

Pat Spangler Saw Lincoln.

The Pat Spangler story was written for the Review as a part of a "He Saw Lincoln" series in connection with a Lincoln anniversary some three or four year ago. I am not sure that it was ever printed. Patrick Spangler now lives at Oreana, a station some six miles northeast of Decatur. He was born and raised in this county and is a well known citizen. His father, Jacob Spangler, was one of the very early settlers and established one of the first mills in the county. It was located on the Sangamon River due east of Decatur and about three and a half miles distant from the railroad station where the meeting with Lincoln took place. Any story of his is entirely dependable.

Pat Spangler of Oreana saw Lincoln in Decatur when the president elect was on his way to Washington for his first inauguration. Although there were a number of distinguished citizens of Decatur at the station to meet Mr. Lincoln Mr. Spangler was the first person he shook hands with when he stepped from the train. Mr. Spangler was a very wet, bedraggled and breathless boy and he was very near the spot where the steps of Mr. Lincoln's car came to a stop when the train halted. Mr. Lincoln looked down at the pathetic little figure and said: "My boy, you must have wanted to see me pretty bad," then shook hands with him and passed on to meet the distinguished committee.

Jacob Spangler, the father of Patrick, lived a mile and three quarters east of Decatur. Patrick was about twelve years old. He thinks that his father was a member of the committee appointed to greet Mr. Lincoln when the train arrived at Decatur and as he remembers it Judge Charles W. Emerson was another.

On the morning of the great day that Mr. Lincoln was to pass through, Jacob Spangler and his older sons were preparing to go to Decatur. Patrick of course, wanted to go with them. He was told to stay at home. What did a twelve year old boy know about presidents-elect or about Mr. Lincoln? But after the others had left home Patrick set out alone and on foot. For most of the way he followed the track of the Wabash Railroad but he was frequently obliged to detour. At intervals along the track leading out of Decatur were armed guards. The guards were civilians for the war was not yet begun and there were no soldiers for such duty. Each man carried a gun.

Whenever he came in sight of one of these guards, Patrick took to the fields and the fields along that stretch of railroad were some of them pretty wet. About where the Wabash shops are now, the ground was low and there were ponds of water. As a result of this turning aside through ditches and fields, he was a spectacle to distress the mother of any lad.

But it is quite likely that it was the boy's pathetic appearance that caught the eye of Mr. Lincoln, always quick with sympathy. At least it was his appearance that called for the remark, "My boy, you must have wanted to see me pretty bad." The honor which Mr. Lincoln conferred upon the boy was one which many men in that crowd were struggling for.

Mr. Spangler does not remember much about subsequent happenings at the station. Of course the train soon moved on and the crowd dispersed. Patrick had no desire to make himself conspicuous. Having seen what he had come to see, he was now only anxious to get back home as quietly and unostentatiously as possible. He hoped that he had not been seen by any of his family for if he had, he rather expected some lively happenings when he reached home.

Nelse Smith, a neighbor, stopped at the Spanglers for dinner that day. At the table Mr. Smith, no doubt with the intention of making himself agreeable said: "Well, Patrick, you got to shake hands with the president today."

This was a sort of attention which Patrick was not courting in the least. If he had been a boy of today he would have said to himself: "What does Old Smith want to bawl me out like that for?" As it was, he hung his head and got busy with his dinner.

"Why Patrick wasn't there," said his father with conviction.

"Oh, yes, he was," said Mr. Smith, "I saw him shake hands with Mr. Lincoln," the first one."

Perhaps Jacob Spangler was impressed with the fact that his boy was the boy singled out by Mr. Lincoln as the first to shake hands with. Perhaps he was impressed with the subtler thought that a boy's nature is deeper than it seems and that it had been an injustice to try to keep him at home. At any rate no word was afterward heard by Patrick of his disobedience.