

A NEW DISCOVERY ABOUT LINCOLN'S OCULAR HEALTH

By Ethan Afshani

Edited by Dr. James M. Cornelius, PhD

*Dedicated to my grandfather, Dr. Ehsan Afshani,
a founder and pioneer of Pediatric Radiology.*

comprehensive study of the previously
uninvestigated field of Abraham Lincoln's
ocular health.

I have located an additional previously unseen pair of Abraham Lincoln's eyeglasses that for the past 15 years had lost their provenance. Mary Harlan Lincoln discovered the glasses while sorting Mary Todd Lincoln's estate in 1882, then stored the pair in a trunk that sat in the attic of Hildene until 1977. After the death of Mary Lincoln "Peggy" Beckwith, in 1975, the trunk was discovered by her brother, Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith. Robert Beckwith gifted the pair to his 3rd wife, Margaret Fristoe, along with an affidavit detailing its history. She kept the pair until her passing in 2009. The auction that sold the items Robert Beckwith willed to her found the affidavit with two pairs of glasses. Due to the auction house's inability to distinguish which pair Robert Beckwith was referring to, it sold neither pair as belonging to Lincoln. The auction house believed the prescriptions were too high, yet they were unaware of the existence of two other pairs of Lincoln's glasses, both of which have higher prescriptions than they thought existed. Later, one of the two pairs was sold as Lincoln's, but these were never owned by Lincoln, as evidenced by a style being undeveloped until the 1880s. Those were found to be Robert Todd Lincoln's eyeglasses. The steel X-bridge pair has been examined by several ophthalmologists, who all say fit the strength range of the other Abraham Lincoln glasses. The findings that follow are a

It is not common to find new discoveries within the world of Lincoln collecting, especially a memento as significant as eyeglasses. This investigation has proved that these findings do occur as well as how these glasses came to be identified. The glasses, which are X-bridge style and simple in design, made of steel, have an interesting backstory that provides a pedigree of the original ownership by Lincoln.

Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith (“Bud”), the great-grandson and last direct descendant of Abraham Lincoln, had no children, and it is because of this that his wife from his third and last marriage, Margaret Fristoe, inherited the Hartfield, Virginia, estate of Beckwith. In the estate was a treasure trove of Lincolniana. Fristoe remained active by volunteering at Hildene, the home of Robert Todd Lincoln and his wife Mary Harlan Lincoln. Upon her passing in 2009, her daughter Lenora came into ownership of the Virginia estate and the remaining Lincoln memorabilia.

Later, in 2010 Lenora auctioned off the remaining Lincoln memorabilia through Cowan's Auctions House. Cowan's Auction dubbed the sale “The Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith Collection.” These items were mostly chinaware, jewelry, and clothing goods (mourning material), all from the Lincoln family. There was a preponderance of material that was accompanied by affidavits from Beckwith, and all of the material that had affidavits were found by Beckwith in a trunk bestowed upon him after his sister, “Peggy” Beckwith's passing in 1975. According to the affidavits, some of the material would go to James Hickey, the former curator of the Illinois State Historical Library.



Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith (1904-1985)
Photograph courtesy of The Lincoln Financial Collection, Ft. Wayne.

The Cowan's Auction Catalog from 2010 Contained three errors.

283 EYE GLASSES FROM

THE LINCOLN FAMILY

Includes two pair, both apparently found at Hildene. One steel framed, with a prescription for +3.75, the other brass, with a prescription for +2.75.



Accompanying the glasses is a xerox copy of an affidavit and deed of gift dated August 17, 1977, in which Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith relates the history of finding two pair of glasses in a trunk at Hildene, both of which were marked by Mary Harlan Lincoln as having been worn by Abraham Lincoln. Beckwith gave one pair to James T. Hickey (Curator of the Lincoln Collection of the Illinois State Library) and one to Margaret Fristoe (his future wife). The Hickey pair is currently curated at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. One of the pair offered here presumably represents the second set.

