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1832-1932

The one hundredth anniversary of an event is an important epoch in the calendar of a historian. Since 1909, the celebration of the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, there has been little occasion for observing the anniversary occurrences of other incidents which happened in the life of the growing boy.

Two local celebrations; one at Rockport, Indiana, recalling Lincoln's river trip to New Orleans in 1828, and another at Vincennes, Indiana, commemorating the migration of the Lincoln family from Indiana to Kentucky in 1830, seem to have been the only events of sufficient importance to justify centennial observances.

The scene of Lincoln's activities now shifts to Illinois and during the next thirty years or more many communities will have the opportunity of emphasizing important episodes associated with the life of Abraham Lincoln one hundred years ago.

The year 1832, especially, was rich in Lincoln pageantry. After having lived for twenty-three years in obscurity "The Tall Sycamore of the Sangamon," makes his first appeal for public recognition and attracts the attention of the leading citizens of the state of Illinois.

The anniversary celebrations of this year should offer a very helpful atmosphere for the beginning of a stupendous task which some day must be accomplished—the publication of a complete and exhaustive documentary history of Abraham Lincoln. Inasmuch as the personal correspondence of President Lincoln will not be available to historians for about twenty years, according to the specifications in the bequest of Robert Lincoln, its completion could not be anticipated before that time. Not less than thirty volumes would be required for the development of the argument, and it should contain the findings of those who are recognized authorities on different periods in Lincoln's life and on different aspects of his character.

As an incentive for the undertaking of such a task by Lincoln students Lincoln Lore plans to feature this year the colorful events which occurred in the life of Abraham Lincoln during 1832. It appears that there are six definite objectives around which sub-

ject matter should be gathered if we are to arrive at a proper understanding of Lincoln's qualifications and ambitions at the very beginning of his public career. They are presented briefly in the following paragraphs.

D. Offut's Clerk

A river trip which Abraham Lincoln made to New Orleans in the summer of 1831 paved the way for the position of clerk at New Salem, Illinois, in the store of the man for whom he operated the flatboat. During the first three months of the year 1832 we find Lincoln in Offut's store. An order was signed by him on March 8, 1832, as an agent for D. Offut. At this time as he puts it in his own words, "Offut's business was failing—had almost failed—when the Black Hawk War broke out."

The Embryo Politician

The day before he signed the order for Offut he set his signature to a more important writing, an announcement of his candidacy for the legislature and a copy of the platform on which he intended to run. This important paper, the first printed address extant by the president, bore the date of March 9, 1832. There is a tradition that he had made a public announcement of his intentions previous to this, but of this fact we are certain, that he was a grocery clerk and mill hand at the time he first aspired for political favor.

The Talisman's Pilot

Mr. V. A. Bogue, a friend of Abraham Lincoln's who sponsored the trip of the steamer, Talisman, from Cincinnati to Springfield, Illinois, in 1832 announced through the Springfield papers that he should be met at the mouth of the Sangamon River by several men under the direction of an experienced river man "to show the course of the stream." Abraham Lincoln happened to be the man who not only piloted the boat from the mouth of the Sangamon to the town of Springfield, reaching the town on the twenty-fourth day of March, 1832, but a week later saw the Talisman safely through the dam at New Salem on its way back to Beardstown.

Captain Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln had not been back from Beardstown many days after the eventful Talisman trip until a messenger came to New Salem and posted hand bills containing a proclamation by the Governor. It called for volunteers to put down the Black Hawk uprising. On April 21, Lincoln enrolled as a member of the voluntary force at Richland in Sangamon County. Here Lincoln was elected captain of the company. They moved on to Beardstown the next day, and in the course of their itinerary touched the following places: Mouth of Henderson River, Yellow Banks, Dixon, Ottawa, Galena, and White Water, then in Michigan

Territory. Near the latter place on July 10, the troops were mustered out. Lincoln's own company had been released at the mouth of Fox River on May 27, and he had re-enlisted, serving in Captain Elijah Iles's Company.

Lincoln Unhorsed

When Lincoln awoke the next morning after the troops had been mustered out he discovered that someone had stolen his horse. This necessitated his walking most of the way from what is now White Water, Wisconsin, to New Salem, Illinois. At Peoria he and his companions purchased a canoe and followed the river to Havana where they disposed of the craft and struck off on foot for New Salem. Lincoln could not have arrived in town less than ten days before the August election and possibly not more than a week intervened before this important event took place. As candidate for the legislature he could not reach many people in this short time and there are those who feel that the stolen horse, which delayed his return, was largely responsible for his losing race at the polls on August 6.

Merchant of New Salem

His political defeat was the beginning of a series of disasters which confronted him for the next several months. On October 30, he signed a note with Nelson Alley for over one hundred dollars. Alley defaulted and Lincoln was obliged to pay the note. He purchased a half interest in a store at New Salem and later acquired half interest in another business which he and his partner purchased. The Lincoln and Berry enterprises at the close of the year 1832 were in a condition not unlike the store for which Lincoln had clerked earlier in the year, and finally he was obliged to assume the obligation for this failure, which he called in later years the "National Debt."

The six episodes mentioned here which occurred during the year 1832 should furnish plenty of material for a series of interesting pageants which might be presented as centennial celebrations during the year 1932.

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