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THE LONG NINE

No group with which Abraham Lincoln became affiliated in his younger days has gained more prominence than the "long nine." Its most notable achievement was the winning of the state capital of Illinois for the city of Springfield.

Sangamon County in 1836 elected seven representatives and two senators to the Legislature, the largest delegation from any county in the state. These nine men were not only bound together because of their local political interests, but each one of them was six feet tall or over, which gave them the name of the "long nine." The combined height of the group is said to have been fifty-five feet.

The seven successful candidates for the House of Representatives received the following number of votes: Abraham Lincoln, 1716; William F. Elkin, 1694; Ninian W. Edwards, 1659; John Dawson, 1641; Daniel Stone, 1483; Robert L. Wilson, 1353; Andrew McCormick, 1306. These men, with the two successful candidates to the Senate, Job Fletcher and Archer G. Herndon, comprised the famous "long nine."

On one occasion Lincoln had opportunity to mention from the floor of the legislature the group of which he was a member. Some reference had been made to the figure nine as associated with old women, and Lincoln seized upon this opportunity to turn loose some of his wit. He said:

"A few years since the delegation from this county was dubbed the 'long nine,' and, by way of further distinction I had been called the longest of the nine. Now, if any woman old or young, ever thought there was any peculiar charm in this distinguished specimen of number nine, I have, as yet, been so unfortunate as not to have discovered it." The reporter of the Sangamon Journal in the issue of January 15, 1839, commented that this speech was greeted with "loud applause." As a sequel to this story Miss Mary Todd was soon to discover the peculiar charm of this certain member of the long nine.

Lincoln's leadership in the efforts which resulted in this group bringing the state capital to Springfield, did more for him than any other achievement up to this time. The very day after the victory was gained for Springfield, the Supreme Court at Vandalia presented him with a certificate of admission to the bar of Illi-

nois. One month later than this he took up his residence in Springfield. While the story of his arrival in the city, which was to become the new state capital, has made it appear that he took up his abode there as a rather humble country lad, he was in fact the most honored of the representatives of Sangamon County, due to the ef-

The members of the "long nine" and their ages follow:

John Dawson—45
William F. Elkin—44
Job Fletcher—43
Archer G. Herndon—41
Daniel Stone—37
Andrew McCormick—35
Robert L. Wilson—31
Ninian W. Edwards—28
Abraham Lincoln—28

forts he had put forth in the legislature.

John Dawson

In the 1834 election when Lincoln was first chosen for the legislature, Dawson was the only candidate who received more votes than he. Politically and socially, Dawson and Lincoln, the senior and junior members of the "long nine," had much in common. Dawson was one of the group who joined Lincoln as one of the six managers of the famous "Cotillion Party." He served five terms in the legislature and was a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1847. He was born in Virginia.

William F. Elkin

Inasmuch as Elkin was born in Kentucky it is possible that he may have been related to Rev. David Elkin, the minister who preached the funeral of Nancy Hanks. He served three terms in the legislature and was later registrar of the land office at Springfield.

Job Fletcher

Not much is known about Fletcher with the exception that he served six years in the State Senate and one term in the House of Representatives. He was born in Virginia.

Archer G. Herndon

The association of Lincoln and Archer G. Herndon may have had something to do with the interest which Lincoln took in Herndon's son, William H. Herndon, who later became his law partner. Herndon was born in Virginia, but for many years lived not far from the Kentucky home of the Lincolns. Herndon served eight years in the State Senate and was receiver of the land office.

Daniel Stone

This is the same Dan Stone who joined Abraham Lincoln in the abolition protest and signed the remonstrance with him on March 3, 1837. Possibly the fact that he was born in Vermont may have had something to do with his attitude towards slavery. He served one term in the General Assembly, and was also a Circuit Judge.

Andrew McCormick

McCormick seems to be one of the other rather obscure members of the long nine. His three terms served in the legislature seem to be his full sum of public service. He was born in Tennessee.

Robert L. Wilson

It was Lincoln's association with Robert L. Wilson which undoubtedly was responsible for his later appointment of Wilson as paymaster, where he served at both Washington and St. Louis. He served but one term in the legislature, but was five terms Circuit Judge and eight years a Probate Judge. He was born in Pennsylvania.

Ninian W. Edwards

One member of the "big nine," Ninian W. Edwards, was later to become Abraham Lincoln's brother-in-law. He was born in Kentucky, and while in Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, had married Mary Todd's sister, Elizabeth. He served in the Legislature sixteen years, was a member of the State Constitutional Convention of 1847, and in 1862 was appointed United States Commissary by Lincoln. Upon his coming to Illinois shortly after his graduation from Transylvania he was appointed Attorney General of Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln

Although Abraham Lincoln was but twenty-eight years old at the time the long nine was serving in the legislature, he became the recognized leader of the group.

If the following tradition can be verified Lincoln was a member of another group for a very short time which would have towered above the "long nine." It is said that on one occasion the Ninety-third Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers was passing through Washington and in the ranks was a very tall young man by the name of Mahlon Shaaber.

Young Shaaber noticed a group of tall men standing together viewing the troops, the tallest of them beckoning him to come to them. The captain of Shaaber's company, recognizing the gentleman as President Lincoln, ordered Shaaber to join the group. Shaaber said that Mr. Lincoln asked him how tall he was and he told him that he was six feet six and one-half inches.

Mr. Lincoln is said to have jotted down these figures in a black memorandum book, remarking, after learning the height of the other men present and noting it in his book, "It will be a good while, I guess, before as small a party as this can show so great a total of inches."

The members of the party were Mahlon Shaaber, six feet six and one-half inches; Abraham Lincoln, six feet four inches; Hannibal Hamlin, six feet two and one-half inches; Governor Curtin, six feet two inches; and General Cameron, six feet one inch.

We are wondering if this group did not bring back to Abraham Lincoln the memory of the "long nine."