

# LINCOLN LORE

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## MEMORIALIZING LINCOLN'S WISCONSIN VISIT

The dedication on June 23 of the Lincoln-Tallman Museum at Janesville, Wisconsin deserves some attention in this bulletin because it serves as another link in that ever extending chain of shrines dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. This homestead might well be called the Wisconsin memorial link as it not only calls attention to a week-end spent by Lincoln in the home of William Morrison Tallman and speeches at Beloit and Janesville, but it points to the now famous speech Lincoln made at the Wisconsin State Fair in Milwaukee which was the chief incentive for the Wisconsin visit. Of earlier importance it may well serve as a memorial of Lincoln's Black Hawk War experience which took him to this very community, then a part of the state of Michigan.

The Tallman home was completed at a cost of \$42,000 only two years before Lincoln's 1859 visit. It is a brick structure of Italian Villa design with three floors and twenty rooms. The home served as a station on the underground railroad which conveyed fugitive slaves from southern plantations to areas of freedom. A room in the basement where the slaves were harbored is still preserved in its original setting.

George Kemp Tallman, grandson of William Morrison Tallman, and his wife Jessie Mac Gregor Tallman, presented the mansion to the city of Janesville for the establishment of the Lincoln-Tallman Museum. Mr. Tallman, himself a collector of antiques not only contributed the Homestead but also provided furnishings and valuable items for the museum collection.

The Lincoln Room, occupied by the Illinois lawyer upon his visit there, is on the second floor and the exhibition of *Lincolniana* is also displayed on this same floor.

Previous to the dedication the Lincoln National Life Foundation was honored by a visit from Mr. and Mrs. John W. Gross and son. Mr. Gross is President of the Rock County Historical Society which has been active in directing the conservation of the project and planning for the future success of the enterprise. At the dedication George W. Gressman, President of the Janesville Chamber of Commerce, was master of ceremonies. Mr. Gross welcomed the guests and Dr. Robert K. Richardson of Beloit College delivered the dedicatory address. The Governor's Historical Commission for the state of Wisconsin has placed the house on the official list of Historic Sites in Wisconsin.

A brief summary of Lincoln's Wisconsin week-end itinerary might be timely to properly orient Lincoln in Wisconsin. The Tremont House at Chicago may be used as both the starting point and the terminal for this trip into Wisconsin extending from Thursday, September 29 to Monday, October 3.

Lincoln registered at the Tremont House on Wednesday, September 28 and the following day left for Milwaukee. He is said to have arrived very late that night at the Newhall House and visitors to the State Fair had occupied every available room. As he was not expected to arrive until morning no reservation had been made for him. However, the clerk arranged a cot at the side of the office placing a screen in front of it and here the distinguished guest spent the night.

That morning at 11 o'clock Lincoln delivered his speech on agriculture prepared especially for the occasion. It is one of the most important non-political addresses of his career. The written text was given to Henry Bleyer, who had it printed the next morning in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. Apparently pages of the speech were passed out by Bleyer to his friends as souvenirs of the occasion and some of them are still in existence.

Possibly an excerpt from the address might give some idea of the general characteristics of the speech.

"No other human occupation opens so wide a field for the profitable and agreeable combination of labor with cultivated thought as agriculture. I know nothing so pleasant to the mind, as the discovery of anything which is at once new and valuable—nothing which so lightens and sweetens toil as the hopeful pursuit of such discovery. And how vast and how varied a field is agriculture for such discovery. The mind, already trained to thought in the country school, or higher school, cannot fail to find it an exhaustless source of profitable enjoyment. Every blade of grass is a study; and to produce two where there was but one, is both a profit and a pleasure. And not grass alone, but soils, seeds and seasons; hedges, ditches and fences; draining, droughts, and irrigation; plowing, hoeing and harrowing; reaping, mowing and threshing; saving crops; pests of crops; disease of crops, and what will prevent or cure them; implements, utensils and machines, their relative merits, and how to improve them; hogs, horses and cattle; sheep, goats and poultry; trees, shrubs, fruits and flowers; the thousand things of which these are specimens, each a world of study within itself.

"In all this, book-learning is available. A capacity and taste for reading, gives access to whatever has already been discovered by others. It is the key, or one of the keys, to the already solved problems. And not only so, it gives a relish and facility for successfully pursuing the yet unsolved ones."

On the evening of the same day, however, Lincoln had an opportunity to give expression to his political philosophy in a meeting at the Newhall House and it is likely that Friday night he occupied the "handsome quarters" which had been reserved for him for September 30.

On Saturday morning the first day of October Lincoln journeyed to Beloit, Wisconsin where at two o'clock in the afternoon he delivered a political speech at Hanchett's Hall. It was scheduled as an out doors meeting but rain caused the removal to the more convenient place of assembly. Later that afternoon at the solicitation of A. A. Jackson and W. M. Tallman he traveled the thirteen miles to Janesville and addressed a public meeting there that night. Lincoln recalled that back at the time of the Black Hawk War he had traveled part of that same road as a volunteer soldier.

Lincoln must have been greatly impressed with the magnificent home where he was entertained, a far cry from sleeping in a hotel lobby. He spent all day Sunday with the Tallman's and accompanied them to the Congregational Church for religious services that morning. The next day he started the return trip and on Monday morning, October 3 he is again found registered at the Tremont House in Chicago.