

LINCOLN LORE

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SOME SPRINGFIELD PREACHERS LINCOLN LIKED

Clergymen played an important part in the history of early education in America and naturally influenced the outstanding students to enter the field of theology. The legal profession soon demanded a formal education for those who aspired to practice law so there grew up an affinity between the minister and the attorney based on a somewhat similar cultural background.

In other issues of this bulletin we have taken occasion to mention some of the preachers in Kentucky and Indiana with whom Abraham Lincoln came in contact. It seems appropriate to call attention to a few of the ministers serving in Springfield, Illinois, whom we may designate as Lincoln's personal friends.

Three different episodes are recalled which would make it appear as if Lincoln would not have a very kindly feeling towards clergymen. In 1843 he hoped to be a delegate for the Sangamon County Whigs to nominate a congressman at the district convention. Writing to a friend about the primary which selected Edward Baker in his stead, Lincoln explained:

"There was too the strangest combination of church influence against me. Baker is a Campbellite, and therefore as I suppose, with few exceptions got all that church. My wife has some relatives in the Presbyterian and some in the Episcopal churches, and therefore, wherever it would tell, I was set down as either one or the other, whilst it was everywhere contended that no Christian ought to vote for me because I belonged to no church, was suspected of being a deist, and had talked about fighting a duel."

Later, in 1846, Lincoln became the Whig nominee for Congress and his opponent in the race was the famous Methodist Bishop Peter Cartwright. Lincoln wrote to a friend: "I was informed by a letter from Jacksonville that Mr. Cartwright was whispering the charge of infidelity against me." This accusation caused Lincoln to have a handbill printed denying the charge of infidelity and he concluded his statement in this manner: "I do blame those, whoever they may be, who falsely put such a charge in circulation against me."

A third incident is related by Newton Bateman who for eight months occupied a room in the statehouse at Springfield adjacent to Lincoln's campaign headquarters in 1860. The door between the two offices often being open, Bateman was in the center of political activities. He states that during the canvass Lincoln called his attention to a Springfield poll book and together they checked the political inclinations of the clergymen which caused Lincoln to exclaim: "Here are twenty-three ministers of different denominations, and all of them are against me except three."

A Disciple Evangelist

The first episode mentioned finds Lincoln referring to the Campbellites or Disciples of Christ to which church many of Lincoln's friends belonged and the same religious body with which his parents were affiliated in Coles Co., Ill. The *Sangamon Journal* for March 16, 1833 announced that Rev. Josephus Hewett would preach in Springfield at eleven o'clock that morning. Hewett was responsible for the establishing of a church and was preaching there when Lincoln came from New Salem to Springfield. James H. Matheny stated: "Josephus Hewett was one of the most eloquent men I ever knew. He came here as minister of the Christian Church." Afterward he was admitted to the bar.

This is the same Hewett to whom Lincoln wrote the interesting letter of February 13, 1848 in which he said: "Perhaps you have forgotten me. Don't you remember a long black fellow who rode on horseback with you from Tremont to Springfield nearly ten years ago, swimming your horses over the Mackinaw on the trip? Well, I am that same one fellow yet. . . . For old ac-

quaintance sake, if for nothing else, be sure to write me on receiving this."

An Episcopalian Vicar

The Episcopalians held their first public service in Springfield in 1835 with Bishop Philander Chase as the preacher. He had recently been appointed Bishop of Illinois and three years later he founded Jubilee College. The first rector of the newly established church was Charles Dresser, D. D., who came to Springfield in 1838 and remained until 1855. He is best remembered for having performed the marriage ceremony of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd on November 4, 1842 at the home of Ninian W. Edwards. It is well known by most Lincoln students that Lincoln purchased from the same Dr. Dresser the story and a half cottage that was later remodeled and in which the Lincoln family lived during most of the Springfield years. Apparently the Lincolns attended Dr. Dresser's church during that early period after their marriage.

Presbyterian Clergymen

The Presbyterian faith in Springfield found its first exponent in Rev. John M. Ellis who organized a church there in 1828. Soon after its establishment, Rev. John R. Bergen became the clergyman and remained with the congregation until 1848. Dr. James Smith came to the church as its pastor in 1849. The following year Edward Baker Lincoln, the second son of the Lincolns died and Dr. Smith was called to officiate at the services. On April 13, 1852 Mary Lincoln became a communicant at this church. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln occupied Pew No. 20, which has been preserved. It is well established that Mr. Lincoln usually attended the services here when in Springfield. Dr. Smith was the author of a book entitled "The Christian Defense" which is said to have greatly influenced Lincoln's religious thinking. Mr. Lincoln's admiration for Dr. Smith is revealed by the appointment of his former pastor as United States Council to Edinburg. On Jan. 9, 1863 in a note to Secretary Seward, Lincoln wrote: "Dr. Smith, mentioned within, is an intimate personal friend of mine."

A Baptist Preacher

The Baptist Church was constituted in Springfield on July 17, 1830 and Rev. Aaron Vandiver became its first pastor. He was followed by a series of short term ministers up to April 1855 when Rev. W. N. Miner came to the church and remained fourteen years which period extended beyond the death of Lincoln. The Miners lived directly opposite the Lincoln home and there was much visiting back and forth. The Lincolns often attended his services.

On the centennial year of Lincoln's birth a daughter of Dr. Miner prepared some reminiscences for the press. She recalled the bust which Leonard Volk had made of Lincoln and later presented to him. She further stated that "Mr. Lincoln regarded it as one of his most treasured possessions," and then continued: "Before leaving his home for Washington he called Dr. Miner over to his house and gave him the cast as a remembrance saying it was the best likeness he had." On Mrs. Lincoln's last visit to New York in 1881 where she went to consult physicians about her health, Dr. and Mrs. Miner called on her and largely through the efforts of Dr. Miner, Mrs. Lincoln's pension was increased and a substantial gift made to her by Congress. At this time on December 15, 1881 Mrs. Lincoln wrote out this letter of introduction for Mr. Miner:

"Permit me to introduce the Rev. Dr. Miner to you, our clergyman for fifteen years, our opposite neighbor and a friend very much beloved by my husband. I sign very respectfully yours,

Mrs. Abraham Lincoln."