



Have you ever wondered whether this picture of Abraham Lincoln truly depicts the way America's future President appeared when he sat for this photo on February 28, 1857?

As it happens ... the picture (a gelatin silver print now owned by the Library of Congress) is real, and there's a story behind it.

Alexander Hesler (1823-1895) took the photo, in Chicago, just before Lincoln's nomination to the Senate. The photographer had smoothed Lincoln's sometimes-unruly hair, but Lincoln didn't like the smooth-hair look.

H. W. Fay (of DeKalb, Illinois), who once owned this photo, relates what happened next:

I have a letter from Mr. Hesler [the photographer] stating that [Lincoln] came in and made arrangements for the sitting, so that the members of the bar could get prints. Lincoln said at the time that he did not know why the boys wanted such a homely face.

*Joseph Medill [co-owner and managing editor of the Chicago Tribune] went with Mr. Lincoln to have the picture taken. He says that the photographer insisted on smoothing down Lincoln's hair, but Lincoln did not like the result, and ran his fingers through it before sitting. (See *The Early Life of Abraham Lincoln*, by Ida M. Tarbell, at page 49.)*

So ... it was the future President himself who opted for a "hipper look" (as we might describe it today).

Unfortunately, the original negative of this image was burned when the Great Fire devastated Chicago in October of 1871.

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Credits:

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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