EDWARD CORLETT
JOLIET, ILLINOIS

LAW OFFICE
34 VAN BUREN STREET

March 30, 1938.

Ida M. Tarbell,
120 E. 19th Str.,
New York City, N. Y.

Dear madam:--

I herewith enclose a copy of a Lincoln Day Address delivered by Clinton L. Conkling before the Illinois Constitutional Convention at Springfield, February 12, 1920, the year Mr. Conkling died. If you have not seen the Address, I think it may be of interest as it touches some questions you discussed in your very wonderful book IN THE FOOT STEPS OF THE LINCOLNS, and in regard to those matters gives further support to your conclusions.

Mr. Conkling was born in Springfield in 1843; knew Abraham Lincoln and was the first to tell him of his nomination for the Presidency in 1860. Was the first Secretary of the Lincoln National Monument Association, under whose direction the Lincoln Monument at Oakridge Cemetery was erected, and was at the time of delivering the address mentioned, one of the three surviving members of the Lincoln Guard of Honor.

He was a lawyer by profession, a delegate to the Constitutional Convemtion, and President of the Ridgley National Bank, which I mention so you will see that he was still active at the time he delivered this address. In addition to that, he was a very high class gentleman.

On the same day former Governor Joseph W. Fifer, then in his 80th year, and still living at Bloomington, Illinois, delivered a very fine address on Lincoln, which I mention because he described the Bloomington meeting in 1858 substantially as you have recorded his impression of that meeting in your book, in which you refer to him as Judge Fifer.

Hoping the enclosed may be of some interest to you,
I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Edward Corlett

(Enclo.) (Edward Corlett)

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# LINCOLN DAY ADDRESS OF CLINTON L. CONKLING, DELIVERED BEFORE THE ILLINOIS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AT SPRINGFIELD, FEBRUARY 12th, 1920.

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MR. CONKLING (Sangamon). Mr. Chairman, Fellow Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I shall not attempt upon this occasion to pronounce a eulogy upon Abraham Lincoln. After the eloquent and stirring words of the gentleman who has preceded me it would ill become me to attempt anything of the kind, even should I be able, and in view of the words that shall be spoken after I have done, it would be still more presumptious for me to attempt a eulogy upon Mr. Lincoln, but I desire to give you this morning a few things which will give the setting in the midst of which Mr. Lincoln lived. I wish to refer to two or three incidents that will enable you more thoroughly to understand the eulogies that have been and will be pronounced, for what I say will be simple and will form a setting and background to the picture which others may paint.

With much reluctance I yielded to the request of the committee when they asked me a few days ago to say something on this occasion about Mr. Lincoln, and especially how he received the news of his first nomination. The time is entirely too short to do justice to the subject, and my ability is not equal to the task; but in a conversational way I trust I may say a few things that will be interesting.

The original settlers in this region were largely from Kemtucky, Tennessee and Virginia, and were mostly pro-slavery in their feelings. More than one captured slave from Missouri and Kentucky was carried back through the streets of this town of Springfield in chains to be returned to bondage without effective protest and with the approval of the mass of the people. After a while a stream of emigrants came from New York and New England. The two principles of slavery and freedom here met and battled. One of the stations of the underground railroad was here, another at Farmington and so on at intervals to the north part of the State.

Meanwhile at New Salem, twenty miles west, Abraham Lincoln was preparing to be a lawyer. He was admitted to the Bar, and one day in March, 1837, seated on a borrowed horse, with all his earthly possessions, among which was a law library of two or three volumes, in a pair of old saddle-bags, he rode into Springfield from the west along what is now Jefferson Street. William Butler, then living at the southwest corner of Madison and Third Streets in a good brick house in the midst of a large garden, invited him to take his meals with his family. Passing on to the general store of Joshua Speed, whom he knew, he asked the cost of a bed and other things. Speed told him what his list would cost. It was more money than he had. "Come upstairs," said Speed, "and see if we can't fix you up." There Speed showed him a bed and said, "half of that is yours if you'll take it." Placing his saddle-bags on the floor beside the bed, Lincoln said, "well, I'm moved." This first home of Lincoln in Springfield, and where he and Speed kept bachelor apartments, was in the second story of a two story brick building on the northwest corner of Adams and Fifth Streets, where Herndon's store now is.

