

The Caravan Tour of Lincoln's Old 8<sup>th</sup>  
Circuit

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Sesquicentennial activities in the field of law began long ago as Illinois developed its decades of a great legal heritage. To celebrate the legal heritage of Illinois in its sesquicentennial year of 1968, discussions between staff members of the Illinois State Bar Association and the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission began in 1966. The planning culminated in the caravan tour of Lincoln's Old Eighth Circuit on September 23-26 of this year. In the course of the many months of planning some of the groundwork was laid for the celebration of the Illinois State Bar Association's own Centennial in 1976-77.

At its January 1968 meeting, the Board of Governors approved a Sesquicentennial program for the Association. One element of the program was the assignment of planning to a committee headed by John A. Yantis of Shelbyville. Howard Braverman, Director of Professional Services, was responsible for the major portion of the work going into the preparation of the tour.

The caravan was designed to commemorate the circuit-riding heritage of lawyers in Illinois, especially the importance of the experience to Lincoln, and to call attention to the Circuit's counties where Lincoln practiced. The caravan visited the counties that made up what was then, in Lincoln's day, the Eighth Circuit.

The tour began with the dedication of the statue by sculptress Anna Hyatt Huntington, which is at the entrance to New Salem State Park near Petersburg. The statue, called "Lincoln on the Prairie," represents Lincoln on horseback reading a law book. It was formerly at the Illinois Pavilion of the New York World's Fair.

**Beginnings at New Salem.** It was at New Salem in the 1830's that Lincoln began his study of law and where he lived when he became a legislator and a lawyer, before moving to Springfield. At the New Salem ceremonies, Circuit Judge Richard Mills, Virginia, and Associate Judge Lyle E. Lipe, Petersburg, spoke on Lincoln the lawyer and his connection with Menard County and New Salem. Ralph G. Newman, Chicago, Chairman of the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission, and State Conservation Director William T. Lodge, spoke on the background of the statue and its significance. As he was to do at every stop along the way, ISBA President Alfred Y. Kirkland, Elgin, addressed the gathering.

A high point of the caravan occurred in the afternoon of the first day, when the caravan stopped at the Metamora

Courthouse, a State Memorial, in Woodford County. The feature of this program was a talk by William H. Foster, Eureka, a former Woodford County judge. At a vigorous ninety-eight years of age, Judge Foster spoke for an hour on his recollection of early years in Woodford County. He had known many persons who had been friends of Lincoln, and who had seen Lincoln often in Woodford County when on the circuit. Judge Foster's acquaintances remembered Lincoln pitching horseshoes, one of the pastimes of lawyers when they were in Metamora attending court.

No one in the packed courtroom hearing Judge Foster speak of his decades of practice could doubt the value of an oral history project, which was another project approved by the Board of Governors in January. Oral history projects involve the tape-recording of recollections of participants in historic events or persons having knowledge of such events, personalities, and places. A recent innovation, such interviews produced valuable research material for historians.

**A Lincoln Anecdote.** Metamora was the first site of the telling of the story of Mrs. Goings, whom Lincoln represented in Woodford County. Mrs. Goings had been indicted for the murder of her husband, in spite of high feeling in favor of her, for her deceased husband had been a man of violent temper and her action had had all of the characteristics of self-defense. During the course of the preliminary proceedings, Mrs. Goings' absence was noted and Lincoln was questioned as to her whereabouts. He

said he did not know where she might be, but had seen her shortly before, in the courthouse, where she had asked him where she could get a drink of water. Lincoln stated that he did not know, but had always heard that the waters of Tennessee were as fine as anywhere! (The case against Mrs. Goings was later *nolle-prossed*.<sup>1</sup>) President Kirkland related this classic Lincoln anecdote at each subsequent stop, always to the great interest and amusement of the audience.

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Caravan A Distinct Success. Thus the caravaneers were brought into association with the counties where Lincoln practiced law in the Old Eighth Circuit, and with the lawyers and history-minded people in each area. Public attention was drawn to each county for the role it played in the Lincoln era of Illinois history.

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<sup>1</sup> **Nolle Prossed** is from the Latin term "Nolle Prosequi" meaning "We shall no longer prosecute."

Another ISBA article also discussed the Caravan Tour of the Old 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit. From the Desk of Amos Pinkerton, Executive Director, Illinois State Bar Association, Illinois Bar Journal, September, 1968.

The Sesquicentennial Year of 1968 gives Illinois lawyers and the legal profession an excellent opportunity to remind the public of the profession's contribution to the growth and development of this great state. As a part of its Sesquicentennial activities, the Illinois State Bar Association is now making plans for a caravan tour of Lincoln's Old Eighth Circuit in September to call attention to Lincoln's role as a lawyer.

Many Lincoln biographers believe that Lincoln attained his stature as one of America's greatest political leaders through the insight into human nature he gained by practicing law. During a period of 24 years, Lincoln handled thousands of cases, ranging from simple petty larceny to complicated patent infringement cases. More than 200 of his cases went to the Illinois Supreme Court.

But Lincoln was not just a general practitioner and a politician. He sat as a judge of the circuit court in the absence of the judges in several instances. He taught law in his office to several young men.

These four roles of the lawyer – the lawyer as a politician, the lawyer as a practitioner, the lawyer as a teacher, and the lawyer as a judge – will be explored by the caravan's speakers. Senator Everett Dirksen will discuss the role of

the lawyer as politician at a dinner in Pekin; Supreme Court Justice Robert C. Underwood the role of the lawyer as a judge at a dinner in Bloomington; Dean John E. Cribbet of the U. of I. College of Law the role of the lawyer as a teacher at a dinner in Champaign, and Robert D. Owen, a Decatur practicing lawyer, the role of the lawyer as a general practitioner at a dinner in Decatur.

ISBA members and their wives, particularly those residing in the counties of the Old Eighth Circuit, are cordially invited to attend the caravan functions. The caravan will make the following stops:

September 23: New Salem State Park, 10 a.m. (dedication of Lincoln statue); Metamora Courthouse, 3 p.m.; Pekin, 6:30 p.m. (dinner).

September 24: Mt. Pulaski Courthouse, 8:30 a.m.; Postville Courthouse, Lincoln, 9:15 a.m.; Pontiac, Noon (luncheon planned); Bloomington, 6:30 p.m. (dinner).

September 25: Old Courthouse, Taylorville, 8:30 a.m.; Clinton, Noon; Monticello Courthouse, 3:00 p.m.; Champaign, 6:30 p.m. (dinner).

September 26: Danville, 8 a.m.; Paris, 10:15 a.m.; Shelbyville, Noon (luncheon); Sullivan, 3:30 p.m.; Decatur, 7:00 p.m. (dinner).

We hope you can find time to join the ISBA caravan to help pay tribute to the significance of the legal profession's contribution to "150 years of the good life in Illinois."

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