



# Lincoln's Secret Spy: The Civil War Case That Changed the Future of Espionage

*Jane Singer, John Stewart*

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A month after Lincoln's assassination, William Alvin Lloyd arrived in Washington, DC, to press a claim against the federal government for money due him for serving as the president's spy in the Confederacy. Lloyd claimed that Lincoln personally had issued papers of transit for him to cross into the South, a salary of \$200 a month, and a secret commission as Lincoln's own top-secret spy. The claim convinced Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt—but was it true?


For many years Lloyd had been hawking his *Southern Steamboat and Railroad Guide* throughout Dixie, and it was this thorough familiarity with the South and its people—and their familiarity with him—that would have given him a good cover when the time came. In July, 1861, and now desperate for cash, Lloyd crossed enemy lines to collect debts owed by advertising clients in the South.

After just a few days in the Confederacy, officials jailed Lloyd for bigamy, not for being a Yankee spy as he later claimed. After bribing his way out, he crisscrossed the Southern states, trying to collect enough money to stay alive.

Between riding the rails he found time to marry plenty of unsuspecting young women only to ditch them a few days later. His behavior drew the attention of Confederate authorities, who nabbed him in Savannah and charged him as a suspected spy. But after nine months, they couldn't find any incriminating evidence or anyone to testify against him, so they let him go. A free but broken man, Lloyd continued roaming the South, making money however he could. In May 1865, he went to Washington with an extraordinary claim and little else: a few coached witnesses, and a pass to cross the lines signed "A. Lincoln" (the most forged signature in American history), and his own testimony.

So was he really Lincoln's secret agent or nothing more than a con man? And was *Totten vs. United States*—inspired by Lloyd's claim and which set precedent for espionage law based on a monumental fraud? Find out in this completely irresistible and wholly original work.

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