The John E. Boos Collection

SC.MSS.048

2.09 linear feet

Special Collections and University Archives
Jean and Alexander Heard Library
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee
The John E. Boos Collection

Scope and Content Note

The John E. Boos Collection is a collection of books that contain letters, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and other ephemera pertaining to the Civil War, more specifically Abraham Lincoln and the legacy he has left. The letters are of special interest to historians, as they come from people who lived during the Civil War and may have encountered Lincoln. Over the span of several decades, John E. Boos contacted thousands of people who lived during the Civil War, asking for their written memories of the time, or any specific points of interest about Lincoln.

The collection is arranged chronologically by publication date, starting with 1917 the latest being 1968. Each book documents different aspects of the war’s legacy, ranging from newspaper clippings that mention Lincoln’s name to memories of Confederate soldiers’ experiences. “The manuscript was put together in the first couple of decades of the twentieth century when some of those who had seen Lincoln were still alive. John E. Boos was an avid autograph collector, a devotee of Abraham Lincoln and the soldiers who fought in the Civil War. His text for the book does not give a complete transcript of each item he collected, but does talk about the items and provides some context for the items” (Amazon.com). The typical format of these books is a brief typed biographical sketch of the letter writers, followed by the physical letter and a typed version to accompany it.

Some notable components of the John E. Boos Collection include commentary on Lincoln’s oratorical style, opinions on Ulysses S. Grant as a general, and encounters with Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy.

A significant number of these letters come from New York; Boos lived in Albany.

Biographical Sketch

John E. Boos avidly collected transcripts of memories from those who were alive during the Civil War, hoping to amass information on Abraham Lincoln. He wrote to a range of people, from Union and Confederate veterans to people whose parents encountered major Civil War figures. Over the span of several decades in the 20th century, Boos collected this information and bound the ephemera and typed transcripts into a series of 19 books.

Provenance Statement

This collection was donated to Vanderbilt University in the 1960’s.
Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish, copy, reprint, digitize, orally record for transmission over public or private airways, or use materials from the John E. Boos Collection in any and all other current or future developed methods or procedures, must be obtained from the Special Collections and University Archives Division of the Vanderbilt University Libraries. All rights are reserved and retained regardless of current or future development or laws that may apply to fair use standards.
BOX 1

FOLDER 1: Extracts from Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, in which they mention the name of Abraham Lincoln.
J. E. Boos, 1917. Albany, NY.
This book consists of cutouts of articles from magazines and newspapers that mention Lincoln. Most are about presidents and other politicians (Truman, Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Coolidge, etc.), in which Boos underlines Lincoln’s name. Other articles are about memorials, his legacy, etc. There are also several cutouts of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Featured articles and mentions also cite the newspaper and date of publication.

FOLDER 2: Extracts from Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, in which they mention the name of Abraham Lincoln.
J. E. Boos, 1917. Albany, NY.
Similar to book 1, this book contains articles from magazines and newspapers that mention President Lincoln. Some of the advertisements that mention Lincoln’s name use his legacy to communicate what the company stands for. This book also has more instances of the Gettysburg Address, along with some cutouts about the Bixby Letter and photographs.

FOLDER 3: Extracts from Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, in which they mention the name of Abraham Lincoln.
J. E. Boos, 1925. Albany, NY.
Book 3 follows the same format as books 1 and 2, with an extensive collection of cutouts of articles from newspapers and magazines that discuss Abraham Lincoln. Several cutouts of the Gettysburg Address are featured. *Note: binding is partially undone and is not in a hardcover.

FOLDER 4: Abraham Lincoln.
J. E. Boos, 1929. Albany, NY.
Book 4 contains miscellaneous images of statues around the country, facsimiles and cutouts of letters (i.e. the Bixby letter and personal letters) and images. Also included are accounts of Lincoln’s character, his relationship with Mary Todd, and other miscellaneous topics such as his campaign, his presidency, and his youth. A publication from 1930 of Lincoln’s brief autobiography is featured at the end.

BOX 2

FOLDER 1: A Program of the Sixth Ohio Cavalry.
J. E. Boos, 1931. Albany, NY.
“A Program of the Sixth Ohio Cavalry” includes a donated pamphlet about a reunion of Union and Confederate soldiers at Gettysburg, in addition to people’s letters about their parents’ experiences during the war. Also includes a program in the back featuring the names of an Ohio company.

FOLDER 2: Abraham Lincoln and the Advertisers.
J. E. Boos, 1932. Albany, NY.
This book consists of advertisements, most of which are from newspapers. The ads often feature books about Lincoln, or use him to communicate the company’s
values and advertisement. Advertisements are from 1928-1932. Some are just illustrations that feature Lincoln. Common advertisement topics: life insurance, books/volume series, lectures, paraphernalia.

**FOLDER 3:** From Springfield to Washington.  
J. E. Boos, 1932. Albany, NY.  
Opening page inscription: “He writes it Thomas Francis Woods, and it sounds rather aristocratic, but when you know him, Tom is good enough, because Tom means he is a loyal, sincere friend, and I deem it a privilege to have a claim upon his friendship.” Followed by a note written in 1934 to Boos from Woods: “This occasion recalls my address on Lincoln some few years ago, given at your request before the West End Community Club; and serves as a little souvenir of an old and valued friendship.”  
This book features anecdotes from a variety of people who knew Lincoln before and during the Presidential election. The content consists of a write up about the person by Boos, the letter in which the people recounted their stories, and other ephemera. Some photos are included with the biographies of the subjects. Consists mainly of anecdotal stories of his habits and times they saw him.

