ABRAHAM LINCOLN AT GETTYSBURG, NOVEMBER 18 and 19, 1863

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IN November of 1863 a young man just turned nineteen years of age stood with the throng gathered to participate in the "exercises for the consecration" of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg. He was an observant young man with the promise of scholarship already in evidence. In 1862 he had been graduated from the local college of which his father was an honored professor. He began the study of theology and entered into the service of the Christian Commission, but was home on leave in November as he had also been in the terrible July days when General Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania was halted before his very eyes. After a long and busy life of service in the educational work of the Lutheran Church, he wrote his recollections, constantly refreshed and verified by study, of the days of '63 in Gettysburg. In this book of recollections and interpretation entitled Lincoln's Gettysburg World-Message,¹ the Rev. Dr. Henry Eyster Jacobs begins his preface with these significant words, "Gettysburg will live in history because of its association with Lincoln even more than as the scene of the decisive battle of the Civil War." This is the point of view offered in this brief presentation seventy-five years after Abraham Lincoln's single and brief visit to Gettysburg. Although single and brief, it was enough inseparably to join together the names of Lincoln and Gettysburg. Seventy-five years after, no one thinks of Gettysburg without thinking of Lincoln, and when thinking of Lincoln that which most commands attention and first comes to mind is some phrase or sentence from his Gettysburg Address.

The destructive and decisive battles of July 1, 2, and 3 had left the little community of Gettysburg a place of horror. As

¹ Published by The United Lutheran Publication House (Philadelphia, 1919).
soon as action finally ceased, the work of caring for the wounded
was more efficiently organized and the burial of the dead was
begun. However, the more than 20,000 wounded and sick required
so great attention, with every available building devoted to their
care, in addition to general and corps hospitals under canvas, that
completion of the burial of the dead was necessarily delayed.
Nearly 6,000 men had been killed in action and every day hundreds
more died of their wounds and of disease. The soldiers of both
armies had begun the work of interment of their comrades in
hastily prepared graves, but the scene of action had often shifted
and portions of the field had come within other and hostile lines so
that many were left uncared for, especially as the Confederate
army began its retreat on July 4th. To add to the seriousness of
the situation, in the heat and humidity of July days in southern
Pennsylvania, were the hundreds of carcasses of horses, many of
which remained unburied or unburned for weeks. When both
armies had withdrawn, the responsibility for protecting the health
and the sensibilities of the people of the community devolved
largely upon the local authorities. Under the circumstances and
in the face of all conditions it was an appalling situation. Even
where the dead had been buried it had been done superficially in
many cases and heavy rains had often washed away the layer of
hastily thrown earth which covered the bodies. Many graves were
left unmarked and some of these had been opened by persons
seeking to identify missing loved ones and then were left in con-
fusion. It was imperative that some well-organized and generously
supported plan for the permanent interment of at least the Union
dead should be made.

Governor Andrew G. Curtin in his annual message to the
Legislature on January 7, 1864, explained the purpose and scope
of the plan that was developed as follows:

After the battle of Gettysburg, in which loyal volun-
teers from eighteen States, including Pennsylvania, were
engaged, it appeared to me proper that all those States
should unite in establishing a cemetery on the spot, in
which their soldiers who had fallen in that conflict, should
be honorably interred. I accordingly appointed David
Wills, Esq, of Gettysburg, my agent, and through him, a
site was purchased at a cost of $2,475.87, and the convey-
ances made to the Commonwealth. On communicating
with the authorities of the other States, they all readily agreed to become parties to the arrangement, and on the 19th day of November last, the cemetery was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies in the presence of the President of the United States, the Governors of the States concerned, and other high officers, State and National. . . .

It is just to say that Mr. Wills has discharged his delicate and important duties with fidelity and to my entire satisfaction.

How Mr. Wills came to be appointed to this important position is described on page 62 of Report of the Select Committee Relative to the Soldiers' National Cemetery thus:

A few days after the terrific battle of Gettysburg, His Excellency, A. G. Curtin, Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, hastening to the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers, visited the battle field, and the numerous hospitals in and around Gettysburg, for the purpose of perfecting the arrangements for alleviating the sufferings and ministering to the wants of the wounded and dying. His official duties soon requiring his return to Harrisburg, he authorized and appointed DAVID WILLS, Esq., of Gettysburg, to act as his special agent in the matter.

