



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
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THE FUNERAL OF WILLIE LINCOLN

On Monday, February 24, 1862, the funeral of William Wallace Lincoln, the eleven year old son of President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, took place at 2 P.M. in the East Room of the White House. During the service the body lay in the adjoining Green Room. The Rev. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, the pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, officiated, and his remarks were "Skillfully extended . . . so as to afford consolation to the heart of every sorrowing parent present." Dr. Gurley was followed in the funeral service by the Rev. Dr. John Smith, the pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, then located on 9th Street between C and H Streets. Mrs. Lincoln was so grief stricken that she was unable to attend the funeral.

Willie's illness had been a long drawn out siege of bilious fever, an intermittent fever assuming a typhoid character. In the 1860's there was much medical confusion in distinguishing between malaria, typhoid and pneumonia. Willie and his brother Tad both became ill in early February of 1862, but the eleven year old son's illness was more critical because about two years before, he had suffered scarlet fever "and probably acquired therefrom an unappreciated damaged heart or kidney" and could not resist the infection.

The Washington press reported almost daily the fluctuating disease:

February 10 — "Willie is reported much better today, but Tad is thought to have contracted the same illness."

February 11 — "President gives 'pretty much all of his attention' to Willie and Tad who are ill."

February 12 — "President spends much time with sick son Willie."

February 14 — "The children (Willie and Tad) we are glad to say are on the mend."

February 15 — "Reception at White House due today is omitted in consequence of the continued illness in the family of the President."

February 19 — "Willie continues critically ill though somewhat easier than yesterday."

Willie died on Thursday, February 20, at 5 P.M. Shortly thereafter, Lincoln stopped by his private secretary's office and said, "Well, Nicolay, my boy is gone — he is actually gone," and bursting into tears he went into his own office. Immediately after Willie died, Lincoln sent his carriage for Senator and Mrs. Orville H. Browning. Mrs. Browning came to comfort Mrs. Lincoln and the Senator was placed in full charge of the funeral service.

Preparing the child's body for burial was Browning's first concern. The body was embalmed on February 22 by Doctors Brown and Alexander, who were assisted by Dr. Wood. The work was done in the presence of attending physicians Dr. Stone and Dr. Hall, Senator Browning and Isaac Newton. The method of Sagnet of Paris was used

and the results were entirely satisfactory to the attendant friends of the family. Extravagant claims were made of the Sagnet process, stating that the remains became a "shell in effigy, a sculpture." However, the critical Lincoln student will not accept the claim that "the embalmers prepared the body so handsomely that the President had it twice disinterred to look upon it." After the boy's body was embalmed, the remains were placed in a metal casket furnished in rosewood and silver.

On February 22, Senator Browning took the President's carriage and drove out to Georgetown with William T. Carroll to examine his vault which he had offered for the use of the President's dead son. It is difficult to determine how this offer of the use of the Carroll vault came about. Carroll was for thirty-five years (appointed in 1827) the Clerk of the United States Supreme Court. He was the son of Charles Carroll of Bellevue. As the Supreme Court of that period convened in the shadow of the Senate Chamber, it is possible that the Clerk of the Court was well known to Senator Browning, even though they would have had only one year to get acquainted. Possibly a simple request or a direct offer was made.

On the other hand, as suggested by Miss Mathilde Williams (Curator of the Peabody Library Association of Georgetown) in her essay on the funeral of Willie Lincoln, the Carrolls may have been long time friends of the Lincolns through a Carroll-Sprigg relationship dating back to the early months of Lincoln's congressional career when he with Mrs. Lincoln boarded at Mrs. Benjamin Sprigg's rooming house on Carroll Row.

William T. Carroll married Sallie Sprigg, and in 1857 their son William Thomas, Jr., aged twenty-three years, died on January 19. A month later, on February 21, their five year old son Howard Carroll died. The Carrolls purchased Lot 292 in Oak Hill on March 5, and the first interments in a new vault in the northwest extremity of the cemetery, on a slope overlooking Rock Creek, were made in May. In 1861 the remains of an infant son named William Cuyler Carroll were also placed in the vault.