**FOLDER 4:** Pictures of Lincoln.  
J. E. Boos, 1932. Albany, NY.  
Book 8 mainly consists of cutouts of photographs, illustrations, paintings, and other media featuring Lincoln. Some are the same as the advertisements found in book 6.

**BOX 3**

**FOLDER 1:** The Perfect Tribute. Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews.  
J. E. Boos, 1944. Albany, NY.  
“The Perfect Tribute” is a story written by Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews about Abraham Lincoln. Boos’ book features an introduction he wrote, detailing his meeting with the author, followed by a copy of Andrews’ story.

**FOLDER 2:** Abe Passed Through.  
“Abe Passed Through” is a fact-filled account of people’s interactions with Lincoln before and during his presidency. Topics include how he interacted with people while he was a lawyer, Copperheads, his rhetoric and persuasive abilities, veterans’ encounters, and the transport of Lincoln’s body to Illinois. These accounts seem to be focused on people from the Albany area. Some of these accounts also include autographs of the people who submitted memories.

**FOLDER 3:** President Lincoln at Gettysburg.  
“President Lincoln at Gettysburg” starts with a copy of the Gettysburg Address and a lengthy opening statement. Following Boos’ statement are statements made by soldiers who fought at Gettysburg, in addition to other people whose family members had experiences related to the Battle at Gettysburg.
FOLDER 4: Ulysses S. Grant, A Greater General than President.
Book 12 is a comprehensive look at Ulysses S. Grant from the perspective of soldiers and other figures. This book makes a point to differentiate between Grant’s leadership style on the battlefield and as President, as well as drawing comparisons to Lincoln’s leadership style. Included are excerpts from magazines and short books on Grant’s early life, with some interjections from Boos. Miscellaneous ephemera and telegrams are included, covering topics such as Grant’s personal traits, his later life, the Battle of Shiloh, and the Siege of Vicksburg. A short index is provided at the end for organizational purposes.

FOLDER 5: Some Experiences of John W. Ennis.
Boos provides an introduction on Ennis, who was a Civil War veteran. He enlisted in 1861, fought in a few battles, then was taken prisoner and forced to become a secret operator in Provost-Marshall’s Department. His responsibilities included finding deserters and arresting them. The book is formatted as a sort of memoir for Ennis, describing his experiences on the battlefield. There are also other excerpts from men detailing their experiences. There is an index of names at the end.

BOX 4

FOLDER 1: When Old Soldiers were Young Soldiers in Washington.
Similar in format to Boos’ other books, letters describing encounters with Lincoln are laid out in the same format (typed biography by Boos, typed version of the letter, and the physical copy of the letter), followed by an index. Featured at the end is a booklet titled “Footprints through Dixie.”

FOLDER 2: Johnny Reb.
This is a compilation of memories from members of the Confederate army. Following the same format as Boos’ other books, Boos provides brief typed biographies of the people he contacted, followed by their letters describing their contributions/experiences with the Confederate Army. The end contains a booklet titled, “Surgical Care of the Confederate States Army” by Richard B. Stark and Janet C. Stark. This booklet provides background information on medical supplies, uniforms, techniques for surgical procedures, and other information on the Confederate Army’s medical stations and hospitals.

FOLDER 3: Jefferson Davis: The President of the Confederacy.
“Jefferson Davis” is about soldiers’ memories of the President of the Confederate Army and other high-ranking confederate generals. These stories are recounted by former Confederates and include a book titled, “Jefferson Davis: A Short Story of the Confederate Soldier, the Ideal Soldier of the World,” published in 1911. This book aims to provide an accurate portrait of Jefferson Davis to later generations, as well as giving a pro-Southern idea of the causes of the Civil War.
BOX 5

**FOLDER 1:** I Met Mr. Lincoln.

“I Met Mr. Lincoln” follows a similar layout to other books in this collection, starting with physical copies of the letters written to Boos, followed by typed transcripts of these letter writers’ experiences with Lincoln. Some are brief interactions that the writers remember from their childhoods, while some others are unable to provide any further information.

**FOLDER 2:** Mr. Lincoln went to Richmond.

This book features soldiers’ memories of a specific day: April 2, 1865, following “Sheridan’s success at Five Forks…[Lincoln] visited Richmond April 3rd.” Lincoln didn’t visit for long, but some of these memories are from soldiers in the regiments that were there that day. Most anecdotes are just sightings of the President rather than interactions. Some of the memories are from other dates, however.

**FOLDER 3:** Lincoln in Wartime.
John E. Boos, unknown.

All of the ephemera and clippings in “Lincoln in Wartime” are from wartime. These clippings trace his speeches, troop visits, announcements, etc. There are also some political cartoons and op-ed columns. The clippings are possibly from Harper’s Weekly. The end of the book consists of a leaflet reflecting on Lincoln’s legacy and pictures of his final resting place.