Lincoln did not begin to wear glasses until he was 47 years old. Based upon two pair of eyeglasses found in his pocket at the time of his assassination, Lincoln was mildly far-sighted and needed glasses of a greater strength for magnification. In 1977 the prescriptions for both glasses were examined by the Chief Optician for the Veteran's Administration. One pair was corrected to +1.75, the other +2.0. Given this information, these two pair could not have been worn by Lincoln. Nonetheless, given their provenance, they were undoubtedly worn by one of Lincoln's immediate descendants.

Note: Cowan's is indebted to Dr. Tonya Liddell of Cincinnati, Ohio for examining the prescription of both of these eyeglasses.

\$500 - 1,000

Cowan's Auction, in one lot, offered two pairs of eyeglasses, a pair which is made of steel (Fig. 3), a brass pair (Fig. 1), and a leather case that belonged to the brass pair (Fig. 2), and all of these were accompanied by an affidavit from Beckwith. In this statement, Beckwith, explained that he found two pairs of eyeglasses in a trunk, similar to the other material with the same origins. Beckwith, however, claimed that Mary Harlan Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's daughter-in-law, noted that these pairs were owned by Lincoln. The Beckwith affidavit reads as follows:

I, Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith of Washington, D.C., certify that among the contents of a trunk located and unopened until recently, and placed in the attic of Hildene, the estate of my grandfather Robert Todd Lincoln, Manchester, Vermont, by my grandmother Mary Harlan Lincoln (Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln), and the said contents being awarded to me by the Estate of my sister Mary Lincoln Beckwith, were found two pair of eye glasses which had belonged to my great grandfather President Abraham Lincoln, and so marked by my grandmother Mary Harlan Lincoln.

I further give one pair of these eye glasses to Margaret Fristoe of Chevy Chase, Maryland, and one pair to James T. Hickey of Elkhart, Illinois.¹

Cowan's auction ran into difficulty in determining which pair was the one referenced in the said affidavit. The auction house had both pairs' prescriptions checked and found both pairs higher than the +2.0 and +1.62² diopters

found in Lincoln's pocket at Ford's Theatre after he was assassinated. This fact led to the auctioneer's claim that neither pair had belonged to Lincoln.

The Cowans' auction lot 283 was full of inconsistencies, prompting further investigation. First, the auction claims both eyeglasses were prescription checked to be +2.75 diopters (Fig. 1) and +3.75 diopters (Fig. 3). The two pairs upon re-examination were found to be +2.12 diopters (Fig. 1) and +3.50 diopters (Fig. 3). Additionally the auction claims the affidavit from Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith is dated August 17, 1977, the affidavit is hand dated August 16, 1977.

Lastly, the auctioneer exclaims that given the prescriptions for both pairs listed, neither could have been owned by Abraham Lincoln, a claim which was created based on the false assumption that Lincoln only had two prescriptions, the pairs in his pocket at Ford's Theatre. This claim in particular lacks medical credibility, as it is known that Lincoln owned several other pairs, several of which surfaced prior to this 2010 auction. The two most prominent pairs in particular which will be discussed later in this article are the pair that sold two years prior to the Cowan's sale from the collection of Dr. John K. Lattimer, and the pair referenced in the August 16, 1977 affidavit, which was gifted to historian James Hickey.

¹ Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, *Affidavit and Deed of Gift*, August 16, 1977.

² Boris Weintraub, "Making a Spectacle of Spectacles," *The Washington Star Portfolio*, June 8, 1976.



Figure 1. Brass spectacles from the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith, measured at +2.12 diopters.



Figure 2. Case accompanying the brass spectacles.



Figure 3. Steel X-bridge pair of spectacles from the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith, measured at +3.50 diopters.

In 2010, the glasses were re-checked and the brass pair (Fig. 1) was found to be at +2.12 diopters, and the X-bridge pair (Fig. 3) at +3.50 diopters. Three years later, in 2013, Nate Sanders Auction House auctioned off the brass pair (Fig. 1) measured at +2.12 diopters as being owned by Lincoln. The largest complication of this sale is that the brass pair was manufactured far too late to possibly have been owned by Lincoln.

