

# LINCOLN LORE

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## Lincoln Lore

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### THE LINCOLN TOMB

Charles Herrick Hammond, State Supervising Architect for Illinois, has just completed plans for remodeling the Lincoln tomb at Springfield. When this project is developed and improvements made, the dignity and decorum befitting such a shrine will be achieved.

A visit to the tomb serves as an appropriate climax at the end of a day spent in visiting sites in Springfield associated with the life of Lincoln. The home sites—where he first found a lodging place; where he was married; where he and his wife first went to keeping house; and finally his own home, where he lived for so many years help to make real his residence there.

The building sites, where his offices were located, which changed with each new partnership, recall many incidents in his legal career. Another group of markers designating incidents in his political experiences where he was advised of his nomination to the presidency; where he greeted his townsmen after his election; and where he prepared the first inaugural.

The spots most closely associated with the tomb, however, recall his farewell address, the return of his body to Springfield, and the place where it lay in state.

The efforts, thus far put forth, in the attempt to properly mark and beautify the resting place of the martyred president, seem to have fallen into three periods. The first interval might be called a season of local interest; the next, a period of anxiety and watchfulness; and the third, an era of increasing favor.

#### Local Interest

At noon on the day of Lincoln's death, an assemblage met in the Illinois State House to make plans for the reception of the body and its interment. Out of this initial meeting grew The National Lincoln Monument association. Its duties were soon expanded to the raising of funds for the building of a monument. The first serious problem which confronted the executives of this group was the location of the monument. The place where the present state capitol building now stands was selected, but Mrs.

Lincoln insisted that the remains be interred in Oak Ridge Cemetery. In this decision, at least, it seems as though she was wiser than those who desired a more central location for the memorial. The congenial atmosphere which nature creates about the shrine, itself, withdrawn from the business section of the city, is just as necessary for a proper appreciation of the shrine as the more immediate atmosphere of the sarcophagus, itself.

Subscriptions from individuals and organizations, and appropriations from two or three states made possible the erection of a monument conceived by Larkin G. Mead, Jr., of Brattleboro, Vermont. Ground for the foundation was broken on September 9, 1869, but the completion of the shaft was not achieved until October 1, 1871.

The statuary which now graces the monument was added as funds were provided to acquire them. On October 15, 1874, the heroic bronze likeness of Lincoln was unveiled. The Infantry and Naval groups were in place by the year 1873. Eighteen years after the project was started it finally reached completion.

#### Anxiety and Watchfulness

In 1786 another organization associated with the tomb was formed, called The Lincoln Guard of Honor. An attempt had been made by ghouls to steal the body of Lincoln for which they hoped to receive a ransom. The purpose of this Guard of Honor was to safeguard "the precious dust of Abraham Lincoln from vandal hands and to conduct upon anniversaries of his birth and death suitable memorial exercises."

During this time much anxiety was shown by people all over the land as to the actual location of the President's body, which many thought to have been removed from the tomb. To quiet rumors the Guard of Honor exhumed the body in 1886 and placed it in the catacomb where a stronger vault had been prepared.

Not only was the care of the body causing anxiety during this period but the upkeep of the monument was becoming a problem. A fee of 25c was charged those who visited the tomb, but this did not create a sufficient fund to provide for necessary repairs and there had been many protests against such remuneration. On July 9, 1895, the property was transferred from The National Lincoln Monument Association to the State of Illinois.

#### Increasing Favor

With the acquisition of the tomb by the state, a new era in the history of the monument began. An appropriation of \$100,000 was soon made available which relieved the financial embarrassment under which the monument had been maintained. The ad-

mission fee was eliminated and a custodian under the supervision of the state appointed.

The monument had become badly in need of repair because of a faulty foundation. The entire structure, with the exception of the shaft, was torn down and rebuilt. The height of the shaft was also increased from 115 feet to 135 feet. These repairs on the monument were completed by June 1, 1901, and then it was again ready to receive visitors.

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of people who have made pilgrimages to the tomb. In the month of June, 1901, it is said that a total of 1,230 visited the monument. In June, 1928, there were 14,330 who registered. The yearly totals also show a corresponding increase. In 1907 but 20,000 people were recorded, while in 1927 a total of 134,000 people were present at the shrine. In late years many notables have taken occasion to bring floral tributes to the bier of Lincoln.

#### Dignity and Decorum

Someone has said that the plans now drawn up anticipate changing the shrine from a museum to a mausoleum. This implies that much of the \$175,000 appropriated for the task will be expended on interior alteration. The rotunda, housing the collection of Lincoln curios, will be transformed into a quiet reception room where the solemnity which should characterize the resting place of the departed can be realized.\* Marble-lined passages will lead from the reception room and approach the sarcophagus, itself. This will be made of red Arkansas fossil and bear the inscription—"Abraham Lincoln 1809-1865." Whatever is done will have, as its objective, the creation of a reverent atmosphere.

With the completion of the Memorial highway from the cradle of Lincoln in Kentucky, past the shrine at his mother's grave in Indiana, to the place of his burial in Illinois, there will be linked together three notable memorials which should invite thousands of Americans to make an annual pilgrimage to these places of inspiration.

\* This reference to the removal of the Lincoln collection, now on display at the tomb, in no way reflects upon its worth. It is to be regretted that it has been so unfortunately located. While improvements at the monument can be made at any time, the urgency in making safe this valuable collection is immediate. If the State of Illinois shall become the custodian of this collection, much of which has been gathered over a period of fifty years by Mr. Edgar Fay, it should make sure of its preservation. The tomb may be rebuilt over and over again by future generations, but the collection of Lincolniana now housed therein can never be replaced if allowed to disintegrate or be destroyed.