

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN AND EDISON

A general observance of the centennial of Thomas A. Edison's natal day which occurs on tomorrow, February 11, will contribute to a further association of his name with Abraham Lincoln's, whose birthday anniversary will be commemorated on February 12. Edison like Lincoln was a character whose fame will grow throughout the years and the fact that they were both living at the same time invites a few observations setting forth some statements about them that indicate somewhat similar early experiences.

Edison was born in 1847, thirty-eight years after the nativity of Lincoln. At this time Lincoln was married to Mary Todd and the father of two children, Robert and Edward. It was during the year of Edison's birth that Lincoln was introduced into national politics by taking his seat in the 37th Congress and on December 6th that same year introduced his famous "Spot Resolutions."

Lincoln and Edison, both sons of carpenters, were born in adjacent states, Kentucky and Ohio respectively, and each boy remained in the state of his birth seven years. Lincoln's family moved northwest to Indiana and Edison's parents northwest to Michigan. Both family groups lived in pioneer surroundings of great natural beauty. Both boys were greatly influenced by their mothers who read aloud to their children and which contributed much to their primary education. Edison had but three months formal schooling under one teacher but Lincoln attended five three months periods of school. To offset this deficiency of Edison's his mother being a school teacher took her son under her own educational guidance. Both boys were inveterate readers and their chief objective was information rather than entertainment.

Lincoln said he had an axe put into his hand when he was but eight years of age and was constantly using that most useful instrument until he was twenty-one. Edison was a newsboy on a railroad train by the time he was twelve and continued in this capacity for four years. But both boys were interested in something more than rail splitting and paper peddling, respectively. At sixteen Lincoln had been employed as a ferryman on the Anderson River where it flows into the Ohio and two years later helped to build a flatboat and piloted it to New Orleans where he observed its slave markets. Edison at sixteen secured his first position as a telegraph operator. Both boys previous to this period had become interested in vari-

ous youthful enterprises which were to lay the foundation for their subsequent development in their chosen fields, one in politics and the other in science.

Edison had just begun to develop his newsboy activities when Lincoln came into prominence in 1860 as the Republican nominee and later as President Elect. When Edison called out the news to sell his wares on the Michigan train he did not know that sometime before the Presidential nominee had given an interesting ad-

increased and especially after the battle of Shilo the youthful newsboy profited greatly by advertising in a unique way to build up the demand for his papers. The war made a further opening for telegraph operators and this emergency demand was undoubtedly responsible for Edison's advancement in this field. Starting in at Stratford Junction in Ontario he later worked at Adrian, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and was at Cincinnati when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

It was not until 1940 that Edison's residence in Indianapolis was properly recognized when a plaque was placed in the depot bearing this inscription:

"Thomas Alva Edison 1847-1931. This tablet commemorates the residence in Indianapolis of America's great inventor during 1864."

It was just across the street from the station where Thomas Edison, a boy of seventeen was then at work for the Western Union Telegraph Company. His salary at the time was \$75.00 per month which was considerably more than Lincoln earned at seventeen years of age when he lived in Indiana.

There is also a bronze tablet commemorating Lincoln at Indianapolis marking the place where he stood at the time he delivered his famous address there while on his way to be inaugurated President. Inasmuch as the address was delivered on Edison's fourteenth birthday and the tablet bears the February 11th date, the full inscription on this tablet is given in this bulletin.

In the month of February, 1865, Edison went to Cincinnati where the Western Union was the most important telegraphic distribution station in the middle west. Apparently through his office the news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was relayed on the following April 15th.

Thomas A. Edison was twenty-two years old when he finally reached New York "poor and in debt" as one of his biographers states. It was almost a parallel picture of Lincoln arriving in Springfield, Illinois, as a young man without money enough to buy a good bed and also in debt.

It appears that neither Lincoln nor Edison took much interest in popular literature, with the exception of Shakespeare's works and both seem to have been especially interested in the tragedies. It is also of interest that as young men both became readers of Thomas Paine's works and more or less adopted some of his views.

HERE FEB. 11, 1861,
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
ON HIS WAY TO WASHINGTON TO ASSUME THE
PRESIDENCY IN AN ADDRESS SAID: "I APPEAL
TO YOU TO CONSTANTLY BEAR IN MIND THAT
NOT WITH POLITICIANS
NOT WITH PRESIDENTS
NOT WITH OFFICE SEEKERS BUT WITH YOU IS
THE QUESTION: SHALL
THE UNION AND SHALL
THE LIBERTIES OF THIS
COUNTRY BE PRESERVED
TO THE LATEST
GENERATIONS?"

dress on "Discoveries and Inventions." When Edison was but two years old Lincoln had already secured a patent on an invention for lifting vessels over shoals.

When the war broke and Lincoln became the central figure in the contest. Edison's sale of papers greatly