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At the time of Lincoln's arrival, most of the houses on the square were on the north and west sides. They were mostly small wooden structures. The two-storied brick row of three, of which Speed's store was one, were the most pretentious on that side of the square. At the northwest corner of the square was a row of five two-story brick buildings called "Hoffman' Row," running north on the west side of Fifth street. In the upper room of one of these Stuart and Lincoln had their law office, for Major John T. Stuart had taken Mr. Lincoln into partnership with him immediately upon his arrival.

At that time "Chicken Row" on the north side of the square was the place where chickens, butter, eggs and other produce were sold. Wooden awnings covered the sidewalks. It was the market place for the people. The common coins in use were large copper cents, silver five and ten cent pieces, the latter known as dimes, and bits or shillings and quarters, the latter usually called "two-bits." A bit or shilling was 12 1/2 cents. The New York or long shilling was 16 1/2 cents.

About the time that Mr. Lincoln made his home in Springfield it required from seven to eight days to come from Chicago. The fare was $25 in gold. Railroads were unknown. There were no telegraphs. The mails were very irregular. There were no postage stamps and letters were sent without pre-payment of postage, the receiver having to pay from ten to twenty-five cents for postage before he could get his letter.

Springfield was then a straggling village containing a few hundred inhabitants. The main part of the town was situated on both sides of Jefferson street, north of what was known as the Town Branch and west of Sixth Street, and was locally known for many years as Old Town. The houses were mostly built of logs. The new and better improvements were extending east and south. The center of business, which had been at the intersection of Second and Jefferson streets, was now gathering about the square, in which there had been built in 1831 the court house. This was torn down in 1837 when the capitol was removed from Vandalia to this place, and room was made for the erection of the new capitol, the present court house. The courts were held for nearly two years on the ground floor in Hoffman's Row, Mr. Lincoln's office being above one of the court rooms.

The partnership with Mr. Stuart lasted for four years. Then came the partnership with Stephen T. Logan under the firm name of Logan and Lincoln, with offices in the third story of the building now standing on the west side of Sixth street at the southeast corner of the square.

At this time Dr. John Todd lived on the south side of Washington street between first and second streets, occupying the whole of the block. His was a typical Southern home with a large gallery in front. Here stayed with him at intervals his niece, Mary Todd, afterwards Mrs Lincoln. Part of the courtship between her and Mr. Lincoln took place in this house; also in the home of her sister, Mrs Ninian W. Edwards, on South Second Street, and, when a temporary coolness arose between them, Mrs Simeon Francis, who lived at the southwest corner of Sixth and Jefferson streets, befriended the couple, and here they laid the plans for their hasty wedding.

My mother was a young lady here at that time, having come from Baltimore, Maryland. She was intimately acquainted with all the Edwards and Todd families, and was a friend of Mary Todd. She has told me repeatedly that the story in Herndon's book that the wedding was set and the guests assembled but that Mr. Lincoln did not appear and that the company separated is not true. The same story is indignantly denied by members of Mrs Edwards' family, who by actual knowledge and tradition knew the story to be untrue.

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Mrs Benjamin S. Edwards, in her reminiscences written in 1900 said this about Mary Todd:

" I must tell my acquaintance and friendship with this most interesting woman, Mary Todd. I was attracted towards her at once. The sunshine in her heart was reflected in her face. She insisted upon my calling her by her first name, saying she knew we would be great friends and I must call her Mary. This bond of friendship was continued to the end of her life. Mary Todd had naturally a fine mind and cultivated tastes. She was a great reader and possessed a remarkably retentive memory. Her brilliant conversation, often embellished with apt quotations, made her society much sought after by the young people of the town. She was quick at repartee and, when the occasion seemed to require it, was sarcastic and severe."

