

LINCOLN'S DEATH WATCH?

By Paul Mellen

In March of 2012, I purchased a gold pocket watch on e-Bay which was engraved to a relatively unknown Civil War Paymaster named Major Jonathan Ladd of Lowell, Massachusetts. This watch became the catalyst that motivated me to research the storied life of Jonathan Ladd—and his uncanny, intriguing relationship to Civil War violence, including the death of Abraham Lincoln.



Watch Inscription: The engraving on the watch reads: "Presented To Paymaster Ladd By the Officers of 2nd C.V.A. March 1864"--- (Author)

Digging into the National Archives in Washington, I retrieved a letter that Ladd wrote to Senator Henry Wilson, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, in which he articulated his initiative to protect President Lincoln and the national capital.

On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln called for volunteers and Ladd gained appointment as Massachusetts master of transportation by Governor John A. Andrew. Ladd immediately traveled to the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City, where he was headquartered, and made plans to dispatch Massachusetts regiments to Washington.

Ladd wasted no time in transporting the 6th Massachusetts to Washington under direct orders from both Lincoln and Andrew. Unfortunately, he had no choice but to use the B & O Railroad, which required the troops to disembark and march through the streets of belligerent Baltimore. This city was already well known for its hostility toward Lincoln, who had stealthfully passed through Baltimore on the final leg of his inaugural train ride to Washington. At that time, Lincoln's security advisor Allan Pinkerton was concerned about an assassination plot by Lincoln's enemies there. Pro-southern sentiments abounded in Maryland, one of the nation's 15 slave states, which earned it the reputation as an anti-Lincoln, anti-union, anti-northern, pro-slavery bastion of southern sympathizers. Undoubtedly, pro-Lincoln men lived in Maryland, too, but they remained silent in fear of the secessionists.

Baltimore also had an inconvenient city ordinance which

prohibited railroad steam engines from traveling within city limits. This made Ladd's 6th Massachusetts regiment vulnerable to mob violence, since tracks from the north ended at one of the city's depots, requiring passengers to cross town and pick up southbound trains at a different station. Horses had to tow slow-moving railcars filled with Union troops from President Street Station east of the city to Camden Station ten blocks west. On April 19, 1861, a secessionist mob halted the procession and forced Ladd's troops onto Pratt Street, where they were assaulted and fired upon. Sadly, Jonathan Ladd's first cousin, Luther Ladd, was killed on Pratt Street and thus became the first casualty of the Civil War—exactly 86 years after the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord.

Shortly after learning of the death of Luther Ladd and the carnage of the Baltimore riot, Lincoln called on Governor Andrew to send an additional 1,200 Massachusetts troops to Washington. Lincoln was fearful of a Rebel advance across the Potomac from Virginia, which had seceded a few days earlier on April 17. In a letter to Senator Wilson, Ladd described how he was denied transportation for his Massachusetts 5th regiment by a member of General Winfield Scott's staff in New York. He wrote: "Tompkins informed me he had no authority to furnish transportation for 1200 troops and could not furnish it. I then on my own responsibility and in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered the steamships Ariel and DeSoto and put upon them the troops and their subsistence and started them on their way to Washington... I have continued in the service of my country ever since."

Ladd's connection with the Massachusetts 5th was immortalized in Steven Spielberg's movie, *Lincoln*, which opens with a conversation between Corporal Ira Clark, an African-American soldier from the Massachusetts 5th, speaking to Lincoln about the inequity of pay for "colored" troops. To those who know the full history of the 5th, this poignant moment brings together Ladd's association with the regiment and his responsibilities as Paymaster.

In 1864, Jonathan Ladd played a vital role in the reorganization of the army of the Potomac under General Winfield Scott Hancock, who had recently recovered from wounds sustained at the Battle of Gettysburg. General Ulysses Grant entrusted Hancock to expand the army of the Potomac to strike a final blow to the Confederate military force in the Shenandoah Valley. Ladd was assigned to pay bounties and organize recruits for the 2nd Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery (2nd C.V.A.) under the command of Colonel Elisha Kellogg. **continued on page 12**



Deathbed scene (loc.gov)

