

## Abraham Lincoln papers

John G. Nicolay, *The Carpet-Bag Papers*<sup>1</sup>, March 14, 1874

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1 This document was created by John G. Nicolay, Lincoln's former secretary and biographer, to record the contents of a collection of Lincoln documents. Some were printed newspaper clippings, some were printed texts of speeches, some printed texts with handwritten changes, and some were handwritten manuscripts. All were contained in a carpet bag and presumably had been part of Lincoln's personal papers. The reference to "Mr. Spofford," is to the Librarian of Congress, Ainsworth R. Spofford, who had been appointed to his position by Lincoln. In addition to listing the contents of the carpet bag, Nicolay's document contains copies (in Nicolay's hand) of certain of the documents. Some of the originals of these documents are still in this collection, as indicated.

The Carpet-Bag Papers.

(March 4, 1861?)<sup>2</sup>

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2 This note probably indicates that Nicolay at first intended to copy the material in the carpet bag relating to Lincoln's First Inaugural Address. Instead, he first included a descriptive list of the twelve items.

[Marginal note:

A true copy J. G. N.]

Contents

Of the Carpet Bag bundle of "Lincoln Papers"— somewhat damaged by water, preserved by Mr. Nicolay and examined and transcribed by him, after having been shown to Mr. Spofford, Librarian of Congress, this March 14th 1874.

1st Printed Document — Cooper Institute Speech with notes &c. No. Mss. Notes.

2. Printed Doc. Lincolns Springfield Speech of June 26th 1867.<sup>3</sup> No Mss. Notes

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3 This date is undoubtedly a mistake for that of Lincoln's speech on the Dred Scott decision, which took place in Springfield on June 26, 1857. See *Collected Works*, II, 398-410.

3. Printed Doc. Proceedings Rep. State Convention at Springfield Ill. & Lincolns "house divided against itself" speech, June 16, 1858. No Mss. Notes.

4 Printed Documents. Five printed copies Lincolns first inaugural. No. Mss notes.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Only one of these pristine, unmarked copies survive in this collection. See Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, First Printed Draft [January or February, 1861].

5 Printed Document. Printed Copy of Lincolns first inaugural with Mss. Notes in his own handwriting, and accompanied by four and one fragmentary foolscap half-sheets of Manuscript notes, & suggestions for emendations in the handwriting of Wm H Seward, on the<sup>5</sup>

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5 This probably refers to the Lincoln document in this collection designated Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, Second Printed Draft, with Changes in Lincoln's Hand [February or March, 1861] and to the Seward document designated William H. Seward, Suggested Changes to First Inaugural Address [February, 1861].

6. Original Mss.— Eleven foolscap halvesheets of notes and memoranda with two endorsement as follows:

"The foregoing paper was written by Lincoln in 1848 as being what he thought Genl. Taylor ought to say."<sup>6</sup> also

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6 See Abraham Lincoln, Fragment: What Gen Taylor Ought to Say [January?] 1848.

"The foregoing scraps about "protection were written by Lincoln between his election to Congress in 1846 and taking his seat in 1847."<sup>7</sup>

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7 See Abraham Lincoln, Fragments on Protection, [August 1846-December 1847].

They were enclosed in an envelop addressed to Hon David Davis, Bloomington Ill. under frank of "Simon Cameron U.S.S."

7 Original Mss. — Fragment (three half sheets small note paper) with memoranda of a speech to Kentuckians.<sup>8</sup>

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8 See Abraham Lincoln, Fragment of Speech to Kentuckians, [February 1861].

8 Original Mss.— Two foolscap half sheets of Mss. beginning “Niagara Falls.”<sup>9</sup>

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9 See Abraham Lincoln, Fragment on Niagara Falls [September-October 1848].

9 Original Mss. Part of one foolscap halfsheet of Mss. beginning “The legitimate object of government” &c.<sup>10</sup>

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10 See Fragment, Abraham Lincoln, “The Legitimate Object of Government is...”[1840s?].

10. Original Mss — Part of one foolscap halfsheet of Mss. entitled “Suggestions for a closing paragraph” apparently in handwriting of F W Seward and intend for first inaugural.<sup>11</sup>

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11 See William H. Seward?, Suggestions for a Closing Paragraph, First Inaugural Address, [February 1861].

