

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD:
THE PUBLIC SQUARE
(1823-1865)



Compiled by Richard E. Hart
For the Elijah Iles House Foundation
Springfield, Illinois

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)

Front Cover Photograph: The Illinois State House of Lincoln's time, taken from a building on Fifth Street and looking east. The photographer is unknown. *Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.*

Back Cover Photograph: Abraham Lincoln taken on February 9, 1861, two days before he left Springfield for Washington, by Christopher Smith German in his studio on the West Side of the Public Square. This is the last known photograph of Lincoln taken in Springfield.



All proceeds from the sale of this pamphlet will benefit the Elijah Iles House Foundation.

The mission of the Elijah Iles House Foundation is to preserve, restore and endow the maintenance of the Elijah Iles House for the use and appreciation of the citizens of Springfield and its visitors.

Lincoln's Springfield: The Public Square (1823-1865)

Spring Creek Series.

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First Printing, September, 2004.

The Public Square

Introduction

The Public Square in Springfield is bound by Adams, Washington, Fifth and Sixth Streets. It was created on paper in December of 1823 when the plat of the Town of Calhoun was recorded with the Sangamon County Clerk. The Public Square became Springfield's heart and soul. It was a governmental and political site—four Sangamon County Court Houses, the Illinois State House, and the United States District Court were located here. It was also a place for general and drug store keepers, hotelkeepers, lawyers, hatters, photographers, jewelers, bankers, restaurateurs and entertainers to ply their trades and professions.

From April 1837 to February 1861, the Public Square would be a stage upon which Abraham Lincoln would perform as the central figure in a drama that would conclude with a resolution of what America was to be. He entered the stage as a young, bachelor lawyer living for over three years at the northwest corner of the Square above the store of Joshua Fry Speed. He spent winter evenings around a stove at Speed's store with a coterie of Springfield's best and brightest including William H. Herndon, his future law partner, Milton Hay, James C. Conkling and Stephen A. Douglas. He practiced law in the Court House on the corner of Sixth and Washington Streets and officed at the corner of Sixth and Adams Streets. He had his picture taken in a third story studio on the South Side of the Square and in Christopher German's studio above Chatterton's on the West Side of the Square. In the Illinois State House, he argued over 200 cases before the Supreme Court, served in the Illinois Legislature and on June 16, 1858 delivered his House Divided speech in the Hall of Representatives. He learned of his nomination for President at Watson's Saloon on the South Side of the Square and celebrated there on the November night he was elected President of the United States. As President-elect, he wrote his first inaugural address in a third floor back room of his brother-in-law's store on the South Side of the Square. His body was returned to Springfield on May 3, 1865 and lay in state in the Hall of Representatives of the State House until the morning of May 4, 1865. For two days his Springfield neighbors lined the north walkway entrance to the State House and slowly entered and paid their respects to him for the last time.

I hope that the following photographs and narrative will help you to recapture the magic of this place.

Richard E. Hart
Springfield, Illinois
September 2004

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**THE FIRST COURT HOUSE AND THE ORIGINAL PUBLIC SQUARE
AT SECOND AND JEFFERSON STREETS—CIRCA 1821-1831**

“Prior to 1831, the town centered about the small square at Second and Jefferson streets, where Iles’ store and the first court house were located. The present square was on the fringe of settlement.”...¹

THE NEW PUBLIC SQUARE PLATTED IN DECEMBER 1823



PLAT OF THE TOWN OF CALHOUN SHOWING THE NEW PUBLIC SQUARE-DECEMBER 1823²

THE SECOND SANGAMON COUNTY COURT HOUSE—1825-1830

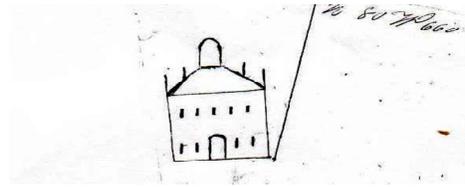
In 1825, Sangamon County moved its Court House from the northwest corner of Second and Jefferson Streets and the small square there. A two-story, new frame Court House was built at the northeast corner of Sixth and Adams Streets where the Illinois Building now stands. It was the first governmental building on the Public Square and was used until 1830.

