

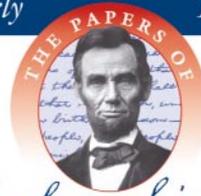
LINCOLN EDITOR

The Quarterly

Newsletter of

July - September 2001

Volume 1 Number 1



Abraham Lincoln

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

ANNOUNCING THE PAPERS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, a long-term documentary editing project dedicated to identifying, photographing, and publishing all documents written by or to Abraham Lincoln during his lifetime (1809-1865). The combined expertise of Lincoln scholars, nineteenth-century historians, information technology specialists, and historical documentary editors will produce a comprehensive collection of texts from the life of Abraham Lincoln. This project builds upon the experience and successes of the Lincoln Legal Papers.

The Papers of Abraham Lincoln will consist of three series. Series I: Legal Papers will incorporate the research and publications of the Lincoln Legal Papers. Series II: Illinois Papers will incorporate all non-legal documents from Abraham Lincoln's life from his birth in 1809 until his inauguration on March 4, 1861. The vast documentation of his presidency will comprise Series III: Presidential Papers.

Publication plans include both a freely accessible Internet edition of authoritative texts with ap-

propriate annotation, linked electronically to images of the original manuscripts, and a selective book edition of carefully selected documents. *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln* will form the foundation for new generations of scholarship on Abraham Lincoln, antebellum America, and the Civil War era.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency serves as the project's sponsor, and the University of Illinois at Springfield will cosponsor it. As with the Lincoln Legal Papers, the expanded Papers of Abraham Lincoln will depend on a mixture of state, federal, foundation, and individual funding. Readers of our newsletter can help us in two principal ways: (1) notify us of the location of any "Lincoln document," especially those in private hands or unusual places, and (2) support the project with a tax-deductible gift to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln.

Through the pages of this and future issues of the *Lincoln Editor*, readers can follow our progress as we collect, assemble, and explore the fascinating documentary record of this remarkable man.

PROJECT RECEIVES FIRST PRIVATE DONATION—\$10,000

Mr. Benjamin Shapell, of Beverly Hills, California, has the honor of being the first private donor to Series II and Series III of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Shapell sent the project a check for \$10,000, to be used specifically for the new phases of the expanded project.

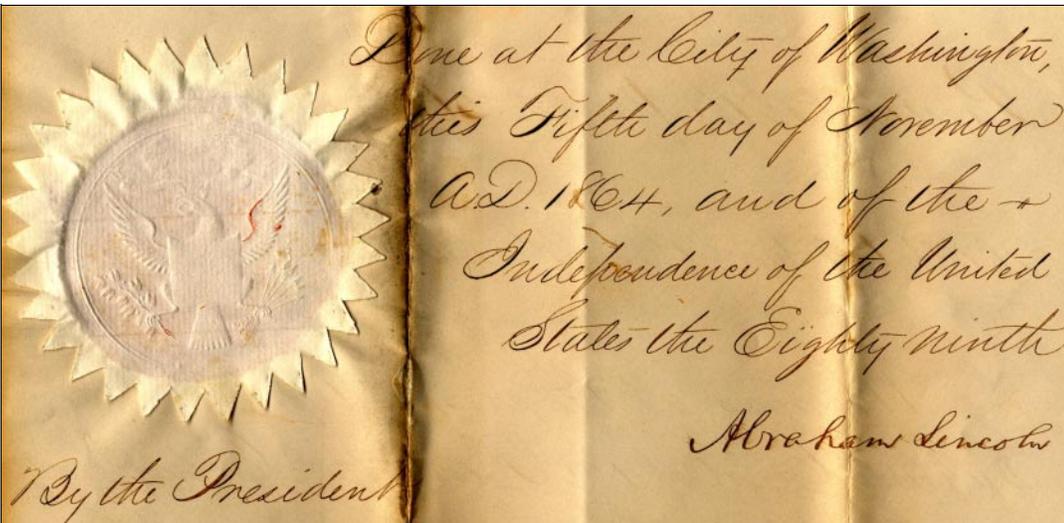
Mr. Shapell's generous donation will be used to design and publish the project's new website at www.papersofabrahamlincoln.org and to print and mail the first issues of this newsletter. These methods of communication with friends of the project, manu-

script collectors, repositories, and scholars are vital to the success of this project as it begins a new search for Lincoln documents.

The project staff would like to express our deep gratitude to Mr. Shapell for his contribution and to assure him and all other private donors that the project staff will use funds donated to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln carefully and wisely to locate, transcribe, annotate, and publish the documentary record of the life of our most admired President.

NEW DOCUMENT REVEALS A RARE LINCOLN PARDON OF A CIVILIAN WOMAN

In April, James Woodward, the Clerk of the Court for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, contacted Director Daniel W. Stowell to request the validation of a Lincoln signature as genuine and to obtain advice on preserving the document. In late June, Mr. Woodward brought the document to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln offices in Springfield, where staff members and Kim Bauer, the curator of the Henry Horner Lincoln Collection in the Illinois State Historical Library confirmed that the document was genuine. It is, however, a curious document. It is an 1864 pardon President Lincoln issued for a woman named Elizabeth Shorter.



Abraham Lincoln's signature and the seal of the United States on Elizabeth Shorter's pardon.

In part, the pardon reads, "I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, divers other good and sufficient reasons me thereunto — moving, have granted and do hereby grant unto her the said Elizabeth Shorter a full and unconditional pardon." On the reverse side of the document, a clerk affixed the Seal of the United States embossed through a separate paper seal and red wax. The document is dated November 5, 1864, and is signed "Abraham Lincoln." This document led us to search for the case file and pardon file in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Historian J. Dane Hartgrove of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission graciously copied and sent the files, which revealed a fascinating story.