Optical Eyewear Historians Alan R. McBrayer and Thomas F. Valenza published an article in 2012 detailing the dating process of eyewear from before and after the Civil War. Commenting on the style of the glasses that match Fig. 1, they explained:

“Curl or hook temples. These are made from a single strand of blue or common steel wire. The “cable” type curl temples (made of fine twisted wire) are 1880’s and later.”³

Furthermore, this shifted the way familial provenance was seen in relation to Lincolniana. This degree of provenance no longer had the same weight it had before the sale of the glasses, which were later found to have been owned by Robert Todd Lincoln. Mary Harlan Lincoln was demonstrably aware of her husband’s eyewear and was correct in knowing the glasses she inherited had belonged to Abraham Lincoln, but the auctioneer mislabeled which pair she was referring to.

Many items in the 2010 Cowan’s sale were owned solely by Mary Harlan Lincoln, and many were found unorganized (see Fig. 4 and 5), thus, including the brass pair of eyewear generically from the Lincoln family. The Fristoe

³ Alan R. McBrayer and Thomas F. Valenza, *History on Your Face: Common Spectacle Styles Before, During and After the Civil War, 1835–1870* (2012), 6, <https://www.historiceyewearcompany.com/files/HOYFrevisedMcBrayer.pdf>.

sale included many items never owned by Abraham or Mary Todd Lincoln. These simply did not have any affidavits. Beckwith, a man who was perceptibly detailed in his affidavits, would have also mentioned the matching leather case (Fig. 2) in the statement, but no such thing was mentioned.



Figure 4. Mary Harlan Lincoln's gold pocket watch. From the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith.



Figure 5. Grouping of Mary Harlan Lincoln's sterling silver flatware. From the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith.

The Provenance of the Steel X-Bridge Pair of Spectacles

Cowan's Auctions seemingly overprioritized prescription and failed to analyze the physical glasses itself. The X-bridge pair (Fig. 3) is measured at +3.50 diopters. As referenced by the 2012 McBrayer and Valenza article, the style dates to the Civil War and earlier. The authors state:

"Most Civil War and earlier examples have loops at the end."⁴ The X-bridge pair (Fig. 3) has loops at the ends of the arms.

The joints on the X-bridge pair match the example used in the article:

"The most common type of spectacle joint, used for 150 years. A screw holds together the two halves of the joint. The temples are attached using a separate pin."⁵ Therefore, the structural makeup of the X-bridge pair is consistent with the Civil War-era structure of the other established Lincoln eyeglasses (see Fig. 6).

The glasses that are tied to Lincoln's assassination and now owned by the Library of Congress were not the only pairs Lincoln owned. There were an additional two pairs of Lincoln's glasses (excluding the X-bridge pair and the other steel pair which was given to James Hickey) that Mary Harlan Lincoln owned and attributed to Lincoln. Two other steel pairs surfaced. The first pair was prescription checked at +2.25 diopters in both lenses⁶ (Fig. 9). The second steel pair (which has a knot repair similar to the pair from Ford's Theatre) was prescription-checked to be +2.75 diopters in the right lens and +2.25 diopters in the left lens (Fig.

⁴ McBrayer and Valenza, *History on Your Face*, p.6

⁵ McBrayer and Valenza, *History on Your Face*, p.8

⁶ "Mysteries of Mr. Lincoln's Glasses," *For the People: A Newsletter of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 1, no. 3 (1999): 4–8.

8). These pairs were both gifted to photographer Joseph Leisenring of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Joseph Leisenring was a photographer who took sittings of Robert Todd Lincoln's children and thus was close to the family. Mary Harlan Lincoln undoubtedly discovered these glasses while sorting the contents of Mary Todd Lincoln's estate in 1882.⁷ Cowan's Auction did not investigate these pairs of glasses, and most definitely were not aware of the existence of the high prescription pair with the knot repair (Fig. 8).



Figure 6. Reference example used by Alan R. McBrayer and Thomas F. Valenza (top), and the X-bridge spectacles from the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith, (Figure. 3, bottom).



Figure 7. Steel eyeglasses gifted to James Hickey by Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, measured at +4.50 diopters. Exhibited from 2007 to 2022 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) as part of the Taper Collection.



Figure 8. One of two pairs of Abraham Lincoln's eyeglasses, gifted by Mary Harlan Lincoln to Joseph Leisenring. This pair measured at +2.75 diopters (right lens) and +2.25 diopters (left lens).



