

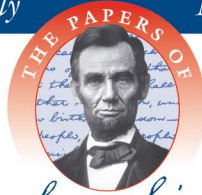
LINCOLN EDITOR

The Quarterly

Newsletter of

October - December 2014

Volume 14 Number 4



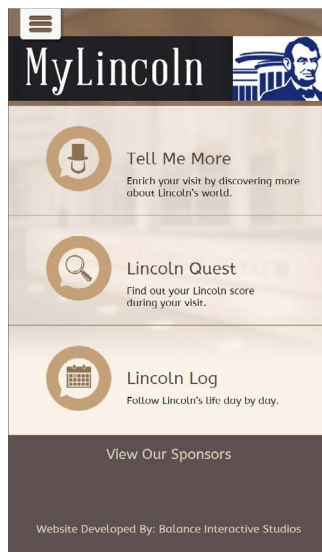
Abraham Lincoln

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

ENHANCING THE LINCOLN MUSEUM VISITOR EXPERIENCE

For the past several years, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln has played a leading role in the Center for Digital Initiatives at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM). Much of the Center's work offers direct benefits to the Papers, and one such example has come to fruition in the past few months.

Some of the project's newsletter readers may have already noticed that the project's online publication *The Lincoln Log* has received a facelift. The bold new look is the result of the Center's work on extended content for the Museum. *The Lincoln Log* is now a part of *MyLincoln*, an innovative mobile website that visitors to the ALPLM can access on their mobile devices to enhance their experience. For readers



unfamiliar with it, *The Lincoln Log: A Daily Chronology of the Life of Abraham Lincoln* provides information about Lincoln's activities for many days of his life in a calendar format.

The "Tell Me More" section of *MyLincoln* provides visitors with additional information about Lincoln's life at each stage of the immersive journeys that form the core of the Museum. Visitors can access additional information, images, and documents that extend their understanding of Lincoln's life and career.

The "Lincoln Quest" challenges visitors to complete an age-appropriate quest for information in the exhibits in the Museum to answer a series of questions. After completing their quest, visitors earn an occupation corresponding to a job Abraham Lincoln held, from Railsplitter all the way to President.

Balance Studios of Green Bay, Wisconsin, developed *MyLincoln* with grant funding. Project staff and interns from the Center and from the Papers of Abraham Lincoln developed the content with input from the ALPLM's outstanding corps of volunteers.

VOLUNTEER SEARCHES OFFICIAL RECORDS FOR LINCOLN

For the past two years, volunteer Boyd Springer has carefully searched through the pages of *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Springer is an attorney, who began his law practice at the Chicago law firm of Isham, Lincoln & Beale, founded by Robert Todd Lincoln. Every few weeks, Springer came to the project offices of the Papers to borrow more volumes to search.

The federal government compiled the *Official Records* and published them between 1881 and 1901. Consisting of 138,579 pages assembled in 128 books, organized as 70 volumes in four series, the *Official Records* is a treasure trove of correspondence between

military commanders in the field and officials in Washington, from the General in Chief to the Secretary of War, and the President himself. In his careful review of the *Official Records*, Springer has located more than 2,300 documents within the scope of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. He is now beginning the process of matching his findings to records in the project's database of nearly 100,000 documents.

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln included many documents written by Lincoln from

VOLUNTEER *continued on page 3...*

PROJECT MOURNS LOSS OF A YOUNG COLLEAGUE

On October 7, 2014, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln family was stunned and saddened to learn that Mackenzie Kathleen McDermott, 20, younger daughter of Assistant Director Stacy McDermott, passed away suddenly while studying abroad in Burgos, Spain. Mackenzie was not only a member of our extended Papers of Abraham Lincoln family, she was also a colleague. In 2012, Mackenzie, along with six other students, spent their summer break assisting the project by processing Library of Congress digital images. Mackenzie quickly mastered the task and rapidly befriended her fellow student workers and PAL staff and volunteers.

Mackenzie, a junior at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, majored in creative writing and pursued an interest in women's and gender studies. Growing up in Springfield, she excelled in academics and was a four-year varsity athlete in golf, basketball and softball. Everyone at PAL extends our deepest condolences to Mackenzie's devoted parents, Stacy and

Kevin, to Mack's beloved older sister, Savannah, and to her extended family and friends for the loss of such a wonderful young woman. She will be greatly missed.