[Then follows a description of the appalling conditions noted.]

And this, too, on Pennsylvania soil! Humanity shuddered at the sight, and called aloud for a remedy. The idea, accordingly, suggested itself of taking measures to gather these remains together and bury them decently and in order in a cemetery. Mr. Wills submitted the proposition and plan for this purpose by letter, July 24th, 1863, to His Excellency, Governor Curtin; and the Governor, with that profound sympathy, and that care and anxiety for the soldier which have always characterized him,

2 The Alumni Record of Gettysburg College, 1832-1932, gives the following sketch of David Wills: A.B. 1851. Studied law in the office of Thaddeus Stevens. Born, February 3, 1831, Adams County. Practiced law in Gettysburg, 1854-94. Superintendent of Schools of Adams county, 1854-56; director, Gettysburg National Bank, 1856-94; president judge, 42nd judicial district, 1873-74 (whence the title commonly applied, "Judge" Wills); originator and president, Commissioners of the Soldiers' National Cemetery until its cession to the United States government in 1872; president, Baltimore and Cumberland Valley Railroad, 1880-94; director, Hanover Railroad and branches. Died October 27, 1894.
approved of the design, and directed a correspondence to be entered into at once by Mr. Wills with the Governors of the other states having soldiers dead on the battle field of Gettysburg. The Governors of the different States, with great promptness, seconded the project, and the details of the arrangement were subsequently agreed upon.  

Under date of August 17, 1863 Mr. Wills reported to Governor Curtin the early progress of the work:

By virtue of the authority reposed in me by your Excellency, I have invited the cooperation of the several loyal States having soldier-dead on the battlefield around this place, in the noble project of removing their remains . . . to a cemetery.

The chief executives of fifteen out of the seventeen States have already responded, . . .

I have, also, at your request, selected and purchased the grounds for this cemetery, the land to be paid for by, and the title to be made to, the State of Pennsylvania, and to be held in perpetuity, devoted to the object for which it was purchased.

The grounds embrace about seventeen acres on Cemetery Hill, fronting on the Baltimore turnpike, and extending to the Taneytown road. It is the ground which formed the apex of our triangular line of battle, and the key to our line of defences. It embraces the highest point on Cemetery Hill, and overlooks the whole battle field. It is the spot which should be specially consecrated to this sacred purpose. It was here that such immense quantities of our artillery were massed, and during Thursday and Friday of the battle, from this most important place on the field, dealt out death and destruction to the Rebel army, in every direction of their advance.

I have been in conference, at different times, with agents sent here by the Governors of several of the States, and we have arranged details for carrying out this

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*This official report, together with accompanying documents as reported to the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, March 31, 1864, is the only collection of official papers easily available to the student. It contains also many pertinent letters. Later citations from this source will be indicated as from Report of the Select Committee. It bears the imprint—"Harrisburg: Singerly and Myers, State Printers, 1864." It is interesting to note that the copy used in the preparation of this paper is one bearing the autograph of David Wills and presented by him, November 4, 1864, to the library of the Philomathean Society of Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg) College.
sacred work. I herewith enclose you a copy of the proposed arrangement of details, . . .

I have also, at your suggestion, cordially tendered to each State the privilege, if they desire, of joining in the title to the land.

I think it would be showing only a proper respect for the health of this community not to commence the exhuming of the dead, and removal to the cemetery, until the month of November; and in the meantime the ground should be artistically laid out, and consecrated by appropriate ceremonies.

Under the leadership of Mr. Wills, contracts were made for the preparation of the grounds and for the removal of the bodies when the weather conditions were more favorable. Several men were employed to have specific responsibilities, under Mr. Wills' direction, in the exhuming and re-burial of the bodies. Particular care was exercised to identify the bodies and to take in trust articles of intrinsic or sentimental value found upon them. Such arrangements having been made, it was the next interest of the commissioners to make plans for the consecration of the grounds with the expressed purpose of making this consecration imposing.

In a letter, dated August 31, 1863, Governor Curtin expressed to Mr. Wills, apparently in reply to a letter from the letter of August 26, his pleasure at the report of progress made and concluded:

The proper consecration of the grounds must claim our early attention; and, as soon as we can do so, our fellow-purchasers should be invited to join with us in the performance of suitable ceremonies on the occasion.

