proud that Republicans did their “whole duty” in Edgar County by electing Republicans to the state legislature. Rives concluded his letter by assuring Lincoln that “we stand ready to aid you in 1860. We are for You first, &, last. . . . No man never had Such friends in Edgar as you have! Can we do

you any Good[?] Command us & we will obey. We await your Command.”⁶ Rives also worked for Lincoln’s election to the Presidency in 1860. On August 28, 1862, Lincoln appointed Rives as the Assessor of Taxes for the Seventh Collection District of Illinois.⁷

By Daniel W. Stowell, Director/Editor

¹ U.S. Census Office, Seventh Census of the United States (1850), Edgar County, IL, 203.

² George W. Rives to Abraham Lincoln, 25 April 1849, Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Abraham Lincoln to George W. Rives, 7 May 1849, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 2:46.

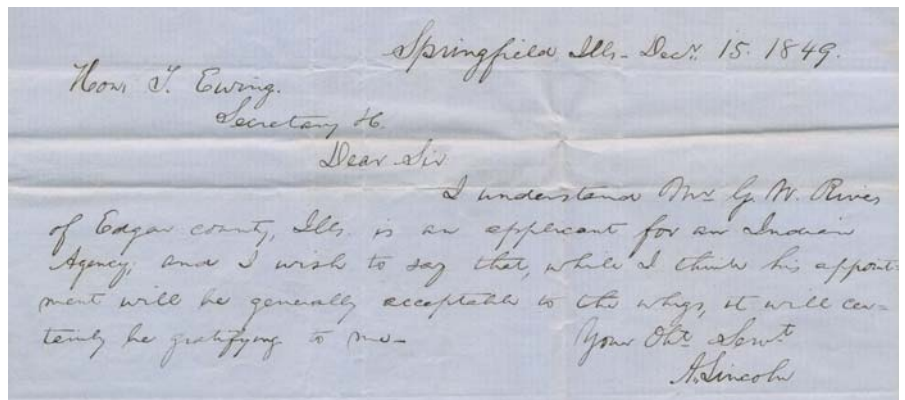
³ Abraham Lincoln to George W. Rives, 15 December 1849, Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴ Basler et al., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 2:69.

⁵ Abraham Lincoln to Thomas Ewing, 15 December 1849, Private Collection.

⁶ George W. Rives to Ozias M. Hatch, 5 November 1858, Ozias M. Hatch Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, IL; George W. Rives to Abraham Lincoln, 15 November 1858, Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁷ Appointment of George W. Rives as Assessor of Taxes for the Seventh Collection District of the State of Illinois, 28 August 1862, Record Group 56, Entry 234, Commissions Issued to Major Treasury Officers, 1797-1901, National Archives College Park, College Park, MD.



STAFF NEWS

Research Associate John A. Macaulay resigned from his position with the project at the end of February. Macaulay worked for the Papers of Abraham Lincoln at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. His primary responsibility was editing scanned images of Lincoln documents prepared by Library of Congress staff. Macaulay has accepted a faculty position at Erskine College in Due West, South Carolina, beginning in the fall. The project staff wishes him the best in his future endeavors.

Associate Director John Lupton assisted the PBS television series *The History Detectives* regarding a purported Lincoln signature. While he will not appear on camera for this upcoming episode, Lupton helped to provide samples of Lincoln’s signature to a forensic document examiner.

DONORS

The project acknowledges with deep appreciation the generosity of the following contributors:

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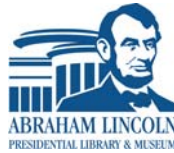
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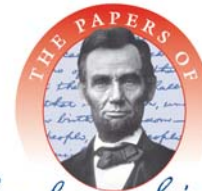
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Please address inquiries and gifts to:

The Papers of Abraham Lincoln
#1 Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701-1512
Phone: (217) 785-9130 Fax: (217) 524-6973
Website: <http://www.papersofabrahamlincoln.org>

How You Can Help:

- By advising project staff of known or reported Lincoln documents in your locality. We are seeking copies of any document, letter, or contemporary printed account that relates to Abraham Lincoln's entire life, 1809-1865.
- By making a tax-deductible donation to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln in support of the project. Such gifts provide crucial support in furtherance of the project's objectives.



Abraham Lincoln

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