To honor Mackenzie, the McDermott family has established a scholarship at Truman State. People interested in doing so can make a contribution to the Mackenzie Kathleen McDermott Memorial Scholarship Fund (<http://www.truman.edu/giving/ways-of-giving/>). The \$1,000 annual scholarship will support students studying creative writing and will celebrate Mackenzie's passion for writing.



PROJECT AND STAFF NEWS

Assistant Editor Daniel Worthington published two articles in "[1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War](#)." This interesting encyclopedia is a "multi-perspective, open-access knowledge base" featuring more than 1,000 articles, timeline, bibliography, and navigation through mapping. Worthington contributed one essay about Secretary of the Navy [Josephus Daniels](#) and another about Gen. [Hunter Liggett](#).

Assistant Editor Christian McWhirter published an essay entitled "Pursuing the Mysteries: A Conversation with William Freehling" in Megan L. Bever and Scott A. Suarez, eds. *The Historian Behind the History: Conversations with Southern Historians* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014): 5-25.

In November, Assistant Editor David Gerleman was in Southport, North Carolina, where he gave a presentation entitled "The Election of 1864: Worth More Than a Battle Won" to over 300 members of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table. This group boasts the largest membership of any similar organization in the country.

Gerleman also participated in an episode of Brad Meltzer's "Lost History," which appears on the History Channel. He talked about the pistol of John Wilkes Booth.

Also in November, Christian McWhirter gave a Pecha Kucha presentation entitled "How a Canadian Hoser Became a Yankee Civil War Historian" at the Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield, Illinois.

Assistant Director Stacy McDermott gave a presentation at the Lincoln Home Conference Center in Springfield to a group organizing an association to commemorate Mary Lincoln's life. McDermott also talked about her forthcoming biography, *Mary Lincoln: Southern Girl, Northern Woman* (available from Routledge in late January 2015).

We always appreciate the assistance of manuscript dealers who provide us with images of documents. This quarter, we would like to thank Chris Coover and Patrick McGrath at Christies and Nathan Raab of the Raab Collection.

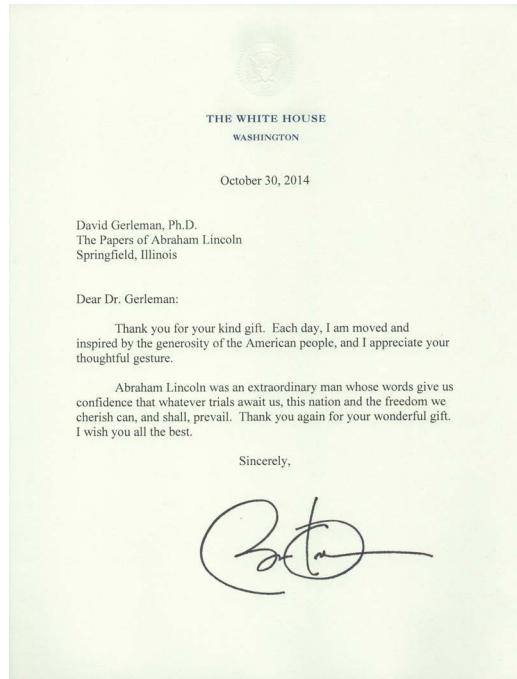
The project also thanks Philip Downs for allowing us to scan his Lincoln documents. As well, the project thanks Tim Saiter, a manuscript dealer in Illinois, who allowed Director Daniel Stowell to scan a letter to Lincoln and an unrelated envelope addressed to Lincoln during the Lincoln Colloquium at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In October, two private collectors made their documents available for scanning in Springfield. Thanks to Robert R. Heuermann and Fred Walker. Heuermann's document is a new Lincoln that was addressed to

Heuermann's great-great-great-grandfather. Walker's document is a new Lincoln legal document.