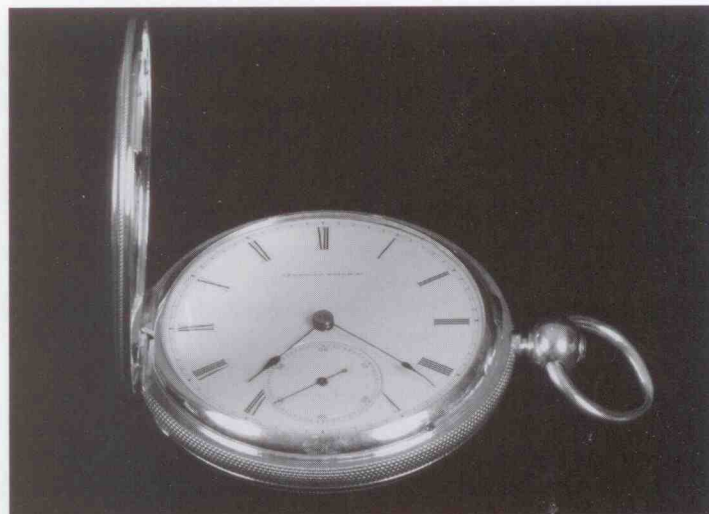
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continued from page 10 From archival letters and regimental history, it was learned that Ladd was presented with a gold pocket watch by Colonel Elisha Kellogg for his success in preparing the 2nd C.V.A. for deployment to the Second Brigade, First Division, VI Corps.

The 2nd C.V.A. went on to fight in the Battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864. Tragically, more than 323 of Ladd's men were killed or wounded there, including Colonel Kellogg, who suffered two bullets to the head. Because the 2nd C.V.A. was newly formed, battle reports mentioned that the men's pristine uniforms were distinguished on the battle field and magnified the horror of death and destruction. This June, we remember the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Cold Harbor, which claimed the lives of over 10,000 men.

Major Jonathan Ladd served the entire Civil War as Paymaster, and astonishingly, ended his wartime career at President Lincoln's deathbed on April 15, 1865. No one is sure why Ladd turned up on the scene of this historic event, but he was well known in Washington. Ladd was not only related to former Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, but was a first cousin to Connecticut Senator Lafayette Sabine Foster, President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate. Had the assassins been successful in their plot to kill not only Lincoln but also Secretary of State William H. Seward and Vice President Andrew Johnson, Ladd's first cousin would have become President of the United States.

Most historians do not realize the uncanny connection between Paymasters and the assassination of President Lincoln. For example, William T. Kent, a clerk in the Paymaster's Office, provided the knife that Dr. Leale used to cut open Lincoln's clothing shortly after he was shot at Ford's Theatre. Kent also retrieved the derringer that Booth used to shoot the President. While all this was happening, yet another Paymaster, Major Joseph Potter, was assisting Major Henry Rathbone, who was wounded at the theater by



Watch face set to 7:22 (author)

Booth's dagger. Major Potter is known to history as the man who escorted Major Rathbone, Clara Harris, and Mary Lincoln over to Peterson House. The next morning, Jonathan Ladd was present at Lincoln's deathbed—but why? We know that General Henry Burnett, a judge advocate assigned to the Lincoln assassination investigation, later confirmed that Ladd was among the witnesses who surrounded Lincoln's bedside at the time of his death at 7:22 on the morning of April 15. That confirmation begs another fascinating question: did the Ladd pocket watch I bought on e-Bay perhaps record Lincoln's time of death?

(Paul Mellen, a business communications consultant, new member of the Forum, and avid watch collector, lives in Duxbury, MA. For more information about the subject of this article, visit the website www.majorjonathanladd.com)

DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN OBSERVED

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 15th April 2014: 149th death anniversary of Abraham Lincoln has been observed in Bangladesh today by paying homage to three of the great leaders of all time, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. These Great Leaders sacrificed their lives for the well being of their countrymen and contributed largely to establish the true meaning of independence and democracy. The death anniversary program was organized by Abraham Lincoln Society of Bangladesh and ALSB President Zahurul Haque announced the plan for organizing an International Exhibition and Seminar on the life and works of Abraham Lincoln,

Mahatma Gandhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in mid August 2014. Mr. Haque mentioned that Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, International Lincoln Center of USA and Mahatma Gandhi Foundation in India will be invited to co-organize this great event. Held at the conference room of Pinnacle Resource at Dhaka, the death anniversary program was presided over by FOA Bangladesh President Mr. Md. Giasuddin Khan and attended by a good number of Lincoln's followers in Bangladesh. The program was held in cooperation with the U. S. Bangladesh Foundation and Friends of America.