Figure 9. One of two pairs of Abraham Lincoln's eyeglasses, gifted by Mary Harlan Lincoln to Joseph Leisenring. This pair measured at +2.25 diopters.

⁷ R. Gerald McMurtry, "Some Intimate Glimpses into the Private Lives of the Members of the Robert Lincoln Family," *Lincoln Lore*, no. 1525 (March 1965).

The pair of brass spectacles the auctioneer originally believed to be Lincoln's (Fig. 1) is matched to several identical pairs Mary Harlan Lincoln owned, one of which was gifted to Leisenring (Fig. 10) and all of which were identified as being owned by her husband. This negates the claim Mary Harlan Lincoln referred to (Fig. 1) in the August 16, 1977 affidavit.

Today, the Harlan-Lincoln House in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, owns two pairs of eyeglasses: a matching brass pair (Fig. 11) and another pair (Fig. 12) that also matches the designs of the previous brass pairs from the Lincoln family. That pair (Fig. 12) was found recently and is a pair of sunglasses. This belonged to either Robert Todd Lincoln or Senator James Harlan, Mary Harlan Lincoln's father. Both pairs (Fig. 11 & 12) were among the items Mary Harlan Lincoln left in her will to the Harlan-Lincoln House in 1937. Mary Harlan Lincoln primarily left items associated with her father and her husband. Senator Harlan owned the house, and it became a vacation spot for Robert and Mary Lincoln and their children. The brass pair of glasses (Fig. 11) were later found to be owned by Robert Todd Lincoln.⁸

Abraham Lincoln's frugality and simple taste are reflected in the images of his eyewear, mostly being steel. The only exception was a pair he did not buy for himself. This was a gift from his personal bodyguard and friend Ward Hill Lamon.

⁸ Lynn Ellsworth, "Harlan-Lincoln House Celebrated Presidents Day with Lincoln Expert," *Southeast Iowa Union*, February 26, 2024, <https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/se-iowa-union-mount-pleasant/harlan-lincoln-house-celebrated-presidents-day-with-lincoln-expert/>.



Figure 10. Brass spectacles, gifted by Mary Harlan Lincoln to Joseph Leisenring as Robert Todd Lincoln's eyeglasses.



Figure 11. Brass spectacles from Mary Harlan Lincoln, willed to the Harlan-Lincoln House with no identification, later identified as Robert Todd Lincoln's eyeglasses. This pair measured at +0.50 diopters.



Figure 12. Brass sunglasses from Mary Harlan Lincoln, discovered in the Harlan-Lincoln House.

Several ophthalmologists evaluated the prescription and agreed that +3.50 diopters is the correct prescription for reading glasses when compared to the +1.62, +2.0, +2.25, +2.75, and +4.50 diopter prescriptions we know Lincoln owned.

I have consulted Jennifer Lacy, the Clinical Lead of Ophthalmology at the Springfield Clinic Eye Institute. After I explained the six known Lincoln prescriptions, Jennifer provided insight into the wide range of prescriptions.

“Based on the information provided, I can conclude that President Lincoln likely dealt with a condition called presbyopia. Most individuals, over the age of 40, encounter this condition. It simply means the natural lens in the eye loses flexibility with age. When we are young, our lens has flexibility, allowing us to focus near to distance and distance to near, without complication. As we age, our lens stiffens. This causes greater challenge for near vision and compromises clarity at near. At this point, reading glasses can greatly assist with our need to see up close. Looking at the prescriptions you have listed, my guess would be President Lincoln used the glasses to help him see things at his near point.”⁹

Furthermore, the distinct style of the X-bridge pair (Fig. 3) is featured in a 1951 advertisement¹⁰ that was paid for by Riggs National Bank (the former bank of Abraham Lincoln and later Robert Todd Lincoln) spotlights “Franklin & Co. Opticians,” the dealer

from whom Lincoln purchased his eyewear. The ad (Fig. 13) also features a copy of the check Lincoln used to purchase eyeglasses, but the specific pair it is referring to is unknown. The illustration noticeably depicts Lincoln in the advertisement wearing identical X-bridge glasses as (Fig. 3), and they appear to be of the same frame, structure, and size.