In November, Assistant Editor Ed Bradley visited the St. Augustine Historical Society and scanned a transcript of statements by Abraham Lincoln regarding a planned duel between John D. Whiteside and Elias H. Merryman. On that same trip to Florida, Bradley also scanned an appointment (signed by Abraham Lincoln) of George Harrington as Secretary of the Treasury ad interim. The Papers of Abraham Lincoln would like to thank Robert F. Nawrocki and John Pitta for making these documents available for scanning.

David Gerleman sent a copy of the project's booklet, *On Lincoln's Mind* to President Barack Obama and received the reply at right.



The project appreciates the generosity of the following donors:

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VOLUNTEER *continued from page 1*

the *Official Records*, but that work did not include any documents sent to Lincoln. Most documents written by Abraham Lincoln from the *Official Records* are already in the project's database, but the work of Springer (*pictured here surrounded by the volumes he searched*) will allow the editors to cross-reference these documents to their publication. Likewise, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln's intensive search at the National Archives and the Library of Congress has located many documents to Lincoln that were published in the *Official Records*, and Springer's research will allow the Papers of Abraham Lincoln to add references to them as well. Most importantly, there are documents to Lincoln published in the *Official Records* that the project has not yet located and perhaps scores that have not survived the past 150 years.

Springer's careful attention to the tens of thousands of pages in the *Official Records* has

been a great service to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln and to future scholarship on Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War era.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S OTHER 1864 CHRISTMAS GIFT

Union military triumphs at Atlanta, Nashville, Mobile Bay, and in the Shenandoah Valley, as well as at the polls in the November election, helped make the holiday season of 1864 possibly the most festive of Abraham Lincoln's presidency. Extra joy erupted on Christmas Day when a telegram arrived in Washington after a tenuous transmission from Georgia via Fortress Monroe, Virginia, to the War Department. The message from General William T. Sherman announced the culmination of his army's March to the Sea by notifying the president, with a mischievous flourish, "I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah with 150 heavy guns & plenty of ammunition & also about 25,000 bales of cotton."¹

The news thrilled the North and relieved an anxious president, and the communication quickly became one of the Civil War's most famous telegrams, but it also vastly overshadowed another missive arriving in the capital presenting the president with a much humbler sort of holiday gift, this one sent by an ordinary sailor.

Arriving at the Navy Department in the wake of Sherman's headline splashing message was a letter for



Homer C. Blake

Image courtesy of findagrave.com

Secretary Gideon Welles, enclosing another letter from Lieutenant Commander Homer C. Blake to the President of the United States.

Homer C. Blake to Gideon Welles²
25 December 1864

U.S. Steamer "Eutaw"
"Deep Bottom" James River Va.
Dec. 25th 1864.

Sir:

I respectfully enclose a letter address to the President of the United States and to accompany a box which is to be sent in your care.

I have the honor Sir, to be
Your obedient Servant.
Homer C. Blake
Lieut Com^{dr} u.s. n[avy]

Hon. Gideon Welles
Secretary of the Navy.
Washington D.C.

Homer C. Blake to Abraham Lincoln
25 December 1864

U.S. Steamer "Eutaw"
"Deep Bottom" James River Va.
Dec. 25th 1864.

