

LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND
FOREVER ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
WELCOME!



The President visits the Government Printing
Office

GPO History Talk February 26, 2013

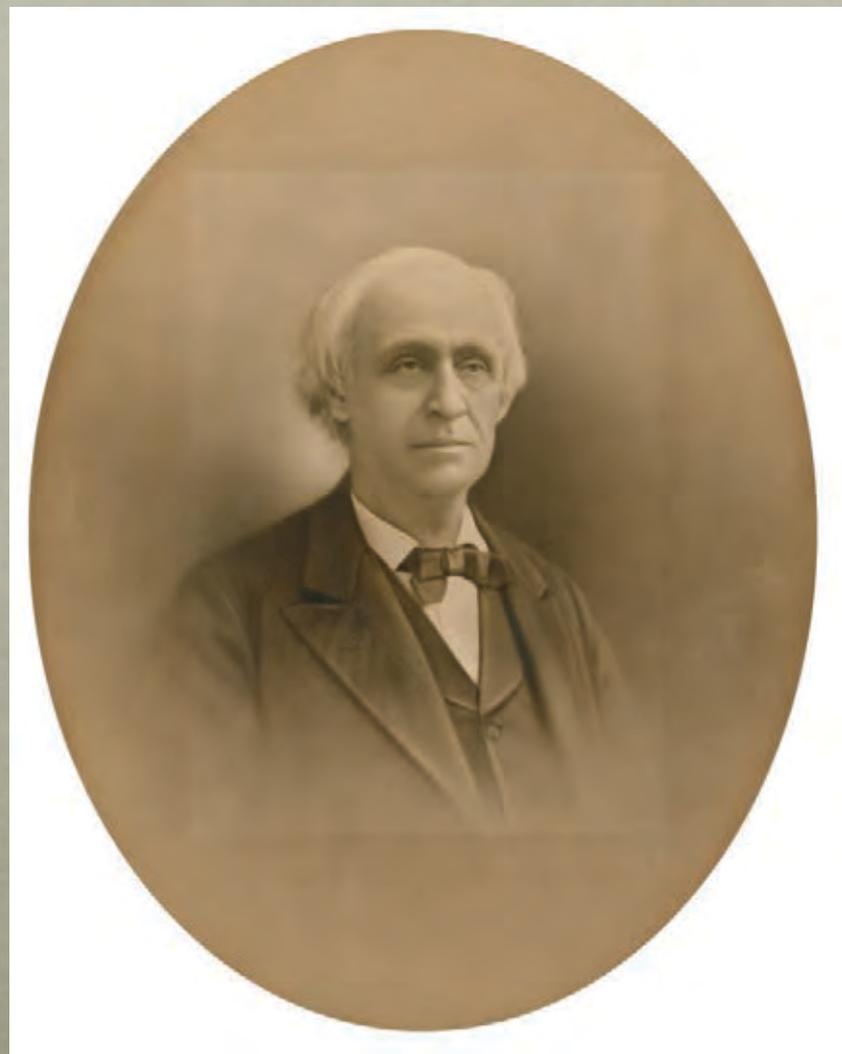
IN OCTOBER 1863

GPO had been in business just over three years, at the corner of North Capitol and H Streets in Northwest Washington.



AT THE HELM

was John D Defrees, the Indiana newspaperman whom President Lincoln appointed a few weeks after taking office in March, 1861



DEFREES AND LINCOLN

were political allies, Defrees having worked hard for Lincoln's win in Indiana in 1860. They formed a solid working relationship as well, with Defrees acting as a trusted editor.



BY ANY MEASURE

GPO's first few years were a success.

The volume of work steadily increased, and savings over the previous contracting system were immediate and substantial.



IN 1863

Defrees was able to report that work in the plant was increasing steadily and that the savings to the taxpayer for that year alone were \$280,961 over charges for the same work under pre-GPO formulas. The total saved since the start of GPO was computed at \$583,935



IN THE AUTUMN

of 1863, Defrees invited the President to visit GPO and on Saturday, October 24, Lincoln arrived.



TWO OF WASHINGTON'S

daily newspapers, the Evening Star and
the Daily National Republican
reported on the visit in their editions
for Monday, October 26, 1863



THE STAR GAVE IT FULLER COVERAGE

Visit of the President to the Government Printing Office

On Saturday afternoon President Lincoln paid a visit to the Government Printing Office, and minutely inspected the workings of that monster establishment. The employees got an inkling of the visit, and the various portions of the building were decorated with excellent taste with flags, mottoes, wreaths, evergreens, &c.; &c. It had been announced that the visit would be made at three o'clock and punctually at that hour the President made his appearance, and was received by Mr. Defrees, the superintendent, and after spending a short time in the office, he proceeded to inspect the various departments of the establishment, in company with Mr. Defrees.

