



## *The Abraham Lincoln Foundation* of the

### **UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA**

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### **THE TANNER MANUSCRIPT**



In 1865 Corporal James Tanner was a disabled Civil War veteran working as a clerk in the Ordnance Bureau of the War Department and living in an apartment next to the Peterson House in Washington, D.C. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, President Abraham Lincoln was shot during a theatre performance at Ford's Theatre. The mortally wounded President was taken to the Petersen House. Because he had stenography skills, Tanner was called into the Peterson House. While Lincoln lay dying in the bedroom, Tanner sat in the parlor and recorded eyewitness testimony as given to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and David Kellogg Carrter, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.

The interrogation of the witnesses took place between midnight and 1:30 A.M. "In fifteen minutes I had testimony enough to hang Wilkes Booth, the assassin, higher than ever Haman hung" noted Tanner. While still in the parlor, Tanner transcribed his shorthand notes into longhand, finishing his task at 6:45 A.M. Tanner returned to his apartment and, dissatisfied with the quality of the first transcription, began a second copy which he left with an aide of Stanton's at his office in the War Department. Tanner retained the original testimony. The copy deposited at the War Department was lost. In 1905, Tanner's son took his father's first transcription and mounted each sheet on linen and bound them.

In November 1917, as the Union League prepared to celebrate its 55th anniversary and dedicate the Lincoln Memorial Room, Corporal James Tanner wrote to UL President John Gribbell to offer his bound volume of testimony to the League's collection: "believing that they are of considerable interest to the general public owing to the circumstances surrounding their creation and believing they will become more so as the years pass, I write to say that if you care to give the volume a place among the treasures you may now possess or may naturally gather in the future regarding President Lincoln, I shall be glad to present them to you in perpetuity, limited only to the life of the Union League."

Tanner himself appeared at the Union League several times, the last in 1918 when he addressed a large audience.