

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN IN KANSAS

The State of Kansas has received much attention during the past few weeks due to the fact that one of the presidential nominees hails from there. Lincoln Lore during the past year has presented such subjects as Lincoln in Michigan, Lincoln in New England, Lincoln in Wisconsin, etc., and it seems timely just now to consider Lincoln in Kansas.

On December 1, 1859, Abraham Lincoln entered the State of Kansas for the first time. For one whole week he enjoyed the hospitality of the people. It is evident that the pioneer spirit was still coursing in his blood, as it had through the veins of his ancestors. Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois had been able to detain the westward migration of the Lincoln family for one generation only. There are those who believe that if Abraham Lincoln had lived to return to private life, he too would have been caught up by the spirit of adventure and opportunity which kept the Lincoln family on the very frontier of western civilization.

Kansas undoubtedly would have been the next state to receive the Lincolns if the family migration had continued. This conclusion is drawn from a letter which Lincoln wrote in the month of March following his Kansas visit. An attorney, J. W. Somers, had asked his advice about locating in the West, and Lincoln in reply to his inquiry stated:

"If I went west, I think I would go to Kansas,—to Leavenworth or Atchison. Both of them are, and will continue to be, fine growing places." Lincoln visited both Leavenworth and Atchison on his trip in December, 1859, and apparently was greatly impressed with these western cities.

Elwood

The town of Elwood, Kansas, just across the river from St. Joe, Missouri, had the honor of first receiving Lincoln, due to the efforts of D. W. Wilder, an editor there. No preliminary arrangements had been made for him to speak but the people on learning of his presence insisted that he be heard. A crier ringing a bell was sent up and down the streets shouting: "Abe Lincoln of Illinois will speak at 3 o'clock in the dining room of the Great Western Hotel. Everybody invited."

The town of Elwood "winked out" much the same as Lincoln's old town of New Salem and the hotel where Lincoln stayed that night has been torn down.

Troy

On Friday, December 2, Lincoln had a busy day. There was not a railroad in the entire state at that time and Lincoln's first speaking appointment was at Troy, thirty miles away. The day was intensely cold. Lincoln was driven the entire distance across the prairie in a one-horse open buggy and when he arrived he was "blue with cold."

We are fortunate in having an account of the meeting at Troy by an eye witness who says:

"Not more than forty people assembled in that little bare-walled courthouse. There was none of the magnetism of a multitude to inspire the long angular, ungainly orator, who rose up behind a rough table. With little gesticulation—and that little ungraceful—he began, not to declaim, but to talk. In a conversational tone he began to argue the question of slavery in the territories in the language of an average Ohio or New York farmer. I thought, 'if the Illinoisans consider this a great man their ideas must be very peculiar.' But in ten or fifteen minutes I was unconsciously and irresistibly drawn by the clearness and closeness of his argument. Link after link it was forged and welded, like a blacksmith's chain. The address lasted an hour and three-quarters."

Doniphan

The second speech of the day was at Doniphan, then an important town in Kansas. The place of meeting was Abel Lowe's Hotel. Little information is available about this

speech, but it could not have been long and the audience could not have been large. One authority says it was "a short address in the dining room of the hotel."

Atchison

The climax speech of the day, and possibly the most impressive one of the whole itinerary, was delivered that evening at Atchison. A brass band had been engaged to parade the streets to drum up a crowd. Lincoln stopped at the Massasoit House and was escorted by the band to the Methodist Church.

He spoke two hours and twenty minutes to as large a group as could crowd into the church. It was the evening of the day on which John Brown was executed and this contributed much to the atmosphere of the occasion.

A man who heard Lincoln that evening stated that his address was "the most logical and vigorous he had ever heard from a Republican orator." One of the most dramatic incidents in the speech was Lincoln's reference to John Brown in which he said to those who might be disloyal to the government: "If you are guilty of treason we will hang you, as you have hanged old John Brown this afternoon." It is accepted generally that the Atchison speech was the first draft of the Cooper Institute address soon to follow.

One of Lincoln's auditors that night, in reminiscence years afterward, said: "I shall never forget how Lincoln looked, standing in the little box of a pulpit, with his strange ungraceful gesticulations, as he leaned over seeming with his long arms almost as if he could touch his hearers upon the back benches."

Leavenworth

On Saturday, December 3, Lincoln moved on to Leavenworth. He was met at the Fort Leavenworth Military Academy by a large group of people and escorted to the Mansion House. Here he received a word of welcome from Col. Vaughn to which he briefly responded, giving a short sketch of the Republican party and the trials of free state men in making Kansas the home of liberty.

The important address at Leavenworth was delivered in Stockton Hall in the evening. His subject for this speech was Popular Sovereignty, and he discussed the principles of Washington, Madison, and Jefferson, and the founders of our government.

Sunday, December 4, was free for social contacts, and it is likely that most of the day was spent with a distant relative, Mark Delahay of Leavenworth, who was largely responsible for Lincoln's visit to Kansas.

The news of Lincoln's Saturday night speech had traveled far over the week end so that he was prevailed upon to speak again on Monday. The crowd assembled in the town was so great that no hall available was large enough to care for it, and the people assembled in the street opposite the Planters' Hotel. Henry Villard, an eastern reporter, wired his paper that night: "It was the largest mass meeting ever assembled on Kansas soil and the greatest address ever heard there."

Lincoln remained for the election held on the following day and on Wednesday started for home.

A most interesting sequel to his Kansas visit occurred on February 22, 1861, when on the way to Washington to be inaugurated President of the United States, Lincoln stopped at Philadelphia to dedicate a flag with a new star, and the new star represented Kansas. Lincoln said in part:

"I am invited and called before you to participate in raising above Independence Hall the flag of our country with an additional star upon it . . . When the flag was originally raised here it had but thirteen stars . . . Under the blessing of God each additional star added to that flag has given additional prosperity and happiness to this country. The new star placed upon the flag shall be permitted to remain there to our permanent prosperity for years to come."