



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library



LINCOLN
PUTS ON (H)AIRS

Copyright, 1934
The Lincoln National Life
Insurance Company
Fort Wayne,
Indiana

LINCOLN'S BEARD

Reproduction of
Correspondence
between
Abraham Lincoln
and Grace Bedell

By
LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE
FOUNDATION

LINCOLNIANA PUBLISHERS, Fort Wayne, Ind.
1935

FORTY-SEVEN words were used by Abraham Lincoln to tell his life story, prepared for the Dictionary of Congress in 1858. Now, over four thousand books and pamphlets have been written about him, and there is a steadily increasing flow of Lincoln literature each year.

L I N C O L N ' S B E A R D

In the pioneer day the course of least resistance most of the men on the frontier to allow their beards to grow. It may be said to the credit of Thomas Lincoln that he was always clean shaven. In this respect, as in many others, Abraham Lincoln followed in the footsteps of his father.



LINCOLN'S personal appearance was greatly changed by the wearing of a beard. Up until the time of his election to the presidency he was a smooth-faced man.

Just when he first conceived the idea of allowing his whiskers to grow cannot be determined but it would be reasonable to expect that after his nomination for the presidency the continual appeals for his portrait induced him to give more attention to his personal appearance.

On December 27, 1860, the following item appeared in the Evansville Daily Journal:

"They say that Old Abe is raising a pair of whiskers. Some individual of the cockney persuasion remarked that he was 'a puttin' on (h) airs'."

As this story appears to be of current interest it is likely that it was not very long before this date that he made the decision which was to bring about such a change in his appearance.

The first portrait of Abraham Lincoln showing him with a beard is said to have been made in Springfield, Illinois, early in the month of January, 1861.

On January 26, 1861, a photograph of Lincoln was taken by C. S. Germon, a Springfield photographer. This photograph shows a much heavier beard, and a later portrait by the same photographer indicates that by the time he left Springfield for Washington he had quite a full beard.

The Century Magazine for February, 1909, publishes an engraving of Lincoln copied from the portrait which is presented in this booklet. On the original photograph from which it was taken, then in the possession of Frank W. Ballard, is this inscription in the handwriting of the president: "A. Lincoln, January 26, 1861, Springfield, Ill." This photograph was a personal presentation of Lincoln to Mr. Ballard. The date does not necessarily establish the day the portrait was taken but may have been the date of presentation. It does make certain that the photograph was not taken later than January 26.

This places the taking of the portrait within three months of Lincoln's election to the presidency and it may well be called "The President-Elect Lincoln."

Just how much Lincoln's conclusion to grow a beard was due to his correspondence with an eleven-year-old girl, Grace Bedell, is not known, but the letter he received from her shortly before the election is very interesting and is here printed by permission

of Mr. George A. Dondero, of Royal Oak, Michigan, who is now in possession of the original letter.

Westfield, Chatauqua Co., N. Y.

Oct. 15, 1860

Hon. A. B. Lincoln,

Dear Sir:

My father has just come from the fair and brought home your picture and Mr. Hamlin's. I am a little girl only eleven years old, but want you should be President of the United States very much so I hope you won't think me very bold to write to such a great man as you are. Have you any little girls about as large as I am if so give them my love and tell her to write to me if you cannot answer this letter. I have got 4 brothers and a part of them will vote for you any way and if you will let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you; you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be President. My father is going to vote for you to and if I was a man I would vote for you to but I will try and get everyone to vote for you that I can. I think that rail fence around your picture makes it look very pretty. I have got a little baby sister she is nine weeks old and is just as cunning as can be. When you direct your letter direct it to Grace Bedell, Westfield Chatauqua County, New York, I must not write any more answer this letter right off. Good bye.

Grace Bedell

We might expect Mr. Lincoln would reply to any letter which he received from a child, as he was especially interested in children. His letter to Grace Bedell follows.

