

Delphos, Kansas.

5-8-1918

J. E. Boos

Albany, N.Y.

I found your letter awaiting me on my return from a visit at our capital city and will comply with your request ^{in writing} of how I happened to write to Mr Lincoln. I was eleven years of age at the time of ^{his} candidacy for our chief magistrate. At school we children had many disputes over the faults and merits of Lincoln and Douglas. My father was a staunch republican and of course his choice was mine and I resented the rude jeers and ridicule of Mr Lincoln's personal appearance even before I had seen his picture, but I think I must have been rather disappointed when my father brought from some meeting a crude and glaring picture of Lincoln and Hamilton. The two were surrounded by way of frame with a rail fence. Looking about in my mind for something which would improve Mr Lincoln's face I finally

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decided he might look better
if had a beard, and straight-
way wrote telling him so. I
must have felt that it was
a rather free criticism, for
I remember saying that I
thought the soil fence about
his picture looked real
pretty. I asked him if he
concluded to cultivate a beard
and had no time to write me
if his little girl might. (Sup-
posing every one had little
girls.) I promised to use my
best efforts to induce two
brothers who were of the demo-
cratic faith to vote for him.
While writing the letter I thought
no more of it until the
reply came a few days later.
It read like this:

Chiro. Springfield Ill
Miss Grace Bedell Dec-19-1860

My Dear little Miss. Your
very agreeable of the 15th inst. is re-
ceived. I regret the necessity of
saying I have no daughter, I have
three sons, one seventeen, one nine,
and one seven years of age. They
with their mother constitute my
whole family. As to the whiskers,
having never worn any, do

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you not think people would call it a
piece of silly affectation if I were to be -
gin wearing them now?

Your very sincere well-wisher

A Lincoln

Probably the frankness of the child
appealed to the humorous, kindly side
of his nature for on his memorable
journey from Springfield to Washington
he inquired of Hon. G. W. Patterson, ~~and~~
who was a resident of our town if he knew
of the family, and on arriving at West-
field ~~where~~ he made a very brief talk
from the rear of the train. At its close
he said he had a correspondent in
that place and if she were present -
he would like to see her - she wrote to
me that I would look better if I wore
a hood. The people immediately began
shouting who is it - what is the name?

I was there with two older sisters
but in the crowd had neither seen or
heard what he was saying - so when he
said her name is Grace Bedell, the
crowd took up the name, you may
imagine there was one confused and lit-
tled person - a gentleman
helped me forward, the people making
way and cheering. Mr Lincoln stepped
to the platform by the side of the track
took my hand and said: "I am sure I
let these whiskers grow for you - Good -"
stopped and kissed me and was
whirled away. He did not take me
in his arms as has been reported.

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5 I remember running - running
only to get to my mother at home
and with a poor little bunch of
winter roses which I had hoped
to pass up to Mr Lincoln with some
other flowers which were to be
presented. As I think of it those
withered stems seem rather piti-
ful, but I had not once thought
of them. A rather laughable incident -
connected with the letter I wrote
Mr Lincoln may be of interest
although it occasioned me at
the time great humiliation. My
sister asked me how I addressed
the letter & to show her it was car-
rectly done I re-wrote it for her
inspiration
"Hon. Abraham Lincoln Esq." Of
course they were all amused &
ridiculed it but my mother who
said - never mind I am sure
they could make no mistake
as to whom the letter belonged
and turned away her head so
that I should not be hurt -
at her smile. - It is a far
cry from eleven years to sixty-
nine - is it not? - but I am
well and happy with my
grandchildren around me.
Very Truly
Grace Bedell Billings

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(Transcription)

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