

LINCOLN LORE

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THE BURIAL OF LINCOLN

Memorial Day invites a general visitation of the cemeteries of the land and naturally directs our attention to the interment of Abraham Lincoln, whose martyrdom and extensive funeral preparations did much to inaugurate the annual Decoration Day.

The first reference appearing in the press relating to a burial plan for the President states that "his remains will be temporarily deposited in the vault of the Congressional Cemetery." This supposition, however, proved to be untrue.

It was proposed by many in official circles that the body of Lincoln should be "placed permanently in the vault under the capitol prepared for the remains of George Washington."

The third day after Lincoln's death Governor Oglesby of Illinois, who had been appointed to confer with the family of the late president about the burial place, announced that the remains would be returned to Illinois. At a meeting of the citizens of Illinois then in Washington, a set of resolutions was drawn up which contained this clause referring to the disposition of the body of Lincoln:

"Resolved, That our thanks are due, and are hereby heartily tendered to the federal authorities in this city, for their cordial co-operation and concurrence with the citizens of Illinois, in securing to that State the remains of the citizen she delighted to honor and the President she gave to the nation; and that we will receive as a sacred trust all that is left of the illustrious dead, to be deposited amidst the people who first learned to love him, because they first knew him to be great in goodness and good in greatness."

The place of interment in Springfield, Illinois, was not determined until the funeral procession reached the city. A tract of land where the State House now stands had been acquired and a stone vault built to receive the remains of the President, but Mrs. Lincoln insisted that her husband had expressed a desire to be buried in a quiet place, and the Oak Ridge location was finally agreed upon.

Oak Ridge Cemetery Vault *Interment, May 4, 1865*

Upon reaching Springfield, immediately after the elaborate services, the body of President Lincoln was placed in the receiving vault of the Oak Ridge Cemetery. It had been brought over a seventeen hundred mile route from Washington and had been viewed in all the principal cities enroute during the twenty days since the President's assassination.

National Lincoln Monument Association Vault *Interment, Dec. 21, 1865*

One week after Mr. Lincoln's remains reached Springfield, the National Lincoln Monument Association was formed. Their first task was to build a temporary vault which they constructed about seventy-five yards southeast of the receiving tomb. The body of Lincoln was moved to this vault on December 21, 1865.

The Crypt *First Interment, Sept. 19, 1871*

When the catacomb of the Lincoln monument was ready to receive the casket it was placed in crypt number one on September 19, 1871. Before moving the body to the monument it was taken out of the original coffin and placed in an iron one.

The Sarcophagus *Interment, Oct. 9, 1874*

While the body of the President was resting in the crypt, the construction of a beautiful white marble sarcophagus was under way. When it was ready to receive

the remains of Mr. Lincoln, it was found that the iron coffin was too large to be placed within it and one of red cedar, heavily lined with lead, was prepared. The body was placed in the marble sarcophagus on October 9, 1874, and it was expected that this would be the permanent burial place.

The Tomb Recess *First Interment, Nov. 15, 1876*

On the night of November 7, 1876, ghouls broke into the sarcophagus and were nearly successful in an attempt to steal the President's body, planning to hold it for ransom. Realizing how insecure the body was in the sarcophagus, it was removed secretly into one of the side recesses in the northwest corner of the memorial.

The Tomb Recess *Second Interment, Nov. 22, 1878*

When the statuary was placed on the monument, it was necessary to make some changes in the recess where the body was secreted. It was thought wise at this time to bury the coffin in the northern recess just back of the catacomb. This was also done secretly. It had not seemed necessary to bury the remains when the body was first placed in the catacomb, but it now appeared to be advisable.

The Catacomb *Interment, April 14, 1887*

During the years the body of Lincoln had been secreted, the marble receptacle, which had been used as a sarcophagus while it contained the body of Lincoln, had been allowed to remain in the center of the catacomb. Directly under the floor of the catacomb a brick and mortar vault was built and on April 14, 1887, the remains of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were placed side by side in this new burial place.

The Temporary Vault *Interment, 1899*

The Lincoln tomb by the year 1899 had shown such evidence of decay that the Illinois Legislature decided that it would have to be rebuilt. This called for the removal of the Lincoln family remains to a temporary vault during the reconstruction of the monument.

The Crypt *Second Interment, Feb., 1901*

When the reconstructed monument was ready in February, 1901, the remains of the family, including Mr. Lincoln's, were placed in the series of crypts prepared for them. Beside the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, three sons, Edward, William and Thomas, were placed in the compartments of the catacomb.

The Cenotaph *Interment, September 26, 1901*

The last interment of Abraham Lincoln's remains took place on September 26, 1901. Robert Lincoln arranged for the construction of a steel and cement vault to be located under the floor of the catacomb and to be sealed by a cover of the same material.

The old marble sarcophagus, which at one time held the remains of Lincoln, after the reconstruction of the monument was used as a cenotaph to mark the resting place of Lincoln in the vault ten feet below the floor of the catacomb.

The more recent improvements made at the tomb, which caused many changes in the interior construction, did not disturb the vault in which Lincoln lies buried. A new cenotaph was provided, however, and the exact position of the body is described by the custodian as "six feet from the inside north wall ten feet below the floor with head to the west and thirty inches north of the new cenotaph."