



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1579

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

September, 1969

Lincoln's Law Offices In The Tinsley Building 1843 - 1852

Editor's Note: In the preparation of this article I have relied heavily on the work of James T. Hickey, the curator of the Lincoln collection of the Illinois State Historical Library of Springfield. His research notes have proved invaluable in attempting to work out the complicated history of the Tinsley Building.

Likewise, the editor is indebted to Richard M. Phillips, the editor of *Illiniseek*, whose article "Prairie Lawyer" appeared in the May-June 1969 issue. His concise account of the three Lincoln law partnerships, the different office locations by the use of floor plans and maps and the excellent photographs with which he illustrated his article have made my task much easier in attempting to present an accurate account of the historic building.

The editor also found James E. Meyer's article "Springfield The Town That Remembers Lincoln" that was published by the *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine* on December 15, 1968, most helpful in describing the furnishings and contents of the restored building.

R. G. M.

In the summer months of 1843 the law firm of Stephen T. Logan and Abraham Lincoln moved to a large office on the third floor of the Tinsley Building at Sixth and Adams Streets. Their original location had been on the east side of North Fifth Street less than one-half of a block from the Square. The present walk-up teller's windows of the Illinois National Bank mark the site. This original office was also directly across Fifth Street

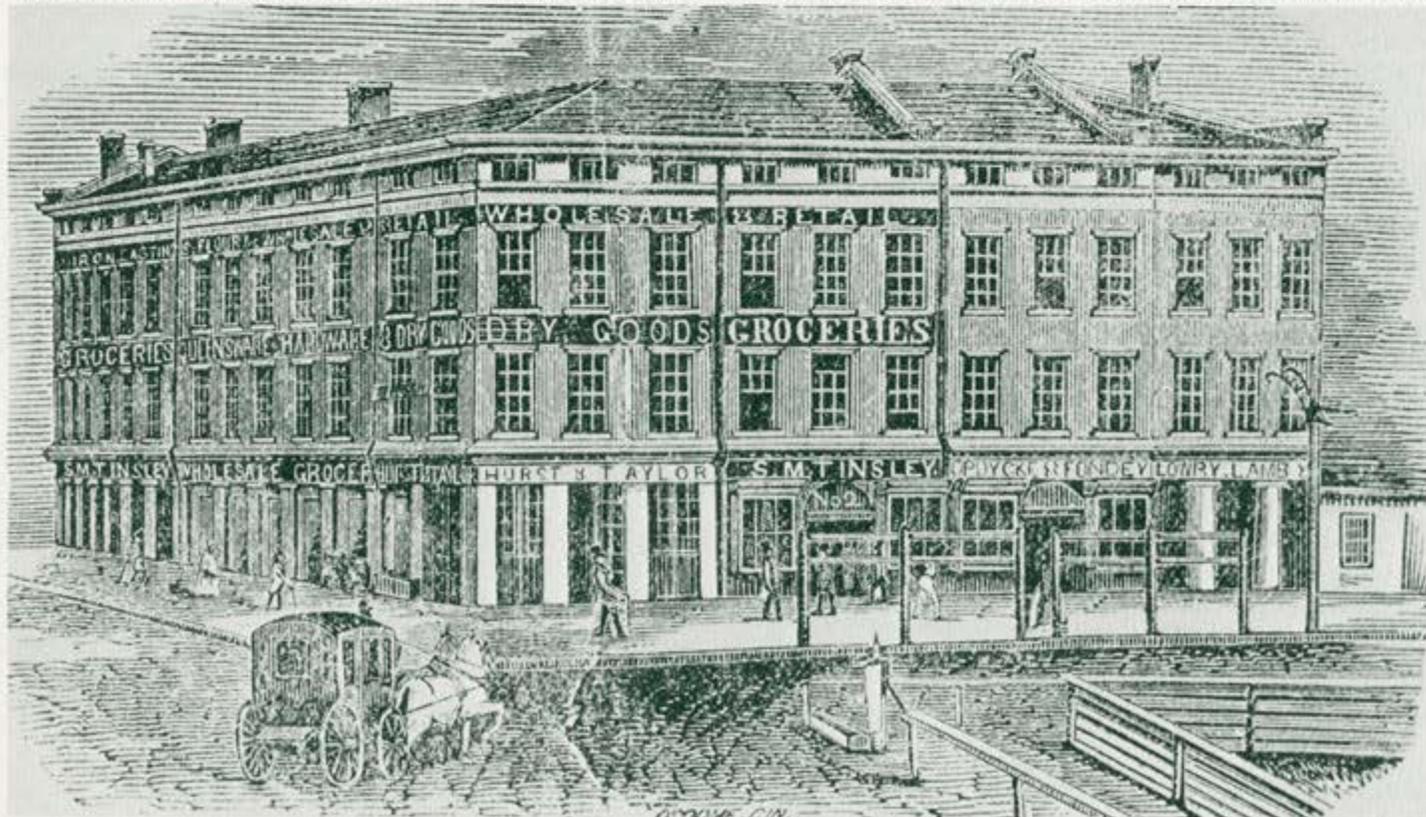
from the location of the former Stuart and Lincoln law office. In the Tinsley Building they probably occupied the vacated Shields and Conkling office. Although directly over the United States District and Circuit Court Room on the second floor, their advertising card in the local papers stated they were over the post office which was located on the first floor. The Tinsley Building at this time was only about three years old and was considered a show place in Springfield.

