

# Manuscript Collection Inventory

Illinois History and Lincoln Collections

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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**Robert Todd Lincoln.**  
**Correspondence on Diverse Topics, 1863-1918.**

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1. HERNDON

William H. Herndon to "Friend Nickoly" [John G. Nicolay], Feb. 21, 1863, copy, regarding Lincoln's request on Feb. 19 that Herndon "accept a job of about a month's duration at St. Louis..." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, et al., 8 vols. and index (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55) 6:111, where it is noted that Herndon's reply, declining the office, "has not been located."

Herndon to Lincoln, Feb. 24, 1863, copy, stating that Lawrence Weldon accepted the "job" at St. Louis. RTL annotated this copy in 1885: "Herndon - 33 [?] / Begging letter."

Herndon to Nickoly [Nicolay] & Hay, Feb. 17, 1865, copy, offering to accept any office President Lincoln will offer him, "if it will afford to me and mine good pay - with lots of stealings [sic] attached thereto in gross, not causing me much trouble to keep and run...".

Herndon to David Davis, Mar. 20, 1867, denying that he had any intention, in his "third published Lecture on Mr Lincoln's life & character," to suggest that "Mr Lincoln did not love his wife and family," nor that "Mr and Mrs Lincoln did not live happily together as husband and wife: nor that their domestic relations were not pleasant and agreeable through life."

John C. Black, Champaign, Ill., to the President of the "Ills. [Chicago] Hist. Soc.," Nov. 18, 1872, regarding "the painful effect [of Ward H. Lamon's *The Life of Abraham Lincoln...* (1872), which was based on Herndon's material] which, to say the least, leaves a doubt as to the legitamacy [sic] of the late President." Black also alluded to acquiring from Dennis F. Hanks "specimens of his [Lincoln's] hand writing when a boy & a piece of the family register and bible of the Lincoln's."

## 2. GETTYSBURG

In 1912, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., and RTL corresponded regarding President Lincoln's letters to Gen. George Meade after the battle of Gettysburg. At issue was whether Meade should have engaged Gen. Robert E. Lee before Lee's army had retreated across the Potomac River. Although Adams's last letter in this exchange suggests that this "rather interesting question is now fully thrashed out," it is apparent that he had no inkling of the letter from Lincoln to Gen. Henry W. Halleck (for Meade) on July 14, 1863--a letter that Lincoln wrote but did not send. *Collected Works*, 6:327-29.

Adams rather had in mind Lincoln's letter to Halleck on Oct. 16, 1863, in which Lincoln (again) urged Meade to attack Lee: "the honor will be his if he succeeds, and the blame may be mine if he fails." *Collected Works*, 6:518.

This collection of RTL's papers contains a six-page set of imprecisely copied extracts from the diary of Gideon Welles, at the end of which his son, Edgar T. Welles, wrote "Not to be published & for R.T.L's information only." These extracts, dated between July 7 and 16, 1863, are accurately printed in William E. Gienapp and Erica L. Gienapp, *The Civil War Diary of Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 241-52, and see page 310 for the entry on Oct. 16, 1863, relating to Lincoln's letter to Meade on that day.

Other items pertinent to this matter are as follows:

Abner Doubleday to RTL, Sept. 16, 1881.

Herman Haupt to RTL, Mar. 28, 1889, July 21, 1892, and Haupt, "The Crisis of the Civil War," *Century Magazine*, 44:5 (Sept. 1892), 794-97.

Adams to RTL, Apr. 2, 5, 9, 12, 1912 [14 typed pages in all].

RTL to Adams, Apr. 22, 1912 [4 pages].

RTL referred to his own "Gettysburg story" which indirectly saw the light in an untitled and unattributed paragraph in the *Army and Navy Journal*, Aug. 13, 1881, 13 (col. 1): "One of the first acts" of RTL when he became Secretary of War was to send for "a copy of a letter" from President Lincoln to Gen. Meade in which he "urged Gen. Meade to follow up his advantage without delay, and said in substance: If you succeed, all the glory and honor shall be yours; if you fail, I will take the responsibility."

In a letter to the editor on Oct. 22, George Meade (the general's grandson) denied the existence of any such letter. See "President Lincoln and Gen. Meade," *Army and Navy Journal*, July 22, 1882, 1197 (col. 1).

[Both of these items are in Vol. 19 (1881-1882) of the *Army and Navy Journal*; copies are filed in this collection.]

Writing to Charles A. Tinker on July 20, 1907 (copy in RTL letter books), RTL recalled that "on several occasions my father, in his desire to unburden himself to someone in whom he could have entire confidence, gave me brief statements of the condition of things which were very much bothering him, and I ought to have jotted them down so that my memory of them could be more trusted than is now possible. There was one instance particularly, in regard to a communication which he sent to General Meade after the Battle of Gettysburg, which is most vividly impressed upon my mind, but I never was able to convince Mr. Nicolay that I was not in error; he insisting that there was no record to sustain me at all. The trouble was that the very essence of the transaction was that there should be no record, because my father requested General Meade in the letter to destroy the letter in a certain contingency, and of course he himself would not keep a copy of it." [RTL here refers to President Lincoln's letter to Meade on July 14 which he did not send. Lincoln did not ask Meade to destroy the letter, as RTL supposed, but simply filed it away.]

