

John C. Lincoln Left Deep Impact on Land

By N. R. HOWARD
Contributing Editor

The penetrating teacher, statesman, and columnist Raymond Moley is author of a new book, "The American Century of John C. Lincoln," which will reward two kinds of serious readers—those wishing to know the geniuses of the kind of Edison and Kettering whose aggressive, inventive imaginations built America to wealth and productive might, and those fond of socio-political panorama that went with this growth.



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As every Clevelander should know, John C. Lincoln, who died in 1959 in his 93d year, was an electrical engineer and inventor who helped shape the industries of Cleveland, the country, and the world. Born in Painesville as son of a crusading Congregationalist minister, he grew up long enough ago to have been a trainee of Charles F. Brush, inventor of the arc light, and an engineer of America's first electric street cars; he came to know Tom L. Johnson as a street car operator before Johnson thought of going into politics.

His first thrust at building Cleveland into what Moley says was the electric manufacturing capital of the country was the Elliott-Lincoln Electric Co. for which (for an unbelievably meager reward) he invented and produced an electric motor. With \$200 capital, he went on his own in the Lincoln Electric Co. in the Perkins Power block in 1895 making an improved motor for shop work. Reliance Electric grew out of one of his early ventures, and he affected Cleveland's production of electric automobiles and storage batteries.

Begins Welding Revolution

After he acquired his brother James F. in 1907 from Ohio State University—thereby adding another kind of genius, that of industrial administration—John Lincoln raised his enterprise to the top of motor manufacturers, and also began the great revolution of electric welding.

It was revolution because it converted a previously suspect metallurgical process into today's accepted "strength" technology. The present huge Lincoln Electric had its greatest growth after James F. succeeded his older brother as its president, but the foundations were 15 or more of John's 55 lifetime patents.

In the middle of his life, John Lincoln went to Arizona to make his home and virtually started another "genius" career, which carried him successfully into copper mining and refining, land development that turned desert into bloom, even the rescue of an abandoned gold mine. But he was to give Cleveland another of its more notable industries, Universal Wire Spring, in which he helped invent modern seat springs made famous by the World War II "jeep" and eventually taken up by General Motors. He perceived the first going principles of the zigzag spring's machine production.

Laid Against Historical Scene

Between chapters of Mr. Lincoln's adventures, Raymond Moley has inserted the parallel events in the American narrative, and skillfully makes it possible to detect where great events such as wars, depression, and economic experiment may influence yet fail to mislead the really great men of a time. It is good history, moving as a story without the romantic coloration given by a Mark Sullivan or a Nevins, and it makes a genius stand out in sharp outline.

The late John W. Love (of The Plain Dealer and the Press) worked on this book with Moley, and the author dedicates it to him "who should have written this book." The first I ever heard of John C. Lincoln was from John Love's lips. I was too young to know much about genius or invention, but I recall his reflection: "Some day the world may realize what a giant he is."

Lincoln's personal predilections were as fascinating as his industrial triumphs. As a lifelong student of Christianity, he saw Christ as a reformist-leader exactly as the monk Peter Abelard (of whom Lincoln was unknowing) had proposed hundreds of years ago, and published a book contemplating his Savior as having encountered an almost accidental termination to a powerful career. Lincoln was a lifelong devotee of Henry George's single tax and not only died believing its principle will be recognized eventually by economics, but set up a foundation which will considerably further teaching of tax reform. He had outstanding patience and thoughtfulness, and evidently appreciated sensitively the life span granted him in a century of the world's most awesome changes.