

LINCOLN LORE

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A LINCOLN EPISODE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Anticipating a trip to New Hampshire the editor of Lincoln Lore reviewed the incidents which occurred when Abraham Lincoln visited the state in 1860. One episode especially seemed worth giving more emphasis than it has generally received by those who have written on Lincoln's New England itinerary. Associated as Lincoln's visit was with the presence of his son Robert in the academy at Exeter, N. H. the filial duties of the father have been given more attention than the far reaching political significance of the New Hampshire engagements.

Some trivial remarks made by Robert Lincoln, about his failure to pass the preliminary Harvard entrance examinations being responsible for his father's election to the Presidency, has been taken far too seriously. We admit that Robert's presence in New Hampshire may have been responsible, in a measure, for the extension of his father's New England jaunt as far north as New Hampshire. However, it is not likely that an ambitious politician like Mr. Lincoln would have turned down the Cooper Institute bid to speak in New York, with expenses paid, or reject further opportunity to appear before eastern audiences irrespective of where Robert may have been.

There was a friend of Abraham Lincoln living in Exeter named Amos Tuck who may have contributed just as much in bringing Lincoln into New Hampshire in 1860 as the presence of Robert at school there. In fact it is reported that Tuck was responsible for Mr. Lincoln selecting Exeter for his son's preparatory studies. Tuck was elected to the Thirtieth Congress by the Independent Democrats and was refused a seat on the Democratic side of the House. This act relegated him to the back row on the Whig side, four seats away from Abraham Lincoln. Both were young men with but one year difference in their ages, both were interested in the anti-slavery movement, and both were to become champions of the Republican party in their respective states. It was in Tuck's home where Robert stayed until he could find permanent accommodations when he first reached Exeter and upon Mr. Lincoln's visit it was the Tuck family that also entertained him.

Furthermore in 1856 at Philadelphia where the first Republican Convention was held, Abraham Lincoln, without knowing his name was to be used, received 110 votes as a nominee for the Vice Presidency, it appears as if Tuck may have been one of the moving spirits in this nomination. New Hampshire gave Lincoln eight votes, or one-fourth of the votes received by the candidate from all eastern delegates. Amos Tuck was one of the delegates attending the convention from New Hampshire. Now that Lincoln was again being mentioned for the Vice Presidency in 1860 it is not strange that he would recall the 1856 incident and New Hampshire's eight votes.

A few months before the visit to his son in February 1860 the Republican Central Committee in New Hampshire had advised Lincoln that if Douglas came to the

state for some speeches as it was proposed "they must have Lincoln to answer him," With the Republican National Convention but a few weeks away and Lincoln's name already before the people as a candidate for the second place or possibly the first place on the ticket it seems plausible that the reaction of New England to his political fortunes might have some consideration in his decision to visit New Hampshire.

Eleven speeches in all were made in New England and four of them were delivered in New Hampshire. It is a significant fact that he passed through Massachusetts without making a speech there although he was invited to do so. The state had already gone on record as favoring Seward for the Presidency and with the possibility of being Seward's running mate it seems logical that he would hesitate to take an aggressive stand in Massachusetts.

Enroute to Concord, the New Hampshire state capital, for his first speech he was joined at Manchester by Frederick Smythe, who found Lincoln reading in a Boston paper the speech Seward had made the day before in the United States Senate. Lincoln told Smythe "the speech would make Seward President." Although at Cooper Institute Lincoln had been named as one of the three men who would be President there is evidence that up to this time Lincoln was convinced Seward would be the man.

Arriving at Concord he found himself the farthest from home he had ever been in his life. It was not strange that the people of the West for many months had been putting him forth as a Presidential nominee both in the press, public meetings and personal contacts. Provincial motives were lacking in New Hampshire and one of the great surprises of his life was prepared for him when he was introduced to the audience at Manchester the evening of the same day he was at Concord. Frederick Smythe who had accompanied Lincoln to Concord and return had been city clerk, mayor, and was now chairman of the Republican City Club. While he may have told Lincoln he was to preside at the meeting at Manchester he did not advise him about his introductory remarks. After reviewing some of the speakers' political achievements he presented as the next President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.

There were many other private assurances which supplemented the public presentation of Lincoln as the next President by Mr. Smythe. Back in New York he was advised that when he was invited to speak at Cooper Institute it was thought he might make a good running mate for Seward. After hearing Lincoln's speech the group of young men who sponsored his speech advised him they were for Lincoln for the Presidency regardless of what happened to Seward. It was Smythe at Manchester, however, who fired the first big gun in the east and at Chicago New Hampshire backed up Smythe by giving Lincoln seven of its ten votes on the first ballot and nine of the ten went for Lincoln on the second ballot.