



# Jesse White

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## SECRETARY OF STATE

# NEWS

### ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **August 28, 2000**
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### **White Announces Return of Historic Documents**

**SPRINGFIELD** — Secretary of State Jesse White announced today that his office has recovered two historic documents missing from the state of Illinois for more than half a century.

"The documents are warrants for payments, which are today's equivalent of checks," White said. "One warrant is from 1841 and is made out to Abraham Lincoln. The other warrant is from 1842 and is made out to Stephen Douglas."

White, who serves as state archivist, said both warrants had been listed for sale in an auction catalogue. His staff had been tipped off about the sale and began pursuit of the documents, which are official government records and legally belong to the state of Illinois.

Like checks, the backs of the warrants had to be signed to be redeemed. The Lincoln warrant, with Lincoln's signature on the back, was expected to sell for between \$4,000 to \$6,000. The Douglas warrant was expected to sell for \$500 to \$700.

"The Lincoln warrant is interesting because not only is it signed by Lincoln, but it also is signed by the state's auditor, James Shields," White said. "Shields would later challenge Lincoln to a duel, which almost occurred. He also would become the only man ever elected to the United States Senate from three states."

"The Douglas warrant also is interesting, because he signed his last name 'Douglass.' Later in his life, he would drop the second 's' from the end of his name."

White said a company known as Remember When Auctions, located in Maine, had put the two warrants up for sale.

He added that Remember When did not know the warrants were state property and, when contacted by the Secretary of State's legal staff, the company agreed to return the documents.

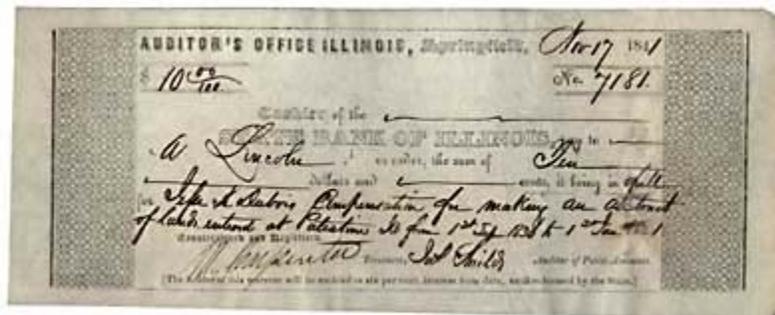
According to White, a number of warrants and receipts were lost or taken from the state in the late 1940s.

Since that time, most valuable state records have been transferred to the Illinois State Archives, which has numerous safeguards to protect its documents from theft.

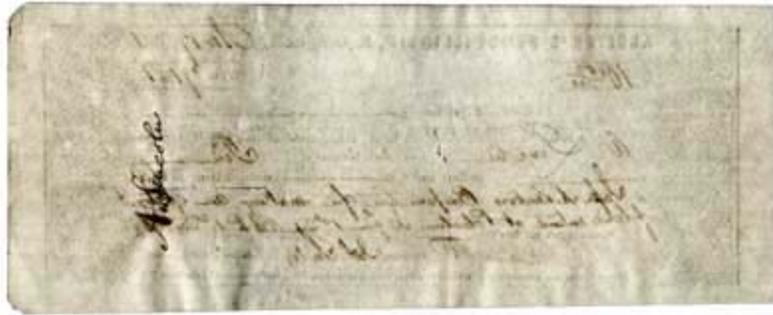
In addition, the Archives has catalogued as many of the missing documents as possible, so as to have proof of state ownership if and when these documents go on sale or become known.

Last fall, White's office recovered another Lincoln document, this one a receipt for a warrant that had been cut out of a register book. Archives staff took action when it was placed for sale over the Internet. Bidding on that document had reached more than \$3,500 before the Secretary of State's office stopped the sale.

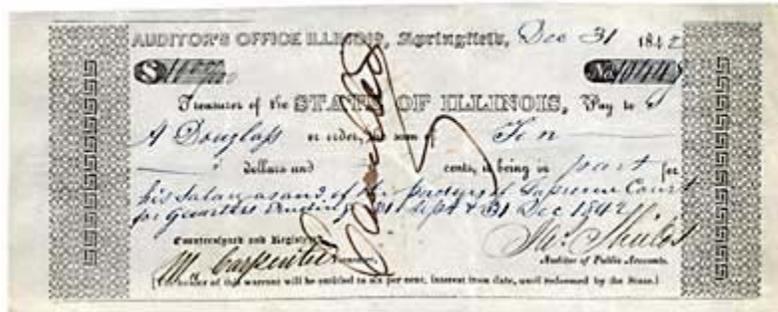
"Part of my job as State Archivist is to protect and preserve valuable government records," White said. "When we learn of a document that legally belongs to the people of Illinois, we always attempt to get it back. The public's help in telling us the whereabouts of stolen documents is vital to our efforts."



The warrant from 1841 made out to Abraham Lincoln for \$10 (FRONT)



The famous Lincoln signature. (Back)



The Douglas warrant (FRONT)



Signed 'Douglass.' Later in his life, he would drop the second 's' from the end of his name. (Back)