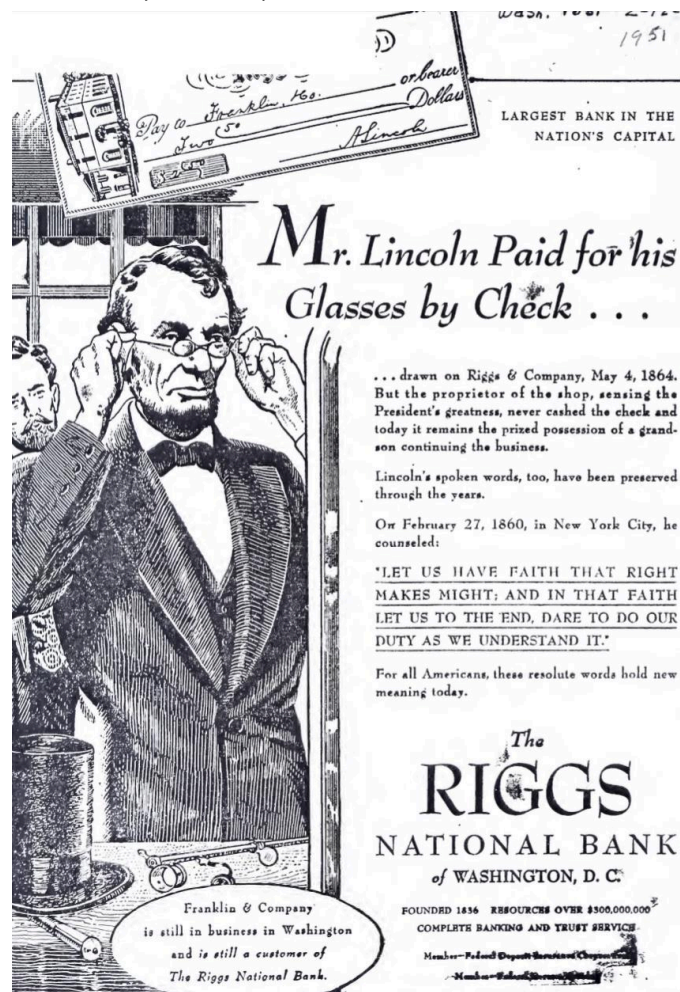


Figure 13. Advertisement for Franklin & Co. Opticians depicting Abraham Lincoln trying on a pair of spectacles resembling the steel X-Bridge pair from the estate of Margret Fristoe Beckwith.

⁹ Jennifer Lacy, email message to Ethan Afshani, April 11, 2025.

¹⁰ Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, “Abraham Lincoln’s Appearance: Eyes and Eyeglasses,” November 10, 2012, <https://www.lincolncollection.org/search/results/item/?q=Appearance+&item=96872>.

The findings in this article have given a breakdown of the ocular health of Abraham Lincoln and of his son Robert Todd Lincoln. Lincoln's eyes demonstrated a decline over time, not uncommon for a man in his mid-late 50s. It is highly probable that Lincoln never had a pair of spectacles fitted custom to him. Rather, as time went on, he purchased the pairs shown and detailed in this article based on feel. No account exists from Lincoln's well-recorded movements during the Presidency that an oculist visited the White House or that one examined him for medical reasons.

Interestingly, Robert Todd Lincoln seemed to have decent eyesight for his age, too. He began to wear glasses around the age of 40, based on the absence of photographs taken of him with glasses prior to the 1880s. It is evident based on the prescription of the eyeglasses he wore that he had fair eyesight. In my collection, I have a pair of eyeglasses that belonged to Robert Todd Lincoln (Fig. 14). This pair is pince-nez style and is accompanied by a handwritten note inside the case in the hand of Mary Harlan Lincoln, "Long Distance." It is apparent that the eyeglasses measured at +2.12 diopters (Fig. 1) were Robert Lincoln's reading glasses, a stark contrast to the +3.50 diopter prescription of the reading glasses used by his father (Fig. 3). The pair of Robert Lincoln's eyeglasses from the Harlan-Lincoln House (Fig. 11) measures at +0.50 diopters, which represents regular prescription glasses.

