

LINCOLN LORE

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WILLIAM H. SEWARD — SECRETARY OF STATE

William H. Seward wrote a letter on Sunday, September 24, 1848 from Springfield, Massachusetts, to his family in which he comments on a speech which he made at Boston on the preceding Friday night. He states, "I met at the Tremont Temple three thousand Whigs; a most intelligent and respectable body of men." He does not state that one of the men was Abraham Lincoln, who occupied a place on the platform with him.

There are some reminiscences of this new acquaintance which have been preserved. Lincoln is supposed to have said in conversation with Seward after the meeting at the hotel where they were stopping, "Governor Seward, I have been thinking about what you said in your speech. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing." Again when they first came together in 1860 Lincoln is said to have remarked that the 1848 meeting "had probably made a stronger impression on his memory than it had on Governor Seward's."

Less than five weeks had elapsed after Lincoln's election to the presidency when he wrote a letter to William H. Seward dated December 8, 1860, in which he stated: "With your permission I shall at the proper time nominate you to the Senate for confirmation as Secretary of State for the United States. Please let me hear from you at your own earliest convenience."

Mr. Lincoln also sent along with the notice of appointment an important personal message which bore the same date. It follows in part:

"In addition to the accompanying and more formal note inviting you to take charge of the State Department, I deem it proper to address you this. Rumors have got into the newspapers to the effect that the department named above would be tendered you as a compliment, and with the expectation that you would decline it. I beg you to be assured that I have said nothing to justify these rumors. On the contrary, it has been my purpose, from the day of the nomination at Chicago, to assign you, by your leave, this place in the administration. I have delayed so long to communicate that purpose in deference to what appeared to me a proper caution in the case. Nothing has been developed to change my view in the premises; and I now offer you the place in the hope that you will accept it, and with the belief that your position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning, and great experience, all

combine to render it an appointment preeminently fit to be made."

Again on January 12, 1861, Lincoln included in his correspondence with Seward an important personal note: "Your selection for the State Department having become public, I am happy to find scarcely any objection to it." However, it was not long before the opposition press took a hand in attempting to stir up trouble between Lincoln and Seward. As one paper put it, "This schism is to result in Mr. Seward's going out, before he can be fairly said to have come in."

Seward, who had been actually at work at Washington as Lincoln's prospective prime minister for two months before the inauguration, felt that he

for the inaugural. It was primarily Seward's suggestion that the danger of an attack on Mr. Lincoln at Baltimore was so serious that Mr. Lincoln should change his schedule, averting the Baltimore program. This advice, supplemented by an entirely independent warning, was responsible for his unannounced arrival in the nation's capital.

Possibly the strangest incident in the relationship between Lincoln and Seward, with the possible exception of the famous Seward memorandum of April 1, 1861, and President Lincoln's reply on the same day, was a last-moment note sent by Seward to Lincoln on March 2, 1861, two days before the inaugural, in which Seward asks to withdraw his acceptance of the State Department portfolio.

The brief note follows: "Circumstances which have occurred since I expressed to you, on December 28 last, my willingness to accept the office of Secretary of State, seem to me to render it my duty to ask leave to withdraw that consent." Lincoln did not reply to this letter until the morning of the inaugural, March 4, and then in these words:

"Your note of the 2d instant, asking to withdraw your acceptance of my invitation to take charge of the State Department, was duly received. It is the subject of the most painful solicitude with me, and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply enlisted in the same direction. Please consider and answer by 9 A. M. tomorrow." Seward withdrew his resignation note early enough on the morning of March 5, to have the Senate confirm his nomination as Secretary of State as early as twelve o'clock noon the same day.

An address delivered to a group of New York citizens on the day Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, presents a fine testimonial of his loyalty to the President which did not waver throughout Lincoln's incumbency. Seward commented:

"I believe I know the character and purposes of the Chief Magistrate. I believe that while he will be firm, he will be also just to every state, every section and every citizen; that he will defend and protect the rights and interests, the peace and prosperity of all the States equally and alike, while he will practice moderation that springs from virtue and affection that arises from patriotism."

Note—This is the last sketch in the series of Lincoln's cabinet members, which has extended over the past twelve months.

WILLIAM H. SEWARD

Born, Orange County, N. J., May 16, 1801

Attended Farmers' Hall Academy, Goshen, N. Y.

Graduated from Union College, 1820
Admitted to the bar of Utica, N. Y., 1822

Entered law partnership at Auburn, N. Y., 1823

Campaigned for John Quincy Adams in President's race, 1824

Elected to state senate on Anti-Masonic ticket, 1830

Traveled in Europe, 1833

Defeated for Governor of New York on Whig ticket, 1834

Elected as first Whig Governor of New York, 1838

Reelected Governor, 1840

Became U. S. Senator, 1849

Reelected U. S. Senator, 1855

Traveled abroad, 1859

Candidate for Republican nomination for President, 1860

Appointed Secretary of State by Lincoln, 1860

Nomination as Secretary of State confirmed by the Senate, March 5, 1861

was largely responsible for the survival of the Union until Lincoln's arrival. Seward advised his wife, "It seems to me if I am absent only eight days, this administration (Buchanan's), the Congress, and the district would fall into consternation and despair."

The relation between Lincoln as President-elect and Seward seems to have proceeded with no unusual incident until Lincoln approached Washington in late February in preparation