

Old Main:

I first saw Old Main at the end of a long trek in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln. I had begun in Kentucky, ^{had} ~~passed~~ ^{some} ~~piloted~~ through Southwestern Indiana, down the Sangamon to New Salem, from New Salem to Springfield. I had traveled from County seat to County seat in the old eight districts ^{and two} ~~and two~~ - ~~it was over thirty-five years ago~~ - I was making a tour of the towns in which the Lincoln-Douglas debates were held.

One task I had taken on myself, in this long journey, was to see for myself, as far as possible, what at each point of his life Lincoln's ^{physical} ~~surroundings~~ ^{reconstruction} had been - the cabin in which he had been born - the schoolhouse in which he had studied - the ^{offices} ~~places~~ where he had studied and practiced law. Of all these I had ~~been trying to gather material and trying to~~ ^{By the time I reached Old Main} ~~visualize~~ and the sum total of my gatherings weighed heavily upon my spirit - ^{What did I have but a collection of,} The tumble down log cabins, the remnants of shacks, commonplace houses and ~~cabins~~, court houses ^{original} dingy and disorderly even, as was often true, dignified.

It was discouraging to know that this man had had so little of comfort and almost nothing of beauty in his background.

I was feeling this heavily when I went to Galesburg

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difficult for me to ^{directly} ~~to~~ ^{deep} ~~the~~ the desperate satisfaction that
that fine old building brought me. Old Main has the ^{is a given} ~~the~~ she
a calm ^{her} ~~great~~ dignity of ^{she} ~~its~~ own; it has character and it has
charm. What a background I had at last found for a Lincoln scene,
speech. I set myself to ~~work~~ with gusto to digging up all
available data. of what went on ^{and} ~~on~~ that October 8th, 1858.
in Galesburg. - the day - the crowd - Douglas - Lincoln -
where they stood - what they said.

Zest and interest ^{were} was given to my work by the fact that it was under the direction - ~~certainly with the full co-operation~~ of my old friend, then President of Knox College, Dr. John H. Finley. I had known Dr. Finley well in other years and he generously took me into his home where I for the first time met Martha ^J Boden Finley. Nobody could have been more hospitable, more helpful, than they were. That association added a glow to Old Main itself.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Among those ^{when} that Dr. Finley arranged for me to meet in Galesburg that ^{had} ^{will} have recollections of the debate was Colonel Clark E. Carr. Colonel Carr had heard the Galesburg debate as indeed he ^{had} all of the series of seven and he

was much interested ^{with} the plan McClures Magazine, for which I was doing the research, had for ^a the picture of the scene. After I had gone away from Galesburg he wrote me under date of April 25, 1895:

"There is no picture that I have ever seen representing one of the joint debates between Lincoln and Douglas, but it seems to me that it would be a good subject for an artist. He could place the two great characters of course in the foreground and then make portraits of prominent Illinoisians of those days about them, such men as Judge Davis, Leonard ^{Swett} Smith, O. H. Browning, Joseph Medill, General ~~McClelland~~ ^{McClelland} and General McClelland.

organ "The debate in Galesburg was on the East side of the main (Central) Knox College building. The stage was immediately in front of and partly covering the hall door. Stage about 10¹/₂ feet ~~but~~ high. The speakers and listeners on the stage faced the East and the crowd was standing filling the space between the main building and the low part of the East brick ^{upon} which I was ^{perched} I give you all this in detail as Mr. McClelland ^{sure} knows the ground perfectly and can advise.

"I have thought that a picture for the magazine might be made up by having a photograph ~~copy~~ made of the

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ground and our college building on that side, and that then a clever artist could make the stage which was about 25 feet square and put Douglas and Lincoln upon it with people all about them."

Out of this letter and of the material already collected a picture was made by an excellent artist.

(1) William R. Leigh

Old Main wall forever remain distinguished because it was the background of one of that great series of debates. but what ~~It has something more to~~ particularly distinguish it ~~is that~~ the occasion however - because here for the first time in this ~~the~~ series Lincoln drove his argument down to the question of the right and wrong of slavery. ^{was} ~~It was at this debate and it was~~ here for the first time ~~that he had~~ boldly proclaimed that the final and answerable reason for opposing the extension of slavery was that it was a wicked institution.

Four years before in 1854 when he had first challenged the repeal of the Missouri-Compromise by which slavery was admitted into hitherto free territory he had ~~given~~ declared the institution a monstrous *injustice*

But his characterization of slavery as wrong, his ~~sense~~ *deliberate* ~~that~~ the negro ^{and yet} as a man, had ^{no man had his} right to eat the bread he earned, his insistence that there ~~was no~~ moral right for ~~one~~ ^{to make} ~~man~~ making a slave of another. - all of this had brought upon him the charge

stirred like a passion

of abolitionism, of a desire to bring about the social equality of black and white.

When the debates began in 1858 Lincoln found himself forced by Douglas, a most able and adroit disputant *on* what the Missouri Compromise meant and those of 1850 had meant to meet these charges. / He found himself involved in the

necessity of personal attacks. It was not indeed ^{until} the fifth

debate at Galesburg that *Lincoln* he found it possible to introduce *bring those issues*

been to what to him *was* the crux of the whole matter, that slavery was wrong and must be kept back or it would spread over the whole country.