"About that time Springfield society contained some of the brightest young men that any State could produce, men whose names hold a prominent place in Illinois history and who came together here during the sessions of the legislature. * * * These legislative assemblies were always the occasion of many social gatherings for distinguished men from every part of the State, who came to the capitol, and were royally entertained by our ladies. There was then a galaxy of beautiful girls whose vivacity, intelligence and propriety of deportment would entitle them to the entree of the choicest society of any city. It was a brave set of young people with a congeniality of mind and spirit such as is seldom met in these days. I have heard that at this time Mary Todd was the center of attraction."

She also said:

"Mr. Lincoln, I think, was acknowledged to be the most popular and agreeable talker of the young men. His stories were always listened to with the greatest attention and enjoyed immensely. I heard a rumor of an engagement between Mr. Lincoln and Mary Todd, yet I considered it one of those unfounded reports always floating in society, for I really thought Mr. Douglas was more assiduous in his attentions than Mr. Lincoln."

The wedding took place in Mr. N. W. Edwards' parlor and hardly anyone but members of the family were present.

The couple at once took rooms at the Globe Hotel, at the modest price,it is said, of $4.00 per week. This house was situated on the north side of Adams street between Third and Fourth streets. It was a plain two story wooden structure and was the stage office for the lines from St. Louis and from Jacksonville and Beardstown on the west, and from Peoria on the north. It had a bell on the top, much like a locomotive bell. Many of the travelers came in their own conveyances. The clerk would ring the bell and the stable men would come around to take the horses of the travellers to the barn in the rear. This place continued to be a hotel under different names for some years, and during my early boyhood I have often seen the stage roll up in front and have heard the bell ring when some traveller came. In those days I thought that the very height of a boy's ambition would be fulfilled if he could only become a stage driver.

In those days and for many years thereafter, indeed, until the latter part of the sixties, Springfield was not only known as the Capitol of the State, but also as one of the most unattractive places to be found. In bad weather the streets approached the condition of a quagmire with dangerous sink-holes where the boatman's phrase "no bottom" furnished the only description. An absence of civic pride made

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them the dumping ground of the community rubbish, so that the gutters were filled with manure, discarded clothing and all kinds of trash, threatening the public health with their noxious effluvium.

The problem of the hog nuisance and of the running at large of cows came up time and again, and most frequently the owners of the stock succeeded in having full freedom given to their property to wander through the streets at will. One paper stated that the hogs were more numerous on the streets of Springfield than in the pens of the State Fair Ground, and another paper said that they had equal rights with the citizens upon the streets.

When Mr. Lincoln came here there may have been 1,600 people in the city. In 1840 there were probably not over 2,000. In 1850 the population was 4,500 and in 1860 a little over 9,000.

It was into a place of this kind and amidst surroundings like these that Mr. Lincoln came and lived and practiced law.

His partnership with Major Stuart was dissolved because of political differences, Mr. Lincoln being a Whig, and opposed to the further extension of slavery; Mr. Stuart being pro-slavery in his leanings.

The partnership with Judge Logan was terminated after two years, because of differences of opinion about how much to charge for fees and as to the conduct of cases. But all three of the men during all the remaining years of their lives were warm personal friends.

Mr. Lincoln rode the circuit-that is, with the judge and other lawyers in this judicial circuit, they went from county seat to county seat opening the terms of court. The courts often met and adjourned the same day, the cases were so few. Yet court days were gala days with the people. The circus and the courts provided the principal holidays for the masses.