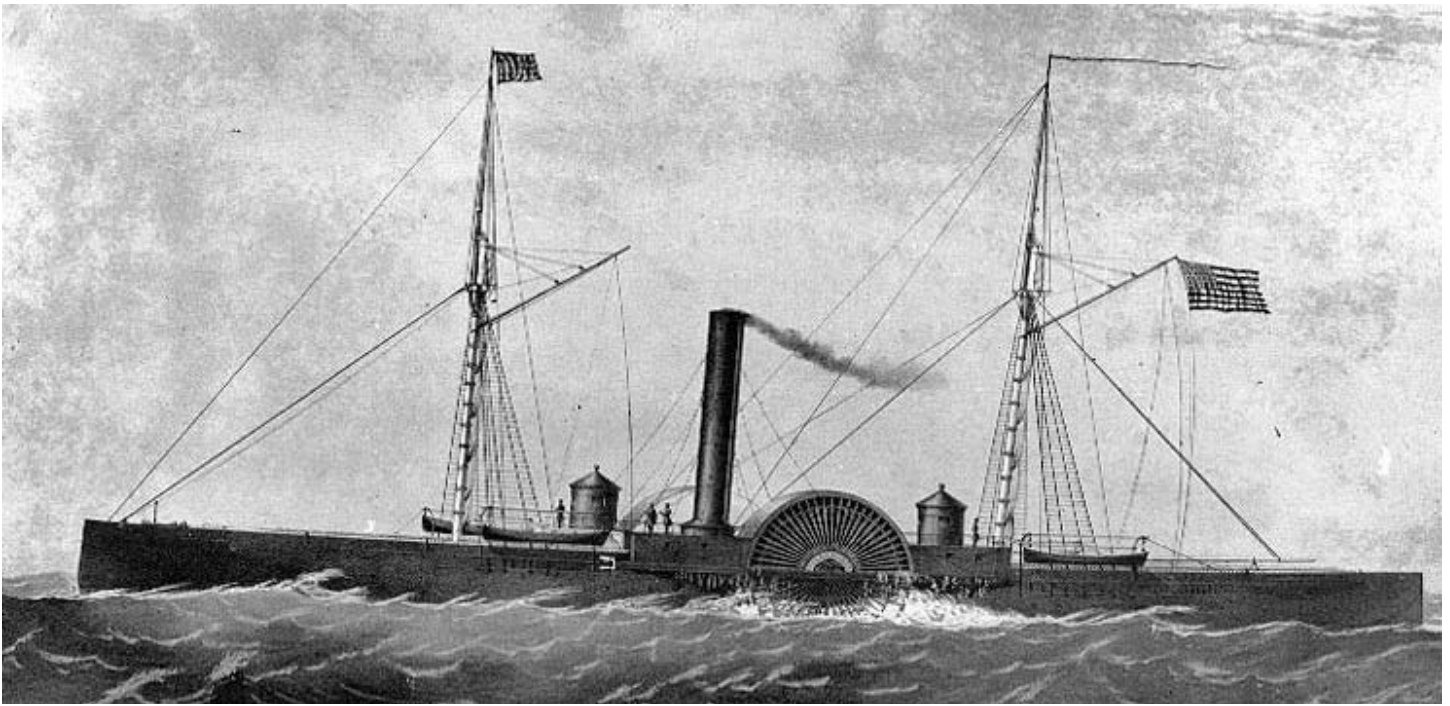
Sir:

In compliance with the request of James McMillan, Carpenters Mate, on board this vessel, I respectfully present to you a box made by himself from wood taken from the U.S. Frigates "Cumberland" and "Congress" as also from the rebel vessel "Merrimac"

Though a small mark of his esteem for your Excellency, he begs that it may be accepted as demonstrative of his disposition

I have the honor Sir, to be,
Your obedient servant.
Homer. C. Blake
Lieut Comd^r u.s. n
Com^{dr} U.S.S. "Eutaw"

To
His Excellency,
Abraham Lincoln
President of the United States.



USS Eutaw (1865 Lithograph by Endicott & Co., New York)
Image courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Both the letter's author and its subject matter had an interesting back-story. Lieutenant Commander Blake, the officer who penned the cover letter, was a twenty-year navy veteran who already had achieved ill-fated fame during the war.³ While commanding the *USS Hatteras*, operating as part of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron off Galveston, Texas, his ship had run afoul of the feared Confederate commerce raider *CSS Alabama* in January 1863. Both slower and more lightly armed than the rebel ship, the *Hatteras* put up a short but valiant struggle before surrendering in sinking condition.⁴

Blake's next command was of the newly completed *USS Eutaw*, one of the unique "Sassacus" class of double-ended, side-wheel gunboats armed with eight cannon of varying calibers built for the Union Navy. Sporting a rudder at each end, the *Eutaw* was able to travel either direction on narrow inland waterways without having to turn around. The *Eutaw* was assigned to blockade duty on the Potomac and James rivers and took part in the 1864 Overland Campaign. The vessel and its 135-man crew helped cover the landing of Grant's army below City Point, Virginia, shelled Confederate forces at Malvern Hill, and then towed the ill-fated monitor *USS Tecumseh* to the Gulf of Mexico, before returning to patrolling the James River from late August until the end of the war.⁵