The firm's new location was announced by the following business card which appeared in the *Sangamo Journal* of July 27, 1843:

Logan & Lincoln
Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, Springfield
— Office over the Post Office — third story

This law-partnership, originating in 1841, was short lived because Logan wished to form an association with his son, David. In December 1844 Logan moved to a smaller office on the third floor of the Tinsley Building, in order to practice law with his son.

Lincoln remained in the large front office, taking into



From The Illinois State Historical Library

The Tinsley Building (Circa 1850) taken from a woodcut which appeared in the *Illinois State Journal* of June 1, 1850.



From *Illiniwek*, May-June, 1969

The restored Tinsley Building located on the southwest corner of Fifth and Adams Streets. Here on the third floor was Lincoln's law office from 1843 to 1852.

partnership William H. Herndon, a young man nine years his junior, who had just received his license to practice. Herndon had been a law student in the Logan & Herndon office. "Billy" as Lincoln always called him stayed in Springfield and took care of the office while Lincoln toured the circuit. This arrangement was ideal, and the two lawyers worked well together. During the ensuing years Lincoln was also active in politics, and on August 3, 1846 he was elected to Congress. He rode the circuit, however, until the middle of October 1847, when he made preparations to travel to Washington, D.C. to serve his one term in Congress.

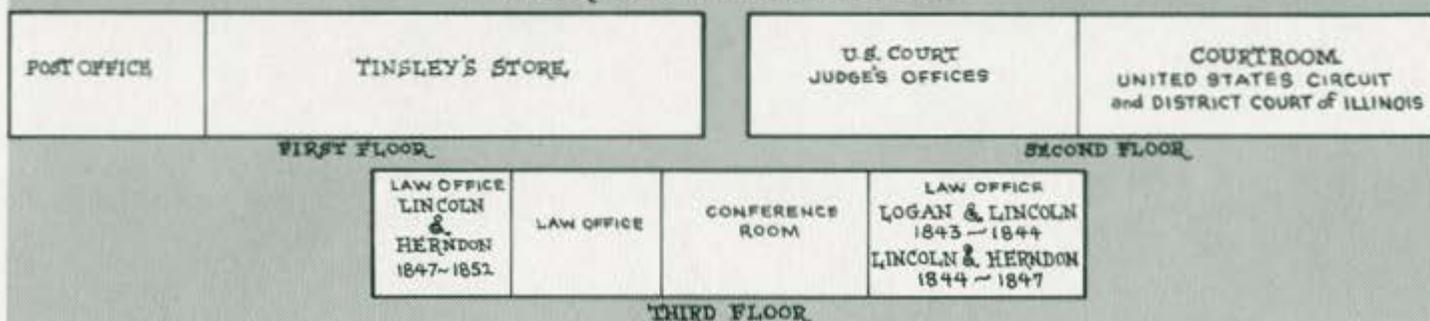
Since Lincoln's absence from an active law practice would curtail the firm's income, their office was moved from the large front area of the third floor of the Tinsley Building to a small office at the rear of the third floor, which had once been occupied by Logan and his son David. Their business card appeared as follows in the local papers:

Abraham Lincoln W. H. Herndon
Lincoln & Herndon, Attorneys and
Councillors at Law, will practice in the Courts
of Law and Chancery in the State Dec. 1847

When one attempts to define the precise location of the Lincoln-Herndon law office during the entire period of the firm's existence, there is some confusion. This is due to the fact that several months' issues of the *Illinois State Journal* are missing which would have shown a change, if they had moved, in their business card. While it is impossible to document their location in the Tinsley Building after August 23, 1849 it is generally believed that they remained there until October 1852. By October 1, 1852 their office was over the McGraw & Buchanan store on the west side of the Square, in the very same back room on the second floor vacated by W. I. Ferguson, Attorney. The *Illinois State Register*, September 25th and 27th, 1852 reported that Ferguson left Springfield for permanent residence in Texas.