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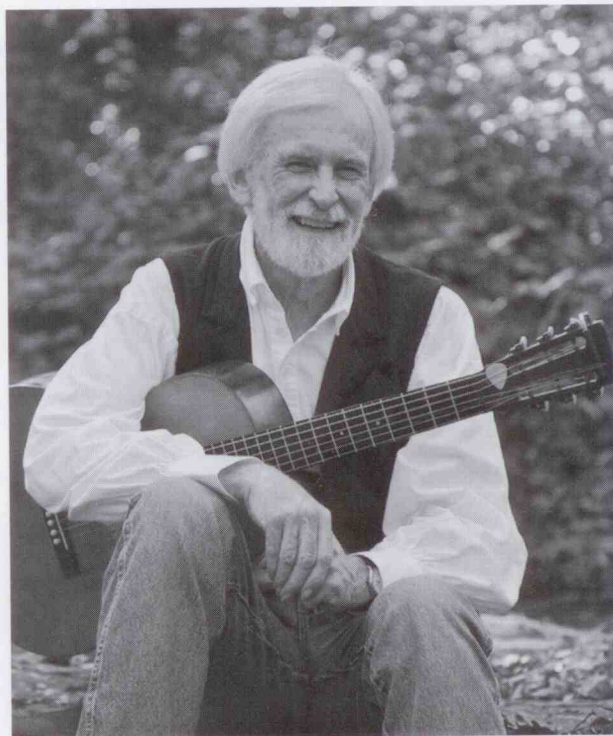
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'THE PEOPLE SAY LINCOLN'—WITH SESQUICENTENNIAL FOCUS ON 1864—TO BE THEME OF 19th ANNUAL LINCOLN FORUM SYMPOSIUM NOVEMBER 16-18 AT GETTYSBURG

The pivotal year of Abraham Lincoln's presidency—and, in many ways, in the life of the nation he so strongly believed must “live”—will be the focus of the 19th annual symposium of the Lincoln Forum when it reconvenes November 16-18 at the Wyndham Gettysburg. “The People Say Lincoln! Fighting for Political and Military Victory in 1864” marks year five of the Forum's six-year focus on the Civil War sesquicentennial.

Forum Chairman Frank J. Williams, in officially unveiling the 2014 schedule, noted: “As we approach the sesquicentennial anniversaries of the climactic political and military events of 1864 and 1865, we take special pleasure in offering one of the richest and most diverse programs in Forum history, featuring another stellar roster of favorite veteran presenters and historians making their Forum debuts. We will not only cover the all-important 1864 presidential campaign—arguably the most important election in U.S. history—and the bloody and agonizing military stalemates East and West, but also focus on the civilians, women, people of color, artists and musicians, and partisan newspaper powerhouses all caught up in or fanning the maelstrom. Seldom have we assembled such a brilliant faculty, and seldom have we set out to cover so many different facets of war, leadership, and citizenship in war-torn America.”



Bobby Horton

To fully convey a year filled not only with profound oratory and screams of agony from the battlefield, the symposium will make a special effort to shed light on the other important sights and sounds of 1864, including, for the first time, the rousing, mournful, and inspiring music of the campaign and campfire. To do so, The Forum will feature the long-awaited debut of Birmingham-born musician and musicologist Bobby Horton, who has produced and performed music for 16 PBS films, including Ken Burns' acclaimed documentaries *The Civil War* and *Baseball*. In lieu of the traditional closing-night banquet keynote, Horton will perform a multi-instrumental and vocal concert of Civil War music. Horton's talent and unmatched knowledge have been on display for more than three decades at performances around the country. Among his many CDs is a 14-volume set of authentic Civil War tunes, for which Horton played all the instruments and sang the vocals.

Additional after-dinner presentations will come from Forum leadership. Vice Chairman Harold Holzer will introduce his eagerly anticipated new book *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* with a major talk on the role of newspapers in 1864 politics, while Chairman Frank Williams will present an image-filled survey of “Lincoln on Film: From Silents to Spielberg.”

Craig L. Symonds and John F. Marszalek return for one of their acclaimed *continued on page 2*

