

1908

Gettysburg address: delivered at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, November 19th, 1863 ; [and] Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby, November 21, 1864.

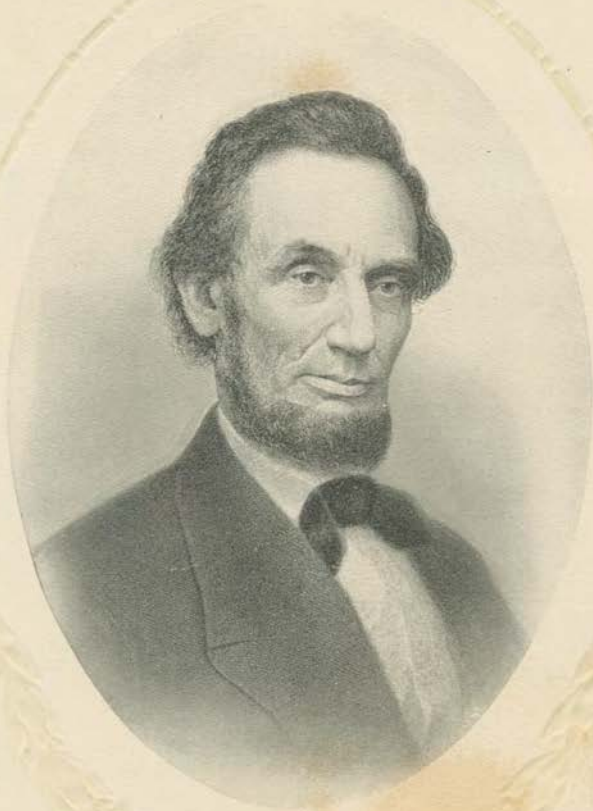
Abraham Lincoln

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1809 1909

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Delivered at the Dedication of the National Cemetery
at Gettysburg, November 19th, 1863

FOURSCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO, OUR FATHERS BROUGHT FORTH UPON THIS CONTINENT A NEW NATION, CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY, AND DEDICATED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN A GREAT CIVIL WAR, TESTING WHETHER THAT NATION, OR ANY OTHER NATION SO CONCEIVED AND SO DEDICATED, CAN LONG ENDURE. WE ARE MET ON A GREAT BATTLE-FIELD OF THAT WAR. WE ARE MET TO DEDICATE A PORTION OF IT AS THE FINAL RESTING-PLACE OF THOSE WHO HERE GAVE THEIR LIVES THAT THAT NATION MIGHT LIVE.

IT IS ALTOGETHER FITTING AND PROPER THAT WE SHOULD DO THIS, BUT IN A LARGE SENSE WE CANNOT DEDICATE—WE CANNOT CONSECRATE—WE CANNOT HALLOW THIS GROUND—THE BRAVE MEN, LIVING AND DEAD, WHO STRUGGLED HERE, HAVE CONSECRATED IT FAR BEYOND OUR POWER TO ADD OR DETRACT. THE WORLD WILL LITTLE NOTE, NOR LONG REMEMBER, WHAT WE SAY HERE, BUT IT CAN NEVER FORGET WHAT THEY DID HERE. IT IS FOR US, THE LIVING, RATHER TO BE DEDICATED HERE TO THE UNFINISHED WORK THAT THEY HAVE THUS FAR SO NOBLY CARRIED ON. IT IS RATHER FOR US TO BE HERE DEDICATED TO THE GREAT TASK REMAINING BEFORE US, THAT FROM THESE HONORED DEAD WE TAKE INCREASED DEVOTION TO THAT CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY HERE GAVE THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION; THAT WE HERE HIGHLY RESOLVE THAT THESE DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN; THAT THIS NATION, UNDER GOD, SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM, AND THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE, SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH.

Executive Mansion

Washington, Nov 21, 1864

To Mrs Bisby, Boston, Mass.

Dear Madam

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

A. Lincoln.

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