

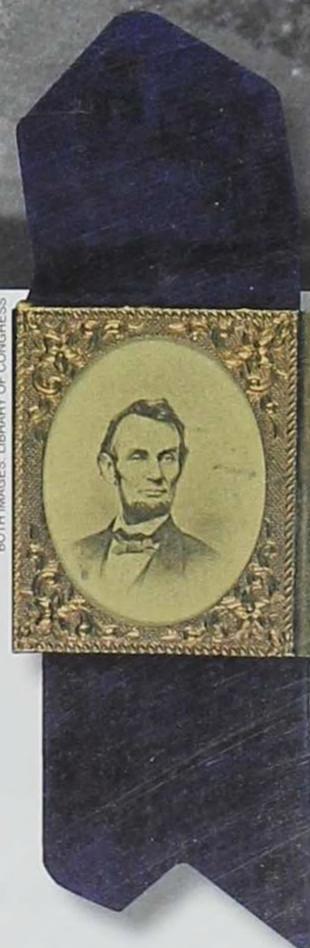


Soldiers stand ready on Pennsylvania Avenue for Lincoln's funeral in Washington. Right: After his death, this 1864 campaign button was matted in brass and attached to a velvet ribbon as a mourning badge.

Iowans Mourn Lincoln

Disbelief, anger, and grief swept across Iowa in the wake of Lincoln's assassination. On April 15, Governor William Stone requested all Iowans "to assemble in their respective places of worship" for noon services on April 27 and to suspend "travel within the state, and all secular employment." But as the following pages demonstrate, many did not wait until April 27 to eulogize their president and to give voice to their emotions, in letters and newspapers. —*The Editor*

BOTH IMAGES: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Daily State Register.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1865.

EXTRA.

DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN!

DES MOINES, April 15, 1865.

The following dispatch has just been received:

President Lincoln was shot through the head last night at Ford's Theatre and died this morning. The assassin is supposed to be J. Wilkes Booth.

About the same time a desperado called at Secretary Seward's, pretending to be a messenger from his physician. Being refused admittance, he attacked Fred. Seward, son of the Secretary, knocking him down; then passed on to the Secretary's room, where, after cutting down two male attendants, he cut Mr. Seward's throat. The wound at last accounts was not considered fatal.

Letters found in Booth's trunk show that this assassination was contemplated before the 4th of March, but fell through from some cause.

The wildest excitement prevails at Washington. The Vice President's House and residences of the different Secretaries are closely guarded.

LATER.—Mr. Seward died this morning

CORRESPONDENCE

[APRIL 16, 1865
FROM MUSCATINE]

A Nation mourns as a Nation never mourned before. When I left Dubuque on Wednesday last loyal men had not got over their rejoicings over the surrender of Lee and his army. From Dubuque I went to Davenport, and from there to Grinnell, and all along the road joy and rejoicing was the order of the day. On Friday I went to Iowa City. The next morning while I was standing in the post-office conversing with Ex-Gov. Kirkwood, Judge Brainerd, and others, a gentleman stepped up and said that a report had reached Davenport that President Lincoln and Secretary Seward had been assassinated,—the dispatch having been received just as the train left for the west. The news spread through the city like wild-fire. "Can it be?" was the exclamation from all. Where, how, by whom the deed was done, could not be learned for Iowa City has no telegraph, and no further information could be had until Monday noon. To wait until then without hearing the particulars was a suspense not to be borne. A courier was started on horseback for Muscatine. . . . A large number of citizens who would not wait went down to the train to Davenport. I arrived in [Muscatine] last night at 7 p.m., and found the report to be true. O I never can forget the feelings that I had when I stepped from the cars and looking here and there saw the flags at half mast and the stores and dwellings draped in mourning.

Peter Melendy
to the Cedar Falls Gazette

Sunday April 16, 1865

[Dear Brother James]

You too, [in Mount Pleasant] are participating in the general dismay and grief over the shocking tragedy at Washington which marks this time in black for all posterity. How giddy one gets in trying to follow the terribly swift succession of events with which the pages of the volume of our national history are so rapidly filled up. This tragic end of the Author of the Emancipation Proclamation surrounds his brow with the martyr's crown. I will hand him down to posterity almost a saint.

If some of the disappointed leaders of the Rebellion thirsting for revenge had done this it would have seemed less shocking than that one who during all this war has been from city to city everywhere warmly received and loaded with applause and confidence. One who has enjoyed all the blessings and emoluments of a free county should madly cry "sic semper tyrannis". It is too shocking.

... Booth has acted in Boston several times since

we have been here but as he was regarded second rate, I never went to hear him. His photograph shows him an unusually fine looking young man of refined and pleasing exterior, the very last style of person to be suspected of such a crime. The evidence today is so conclusive that there seems no room for doubt. . . .

Yesterday I went to town. Crossing the long bridge over the Charles just before entering Boston one is surrounded by a perfect girdle of cities and the sight of all the scores of flags drooping at half mast affected me just as the passionate burst of grief over the grave of some friend. All places of amusement, all prominent business houses were closed and being rapidly festooned with the sorrowful emblems of grief.