Mr. Lincoln generally rode the whole circuit, but Mr. Stuart also attended the courts in the northern part of the district, and those in the counties adjacent to Sangamon. The country was then comparatively unsettled. Between Fancy Creek, just north of Springfield and Pottsville, near Lincoln, there were only two or three houses.. Beyong Pottsville for thirteen miles was a stretch of unbroken prairie, flat and wet, covered with gopher hills and apparently incapable of being cultivated for generations. For fifteen or eighteen miles this side of Carlinville the country was of a similar character, without a house or improvement along the road. The lawyers would travel between Decatur and Shelbyville from nine o'clock in the morning until dark over a country covered with water from recent rains, without finding a house for shelter or refreshment. The tall grass in the low places was higher than the horses'heads, while in the higher parts of the prairie the grass covered the ground as far as the eye could reach, and in the springtime was covered with innumerable flowers. The prairie rattlesnakes would often be found coiled up in the road sunning themselves, and in the evenings as the traveller passed from the prairie down to the edge of the timber, it was very common to see the black and white pussy-like skunks, which would run along in front of the horse in the roadway for quite a distance before they would oblige by turning off into the grass. The snakes were frequently killed with the buggy whip, but care was taken never to strike the wood's pussy.

At the hotels and in the court rooms the lawyers were ever ready for fun, conversation or legal battle.

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The present court house, whose corner stone was laid in 1837, but whose interior has been entirely changed, was then the State House. Within its four walls and in the various offices that then existed, on up to 1861, Mr. Lincoln was a frequent visitor and every room had its memories of him.

In the Hall of Representatives, which was in the second story on the west side, on June 16th, 1858, he delivered the celebrated speech, in which he said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure half slave and half free. It will become all one thing or all the other." I sat on the steps of the platform within arm's reach of Mr. Lincoln as he delivered this speech.

The Republican National Convention met in Chicago on May 16, 1860. The interest throughout the country in the results of the meeting was intense. The general opinion, especially in the East, was that William H. Seward of New York would be nominated, although Horace Greely and others from New York were opposed to him.

The Illinois Republican State Convention on the ninth of the same month had declared Abraham Lincoln to be the first choice of the Republican party of Illinois for the Presidency. Many delegates and politicians thronged the city several days before the convention. Mr. Lincoln's friends were early on the ground, working earnestly and effectively to create sentiment in his favor.

To a Chicago friend who shortly before the convention asked him, "Are you coming up to the convention, Mr. Lincoln?" he replied:

"Well, I don't know. I am not quite enough of a candidate to stay away and too much of a candidate to come."

Mr. Lincoln was present at the State Convention at Decatur but did not go to Chicago. He remained in Springfield, went to his law office as usual, received reports of the progress of events by telegrams, letters and from persons returning from Chicago, visited with his friends to discuss the situation and prospects, and occasionally, as was his wont, joined in a game of hand ball, the then favorite pastime of the professional men of the town.

The only wires in Springfield in 1860 were owned and operated by the Illinois and Mississippi Telegraph Company and were called the "Caton Lines," after Judge John D. Caton of Ottawa, president of the company and one of its organizers. Its principal office was at St. Louis. John James Speed Wilson, afterwards known as "Col. Wilson," was superintendent of the Eastern Division, with headquarters at Springfield; E.D.L. Sweet was superintendent of the Western division, with its office in Chicago.

The local Springfield offices of the telegraph company in May, 1860, were in the upper story of the building known as 121 South Fifth street and over Chatterton's jewelry store in the middle of the west side of the Public Square. In this building were the law offices of James C. Conkling, a warm personal and political friend of Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. E. D. L. Sweet during the convention had charge of all the telegraphic arrangements. There was only one wire into the "Wigwam" as the convention hall was called. This was connected in the main city office with the eastern wire of the Western Union-it being the general opinion that the nomination would go to an Eastern man. Seward being the one most often mentioned in that connection. Mr. Wilson was in

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Chicago during the convention and divided his time between the main telegraph office at the southeast corner of Clark and Lake Streets and the "Wigwam," a building erected for the occasion at the corner of Market and Lake Streets. Most of the personal messages from delegates to Illinois points were sent from the convention hall to the main office of the Caton company by messenger boys.

