

OFFICE OF
A. L. BEALL
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
OF HENDERSON COUNTY

Og uawka, Illinois.
July 25, 1923.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 E. 19th. Street,
New York.

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

It was such an unusual occasion for one in our family to get such an interesting a letter as I received from you last May that it has successive been lost and recovered several times. I have been on the lookout for some of the material suggested in your letter and not until today have I been able to find the time and the stories that I am sending you.

Would it be at all possible that you would be in this vicinity during the last week in August? We are planning to hold our annual Teachers' Institute at that time, and if it will be possible to have you make an address some time during the day of August 31? I do not have a very large fund to use for an address to the boys and girls who are to graduate from the eighth grade at that time, but I assure you, that we would appreciate having you talk to them. I thought perhaps you might want some other material we may be able to find, and could spare a little time to come here if you were to be in this section of the country at that time.

I know it is a pretty hot time here at that time often, and often we strike some very fine weather.

We will try to entertain you at any time you may be able to come, if you can come.

If there is anything further you would like to have me hunt for, please feel free to ask.

Very sincerely,

A. L. Beall.

We cannot find a single copy of the prints and the cuts have been destroyed, but I'll ship you a book as I can take out a page and it can be returned, if you want it.

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The files of the Oquawka Spectator, during and after Mr. Lincoln came to Oquawka are available for our use in tracing any local history they may contain, although one must remember that the editor was a Democrat and everything he has written is probably written from that standpoint. I have talked to the present owner or custodian of the files, Mrs. Florence Patterson, the widow of the son of the earlier editor. Her husband took over the paper when his father, Col. J.B. Patterson became too old to look after it. It ceased publication some ten or fifteen years back. She is a very capable lady and she has told me some interesting things concerning the early history of Yellow Banks.

Judge Stephen A. Douglas spoke at Oquawka, Monday October 4, 1858, the Monday before the debate with Mr. Lincoln at Galesburg. Mr. Lincoln spoke at Oquawka the Saturday following the debate October 9th. The following from a history of the county:

"The fifth joint debate of that campaign was held at Galesburg on October 7, 1858. On the preceding Monday, October 4th, Douglas spoke at Oquawka, and the Saturday following the Galesburg debate (October 9th) Lincoln spoke at Oquawka. Both occasions were gala days, people coming from all over the country to hear them. The weather interfered somewhat with the Douglas meeting, and may have lessened the attendance; although the much larger crowd that greeted Lincoln may be readily explained by the political complexion of the county. The following is copied from the 'Oquawka Spectator' of October 7, 1858:

"On Monday last Mr. Douglas spoke in Oquawka. The morning set in very rainy and disagreeable, and the very unfavorable character of the weather undoubtedly prevented a great number of persons of all parties from coming to town, who would otherwise have been here. The cannon commenced firing a salute about sunrise. Mr. Douglas arrived in town about nine o'clock. The steamer Keokuk arrived at our wharf about ten o'clock with a delegation from the towns below, something in the neighborhood of seventy-five to one hundred persons. The Oquawka and Monmouth brass bands paraded our public streets in their band wagons and discoursed fine music. At one o'clock the Senator, accompanied by Hon. I.N. Morris and a number of their friends, proceeded to the courthouse where a stand had been erected in front of the

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building. Mr. Morris first occupied the attention for a few minutes for the purpose of making several announcements for himself. Mr. C.M. Harris of this place then welcomed Mr. Douglas in a brief speech, after which that gentleman spoke for the space of about two hours and a half to an audience which we have heard variously estimated, but which is generally set down at not less than eight hundred nor more than one thousand people. We do not purpose to give any synopsis of that speech. It will probably appear in the "Chicago Times", as we noticed a stenographer engaged in taking it down. In the evening Mr. Douglas took passage in the Keokuk to Burlington."

