

LINCOLN LORE

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REPORTING ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL ITINERARY

The series of lectures just concluded makes the twenty-fifth annual speaking schedule arranged for the director of the Foundation and the twentieth annual extended itinerary which over a course of three years extends into nearly every state in the Union. Some of the Lincoln contacts made may be of interest to the readers of this bulletin.

One hundred and seventy years ago, Abraham Lincoln Sr., grandfather of the President, settled near what is now Middletown, Kentucky, a suburb of greater Louisville. It was a Rotary Club, in this community where the Lincoln story in Kentucky begins, that furnished the atmosphere for the director's first formal engagement. At the Clifton Christian Church in Louisville a parallel was drawn between the birth and growth of Lincoln and the birth and growth of the church body known as the Christian Church. Lincoln and this largest native American religious body were both born in 1809 and both grew up in the midwest.

Memphis, Tennessee tried the adaptability efforts of the speaker to the utmost after the Christian Church engagement at Louisville. At Southwestern College the Presbyterian influences in the life of Lincoln were emphasized and at the First Methodist Church the contacts of Wesley's circuit riders with the Railsplitter were reviewed.

At no place on the itinerary were the addresses on Lincoln more sympathetically received than at Jackson, Mississippi where engagements were arranged before a junior high school, a senior high school, a college, a woman's club and a men's luncheon group. Through the kindness of Ralph Todd, a former Fort Wayne acquaintance, and the courtesy extended by William C. Everhart of the Vicksburg National Park, I was privileged to visit that battlefield for the first time. The heroic size stone profile of Lincoln on the Illinois monument was not overlooked and the bronze replica of the noted eagle "Old Abe" at the top of the Wisconsin obelisk was viewed with interest.

It was a display of broadmindedness indeed, which prompted three large New Orleans high schools to invite me to speak on the subject of Abraham Lincoln before their student bodies on January 19, the birthday of Robert E. Lee. The athletic teams of one of the schools are known as "The Rebels," and I was introduced there by a member of the student body named Miss Davis.

The atmosphere of Lee's birthday followed me to Houston, Texas as I spoke on January 21 to the student body of the Robert E. Lee High School in adjacent Baytown, where there are two or three ardent Lincoln students on the faculty. It is apparent that the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Houston, one of my hosts, is partly responsible for the tremendous growth of its remarkable city.

At San Antonio before the Conopous Club, tops among San Antonio luncheon groups, I met several admirers of Lincoln. Students at Gen. MacArthur's old school, Texas Military Academy, also gave me an attentive hearing. Fort Worth, the first southern city in which I spoke many years ago revealed a keen interest in Abraham Lincoln, especially Jack Gordon of the Fort Worth Press and an attorney, Herbert L. Tuchin. G. V. Wilson showed me some interesting Lincoln items in his possession.

Dallas, Texas is the city where many years ago I discovered the Bleakley and Montgomery account book used at Elizabethtown, Ky., now in the possession of the Foundation. Several addresses both there and in Shreveport, La. allowed me to meet many people with a special interest in Lincoln.

It was quite an innovation indeed, for a student of

Abraham Lincoln to be given a key to the southern city of Little Rock, Arkansas, but on Sunday, February 1, mayor Pratt Rimmell presented such a key to me when I addressed a large group of men in the Mt. Pulaski Methodist Church. I was introduced by G. W. Blankenship, a long time subscriber of Lincoln Lore who had an exhibition of many of his rare Lincoln items in a local bookstore.

Kiwanis clubs took up most of my time at St. Louis although I did have an opportunity to browse in a few bookstores and talk over the telephone with Ralph Gregory.

I have almost grown up with Kansas City University as I spoke before the first freshman class that entered the university about 20 years ago and was pleased to continue these periodical engagements. A television appearance at Station WDAF-TV was also on the program along with other interesting group contacts including nearby William Jewell College where the president is greatly interested in Lincoln.

The Chicago engagements began with an address before the Avalon Forum where I was introduced by Verne Miners whose fine collection of Lincolniana I had the opportunity of visiting before the evening program. The high point in the Chicago visit was a television appearance February 11 on WENR-TV as a guest of Bob and Kay.

Moving north into Wisconsin for several engagements, the climax of the Lincoln Birthday appearances was at the Civil War Round Table at Milwaukee where Norman W. Fitzgerald Jr. presided with many authors and students present. Two days later one hundred and twenty-five members of the Racine County Historical Society attending their annual Lincoln banquet. This St. Valentine's day festivity gave me an opportunity to speak on Mary Lincoln in the only city which has created a statue to her memory. Green Bay Kiwanis Club received me with fine courtesy as on former occasions.

Madison as usual provided many interesting personal contacts. A. C. Larson and Louis W. Bridgman both attended the Shriners' Lincoln Club where I spoke. Several other Lincoln students were present at a group I addressed at the University of Wisconsin. A trip out to Janesville allowed me to view the home which once entertained Lincoln and now houses the Lincoln-Tallman collection.

My first visit to Minneapolis twenty-five years ago was for the purpose of purchasing for the Foundation the Daniel Fish collection of Lincolniana. The twin cities have always had a large number of Lincoln students and at luncheon clubs in both municipalities I had the privilege of renewing acquaintances with several associates of long standing.

Among the many addresses at Kalamazoo, Michigan one was delivered before the Ladies Library Association whose clubhouse is just opposite the mound on which Lincoln stood when he gave a political speech on August 27, 1856.

Botsford Inn offered the best historical atmosphere for one of the many speeches made in Detroit and I was introduced to the dinner group by Wendell Brown. A visit with Tom Starr is always a high point on a Detroit itinerary and on a Sunday morning I was fortunate in finding Edgar DeWitt Jones in his former pulpit at Woodward Ave. Christian Church. At Pontiac an overflow luncheon meeting contained Frank Howard, W. E. C. Huthwaite and Casey C. Wiggins, all long time Lincoln students. The last two days of the itinerary were spent at Grand Rapids and its environs. Donald Backofen, a Lincoln student was present at one of the nine speaking engagements which were arranged for me on these final days of the trip.