

ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN TRAIN

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12th, 201 years ago. He is widely acclaimed by historians and recent public opinion polls as one of the greatest Presidents in American history. This year, 2011 marks the 145th anniversary of the assassination of the man who led his country through the Civil War. This year also marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of The War Between The States.

His death, by a gunshot from the pistol of actor John Wilkes Booth, sent shock waves throughout the country and left a sorrowing nation in mourning. A funeral train, carrying the body of the slain President, left Washington D.C. for his home in Springfield, Illinois. It stopped in a number of cities along the way so that citizens could pay their final respects to him. The funeral train would arrive in Buffalo on April 27th at 7:00 A.M. and the body would lie in state at St. James Hall on Ellicott Street.

J. H. Day, a 40 year old man from Farmersville, and an acquaintance, John Rix, decided to go to Buffalo for the viewing. At that time there was no rail service from this area so the two men loaded a wagon with maple sugar and left Farmersville at 4:00 P.M. They drove all night and arrived at their destination at 3:00 A.M. They stopped at Buffam's Hotel, a well-known stage coach stop, and had breakfast. They continued on to the open market where they sold their maple sugar and spent the remainder of the day on business matters throughout the city of Buffalo.

The hotels were already filled with people from throughout Western New York who had arrived early to see the body of the martyred President. Day and Rix found lodging with an acquaintance named Ira Catlin who lived on Commercial Street.

The body came the next morning to the Central Depot. Day arrived early to greet the train. However, the crowd was so huge that viewing was difficult. Buffalo made great preparations for the funeral procession. Throughout the city bells tolled, businesses were closed and deep mourning was observed. Military and civic organizations were at the depot for the parade. A large platform had been prepared for the body which was to be carried from the cars to a magnificent catafalque that had been built especially for the occasion. A Member of Congress from each of the states, with the exception of several of the southern states, was in attendance.

The procession moved up Exchange Street to Niagara, then to Delaware and finally to St. James Hall on Ellicott Street, since it was the only suitable place for a gathering of this magnitude. On the advice of Mr. Catlin, Day left the depot ahead of the crowd to view the slain President. Even so a line four abreast had already formed to pass the casket.

At 10:00 A.M. the body was taken into the Hall and the crowd was permitted to pass in review. Although Lincoln had been dead for thirteen days, Day remarked that he looked as peaceful and as natural as in sleep. The body was guarded by soldiers with guns and bayonets. The crowd, although in continual turmoil for a place in line, remained orderly and respectful. The bier was covered with beautiful flowers and draped with the stars and stripes.

ISCHUA VALLEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN TRAIN

Shortly after left the Hall, news spread throughout the crowd that Booth, the assassin, had been shot and the crowd was joyous. Later Day learned that he was among 100,000 mourners who had come to Buffalo for the event. He was also told that several other people had traveled there from Farmersville but had been unable to get to the casket when the line closed at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Day was an 83 year old gentleman, living in Franklinville, when he gave this account to the newspapers in 1909. He found out that W. Scott Baker, another citizen from Franklinville, had also been able to view the body of the President.

After leaving Buffalo, the funeral train continued on to Columbus, Ohio, then to Chicago, and finally to Lincoln's resting place in Springfield, Illinois.

Maggie Fredrickson
Curator of The Miner's Cabin