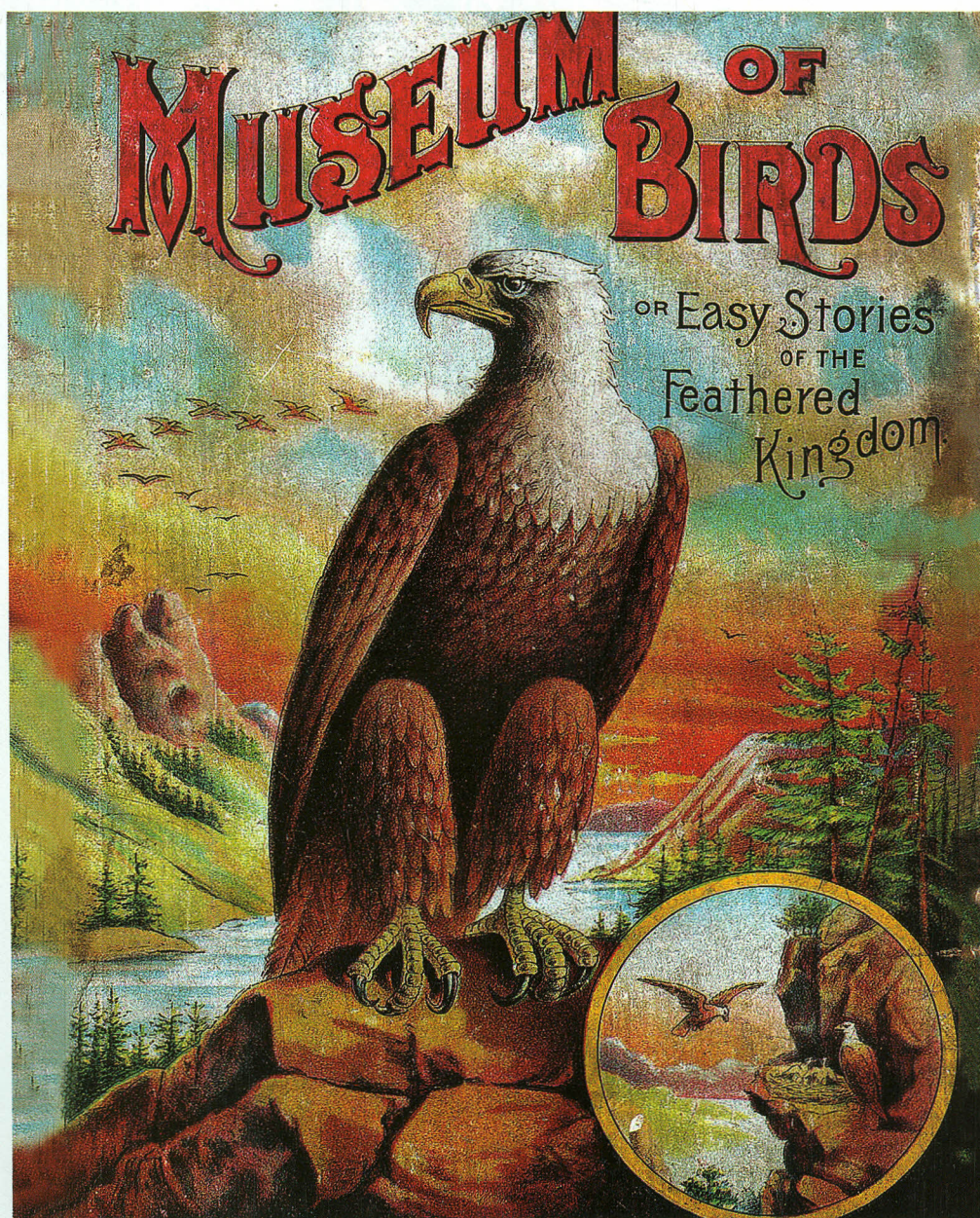


Old Abe's News

the original magazine for folks who enjoy J. I. Case people, equipment and history