11. Original Mss. Letter from Hon. O H Browning to Lincoln dated Springfield Feb. 17 1861, referring to having read, and offering suggestions for the first inaugural. Also containing on the back, the following in Lincoln's handwriting:

“Americans all, we are not enemies but friends. We have sacred ties of affection which, though strained by passion let us hope can never be broken.”<sup>12</sup>

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12 See Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, February 17, 1861.

12. Original Mss. Twenty one half sheets, foolscap, containing apparently minutes of Lincoln's speech to Kansas Convention. (In Lincoln's handwriting.<sup>13</sup>

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13 This is the end of Nicolay's list of items in the carpet bag.

Literal Copy.

With erasures and Interlineations, of suggestions and emendations for Lincoln's First Inaugural, in the handwriting of Hon. Wm H Seward.<sup>14</sup>

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14 For the original of this items, see William H. Seward, Suggested changes to inaugural address, March 4, 1861

Copy

Page 1.

Lines 3 & 4 Omit the inverted commas.

5 Instead of electing write "nominating."

6 Instead of platform write "summary"

7 & 8 Strike out all between "Upon" and "position" both included

9 After the word "that" insert the candidate "that" in the strike out "in his judgment and insert the words in the judgment of the candidate the platform which he thus accepts and insert the summary binds the officer elected

11, 12, 13, 14, 15 Strike out all these lines and write "With this explanation I deem it my duty as I am disposed in feeling to follow so far as they apply to the Executive sphere the principles on which I was brought before the American People."

Page 2.

Line 5 After the words "cheerfully given" insert "in every case and under all circumstances."

Page 3.

Line 1 Strike out "now"

4 Strike out "on the whole" and write "generally."

7, 8 After the word "Union" strike out all the rest of the sentence, and insert "heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted."

31 Strike out the whole line.

33 For "nothing" write "void."

35 For treasonable write "revolutionary."

Page 4.

Line 1. After the word "that" write in the view of the Constitution and the laws.

2 After the word care insert "as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me."

5 Instead of "tangible way" write authoritative manner

6 & 7 Instead of "will have its own and defend itself" write will constitutionally defend and maintain itself"

9, 10 ,11, 12, 13 Strike out the whole line and insert "The means committed to shall be used wi power confided to me shall be used indeed with efficacy but also with discretion in every case and exigency according to the circumstances actually existing and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of exist the national troubles and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections

14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 In cases when the [doneB?] legal right

Strike out the whole sentence and insert "There are in this government as in every other emergencies when the exercise of power lawful in itself is less certain to secure the just ends of administration than a temporary forbearance from it with reliance on the ultimate consent of the community voluntary though delayed acquiescence of the people in the laws which have been made by themselves and for their own benefit. I shall not lose sight of this obvious maxim."

Page 4.

Line 24. After the word persons insert "in one section as well as in the other"

26 After the word "them" insert "because they I am sure they are must be few in number and of little influence when their policy is principles pernicious principles are fully understood.

34 After the word right "any" write "distinct."

Page 5.

Line 6 After the word "negations" write guarantees and exceptions prohibitions

7 After the word "every" write "possible."

15 Strike out "submit" and insert acquiescence.

17 Strike out "submission" & insert "acquiescence."

18 For "submit" write "acquiesce"

21 For "South Carolina" write Alabama "Alabama or Florida"

23 For People write "communities"

26, 27 After the word "anarchy" strike out the next sentences and write A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments is &c

34 And that the judicial constre After the words "the suit" Insert "and while they are entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all the departments of the government

Page 6.

Line 1 Strike out "rule" and insert "practice."

Line 1 Strike out "But" and insert At the same time ever the candid citizen must confess that

Line 3. After the word Court strike out the words "it is plain that" and insert "made in the ordinary course of litigation between parties in personal actions"

Lines 4 & 5 After the word turned having strike out the rest of the sentence and write practically confided resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal."

Lines 9, 10, 11. Strike out the whole paragraph.

Line 12. After the word "section" insert "of our country"

Line 15. After the word "enforced" insert "perhaps"

Line 16 Strike out the words "is against" and insert "imperfectly supports"

Line 20 After the word "be" insert "ultimately."

Line 36. Strike out the whole sentence and insert "While so great a diversity of opinion exists on the question what amendments, if indeed any would be effective in restoring peace and safety it would only tend to aggravate the dispute if I were to attempt to give direction to the public mind in that respect."

Page 7.

Line 10 After the words "transmit it" insert "if possible."

Line 14 Strike out the words, "be on our side or on yours" and insert "be on the side of the North or of the South of the East or of the West."