... Wonder what the orthodox in the country to whom the theatre is such a bugbear will say about the President being killed at the theatre! Will they regard it as a just punishment for so heinous a crime?

Cordelia [Throop Cole]

[to Iowa City]

Morehead City N.C.

Apl. 19th 1865

My Dear Father

... We are enjoying ourselves finely nowadays over the good news [of Lee's surrender] but on Monday we received very sad news which has put a stop to our joyfulness. The assassination of Pres.

Lincoln has cast a gloom of sorrow over all. We cannot hardly believe it—for we have received no official news from Washington, but we are fearful. The flags have all been at half mast since we got the first report. I cannot tell you or express the feeling of the men and we are waiting very impatiently indeed for further light on the subject.

We all hope the report is false, but if so, we have lost one of the very best men of our Country.

We believe the Rebels have

caused his death and every soldier now goes in for having revenge and to wipe and exterminate every traitor from the United States. We have acted too honorable with them in every respect since the war began and they have not returned it in any instance.

If they have killed Abraham Lincoln they have lost their best friend and I fear they will feel it too, for we are not yet through with them. But we hope all will come out right yet.

Today we received an Official Order from Gen. W. T. Sherman that a cessation of hostilities has been established, and he ordered all troops to go into camp and that he expected peace to be declared soon and that he would lead his army home. The news was received with cheers and great rejoicing, but not as much so if we only knew that our

President was still living. You will no doubt hear good news ere this reaches you. The health of the Regiment is very good. . . .

Mr. Brown has just come in the tent and says that news has come that Lincoln is not dead but shot in the arm. We all hope tis true. The latest dispatch from Sherman is that he has sent orders to the Chief Q.M. here . . . [for] ten days rations, for 30,000 Rebels. That looks as though the war is very nearly ended. . . .

The Brass band is playing down town at Head Quarters and as the wind gently blows the sound up this way it sounds splendid. . . . If Peace is soon declared I will be at home to help you plow corn and make hay. . . .

Son J. W. Lee
[22nd Iowa Infantry]

THE ABUSE OF THE TELEGRAPH

While all admit that the invention by which news is transmitted a thousand miles in less than a thousand seconds, is a great invention, and in many instances a great benefit to the word; yet all must deplore and denounce its abuse.

The fact that it sends news with such rapidity is one of its defects and often produces the most serious consequences. Still, we hardly think after all, that the telegraph is to blame for all the bad results caused by the transmission of false reports.

Men sending them are to blame. Why did Secretary Stanton send the report that Secretary Seward's throat was cut, and afterwards telegraph all over the Union that he was dead, when neither statement was true? The effect of such a false report was to greatly and unnecessarily excite the people who were already greatly excited over the assassination of President Lincoln, and might have produced most serious consequences. We ask again, why did Secretary Stanton send out such a false report?

Council Bluffs Weekly Bugle
April 20, 1865

WATERLOO IN MOURNING

The feeling of sadness which succeeded the confirmation of the terrible news was deep and overwhelming. . . . All the stores, shops and offices were closed and crape displayed; many of the private residences being similarly draped. Flags were run up at half-mast, surrounded with black trimming. The splendid large flag belonging to the citizens of the town, was suspended over Commercial street. . . . To this was attached a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, which was encircled with crape—the flag being heavily trimmed with black. We cannot give language to the feelings which were depicted upon the countenances of our citizens. Strong men, unused to tears, went to their homes, weeping like children. In truth, there were few in our loyal town, who did not give way to a grief as poignant as to stir the heart to a depth never before sounded. As might be expected, threats of vengeance were freely made, and partially put into

execution. . . . Most of the stores remained closed till evening. There was no desire to engage in any business, the disposition being rather to abstain from any, and give the day to feelings of gloom and sadness. On Sunday, the various churches in the town were draped in mourning, and Russell's Hall, where the Presbyterians hold services, was shrouded with the emblems of grief. . . . The services in the Baptist church, in the evening, were of the most impressive character. . . . The whole congregation was frequently in tears. . . .

We said last week, in this column, that Waterloo was never so happy, as when the news of the surrender of Gen. Lee was received, and our words were true. We say, this week, that Waterloo was never so sad, so oppressed and overwhelmed with grief as on Saturday last, and the gloom has not yet passed away.

Waterloo Courier
April 20, 1865

MOB LAW

We are aware, that in times of great excitement, men will do things and justify things, which in their moments of sober reflection they would condemn and abhor.

. . . We saw on the day that the news of the assassination of President Lincoln was received in this city, a disposition on the part of some persons, whom we will not name, to resort to mob violence. We are happy to state however, that better councils prevailed, and the city remained quiet. . . .

Because Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by a desperado, or by one belonging to a band of conspirators, it affords no reason why others who had nothing

to do in the matter should be mobbed or driven from their homes. It should also be remembered that there is a great difference of opinion relative to the causes which brought on the present desolating war, and which we have no doubt were in a remote degree the cause of the assassination of the President.

. . . If the people of Council Bluffs desire to be secure in their persons and property, they will frown down all attempts to introduce mob law among us.

