

INVITATION TO
GETTYSBURG

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Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Invitation to Gettysburg

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources illuminating aspects of this most well-known Presidential speech

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Gettysburg Nov. 2nd 1863

To His Excellency,
A. Lincoln,
President of the United States,

Sir,

The Several States having Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac, who were killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, or have since died at the various hospitals which were established in the vicinity, have procured grounds on a prominent part of the Battle Field for a Cemetery, and are having the dead removed to them and properly buried.

These Grounds will be Consecrated and set apart to this Sacred purpose, by appropriate Ceremonies on Thursday, the 19th instant,- Hon. Edward Everett will deliver the Oration.

I am authorized by the Governors of the different States to invite you to be present, and participate in these Ceremonies, which will doubtless be very imposing and solemnly impressive.

It is the desire that, after the Oration, you as Chief Executive of the Nation, formally set apart these grounds to this Sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.

It will be a source of great gratification to the many widows and orphans that have been made almost friendless by the Great Battle here, to have you here personally: and it will kindle anew in the breasts of the Comrades of these brave dead, who are now in the tented field or

nobly meeting the foe in the front, a confidence that they who sleep in death on the Battle Field are not forgotten by those highest in Authority: and they will feel that, should their fate be the same, their remains will not be uncared for.

We hope you will be able to be present to perform this last solemn act to the Soldier dead on this Battle Field.

I am with great
Respect, Your Excellency's
Obedient Servant,
David Wills
Agent for
A. G. Curtin Gov. of Penna,
and acting for all the States.

World Almost Missed Gettysburg Address; 36 Lincoln Asked To Speak As Afterthought

(Copied from letters on microfilm from Collection of Letters
from Robert Todd Lincoln Collection)

Gettysburg Nov. 2 1863

To His Excellency
A. Lincoln
President U.S.

Sir:

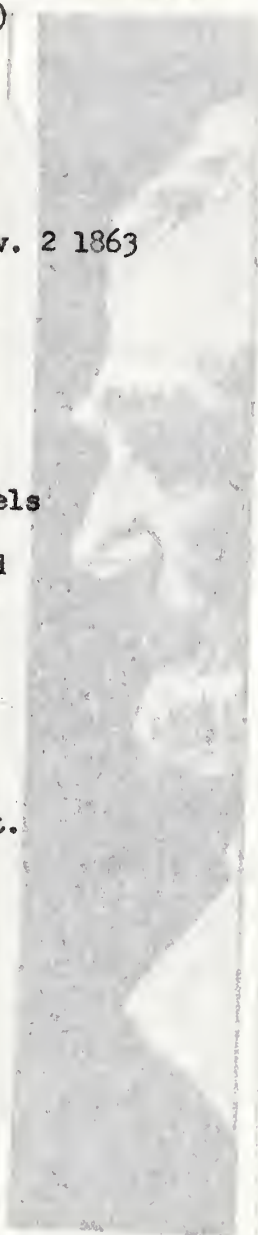
As the Hotels
in our town will be crowded and
in confusion at the time referred
to in the enclosed invitation, I
write to invite you to stop
with me. I hope you will
feel it your duty to lay aside
pressing business for a day to
come on here to perform this
last sad rite to our brave
Soldier dead on this 19th instant.
(over)

Governor Curtin and
Hon. Edward Everett will
be my guests at that time
and if you come you
will please join them at
my house.

You will confer a favor
if you advise me early
of your intentions.

With great Respect
Your Obedient Servant

David Wills



World Almost Missed Gettysburg Address; Lincoln Asked To Speak As Afterthought

NEW YORK, Feb. 13.—(AP)—New Lincoln studies appearing coincidentally with the observance of his birthday anniversary show that the world owes what has been called "the perfect" tribute to an afterthought.

Edward Everett had been asked to deliver the oration at the consecration of the Gettysburg cemetery. He had, a little pompously, demanded that the exercises be postponed a month to accommodate his schedule, and that was done.

Then the committee in charge sent out a number of formal invitations to members of the cabinet and others, Joseph Tausek writes in "The True Story of the Gettysburg Address," just published, and included in this scattering list was one for the president. Unexpectedly, he accepted.

After some discussion it was decided to ask the president, as head of the nation, to deliver "a few appropriate remarks," writes Tausek. This was done, the committee making it clear that his share was to be limited, and offering in no way to accommodate its plans to those of the president. Lincoln was allowed to ride to the battlefield almost unattended, and was shown no especial honor on the platform. He was not asked to speak until Everett had concluded a two-hour spell-binder. Then Lincoln arose, and in two minutes delivered "one of the world's masterpieces in rhetorical art."

The speech (which Lincoln feared was a failure) was written at odd moments, partly in Washington, and partly in Gettysburg. But, writes Mr. Tausek:

"When, fifty years after Gettysburg, the world was plunged into war, not one of all the learned statesmen . . . delivered himself of a single sentence that is remembered today, with the possible exception of Woodrow Wilson . . ."

