

FOREWORD

One of the earliest urban legends that persist to this very day concerns President Abraham Lincoln. As the story goes, President Lincoln—shot with a bullet cursed by a voodoo priest—did not die, but instead survived in a comatose state for many decades, his body somehow remaining limber and ageless. Lincoln is said to have awakened in the 1930s, during the depths of the Great Depression, returning once again to save the nation. But instead of welcoming him with open arms, President Roosevelt refused the elder statesman's services, and Lincoln made a terrible enemy in the form of the powerful and sadistic J. Edgar Hoover.

As recompense for Lincoln allegedly murdering a federal agent, Hoover confiscated a fortune left to the former president by his son, Robert. In retaliation, Lincoln teamed up with the infamous desperado John Dillinger—yes, John Dillinger—robbing Federal Banks in an attempt to recoup the money stolen from him by the FBI Director.

Dillinger was gunned down outside of a movie theater in Chicago, while Lincoln disappeared back into the pages of history. Here the story ends.

The origin of this incredible yarn is unknown. The earliest

ABE LINCOLN ON ACID

evidence contradicting the historical record appears to be an Abraham Lincoln “Wanted” poster, which surfaced in 1933. The name on the poster was “Abe Lancaster,” which as the legend goes was the alias Lincoln used, but the images and description were that of the late President. Over the course of the ensuing years, dime-store detective magazines and comic books surfaced, each featuring some variation of the basic story.

Decades later, in the 1970s, a number of elderly individuals came forward claiming to have seen and even to have known Abraham Lincoln in the early 1930s. When questioned about the timing of their revelations, to a person each asserted they had been waiting until J. Edgar Hoover was dead. One notable member of this curious group was John Dillinger’s older sister Audrey.

Perhaps the most amazing claim connected with the legend came from none other than Judy Garland. In a radio interview given shortly before her death in 1969, Garland recalled that as a child in 1934—when she was then known as Frances Gumm—she appeared onstage in Chicago in a singing act known as the Gumm Sisters. Judy’s act often shared the bill with famous vaudevillians and she faithfully kept an autograph book of their encounters. One hot July evening, in front of the Biograph Theater, the young girl thought she recognized a tall man. She asked the man if he was famous and he smiled, assuring her he was, indeed. The gentleman obligingly signed her book, but it wasn’t until later in the evening that Judy glanced at the inscription. The man had written:

“To Frances, with my best wishes, A. Lincoln.”

Garland claimed to still have the book in 1969, giving

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further credence to the myth. She died a short time later, and her autograph book was never found.

Urban legends generally have some basis in truth, but a centenarian Abraham Lincoln as a public enemy is so outrageous one has to wonder why so many individuals—to this day—swear the story is true.