“Dr. Garret Elkin lived on the southwest corner of Sixth and Adams, while diagonally across from him...stood the two-story frame court house which the county commissioners had built in 1825. On the west side of the square was a solitary two-room frame house. The square itself, swampy and grown over with weeds, contained only the whipping post, a gruesome monument which stood bare and awesome across from [today’s Bank One]. North of Jefferson Street, east of Sixth and south of Adams, all was virgin prairie and timber except for the home and small farm of Charles R. Matheny near the intersection of Sixth and Cook streets... [The original site of the Elijah Iles House.]³

¹ “Here I Have Lived,” *A History of Lincoln’s Springfield 1821-1865*, Paul M. Angle, Springfield, Illinois, The Abraham Lincoln Association, pp. 42-43. (Hereinafter referred to as “Here I Have Lived.”)
² This copy is from the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois. For a short time the name of Springfield was changed to “Calhoun,” but the name was not popular and was soon changed back to Springfield.
³ *Here I Have Lived*, pp. 42-43.

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THE THIRD SANGAMON COUNTY COURT HOUSE—1830-1837



THIRD SANGAMON COUNTY COURT HOUSE
IN CENTER OF SQUARE: BUILT IN 1830⁴

In 1830, Sangamon County began construction of its third Court House.

“...located in the center of the present square. Brick, two stories in height, with a hip roof surmounted by a cupola, it was the most pretentious building in town. Soon after it was finished a brick market house was built on the northwest corner of the square....A plank fence, with stiles, was built around the court house, a public well was sunk and a pump erected, and the entire square sown with grass.”⁵

It was 61 feet long and 45 feet wide. There were five windows across the front of the second story and a center door with two windows on either side of the front first floor. It cost \$6,841. Its design was of the so-called “coffee-mill” or foursquare federal style of court houses built in at least eight other Illinois counties during the 1830’s. The building was completed early in 1831 and was used until the spring of 1837 when the site was given to the State of Illinois for a new State House.

“The public square, a green pleasant lawn inclosed by a railing, contains the court-house and a market, both fine structures of brick; and the sides surrounding the square are lined with handsome edifices. Many of the buildings, however, are small; and the humble log cabin, the abiding place of some of the first settlers, not unfrequently meets the eye.”⁶

ILLINOIS STATE HOUSE 1837-1876

On February 28, 1837, the Illinois State legislature chose Springfield as the capital of Illinois and authorized the Sangamon County Commissioners’ Court “to convey to the Governor of the state of Illinois, for the use of the people of said State, all that piece or parcel of ground ...known as the “public square,” containing two and half acres ..upon which piece... of ground ... shall be erected a State House...for the State of Illinois.”

“When the news reached Springfield there was wild rejoicing, culminating in a huge bonfire built around the whipping post on the east side of the square. There were doubtless aching heads in the days that followed, for the groceries were doing a record business, but these were as nothing against the general belief that the town’s fortune was made.”⁷

⁴ *Sangamon County Commissioners Records, 1834*. IRAD, Brookens Library, University of Illinois at Springfield, Springfield, Illinois. The records contain a road survey from Springfield to Decatur with a drawing of Sangamon County’s third Court House symbolizing Springfield.

⁵ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 43.

⁶ *Illinois in 1837*, Philadelphia, published by S. Augustus Mitchell and by Grigg & Elliot, 1837, p. 129.

⁷ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 57.

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"[On April 15, 1837] Six weeks after the passage of the seat of government act the young New Salem law maker who had steered it through the legislature packed his scanty belongings in his saddle bags, rode into Springfield and arranged with Joshua Speed to share the latter's room above his store [on the northwest corner of the Public Square.]. On the same day the *Sangamo Journal* announced the formation of a new law partnership, John T. Stuart and A. Lincoln."⁸

By the end of May, 1837, the Sangamon Court House on the Public Square had been torn down to make room for the new State House. The actual move of state government into the newly constructed State House did not occur until July of 1839. Sangamon County did not build another Court House for nearly ten years.



PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ILLINOIS STATE HOUSE OF LINCOLN'S TIME LOOKING EAST

"Here Lincoln attended his last session of the legislature in 1840-1841; attended to some 235 cases in the Illinois Supreme Court; delivered the "house divided against itself" speech; and used the Governor's room as his office during the campaign of 1860 and as president-elect. Here his body lay in state May 3-4, 1865."⁹

END OF CIVIL WAR CELEBRATED

"When the wires announced Lee's surrender flags flew to their places as if by magic. In a short time business was suspended, and by common impulse the entire city sought the streets and the State House square. As the crowds grew excitement became intense; cheers and singing mingled with the noise of the bells; impromptu processions marched and countermarched. ...Hacks, buggies, wagons and drays carrying loads of singing, shouting men joined the parade and circled the square times without end. ...As the procession ended the people jammed the Hall of the House of Representatives, where orator after orator pronounced a requiem for the rebellion. Finally the last grandiloquent period ended, the applause died away, the band played, and the people walked quietly to their homes. Peace had come again."¹⁰

⁸ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 59.