"In the issue of the same paper published October 14, 1858, appears the following account of the Lincoln meeting which, considering the party feeling those days and the fact that the "Spectator" was a Democratic paper seems to be a fair account:

"On Saturday last Mr. Lincoln spoke in Oquawka. The day, though rather cool, opened clear and bright, and the streets were thronged with people from all parts of the county at an early hour. Mr. Lincoln was met near the Junction (now Gladstone) by the Brass Band, a procession was formed and he was escorted to town. The procession was an imposing one and about three quarters of a mile long. At one o'clock a procession was formed which escorted Mr. Lincoln from the residence of Mr. S.S. Phelps, whose guest he was, to stand prepared for the occasion, which had been erected in front of Jamison & Moir's Block, near the river on ~~the~~ main street. J.H. Stewart, Esq. briefly introduced Mr. Lincoln who proceeded to address his auditory. The crowd in attendance is variously estimated. we should set the number between twelve and fifteen hundred people, but it may be that is too low an estimate. In the evening Mr. Lincoln visited Burlington, Iowa, by invitation. Yesterday (~~Wednesday~~) he was to meet Mr. Douglas in joint debate at Quincy."

The book continues:

"One who was present at the Lincoln meeting, says that Lincoln took for his theme practically in the same language which he used in the Springfield speech: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect ~~it~~ it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the

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belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

On this occasion he elaborated, followed substantially the line of his speeches in the joint debates; Douglas, likewise, followed, in his speech, practically the same line as in the joint debates.

In connection with the visit of Abraham Lincoln on this occasion, two rather amusing details have come down in local history. As Lincoln, his host, S.S. Phelps, and Judge Stewart, who was to introduce him, were driving, in an open carriage down the main street of the village to the place where the speaking was to be held, a man, standing along the street remarked "Well, if you can get three uglier men together again at one time, I would like to see them."

The other incident occurred at the home of Mr. S.S. Phelps, who entertained Mr. Lincoln on this occasion. He and Lincoln were old acquaintances and friends. He resembled Mr. Lincoln in appearance very much. In fact the first time the writer saw a picture of Mr. Phelps, he supposed it was a picture of Mr. Lincoln until he was informed otherwise. After dinner, as they were talking together at the home of Mr. Phelps, Lincoln took from his pocket for some purpose, a very dilapidated looking pocket knife. Mr. Phelps said to him, "Abe, it seems to me that is rather a poor pocket knife that you have." Lincoln replied: "Sumner, it is. That knife was given to me and there was a rather peculiar condition attached to the gift." Said Mr. Phelps: "What was it?" Lincoln replied: "That knife was given to me on condition that if I ever met a homelier man than my self, I was to give him the knife; fulfilling that condition, I now present the same to you." Mr. Phelps, however, it seems, did not accept the gift.

After making his speech and returning to the home of Mr. Phelps, Mr. Lincoln signified a desire to lie down and rest. He was accordingly shown upstairs and into a room where was an old fashioned "four poster" bed, with a canopy top, where he reclined for some time. Mrs. Adaline Hodson, a daughter of S.S. Phelps still resides in the old homestead, and she has always kept the old "four poster" ~~bed~~, standing in the room where Lincoln used it, and it is always shown to friends and visitors, on their first visit to the Hodson home.

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The respective visits of Lincoln and Douglas to Oquawka naturally aroused a great deal of interest in the political question of the day, and every effort was put forth by their respective partisans to make their meetings a success. On the occasion of the Douglas meeting, among other things that were done was the raising of a hickory pole by the local democracy across the street from the court house, thus demonstrating their loyalty to "Old Hickory."

On the occasion of the Lincoln speech a very elaborate parade was held in which many elegant floats, among them being a representation of Lincoln's old log cabin. Girls, beautifully dressed, were very much in evidence, adding charm to the scene, and political excitement was at its highest pitch."

(Across the street from my home there lives an old lady who is past 92 years of age. She lived in what is now Henderson county when it was a part of Warren county, coming here behind an ox team in 1838. She says they did make any effort to hear Douglas nor Lincoln, although they were partisans of the former, but it had to be a mighty bad road if they did not get out to hear old Peter Cartwright preach, if they had any knowledge that he was to be in the county. They did not think it worth while to hear either Mr. Lincoln or Mr. Douglas.)

I am going to try to get some of the pictures of the room and the bed for you. I think we could find the half-tones from which they were made if you care to use them. I have copied the stories, etc. as they are written in a history of the county that was printed in 1911. I am trying to locate some of the letters written by Mr. Phelps' daughters but I know this that he and Mr. Lincoln became acquainted in the Sangamon country, and called each other by their first names, and Mr. Phelps lived in the Sangamon country for some time before he came to this part of the state in 1828.

I hope you will pardon the mistakes in typing, as they are all mine.