RTL's letter to Adams on Apr. 22, 1912, concludes with the [rather striking] observation that he had "come to the belief that it was better for the whole situation that Lee's army was not destroyed at that time. It is at least a question whether it is not better that the spirit of arrogance and rebellion that inspired that generation of the South should receive the dreadful lesson given to it by the destruction of the campaigns East and West of 1864 and the Spring of 1865."

### 3. RANKIN

Rankin, Henry B. to RTL, June 2, [1915], asking him to read his manuscript on Lincoln. This manuscript became Rankin's *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (1916).

Clinton L. Conkling to RTL, June 9, 1915, providing background information on Rankin and advising RTL not to read Rankin's manuscript or to have anything to do with him. [This item accords with the view that Rankin's writings on Lincoln lack credibility. See Michael Burlingame, "A Hard-Hearted Conscious Liar and an Oily Hypocrite," in Burlingame, ed., Jesse W. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait* (2002 edn.), 389-397.]

[RTL], Draft for his secretary to use in replying to Rankin, June 14, 1915.

Alice E. Ferguson (Mrs. Benjamin Ferguson), daughter of Benjamin S. Edwards, to RTL, May 23, [1916], stating that Rankin asked her to appeal to RTL to read his manuscript, and noting her gift of Edwards Place, 815 N. 5th St., Springfield, to the Springfield Art Association.

## 4. OTHER

William C. Endicott (Secretary of War) and John Tweedall (Chief Clerk for the Secretary), Apr. 24 and 28, 1885, regarding RTL's purchase for \$25 of the desk and chair he himself had used as Secretary of War.

RTL's notation on a copy of AL to Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, Dec. 26, 1861 (*Collected Works, Second Supplement* [1990], 39: "From Henry L.[sic] Howe, Boston, Oct. 25, 1897." Howe was a prominent metallurgist.

Sherburne Blake Eaton to John C. Rowe (New York lawyers), Apr. 23, 1912, and Rowe to RTL, Dec. 18, 23, 1914, returning to RTL a gold watch, "a memento of...exceptional value," which Abraham Lincoln had given RTL.

RTL to George H. Thacher, Oct. 20, 1918, regarding letters between RTL and Sally Orne, Mary Lincoln's close friend; and referring to recent golf outings.

RTL to Walter Colyer, Oct. 19, 1896. [This letter, previously acquired by the Library, is annexed here to simplify its filing.] Campaigning for the Republican presidential ticket in 1896, RTL spoke in several downstate Illinois communities, including Marshall, Shelbyville, Centralia, and Danville. In this letter he explains the impossibility of also speaking in Albion.

## 5. EPHEMERA

Items related to Hildene, RTL's home, which Ralph G. Newman collected:

Equinox House, Manchester, Vt., *Golf* (cover title), a small, 8-page brochure [1898].

Manchester Development Association, *Manchester-in-the-Mountains Vermont* (1901), a 40-page booklet; OCLC 10589554.

*Hildene Lighting System*, undated.

Friends of Hildene, *Robert Todd Lincoln's Hildene, Manchester Village, Vermont* [18 pages, 1981].

*News from Historic Hildene* (newsletter): 4:3 (Autumn 1980); 5:1 (Winter 1981); 5:2 (Spring 1981); 6:1 (Winter 1982).

*Hildene, Manchester Village, Vermont*, undated. [4-page newspaper insert] [with a copy of *Vermont Autumn*, Oct. 14, 1983, a travel supplement].

## 6. CHRONOLOGY OF THE COLLECTION

Typed list of microfilm print of "Papers burned in 1895 & after."  
Also microfilm prints, without typed lists, of three pages in RTL's letter books which include indexes for "Account Papers," "Hildene," and "Letters to R.T.L."

James T. Hickey's notes on items of interest in RTL's letter books [6 pages, both note card and legal sheet size].

Typed list of items in RTL's letter books, 1865-1911, 23 pages (no page 6). [Probably items on topics that Hickey planned to write up.]

Samuel S. Vaughan of Doubleday & Company, to Ralph Geoffrey Newman, Mar. 8, 1982, regarding his "proposal for a book of Robert Todd Lincoln's letters." Vaughan indicates that "there is not much enthusiasm here for the project" and encloses the in-house editorial report: "The samples of letters sent for evaluation don't strike me as especially revealing or compelling, but a more complete sample could change my mind....These sample letters show a realistic grasp that people only wanted him [RTL] because of his father's fame. I think we need more than selected letters to start a Robert Todd Lincoln bandwagon."

Ralph G. Newman to *Reader's Digest*, Pleasantville, N.Y., Aug. 12, 1982, stating that RTL's letter books "would offer opportunities for both articles in the *Reader's Digest* and for publication in book form." Newman recounts meeting Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith and introducing him to James T. Hickey. He also notes his and Hickey's subsequent trips to Hildene, where Hickey discovered RTL's letter books which Beckwith then presented to the Illinois State Historical Library. Newman further notes that Beckwith granted him and Hickey "the first literary use of the material."

Copies of "some typescripts of a few letters" in RTL's letter books which Newman enclosed in his letter to *Reader's Digest*.

Photocopies of labels or notes on two archival boxes, indicating that they contained "sorted" copies of RTL letters which "pc" [Patricia Clark, graduate assistant in the University of Illinois Library's Lincoln Room] "received from Chuck Hand" in 1998.