~~Beveridge in his Life of Lincoln declares that this interjection of the moral wrong of slavery into the brought Galesburg speech / was a new point in Lincoln's argument, the debate though it was four years old in matter of fact.~~ *and*

~~He lifted the Galesburg speech onto a higher level than any of its predecessors.~~ *main* What he was fighting, *left at their argument to*

Lincoln he told hearers, was a moral and social and political evil; what he was working for was a policy that looked to the prevention of it as a wrong and looked hopefully to the time when as a wrong it would come to an end.

"There is *this* a real difference," *he went on* he told his Galesburg audience. ~~there was great applause,~~ between Douglas and his friends on the one hands and the Republicans on the other. *A* In Mr. Lincoln's audience was ^{at} Galesburg

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Lincoln began in 1858 Lincoln found

to defend himself against abolitionism - to
discuss sectionalism. ^{sovereignty} Equality - the
of the Masonic Conspiracy - the
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well as explicitly and personally attacks
on Lin used as a public man. Of all
Amos Dyer did not wait the
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in - He did not go publicly ~~the~~
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Galapagos audience. There was great applause between

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clergyman, one of the great Beecher families - Edward Beecher; and he went home to write of Lincoln's speech ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{who} ~~it was he was an ardent opponent of slavery.~~

"There was a grandeur in his thoughts, a comprehensiveness in his arguments, and abiding force in his conclusions, which were perfectly irresistible. The vast throng was silent as death; every eye was fixed upon the speaker, and all gave him serious attention. He was the tall man eloquent; his countenance glowed with animation, and his eye glistened with an intelligence that made it lustrous. He was no longer awkward and ungainly; but graceful, bold, commanding."

From that day at Galesburg Mr. Lincoln's arguments took on new power. Here was the real issue and he ^{henceforth} ~~gave his hearers an issue from henceforth~~ ^{which U. man to that issue} ~~must listen.~~ his hearers must listen.

~~"quote 367 of 'Footsteps'"~~

What makes Old Main of Knox College of pre-eminent value, not only to the youths of the College but to the youth of the country, is because it is a monument to the greatest of all issues.

Here is the true glory of Old Main. It is a monument to the struggle between right & wrong - a monument to the truth that every faithful & wedded proclaimer still there who fight against cannot fail.

Notes of talk made at
Knox College dinner
Jan 13, 1934

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I first saw Old Main at the end of a long trek in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln. I had begun in Kentucky, had passed through Southwestern Indiana, gone down the Sangamon to New Salem, from New Salem to Springfield. I had traveled from County seat to County seat in the old Eight District and now I was making a tour of the towns in which the Lincoln-Douglas debates were held.

One task I had taken on myself, ~~in this long~~ journey, was to see for myself, ~~as far as possible~~, what at each point of his life Lincoln's physical surroundings had been - reconstructing the cabin in which he had been born - the schoolhouse in which he had studied - the ^{Court House} ~~offices~~ where he had practiced law. By the time I reached Old Main the sum total of my gatherings weighed heavily upon my spirit - what did I have but a collection of tumbled down long cabins, remnants of shacks, commonplace houses, dingy and disorderly ^{court} houses even, as was often true, originally dignified.

It was discouraging to know that this man had had so little of comfort and almost nothing of beauty in his background.

I was feeling this heavily when I went to Galesburg, the scenes of the fifth debate in the series of seven. It was then that I first saw Old Main. It is difficult to describe the deep satisfaction that that fine old building brought me. Old Main is gracious; she has a calm dignity of her own; she has character and charm. What a background I had at last found for a Lincoln scene! I set myself with gusto to digging up all available data of what went on in Galesburg that October seventh of 1858 - the day - the crowd - Douglas - Lincoln - where they stood - what they said.

Zest and interest were given to my work by the fact that it was under the direction of my old friend, then President of Knox College, Dr. John H. Finley. I had known Dr. Finley well in other years and he generously took me into his home where I for the first time met Martha Boyden Finley. Nobody could have been more hospitable, more helpful, than they were. That association added a glow to Old Main itself.

Among those with recollections of the debate whom Dr. Finley arranged for me to meet was Colonel Clark E. Carr. Colonel Carr had heard the Galesburg debate as indeed he had all of the series of seven and he was much interested in the plan McClures Magazine, for which I was doing the

research, had for a picture of the scene. After I had gone away from Galesburg he wrote me under date of April 25, 1895:

"There is no picture that I have ever seen representing one of the joint debates between Lincoln and Douglas, but it seems to me that it would be a good subject for an artist. He could place the two great characters, of course, in the foreground and then make portraits of prominent Illinoisians of those days about them, such men as Judge Davis, Leonard Swett, O. H. Browning, Joseph Medill, General Logan and General McClelland.

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Four years before in 1854 when he had first challenged the repeal of the Missouri-Compromise by which slavery was admitted into hitherto free territory he had declared the institution a "monstrous injustice." But his characterization of slavery as wrong, his declaration that the negro was a man and had the right to eat the bread he earned, his insistence that no man had the moral right to make a slave of another man - all of this had stirred violent passion and brought upon him the charge of abolitionism, of a desire to bring about the social equality of black and white.

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Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19th St.
New York City

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