



Albert Taylor Bledsoe
(1809-1877)

Albert Taylor Bledsoe was born in Kentucky in 1809. He graduated from West Point and, after leaving military service, became an Episcopal minister in 1835. He resigned from the ministry in 1839 and spent most of the next nine years in Springfield, Illinois, where he practiced law as a partner of Edward D. Baker, a friend of Lincoln. He was a member of the Whig Party, served as chief editorial writer for the *Illinois State Journal*, Springfield's principle Whig newspaper, met Lincoln and even served as his broadsword instructor and a second for an abortive Lincoln duel.

In 1848, Bledsoe left Springfield to become a professor of mathematics at the University of Mississippi (1848-54), later moving to a similar post at the University of Virginia (1854-61). In 1848, while living in Springfield, Bledsoe had voted against the Negro exclusion clause in the new Illinois state constitution. However, after moving into the south, he became a proslavery enthusiast, arguing that the Bible sanctioned slavery.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Confederate War Department at Richmond took on Albert Taylor Bledsoe as acting assistant secretary of war. Late in the war, on January 16, 1865, Bledsoe's wife, Harriet, visiting in the North, received a card of safe conduct through Union lines signed by President Lincoln. After safely returning to Richmond, she had occasion to ask President Jefferson Davis to autograph the same card, making it one of the few documents containing both signatures.

After the Civil War, Bledsoe published materials in book and periodical form in defense of the Southern cause. In 1867, he founded the *Southern Review*, which he edited until his death. In 1873, Bledsoe reviewed Ward Hill Lamon's *Life of Abraham Lincoln* in the *Southern Review* and, calling upon his past experiences with the former president, he was highly critical of Lincoln the politician and the public figure.

Although KHS does not have the signatures of Lincoln and Jefferson on the same card like the card of Bledsoe's wife, Harriet, we do have them on separate documents in our collections.
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