

Abraham Lincoln Visits Kansas

Harold Dellinger, Special Projects Editor
WindingRiver.com

Abraham Lincoln was only an ex-Congressman from Illinois and a little-known candidate for the Republican nomination for President when he made his only visit to Kansas from November 30 - December 7, 1859. The Kansas campaign trip was arranged by Mark Delahay, who was chairman of the Kansas Republican Party. At stake were the six votes allocated to Kansas Territory (K.T.) at the upcoming Republican Convention.

Chairman Delahay was married to Louisiana Hanks, a distant cousin of Lincoln. Mrs. Delahay was said to greatly resemble Lincoln in appearance and action.

Lincoln traveled to Kansas across Missouri on the Hannibal - St. Joseph Railroad, which had just been completed. He arrived in St. Joseph on November 30 and was taken to a barber shop, where he received the Chicago and New York newspapers. Later that day he was ferried across the Missouri River to Elwood (K.T.). Lincoln spoke that night at the Great Western Hotel in Elwood; on the subject of the scheduled execution of ex-Kansan John Brown. Lincoln said “John Brown has shown great courage, rare unselfishness...But no man, North or South, can approve of violence and crime.”

Lincoln’s tour through eastern Kansas included formal speeches at Troy, Doniphan, Atchison and Leavenworth - plus several impromptu gatherings along the way. His efforts attracted attention everywhere he went and were generally well received, even in the “pro-slavery” town of Leavenworth . There he spoke at Stockton’s Hall in the afternoon to a packed audience that included more than a few ladies. Later at a public reception in his honor, Lincoln spoke from the steps of the Planters Hotel. Lincoln continued to distance the Republican Party from the methods of John Brown, while asserting that “if we constitutionally elect a President, and therefore you undertake to destroy the Union, it will be our duty to deal with you as Old John Brown has been dealt with. We shall try to do our duty.”

Lincoln also urged the Kansas audience to “Leave your Missouri neighbors alone. Have nothing to do with the white people, save in a friendly way.”

On December 7, Lincoln departed St. Joseph for a return to his home in Springfield, Illinois. Despite what was judged a successful trip, Lincoln did not win the six Kansas votes at the Republican convention. They went instead to Sen. William Seward of New York. Lincoln did win the Republican nomination for President, although it took three ballots at the convention, and considerable political maneuvering, to secure.

Return to www.WindingRiver.com

Return to <http://www.windingriver.com/CivilWar2011/CW2011.htm>