

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor,
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 502

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

November 21, 1938

LINCOLN'S FAREWELL TO HIS STEPMOTHER

"Lincoln's Farewell To His Stepmother" is the title of another human interest study in the series of informal portraits being sponsored by the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. The Thanksgiving season seems to be a very appropriate time for the showing of this picture portraying the President Elect's last visit to the old home in Coles County, Illinois.

Lincoln's own mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, passed away when he was but nine years of age. A year later his father married Sarah Bush Johnston who was a poor widow struggling along with three orphan children of her own. She immediately took Abraham under her care and gave him a mother's love and sympathetic attention which he never forgot.

Upon writing an autobiographical sketch, after his nomination for the presidency, Lincoln referred to his stepmother with these words: "She proved a good and kind mother to Abraham and is still living in Coles County, Illinois."

At a time when he was the President Elect of the nation and the most important figure in the country, in the very midst of selecting the members of his cabinet, he set apart three days for the memorable trip to Coles County. It was this gracious and considerate act which Mr. Mizen has attempted to visualize in his interpretation of Lincoln's final farewell to his aged stepmother.

On the morning of January 30, 1861, Mr. Lincoln boarded a Great Western train which took him as far as the junction point at Tolono. An eye witness states that Lincoln upon entering the passenger coach "took pains though not with ostentation to secure an humble old lady, whom he knew, a double seat."

Changing to the Illinois Central train at Tolono, he continued on to Mattoon, only to find that the last bound train for Charleston over the Terre Haute and Alton road

had already departed. This necessitated his waiting for an evening freight train and he traveled the remaining part of the journey in a caboose. A Charleston lawyer who witnessed his arrival states that "the freight train finally drew in and stopped, the locomotive was about opposite the station and the caboose some distance down the tracks." He said that Lincoln "patiently made his way through the long expanse of slush and ice beside the track as far as the station."

Remaining in Charleston that night and securing a horse and buggy early the next morning, he drove out eight miles to Farmington where his mother was residing.

There will be no attempt here to describe the last few hours that Abraham Lincoln and his stepmother were privileged to spend together but it is quite certain that Lincoln was greatly moved by this event. While there is some conflict in the stories as to the final words at parting, it is understood that the old stepmother was quite sure she would never see Abraham again and so expressed herself. Lincoln in reply used some such expression as he had written to his aged father about a meeting up yonder.

At a time when interviews were being

sought with Lincoln by the leading men of the nation, when every word he spoke was being noted by news correspondents from the great Eastern papers, he stole away for a quiet visit with the little old lady who had mothered him during those early years in Indiana.

Slow trains averaging not over twenty miles an hour, two of them bad connections; riding part of the distance in the caboose of a freight train; and finally driving through eight miles of mud in a horse drawn vehicle; these were no barriers to Lincoln paying his last respects to one who has been called "the finest stepmother in all the world."



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—By Frederick Mizen