Among the crew on board the *Eutaw* was twenty-two year old James McMillan, a carpenter from New

York who had enlisted in the Union navy for three years on April 16, 1863.⁶ Joining the newly outfitted ship at Baltimore, Maryland, that July, McMillan was appointed a Carpenter's Mate, which made him responsible for maintaining the *Eutaw's* superstructure, ventilation, paint, and drainage, and in combat, putting out fires or plugging holes in the hull.⁷

Like many other sailors who sought to fend off the boredom of blockade duty by carving or whittling all sorts of trinkets, McMillan decided to make use of his woodworking skills to fashion a presentation box for the Commander-in-Chief. Gathering wood remnants from the sunken U.S. frigates *Cumberland* and *Congress*, and from their attacker the Confederate ironclad *CSS Virginia* [*USS Merrimack*], whose wrecks still littered Hampton roads, McMillan set to work. No physical description of the final product exists, yet if similar handiwork of other nineteenth-century sailors is a guide, then it is likely that McMillan's gift box featured intricately carved patriotic and nautical decorative motifs.⁸

McMillan was not alone in sending presents to the White House, as every U.S. president received numerous homemade gifts from friends, supporters, and patriotic citizens. Lincoln, too, received his fair share, from an elk horn chair given by California frontiersman Seth Kinman to a "Liberty Cake" baked by a Mississippi freedwoman. Unfortunately, however, not all gifts actually reached their intended recipient.⁹

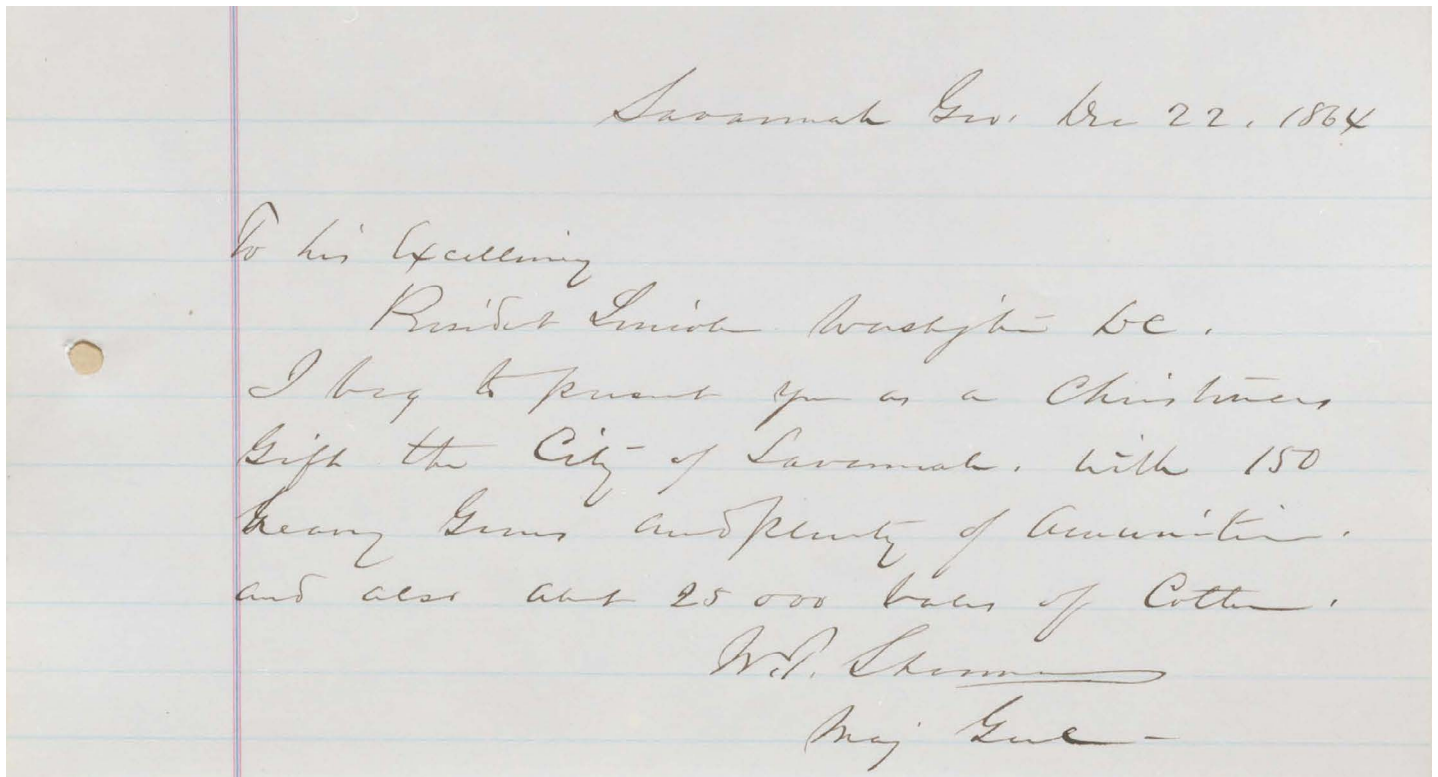
Having doubtlessly put many hours and painstaking work into creating a suitable gift for the chief magistrate, the carpenter's mate would have been deeply disappointed to learn that Lincoln likely did not receive his intended Christmas present. A brief notation on the back of Commander Blake's letter by John W. Hogg, the Navy Department Chief Clerk, gives an inkling of what happened to the gift, saying "asked Mr. Greene about the box—said he knew nothing about it."¹⁰ Apparently, McMillan's memento was either lost in transit, misplaced at the Navy Department, or ended up gracing some light-fingered government employee's mantle instead.