The commission must have immediately begun to plan for the exercises of consecration and on September 23, Mr. Wills wrote the following letter to the Hon. Edward Everett:

The several States having soldiers in the Army of the Potomac, who fell at the battle of Gettysburg, in July last, gallantly fighting for the Union, have made arrangements here for the exhuming of all their dead, and their

removal and decent burial in a cemetery selected for that purpose, on a prominent part of the battle field.

The design is to bury all in common, marking with headstones, with the proper inscription, the known dead, and to erect a suitable monument to the memory of all these brave men, who have thus sacrificed their lives on the altar of their country.

The burial ground will be consecrated to this sacred and holy purpose on Thursday, the 23d day of October next, with appropriate ceremonies, and the several States interested, have united in the selection of you to deliver the oration on that solemn occasion. I am therefore instructed, by the Governors of the different States interested in this project, to invite you cordially to join with them in the ceremonies, and to deliver the oration for the occasion.⁵

Mr. Everett replied under date of September 26 that he was much complimented by this invitation and “would cheerfully undertake the performance of a duty at once so interesting and honorable,” but did not then expect to have a day at his command during the whole month of October. He continued:

The occasion is one of great importance, not to be dismissed with a few sentimental or patriotic commonplaces. It will demand as full a narrative of the events of the three important days as the limits of the hour will admit, and some appropriate discussion of the political character of the great struggle, of which the battle of Gettysburg is one of the most momentous incidents. As it will take me two days to reach Gettysburg, and it will be highly desirable that I should have at least one day to survey the battle field, I cannot safely name an earlier time than the 19th of November.

Should such a postponement of the day first proposed be admissible, it will give me great pleasure to accept the invitation.⁶

It is a tribute to the regard in which Mr. Everett was held and to the sincerity of the desire to have him as the orator at the

⁵ Ibid., pp. 68-69.
⁶ Ibid., pp. 69-70.
consecration that a date so far advanced in the autumn season for an out-door meeting should have been so cheerfully accepted.

It has been said that the members of the commission purposed to make the exercises attending the consecration imposing. Therefore they had set out to secure the most popular and most gifted orator of the day. William E. Barton in his work, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, which is the most complete as well as most scholarly and critical of all the works on this subject and to which the present writer acknowledges a deep debt of gratitude, says:

Edward Everett was in his day America's foremost orator. He had been a noted Boston minister; had followed his work in the pulpit with ten years as a professor of Greek; had then been successively President of Harvard, Governor of Massachusetts, United States Senator, Minister to England and Secretary of State. He was a cultured scholar, and an orator whose productions based on the best Greek models, displayed American scholarship upon the platform at its best. He had delivered memorable orations at historic spots in New England, notable in connection with semi-centennial celebrations of battles in the Revolutionary War. His oration on Washington, a hundred times repeated in many parts of the country, had brought in the money that helped to purchase and save Mount Vernon. He had been candidate for Vice-President on one of the tickets opposed to Lincoln, but was a hearty supporter of Lincoln's administration. America had no orator in his generation, and has produced none since, who could more worthily have represented the nation in a classical oration on such an occasion as that which he met at Gettysburg.⁷

As the cemetery was not then as it has been since 1872, under the authority of the national government, it was not felt that the President of the United States had any official responsibility for, or interest in either its establishment or its consecration. No one seems to have had any thought that the President would be concerned to come to the exercises of consecration, and indeed there were members on the commission who would not have been willing to extend a very pressing invitation to him. There-

fore, when in the course of sending formal, printed invitations to important national figures, including the President, an acceptance of such an invitation came from him, the group in charge was much surprised and some at least were not greatly pleased. However, if certain ones of that group did not respect the man they respected his office and after consideration, Mr. Wills was directed to invite Mr. Lincoln to have a part on the program. On November 2 the following letter from Mr. Wills went forward to the President:

The several States having soldiers in the Army of the Potomac who were killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, or have since died at the various hospitals established in the vicinity, have procured grounds on a prominent part of the battlefield for a cemetery, and are having the dead removed to them and properly buried.