Address delivered at the consecration of the cemetery at Gettysburg.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task, remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

November 19, 1863.

Abraham Lincoln. (P)



But for an afterthought, Abraham Lincoln might never have delivered his famous Gettysburg address, says Joseph Tausek in his book, "The True Story of the Gettysburg Address," published coincidentally with his birthday observance. Lincoln was asked to speak only after he unexpectedly accepted an invitation to attend the ceremony, Tausek says.

Precious Document Almost Missed


Address delivered at the dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new Nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

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November 19, 1863.

Abraham Lincoln. 



Gettysburg Speech Almost "Missed"

Perfect Tribute Result of "Afterthought"

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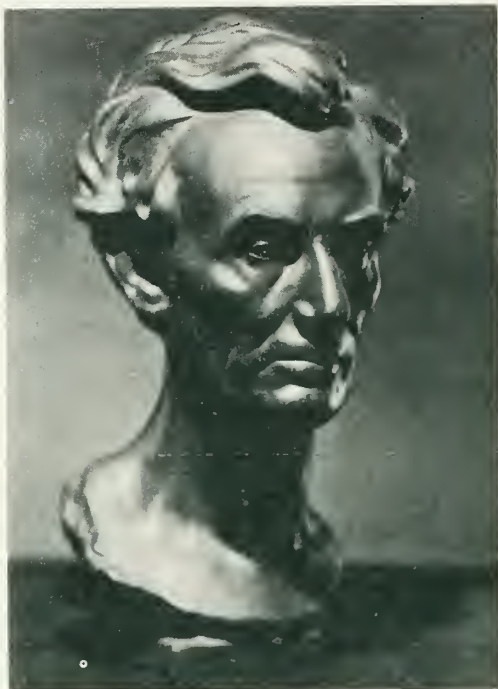
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THE SHORT BUST OF LINCOLN BY VOLK. NO. 4



In classifying Volk's plaster portraits of Lincoln the usual chronological order has been mask, head, short bust, nude bust and full bust. However, there may be a possibility that the so-called "Hermes" nude bust came third. This belief is strengthened by the fact that Volk secured his patent on June 12, 1860 with the submission to the Patent Office of the "Hermes" bust.

The nude bust might be characterized as featuring too prominently Lincoln's shoulders and chest in its "design in round relief" because so much material was required in its manufacture. Likely the cost was prohibitive for many prospective customers, particularly if it appeared in marble or bronze. A practical solution was to cut the head and neck out of the shoulders and once it was mounted on a small base (overall dimension 17½ inches tall), it could be offered for sale at a greatly reduced price. Obviously the idea was sound because the short bust is the most popular of all of Volk's works and many replicas have been manufactured for sale. Some of the replicas are mounted on a small pedestal base about 4 inches tall.

In 1953 at the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York, N. Y., an original plaster model of the Volk short bust was sold at auction for \$420. This bust was the property of Mrs. Wendell Douglas Volk. Written in ink on the bust is the following inscription: "Original cast of bust of A. Lincoln from life sittings by Leonard W. Volk, Chicago, Apl. 1860." This bust is mounted on the four inch pedestal making it 21½ inches tall.

The inscription on the manufactured short bust follows: "Abraham Lincoln, Modeled From Life by Leonard W. Volk, Chicago 1860. Replica." The Foundation collection has the short bust in both plaster and bronze.

A good story is in circulation that before the commencement of the recent military movement which resulted in the capture of Richmond, Mr. Lincoln, then at City Point, sent by the hands of "a reliable contraband," as a present to Jefferson Davis, the identical long cloak and Scotch cap in which, in 1861, Mr. Lincoln travelled from Harrisburg to Washington. The present has evidently been appreciated.

The Saint Paul Press
April 16, 1865

LINCOLN ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1856

Visited: Alton, Trenton, Pekin, Ottawa, Joliet, Peoria, Clinton, Belleville, Urbana, West Urbana (Champaign), Atlanta, and Pittsfield.

Political Issues: Discussed constitutionality of congressional legislation upon the subject of slavery in the territories. Appealed for votes for Fremont and Dayton, Bissell and Wood, and the whole Anti-Nebraska ticket.

Law: Made and filed an affidavit (case of Gray v. French) concerning the paternity of a child.

Apt Expressions: "I am here at court, and find myself so 'hobbled' with a particular case, that I can not leave. . . ." Lincoln to Jonas, October 21, 1856. "I was forced off to Pike County, where I spoke yesterday. . . ." Lincoln to Ruggles, October 28, 1856.

GETTYSBURG, NOVEMBER 19, 1863

A letter written by David Wills, president of the Gettysburg Cemetery Commission, to Governor A. G. Curtin of Pennsylvania, dated October 6, 1863, reveals that Edward Everett definitely set the date for the dedication of the Soldiers' Burial Ground at Gettysburg.

