

LINCOLN LORE

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THE BIRTHPLACE MEMORIAL

The erection of the magnificent Lincoln Memorial at Washington, and its continually growing popularity with the people, has, in a measure, obscured the more humble Lincoln Memorial building at Hodgenville, Kentucky where Abraham Lincoln was born. For many years the shrine which houses the Lincoln birthplace cabin, enjoyed a season of unprecedented publicity, beginning with the laying of the cornerstone on the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, celebrated on February 12, 1909.

Through the medium of *Collier's Magazine* an organization was perfected under the name of the Lincoln Farm Association which acquired possession of the birthplace farm and cabin, and was responsible for gathering funds to erect the shrine which encloses the humble cabin home of the Lincolns.

It is a noteworthy fact that three presidents participated in the ceremonies associated with the memorial project. Theodore Roosevelt was present at the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial, on February 12, 1909; William Howard Taft was the distinguished guest at the dedication of the building, on November 9, 1911; and Woodrow Wilson received on behalf of the United States government the memorial structure, contents and surrounding acres on September 4, 1916.

Much has been written about the lifetime journey of Abraham Lincoln from the log cabin to the White House, but little emphasis has been placed on the fact that presidents of three successive administrations journeyed from the White House to this Kentucky log cabin to participate in ceremonies connected with the memorial project.

The Cornerstone

The centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth was one of the most widely observed anniversaries of any American historical character. Nearly every newspaper printed a special centennial edition. The outstanding celebration by far was the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial building at Hodgenville with an address by President Theodore Roosevelt, who concluded his address with the often quoted characterization of Lincoln, "The mightiest of the mighty men who mastered the mighty days."

While the speaking was going on the cornerstone was suspended in the grasp of a derrick. Upon a signal from the President, the huge stone was lowered to its correct position and the first trowel of mortar was applied by him.

The program of the occasion was as follows:

Invocation—E. L. Powell, Minister First Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

Address on behalf of the United States of America—President Theodore Roosevelt.

Address on behalf of the State of Kentucky—Governor Augustus Wilson.

Address on behalf of Lincoln Farm Association—Governor Joseph Folk, President of Association.

Address on behalf of Federal Army—General James Grant Wilson.

Address on behalf of Confederate Army—General Luke E. Wright.

The Dedication

While Theodore Roosevelt visited the cabin site on a most significant anniversary, his successor, William Howard Taft, made the pilgrimage on a day of no significance whatever, with respect to the history of the Lincoln family. It was just another day apparently set apart as a convenient time for the president to make the ap-

pointment. The address of President Taft on this occasion was a much more scholarly effort than the oratorical declamation by Roosevelt, and his characterization of Lincoln included this statement:

"The lucidity and clearness of his thought manifested itself in the simplicity, directness and clearness of his style. He had imagination and loved poetry. He had the rhythm of language, and though purely self-educated, these circumstances developed a power of literary expression that the world, and especially the literary world, has come fully to recognize and enjoy."

The principle speakers on this dedication occasion were:

William Howard Taft—President of the United States.
Joseph W. Folk—Ex-Governor of Missouri.
Augustus E. Wilson—Governor of Kentucky.
William A. Borah—Senator from Idaho.
Gen. John C. Black—Washington, D. C.
Henry Watterson—Louisville, Kentucky.

The invocation was offered by Rabbi Enlow and the benediction by Bishop Bryne.

The Acceptance

The day that President Woodrow Wilson accepted the Lincoln Memorial on behalf of the government was a significant one, it was Labor Day, 1916. His address was brief but as might be expected, couched in the language of a brilliant educator and one time university president. One can clip out almost any paragraph in his speech and have a significant tribute. Here is one at random which refers to the log cabin boy:

"This little hut was the cradle of one of the great sons of men, a man of singular, delightful, vital genius who presently emerged upon the great stage of the Nation's history, gaunt, shy, ungainly, but dominant and majestic. A natural ruler of men."

The program of the day follows:

Invocation—Dr. Canfield of Centre College.

Address—Gen. John B. Castleman.

Address—Gov. Joseph W. Folk.

Address—Senator John Sharp Williams.

Presentation of the Lincoln Birth-place Farm—Robert J. Collier.

Acceptance on behalf of the United States of America—Newton D. Baker.

Flag Raising Ceremonies.

Address—President Woodrow Wilson.

Benediction—Rev. Shahan.

A Fourth Presidential Pilgrim

The story of the presidential treks from the White House to the Kentucky log cabin might be called the Roosevelt to Roosevelt pilgrimages. It is not known that President Franklin D. Roosevelt purposely chose June 14 (1936), Flag Day, to visit the birthplace of Lincoln, and inasmuch as he made no address on the occasion it would appear to have been merely a courtesy call to pay a silent tribute to the Emancipator. However, after the visit he was prompted to make a few remarks for publication, among them these words:

"Here we can renew our pledge of fidelity to the faith which Lincoln held in the common man—faith so simply expressed when he said:

"'As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.'"