These grounds will be consecrated and set apart to this sacred purpose on Thursday, the 19th instant. It is the desire that you, as Chief Executive of the Nation, formally set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks. It will be a source of great gratification to the many widows and orphans that have been made almost friendless by the great battle here, to have you here personally. It will kindle anew in the breasts of the comrades of these brave dead, now in the tented field or nobly meeting the foe in the front, a confidence that they who sleep in death on the battlefield are not forgotten by those in authority; and they will feel that should their fate be the same, their remains will not be uncared for.

In his article, “Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address,” in *The Century Magazine*, February, 1894, John G. Nicolay includes the text of a private note which Mr. Wills enclosed with his official communication. It is given as follows:

As the hotels in our town will be crowded and in confusion at the time referred to in the inclosed invitation, I write to invite you to stop with me. I hope you will feel it your duty to lay aside pressing business for a day to come on here to perform this last sad rite to our brave

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8 As it appears on the memorial to Lincoln and his Gettysburg Address in the National Cemetery, Gettysburg.
The days which followed the receipt of the invitation to take a part in the exercises at Gettysburg were busy ones for President Lincoln and it is impossible to see how he had any considerable time for reflection on what he should say, much less for extended formal preparation. However, there is much evidence that he was anxious, very anxious, to go to Gettysburg and the responsibility for being ready with "a few appropriate remarks" was undoubtedly keenly felt. Fortunately, we are in a position to say with a great deal of certainty that we know that he did not leave Washington on his special train on Wednesday, November 18th entirely unprepared. We know, at least, of one sheet of prepared writing which he took with him. He might have had more sheets or some notes, but only one such sheet survives. In the Library of Congress is a sheet of Executive Mansion paper, 8 x 9¾ inches on which is written in Lincoln's hand the following:

Four score 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 nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow, this ground—The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

It is rather for us, the living, to stand here,⁹

⁹The text of this first page of the first draft of the Address is copied exactly from a photostatic copy of the original in the Library of Congress. Particular care has been taken to reproduce the punctuation. There is no period at the end of the first sentence. The last incomplete sentence has a comma as its concluding mark. There are no erasures or correction marks visible, but the whole indicates a first draft which was intended to be revised and polished.
The special train arrived at Gettysburg from Washington at dusk and the President was escorted to the large house of David Wills which stood, as it stands today, on the south-east corner of the public square. Some time later in the evening a band serenaded the President and the accompanying crowd demanded a speech. Mr. Lincoln responded, reluctantly no doubt, in view of his expected appearance and address on the morrow. He addressed the crowd in the following words in which it is evident he did not acquit himself with great credit:

I appear before you, fellow citizens, merely to thank you for this compliment. The inference is a fair one that you would hear me for a little while at least, were I to commence to make a speech. I do not appear before you for the purpose of doing so, and for several substantial reasons. The most substantial of these is that I have no speech to make. In my position it is sometimes important that I should not say foolish things. [A voice: If you can help it.] It very often happens that the only way to help it is to say nothing at all. Believing that in my present condition this evening, I must beg of you to excuse me from addressing you further.10

Conversing with the group which gathered to meet him at the Wills House, the President seemed uneasy and anxious to retire. Doubtless the unfinished address in the room prepared for him troubled him. About 1890 Mr. Wills wrote out and signed a statement concerning the events connected with Mr. Lincoln during the evening of November 18 after he retired to his room. This statement was given to a protege of Mr. Wills—Mr. Charles M. McCurdy. It has recently been reproduced for publication and is now considered.11 In the statement Mr. Wills says,

... After spending part of the evening in the parlors he [Lincoln] retired to his room. He had his colored servant, William, with him. Between nine and ten o'clock the President sent his servant to request me to come to his room. I went and found him with paper prepared to write, and he said that he had just seated

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himself to put upon paper a few thoughts for the morrow's exercises and had sent for me to ascertain what part he was to take in them and what was expected of him. After a full talk on that subject I left him. About eleven o'clock he sent for me again, and when I went to his room he had the same paper in his hand, and asked me if he could see Mr. Seward. I told him that Mr. Seward was staying with my neighbor next door, and I would go and bring him over. He said "No, I'll go and see him." He went and I went with him and Mr. Lincoln carried the paper on which he had written his speech with him, and we found Mr. Seward, and I left the President with him. In less than half an hour Mr. Lincoln returned with the same paper in his hand. The next day I sat by him on the platform when he delivered his address, which has become immortal, and he read it from the same paper on which I had seen him writing it the night before. He afterwards made a copy of it, of which I have a facsimile and have had a photograph of it taken. There are but two or three changes in this copy from that as taken by the stenographers on the day it was read from the platform.

