

Bodyguard

FROM THE STAR FILES

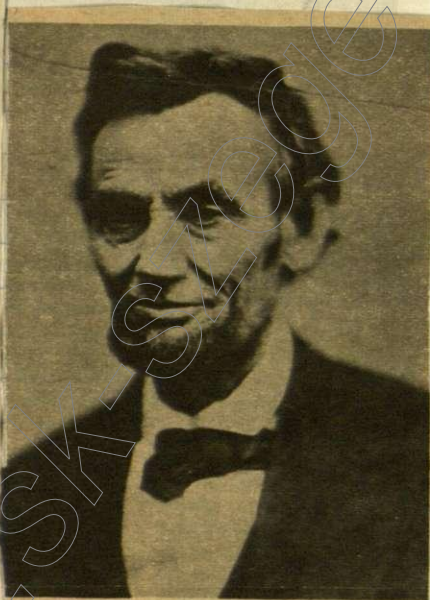
Lincoln's Bodyguard Strengthened

With the Confederacy's cause all but lost, there were growing fears a century ago that some Southerner or sympathizer might attempt to take President Lincoln's life. The Capital was crowded with soldiers in gray—deserters and paroled prisoners. Not until late in 1864 did the Chief Executive have much of a bodyguard at the White House. In November of that year four members of the Metropolitan Police were assigned to duty on the premises to protect the President. Two of them watched over him by day, guarding his office door or whatever room he occupied, and accompanying him on walks. At night the other pair patrolled the hall outside his bedroom, and escorted him to the theater or across the way to the War Department. A new rule at White House functions obliged guests to leave their outer garments in cloakrooms. This was a safety measure, for weapons could be easily concealed in cloaks and shawls. This paper, cooperating to conceal the real intent of the order, said it was a matter of etiquette and mark of respect to the First Family. There were protests but things went off rather smoothly at the President's New Year reception on Jan. 1, 1865. The Star reported: "In accordance with the time-honored custom, the President held his New Year reception today, and we do not remember of ever having seen a larger crowd in attendance upon any similar occasion. . . . At 12 o'clock Mr.



and Mrs. Lincoln made their appearance in the 'Blue' or 'Oval' Room when the Diplomatic Corps and Cabinet officers began to arrive. The Diplomatic Corps was fully represented, and also the Cabinet, Secretaries Seward, Stanton, Welles, Fessenden, Usher, Postmaster General Dennison and Attorney General Speed being present. About 12:30 the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the Court of Claims and the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia were ushered in. . . . After the officers of the Army and Navy had been received by the President, the gates were thrown open and a general rush was made by those eager to gain admittance. . . . The President received all with the greatest cordiality, and took each individual by the hand. The crowd, after passing through the Red, Blue, Green and East Rooms, emerged from the mansion through one of the side windows, over a substantial wooden platform leading to the portico. The Marine Band, under Prof. Scala, was stationed in one of the ante-rooms and discoursed excellent music. In order to prevent the handsome carpets

from being soiled by the mud and dirt brought in by the crowd, canvas was spread over them. Police arrangements were admirable and reflect great credit upon Superintendent Richards, who was present in person. A detail of 32 men was posted throughout the building to prevent crowding and jostling. The jam was terrible, and many pressed so determinedly that several ladies and children were nearly suffocated, and in some instances ladies and children were raised above the crowd by the male protectors in order to shield them from the pressure. One lady reached the door in such dilapidated condition (her bonnet being smashed and her shawl torn nearly in twain) that she said she would not go into the presence of Mr. Lincoln in that condition and inquired the way out. One man, determined to see the President, come what might, had the tail of his long cloak well fastened between four or five men to his rear, and concluded to leave the garment behind. He unlooped it from his neck and made his way in. . . ."



Lincoln shortly before his death.