Willie's death occurred two days before the nation



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
William Wallace Lincoln
Born December 31, 1850
Died February 20, 1862



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The 18' x 36' chapel at Oak Hill Cemetery where the Rev. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley repeated the "solemn burial service" prior to placing Willie Lincoln's remains in the burial crypt.

would celebrate George Washington's birthday. On February 21 the Cabinet met and adjourned, after reading the "Journal", because of the death in the President's family. The Cabinet requested Congress to cancel the illumination of the public buildings on February 22 out of respect for the President's family. On February 23 John G. Nicolay wrote a memorandum to the effect that "At night the city was partially illuminated, but the illumination of the public buildings having been countermanded on account of the death of the President's son, the show was not so imposing as it would otherwise have been." During this holiday period the members of the Cabinet and their wives called on President and Mrs. Lincoln.

On February 23 the body of Willie was viewed at the White House by many friends of the family. However, Mrs. Lincoln was inconsolable, and it was said that she never entered Willie's sickroom again. While Willie's body lay in state in the Green Room the undertaker placed in his hands a bouquet of flowers, and before the casket was closed Mrs. Lincoln requested that the flowers be sent to her room.

The interior of the White House was draped with black crepe. Even the great mirrors were covered with black cloth. Fortunately, Tad Lincoln's condition improved, and on the day of the funeral he was no longer on the critical list.

The funeral was attended by a large crowd including Cabinet Officers, foreign ministers, members of Congress and citizens in general who gathered in the East Room for the funeral services. After the White House service was concluded, Willie's remains were placed in a hearse drawn by two white horses for the trip to Oak Hill on the "picturesque heights" of Georgetown.

Black horses drew the President's carriage. Lincoln was accompanied by his son Robert, and by Senators Browning (Ill.) and Trumbull (Ill.). The funeral cortege was made up of the Illinois congressional delegation, Vice President Hamlin, the heads of government departments, Major General George B. McClellan, foreign ministers, members of Congress and many private citizens.

Miss Williams' essay provides the following information regarding the route of the funeral cortege: "A long sad procession moved slowly out of the White House grounds into Pennsylvania Avenue. Going westward along that thoroughfare it stumbled through the rubble around the new bridge carrying an equally new aqueduct over Rock Creek, and passed into Bridge Street, Georgetown. When the head of the cortege reached Oak Hill Cemetery by way of Washington Street it was found necessary, because of the length of the line to route a

part of the line along Bridge Street into High Street. Climbing the hill up past the new High Level Reservoir, it turned into Road Street, and proceeded eastward to the cemetery, where the body of William Wallace . . . was to be placed in the vault of W. T. Carroll, on Lot 292."

Once the procession arrived in the cemetery, the mourners proceeded to the chapel where "the solemn burial service" was repeated by Dr. Gurley, after which the coffin was deposited in the crypt prepared for it. All present understood that this was a temporary arrangement and that eventually the remains would be permanently deposited in Illinois.

The government offices in Washington were closed on the day of Willie's funeral, and John G. Nicolay made the statement that this was "the only time probably that the death of a child has been so observed in the history of

our country."

Mrs. Lincoln who was unable to attend the funeral spent the next ten days in bed. It was with some difficulty that her sister, Mrs. Ninion W. Edwards, who had been summoned from Springfield, Illinois to comfort her in her bereavement, finally persuaded her to put on her mourning attire.

Oak Hill Cemetery, established 123 years ago, contains the remains of several notable people such as John Howard Payne, composer of "Home, Sweet Home,"



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Door to the William Thomas Carroll vault in Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown where Willie Lincoln's remains were temporarily placed.