Mr. Luhrs sets forth the view that Mr. Lincoln wrote all his first draft in the Wills house and uses Mr. Wills' statement plus the statement of John G. Nicolay concerning Mr. Lincoln's writing activities on the morning of November 19 to support his view. Another interpretation—developed by Barton—is that Mr. Lincoln brought a partly completed draft with him from Washington, completed that on the evening of November 18 in the Wills House, and on the morning of November 19 made a fair copy, with revisions and amendments, thus producing the so-called "Second Draft" which is also in the Library of Congress. This view is supported by notes on a sheet setting forth seven versions of the Gettysburg Address for purposes of comparison, published by the Library of Congress in 1924. Let us consider the relative merits of these two contrary views.

Mr. Luhrs says:

We do know that President Lincoln retired to his room on the evening of the 18th to prepare his address, and I

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22 Ibid., pp. 16-18.
have every reason to believe that it was at this time that he first wrote out in ink on White House stationery, the first draft of the Gettysburg Address. We have the statement of Judge Wills to support this belief, and also know from the statement of Secretary Nicolay that some last-minute changes were made on the morning of the 19th before leaving for the cemetery grounds. These changes being made hurriedly, were done in pencil on a sheet of legal size foolscap paper of bluish gray color. . . . This second sheet, which is written in pencil, clearly indicates that it was written at a different time than the first page of the first draft and while everybody could agree that this portion was written at Gettysburg, it is quite clear that he would have written more deliberately and in ink, in the longer period at night as Judge Wills testifies, and the second page, written in pencil, was written on the morning of the day of the ceremonies as Secretary Nicolay testifies in his article "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." . . .

Mr. Nicolay states:

It was after the breakfast hour on the morning of the 19th that the writer, Mr. Lincoln's private secretary, went to the upper room in the house of Mr. Wills which Mr. Lincoln occupied, to report for duty, and remained with the President while he finished writing the Gettysburg address, during the short leisure he could utilize for this purpose before being called to take his place in the procession, which was announced on the program to move promptly at ten o'clock.

There is neither record, evidence, nor well-founded tradition that Mr. Lincoln did any writing, or made any notes, on the journey between Washington and Gettysburg . . . Mr. Lincoln carried in his pocket the autograph manuscript of so much of his address as he had written in Washington. . . . It fills one page of the letter-paper at that time habitually used in the Executive Mansion, . . . The whole of this first page—nineteen lines—is written in ink . . . and the last line is in the following form: "It is rather for us the living to stand here," the last three words being, like the rest, in ink. . . . But when, at Gettysburg, on the morning of the ceremonies, Mr. Lincoln finished his manuscript, he used a lead pencil, with which he crossed out the last three words of the first page, and wrote above them in pencil "we here dedica," at which point he took up a new half sheet of paper—not white
letter-paper as before, but a bluish-gray foolscap of large size with wide lines, ... and on this he wrote, all in pencil, the remainder of the word, and of the first draft of the address, comprising a total of nine lines and a half.

The time occupied in this final writing was probably about an hour, for it is not likely that he left the breakfast table before nine o'clock and the formation of the procession began at ten.\(^{14}\)

As both Mr. Nicolay and Mr. Luhrs, on the basis of eye-witness evidence, contend that Mr. Lincoln wrote only one draft of his Address before delivery, although it must be noted they differ radically on how much of this draft was written in Gettysburg, it would seem that the matter was thus settled. However, as set forth above, Barton has another view, in which he is supported by notes on a publication of the Library of Congress. Barton shows clearly that he had seen Mr. Wills' statement of 1890,\(^{15}\) but in face of it he develops another theory. Here is the theory:

On Monday, November seventeenth, he told Honorable James Speed, later a member of his Cabinet, that he had found time “to write about half of it.” . . .

Whether Lincoln wholly completed his first draft before he left Washington, we are not quite sure; if he had, he was not satisfied with the way it ended. . . .

