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LINCOLN AT STATE LINE

The editor of Lincoln Lore recently addressed the quarterly meeting of the Tri-county Historical Society, which comprises the Indiana counties of Benton, Fountain, and Warren. At this meeting, a committee was appointed to consider marking places of historical interest within the boundaries of these counties.

The site where Abraham Lincoln made an address in 1861 at State Line, Warren County, while enroute from Springfield to Indianapolis and Washington, received special emphasis. The place of departure at the old Great Western station in Springfield is well marked with a bronze tablet, and the place of destination at the close of the first day's journey is also designated by a bronze marker on the wall of the Claypool Hotel, at Indianapolis. It would seem appropriate to erect a simple memorial at State Line, the midway point between those two cities, where Lincoln was welcomed to the state of Indiana, and where the president-elect and his suite stopped for dinner.

Little has been published about the incidents occurring on the special train from the time it left the Illinois line until it arrived at the Indiana capital. Files of old newspapers have made available some interesting items which are here released in hopes that they may encourage some definite action in appropriately marking places where Lincoln is known to have addressed the people.

Lincoln left Springfield on this eventful trip on the morning of February 11, 1861. These words appear on the marker located on the Monroe Street side of the old depot, now the property of the Wabash Railroad.

Farewell Address Marker

"The Site of the Great Western R. R. Passenger Station and near their track where stood the train from which President-elect Mr. Lincoln made his farewell address."

The special train arrived at the Indiana state line about noon without accident or special incident. At this point the presidential party was welcomed to the state of Indiana by General G. K. Steele on behalf of the committee which accompanied him. The following address of welcome by

General Steele and the reply by Abraham Lincoln appeared in the LaFayette Daily Courier of February 11, 1861.

General Steele's Welcome Address

"Mr. Lincoln: As chairman of a joint committee appointed by the Legislature of Indiana to invite and escort you to the capital, it affords me great pleasure on this occasion to tender you in their behalf here on the border of our state a cordial and hearty welcome. Indiana as a home of your boyhood, feels a great degree of pride in your elevation to the highest position within the gift of the American people. We are proud to reflect that as the architect of your own fortunes, Indiana was the scene of your first triumphs and I may say briefly that the wisdom and excellency of our free institutions are thus exhibited before the world. The youth of the country may learn from your illustrious example, that the highest gifts of the nation are obtainable through that indomitable energy and sterling integrity which characterized your younger days and are the crowning glory of your manhood. Again in behalf of the committee I bid you welcome to Indiana."

Reply of Mr. Lincoln

"Gentlemen of Indiana: I am happy to meet you on this occasion and enter again the state of my early life and of almost my maturity. I am under many obligations to you for your kind reception and to Indiana for the aid she rendered our cause which I think is a just one. Gentlemen, I shall address you at greater length at Indianapolis, but not much greater. Again gentlemen, I thank you for your warm hearted reception."

Dinner was served to the visitors and reception committee at the State Line Hotel. Upon departing, Mr. Burrows, the superintendent of the Valley Road, had charge of the train, in person, and saw to it that the train left on time. At Lafayette a change was made to the Lafayette and Indianapolis Railroad. At this railroad junction Lincoln was greeted by another large group of people. Both the national and federal salutes were fired by the artillery. After having been introduced by General Field, Lincoln made the following remarks:

Lincoln's Lafayette Speech

"Fellow Citizens: We have seen great changes within the recollections of some of us who are older. When first I came to the west some 44 or 45 years ago, at sundown you had completed a journey of some thirty miles which you had commenced at sunrise and thought you had done well. Now only six hours have elapsed since I left my home in Illinois, where I was surrounded by a large concourse of my fellow citizens almost all of whom

I could recognize, and I find myself far from home and surrounded by thousands I now see before me who are strangers to me. Still we are bound together in Christianity, civilization, and patriotism and our attachment to our country and our whole country. While some of us may differ in political opinions, still we are all united in one feeling for the Union. We all believe in the maintenance of the Union, of every star and every stripe of the glorious flag, and permit me to express my sentiment that upon the union of the states there shall be between us no difference.

"My friends, I meet many friends at every place on my journey, and I should weary myself should I talk at length, therefore permit me to bid you an affectionate farewell."

It is likely that the train stopped at Thorntown, and it would appear that Lincoln made some brief remarks there and possibly told a story. At least an Indianapolis paper stated that "Old Abe was told on his arrival at Indianapolis, that the people of Thorntown followed the train on foot to hear the conclusion of his anecdote."

What took place at Lebanon has not been discovered but one of the Lebanon papers, unfriendly to Lincoln, stated that "the people of this county have seen enough of him."

The next station was Zionsville, where the engine stopped for water. An old citizen of the town, who remembered the incident, told the writer that Lincoln said on this occasion, "I would like to spend more time here but there is an event to take place at Washington which cannot start until I get there."

At five o'clock in the afternoon the train arrived in Indianapolis at the North Street Station on LaFayette Road, where it was met by a dense crowd. A delegation headed by Governor O. P. Morton officially welcomed the president-elect.

Lincoln made two addresses at Indianapolis, one at the Bates House on the evening of his arrival and another the next morning before the legislature. Both of these discussions have had wide distribution and can be found in many publications. The Bates House stood on the site now occupied by the Claypool Hotel. On a bronze tablet in the wall of this building the following inscription, the concluding paragraph of the memorable speech, appears as follows:

Marker on Claypool Hotel

"Here February 11, 1861 Abraham Lincoln on his way to Washington to assume the presidency in an address said: 'I appeal to you to constantly bear in mind that not with politicians, not with presidents, not with office-seekers but with you is the question, Shall the Union, shall the liberties of this country be preserved to the latest generations?'"