On Friday morning, May 18, 1860, the third day of the convention, the delegates were to meet to ballot. James C. Conkling of Springfield, who had been in Chicago several days, but was unexpectedly called back, arrived home that morning. About half past eight o'clock Mr. Lincoln came into Mr. Conkling's office inquiring for him, as he had just heard on the street that he had returned from Chicago. On being told that Mr. Conkling was not in but probably would be in an hour, Mr. Lincoln said he would go out on the street and come back again as he was anxious to see Mr. Conkling. Presently the latter came in and Mr. Lincoln again called.

There was an old wooden settee by the front window on which were several buggy cushions. Mr. Lincoln stretched himself at full length upon this settee, his head on a cushion and his feet over the end of the settee. For a long time they talked above the convention. Mr. Lincoln wanted to know what had been done and what Mr. Conkling had seen and learned and what he believed would be the result of the convention. Mr. Conkling replied that Mr. Lincoln would be nominated that day; that after the conversations he had had and the information he had gathered in regard to Mr. Seward's candidacy, he was satisfied that Mr. Seward could not be nominated, for he not only had enemies in other States than his own, but he had enemies at home; that if Mr. Seward was not nominated on the first ballot the Pennsylvania delegation and other delegations would immediately go to Mr. Lincoln and he would be nominated.

Mr. Lincoln replied that he hardly thought this could be possible and that in case Mr. Seward was not nominated on the first ballot, it was his judgment that Mr. Chase of Ohio or Mr. Bates of Missouri would be the nominee. They both considered that Mr. Cameron of Pennsylvania stood no chance of nomination. Mr. Conkling in response said he did not think it was possible to nominate any other one except Mr. Lincoln under the existing conditions because the pro-slavery part of the Republican party then in the convention would not vote for Mr. Chase, who was considered an abolitionist, and the abolition part of the party would not vote for Mr. Bates, because he was from a slave State, and that the only solution of the matter was the nomination of Mr. Lincoln.

After discussing the situation at some length, Mr. Lincoln arose from the settee and said,"Well, Conkling, I believe I will go back to my office and practice law," He then left the office.

I was present during a part only of this conversation and depend very largely for the details of the interview upon what my father, Mr. Conkling, and Mr. George H. Brinkerhoff, then a law student in my father's office, have told me.

A moment after Mr. Lincoln left, the wires in the adjoining telegraph office brought the news of his nomination and I rushed down the stairs after him. I met him coming out of his brother-in-law's store, just a few steps away, and all unconscious of the news. I cried to him, "Mr. Lincoln, you're nominated. Taking my outstretched hand in both of his great hands, a smile spreading over his face, he looked down upon me and said, "Well, Clinton, then we've got it."

Then the excited crowd surged around him and I dropped out of sight.

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Mr. Lincoln's own version of the story is that he had gone into the dry goods store of N. W. Edwards & Company on an errand for Mrs Lincoln. "I had started out," Mr. Lincoln afterward told a friend, T. W. S. Kidd, editor of the Sangamon Monitor, "and Jack Smith (a member of the firm) walked to the door with me. As we stood there talking I heard a shout go up near the telegraph office. Then Jim Conkling's oldest boy came running up and told me I was nominated. That is the first I knew of it."

I was that boy.

Through the courtesy of Hon. Robert T. Lincoln there came into my possession five original telegrams received by Mr. Lincoln on the day he was nominated. All are on the Illinois and Mississippi Company form.

The first one sent was from the telegraph superintendent Wilson, shows signs of haste and bears no date. It reads:

"To Lincoln.
You are nominated.
J. S. Wilson."

This was the first message received for Mr. Lincolning announcing his nomination.

A moment after this message was sent a messenger boy brought to the main office in Chicago a message addressed simply "Abe" and which read, "We did it. Glory to God. Knapp." The receiving clerk brought the message to Mr. Sweet, calling his attention to the address, and also to the expression, "Glory to God." Mr. Sweet directed that words, Lincoln, Springfield," be added and that the message be sent at once. This message is probably the first one to Mr. Lincoln from any person who was actively at work in his behalf in the convention and without doubt was from Mr. N. M. Knapp, then of Winchester, Illinois.