Peggy O'Neale and her husband, Senator John H. Eaton, a member of Jackson's Cabinet and a minister to Spain; Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War; General Jesse Lee Reno; Bishop William Pinckney; Philip Barton Key, Uncle of Francis Scott Key; Reuben Dow (whose gun barrel fences made of ordnance rejected in the Mexican War still surround the Dean Atchinson, Illder and Craighill houses); James G. Blaine; General Uriah Forest, the veteran of the Revolution; W. R. Singleton; Colonel James A. Joyce; and E. D. E. N. Southworth, prolific novelist who lived and wrote in Georgetown until her death.

MOSAIC LINCOLN MURAL

On September 26, 1963, at the time of the dedication of David K. Rubins' Lincoln statue (see Lincoln Lore No. 1510), a mosaic Lincoln mural was unveiled on the south wall of the entrance lobby of the Indiana State Office Building. The mural was created by Garo Z. Antreasian, Indianapolis artist and advanced painting instructor at John Herron Art School.

The competition was judged by the same jury that selected the Rubins statue. As Lincoln's relationship with the State of Indiana has often been overlooked, it was thought well that the works of art for the new State Office Building should commemorate the fact that Lincoln had spent his formative years on Indiana soil.

The mosaic mural is majestic in scale. According to the magazine *Indiana Architect*, October 1961, "The south lobby wall of travertine marble was the logical setting . . . , and the artist chose a mosaic mural to respect and magnify the marble surface while relating the mural to the mosaic used on the 'drop' ceiling running the length of the lobby on the west side.

"Ornateness of style was avoided as being inappropriate to the theme, and the mural was designed with a free-flowing pattern vignettted against the travertine wall, thereby avoiding a ponderous effect which would have

been detrimental to the expansive and airy character of the architecture.

"A stylized map of the area of Lincoln's boyhood forms the framework for this pattern, and the conformity of the Ohio River in the region was chosen as the unifying element. The key geographic spots (such as Gentryville, Pigeon Creek and the Anderson River) are simply depicted and serve as terminal points of Lincoln's environment.

"Within this locus, significant episodes of Lincoln's youth are depicted:

1. The Pensive Student (lower left): Lincoln sitting on recently-felled logs, pondering a passage from a book he is reading.

2. Taking Grain to the Mill (upper center): Lincoln pictured riding his horse, with sacks of grain tied across the horse's back.

3. Flat Boat Trip to New Orleans (center foreground): Lincoln's first venture into the outside world, and his first close contact with slavery.