At Judge Wills' house that evening he read over the first draft of his speech, and was not pleased with the way it ended. . . . He took a new sheet of paper, marked out with his pencil the three words “to stand here” with which the first page ended, and in pencil, not pen, wrote above these “we here be dedica” . . .\(^{16}\)

Then taking a sheet, 8 x 13 inches, of different kind and quality, he wrote:

ted 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 these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation, shall have a new

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 602.  
\(^{16}\)Ibid., pp. 66-70.
birth of freedom, and that government of the people by the people for the people shall not perish from the earth.

Barton continues:

He walked across to the Harper house and read this to Seward, and Seward can not have made any important suggestions, or if he did so, they do not seem to have been regarded by Lincoln as important. He worked no more upon his manuscript that night. The address had assumed an approach to finality, . . . About nine o'clock the following morning, Lincoln rose from the breakfast table in the Wills' house and went to his room. There, not very long afterward, John G. Nicolay found him rewriting his address. For this re-writing he used the same kind of paper which he had used for the penciled draft of his second page. From the new draft, written wholly in ink, and without erasure, on two pages of the wide-lined paper Lincoln delivered the address that day. This second draft is virtually a fair copy of the first draft.

The text of the second draft, taken from a photostatic copy of the original which is also in the Library of Congress, and on two sheets of paper like the second sheet of the first draft is as follows:

Four score 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 nation, so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met here on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it as a final resting place for 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 larger sense we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which 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 shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

This second draft contains 269 words while the first draft contains only 239 words.

In full agreement with Barton that Mr. Lincoln completed the first draft of his Address on the evening of the November 18 in the Wills House and copied and revised it, creating the second draft, in the same place on the morning of November 19, are the notes published by the Library of Congress in 1924. In these it is stated:

Nos. 1 and 2 were given to the Library of Congress by the children of John Hay. Apparently both were written before the Address was delivered. The first page of No. 1 is written on a sheet of Executive Mansion paper, in ink. The second page is written in pencil on a sheet of foolscap, and a few words at the bottom of the first page are changed in pencil. According to Nicolay’s account (Century Magazine, February, 1894), these changes were made by Lincoln after he arrived in Gettysburg. If so, the second Library of Congress draft must also have been written in Gettysburg, after the first draft was corrected and before delivery. It contains certain phrases that are not in the first draft, but are in the reports of the Address as delivered and in subsequent copies made by Lincoln. It seems probable that this second Library of Congress draft was the final revision before delivering the Address, and was the copy that Lincoln held in his hand while speaking, although he apparently referred to it so little that some of those present thought he spoke extemporaneously.

The words “under God,” in the last sentence of the Address as reported, and in all subsequent copies made by Lincoln, are not in either of the Library of Congress drafts.
The present writer is satisfied that the theory set forth in the notes just quoted is the most satisfactory explanation of the whole matter of the preparation and revision of the Address before delivery. It is, however, impossible that the case be fully argued here. The conclusion must rest upon a textual study of the several drafts and versions, including the stenographic reports and the copies later made by Lincoln, together with a critical analysis of the accounts of Wills and Nicolay.\textsuperscript{17}

November 19, 1863, was a great day for the little town of about two thousand people. The weather was most pleasant, a rare Indian Summer day. Mr. Lincoln came out of his lodging place in time to take his place in the procession at the appointed hour, but an hour's delay followed so that the procession, moving southward through the town to the Cemetery Hill, did not get under way until eleven o'clock.\textsuperscript{18} At the cemetery another delay followed because Mr. Everett had not yet arrived. Finally, at noon the exercises began.

The following order was observed:

- Music, by Birgfield's Band.
- Prayer, by Rev. T. H. Stockton, D.D.
- Music, by the Marine Band.
- Oration, by Hon. Edward Everett.

\textsuperscript{17} Luhrs is alone in believing that Lincoln wrote all of his address in Gettysburg. Other writers of repute, however, hold to the view that he completed the first draft there, used that at the Dedication, and some time later wrote the second draft. See J. Tausek, \textit{The True Story of the Gettysburg Address} (New York: The Dial Press, 1933); O. H. Carmichael, \textit{Lincoln's Gettysburg Address} (New York: Abingdon Press, 1917); C. E. Carr, \textit{Lincoln at Gettysburg} (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1906). These three base their conclusion entirely upon Nicolay's authority. A curious theory is found in W. H. Lambert's excellent article, "The Gettysburg Address," \textit{Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography}, October, 1909, in which Lambert says, "I am convinced that this manuscript [the second draft] was written before November 19, 1863, and that it was inadvertently left at Washington." He says that the text of the second draft conforms more closely to the address as actually delivered and "justifies the belief that" the second draft "was the final draft of the complete Address before its delivery."