Hon A. B. Lincoln
 Dear Sir
 My father has
 just come from the fair and brought home
 your picture and Mrs. Hamlin's. I am a little
 girl only eleven years old, but want you should
 be President of the United States very much
 so I hope you won't think me very bold to write to
 such a great man as you are. Have you any
 little girls about as large as I am if so give them
 my love and tell her to write to me if you cannot
 answer this letter. I have got 4 brothers and part of
 them will vote for you any way and if you will
 let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest
 of them to vote for you you would look a
 great deal better for your face is so thin. All
 the ladies like whiskers and they would love

their husbands to vote for you and then you
 would be President. My father is a going to
 vote for you and if I was a man I would
 vote for you to but I will try and get
 every one to vote for you that I can. I think
 that will be around your picture makes it
 look very pretty. I have ^{not} got a little baby
 sister she is nine weeks old and is just as
 cunning as can be. When you ~~write~~ your letter
 direct to Grace Beadell, Methuen
 Chatham Co. Count New York
 I never find write any more answer
 this letter right off. Good bye
 Grace Beadell

The Letter Grace Beadell wrote to Lincoln which prompted his growing a Beard

L I N C O L N ' S B E A R D

Westfield, Chatauqua Co., N. Y.

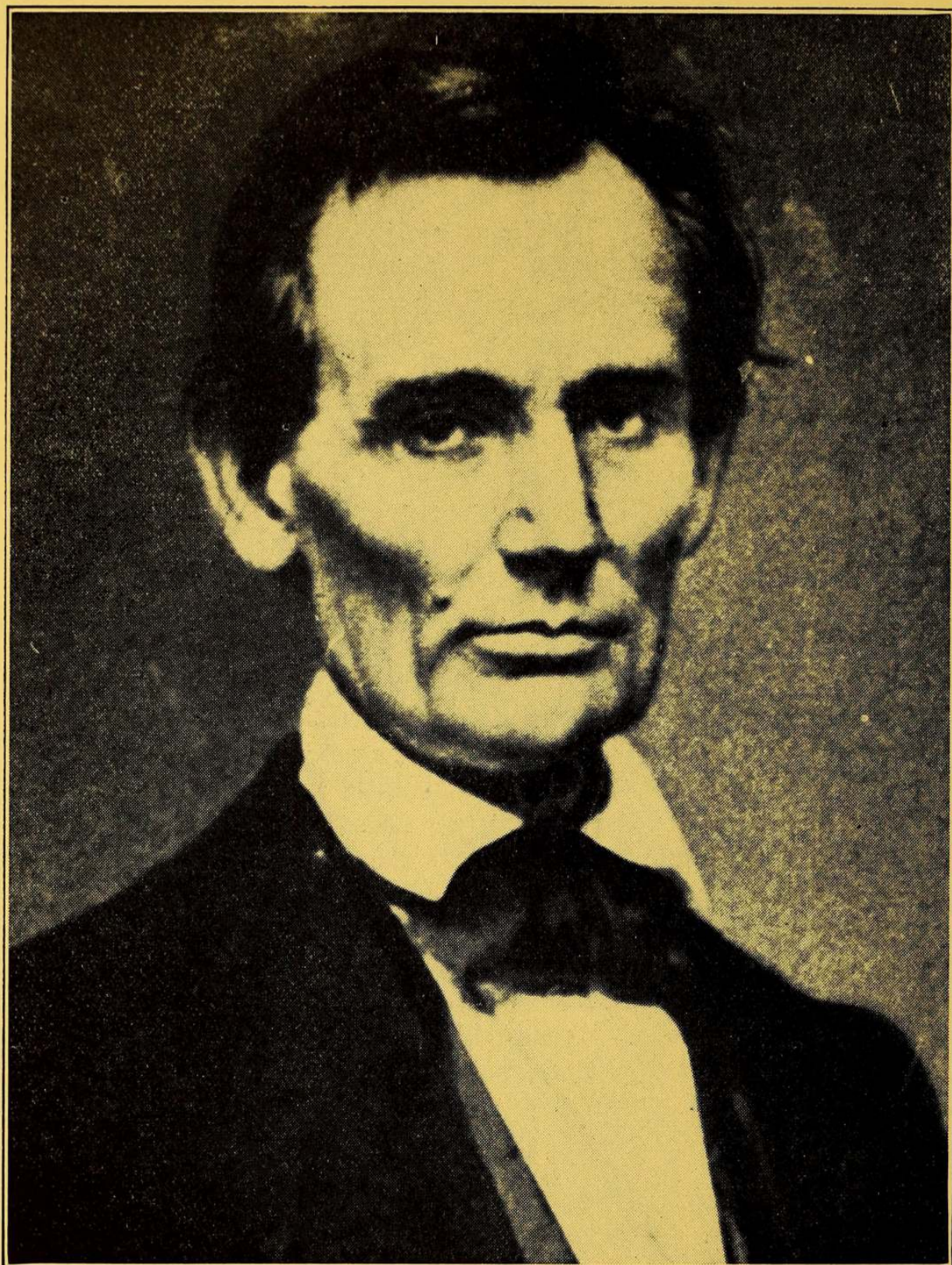
Oct. 15, 1860

Hon. A. B. Lincoln,

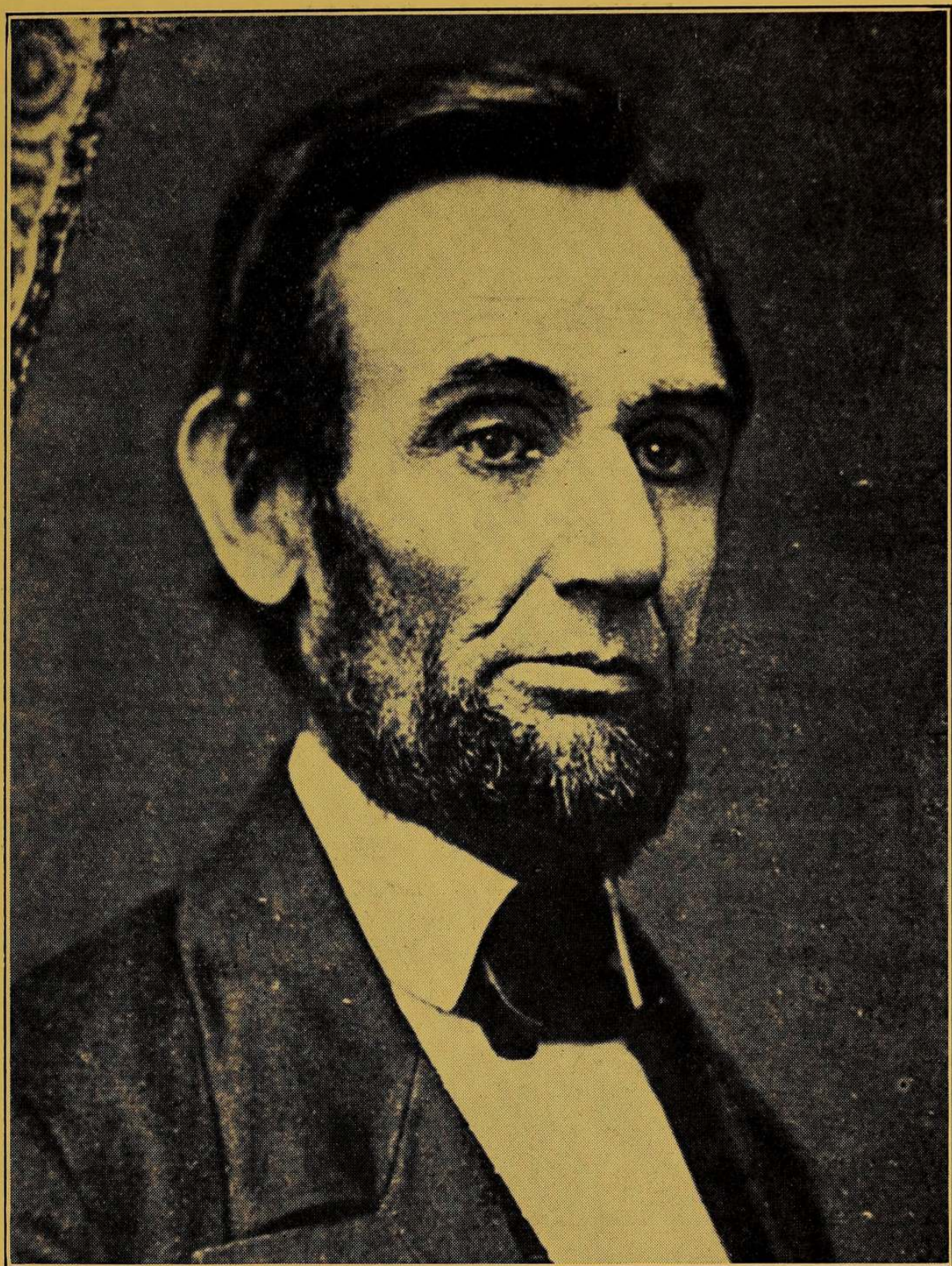
Dear Sir:

My father has just come from the fair and brought home your picture and Mr. Hamlin's. I am a little girl only eleven years old, but want you should be President of the United States very much so I hope you won't think me very bold to write to such a great man as you are. Have you any little girls about as large as I am if so give them my love and tell her to write to me if you cannot answer this letter. I have got 4 brothers and part of them will vote for you any way and if you will let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you; you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be President. My father is a going to vote for you and if I was a man I would vote for you to but I will try and get everyone to vote for you that I can I think that rail fence around your picture makes it look very pretty I have got a little baby sister she is nine weeks old and is just as cutting as can be. When you direct your letter direct it to Grace Bedell, Westfield Chataqua County, New York. I must not write any more answer this letter right off. Good bye.

Grace Bedell.



Taken from the last photograph of Lincoln without his beard. This picture was used on the National Republican Chart which prompted Grace Beadell to write her letter.



THE PRESIDENT ELECT LINCOLN

From a photograph made by C. S. Germon. Taken at Springfield, Illinois, not later than January , . Messerve, No. .

Springfield, Ill. Oct 7th 1860
 Miss Grace Beadell
 My dear little Miss.
 Your very agreeable letter
 of the 15th is received—
 I regret the necessity of saying I
 have no daughters— I have three
 sons— one seventeen, one nine, and
 one seven, years of age— They, with
 their Mother, constitute my whole fam-
 ily—
 As to the whiskers, having never worn
 any, do you not think people would
 call it a piece of silly affectation
 if I were to begin to grow?
 Your very sincere well-wisher
 A. Lincoln

Lincoln's Reply to Grace Beadell

LINCOLN'S BEARD

Springfield, Illinois, October 19, 1860

Miss Grace Bedell:

My dear little Miss: Your very agreeable letter of the 15th is received. I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughter. I have three sons—one seventeen, one nine, and one seven years of age. They, with their mother, constitute my whole family. As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affection if I were to begin it now?

Your very sincere well-wisher,

A. Lincoln.

Grace Bedell, now Mrs. George N. Billings, of Delphos, Kansas, is still living. She is eighty-two years of age, but remembers well her meeting with President Lincoln some weeks after receiving his letter, while on his way to Washington for the inauguration.

The following statement signed by Mrs. Billings has been prepared especially for this number of Lincoln Lore:

REMINISCENCE OF MRS. GRACE
BEDELL BILLINGS

Before President Lincoln's special train arrived at Westfield, N. Y., Mr. Lincoln is said to have asked Hon. Geo. W. Patterson whose home was in Westfield, if he knew a family there named Bedell. Mr Patterson replied in the affirmative whereupon Mr. Lincoln told him that he had received a letter from a little girl named Grace Bedell in which she advised him to wear whiskers, thinking it would improve his looks. He said, "The character of the letter was unique, so different from the many self-seeking and threatening ones I was receiving every day that it came to me as a relief and a pleasure."

I was at the station with my two sisters and a Mr. McCormac who had escorted us there when the president's train arrived. In my hand was a bouquet of roses which a neighbor had furnished so that I might give them to the president. The crowd was so large and I was so little that I could not see the president as he stood on the rear platform of his train making his address. But at the end of a short speech he announced, "I have a little correspondent in this place, and if she is present will she please come forward?"

"Who is it?—What is her name?" shouted a chorus of voices from the crowd.

"Grace Bedell," answered Mr. Lincoln.

Taking my hand, the gentleman who had escorted us to the station made a lane through the crowd and led me to the low platform beside the train. The president stepped down from the car, shook my hand, and kissed me. "You see," he said, indicating his beard, "I let these whiskers grow for you, Grace."

