

Abraham Lincoln papers

Abraham Lincoln, Final Emancipation Proclamation — Final Draft [Lithograph copy]¹, January 1, 1863

1 Abraham Lincoln considered the Emancipation Proclamation to be one of his greatest achievements. Issued on January 1, 1863, it was widely celebrated in its own time and has enjoyed international celebrity ever since as one of the great documents in the history of human freedom. But its stature has resulted in widespread misconceptions about its inception, its provisions, its scope, its intended effect. Readers of the document that follows, and other related documents listed hereafter, will readily see that it did not proclaim the freedom of all slaves on American soil, or even of all slaves held in rebel territory. Heralded at the time and often since as a humanitarian measure, it was offered by Lincoln strictly as a military measure that was necessary to defeat the forces of secession and preserve the Union, but readers should be aware that it was targeted and timed with great care.

Major documents in this collection bearing on the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 are as follows:

1. Message to Congress — Draft, [February or March, 1862], [on federally compensated emancipation]
2. Address to Border State Representatives, [July 12, 1862]
3. Message to Congress — Draft, [July 17, 1862] [on the Second Confiscation Act]
4. Emancipation Proclamation — Earliest Draft, [July 22, 1862]
5. Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation - Printed Circular, [September 22, 1862]
6. Final Emancipation Proclamation — Preliminary Draft [four copies in this collection]
7. William H. Seward to Abraham Lincoln, December 30, 1862 [suggested revisions to Final Emancipation Proclamation — Preliminary Draft]
8. Montgomery Blair, Memorandum on Draft of Final Emancipation Proclamation, December 31, 1862 [suggested revisions to Final Emancipation Proclamation — Preliminary Draft]
9. Salmon P. Chase to Abraham Lincoln, December 31, 1862 [suggested revisions to Final Emancipation Proclamation — Preliminary Draft]

10. Edward Bates, Memorandum, December 31, 1862 [suggestions for the Emancipation Proclamation]
11. Salmon P. Chase, Proposed Revision of Emancipation Proclamation, [December 30-31?, 1862]
12. Salmon P. Chase, Memorandum on Emancipation, [December 31?, 1862]
13. Final Emancipation Proclamation — Final Draft, January 1, 1863, [lithograph copy of Lincoln's manuscript]

Emancipation of the slaves had been urged in various quarters from the beginning of the Civil War, but Lincoln resisted such efforts, arguing that the President and Congress had no constitutional right to interfere with slavery in the states. Because he deemed keeping the border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri in the Union indispensable to preserving the Union, Lincoln was reluctant to do anything about slavery that would tilt these slave-holding states in the direction of the Confederacy. Accordingly, his initial attempts to promote emancipation began in early 1862 with measures to persuade the border states to agree to accept federally mandated compensation for their slaves (see nos. 1 and 2 above). When it became clear that these efforts were to be without effect, and when, about the same time, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, Lincoln responded with a message to Congress expressing his reservations about confiscation (see no. 3), and he followed this by writing out for his cabinet the earliest version of the Emancipation Proclamation (see no. 4).

The reaction of the cabinet to this document was mixed, and Lincoln was in the end persuaded by the advice of his Secretary of State, William H. Seward, to postpone issuance of the proclamation until a major Union victory had been achieved. Following the Battle of Antietam two months later, Lincoln made public his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862 (see no. 5). Where the earliest version of the proposed proclamation had been extremely brief, outlining its emancipation provisions in a single paragraph, the September version was much more detailed. It specified that the President would continue efforts to encourage compensated emancipation and the colonization of freed slaves. It also called attention to acts of Congress that enjoined the U. S. military to protect escaped slaves from being re-enslaved. The deadline for states to cease rebellion and renew their loyalty to the Union was announced as January 1, 1863.

After extensively re-drafting his proclamation, Lincoln distributed copies of his draft to members of his cabinet on December 30, asking for their suggested revisions and comments. Four copies of this document survive in this collection (see no. 6), some of which reflect copies marked for revision by various cabinet members. Except for Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, who submitted his

own original version of the Proclamation (see no. 12), the suggested changes of cabinet members were not numerous, and many were incorporated by Lincoln into the final draft (see nos. 7-12).

Although Lincoln's earliest efforts at emancipation had been exclusively along the lines of compensation to slave owners, and although this element had been a prominent part of his first two versions of the Emancipation Proclamation (nos. 4 and 5), no mention whatever is made of compensation in this final version. Even more notable is the conspicuous mention here, for the first time, of the administration's determination henceforth to enlist freed slaves and other African Americans as soldiers.

The text that follows is taken from a lithographic reproduction of Lincoln's original manuscript of the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. Except for the ceremonial opening and closing, and the two printed paragraphs pasted in, the original manuscript was entirely in Lincoln's hand. Lincoln reluctantly agreed to allow the original of this manuscript to be sold to benefit the Sanitary Commission, but not before he had three lithographic copies made. This precaution resulted in a clear image of the original manuscript, which was subsequently destroyed in the great Chicago fire of 1871.

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.²

2 The two lines comprising the document's headings are in an unknown secretarial hand.

Whereas, on the twentysecond day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:³

3 The following two paragraphs were clipped from a printed circular containing the text of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation (no. 5 above) and pasted by Lincoln into this manuscript, then marked off by handwritten quotations marks.

“ That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thence forward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority

thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of the m, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New-Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the fortyeight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess, Ann, and Norfolk, including the Cities of Norfolk, & Portsmouth⁴; and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

4 Lincoln neglected to place a closing parenthesis here.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.⁵

⁵ This sentence, except for the phrase "upon military necessity," was suggested by Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. See no. 11 above.

In⁶ witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

⁶ Except for Lincoln's signature, all writing from this point on is in an unknown secretarial hand.

Done at the city of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

L. S.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President;

William H. Seward,

Secretary of State.