



The Gettysburg Address

Delivered at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863

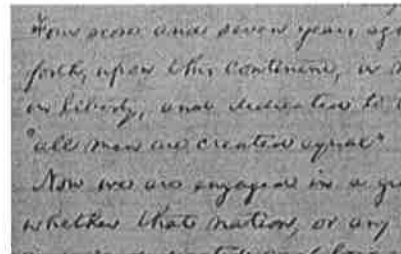
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The Gettysburg Address Drafts

Of the five known manuscript copies of the Gettysburg Address, the Library of Congress has two. President Lincoln gave one of these to each of his two private secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay. The copy on exhibit, which belonged to Nicolay, is often called the "first draft" because it is believed to be the earliest copy that exists.

Considerable scholarly debate continues about whether the Nicolay copy is the "reading" copy. In 1894 Nicolay wrote that Lincoln had brought with him the first part of the speech, written in ink on Executive Mansion stationery, and that he had written the second page in pencil on lined paper before the dedication on November 19, 1863. Matching folds are still evident on the two pages shown here, suggesting it could be the copy that eyewitnesses say Lincoln took from his coat pocket and read at the ceremony.

["Nicolay Draft" of the
Gettysburg Address](#)
Holograph.
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John Hay Papers
[Manuscript Division](#)



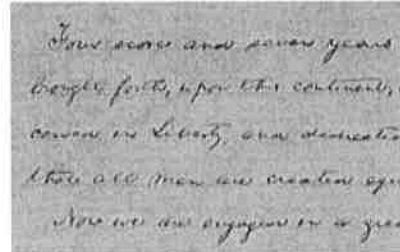
[Transcript of the "Nicolay Draft"](#)

However, one of the arguments supporting the contrary theory that the delivery text has been lost is that some of the words and phrases of the Nicolay copy do not match contemporaneous accounts. The words "under God," for example, are missing from the phrase "that this nation [under God] shall have a new birth of freedom...." In order for the Nicolay draft to have been the reading copy, Lincoln uncharacteristically would have had to depart from his written text in several instances. This copy of the Gettysburg Address remained in John Nicolay's possession until his death in 1901, when it passed to his friend and colleague John Hay.

The "second draft," probably made by Lincoln shortly after his return to Washington from Gettysburg, was given to John Hay, whose descendants donated both it and the Nicolay copy to the Library of

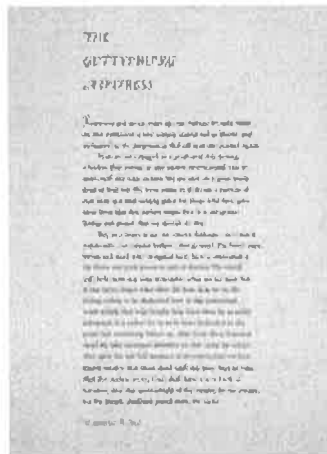
Congress in 1916. There are numerous variations in words and punctuation between these two drafts. Because these variations provide clues into Lincoln's thinking and because these two drafts are the most closely tied to November 19, they continue to be consulted by scholars of the period.

"Hay Draft" of the
Gettysburg Address
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Transcript of the "Hay Draft"

The other three copies of the Address were written by Lincoln for charitable purposes well after November 19. The copy for Edward Everett, the orator who spoke at Gettysburg for two hours prior to Lincoln, is at the Illinois State Historical Library at Springfield; the Bancroft copy, requested by historian George Bancroft, is at Cornell University; the Bliss copy was made for Colonel Alexander Bliss, Bancroft's stepson, and is now in the Lincoln Room of the White House.



Transcription of the version of the
Gettysburg Address inscribed on the
walls at the Lincoln Memorial in
Washington, D.C.