The crowd cheered and the president reentered his car. I was so surprised and embarrassed by the president's unexpected conduct that I ran home as fast as I could, dodging in and out between horses and buggies and once crawling under a wagon. Such was my confusion that I completely forgot the bouquet of roses that I was going to give the great man to whom I had offered such rare advice, and when I arrived home I had the stems, all that remained of the bouquet, still tightly clutched in my hand.

It seemed to me as the president stooped to kiss me that he looked very kind, yes, and sad.

Grace Bedell Billings.

It was not the first portrait taken after his election, however, as one other likeness of him is available showing a beard just starting its growth. It must have been taken nearly a month before the one under consideration in this bulletin. The earlier one, however, is a poor exposure and a very unsatisfactory likeness of Lincoln.

The transition period, during the interval when Lincoln's face was changing from that of a beardless to a bearded man, presents one of the most interesting studies of Lincoln portraits. Here under the hand of the artist we see many transformations.

L I N C O L N ' S B E A R D

The well-known portrait by Hesler presenting Lincoln as the presidential condidate appeared after the election showing a well-trimmed beard, placed there by an artist. Currier & Ives, through a process of retouching, brought one of their smooth faced Lincolns up to date by putting a beard on him. Many other famous photographs erwe thus mutilated in order to make the respective prints up to date.

The study of this portrait is interesting from the fact that it was taken at the time Lincoln was selecting his Cabinet, and meeting hundreds of politicians who were presenting claims for respective candidates for positions. It clearly shows the strain under which Lincoln was working at this time and even before the camera the anxiety caused by the unrest in the south and the insistent demands for political favor in the north could not be obscured. The contrast between the portraits of Lincoln, the Candidate, and Lincoln, the President-Elect is striking indeed.

The uncertainty as to who took the portrait featured here has been caused by the changing of wonership of the original negative now in possession of Herbert Wells Fay, custodian of the Lincoln Monument at Springfield, Illinois.

In 1883 the portrait was copyrighted by F. M. McNulty. On October 24, 1894, the assignment of the photograph to H. W. Fay is recorded. The photograph first called the McNulty-Butler photograph, later on the McNulty-Butler-Germon portrait; but now it is usually known as the Germon portrait.

McClure's Magazine for June, 1895, under a full page cut of the portrait, uses this description:

"There are in existance but few original negatives of portraits of Lincoln. Brady made a number, which he sold to the govern-

ment; and the portraits of Lincoln commonly seen are copies from one or another of these, or of the well-known Hesler picture, wherein Lincoln is shown without a beard. The above is from a photograph by McNulty, taken at Springfield, Illinois, just previous to Lincoln's departure for Washington in January, 1861. It is accounted about the truest portrait of Lincoln ever made. His friends at home esteemed it so highly that they chose it as the model for a painting for the Illinois State House. The original negative, an old-fashioned wet plate, is very well preserved, and is now in the historical collection of H. W. Fay, Esq., DeKalb, Illinois, by whose kind permission the present reproduction is made."

According to the testimony of the late O. H. Oldroyd, C. S. Germon was the artist who took the picture. When the photographer, who knew Mr. Oldroyd very well, presented him with a print from the original negative he told Oldroyd that he had taken the picture himself.

This portrait was so well received when it was given general distribution, that an engraving from it was used on the ten dollar greenback and later on one of the issues of the 5-20 bonds.

Leonard W. Volk, the Lincoln sculptor, wrote the following note on the back of one of these portraits:

"This photograph of Abraham Lincoln, one of the first with a beard, I regard as one of the best, as I remember him after he allowed his beard to grow."

This testimonial was signed in Chicago on March 13, 1983.

Much credit is due to Herbert Wells Fay for preserving the original negative of this photograph, and for the general circulation

LINCOLN'S BEARD

which he has given it by using it as an exchange medium for the portraits of famous men.

He has also been very generous in allowing its reproduction so that it has become one of the best known of the Lincoln photographs.

The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company is fortunate in having an excellent copy of the original, presented to its Executive Vice-President, Franklin B. Mead, by Van de Grift, a local photographer.

71.2009.084.11124



Presented with the compliments
or
The Lincoln National Life
Insurance Company
Fort Wayne, Indiana



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library