



Lincoln on Pennies

The face of Abraham Lincoln on the copper cent seems well and proper. If it were possible to talk with that great, good man, he would probably say that he is perfectly willing that his face is to be placed on the cheapest and most common coin in the country.

The penny is strictly the coin of the common people. At Palm Beach, Newport and Saratoga you will find nothing for sale at one cent. No ice cream cones at a penny apiece there.

“Keep the change,” says the rich man, “How many pennies do I get back?” asks the poor man.

Only the children of the poor know the joy of getting a penny for running around the corner to the grocery.

The penny is the bargain counter coin. Only the common people walk out of their way to get something for 9 cents reduced from 10 cents. The penny is the coin used by those who are not sure of tomorrow, those who know that if they are going to have a dollar next week they must watch the pennies this week.

Follow the travels of the penny and you find it stops at many cottages and few mansions.

The common, homely face of “Honest Abe” will look good on the penny, the coin of the common folk from whom he came and to whom he belongs.

--Carl Sandburg

The above was Carl Sandburg's first published writing on Lincoln. It appeared in the Milwaukee DAILY NEWS in 1909, when the now familiar penny was minted in observance of the centennial of Lincoln's birth. Mr. Sandburg was then a reporter on the Daily News staff.