While Lincoln no doubt would have been pleased to receive the carpenter's keepsake, the more symbolic gift of Sherman's taking Savannah vastly overshadowed all lesser trifles. Yet as 1865 dawned, the gift that the president truly wanted—a victorious peace—was slowly edging closer to a reality thanks to the efforts of generals like Sherman and ordinary soldiers and sailors like James McMillan.

*By David J. Gerleman
Assistant Editor*

Notes on page 8...

A Christmas Gift from General Sherman 22 December 1864



Copy in William T. Sherman's Hand in Preparation for His Memoir

Image courtesy of the Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

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Image courtesy of the Alfred Whital Stern Collection,
Library of Congress, Washington, DC

In 1865, Charles D. Poston, whom Abraham Lincoln had appointed as superintendant of Indian Affairs for Arizona Territory, sent this inkwell to the President. Poston also served in the U.S. Congress from 1863 to 1864 as a delegate from Arizona Territory. Cast in sterling silver, the inkwell is engraved with Lincoln's name on one side and Poston's name on the other. Columbia is the center figure, and she is flanked by a frontiersman and a Native American. The piece is now at the Library of Congress, and a three-dimensional image is available [online](#).

Notes: Appointment of Charles D. Poston as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Arizona Territory, 16 March 1863, RG 45, Entry 41: Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 1833-1964, National Archives, College Park, MD; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2005), 1755.

ANOTHER HUMBLE GIFT

On Christmas Day in 1863, Josiah T. Elliott,¹ a Union soldier passing Christmas at Fort Pickering in Tennessee, sent President Lincoln his own warm regards and a small gift.

**Josiah T. Elliott to Abraham Lincoln¹
25 December 1863**

(Memphis, Tenn Dec 25th 1863)

(A. Lincoln President)

Dear Sir

please accept this Small Ring as a Christmas gift as a token of Friendship I made it Some months ago & now Send it as a gift to you. we are all enjoying Christmas here in Camp.

yours with much esteem

J. T. Elliott²

C^o. B. 117th Ills vol inf^t

[*Docketing*]

J. T. Elliott

Co. B. 117th Reg^t Ill

Memphis, Tenn. Dec. 25/63

Presenting to the President
a Ring as a Christmas gift

acknowledged Dec. 31, '63

Unlike James McMillan's carved box, Elliott's ring apparently made its way to Lincoln. Elliott's letter ended up in the president's papers, and the endorsement

on the back of the letter indicates acknowledgment of the gift. It is likely that one of Lincoln's secretaries penned a thank-you note, and Lincoln may have even signed it. From 1861 to 1865, Abraham Lincoln and his family were the recipients of many kind gifts like the ones from Josiah Elliott and Charles D. Poston.