Council Bluffs Weekly Bugle
April 20, 1865



In Iowa City a mile-long procession wound through the streets on April 19 to honor the memory of Lincoln. Four horses, each led by an African American groom, pulled a hearse carrying a coffin. All were draped in flags and mourning. The procession comprised local dignitaries as pallbearers; musicians ("the instruments . . . draped and all drum hoops entirely swathed in black"); soldiers; Odd Fellows, Good Templars, and Masons; Ladies' Aid Society; Irish and Bohemian benevolent associations; the fire department; local office-holders; the president, faculty, and students of the State University of Iowa; primary and secondary schools; citizens; and, at the end, a group identified as the "African Association."

The procession ended at the steps of the Old Capitol (above) on the university campus. A large banner suspended from the columns reflected the prevailing mood: "Hung be the heavens all in black."

After hymns and prayers, former Governor

Samuel Kirkwood delivered the oration: "While none doubted [Lincoln's] capacity to conduct the affairs of the nation under ordinary circumstances, wisely and well, many good men feared that his inexperience in public affairs would unfit him for a leader in the fierce, wild whirl of passion through which it was found the nation must pass." He continued, "Every fiery trial . . . proved more clearly his peculiar fitness for his most difficult position."

"The heart of the President was filled with kindness towards those who had sought our ruin—when, as is believed, he was devising liberal and generous plans by which they might again arise and enjoy the high privileges they had so wantonly thrown away."

Minute guns were fired throughout the day, and the tolling of the city bells echoed across the town.

Compiled from articles in Iowa City Republican
April 19 and 26, 1865

A DAY OF MOURNING

It was befitting that our people should assemble as they did, from parts of the country last Wednesday, to express their heart-felt sorrow and indignation over the tragic and wicked assassination of our great and good President, and the exercises throughout were well suited to the solemnity of the occasion. The District Court then in session [in Glenwood] was adjourned, places of business closed and houses and flags becomingly draped in mourning. At one o'clock the bells began their solemn toll and the people repaired to the large Courtroom until it was crowded to overflowing, to participate in the solemn exercise. The venerable Mayor, Rev. Williams, called the meeting to order [and] introduced the exercises by reading a short lesson from the Bible and leading in a prayer most appropriate for the occasion.

. . . [The following resolutions] were unanimously adopted:

We, the people of Mills county assembled in mass to mourn the untimely death of our great and good President, and to mingle our tears with those of the loyal

people of the United States everywhere, do adopt the following sentiments as the feeble expression of our feelings.

1st. We recognize in the assassination of President LINCOLN, an act of villainy and wickedness without a parallel in the history of mankind save in the crucifixion of the Saviour of the world—

2d. That the removal from the Presidency of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, at this juncture in our national affairs, at the moment when our country was rejoicing . . . and when the bright halo of peace was dawning upon a restored Union, can only be regarded as a national calamity. . . .

3rd. . . . While WASHINGTON will be remembered as the Father of his Country, to ABRAHAM LINCOLN will be awarded the application of its Preserver and Savior.

4th. That we rejoice that the Presidency has fallen into the hands of so devoted a defender of the Union, and so wise and tried a Statesman as ANDREW JOHNSON.

Glenwood Opinion
April 22, 1865

VIOLENCE

A Copperhead [antiwar Democrat] of Eddyville was whipped within an inch of his life last Saturday, for declaring "Lincoln had been served just right, and deserved death four years ago." The castigation was administered by a party of loyal men, after which the death-deserving vagabond was ordered to leave town.

The *Nonpareil* says several Copperheads of Council Bluffs were forced to leave on the double-quick for expressing their joy over the assassination of the President. . . . The man who throws up his cap at such a crime, and gloats over the death of a great and pure man like Mr. Lincoln, should be driven from the haunts of civilized man.

Two men were roughly handled at Davenport Monday for exulting over the death of Lincoln. They were glad to get away from the city.

A friend writes us from Mt. Pleasant that while driving along the highway some six miles east of that place his attention was attracted to the following notice conspicuously posted at the "cross roads,"

"All you Copperhead, President killing villains, don't stop here, or d—n you. I will shoot you!"

R. C. MIDDLETON

Mr. M. has been in the service, and it seems has no sympathy for the Copperheads, whose friends have murdered President Lincoln.

Burlington Weekly Hawk-Eye
April 22, 1865

THE PRESIDENT MURDERED

The last fearful crime of baffled, defeated Rebel desperadoes. . . . is but one more of the long, dark, horrid and revolting list . . . invented and perpetrated by the infernal monsters who had leagued with fiends for the destruction of our free Government and the establishment in its place of anarchy and terror. . . .

Do rebels and traitors wish to force upon the Government and the loyal people a war of *utter extermination*, which shall hunt down and utterly destroy the whole race of rebel barbarians?—They have not much farther to go in crime and infamy to merit it. Let them beware—they are standing on the very verge of destruction.

Fort Dodge, *The Iowa North West*
April 25, 1865

Right: Commemorative images like this one appeared almost immediately after Lincoln's death. In deep sorrow, Northerners were eager to acquire lithographs and cartes-de-visite that memorialized and mythologized the slain president. ❖



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WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN, (APOTHEOSIS.)