

LINCOLN LORE

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MEMORIAL TREES

Arbor Day has called to mind many trees which have come to be considered Lincoln memorials. Not all of them were set out by Mr. Lincoln, some were giant trees before he was born, others by some peculiar growth in root, branch or leaf have called attention to the familiar profile of the President, while still others note some day, or mark some spot significant in Lincoln history. Inasmuch as Lincoln was known as "The Railsplitter" it seems as if trees do make appropriate Lincoln memorials.

The Birthplace Oak

The old Lincoln Oak on the Rock Spring Farm, Lincoln's birthplace in Kentucky, is the only tree now left which looked down upon the nativity of the Civil War President. It is our most treasured living memorial of him. The tree is in a perfect state of preservation. The trunk has a circumference of sixteen feet at a point six feet above the ground. The branches form a perfect canopy with a spread of more than one hundred feet.

As early as 1805 the tree had been marked as the beginning corner of the three hundred acre tract which David Vance bought from Richard Mather. This was the piece of land which came into the possession of Thomas Lincoln, father of the President, on December 12, 1808. This tree was made the beginning corner of four other farm surveys, and it bore the two initials "D. V." in 1827 the tree was set apart from its contemporaries as described in a survey of that year: "To begin at a noted white oak D. V. Vance's Corner."

The Lunderner Poplar

Lincoln, while President, told a visitor to Washington that he could remember but two landmarks in Kentucky, the state of his birth, when he left there at seven years of age. One was an old stone house, and the other "a great tree somewhere on Nolin River." Dennis Hanks, who lived in the community, wrote to one of his relatives in Kentucky on March 25, 1866, and among his many inquiries was this one: "Is the old Lunderner poplar a-standing yet?" This is undoubtedly the tree which Lincoln remembered. It stood near the old mill site at Buffalo, on one of the branches of Nolin River.

Spencer County Elm

Not far from the Lincoln cabin site, in Spencer County, Indiana, there is a magnificent elm. If the trees were "God's first temples," they were also God's first school-houses. Under the shade of this old tree Lincoln and his sister undoubtedly read Aesop's Fables or worked out some problems in arithmetic. This tree is one of the most historic of the living Lincoln memorials, and is being carefully protected from insects and the elements.

The Indiana Cedars

When Abraham Lincoln was a young man in Indiana he is said to have planted three cedar trees at his home. During the centennial year of Lincoln's birth in 1909 one of these trees blew down and Albert P. Fenn of Tell City, secured the tree from A. P. Rhodes. Mr. Fenn, who was a furniture manufacturer, had the trees made into canes and the following men were said to have received souvenirs made from the tree: William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Watterson, Robert Lincoln, Governor Marshall and Senators Beveridge and Shively.

Springfield Elm

While it is often stated that Lincoln planted the elm tree at his home on the day he left for Washington to be inaugurated, this statement cannot be true because it is shown in a picture he had taken with his sons in front of the house, in the summer of 1860. On Friday night, August 17, 1906, a severe storm struck Springfield and the famous elm was blown over. There is a cross section of

the tree in the museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, authenticated by A. S. Edwards, then the caretaker of the Lincoln home.

Beech Broadside

One of the most interesting memorials noting the election of Abraham Lincoln was discovered some years ago by Vincent Robbins, Jr., near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Out in the woods one day he observed some strange markings on a beech tree. It was not difficult to make out the original inscription, although it had been made there over seventy-five years previous to its discovery. The tree had increased in growth four times its size in 1860, but the expanding letters and figures could be easily read. This is the unique announcement:

"1860 Nov. 9—Lincoln is elected—Great God."

White House Maple

In October 1896, a severe storm swept over Washington causing great devastation among the shade trees. One tree which was blown down was known as the "Lincoln Tree," planted by the President shortly after he entered the White House. It was at the end of a row of trees nearly all of which were planted by Presidents. The tree was a maple and grew much more rapidly than the other trees and its great size was largely responsible for its destruction, as there was none higher to protect it. A part of the tree was made into souvenir canes and the stump was allowed to remain, in hopes that it would branch out again.

Assassination Trees

Governor Stone of Iowa declared April 27, 1865, a day of mourning for Abraham Lincoln. John Finn, a citizen of Decorah, Iowa, went to the woods on that day and dug up a hackberry shoot and set it out in memory of the martyred President. In 1920 the tree had attained a height of 110 feet and was nearly 12 feet in circumference. On the very day of Lincoln's death, April 15, 1865, there was set out in Augusta, Maine, under the direction of Mrs. Ruben Partridge, a tree memorial to the martyred President.

A Portrait Tree

For many years one of the most publicized natural memorials of Abraham Lincoln has been an oak tree near Albany, Georgia. It stands on the east side of the Dixie Highway, two miles south of Albany, near Radium Springs. This tree is seventy feet high and nearly seventy years old. When in full leaf its foliage makes a very definite profile of Lincoln. It has never been trimmed to accentuate the likeness.

Roots in Profile

At Lawrence, Kansas, almost within a stone's throw of the University of Kansas, there stands a tree whose roots contribute to the memorialization of Lincoln. The roots extending some distance above the ground are so formed that when an arc street lamp is lighted in the evening the roots cast a shadow upon the lawn which makes a vivid portrait of the Emancipator, with all of his peculiar features correctly visualized.

Giant Sequoia

About the same time that John Bidwell discovered the "Big Trees" of California on November 20, 1841, Abraham Lincoln was beginning to impress those with whom he was associated at Springfield, with the magnitude of his own place in the political arena of Illinois. He would have thought it strange, however, if he had been advised that one of the giant Sequoias was to be named for him. On the Alta Meadow Trail in Giant Forest there stands the "Abe Lincoln" tree which is 270 feet high and is 31 feet in diameter. Abraham Lincoln towered above other men of his day as the giant Sequoia caps the other trees of the forest.