Spring, 2004

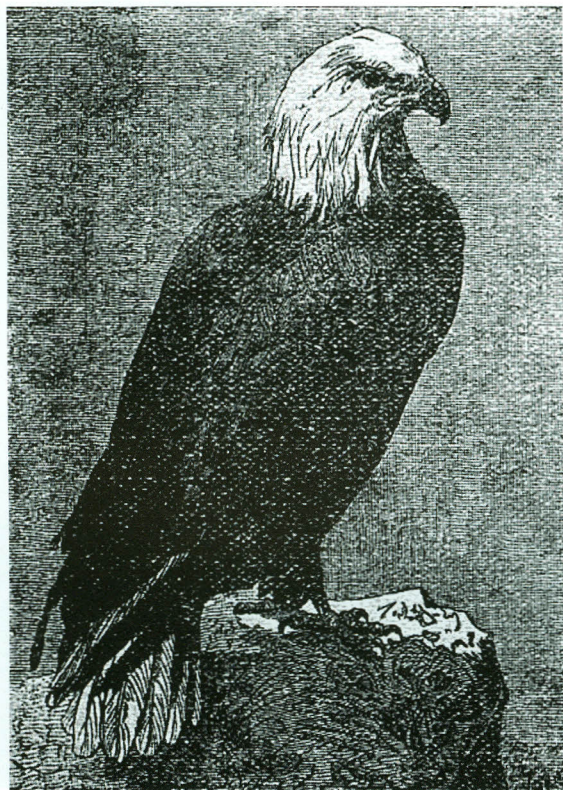


Biography of Francis Tritle - Washington State Case Dealer

The VAC-14 Story

Case Paint Codes

Ohio's New Historical Boiler Law



Artist's ink sketch of Old Abe, the war eagle

Old Abe for Children

By Dr. Robert T. Rhode

Fans of the Case eagle may be surprised to learn that Old Abe was featured in a 1904 book for young readers entitled *Museum of Birds, Or Easy Stories of the Feathered Kingdom*. Old Abe's likeness appeared on the vibrantly colored cover of the volume, (*see front cover of this issue*), and a modest ink sketch of the renowned bird stood guard opposite his story on the inside (*above*). Although the passing of time makes it difficult to know if author Lydia Brooks Miller wrote the piece about Old Abe or if she collected it from another writer, the story about the war eagle undoubtedly thrilled children. Here is Miller's treatment of Old Abe in its entirety:

Old Abe

Old Abe is an eagle that has become more famous than birds usually do. During the war between the States, he was captured by some Union soldiers in camp, who named him Old Abe, in honor of Lincoln. During their months of enforced idleness he was tamed by them and became the bird of the regiment. He took a fierce delight in battle; while it raged he would perch on his standard, gloating over carnage, or, flapping his great wings, would fly hither and thither, shrilly screaming his joy in the red battle.

Old Abe went through the war. He was in many a fight; shells crushed [crashed?] over his head and minnie ball[s] whistled on all sides, but he came out unharmed; perhaps the loser of a feather or two but otherwise sound.

In one battle, when the cannons were booming and the men surging backward and forward, that noble bird entered into all the spirit of the fight. He danced with delight on his perch and his scream could be heard above the roar of the battle. As a result of his excitement, a large feather dropped from his wing, or it might be that some bullet just grazed past him. Anyway, this feather fell a few yards from Mr. Olroyd, one of the men of the battle line. It came from "Old Abe," the best known name during the war, and he made up his mind to have the feather. That was a souvenir that could not be obtained in future years, whether the Union were saved or not, so he just ducked his head and made a dive for it. He put his arm over his face as if that could shield him from the bullets, and rushed into the open space in front of the line, *grabbed* the feather, stuck it under his blouse and carried it away.

This feather of the grand old bird, "Old Abe," is now framed and hangs in the very house in Washington where that great and good man, Abraham Lincoln, breathed his last; just opposite the building where the fatal shot was fired that ended his life.

The eagle was kept with his regiment until the close of the war, when he was consigned to a museum.

He was described to me by a lady who saw him in 1883 in Woodward's Garden, San Francisco. Here he was one of the chief attractions of the place, being visited by hundreds of people daily. He was a large bird, and, of course, too dignified to put on airs, but he seemed thoroughly to appreciate the fact that he was a bird of importance. His mien showed that he was used to homage, and he accepted it with gracious condescension from the crowd about him.



For an excellent book on this subject, see Richard H. Zeitlin's *Old Abe the War Eagle: A True Story of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986).