

LINCOLN LORE

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OCCUPANTS OF THE SPRINGFIELD LINCOLN HOME

The recent improvements made at the Lincoln Home in Springfield which included restoring, redecorating and refurbishing* have brought to a conclusion the arrangements whereby the custodian has occupied part of the house. At this Thanksgiving time it seems appropriate to give a brief summary of the families who have been occupants of the dwelling during the years.

1839—Rev. Charles Dresser, Clergyman—1844

The minister of the Episcopal church at Springfield, Illinois purchased a piece of land in the new state capital in 1839 on which he built a story and a half cottage, painted white with green shutters. The corner lot had a frontage on Jackson Street. After living in the rectory for five years he sold it to Abraham Lincoln.

1844—Abraham Lincoln, Lawyer—1847

When the Lincolns moved into the cottage they had but one son, Robert, nine months old. Their second son, Edward, was born in this home on March 10, 1846. After living in the house but three years, Lincoln's election to Congress caused him to rent out the property for a year reserving the "north room upstairs" in which to store the household furniture.

1847—Cornelius Ludlum, Carpenter—1848

The sum of ninety dollars was paid to Lincoln by Cornelius Ludlum for rental on the house for twelve months. In 1842 Ludlum and an associate had leased the Northern Cross Railroad but the project was a failure and apparently thereafter, he followed his trade as a carpenter.

1848—Abraham Lincoln, Lawyer—1856

The Lincolns were back in their cottage home again in November 1848 and a little over two years later Edward, the second child, died in this house after an illness of almost two months. About a year after Edward's death a third son, William, was born and two years and four months later the fourth and last child, Thomas, was added to the family. Some improvements had been made at the home about 1850 including a brick wall and fence along the front and part of the Jackson Street side of the house.

1856—Abraham Lincoln, Lawyer—1861

The story and a half cottage in which three of the four children were born was remodeled in 1856 and made into a two story house. However, the Lincolns were to enjoy this enlarged home but a comparatively short time, for less than five years later they again moved to Washington, this time to occupy the White House. They sold their furniture at a public sale in February 1861 and their occupancy of the home had come to an end.

1861—Lucian Tilton, Executive—1869

Upon their removal the Lincolns rented the property for \$350 a year to Lucian Tilton, president of the Great Western Railroad. Apparently they had leased the house for an indefinite period as the Tiltons were still living there when Lincoln's second presidential term began and continued on after his assassination. The Tiltons had purchased some of the Lincoln furniture and upon moving to Chicago their household effects were lost in the great fire.

1869—George H. Harlow, Secretary—1880

George H. Harlow, an editor of the *Illinois State Journal* moved into the home in 1869 and when Richard J. Oglesby became governor in 1872 Harlow was elected secretary of state. He was also reelected to this office serving through Shelby M. Cullom's administration as governor.

1880—Dr. Gustav Wendlandt, Physician—1883

Wendlandt was a physician but also had an interest in a German newspaper which he edited. It was while he

was renting the property that Mrs. Lincoln passed away at the home of her sister, Mrs. Ninian Edwards.

1883—Osborn H. Oldroyd, Exhibitor—1889

When Osborn H. Oldroyd went to Springfield he found Dr. Wendlandt occupying the home but determined just as soon as the opportunity came he would attempt to hire it. He was successful in securing it in 1883 at a rental of \$20.00 a month. Oldroyd's collection of over two thousand Lincoln relics were displayed in the double parlor on the first floor and spread into some of the other rooms.

1889—Osborn H. Oldroyd, Custodian—1893

Robert Lincoln presented the property to the state of Illinois on July 29, 1887. The newly appointed board of trustees selected Oldroyd as the first custodian of the Lincoln home on October 16, 1889.

1893—Herman Hofferkamp, Custodian—1897

Robert Lincoln was not pleased with the museum idea which Oldroyd had introduced at the home which gave it the appearance of an antique shop. A change in administration seemed to offer an opportunity to correct the situation and Oldroyd claims that the new Governor John P. Altgeld gave him but "two weeks to get out." Herman Hofferkamp was appointed to replace Oldroyd and all the relics were removed to Washington, D. C. and placed on display in the house opposite Ford's Theatre where Lincoln died.

1897—Albert S. Edwards, Custodian—1915

Albert S. Edwards, a son of Ninian and Elizabeth Todd Edwards and a nephew of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, was made custodian of the home in 1897. There was an attempt at this time to make the first floor of the house at least appear somewhat as it did when the Lincolns had lived there. Several interior pictures of the home were made in 1900 by Burleigh and Lapham, Springfield photographers, which illustrate the earliest effort to capture some of the original home atmosphere of the Lincolns.

1915—Mrs. Josephine B. Edwards, Custodian—1918

Upon the death of Mr. Edwards in the Lincoln home in 1915, he was succeeded by his wife as custodian. Three years later she passed away. The Edwardses had been able to acquire many pieces of furniture which had originally been in the Lincoln house. Exhibit cases had been installed which allowed the display of some relics.

1918—Mrs. Mary Edwards Brown, Custodian—1924

During the years that her parents were custodians, Mary Edwards had come to know the home where Lincoln's children lived and it was very natural for her to be made custodian on the death of her mother. She continued in this capacity until 1924 when the greatly increased number of visitors was making the task too exacting and she resigned as custodian. Just before her resignation the state purchased a fifty foot lot and improvements, just north of the Lincoln property, and razed the structure on it which was a fire hazard.

1924—Miss Virginia Stuart Brown, Custodian—1953

Miss Virginia Stuart Brown was appointed custodian in 1924. She is a great granddaughter of John T. Stuart, Lincoln's first law partner who was also related to Lincoln's wife. It might be said that the members of the Todd family had served as custodians and occupied for the past fifty-eight years the home where Mary Todd Lincoln and her family resided.

The recent restoration effort has made the house unavailable for living accommodations by the custodian, so after 115 years we are able to bring to a close the story of the occupants of the Springfield Lincoln Home.

*See *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, p. 5-27.