The next two telegrams are from J. J. Richards who was well known in earlier days in Springfield. He was connected with the Great Western Railroad Company and was its agent for some time at Naples, which was then the end of the road. He subsequently went to Chicago. These telegrams are as follows:

"To Abraham Lincoln
You're nominated and elected
J.J.Richards."

"To Hon. A. Lincoln
You were nominated on thrid ballot
J.J.Richards."

Mr. J. J. S. Wilson followed his first message, probably within a very few moments, by another which reads:

"To Hon. A. Lincoln
Vote just announced. Whole No. 466 necessary to choice 234- Lincoln 354 votes not stated on motion of Mr. Evarts of N. Y. the nomination was made unanimous amid intense enthusiasm.
J.J.S.Wilson"

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In August of 1860 a most extraordinary mass meeting was held in Springfield by the Republicans, or as they were commonly known, "Black Republicans." People came in great companies, in wagons and buggies and on horseback and camped in the groves on the outskirts of the town for several days. There were many thousands of people from central Illinois here. The procession took eight hours to pass Mr. Lincoln's residence on Eighth street. The crowd was so great that his friends feared for the safety of Mr. Lincoln, the people were so eager to see him. That evening there was an immense torchlight procession in the city in which most of the ministers and all State officials and very many prominent business men, young and old, marched with the old-time wide awake oil lamps.

Near the close of the year 1860 Mr. Lincoln rented his house to Mr. Tilton, superintendent of the Wabash Railway and spent the last few weeks of his stay in Springfield at the Chenery House, which was situated on the northeast corner of Washington and Fourth Streets. Owing to the fact that the legislature then met in the fore part of December, Mr. Lincoln had to give up his reception room in the State House, and Joel Johnson, an old time friend of his, who had recently erected some brick buildings on the northwest corner opposite the Chenery House, offered him the use of his double parlors in the second story as a reception room for the remainder of his stay, which Mr. Lincoln gladly accepted. Mr. Johnson's buildings afterwards became known as the Revere House.

The night before Mr. Lincoln left, on February 11, 1861, for Washington, he had his trunks brought down into the office of the hotel. He "corded" them himself and then taking some of the cards of the hotel, wrote on the backs, "Lincoln, White House, Washington, D. C." and tacked them on the trunks. The next morning early, in a drizzling rain, he went in the old hotel bus to the Great Western Railroad station on Tenth and Monroe Streets. On a stub track which lay west of the main track and ended on the north side of Monroe Street, the car in which he and those with him were to go East was standing, and from the rear of this car he spoke his farewell address to his friends and neighbors.

On February 22, 1842, Mr. Lincoln delivered an address before the Springfield Washington Temperance Society at the Second Presbyterian Church. In this address he referred to the political revolution of 1776 and then to the temperance revolution and said:

> "And when the victory shall be complete-when there shall be neither slave nor a drunkard on earth-how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted, and nurtured to maturity, both the political and moral freedom of their species."

How striking is this language in view of the emancipation of the slaves in 1863 and the amendment to the Federal Constitution in 1919.

In closing his address Mr. Lincoln referred to the day as being the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birth of Washington.

Today is the one hundred and eleventh anniversary of the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Permit me in closing tosubstitute the name of the latter for that of the former and say of our martyr President as Mr. Lincoln said of Washington:

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" This is the one hundred and eleventh anniversary of the birthday of Lincoln-we are met to celebrate this day. Lincoln is the mightiest name on earth-long since mightiest in the cause of civil liberty, still mightiest in moral reformation. On that name a eulogy is expected. It cannot be. To add brightness to the sun, or glory to the name of Lincoln is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked, deathless splendor leave it shining on."

I have thus endeavored to give you some of the settings amidst which this great man lived and from which he went after pronouncing this farewell address which is well known to you all. If what I have said will enable you more thoroughly to visualize the circumstances under which Mr. Lincoln grew and increased here to the time he left here, my object will have been done. It will be for others to analyze his character, to tell of his influence upon the world at large and to apply to the problems of the present day the teachings which he has left. Thank you.

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