Lines 19, 20 Strike out all the words to and including "Chair" and insert

While the people retain their virtue and vigilance no legislature and no administration can

Line 20 Strike out "can"

22 Strike out the words "take time" and insert "think calmly"

23, 24. Strike out all from "Nothing valuable" to "burning" both inclusive.

Line 35 Strike out the words "unless you first assail it."

38, 39, 40 Strike out all after the word "defend it."

On back of 4th half sheet:

I close. We are not we must not be aliens or enemies, but countrymen fellow countrymen or brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly they must not be broken they will not I am sure they will not be broken. The mystic chords which proceeding from every battle field and patriot so many patriot graves bind pass through all the hearts and hearths all the hearths in this broad continent of ours will yet harmonize again harmonize in their ancient music when touched as they surely breathed upon again by the better angel guardian angel of the nation.

Copy

Of MS. in the handwriting of Lincoln.<sup>15</sup>

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15 For the original manuscript, see Abraham Lincoln, Fragment on Niagara Falls [September-October 1848].

Niagara Falls! By what mysterious power is it that millions and millions are drawn from all parts of the world to gaze upon Niagara Falls! There is no mystery about the thing itself. Every effect is just such as any intelligent man, knowing the causes would anticipate, without seeing it. If the water, moving onward in a great river reaches a point where there is a perpendicular jog of a hundred feet in descent in the bottom of the river it is plain the water will have a violent and continuous plunge at that point. It is also plain, the water, thus plunging will foam and roar and send up a mist, continuously, in which last during sunshine there will be perpetual rainbows. The mere physical of Niagara Falls is only this. Yet this is really a very small part of that world's wonder. Its power to excite reflection and emotion is its great charm. The geologist will demonstrate that the plunge or fall was once at Lake Ontario, and has worn its way back to its present position; he will ascertain how fast it is wearing now, and so get a basis for determining how long it has been wearing back from Lake Ontario and finally demonstrate by it that the world is at least fourteen thousand years old. A philosopher of a slightly different turn will say Niagara Falls is only the lip of the basin out of which pours all the surplus water which rains down on two or three hundred thousand square miles of the earth's surface. He will estimate with approximate accuracy that five hundred thousand tons of water falls with its full weight a distance of a hundred feet each minute — thus exerting a force equal to the lifting of the same weight, through the same space in the same time. And then the further reflection comes, that this vast amount of water constantly pouring down is supplied by an equal amount constantly lifted up by the sun; and still he says "If this much is lifted up for this one space of two or three hundred thousand square miles, an equal amount must be lifted for every other equal space; and he is overwhelmed in the contemplation of the vast power of the sun is constantly exerting in the quiet noiseless operation of lifting water up to be rained down again.

But still there is more. It calls up the indefinite part. When Columbus first sought this continent — when Christ suffered on the Cross — when Moses led Israel through the Red Sea — nay even when Adam first came from the hand of his Maker, — then as now, Niagara was roaring here. The eyes of that species of extinct giants whose bones fill the Mounds of America, have gazed on Niagara as ours do now. Cotemporary with the whole race of men, and older than the first man Niagara is strong and fresh today as ten thousand years ago. The mammoth and mastodon now so long dead, that fragments of their monstrous bones alone testify, that they ever lived, have gazed on Niagara. In that long, long time, never still for a single moment. Never dried, never froze, never slept, never rested.



MS. in Lincoln's handwriting<sup>16</sup>

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16 For the original, see Abraham Lincoln, Fragment, "The Legitimate Object of Government is..."[1840s?].

Copy.

The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but can not do at all or can not so well do for themselves in their separate and individual capacities.

In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere.

The desirable things, which the individuals of a people can not do, or can not well do for themselves, fall into two classes; those which have relation to wrongs, and those which have not. Each of these branch off into an infinite variety of subdivisions.

The first — that in relation to wrongs, embraces all crimes misdemeanors and nonperformance of contracts. The other embraces all which in its nature, and without wrong requires combined action, as public roads and highways, public schools, charities, pauperism, orphanage, estates of the deceased; and the machinery of government itself.

From this it appears that if all were well just, there still would be some though not so much need of government.

MS. in Lincoln's handwriting.<sup>17</sup>

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17 For the original, see Abraham Lincoln, Fragment of Speech to Kentuckians, [February 1861].

Copy.

