

LINCOLN LORE

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DOORKEEPER "PENDELTON"

When President Lincoln addressed doorkeeper, plain Tom Pendel as "Pendelton", he must have chuckled as he gave an English emphasis to the name of the former Washington policeman. Pendel did not have the difficulty in making the grade as a doorkeeper that befell one unsuccessful aspirant which recalls one of Lincoln's best stories.

There came to the Executive Mansion one day, an applicant for doorkeeper to the House. He happened to be one of those impossible individuals who would not fit into a place where any responsibility whatever would be involved, and Lincoln immediately began to plan his dismissal in as kindly a manner as possible. The conversation which followed was something like this:

"So you want to be doorkeeper to the House, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. President."

"Well have you ever been a doorkeeper? Have you ever had any experience in doorkeeping?"

"Well, no—no actual experience, sir."

"Any theoretical experience? Any instructions in the duties and ethics of doorkeeping?"

"Um—no."

"Have you ever attended lectures on doorkeeping?"

"No, sir."

"Have you read any textbooks on the subject?"

"No."

"Have you conversed with anyone who has read such a book?"

"No."

"Well then, my friend, don't you see that you haven't a single qualification for this important post?" said Lincoln, in a reproachful tone.

"Yes, I do," said the applicant, and he took leave humbly, almost gratefully.

Possibly "Pendelton" with his improvised name came about as near serving Lincoln as a valet as any of the many servants about the White House. This calls to mind another interesting story told on Lincoln and an English visitor. The Englishman, observing Lincoln with some shoe polish and a brush in his hand, remarked, "Why Mr. Lincoln, you do not shine your own shoes, do you?" Whereupon the President replied, "Whose shoes do you think I shine?"

Thomas F. Pendel was born in the District of Columbia in 1824, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1846 and at thirty-eight years of age became a Washington policeman. Two years later on November 3, 1864 along with Sergeant John Cronin, Alfonso Dunn and Andrew Smith he was sent to the White House and ordered to report to Marshall Ward H. Lamon.

Because of the many threatening letters which were received by the President, it was thought wise to provide him with a permanent body-guard and to this duty Pendel and his associates were assigned. It became the task of Pendel to accompany Lincoln when he walked over to the War department office or the houses of the cabinet members, but his duty as a body-guard was soon changed, due to the incompetency of the doorkeeper, Edward McManus, who was then serving.

On Thursday evening December 29, 1864, Mrs. Lincoln handed to McManus some notices for the Washington papers which gave some important information about the New Year's reception, with the instructions that they were to be delivered to the newspaper offices immediately. A half or three-quarters of an hour later Mrs. Lincoln had occasion to inquire about the announcements only to hear that he had failed to deliver them. Mrs. Lincoln was greatly displeased and informed McManus that he would

have no occasion to deliver any other White House messages. McManus treated the statement lightly but the following morning he was relieved from his duties.

Mrs. Lincoln sent for Pendel and asked him if he would resign from the guard and take McManus' place as doorkeeper, so on the last day of the week, month, and year in 1864 President Lincoln endorsed the appointment of Pendel as doorkeeper at the White House. Although he was to serve during the remaining days of the Lincoln administration, but three months and a half, he saw much of interest during these exciting weeks.

Pendel looked very much like Lincoln and this fact must have given the Chief Executive much amusement, especially when the doorkeeper was mistaken for the President. Governor Andrews of Massachusetts wrote a letter to Mrs. Lincoln asking her to urge William Morris Hunt, the famous Boston artist, to make a portrait of the President. Mrs. Lincoln later sent Pendel on to Boston where he posed for the artist in Lincoln's clothes, as the portrait was to be one of full length.

For many years Pendel was in possession of the letter Governor Andrews had written to Mrs. Lincoln about the portrait painter Hunt. It was this posing for the President that called to Pendel's mind the remark of Lincoln to an artist, who had made a portrait of the Chief Executive and brought it for his comment. After viewing it for some time and with considerable humor in his eye, he said to the artist, "Why yes, that is a very good picture of me and do you know why? I'll tell you why it is the best picture of me, because it is the ugliest."

But it was the pathos rather than the humor that Pendel longest remembers about his service as doorkeeper at the White House during the Lincoln administration and especially the frightful night of April 14, 1865.

Shortly after ten o'clock that evening a sergeant on duty at the White House grounds rang the bell and stated that Seward had been attacked. Fifteen minutes later he returned and assured Pendel that what he had stated before was a fact. Shortly after this Pendel observed several persons hastening toward the White House. When they arrived at the door he observed Senator Sumner was the central figure, who inquired about the President and was advised Mr. Lincoln was at the theatre.

About twenty minutes before eleven Isaac Newton, Commissioner of Agriculture, rang the door bell and upon entering advised the doorkeeper that the President had been shot. Pendel went up and told Robert Lincoln that something had happened to his father. Robert and John Hay immediately departed for the house on Tenth street where the President's body had been taken.

One half hour later the most trying circumstance of the evening occurred when "Tad" who had gone with an attendant to the Glover's Theatre came bursting into the house crying out, "Tom Pen! Tom Pen! they have killed my papa dead". It was Tom Pen, so called by Tad, who long after midnight quieted the heart broken child.

It was probable, through Mrs. Lincoln's solicitation that Thomas F. Pendel was able to continue on as a servant and eventually round out thirty-six years as a doorkeeper in the White House. The following note may have been one of her last requests as an occupant of the executive mansion.

"His excellency Andrew Johnson, President:

"You will confer a personal favor upon me by retaining as principal doorkeeper Thomas F. Pendel. He has been a sober, honest, faithful and obliging servant.

"Yours respectfully,

"Mary Lincoln."