The saga behind this document demonstrates the promise that historical documents and the craft of documentary editing hold for opening up new windows on our nation's past. Elizabeth Shorter was a servant in the home of Mr. William Francis Pruett, a shoemaker, in Washington, D.C. She may be the same Elizabeth Shorter listed in the 1860 federal census as a nineteen-year-old African-American servant living in the home of India rubber merchant Robert Goodyear, but the available evidence is inconclusive. In her appeal for executive clemency, Elizabeth Shorter recounted that in "an evil hour," she gave way to the importunities of Mr. Pruett and had "carnal intercourse" with him. She became pregnant and had a child,

"begotten by Mr. Prewitt."

After the birth of her baby, Elizabeth Shorter asked Francis Pruett to provide her with money to support the child. He refused, and she appealed to a justice of the peace to obtain a warrant for the support of the child. When Pruett learned of her action, he charged her with larceny for stealing \$400 worth of coins in May 1864. Elizabeth Shorter insisted that

Pruett's wife Sarah had given her the money on the condition that she say nothing about the "intimacy existing between myself and Mr. Prewitt." The child lived for only a few months. The grand jury indicted Shorter for larceny on June 22, 1864, and the United States Marshal arrested her on October 21st. At her trial on November 3, Shorter was found guilty of larceny and sentenced to one year of confinement and labor at the prison in Albany, New York. Being illiterate, she signed her November 4th petition to His Excellency Hon. Abraham Lincoln with "her mark." At the end of her petition, the four judges of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, including the judge who presided at the trial, cited "paliating circumstances" which rendered Shorter's case deserving of "Executive clemency." After careful review, Abraham Lincoln endorsed her petition with

the brief but powerful “Pardon. A. Lincoln” on November 5, 1864. Two days after she had been found guilty of larceny and sentenced to a year in prison, Elizabeth Shorter was the recipient of Lincoln’s pardoning power and a free woman.

The relatively brief documentary record of this case illuminates several facets of life in wartime Washington, from the working conditions of servant women to questions of public morality to the workings of the courts in the District of Columbia and patterns of presidential pardons. These kinds of discoveries offer much new material for analysis and investigation by students, teachers, scholars, and the general public.

Many years ago, someone gave this fascinating document to the late Judge Roy Harper of the

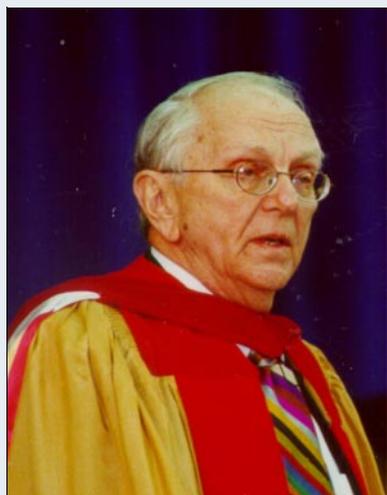
United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. Some years later, Judge Harper conveyed the document to his fellow judge on the court, Senior United States District Judge Edward L. Philippine, who now owns this pardon document and a second related document. The other document, dated October 22, 1864, is an order by United States Marshal Ward Hill Lamon to the warden of the United States Jail in Washington, D.C., to hold prisoner Elizabeth Shorter until she was released. Judge Philippine is now in the process of donating both documents to the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

Daniel W. Stowell
Director/Editor

A “LINCOLN DOCUMENT” IS...

- a document written in Abraham Lincoln’s hand;
- a document printed from an original written in Lincoln’s hand (e.g., letters to a newspaper authored by Lincoln);
- a document written by a secretary or assistant but signed by Abraham Lincoln or issued directly under his authority;
- a document reporting Abraham Lincoln’s words (e.g., legislative bills and acts, newspaper reports of speeches);
- a document addressed or directed to Abraham Lincoln (either sender’s or recipient’s copy; either draft or final version);
- a document enclosed with correspondence addressed to Abraham Lincoln or written by Lincoln; or
- a document comprising a part of the official record of a particular matter submitted for Abraham Lincoln’s review (e.g., military pardon case files).

MEET OUR EDITORIAL BOARD (First in a series)



Dr. David Herbert Donald is the Charles Warren Professor of American History, Emeritus, at Harvard University. Dr. Donald received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1946, and is the author of numerous books including two Pulitzer-Prize-winning volumes, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (Knopf, 1960) and *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe* (Little, Brown, 1987). He is also the author of *Lincoln* (Simon and Schuster, 1995), the definitive one-volume biography of Lincoln, for which he won The Lincoln Prize.

“Though Roy Basler and his associates did an excellent job of editing Lincoln’s writings a generation ago, I believe that it is time for a new, complete, updated edition of his works.”—David Herbert Donald

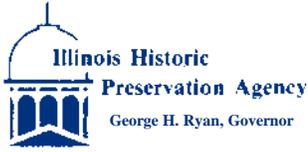
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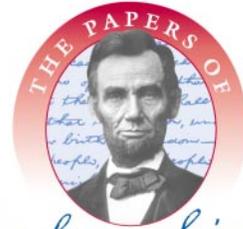
- By advising project staff of known or reported Lincoln documents in your locality. We are seeking copies of any document, letter, or contemporary printed account that relates to Abraham Lincoln's entire life, 1809-1865.
- By making a tax-deductible donation to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln in support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

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