

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1078

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 5, 1949

CUSTODIANS AT LINCOLN'S TOMB

JOHN CARROLL POWER

1874-1894, 20 years

The first full time custodian of the Lincoln Tomb at Springfield, Illinois was John C. Power. He was born in Fleming County, Kentucky on September 19, 1819, but did not come into prominence as an authority in the Lincoln field until he became associated with the Springfield Board of Trade. In 1871 he published for that organization a *History of Springfield*. The last four pages of the history were utilized in telling the story of the National Lincoln Monument Association and related to the progress being made on the erection of the monument then nearing completion. He also gave a prospectus on the last page of the volume of a new book which he then had in the process of preparation entitled *History and Description of the National Monument*.

It was not until October 15, 1874 that the Monument was dedicated and at a meeting of the Association on November 9 a committee reported: "In favor of employing a Custodian, and recommended that Mr. J. C. Power be appointed to that office." His salary was set at \$50 a month and an admission fee of 25 cents was charged to raise this amount. The custodian was also allowed to sell souvenirs, and any income realized from these sales would supplement his salary. For many years not more than \$200 a year was obtained from this source.

By the time the reports of the custodian for the years 1875 to 1883 were ready for publication in a single volume there was a feeling prevalent that "the monument should be free to all visitors." The question of Sunday opening was also up for discussion. Forty-four pages of information was printed to reveal how other memorials handled these questions about entrance fees and Sunday visiting hours.

The fact that the monument was still under the supervision of the National Lincoln Monument Association which had no guaranteed income to assure its upkeep made it necessary to continue the admission charge and sale of souvenirs throughout the incumbency of Mr. Power.

Mr. Power's books on the tomb are well known and his *Abraham Lincoln His Life, Public Services, Death and Great Funeral Cortège* was widely circulated. John Carroll Power died in 1894 at 75 years of age while still serving as custodian of the monument.

EDWARD S. JOHNSON

1895-1920, 25 years

A native of Springfield Illinois, Edward S. Johnson became the second custodian at the Lincoln Tomb. He was born August 9, 1843 and with the exception of the years spent in military service and a short time in Chicago, resided in the city all his life. His father and Abraham Lincoln were close friends, and Edward Johnson and Robert Lincoln were school mates—but eight days separating their respective births.

The day after Sumpter was fired upon Johnson enlisted for military service and became a member of the first company in the state to tender its services to the governor. Through a series of promotions he was finally raised to the rank of major in April 1864 and was mustered out of service on July 9 of that year. He organized the Springfield Zouaves in 1866 which company became known as the Governor's Guard. He was always interested in the work of the G. A. R., being affiliated with Stephenson Post, No. 30.

Although he first served as an apprentice to a printer, upon returning from the war he became interested in the lumber business and later became a hotel proprietor, following this profession in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair. However, it was his long service as custodian at the Lincoln Tomb for which he will best be remembered.

Mr. Johnson assumed his duties at the tomb on July 9, 1895 when the State of Illinois came into possession of the deeds and papers relating to the monument and grounds, having acquired the title from the Lincoln Monument Association. The Governor of Illinois received the trust on behalf of the state "pledging his faithfulness to the duty of guarding and caring for the last resting place of the illustrious dead." The most important change which took place at the tomb was the removal of the fee for entrance.

Lincoln collectors today are familiar with the name of Edward S. Johnson because of the compilation of data he gathered and published on *Abraham Lincoln and his last Resting Place*. It first appeared as a 17 page pamphlet and finally evolved through a progression of editions until it reached 29 pages. Major Johnson remained as custodian of the tomb up until the time of his death on February 15, 1921, having served nearly 26 years in that capacity. He was 77 years old when he passed away.

HERBERT WELLS FAY

1921-1949, 28 years

Bringing to a proper climax this most remarkable exhibition of fidelity, stamina and enterprise in this three man public service succession, extending over 73 years, Herbert Wells Fay, labored longer and lived longer than either of his two predecessors. This issue of Lincoln Lore is most sincerely dedicated to his memory, not only for his long and faithful service, but for his unusual enthusiasm for his task which had not abated even when his strength began to fail. It is doubtful if any man ever reached directly so many people with his story of Abraham Lincoln as did Mr. Fay with his daily recitals for over a quarter of a century. He estimated he had entertained at the shrine more than 4,000,000 visitors.

Mr. Fay was born on February 28, 1859 in DeKalb County, Illinois. Concluding his formal education at Monmouth College he started out as an editor and publisher of a weekly newspaper in his home county, which profession he followed for 42 years. He was what one might call a born collector, turning his attention especially to portraits of American historical figures. He so completely dominated this field that *The Encyclopedia Britannica* used 500 of his photographs. His manuscript collection was started while he was a youth and he highly prized letters written from Abraham Lincoln to his grandfather.

He was often referred to as "the man with a million pictures" and one could scarcely think of any American figure of note but what he could almost immediately bring forth a photograph of the individual in question. His pictures were classified under: Artists, authors, editors, explorers, industrialists, inventors, military personnel, musicians, and possibly of most interest to him in later years—Collectors of Lincolniana.

He took over the position as custodian of the Lincoln Tomb in January 1921 and made a large portion of his enormous collection of pictures and documents accessible to the public. By virtue of his position he came in contact through the years with the great men of the world who visited the tomb of Lincoln and through these acquaintances greatly enriched his collection of Lincolniana.

Except for one or two brief intervals he was actively engaged at the monument up to the time of his retirement last January. He passed away at ninety years of age on Monday, October 24, 1949. We anticipate for Mr. Fay's son, Earl, who succeeded his father, a period of service comparable to his famous predecessors.