I am grateful for the opportunity your invitation affords me to appear before an audience of my native state. During the present winter it has been greatly pressed upon me by many patriotic citizens, Kentuckians among others, that I could in my position, by a word, restore peace to the country. But what word? I have many words already before the public, and my position was given

me on the faith of those words. Is the desired word to be confirmatory of these or must it be contradictory? If the former it is useless repetition; if the latter it is dishonorable and treacherous.

Again, it is urged as if the word must be spoken before the fourth of March. Is the speaking the word a sine qua non to the inauguration? Is there a Bell-man, a Breckenridge-man, or a Douglas-man who would tolerate his own candidate to make such terms had he been elected? Who amongst you would not die by the proposition, that your candidate being elected, should be inaugurated solely on the conditions of the Constitution, and laws, or not at all. What Kentuckian, worthy of his birth-place, would not do this? Gentleman, I too am a Kentuckian.

Nor is this a matter of mere personal honor. No man can be elected President without some opponents, as well as supporters; and if, when elected, he can not be installed till he first appeases his enemies, by breaking his pledges and betraying his friends, this government, and all popular government is already at an end. Demands for such surrender, once recognized, and yielded to, are without limit, as to nature, extent or repetition. They break the only bond of faith between public, and public servant, and they distinctly set the minority over the majority. Such demands, acquiesced in, would not merely be the ruin of a man, or a party, but as a precedent, they would ruin the government itself.

I do not deny the possibility that the people may err in an election; but if they do, the true remedy is in the next election, and not in the treachery of the person elected.

MS. in the handwriting of F. W. Seward.<sup>18</sup>

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18 For the original, see William H. Seward?, *Suggestions for a Closing Paragraph, First Inaugural Address*, [February 1861].

Copy.

Suggestions for a closing paragraph.

However unusual it may be at such a time to speak of sections or to sections, yet in view of the misconceptions and agitations which have strained the ties of brotherhood so far, I hope it will not be deemed a departure from propriety, whatever it may be from custom, to say, that if in the criminations and misconstructions which too often imbue our political contests, any man south of this capital has been led to believe that I regard with a less friendly eye, his rights, his interests or his domestic safety and happiness, or those of his State, than I do those of any other portion of my country, or that I would invade or disturb any legal right or domestic institution in the South,

he mistakes both my principles and feelings, and does not know me. I aspire to come in the spirit, however far below the ability and the wisdom of Washington, of Madison, of Jackson and of Clay. In that spirit I here declare that in my administration I shall know no rule but the Constitution, no guide but the laws, and no sentiment but that of equal devotion to my whole country, east, west, north and south.

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19 For the original, see Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, February 17, 1861.

Springfield Ills. Feby 17, 1861.

Hon. A. Lincoln

Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

When I read your inaugural at Indianapolis, I did so in very great haste, and my attention was more attracted to the clear, bold and forcible statement of principles which are just and true, than to considerations of policy and expediency. Upon reading it with more deliberation since my return here, it occurs to me that there is one passage near the top of the fourth page, which ought to be modified, and I take the liberty of pointing your attention to it, that you may, if you deem it of sufficient importance, consider it.

The passage referred to is as follows:

“All the powers at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen; to hold, occupy and possess these, and all other property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties on imports; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion of any State.”

Would it not be judicious so to modify this as to make it read

“All the power at my disposal will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties on imports &c.”

omitting the declaration of the purpose of reclamation, which will be construed into a threat or menace, and will be irritating even in the border states.

On principle the passage is right as it now stands. The fallen places ought to be reclaimed. But cannot that be accomplished as well or even better without announcing the purpose in your inaugural?

In any conflict which may ensue between the government and the seceding States, it is very important that the traitors shall be the aggressors, and that they be kept constantly and palpably in the wrong.

The first attempt that is made to furnish supplies or reinforcements to Sumter, will induce aggression by South Carolina, and then the government will stand justified before the entire country, in repelling that aggression, and retaking the forts. And so it will be every where, and all the places now occupied by traitors can be recaptured without affording them additional material with which to influence the public mind, by representing your inaugural as containing an irritating threat.

But I will not elaborate the matter. I only intended to make the suggestion for which I hope you will pardon me as you know my motives are good.

Respectfully yours

(signed) O.H. Browning

The following scrap was written on the back of this letter, in Lincoln's handwriting:

Americans, all, we are not enemies, but friends. We have sacred ties of affection which, though strained by passion, let us hope can never be broken.