Abraham Lincoln had a documented case of left superior oblique paresis,¹¹ which became more apparent to his contemporaries during the latter part of his presidential term.

¹¹ Joseph H. Goldstein, "Lincoln's Vertical Strabismus," *Journal of Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus* 34, no. 2 (March 1, 1997): 118–20, <https://doi.org/10.3928/0191-3913-19970301-13>.

This condition (OD) is debated as to whether it originated through genetics or if it was a lasting effect of trauma (TBI) from an event when Lincoln was nine years old. Lincoln was kicked in the face by a horse and remained unconscious for several hours. This event led to Lincoln's minor facial deformities. Alternatively, it is plausible Lincoln's (OD) was a result of genetics. Robert Todd Lincoln had strabismus from birth and had to get corrective surgery at the age of seven, so there was clearly genetic susceptibility. Superior oblique paresis affects vision, and one method of treatment to alleviate the vision impairment that ophthalmologists recommend is using eyeglasses.

Applying the above information to Lincoln, we can see that he had worsening eyesight toward the later part of his life. The earliest photograph showing this is (O-77)¹² taken on November 8, 1863 (Fig. 15). Photographer Lewis Emory Walker also photographed Lincoln in 1863, in (O-82)¹³, which also clearly showcases strabismus (Fig. 16). The exact date of the Walker photograph (O-82) is unknown, but it was likely close in time to (O-77).

¹² Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose*, 2nd ed. (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1985), 145.

¹³ Hamilton and Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs*, 160.



Figure 14. Robert Todd Lincoln's pince-nez eyeglasses from the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith, measured at +1.25 diopters.

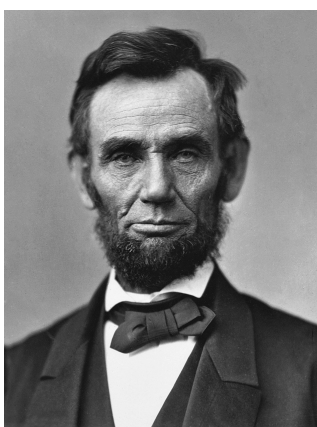


Figure 15. Abraham Lincoln, photograph taken by Alexander Gardner, November 8, 1863 (O-77).

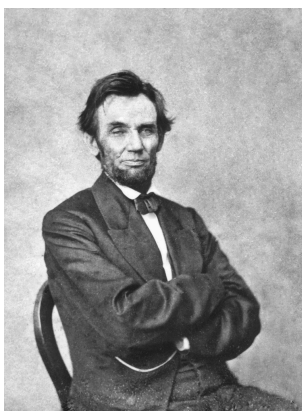


Figure 16. Abraham Lincoln, photograph taken by Lewis Emory Walker, 1863 (O-82).

The prescription for the glasses that belonged to James Hickey (Fig. 7) are higher than the steel X-bridge pair, measuring at +4.50 diopters.¹⁴ The Hickey pair (Fig. 7) bears a strong resemblance to the glasses Lincoln is wearing on February 9, 1864 (O-93).¹⁵ In that photograph, Lincoln and his son Thomas ("Tad") are looking at a photo album. This corresponds with Jennifer Lacy's observation, as the X-bridge pair of glasses definitely represent reading glasses. Due to Lincoln's advancing case of presbyopia, he simply opted for a stronger pair of reading glasses as he got older and his eyesight worsened.

Abraham Lincoln's reliance on reading glasses began prior to his Presidency. Lincoln is documented using a pair during a speech at the Tremont House in Chicago on July 10, 1858. When Lincoln heard the audience's chant for Lincoln to read his speech, he exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, reading from speeches is a very tedious business, particularly for an old man who has to put on spectacles, and more so if the man is so tall that he has to bend over to the light."¹⁶

According to Illinois attorney and Lincoln associate Henry Clay Whitney, Lincoln purchased his first pair of eyeglasses in 1856 at the age of 47 while in Bloomington, Illinois. Over the next nine years, Lincoln's eyesight continued to decline, eventually reaching a +4.50 diopter prescription.

