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Good Bye to Springfield: Lincoln's Farewell Address A Teacher Resource Guide

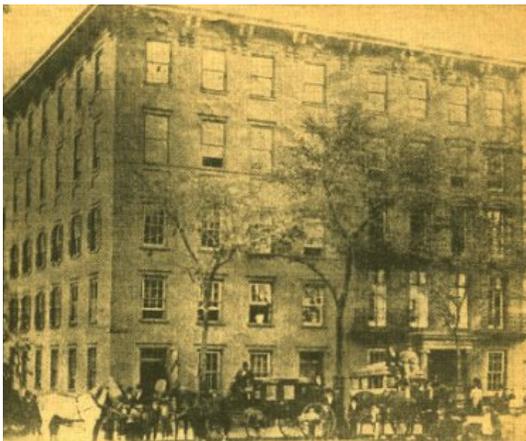


Anyone who has moved out of a home they have occupied for decades can sympathize with Abraham and Mary Lincoln who had innumerable details to attend to before they left Springfield for Washington, D.C. in 1861. They found a renter for their home at Eighth and Jackson – Lucian Tilton, a retired railroad executive who would pay the Lincolns \$350 a year. Lincoln insured the home, valued at \$3,000, with an insurance policy carrying a \$24 annual premium. He designated Robert Irwin of the Springfield Marine & Fire

Insurance Company as his fiscal agent, authorizing him to pay any bills that came in, and listed the Lincoln family assets at just over \$10,000.

Mary burned numerous documents and letters in the alley behind their home. Only souvenir hunters who begged for some of the documents from the President-elect saved some of them from the ash heap.

Robert, Willie and Tad were anxious about the move and what they would have to leave behind. Tad pleaded to take their dog, Fido, to Washington but his father said no: “It would be better for Fido not to come to Washington. A train filled to capacity and lurching and speeding across the country at 30 m.p.h. would be no place for a dog.”



The family's last few days in Springfield were spent at the Chenery House hotel, recently renovated and boasting the latest amenities.

Saying Goodbye

The Lincolns had many goodbyes to say since they had made a lot of friends, both personal and political, during their quarter of a century living in Springfield. One of the last and most poignant was Abraham Lincoln's final meeting with his law partner, William Herndon, whom he had not seen very often during the hectic Presidential campaign. Lincoln confided in Herndon about the ominous direction the country seemed to be taking, plus the constant pressure of everyone who wanted something from the President-elect. "I am sick of office-holding already," he told Herndon.

On the way out, Lincoln looked at the Lincoln & Herndon sign at the entrance and said, "Let it hang there undisturbed. Give our clients to understand that the election of a President makes no change in the firm of Lincoln and Herndon. If I live I'm coming back some time, and then we'll go right on practicing law as if nothing had ever happened."

"I shudder when I think of the tasks that are still ahead," Lincoln added, and indicated that he was convinced he would never return alive. Herndon asked him to put such thoughts out of his head because they were not "in keeping with the popular ideal of a President."

"But it is in keeping with my philosophy," Lincoln said. And then he was gone.

Last Day in Town

Abraham Lincoln's last full day in Springfield concluded with the latest in a very long line of federal job-seekers. Thomas A Marshall, a state senator who had hosted Lincoln just days before during a visit to Coles County, asked Lincoln in a letter for "as good an office as your sense of what is right authorizes." Marshall hinted that his investments in the South had been ruined because Lincoln had been elected and had so far refused to compromise on any of the issues that threatened to tear the nation apart. Marshall therefore felt Lincoln owed him a job.

New York Herald correspondent Henry Villard made this final dispatch from Springfield on the day before the Inaugural train departed: "The path he is about to walk on may lead to success, glory, immortality, but also to failure, humiliation and curses upon his memory. He may steer clear of the rock of disunion and the shoal of dissension among those that elevated him to the office he is about to assume, and safely conduct the Ship of State from amidst the turbulence of fanaticism and lawlessness to the port of peace and reunion. But he may, on the other hand, take his place at the helm of the craft only to sink with it."

The Morning of Departure

February 11, 1861, the day before Abraham Lincoln's fifty-second birthday, dawned cloudy and drizzly, but was an improvement over the cold, snowy weather that had preceded it. "Hard King Frost and soft Queen Thaw" had come "to a tussle," as *Harper's Weekly* put it.

