



Lincoln the Inventor

Jason Emerson

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In *Lincoln the Inventor*, Jason Emerson offers the first treatment of Abraham Lincoln's invention of a device to buoy vessels over shoals and its subsequent patent as more than mere historical footnote.

In this book, Emerson shows how, when, where, and why Lincoln created his invention; how his penchant for inventions and inventiveness was part of his larger political belief in internal improvements and free labor principles; how his interest in the topic led him to try his hand at scholarly lecturing; and how Lincoln, as president, encouraged and even contributed to the creation of new weapons for the Union during the Civil War.

During his extensive research, Emerson also uncovered previously unknown correspondence between Lincoln's son, Robert, and his presidential secretary, John Nicolay, which revealed the existence of a previously unknown draft of Abraham Lincoln's lecture "Discoveries and Inventions." Emerson not only examines the creation, delivery, and legacy of this lecture, but also reveals for the first time how Robert Lincoln owned this unknown version, how he lost and later tried to find it, the indifference with which Robert and Nicolay both held the lecture, and their decision to give it as little attention as possible when publishing President Lincoln's collected works.

The story of Lincoln's invention extends beyond a boat journey, the whittling of some wood, and a trip to the Patent Office; the invention had ramifications for Lincoln's life from the day his flatboat got stuck in 1831 until the day he died in 1865. Besides giving a complete examination of this important—and little known—aspect of Lincoln's life, *Lincoln the Inventor* delves into the ramifications of Lincoln's intellectual curiosity and inventiveness, both as a civilian and as president, and considers how it allows a fresh insight into his overall character and contributed in no small way to his greatness. *Lincoln the Inventor* is a fresh contribution to the field of Lincoln studies about a topic long neglected. By understanding Lincoln the inventor, we better understand Lincoln the man.

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