He first visited the stereotyping department, where Mr. C.W. Murray has six persons employed; and here the President examined minutely, and with much interest, the methods of casting and preparing the plates. This room was handsomely decorated with flags, mottoes, &c.

The machine shop was next visited. In this shop are seven hands under the charge of Mr. M. Lincoln, chief engineer. The repairing of the presses and machines is done here. A miniature engine about nine inches long, one inch cylinder and two inch stroke, attracted much attention here; an a broken down engine, soon to be replaced by a new one from the establishment of Messrs. Gray & Noyes, of this city, was labeled, "Like the Southern Confederacy, near played out," which drew a laugh from the President.

The President from here proceeded to the store and "wetting" room, where a number of boys and men are engaged in preparing the paper for the press; and as he was about to enter this apartment the colored man whose duty it is to make rollers for the presses met Mr. Lincoln and expressed regrets that it was so muddy that the President could not go out and see how he made rollers. The President, noting the diminished size of his interlocutor, said, laughingly, to him that he did not look as if adapted to wade in very deep mud himself, and expressed a wish to see some of his work. The man in a short time returned with two fine roller specimens and he was questioned by Mr. Lincoln as to the materials used in their composition.

"Glue and molasses and something else," was the reply; but he persistently refused to tell what the "something else" was — claiming that was an important secret of his own.

The pressroom was next visited and presented a handsome appearance: the presses forty in number, of all sizes, being decorated with flags &c. many of them having wreaths of evergreens above them enclosing appropriate mottoes and figures. The machines were all at work and the girls numbering about forty at the presses, and the pressmen all dressed in holiday attire, in their places, rendered the scene extremely interesting.

The president remained some time in this room and examined minutely the working of the various presses. Mr. John Graham is the principal pressman, and Mr. John McLeod foreman of the job presses.

After a short time spent in the drying-room, of which Mr. L. Jardella is the superintendent, Mr. Lincoln was conducted to the composing-room, on the second floor, in which about 150 "typos" were at their cases. Innumerable flags were displayed throughout this room, and in a prominent place were the words, "Stand by the Flag. Liberty and Union one and inseparable. Abraham Lincoln welcome." As soon as the President entered three cheers were given with a will. Col. James English has charge of this department while Mr. J.C. Frazoni has charge of the job work.

The folding room in the third story was now visited and what with the one hundred and twenty pretty girls and the decorations of the room, flowers, flags, and mottoes tastefully arranged, it presented a decidedly pleasant sight. The girls here are employed feeding the cutting and folding machines and preparing the work for the binders, under the direction of Mr. J.W. Harrison, and each portion of the work was explained to the President. While the President was here, work at the machines was suspended for a moment, and Miss Ella Lashorn advanced with two handsome boquets, which she presented him with the following words:

"Mr. President : Permit me, on behalf of my associates, to present you with these flowers.

"May the blessings of heaven attend you, sir, and richly reward your efforts for the restoration of unity and peace to our beloved land."

The President accepted the flowers expressing his thanks, and wishes the fair donor might get a good husband. [Laughter]

The bindery occupying the west end of the third story and the fourth story, in which some sixty girls and sixty men are employed, was next visited, and the work in its various stages inspected. Here were also decorations, wreaths, &c. and at one end of the room was the motto taken from the President's letter to Horace Greely, "My paramount object is to save the Union." Mr. George P. Goff is in charge of this part of the building, assisted by Mr. J.A. Roberts. On the appearance of the President, here he was greeted with cheers &c. which he promptly acknowledged.

The entire building now having been visited, the President returned to the composing room, where a large crowd were assembled, and he was loudly cheered and called on for a speech. He said that he had been caught unawares, and would only express himself gratified with the visit; thank them for the kind manner in which he had been received, and wish them all happiness and success in carrying out the principles of their motto, "Liberty and Union."

The "Battle Cry of Freedom" was here sung after which the President retired amid the cheers of all employed in the building.

The branch of the public work, under the direction of Mr. J.D. Defrees, has been in full operation since the last session of Congress, the increased business of the departments in consequence of the rebellion having thrown a large amount of work here; and at the present time there are about six hundred persons who earn a livelihood at the Government office. The manner in which this monster establishment is conducted reflect much credit upon the officers and employes. The superintendent is very popular with the employes, and indeed is every officer. At the present time the hands are on a large amount of work from the Adjutant General's office, and other business of the War Department; and also upon work from other departments. Much of the reserve work from the last session of Congress is in hand and the first report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, which is said to be the finest and most complete report on the subject yet issued, is nearly ready for delivery.

The flags, mottoes, &c. for Saturday's use were many of the obtained from the citizens of the Fourth Ward, among whom [unreadable] instrumentality of Mr. James A. Larcombe who took an active part in decorating the rooms. Our obligations are due to the capital watchman of the establishment, Mr. Richard Kelly, for his kindness in showing us through the building.

IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE

that there were features of this visit
that are still part of GPO celebrations
today, including the singing!

