

EXCERPT FROM  
TRUSTEES' CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

October 1, 1953

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Abraham Lincoln Association

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(to be filed in front of latest folder)

Grants from the Foundation:

\$54,000 to Abraham Lincoln Association

LINCOLN'S WRITINGS IN NINE VOLUMES

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois. In 9 volumes (including a still unpublished Index volume). Roy P. Basler, Editor; Marion Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, Assistant Editors. Illustrated. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press. \$115 the set.

With the publication of these volumes last February, a mission undertaken twenty-nine years ago was accomplished. Since 1924, The Abraham Lincoln Association has been collecting materials and making plans for this edition; since 1945, the chosen editors have worked assiduously and unflaggingly at the task which assumed ever greater proportions and presented more and more complex problems.

The total amount of material presented is impressive, including as it does 3,312 items which have never before appeared in any collection. In terms of entries, this edition contains almost twice as many as the previous standard collections such as that of Nicolay and Hay. All the items have been arranged as far as possible in chronological order, so that one can readily perceive not only the changing interests and activities of Lincoln, but the development of his character and of his literary style as well.

With the editors in Springfield, the publishers in New Brunswick, and the printers, the H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Company, in New York, the usual difficulties of producing a scholarly work of this size were multiplied. There were 12,161 manuscripts, 8,500 galleys, and the final proofs to make the round trip. The competence and skill of the make-up man were tested to the

limit, since copy for the running heads was written after pages had been made up. When the Seward Papers unexpectedly became available, it was necessary to revise Volume IV and repage and rearrange Volume V. All printing was held up until composition was finished, and by the time H. Wolff started presswork from type, ten tons of metal were tied up. So technically interesting and complicated was the whole process, which took almost three years from the arrival of the first copy until the sets reached the bookstores, that Publisher's Weekly devoted a special article to the story of how the production problems were solved.

In his acknowledgements, the editor, Roy P. Basler, states: "Without the timely aid of The Rockefeller Foundation, through Mr. David H. Stevens, the financial backing of The Abraham Lincoln Association would have been inadequate to our task, and to the Foundation the Association and the editors express their sincere thanks."

According to David C. Mearns, Chief of the Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, this edition supplies "for the first time a truly definitive edition of the writings of our foremost statesman." (New York Times, February 8, 1953.)

Edmund Wilson, writing a long essay on The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln in The New Yorker of March 14, 1953, says, "The great value of the new edition is, of course, that it makes it possible to study Lincoln at first hand - his ideas and his dealings with the world - in a more consecutive fashion and on a much fuller scale than before."

This is the first critical edition of Lincoln ever to exist, Mark Van Doren points out in his review (New York Herald Tribune Book Review, February 8, 1953). He goes on to explain, "It is a scholar's text, with variant

readings and notes galore; not an item, long or short, but is presented with full identification as to its source, manuscript or otherwise, its occasion and its broader setting in Lincoln's life. The smoother pages of Lapsley and of Nicolay and Hay will be preferred only by those readers who have no appetite for detail and no relish for the evidence that has survived of Lincoln's extreme care and conscience in the act of composition."

The (London) Times Literary Supplement of April 24, 1953, devoted its front-page article to a review of the new edition and spoke of "the labour, the critical learning, the power of organization that have gone into the production of this edition (which) make it as definitive as such things can be."

In the words of Herbert Cahoon (Library Journal, February 15, 1953), "It was a great undertaking and it will remain a great achievement."