

THE WORKS PROGRAM

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-- Works Progress Administration --

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WPA Writers' Projects locates long-lost Lincoln manuscript.

The long-lost manuscript of the address which President Lincoln delivered November 10, 1864, at the celebration of his reelection has been discovered in a bank vault at Dryden, N. Y.

The finder was Professor Roland P. Gray who was seeking material for the American Guide for which he is New York State research editor. The Guide is the Government's forthcoming five-volume travel handbook of the United States which is being compiled under the Works Progress Administration.

Professor Gray received no hint of the presence of the manuscript in the community until the president of the Dryden Bank, in casual conversation, told him of the treasure he had in safe keeping. By permission of the trustees of the Dryden Public Library which owns the manuscript, the research editor was able to remove it from the vault to have it photostated.

Through the American Guide, photostats of the four-page Lincoln address and of a two page letter respecting it written by Robert T. Lincoln, the President's son, have now been placed on exhibition at the Dryden Public Library and, more important, with the Library of Congress at Washington, D. C.

Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Congressional Library, as a special Lincoln Birthday feature, not only placed on view the photostats, but also a copy of the report which Professor Gray made on his discovery to Henry G. Alsberg, Director of the Federal Writers' Projects and Editor-in-Chief of the American Guide.

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President Lincoln delivered the address from a window above the portico of the White House on the evening of Thursday, November 10, 1864, two days after Election Day, when a "serenade" was staged by the Lincoln and Johnson Clubs of the District of Columbia.

The manuscript remained with the Lincoln family until April 18, 1916, when Robert T. Lincoln sent it to Representative John W. Dwight, of Dryden, N. Y., with the following self-explanatory message:

"You know my gratitude to you for your effective work in the House in the legislation providing for the erection of the Lincoln Memorial here, which is now approaching completion, but I wish you to have something tangible as a testimonial of my feeling and which may be associated by you in your memory of that part of your public work.

"In the book by Noah Brooks, entitled 'Washington in Lincoln's Time', you will find an account of a public demonstration at the White House immediately after the presidential election of 1864, at which my father made a speech which he had written out beforehand. I am sending to you the original manuscript used by him on that occasion and I beg your acceptance of it, with the renewed assurance of my kindest regard."

Dryden, N. Y., is near Ithaca, where Professor Gray makes his home. How he came to find the Lincoln manuscript is explained in his report to Mr. Alsberg. He wrote:

"I am sending you the promised photostat copy, four pages, of the Lincoln manuscript of the speech delivered by him soon after his reelection to the Presidency. The speech was delivered from the window over the front portico of the entrance to the White House. On the ground, there was a great mob of enthusiastic people who had assembled to celebrate the President's reelection. There was a booming of cannon and fireworks. The traditional story, not verified by me, is that Wilkes Booth was at the time on the lawn plotting the President's death.

"With the manuscript of the speech, I am also sending a photostat of a letter signed in ink by Robert T. Lincoln. This letter will give you the facts concerning the gift of the manuscript to Congressman Dwight. Congressman Dwight lived in the little town of Dryden, N. Y. In this same town Jenny McGraw Fiske built on the

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ite of her own former home a very attractive gray stone library as a gift to the own. The library itself contains some first editions of the poet Dryden's works. It also has some valuable Revolutionary and Civil War material. There is nothing in the library, however, to indicate to the casual visitor that it possesses a unique manuscript.

"On one of my visits to Dryden in search of historical material, through conversation with the President of the Bank, I learned that this manuscript of the Lincoln speech was deposited in the bank vaults. He told me, of course, that it belonged to the library, and that the letter explained how Congressman Dwight came into possession of it, and I was then further informed that Mrs. Dwight had given the manuscript to the library. I was privileged on a second visit to inspect the letter and manuscript. The paper and ink are still unfaded and the whole manuscript of four folio sheets is in perfect condition. In lead pencil, apparently in Lincoln's own hand and is written the date, 'November 10, 1864'.

"Regarding the letter to the Hon. John W. Dwight from Robert T. Lincoln, there is one point that no one seems able to clear up for me. At the top of the letter, is typewritten the word 'copy'. Unmistakably, however, the name of Robert T. Lincoln is written in ink.

"I secured the permission of the Trustees of the library to take the manuscript of the speech to Ithaca and have photostat copies made, of which there are now five. At my request the library in Dryden now keeps a photostat copy of the speech on exhibition. I sent photostat copies of both letter and speech to Dr. Alexander H. Flick, State Historian, and to the Tompkins County Historical Society. *** These are the bare facts of the finding of the manuscript.

"I may add simply that, inasmuch as its ownership and location has not been publicly known for a good many years, it seems to me that the discovery through our project is worthy of note. There is a temptation of course to comment on the melodramaticness and the simple wisdom and grandeur of the speech itself but that would

rd of the way from the top, and shared the column with the report of a new oration
 ch John B. Gough, the social reformer, made at the Academy of Music. Of the two,
 e Gough story had a better representation. On the editorial page opposite, while
 re was an editorial on election figures, the speech was not mentioned; but two
 .torials discussed Mr. Davis' remarks.

According to the Washington Evening Star, which devoted several first page
 umns to the account of the celebration, the club members formed lines opposite the
 on League rooms in 9th Street and marched up Pennsylvania Avenue, twelve or four-
 n hundred strong, carrying torch lights and transparencies, while brass bands
 red and men from the Navy Yard discharged two howitzers at intervals.

Most of Washington turned out to see the spectacle. By the time the
 chers reached the White House grounds, the crowd was immense. Men and boys climb-
 into trees and around the sides of the building itself where foothold offered.
 e bands played, fireworks shot into the air, the howitzers crashed and the crowd
 t up a cry for the President.

Mr. Lincoln appeared at the window above the portico and gave the speech
 ch he had prepared especially for the occasion. It opened with the words:

"It has long been a grave question whether any government, not too strong
 the liberties of the people, can be strong enough to maintain its own existence
 great emergencies."

He concluded:

"And now, let me close by asking three hearty cheers for our brave soldiers
 . seamen and their gallant and skillful commanders."

The cheers were given with enthusiasm.

The marchers then left to serenade the members of the cabinet. Secretary
 ard, still hoarse from a recent speech in New York City, told of the rapid dis-
 earance of Tories after the Revolutionary War and predicted:

"It is my judgment that we will all come together again and that, when

human harm; as, henceforth, all men will come to see him as you and I have seen him-- a true, loyal, patient, patriotic and benovolent man. ("That's so!" some shouted and the crowd cheered.) Having no longer any motive to malign and injure him, detraction will cease and Abraham Lincoln will take his place with Washington and Franklin and Jefferson and Adams and Jackson among the benefactors of the country and of the human race."

Secretary Welles, Major-General Ord and Attorney-General Bates also appeared at the call of the serenaders and gave short talks. Secretaries Fessenden, Stanton, and Usher were out when the crowd called.

The Lincoln reelection celebration manuscript is just one of the interesting and important documents which are being recovered for the use of students and historians by the 5,000 American Guide writers, now at work under the WPA in practically every county throughout the country. Besides preparing articles for the Guide on the historic, scenic, geological, sociological, and commercial features of the communities, many of the writers are engaged in making inventories for the WPA's State and Local Historical Records Survey. Copies of the inventories will be left with the communities and states, while a master inventory will be filed with the library of Congress.