

LINCOLN LORE

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A RAILROAD MINDED PRESIDENT

President Lincoln was railroad minded and this fact may have had more to do with the winning of the Civil War than students of history have been willing to admit. The background of his sympathetic attitude towards transportation by rail is revealed in a speech which he made when but twenty-five years old. He said in part, "No other improvement that reason will justify us in hoping for can equal in utility the railroad. It is a never-failing source of communication between places of business remotely situated from each other. Upon the railroad the regular progress of commercial intercourse is not interrupted by either high or low water, or freezing weather, which are the principal difficulties that render our future hopes of water communication precarious and uncertain."

Notwithstanding certain economic savings in transportation by water, loading and orientation benefits in transportation by highway, time element advantages in transportation by air, the intercourse by rail even now is less likely to be interrupted by the natural elements.

Lincoln as an Illinois legislator, a member of Congress, a corporate lawyer, and finally as the President of the nation was an advocate for the railroads. This long association with transportation interests became most valuable to him and to the nation when he became the commander-in-chief of the armies of the Republic.

If a dozen of the most important orders issued by the War Department during the Civil War could be selected, the following one most certainly would be among them. The act virtually made Lincoln the President of all union railroads, something he never could have anticipated when representing railway companies in Illinois at a fee of \$10.00 per case.

"War Department, May 25, 1862.

"Ordered: By virtue of the authority vested by act of Congress, the President takes military possession of all the railroads in the United States, from and after this date until further order, and directs that the respective railroad companies, their officers and servants, shall hold themselves in readiness for the transportation of such troops and munitions of war as may be ordered by the military authorities, to the exclusion of all other business.

"By order of the Secretary of War:

"M. C. Meigs,
Quartermaster-General."

Some attention has been given to the utility of the railroads during the Civil War as a contributing factor to the success of the north. However, as is usually the case, it has taken a well written book featuring this phase of aggressive action to impress the student with the extremely important part which transportation of men and supplies played, especially in the ultimate result of the conflict. This book, *Victory Rode the Rails*,

THE EDITOR'S SEVENTH PACIFIC COAST ITINERARY

Although far withdrawn from the actual scenes of Lincoln's stamping ground, there are on the western coast a great many well informed students of Abraham Lincoln with whom it is always a great pleasure to fellowship. There have always been very interesting programs arranged for me both enroute to and from the Pacific and this coming itinerary will, I am sure, compare favorably with those of other years. Local schedules for each of the cities included in the itinerary may be secured preliminary to the announced date from the general agent of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in the city noted:

Albuquerque, N. M., Feb. 1, 1954.
El Paso, Tex., Feb. 2, 3.
Phoenix, Ariz., Feb. 4, 5.
San Diego, Calif., Feb. 8.
Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 9-14.
San Francisco, Calif., Feb. 15-19.
Sacramento, Calif., Feb. 22, 23.
Portland, Ore., Feb. 24, 25.
Seattle, Wash., Feb. 26, March 1.
Spokane, Wash., March 2.
Butte, Mont., March 3.
Billings, Mont., March 4, 5.
Salt Lake City, Utah, March 8, 9, 10.
Denver, Colo., March 11, 12.
Cheyenne, Wyo., March 15, 16.
Scottsbluff, Neb., March 17, 18.
Lincoln, Neb., March 19.
Omaha, Neb., March 22, 23.
Des Moines, Ia., March 24, 25.

by George Edgar Turner is another one of Bobbs-Merrill's excellent contributions to history.

While the south may have had better trained leaders of combat troops,

the north was far superior in what is technically termed, engineers. Officers who directed the building of bridges, and provided for the moving of the army and supplies from place to place have had little recognition compared with the more glorious exploits of a Lee or a Grant. The railroad minded Lincoln did not overlook the need for supervisors of carriers.

The outstanding engineering genius of the war was Herman Haupt, builder of the great transportation wonder of that day, the Hoosier Tunnel in Massachusetts. On May 23, 1862, just one month after he entered the service of the government he was called in to confer with Abraham Lincoln. Later when the President viewed the bridge over Potomac Creek, 400 feet long and 100 feet high, built in fifteen days, Lincoln said, "I have seen the most remarkable structure human eyes ever rested upon. That man Haupt has built a bridge across Potomac Creek . . . over which loaded trains are running every hour and, upon my word, gentlemen, there is nothing in it but beanpoles and cornstalks."

One of Haupt's most surprising undertakings was in preparation for the Gettysburg Battle. On July 1 when the battle lines were drawn Haupt's assistant, Adna Anderson arrived with 400 men, members of the Railroad Construction Corps. All railroads leading to Gettysburg were immediately made passable allowing thirty trains a day to reach the battlefield. By July 3, two days later when the battle was at its height, 1500 tons of supplies were expressed in to Gettysburg and the trains returning were taking the wounded to Baltimore for hospitalization.

Back in Illinois in 1857 the railroad minded Abraham Lincoln, then an attorney, had clashed with the steamboat minded Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, who had instructed a district attorney to obtain an injunction forbidding a bridge over the Mississippi River at Rock Island to be used for the passage of trains. They clashed again in 1861 and it was not until at the very close of the war in 1865, too late to be of an advantage, that Davis took over the Southern railroads. The north was fortunate indeed in having a railroad minded President who from the very beginning of hostilities, saw the large and important part transportation was to play in the contest.