

LINCOLN LORE

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A PILGRIMAGE IN RICHMOND

Last week, Wednesday, the editor of *Lincoln Lore* made a pilgrimage in the city of Richmond, Virginia, which for many years he has aspired to accomplish. The trek was made on foot over the same streets, as far as can now be ascertained, that Lincoln traveled on that memorable fourth day of April, 1865. With the nation again at war, the significance of Lincoln's behavior on his entry into the fallen capital of the Confederacy is brought home with greater emphasis and deeper appreciation.

Having refreshed my memory on one of the most eventful episodes in Lincoln's whole life, I was able to recall the various stages of the pilgrimage, from the starting point to its destination. This was one pilgrimage I wanted to make alone, unless I might have had one of my boys, in his earlier years, as a companion. Standing on the north bank of the James river at a point close to where the President is supposed to have embarked, it was not difficult to visualize a barge containing twenty people, including the President and "Tad," coming up the river headed for the landing.

Boat Landing at Rocketts

Rocketts was a small community southeast of the Richmond city limits and bordering on the James river. A landing wharf here seemed to offer to Admiral Porter of the flagship "Malvern," an opportunity to put his distinguished guest and the members of his crew ashore, and the barge from the flagship drew up along the side of the wharf for that purpose. There was but one white man there to receive them, Charles C. Coffin, a news correspondent for the Boston Journal. There were, however, twelve negroes, with an old colored man as their boss, working close to the landing, and Mr. Coffin advised them that President Lincoln was about to come ashore. It is needless to say that from that time on there was wild enthusiasm among the people of color who soon learned of the arrival of their great benefactor.

The Canal

Parallel to the river ran a canal, and apparently it was crossed soon after the company landed. The crossing which was most convenient was one just west of Libby Prison, and one of the members of the party recalls passing over this narrow body of water, and observing the prison to the right.

Libby Prison

The old Libby Prison was undoubtedly the first landmark which Lincoln recognized, from the many pictures of it which he had observed. Gen. Porter stated, "The President stopped a mo-

ment to look on the horrible bastille where so many Union soldiers had dragged out a dreadful existence." He visited Libby Prison later that afternoon when it is said "he gave way to uncontrollable emotions."

Nineteenth Street

The procession, if it could be so characterized with but twenty bona fide members in the group, probably formed informally on Nineteenth Street near the prison. Captain Adams was in the lead and six sailors, two abreast and armed with carbines. Then came the president with "Tad" on his left, Admiral Porter on his right, and Coffin on Tad's left, with two officers behind them, followed by six more armed soldiers. That was all. According to one member of the party, the group moved straight up to Main where they turned toward the city.

Main Street

In correspondence with Thomas Nast, a year later, Coffin stated, "I do not remember what streets we passed through, except that we walked for a short distance on Main Street." Probably it was about two blocks, as it is evident that they had turned up Seventeenth Street, if they were to reach Broad Street at the proper junction.

Corner of Main and Seventeenth Sts.

F. Montgomery, a "genuine Johnny Reb, Jr." as he styled himself, has left this reminiscence: "One of a crowd of scantily clad, hungry, but alert and wildly excited boys, I stood at the corner of Main and Fifteenth (probably Seventeenth) Streets in Richmond and amid a struggling and swaying mass of people saw the hollow square of soldiers carrying carbines. In the center of the square I saw the tall form of a man clad in a black frock-coat wearing on his head what seemed to me the queerest looking and the biggest silk hat I had ever seen. He towered far above the people crowding about him. This picture of the tall man, clad in black and wearing his peculiar hat, and on his face the sad, yet kindly expression, as he watched the frenzied people in their efforts to get near him,—some with joy, some—possibly—with hate in their hearts—is still fresh in my memory. I remember it as a soothing peaceful influence—a good spirit moving over an angry scene of strife."

Seventeenth St.

The great crowd which had congested Main Street probably was responsible for their guide, an old negro, directing them through Seventeenth Street to Broad Street, which would be in the direction they were planning to go, and three city blocks would bring them to a much wider avenue.

Broad Street Station

The disorganized procession of humanity turned into Broad Street within a half block of the railroad depot. Having traversed about one-half of the distance of their line of march, here at the depot the President's party stopped a moment to rest before climbing the Broad Street hill.

An incident occurring at this brief rest period is recorded by Coffin. It is typical of many such incidents which occurred all along the line of march.

"May de good Lord bless you, President Linkum!" said an old negro, removing his hat and bowing, with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks. The President removed his own hat, and bowed in silence; it was a bow which upset the forms, laws, customs, and ceremonies of centuries of slavery. It was a death-shock to chivalry, and a mortal wound to caste. Recognize a nigger! Disgusting. A woman in an adjoining house beheld it, and turned from the scene with unspeakable contempt."

Broad Street

Proceeding up the Broad Street hill the first United States Cavalry man was discovered. According to Admiral Porter, "The sight of the President was as strange to him as to the inhabitants. He was dispatched to General Weitzell to send an escort and by the time the capitol was reached, for the first time since the landing nearly an hour before, adequate military protection was provided."

Twelfth Street

Turning from Broad into Twelfth Street, the procession headed for the headquarters of General Weitzell, officer in command of Richmond, which was but three blocks away, at the corner of Leigh Street. He had occupied the home of Jefferson Davis, although Lincoln's destination was Weitzell's headquarters rather than any contemplated visit to Jefferson Davis' home.

General Weitzell's Headquarters

John S. Barnes has left us this reminiscence of Lincoln upon his arrival at General Weitzell's headquarters: "What he (President Lincoln) said remained fixed in my memory—the first expression of a natural want—'I wonder if I could get a drink of water.' He did not appeal to any particular person for it. I can see the tired look of those kind blue eyes over which the lids half drooped—his voice was gentle and soft. There was nothing of triumph in his gesture or attitude."

One other eye-witness who observed Mr. Lincoln's behavior in this strange triumphal march, stated, "The President manifested no signs of exultation. His countenance was one of indescribable sadness."