Abraham Lincoln had breakfast at the Chenery House then walked into the hotel office to get his luggage ready for the impending train trip. Lincoln used a rope to tie shut his family's packed suitcases and a handful of Chenery House note cards to label each bag with the simple address, "A. Lincoln, White House, Washington D.C." Jameson Jenkins, an African American porter and family friend, placed the bags in a cart and took them to the train station.

Lincoln climbed aboard a carriage and traveled the muddy streets to the newly remodeled Great Western depot on the east end of town, just a few blocks from the family's former home. A group of well-wishers followed the carriage but Lincoln said little. His secretary John Nicolay said the "stormy morning" made the mood one of "subdued anxiety, almost of solemnity."



The first thing Lincoln saw at the depot, besides the "vast concourse" of about one thousand friends and neighbors who had gathered to see him off, was the train. It consisted of a modern Rogers locomotive with a towering funnel stack, a baggage car, and a bright yellow passenger car adorned with patriotic bunting.

The crowd cheered and shouted words of encouragement as Lincoln proceeded into the depot and shook dozens of hands. Although the crowd was large, Lincoln would later recount it was full of people "almost all of whom I could recognize."

Abraham Lincoln bid farewell to his wife about 8 a.m. – she was going to shop in St. Louis and would join her husband's train in Indianapolis. Then the crowd parted as Lincoln and his entourage moved to board the train.

The Entourage

- Lincoln's son Robert and Robert's school friend George Latham
- Lincoln's young secretaries John Nicolay and John Hay
- His brother-in-law, Dr. William S. Wallace
- Political supporters Norman Judd, David Davis, Orville Browning, Ozias Hatch, and Jesse Dubois
- William H. Johnson, an African American friend who performed odd jobs for the Lincolns in Springfield and served as a valet on the train trip
- Elmer Ellsworth, a militiaman and law student Lincoln had befriended
- Ward Hill Lamon, a former law associate now serving as Lincoln's bodyguard
- Educator Newton Bateman
- Former Belleville legal colleague William H. Underwood
- Quincy attorney Joseph Jackson Grimshaw
- Democratic politician William Morrison
- Longtime friend William Butler

- John J.S. Wilson, who had manned the telegraph office on Election Night and would now assume responsibility, using a portable telegraphy machine he planned to carry on board, for receiving messages confirming safe passage en route
- Railroad superintendent F.W. Bowen, who personally oversaw the journey while it proceeded along his Great Western tracks. “This train will be entitled to the road, and all other trains must be kept out of the way. Carefulness is particularly enjoined.”
- Banker Robert Irwin
- Governor Richard Yates of Illinois, who had called out state militia to guard trestle bridges along the route
- Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana

The Journalists

- Henry Villard, *New York Herald*
- Joseph Howard, Jr., *New York Times*
- T.C. Evans, *New York World*
- O.H. Dutton, *New York Tribune*
- Henry M. Smith, *Chicago Tribune*
- Henri Lovie, *Frank Leslie’s*
- W.G. Terrell, *Cincinnati Gazette*
- Uriah Hunt Painter, *Philadelphia Inquirer*
- No fewer than five correspondents from the *Associated Press*: J.R. Drake, S.D. Page, J.H.A. Boone, A.W. Griswold, and Theodore Stager
- John Hay, travelling principally as an aide to Lincoln, who doubled as a correspondent for the *Missouri Democrat* and the *Illinois Daily State Journal*

The Farewell

The train bells clanged at 8 a.m. Lincoln climbed the steps of the rear passenger car and turned to face the crowd. He removed his signature stove pipe hat; the men in the crowd followed suit by removing their hats in the cold drizzle. Then, even though he had prepared no written remarks, Lincoln spoke:



My friends – No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

Accompanying Lesson Plans:

Shopping on an 1861 Budget
Grades 3-6

Tag Sale: 8th and Jackson Streets
Grades 6-12

Listening to Remember
Grades 7-9; Adaptation for grades 3-6

Lincoln's Entourage to the White House: A Student Research Activity
Grades 7-12

Miles to Go...
Grades 6-8

Exploring 19th Century Newspaper Editorials
Grades 10-12