

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN IN BOSTON

Although Abraham Lincoln made two trips through Massachusetts, one in 1848 and the other in 1860, he paid but one visit to Boston. He arrived in the city on Friday, September 15, and departed on Saturday, September 23. During this interval he made the Tremont House his headquarters.

It would appear as if William Schouler may have been indirectly responsible for Abraham Lincoln's visit to Massachusetts. Lincoln had corresponded with Schouler on August 8, 1848 advising him that he was remaining for two weeks in Washington to sign documents. It is likely Lincoln had previously been in contact with Schouler at the Philadelphia convention and that they had something in common in the nomination of Zachary Taylor, whom Lincoln had vigorously supported and whom Schouler had predicted would receive the nomination.

Lincoln's "two weeks" in Washington were extended somewhat because on August 28 he was still there and wrote another letter to Schouler indicating he had been busily engaged in behalf of General Taylor's campaign. It would seem that Lincoln's visit to Massachusetts was in a measure arranged by the National Committee, because he happened to be traveling back to Illinois and could conveniently pass through Worcester where the state Whigs were to convene on September 13. Mr. Schouler was present at the convention and made the first motion in the business session, nominating Mr. Wightman of Boston as Secretary. Worcester was the headquarters for the Free Soil party which was proselyting a great many Whigs.

Abraham Lincoln did not speak at the convention proper and his name does not appear in the proceedings. He did speak for one hour and a half at a mass meeting the night before and a few fragments of what he said on this occasion are all that has been preserved of the dozen or more speeches which he made in Massachusetts on this itinerary. While Lincoln probably used about 10,000 words in his Worcester address, less than 2,000 words have been recorded and these were gathered by a reporter for the Boston Advertiser who commented upon Lincoln's speech in that paper the following day.

It is not known that Abraham Lincoln wrote out any of his Massachusetts speeches, but it is said that the Worcester speech was the best one of them all, and the others were largely a repetition of the Worcester speech. This would suggest that the Boston speech, which was the climax of his itinerary, was patterned very largely after his address at Worcester.

The preliminary speech of Abraham Lincoln at the state capitol on September 15, made before the Boston Whig Club and the speech at Worcester were probably responsible for invitations to address groups at New Bedford, Lowell, Dorchester, Chelsea, Dedham, Cambridge, and Taunton, where he is known to have spoken in favor of the candidacy of Taylor. One or two of these engagements are known to have been made by Mr. Schouler, editor of the Boston Atlas, in whose office Lincoln is known to have visited.

Lincoln spoke under very peculiar circumstances as he had been appearing in a state where practically the whole Whig party had been unanimously behind Daniel Webster as a "favorite son" candidate—in the National Convention at Philadelphia. In fact the Massachusetts

delegates were very unwilling to give up Webster even to the last. When his name was placed before the Philadelphia Convention, on the first ballot they gave him their entire twelve votes, the same on the second ballot, but the third ballot nine of the twelve votes were given to Webster, two to Scott and only one to Taylor. On the concluding ballot Webster still received nine Massachusetts votes of the total 12 while two votes went to Scott and one to Taylor. In other words, Abraham Lincoln was appearing in a state which had been almost unanimously for Webster while only one delegate had favored the candidacy of Zachary Taylor. To make it even more difficult for Lincoln, Daniel Webster was still very much disgruntled over his defeat and had made some very unkind statements about the nomination of Taylor.

There is no question but what Abraham Lincoln's speech in Worcester did very much to unify the convention in the decision to support Taylor in the subsequent campaign, and for that purpose especially, Lincoln directed his remarks. After Taylor's election Lincoln had occasion to write to Schouler at Boston, on February 2, suggesting in the letter that their acquaintance although short, had been very cordial and submitted an article for printing in Schouler's paper.

Possibly the most interesting episode which occurred during the visit of Abraham Lincoln to Boston was his appearance on the same program with William A. Seward, on the evening of September 22, at Tremont Temple. Seward spoke first and his speech was printed in full in the Boston papers the following morning. Lincoln, however, who spoke later in the evening, while receiving very favorable reaction to his address, had no manuscript to hand to the reporters so his speech did not appear in the papers.

The point in emphasizing Abraham Lincoln's visit to Boston at this time, however, had been to call attention to Schouler's friendship for Lincoln. The controversy aroused over the authenticity of the letter written to the Widow Bixby by Abraham Lincoln on November 21, 1864, should bring into the picture this same William Schouler, then Adjutant General of Massachusetts, who was the leading exponent in the final recognition of the Widow Bixby by the President. Preliminary attempts to gain attention to her sacrifice had been made by Schouler and on November 21, 1864, he made an appeal in the Boston papers on behalf of the families of the soldiers. On that very day Abraham Lincoln wrote the famous letter now in controversy.

Is it reasonable to expect that Mr. Lincoln would turn over to a secretary, a request from his old friend Schouler for a personal letter of thanks, to be written to a widow whom Schouler thought deserving of the President's personal recognition? It was General Schouler who delivered the letter to the Widow Bixby. It was General Schouler who gave the text of the letter to the Boston newspapers as having been written by Abraham Lincoln. It was also General Schouler who gave a copy of the letter to the Army and Navy Journal of New York published on December 3, 1864. In every instance the letter appeared in print as one which had been written by the President of the United States as a personal expression of his own sympathy for Mrs. Bixby.