

How I obtained the Piece of Lincoln Fence Rail.

In 1916 when I was Chief Inspector of Speed Recorders for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, It was my privilege to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Sarah L. Harding of Chicago, Ills, who was enroute from Baltimore, Md. where she had been visiting her son, to her daughter in Chicago, with whom she made her son. During the trip the subject of the life of the great American, Abraham Lincoln came up, and during the conversation, Mrs. Harding finding that I was an ardent collector of Lincolniana, told me that among her effects in her home in Chicago, she had a piece of chestnut wood, which her father who had given it to her, claimed to be part of a rail which had been split by Abraham Lincoln or one of those who had been working with him, and afterwards placed with many others in a line fence. Mrs. Harding very kindly offered to share this relic with me, and when I parted from her in Chicago, she again advised me of her intention to send a part of the rail to me for my collection.

Time rolled on and I heard nothing from her, and supposed at last that she had either changed her mind or had forgotten all about the matter, and gave up any idea that I would ever see the much desired piece of chestnut wood.

On November 25th, 1922, I was greatly surprised to receive a letter and package from Chicago. The package contained a generous sized piece of chestnut wood, and the letter advised me that Mrs. Harding had died late in the previous August (1922), and when her daughter was going over her late mother's effects she found a package and a note with the address referring to me upon the envelope. My name without any city or state. Upon reading the note the daughter found that her mother long ago had packed the little piece of wood, and evidently intending to wait until she could secure the proper address, had laid the matter aside, and in the end had forgotten it.

The daughter recollecting how I had brought her mother to her home from Grand Central Station, remembered that I was a Baltimore & Ohio employe, and without difficulty, my correct address was sent to her upon request, and upon receipt of the address, she had promptly sent me the package. As the piece of wood was of generous size, I have been able to divide this relic into quite a number of small pieces and have sent many collectors a fragment of the old rail. On account of the peculiar circumstances as related in the note or testimonial attached to the piece of rail when the daughter found it, I believe the statement absolutely true as related in her letter a copy of which follows.

I certify that the above is true and correct
in every detail

Baltimore, Md. July 23, 1923.

(signed)

E. L. Bangs

A true ---Copy of Mrs Harding's statement found with the piece
of chestnut rail

This wood is a part of the fence rail that was carried by my father, Henry R. Hall in a "Wideawake" torchlight procession during the Lincoln Campaign of 1860 at Cairo, Ills. My father always claimed that this rail was one of six which were purchased by the Secretary of the Club, who went to Hardin County, and to the former home of Abraham Lincoln, and that the fence from which these six rails were taken was one of the fences for which Abraham Lincoln split the rails, and that this rail could really be called a rail split by Abraham Lincoln.

(Signed) Mrs. Sarah L. Harding (nee Hall)

I certify that the above is a true copy of Mrs. Harding's statement which came with the piece of wood.

E. L. Bangs