

The Lincoln - Roosevelt Connection

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Teddy Roosevelt's father, whom Teddy adored, served in a civilian capacity during the Civil War. He spent a great deal of time in Washington and became a close friend of President Lincoln and his wife. They took carriage rides together, and Roosevelt even went shopping with Mary and bought bonnets for her. Theodore Roosevelt Senior's direct connection to the President was Lincoln's young secretary, John Hay.

Year's later John Hay became Teddy Roosevelt's Secretary of State and served him faithfully. In fact, their joint efforts resulted in Roosevelt's receiving the Nobel Prize, the first American ever to receive it.

When Roosevelt was inaugurated in 1905, John Hay gave the President a very special present--a "mourning ring" that contains an oval glass over a strand of Lincoln's hair. Hay sent a note with the ring that contains this request: "...Please wear it tomorrow; you are one of the men who most thoroughly understand and appreciate Lincoln."

Roosevelt replied: "Dear John, Surely no other President, on the eve of his inauguration, has ever received such a gift from such a friend. I am wearing the ring now; I shall think of it and you as I take the oath tomorrow. I wonder if you have any idea what your strength and wisdom and sympathy, what the guidance you have given me and the mere delight in your companionship, have meant to me these three and a half years? With love and gratitude, Ever yours...."

(The first published photographs of the famous relic were published in The Rail Splitter, Spring 2002, p.7 The publisher of this fine publication is Jonathan H. Mann. Copies may be obtained by contacting splitter@interport.net (212-980-7031)

Historians have observed that this was the first time TR used the word "love" in his male non-family correspondence.

The impact President Lincoln had on TR was profound. On his desk at Sagamore Hill was an inkwell and pen stand surmounted by a bust of Lincoln. On the wall near a portrait of his father hung an engraving of Lincoln, and down the hall in his North Room was another bust of Lincoln.

There are many traits the two men shared. Both were interested in science and technology--Lincoln is the only President to hold a patent, and TR wrote books and articles on the subject. Both were interested in the water as a form of transportation. During his early years Lincoln was a bargeman; his patent was designed to extricate boats and ships from shoals. TR wrote a definitive book on the role of the navy in the War of 1812, and became Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Both men loved nature. Both were great story-tellers. As for political ideas, both men understood the need in a democracy for a strong central government, and both men believed that human rights took priority over property rights.

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The line from Lincoln through Teddy Roosevelt continued Franklin Delano Roosevelt. FDR described "Cousin Theodore" the greatest man he ever knew. FDR's career paralleled TR's. Both rich men, the each served as Governor of New York and as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Both men strengthened the central government, believed the government should regulate the excesses of big business and big unions. They both believed the government could be a positive force for good in the environment, and both

believed in the primacy of human rights over property rights.

Gene Griessman Brings Abraham Lincoln Back to Life for You. Gene conducts keynote presentations as Lincoln and conducts breakout workshops as Gene. Gene can be reached at 404-256-5927.

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