**By Stacy Pratt McDermott
Associate Editor**

Notes:

¹ Josiah T. Elliott to Abraham Lincoln, 25 December 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

² Josiah T. Elliott, b. 16 December 1832, in Ohio; d. 6 March 1898, in Idaho. In 1850, he lived in Highland County, Ohio, with his mother and siblings; and sometime before 1857, he settled in Montgomery County, Illinois. On January 28, 1857, he married Eliza Ann Rutledge in Montgomery County, and in 1860, he was making his living as a farmer there. On September 19, 1862, he mustered in as a private in Company B of the 117th Illinois Infantry Regiment. After training at Camp Butler in Springfield, Illinois, the 117th was for two years based at Fort Pickering in Memphis, Tennessee. Elliott mustered out of the service on August 5, 1865. Gravestone, Dry Creek Cemetery, Boise, ID; Office of the U.S. Census, Seventh Census of the United States (1850), Highland Co., OH, 63; Office of the U.S. Census, Eighth Census of the United States (1860), Montgomery Co., IL, 279; Illinois Statewide Marriage Index, License 1612, Montgomery Co., IL, Illinois State Archives, Springfield, IL; *117th Regiment Civil War Roster* (Lebanon, IL: McKendree University, 2012); *The Daily Statesman* (Boise, ID), 8 March 1898, 6.

NOTES from page 6

¹ William T. Sherman to Abraham Lincoln, 22 December 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

² Homer C. Blake to Abraham Lincoln, Record Group 45, Entry 37: Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1882-1946, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1798-1921, Correspondence, 1798-1918, Letters Received from Commissioned Officers Below the Rank of Commander and from Warrant Officers, 1802-1884, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

³ Homer Crane Blake, b. 1 February 1822, in New York; d. 12 January 1880. A forty-year U.S. Navy veteran, Blake gained an appointment as Midshipman on March 2, 1840, and a commission as Lieutenant on September 14, 1855. Promoted to Lieutenant-Commander on July 16, 1862, he was assigned to the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron in command of the seven-gun warship *Hatteras*. On January 11, 1863, the *Hatteras* engaged the *CSS Alabama* off Galveston, Texas, and was forced to surrender. Blake was repatriated via Jamaica, received command of the *Eutaw* as part of the North Atlantic Blockade Squadron and took part in several actions against Confederate forces along the James River. Lewis R. Hamersly, *The Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Compiled from Official Sources* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly & Co., 1890), 449-50.

⁴ "Biography of Homer Crane Blake," *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (New York: Published for the Society), XL:147-48.

Blake was also instrumental in foiling a Confederate naval attack on Grant's supply base at City Point, Virginia, in the Battle of Trent's Reach on January 24, 1865.

⁵ Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Naval History Division, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 9 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 2:375.

⁶ Record Group 24, Entry 132: Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Muster Rolls of Ships, *USS Eutaw*, 1864-1865, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

⁷ *A Naval Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly & Co., 1881), 114.

⁸ Harold Holzer, "'Tokens of Respect,' and 'Heartfelt Thanks': How Abraham Lincoln Coped with Presidential Gifts," *Illinois Historical Journal* 77 (Autumn, 1984): 177-92.

⁹ *The Lincoln Log* (Springfield, IL: Papers of Abraham Lincoln), 26 November 1864; Eben G. Trask to Abraham Lincoln, 9 November 1864, box 269, Record Group 107, Entry 18: Records of the Secretary of War, Record Series Originating During the Period 1789-1889, Correspondence, Letters Received, Letters Received (Main Series), 1801-1889, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁰ Homer C. Blake to Gideon Welles, 25 December 1864, Record Group 45, Entry 37.

Benjamin F. Greene was the Navy Bureau of Navigation's Chief Clerk.

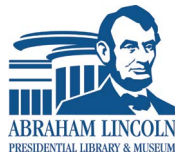
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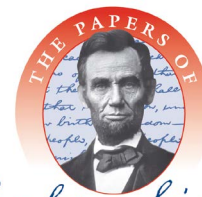
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Abraham Lincoln

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