Wills' letter indicates that Everett had two good reasons for fixing the date of November 19, rather than October 23 (22) as decided upon by the Cemetery Commission. First, his commitments for October were so extensive that he did not have ample time to make adequate preparation. Secondly, he desired to give his oration over the graves of the dead soldiers, rather than over a place designated for their interment.

Wills made no mention to Governor Curtin of the possibility of inviting President Lincoln to be present to give a dedicatory address. While Everett's letter of invitation bore the date of September 23, Lincoln's invitation to Gettysburg dated November 2 was an afterthought.

The Wills-Curtin letter is as follows:

"Gettysburg, Oct. 6, 1863

"To His Excellency, A. G. Curtin, Gov. of Penna.:

"Sir—I have been in communication with the Governors of the States interested in the Soldiers' Burial Ground at this place, about the arrangements for the consecration of these grounds.

"They have all most cordially united in the selection of Hon. Edward Everett to deliver the oration on that solemn occasion, and in accordance with the unanimous wishes of the chief Executives of the several States, I addressed a letter of invitation to Mr. Everett to deliver the address at the consecration of these grounds on the 22d of this month. He replied that his engagements were such, that he could not possibly make such preparation as would enable him to do justice to the interesting and important occasion, and meet the expectations of the multitude that will be assembled. But if the day could be postponed to Thursday, the 19th of November, he would cheerfully undertake the honorable duty.

"The proposition to postpone the time has been acceded to, and therefore this burial ground will be consecrated and set apart to its sacred and holy purposes, with appropriate ceremonies, on Thursday, the 19th day of November, 1863.

"Mr. Everett suggests that the ceremonies would be rendered more interesting if deferred till after the removal of the soldiers. All references to their self-sacrificing bravery in the cause of their country would be far more effective if uttered over their remains, than if only pronounced on a spot to which they are hereafter to be removed.

"The removal of the dead will be commenced about the 26th of this month, and a large portion of the bodies will be interred in the Cemetery before the 19th of November.

"Mr. William Saunders, the rural architect, in the employ of the Agricultural Department, at Washington, is here now, designing and plotting of the grounds, preparatory to the removal of the dead.

"I am, with great respect, your obedient servant,
David Wills."

READ B. HARDING
COLONEL, USAF, RETIRED
124 NORTH MANATEE AVENUE
ARCADIA, FLORIDA

October 14

Dear Mr. McMurtry,

I enclose for your files,
correspondence which I
think might be of interest
to you.

Sincerely,

Read B. Harding

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Wills

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David C. Mearns
Chief
Manuscript Division

Read B. Harding
Colonel USAF Retired
Post Office Drawer No. 191
Arcadia, Florida, 33821



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

October 9, 1963

Dear Colonel Harding:

Thank you for your letter of September 26.

I am enclosing a copy of a typescript of a
holograph letter from David Witts to Gideon Welles,
Secretary of the Navy, November 2, 1863. Presumably
this is the same letter which was addressed to other
members of the cabinet. I know of no printed circular
sent to the cabinet in invitation to the ceremonies.

Faithfully yours,

David C. Mearns

David C. Mearns
Chief
Manuscript Division

Read B. Harding
Colonel USAF Retired
Post Office Drawer No. 191
Arcadia, Florida, 33821

Gettysburg Pa.
Nov. 2, 1863

Hon Gideon Welles
Secretary of the Navy

Sir

The several states having soldiers in the Army of the Potomac, who were killed in the Battle of Gettysburg, or have since died of their wounds at the various Hospitals in the vicinity, have procured grounds on a prominent part of this Battle Field for a cemetery, and are having the remains of these brave dead, removed to it, and properly buried.

These grounds will be consecrated, and set apart to this sacred purpose by appropriate ceremonies on Thursday the 19th inst.

Hon Edward Everett will deliver the Oration.

I am authorized by the Governors of the several states to invite you to be present, and participate in these ceremonies, which will doubtless be very imposing & solemnly impressive,

I am with great respect
your obedient servant
David Wills
agent

for A. G. Curtin, Gov. of Penna. and acting for the other states.

Endorsed on the back in Stanton's handwriting "Colonel is written to send the Maine Band to Gettysburg if he thinks advisable"

LS 2 pp.

Welles Papers, vol. 55, no. ~~XXXX~~ 29,844

Gettysburg, Pa. War Department,
 September 17, 1863. ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
 WASHINGTON, D. C.
 September 18, 1863.
 Pass *S. S. Giddens, Secy Navy*
 and family *to and from Gettysburg by*
Special Train, 11 30 am.
 BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

Ans Adj Genl
 [Not Transferable.]

Adjutant General's Office,
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
V. J. Thompson
Asst. Adjutant General

How Secy of War