\textsuperscript{18} It is a coincidence that the site chosen for the Soldiers National Cemetery was on a hill to which the local name, Cemetery Hill, had already been given in 1854 by reason of the establishment of the Evergreen Cemetery on the unnamed hill and on land which the Soldiers Cemetery was later immediately to adjoin. With only one or two exceptions all the names attached to local geographical features and made famous through their connection with the battle were names in local use before 1863.
Mr. Everett did full honors to the occasion, speaking one hour and fifty-seven minutes in the manner and style of the typical orator of that period. He began:

Standing beneath this serene sky, overlooking these broad fields now reposing from the labors of the waning year, the mighty Alleghenies dimly towering over us, the graves of our brethren beneath our feet, it is with hesitation that I raise my poor voice to break the eloquent silence of God and Nature. But the duty to which you have called me must be performed. Grant me, I pray you, your indulgence and your sympathy.

It was a noble effort, containing a detailed review of the action in the July days of the same year on the field which lay before the speaker. However, many must have tired and become dull of mind before he spoke his closing sentence:

But they, I am sure, will join us in saying as we bid farewell to the dust of these martyr-heroes, that wheresoever throughout the civilized world the accounts of this great warfare are read, and down to the latest period of recorded time, in the glorious annals of our common country there will be no brighter page than that which relates THE BATTLES OF GETTYSBURG.

Then followed in order, as announced:

Music, Hyman, composed by B. B. French, Esq.
Dedicatory Remarks, by the President of the United States.

As Barton has it:

Then Honorable Ward Hill Lamon introduced the President of the United States, who rose and made a few appropriate remarks. And the world has long remembered what he said there.

When Mr. Lincoln had spoken his immortal words in less than three minutes, there followed:

Dirge, sung by Choir selected for the occasion.
Benediction, by Rev. H. L. Baugher, D.D.

Questions naturally arise when these events are recounted concerning the impression made by Mr. Lincoln and his address upon
the assembled multitude of upwards of 20,000 people. The best reply to most of these questions is that no one will ever positively know the answers. Eye-witness and ear-witness evidence is not to be discounted. But there is no consensus of recollections, which are not only varied, but contradictory. Barton says in this connection:

It would seem that it should be very easy to relate just what he said and how he said it, and all else that should be of record about it. And yet, there prevails a very considerable uncertainty about nearly every detail of that address. The place and method of its preparation, the manner of its delivery, the effect upon those who have heard it, and the very content of the speech itself, have given rise to innumerable variations of tradition and sharply contradictory reports on the part of those who heard....

As to his manuscript, we could prove that he had no manuscript with him on the platform; that he had a manuscript, but that it was either a card or a piece of paper not larger than a card; that he had some notes on paper of rough appearance, presumed to have been those that he had written on the train; that he delivered his address from notes on a yellow envelope, ... that he took his manuscript out of his side pocket before he rose ...; that he rose with his manuscript in his hand; that he took his manuscript out of his breast pocket after he rose. ...\(^{19}\)

However, seventy-five years after, we are not so much concerned with the manner or form of delivery as with what was said. After all, the Gettysburg Address has lived as literature; it is as literature and not as oratory that it should be judged.

Reliable evidence indicates that Lincoln himself was disappointed with his effort and said in his characteristically picturesque language that the speech “won’t scour,” or as we would say today, “it didn’t go over.” Perfunctory praise was given at the time, but few saw the majesty of thought and the beauty of phrasing which it possesses. Edward Everett caught a glimpse of its greatness and on the next day sent him the following note:

Not wishing to intrude upon your privacy when you must be much engaged, I beg leave to thank you very

\(^{19}\) William E. Barton, *Lincoln in Gettysburg*, Foreword.
sincerely for your great thoughtfulness for my daughter’s accommodation on the platform yesterday, and much kindness to me and mine at Gettysburg. Permit me also to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you with such eloquent simplicity and appropriateness at the consecration of the cemetery. I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes. My son, who parted from me at Baltimore, and my daughter concur in this statement.59