Today it is difficult to locate the site of the McGraw

FLOOR PLAN TINSLEY BUILDING



From *Illiniwek*, May-June, 1969

Floor plan of the Tinsley Building drawn by Richard M. Phillips, editor of *Illiniwek*.

& Buchanan store on the west side of the Square. Perhaps it was in the same building as Lincoln's last (Fifth Street) law office, as there is no tradition that Lincoln was ever in any other location on the west side of the Square.

If the assumption is correct that the McGraw & Buchanan store was in the same building as the "Old Speed Store" then Lincoln was in the same building which he had entered on April 15, 1837 when he was about to begin the practice of law with John T. Stuart. Joshua Fry Speed was the partner in the James Bell & Company store located on the first floor of the building and Lincoln occupied a room with Speed on the front second floor. The Lincoln & Herndon law office was in a back room of the same second floor.

Today there are two markers on the Myers Brothers Store which gives the impression that Speed's store was next to the building in which Lincoln & Herndon had their law office. However, they were in the same building.

Lincoln is reported to have visited his Fifth Street law office for the last time on February 10, 1861. According to Herndon (Herndon & Weik, 1892 ed., II, 192-94) the President-elect made "the strange request that the sign-board which swung on its rusty hinges at the foot of the stairway should remain. 'Let it hang there undisturbed,' he said, with a significant lowering of his voice."

A sign hangs at the foot of the Tinsley Building stairway today bearing the words "Law Office — Abraham Lincoln & William H. Herndon." It is there because the building has been restored just as it was in 1843, when Lincoln moved into the top floor, front office. The original walls, floors, ceiling still stand; only the furnishings have been added.

The exterior walls of the second and third floors have been sand-blasted to restore the bricks' original color and texture so that the building appears today as if it were new. The first floor has been largely rebuilt, using 125 year old brick to match the floors above. An attractive store with 19th century fixtures occupies a portion of the first floor. Also, an old reconstructed post office adds to the attractiveness of the interior of the first floor.

The purchase and restoration of the Tinsley Building was instituted by enterprising Springfield citizens who were eager to add another historical facet to their city's

splendid heritage. The restoration project was a difficult historical problem; however, with the expert knowledge of James T. Hickey, the curator of the Lincoln Collection of the Illinois State Historical Library, the project was undertaken.

Hickey made a detailed study of all the original deeds to the property, as well as the mercantile and professional advertisements in the local papers in order to determine the many occupants of the building from the date of its construction in 1840 to the present day. A comprehensive study of the history of the building was the result of this project.

Exciting discoveries were also made of old letters, newspapers of the 1840s, account books, journals, Federal Court documents, documents of the U.S. Provost Marshal during the Civil War, business catalogues, almanacs, land records when John Taylor (S. M. Tinsley's father-in-law) was receiver of the land office in Springfield, Lincoln items and other memorabilia under the attic floor (over the Lincoln-Herndon Offices) of the building. Around the turn of the century six wagonloads of old paper were hauled away from the attic or fourth floor of the building and burned. This was done by S. J. Hanes, and his son, Murray S. Hanes, witnessed the event.

The architectural design of the restored Tinsley Building is more "prairie classic" than Georgian, and its furnishings are almost stark in their simplicity. Lincoln's offices, "with layers of dust" and papers scattered about, gives the appearance of "general dishevelment that indicated the active law practice he had." The over-all appearance of the building's interior, which includes offices other than Lincoln's, and the Federal Court room, is one of disorder. According to the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, December 15, 1968:

"Notices of sales, political rallies, bankruptcies were tacked to the walls. Boxes for wood stood about. Sandfilled boxes for spittoons were as often missed as hit. The place jumped with legal, political and social activity."

It has been the aim of the promoters to make the law offices and courts "seem as if they were still in use." The desired historical atmosphere has been achieved with the attic papers (worth thousands of dollars) scattered through the desks and on the tables and chairs.

This new Springfield shrine is open to the public



From *Illiniwek*, May-June, 1969

Lincoln's law office, third floor (front) of Tinsley Building. Occupied by Logan & Lincoln 1843-1844, and Lincoln & Herndon 1844-1847.

with a sight and sound program, with personnel to answer questions, with a museum of documents and with elevator service available in an adjoining building. It requires some thirty minutes to make the tour and one should allow more time if possible because it is well worth all the time you can devote to it. Adults are charged 50¢, children 25¢ and families may enter upon payment of \$1.25.

What would S. M. Tinsley think of his building today? Certainly he would be pleased with the restoration. There is no photograph of Tinsley and his is a sad story. He was born in Virginia. He married Hannah Taylor in 1833, and they had eleven children. The next year following his marriage he formed a business partnership with his father-in-law, John Taylor, which lasted until 1837.