¹⁴ Christopher Brink, email to Ethan Afshani, April 7, 2025.

¹⁵ Hamilton and Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs*, 182.

¹⁶ Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 2, Sept. 3, 1848–Aug. 21, 1858, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections, accessed September 25, 2025, <https://name.umd.umich.edu/lincoln2>.

Abraham Lincoln had two pairs of eyeglasses in his pocket while attending “Our American Cousin” at Ford's Theatre. The prescriptions for these glasses measure at +2.0 and +1.62 diopters. The two pairs of eyeglasses were among the contents of Lincoln’s pocket donated in 1937 by President Lincoln’s granddaughter Mary Lincoln Isham. Mary Isham likely discovered the assassination material after the passing of Mary Harlan Lincoln, who died in the same year. Historians speculate that one pair of eyeglasses left in Lincoln’s pocket was forgotten by the President when he was in Richmond, Virginia the previous week.

These prescriptions were considerably weaker than the four pairs left at the White House. The several pairs that remained in Lincoln’s private quarters most certainly represent lenses used for detailed work, speech writing, and orating. Abraham Lincoln carried a pair of opera glasses (Fig. 17) to view the play at Ford's Theatre. Abraham Lincoln was not holding or wearing either pair of glasses when he was shot, indicating the strength of both pairs was not strong enough to view the play.



Figure 17. Abraham Lincoln’s Opera Glasses used on April 14, 1865.

Within this research article, Abraham Lincoln’s eyesight reflects the physical strain he took during the four years that he led the Union through the Civil War. The X-bridge eyeglasses, along with the five other pairs mentioned in this article, represent perhaps the most intimate pieces of Lincoln’s personal legacy. From the balcony of the Tremont House in 1858, the speakers' platform in Evergreen Cemetery in 1863, to the last speech Lincoln ever delivered, these eyeglasses serve as the direct links to the pivotal moments in Lincoln’s presidency.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809-1865)	ROBERT TODD LINCOLN (1843-1926)
+1.62, <i>both lenses</i>	+0.50, <i>both lenses</i> : Prescription
+2.0, <i>both lenses</i>	+1.25, <i>both lenses</i> : Long distance
+2.25, <i>both lenses</i>	+2.12, <i>both lenses</i> : Reading glasses
+2.25 (L), +2.75 (R)	
+3.50, <i>both lenses</i> : Reading glasses	
+4.50, <i>both lenses</i> : Reading glasses	

Provenance

President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), The White House, Washington, D.C., ca. 1861-1865;
 Mary (Todd) Lincoln (1818-1882), Chicago, Illinois, 1865;
 Mary (Harlan) Lincoln (1846-1937), Mount Pleasant, Iowa, 1882;
 Mary Lincoln Beckwith (1898-1975), Hildene, Manchester, Vermont;
 Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith (1904-1985), Hartfield, Virginia, 1975;
 Margaret Fristoe (1921-2009), Chevy Chase, Maryland, 1977;
 Lenora Fristoe Hoverson, Hartfield, Virginia, 2009;
 Cowan's Auction House, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2010;
 Private collection, 2010;
 Current owner, 2024;

Exhibition:

Echoes of Disunion: The Election of 1860, The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, November 2024-April 2025

Through His Lens, at Hildene- The Lincoln Family Home, April 25-April 27, 2025.

Seminary Ridge Museum & Education Center, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, June 16, 2025-Present

Summary

An affidavit from Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith accompanies the X-bridge eyeglasses, attesting the eyeglasses “had belonged to my great grandfather President Abraham Lincoln”

According to the August 16, 1977 affidavit, the X-bridge eyeglasses were gifted to Margaret Fristoe by Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith.

The X-bridge eyeglasses were sold as part of the estate of Margaret Fristoe Beckwith, wife of Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith.

The X-bridge eyeglasses date to the appropriate historical period, as documented by Optical Eyewear Historians Alan R. McBrayer and Thomas F. Valenza.

When compared to other eyeglasses which have well-documented Lincoln provenance, the X-bridge eyeglasses match the correct prescription range for reading as confirmed by the Clinical Lead of Ophthalmology at the Springfield Clinic Eye Institute.

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