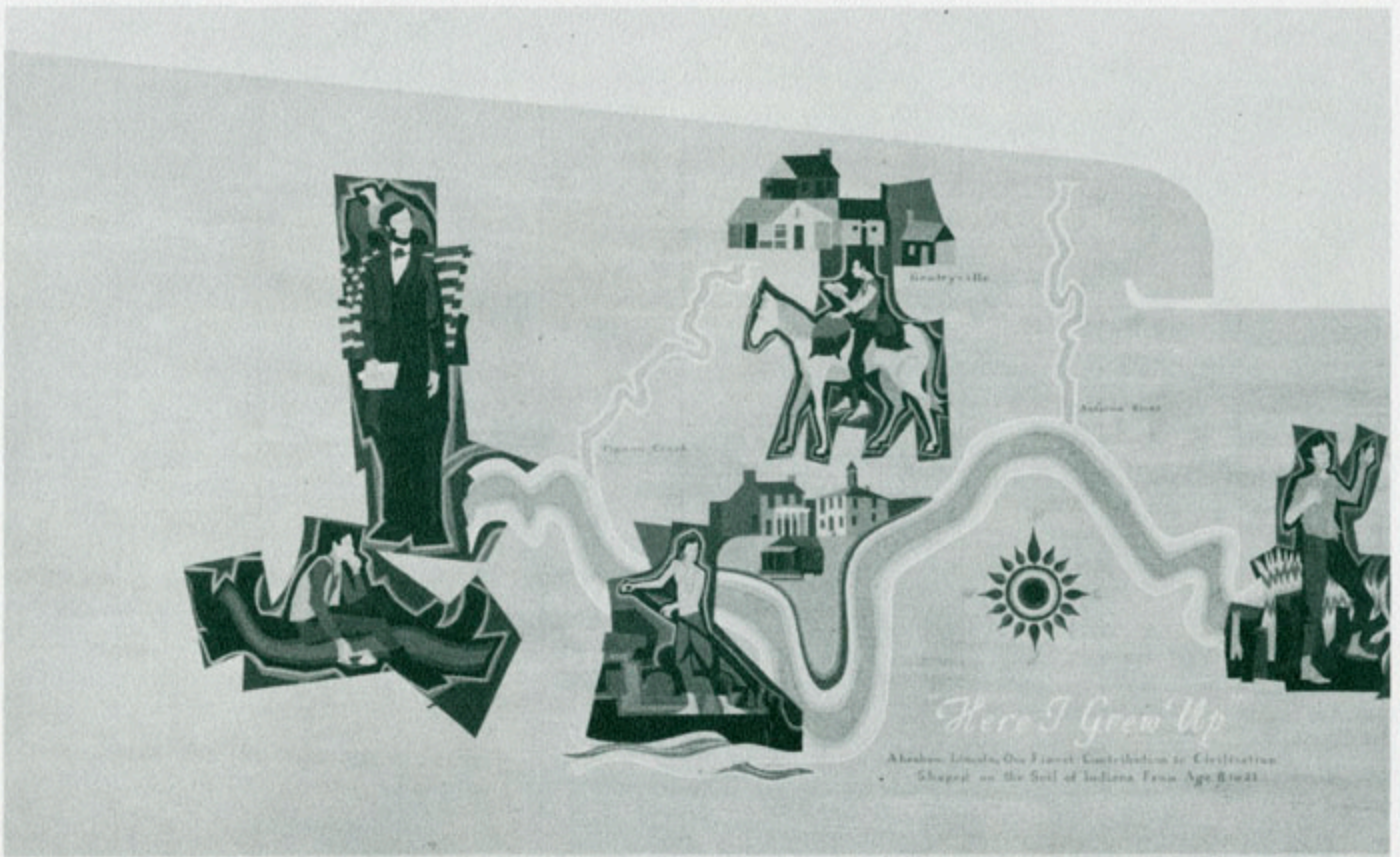
4. Backwoods Stump Speaker (far right): Practicing the oratory for which he would later become famous.

5. The Statesman (upper left): This larger figure of Lincoln as an adult overshadows the youthful episodes, and implies the fulfillment of his youth."

Below the mural is the quotation, "Here I Grew Up." This is followed by the statement, "Abraham Lincoln, Our Finest Contribution to Civilization, Shaped on the Soil of Indiana From Age 8 (7) to 21."

Mr. Antreasian executed the mural in Byzantine Smalti, brilliantly-colored opaque glass particles measuring approximately 3/8ths by 5/8ths of an inch by 1/9th of an inch thick. This is the same type of material used to make the famous mosaics of Byzantine times.

The mural is roughly forty-five feet long by twenty-two feet high. There are eighty-seven different hues and shadings of the smalti. About 300,000 individual pieces of glass are incorporated into the finished artwork.



Photograph courtesy of Garo Z. Antreasian

The mosaic Lincoln mural in the lobby of the Indiana State Office Building, Indianapolis. The incorrect age of 8 shown in the mural has been changed to the correct age of 7.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1963

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New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

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Number 1510, December 1963.

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McMurtry's
Speaking Itinerary—1964

Albuquerque, N. M., Jan. 10-13

Phoenix, Arizona, Jan. 14-15

El Paso, Texas, Jan. 16-17

San Antonio, Texas, Jan. 20-21

Houston, Texas, Jan. 22-23

Beaumont, Texas, Jan. 24-27

Fort Worth, Texas, Jan. 28-29

Dallas, Texas, Jan. 30-31

San Juan, Puerto Rico, Feb. 3-7

St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 13-14

Springfield, Mo., Feb. 17-18

Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 19-20

Denver, Colorado, Feb. 21-24

Any persons interested in learning
details of the above schedule may con-
tact the general agency office of The
Lincoln National Life Insurance Com-
pany.