Lincoln lived to think better of the Address himself and on at least three later occasions wrote it out in full in his own hand, each time making slight changes. The version of the Address most often quoted is the only one which he autographed. This was written in 1864 to furnish a copy to be lithographed and included in a volume, Autograph Leaves of Our Country’s Authors, prepared and sold at a Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Fair held in Baltimore in April, 1864. The notes of the Library of Congress say that this has been called the “standard version,” probably because it appears to be the latest copy written by Mr. Lincoln, and therefore, his final revision. At last reports it was in the hands of the descendants of the late Colonel Alexander Bliss of Washington, D. C., who as one of the committee for gathering the autographed contributions to the volume had conducted the correspondence. This “standard version” is as follows:

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE CEMETERY AT GETTYSBURG

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on 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 nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for 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 larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor 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 which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. 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 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, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln

November 19, 1863
This version contains 272 words.

Mr. Lincoln wrote out two other copies in his own hand of which we know and which are extant. One was written on the same occasion as the one just given, but he wrote it without title or signature as the committee desired, so that it was not suitable for lithographing for their purpose. This copy he gave to George Bancroft whose family retained possession of it until some time ago when it was sold. This contains 272 words. A fifth copy was made in 1864 in response to a request from Everett to join him in giving manuscripts of their addresses at Gettysburg to be bound together in one volume and sold for the benefit of sick soldiers at a Sanitary Commission Fair in New York. Barton says:

By this time Lincoln had begun to think that his Gettysburg speech was not altogether a failure. If a manuscript copy of it was to be bound up with the speech of Everett, he wanted it to be in better form than any he had written up to that time. He took the matter in hand, and gave the address a good overhauling.²¹

At last reports, this volume containing both addresses, owned by former Senator Keyes of New Hampshire had been acquired by

²¹ William E. Barton, Lincoln in Gettysburg, pp. 105-106.
a New York collector. This version contains 273 words. If Mr. Lincoln ever made another copy, no evidence is at hand to prove it.

Through the years the beauty, power, and the literary perfection of the Gettysburg Address came to be recognized and praised more and more, until today it is looked upon as a precious gem of English literature, and what is probably more, the best and most pointed expression in short compass of American political idealism. At the recent great celebration in Gettysburg commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the battle, when nearly 2,000 veterans of the war gathered in “Final Reunion,” when 500,000 Americans joined them throughout the days of the celebration, hardly one address of the long list of addresses was made in which reference to Lincoln at Gettysburg was omitted and in which at least one quotation from his famous address was not included.

A glowing tribute to the man and to the address was paid fifty years after Lincoln stood at Gettysburg by Lord Curzon, then Chancellor of Oxford University, in a speech on “Modern Parliamentary Eloquence,” made on November 6, 1913, at Cambridge University. On the authority of Barton, Lord Curzon is credited with having, in the course of his speech, set up the three supreme masterpieces of eloquence in the English language, in his judgment: the toast of William Pitt after Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar, the Gettysburg Address, and the Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln. Lord Curzon is quoted as having said:

The Gettysburg Address is far more than a pleasing piece of occasional oratory. It is a marvelous piece of English composition. It is a pure well of English undefiled. It sets one to inquiring with nothing short of wonder, “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” The more closely the address is analyzed the more one must confess astonishment at his choice of words, the precision of its thought, its simplicity, directness and effectiveness.

But it is more than an admirable piece of English composition, it is an amazingly comprehensive and forceful presentation of the principles for which the war then was waging. It was a truthful recital of the events which lay behind the gathering at Gettysburg, and an interpretation of the spirit of the occasion. It joined the local to the national, the occasional to the permanent; it
went straight at a declaration of the purpose which ani-
mated the soul of Abraham Lincoln, and for which the
men buried at Gettysburg had given their lives. Above
all it was a declaration of America’s fundamental prin-
ciples. It truthfully represented the spirit for which men
fought, not only at Gettysburg but at Runnymede, at
Bunker Hill, and on the plains of Flanders. The long,
hard fought battle for the liberation of humanity has been
a struggle for the rights and welfare of humanity.  

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 127-129.