

LINCOLN LORE

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

Number 1220

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 25, 1952

IDENTIFYING LINCOLN'S LAW OFFICES

A dingy cluttered room in a dilapidated building is usually visualized when one recalls the headquarters of Abraham Lincoln's legal activities. There is still so much confusion in the mind of the casual student as to the exact locations of the several rooms occupied during his partnership with Stuart, Logan and Herndon that an attempt will be made to orient Lincoln in his actual surroundings.

109 NORTH FIFTH STREET

Business men of Springfield, Illinois anticipating the removal of the state capital to their city began to plan the construction of buildings commensurate with the honorable position which the community was about to assume. One of these projects of considerable importance was the building in 1836 of a row of six two story brick buildings. These structures were erected on the west side of North Fifth Street with the initial structure on the northwest corner of Washington and North Fifth, and the subsequent buildings extending north from that point. Each one occupied a twenty foot frontage and had a depth of forty-four feet.

The largest investor in this enterprise was Herman L. Hoffman, a St. Louis druggist who married a daughter of Springfield's wealthiest citizen, Major Joseph Klein. Because of Hoffman's interest the row of six buildings was called Hoffman's Row and the separate units numbered one to six respectively. This improvement was called the finest business block in the city.

When the state capital was finally moved to Springfield in the winter of 1836-1837 the old court house that stood in the public square was torn down. According to an early historian of Springfield:

"The county authorities then rented a building that had been erected for a storehouse by the Hon. Ninian W. Edwards. This building at the west side of Fifth Street five doors north of Washington, was used as a court house for about ten years. It still belongs to Mr. Edwards (1871) and is now receiving some additions and undergoing some alterations and repairs in order to fit it up for a first class business house."

Although Stuart and Lincoln had been collaborating in law cases for a month or more, on April 15, 1837 there appeared in the *Sangamon Journal* this announcement:

"J. T. STUART AND A. LINCOLN

Attorneys and counsellors at law, will practice conjointly, in the Courts of this Judicial Circuit—Office No. 4 Hoffman's Row, upstairs. April 17, 1837."

It will be observed from the information on the legal card that the business address of Stuart and Lincoln was "No. 4 Hoffman's Row, upstairs," while the county court was situated on the "lower floor" at No. 5 Hoffman's Row. There is a general acceptance of the fact that the Stuart-Lincoln office was directly over the court room. This situation would imply that the law office was in reality in the building at No. 5 with an entrance to it in the No. 4 building. Later on in numbering the city streets No. 5 Hoffman Row became 109 North Fifth Street.

It is interesting to note that Abraham Lincoln's first law office was in a building owned by his future brother-in-law, Ninian Edwards, whose wife was also a kinsman

of Stuart. Located as it was immediately over the county court the room would not only be a most desirable location for a law office but it was also situated in the best building block in the state capital. The building at 109 North Fifth St. was eventually removed and replaced by a structure called the Stuart Building.

108-110 NORTH FIFTH STREET

Abraham Lincoln stated with respect to his legal affiliation with Logan, "He and I were partners from the spring of 1841 to the autumn of 1844." Logan had been practicing law in Springfield since 1833 at which time he joined in partnership with William L. May. Later on Logan and Col. E. D. Baker were partners. The *Sangamon Journal* for May 14, 1841 referred to the Logan and Lincoln office as "opposite Hoffman Row" where the Stuart and Lincoln office had been located. It would appear as if the senior partner was well established as Stephen A. Logan was then considered the outstanding lawyer in the state of Illinois. Just how long Logan and Lincoln occupied this office is not definitely known.

203 SOUTH SIXTH STREET

We are positive that by February 23, 1843 Logan and Lincoln had moved to a new building at the corner of Sixth and Adams Street known as the Old Farmer's Bank Building. At the time Logan and Lincoln were tenants in this building the Post Office was situated in the structure and their business card stated: "Office over the Post Office—Third Floor." The second floor of the building was occupied at this time by the United States Court so it would appear as if Lincoln as heretofore enjoys a very advantageous spot. The building they occupied was completed in 1841 and was said to be at that time the outstanding business house in central Illinois. So once again Lincoln seems to have been situated in the finest building in the state capital city.

103 SOUTH FIFTH STREET

The Logan and Lincoln association was dissolved when Logan decided to take his own son David into partnership with him. David had been reading law in the office and also a young man, William Herndon, had been studying there. Lincoln apparently at this time set up an independent office and upon Herndon's passing the bar examination took him in as a partner. Their business card first appeared in the *Sangamon Journal* for December 30, 1847. It is the Lincoln-Herndon office that is best known to the public and which has most often been used to illustrate the humble surroundings of the future President.

By the time the Lincoln and Herndon partnership was formed Lincoln had built up a tremendous practice on the circuit and arranged temporary headquarters in several cities in the area. The one at Danville with Lamon as an associate has been given some attention. With Lincoln away from the office so much of the time it was not essential that he be housed in so fine a room as he would have desired if he were to spend much of his time in Springfield. Much emphasis is placed on the fact that the Lincoln-Herndon office was a back room on the second floor and it is true that the artist's drawings made of the room do not leave a very flattering impression when compared with the sumptuous law offices of the modern day.