

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN IN INDIANA

It is not known generally that Abraham Lincoln spent one-quarter of his whole life in the State of Indiana. Fourteen of his fifty-six years, from 1816 to 1830, he lived on a tract of land in what is now Spencer County, arriving from Kentucky at the age of seven and leaving for Illinois the year he was twenty-one. The visits which Lincoln made to Indiana in after years, however, are those in which we are especially interested.

Clay Campaign Itinerary—1844

In a letter which Lincoln wrote in 1848, he stated "In the Fall of 1844 thinking I might aid in carrying the state of Indiana for Mr. Clay, I went into the neighborhood in that state in which I was raised, where my mother and only sister were buried and from which I had been absent about fifteen years."

Lincoln evidently made a great many speeches on this trip, none of which are recorded, and many of the places where he spoke are not known.

Vincennes

While it is true that Lincoln was in Vincennes as a guest of Judge Abner T. Ellis during the 1844 campaign, there does not seem to be any evidence that he made an address there at that time, although it would appear likely that some gathering of the Whigs would be arranged to hear him.

Bruceville

Major William Bruce, a survivor of the War of 1812 and the man for whom Bruceville was named, claimed that Lincoln and Abner T. Ellis of Vincennes visited the town in 1844, and that Lincoln made a speech there in an old brick school house which stood opposite the Christian Church. The home in which he was entertained on this occasion is still standing.

Washington

One traditional site where Lincoln is said to have stopped in Indiana on the 1844 visit is Washington. There is some evidence that Lincoln's decision to make the Indiana trip, aside from political interests, was due to his engagement as a lawyer in a suit tried in the Daviess County Court House, and there are those who recall seeing his name in the court records. It is said that he gave his political address under a large elm tree which stood at what is now the corner of Third and Main Streets.

Rockport

A copy of the *Rockport Herald*, dated Tuesday, November 1, 1844, carried the following news item:

"Mr. Lincoln of Springfield, Illinois, addressed a large and respectable

audience at the court house on Wednesday evening last upon the Whig policy. His main argument was directed in pointing out the advantages of a Protective Tariff. He handled the subject matter in a manner that did honor to himself and the Whig cause. His speech was plain, argumentative and of an hour's duration."

When at Rockport Lincoln is said to have been a guest at Rockport Tavern which is still standing. A marker at the foot of the steps leading to the elevation on which the building stands bears this inscription:

Rockport Tavern/built 1832/where/Abraham Lincoln/was a guest in 1844/ sponsored by the/Business/and Professional Women's/Club of Rockport/Oct. 28, 1926/

Carter Township

Captain J. W. LaMar claims that he heard Lincoln make a political address in a little log schoolhouse, which stood in Carter Township at the cross roads between Barker's and Lincoln's old home. This would be about one-half a mile east of the original cabin site. LaMar remembers Lincoln's closing sentence as follows: "I may not live to see it but give us a protective tariff and we will have the greatest country the sun ever shown upon."

Gentryville

One other point where Lincoln is said to have spoken is at Gentryville which was the community center, located about two miles west of the Lincoln cabin. The doorway of a harness shop was on this occasion the rostrum from which he spoke.

Boonville

A correspondent at Boonville on June 5, 1860, wrote to the *Evansville Daily Journal* that "Mr. Lincoln passed through the town some years ago and made a speech in our court house. All who heard him (without distinction of party) concur in saying he made one of the best speeches ever heard in this place. His speech was mainly on the tariff question."

Evansville

The *Evening Journal* of Evansville on October 31, 1844, advertised a meeting of the Clay Whig Club at the court house on Friday, November 1. The announcement stated that several speeches would be made and that the public was invited to attend. Inasmuch as Lincoln was apparently in the community it is very likely he addressed the group at Evansville, although the papers do not mention his name.

Business Trip—1855

Indianapolis

In the Fall of 1855 Abraham Lincoln was called to Cincinnati, Ohio, as counsel in the McCormick Reaper

Case. He was obliged to pass through Indiana, and it is quite likely that he went by the way of the state capitol.

There is an oft-repeated tradition about Col. Tom Nelson and Bayless Hanna riding in a stage coach from Terre Haute to Indianapolis with Abraham Lincoln in 1847, at the time the latter was on his way to Washington to take a seat in Congress. There is positive evidence that Lincoln and his family went by boat to Louisville, Kentucky, via St. Louis, thus failing to pass through Indiana.

There is a probability that Lincoln went to Cincinnati in 1855 by way of Terre Haute and Indianapolis, and that it was at this time the Nelson-Hanna episode occurred. There is no evidence, however, which locates Lincoln in Indiana on any spring day in 1855 as is sometime alleged.

The Ohio-Indiana Schedule—1859

Indianapolis

It would appear from the account of Lincoln's visit to Indianapolis that the speech which he made at the state capitol on Monday, September 19, 1859, was his first public appearance there. He had made arrangements for some speaking appointments in Ohio and evidently passed through Indiana enroute. He was persuaded at that time or by correspondence directed to him at his destination to return by the way of Indianapolis for a political address there.

Returning from Cincinnati he arrived at four o'clock Monday afternoon and was entertained at the American House. At seven o'clock he spoke at Masonic Hall, one of the papers commenting that "he was appearing for the first time in his life before a large audience in Indiana." In the *Indianapolis Daily Atlas* for September 20, 1859, there is conserved a fragmentary copy of the speech he delivered.

Note—There is a tradition that a famous "mad stone" at Terre Haute was responsible for Lincoln bringing his son, Robert, there to be treated after the boy had been bitten by a dog.

The editor discovered a news item appearing in a *Terre Haute Journal* of 1866, which says that a lady of that city "is in possession of a valuable madstone and it has effected many remarkable cures of dog and snake bites. Hundreds of persons, some from great distances have tested its efficacy in such cases." The evidence of a madstone at Terre Haute is now established, but we need some evidence to establish the story of Lincoln's visit said to have been told by a Mrs. Wallace.

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