The E. D. Taylor who became his partner in 1841 was not a blood relative of his father-in-law but became a relative when he married Margaret Taylor, Mrs. Tinsley's sister. Charles R. Hurst who was also a business partner of Tinsley, married Ann Taylor, another sister of Mrs. Tinsley. Hurst got into business first by buying out Joshua F. Speed when he returned to Kentucky.

S. M. Tinsley at one time had a fine home and had erected a large Metropolitan Hall. He was a director of Mechanics & Farmers Bank in 1852, opened a large lumber yard in 1856 and a large flour mill in 1859; but after that it is apparent that he ran into personal and financial trouble.

His wife died February 23, 1867, at age 56, and her funeral was held at St. Paul's. Tinsley seems to have then closed or lost his home, because on March 25, 1868, when a fire destroyed the Metropolitan Hall which he no longer owned and which had been converted into a mill, the *Illinois State Register* reported that Mr. Tinsley, the former owner, had a sleeping room in the building and nearly lost his life in the fire.

The next year (1869) Tinsley died at 62 years of age and was buried in the Hutchinson Cemetery, but his remains were moved to the Oak Ridge Cemetery in November 1870 and buried in an unmarked grave in the lot of his brother-in-law, E. D. Taylor. Tinsley left no estate to probate, and none of his eleven children seem to have resided in Springfield at the time of his death.

Is it not ironic that the restored structure on Sixth and Adams Streets is to be called The Lincoln-Herndon Building? Would not the name Tinsley Building, with its sign of "Lincoln & Herndon" swinging on its rusty hinges (they will get rusty) at the doorway on Sixth Street be more appropriate?

History of The Tinsley Building

July 7, 1840

S. M. Tinsley bought a lot (Sixth at Adams) from Garrett Elkin, Thomas & Isaac Constant and William F. Elkin. Building may have been under construction.

December 25, 1840

First part of building occupied.

January 27, 1841

A notice in *Journal* stated that an art exhibit by Wilkins & Stevenson would be held in the building.

March 5, 1841

S. M. Tinsley & Co. (S. M. Tinsley, Wm. M. Cowgell and E. D. Taylor) removed their entire stock of goods to the new four story brick building, on the southeast corner of the public square, directly opposite the American House. (*Register* March 5, 1841) S. M. Tinsley & Company were retail merchants. Opdycke, Tinsley & Company were in the wholesale business.

1841

Between January 1841 and August 1843, the U. S. Post Office occupied the back of the first floor. U.S. Court moved to the second floor.

March 19, 1841

The *Register* reported that Shields & Conkling had moved into the new Tinsley Building. They continued to advertise at this location until May 19, 1843.

July 28, 1842

Journal carried advertisement of S. M. Tinsley offering the store room for rent recently occupied by Opdycke, Tinsley & Co.

1843

Between June 15, 1843 and August 31, 1843 Logan and

Lincoln moved into Tinsley Building, probably occupying the vacated Shields & Conkling office.

April 4, 1844

The *Journal* reported that E. D. Baker and James H. Matheny had an office on the third floor. They vacated the office in December, 1845.

August 28, 1844

David Logan moved his office to the third floor over the post office. He moved to a new location on September 10, 1847.

December, 1844

Logan & Lincoln partnership ended. Logan wished to take son David as partner. David was already in the building on the same floor. Lincoln took as his partner William H. Herndon, a former student in the Logan & Lincoln firm.

February, 1847

A. T. Bledsoe moved into office over the post office.

February 17, 1849

Tinsley and Charles R. Hurst dissolved partnership. Hurst remained in building.

March 23, 1849

Hurst took in E. J. Taylor as partner, and firm became Hurst & Taylor. Tinsley moved to building in center block on south side of square.

July 30, 1849

A. Campbell advertised office in Tinsley Building.

September 17, 1849

Tinsley moved back to Tinsley Building to the 2nd 20 foot front, next to Hurst & Taylor on corner. He called his new store "Tinsley's No. 2."

August 23, and 29, 1849

According to *Daily Journal* and *Weekly Journal* Lincoln & Herndon were still listed on the third story over the post office.

August 24, 1849

S. T. Logan had new office west of Hawley & Loose store. This was one and one-half blocks west of Tinsley Building.

August 27, 1849

Daily Journal carried statement that William Pope, Clerk of the United States District and Circuit Courts had office over post office in the Tinsley Building.

October 13, 1849

Advertisement in *Register* carried announcement that Tinsley had a tailoring establishment on the second floor of Store No. 2.

(To be continued in the October issue)



From Illiniwek, May-June, 1969

Small office on the third floor of the Tinsley Building (rear) occupied by Lincoln & Herndon, 1847-1852.