⁹ *Lincoln's Inner Circle*, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, 1955.

¹⁰ *Here I Have Lived*, pp. 288-289.

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KILBURN'S DRAWING OF THE STATE HOUSE: NOVEMBER 1856¹¹

M. M. BALLOU, { NUMBER 22
WINTER STREET. BOSTON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1856. \$3.
6

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

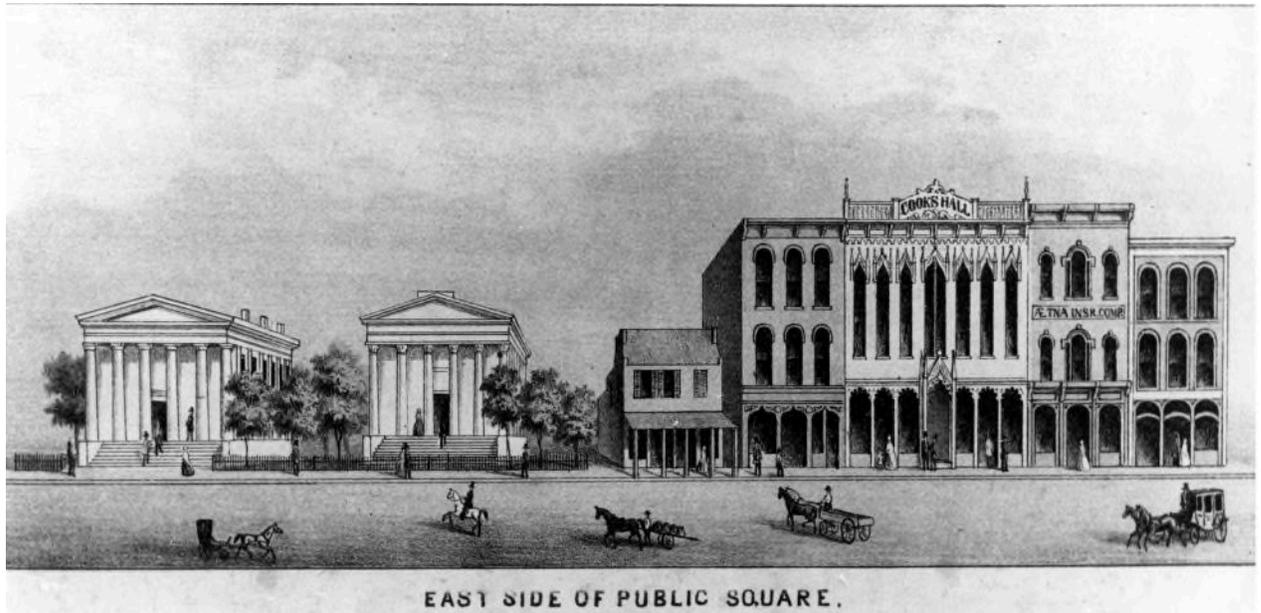
We present on this page a fine view of the State House, in Springfield, the capital of the State of Illinois, a flourishing post-town, and the seat of justice of Sangamon County. The State House is a noble stone building, of great architectural beauty, as will be seen by Mr. Kilburn's graphic delineation, executed expressly for us, together with the other pictures of the series of Springfield views, which will be seen on turning to page 312 of the present number. The State House stands in the centre of a square of three acres, bounded by Fifth, Sixth, Adams and Washington Streets. The grounds are laid out with great taste, and shaded by ornamental trees. The building cost \$180,000. The town is situated three miles south of Sangamon River, and 230 miles southwest of Chicago. It is laid out with great regularity,

the streets being wide and straight, the public square we have depicted being in the centre. The town contains a court house, three banks, a United States land office, churches of various denominations, several academies and hotels. Five or six newspapers are established here. It became the seat of government in 1840, a circumstance which imparted a sensible impulse to the place. It is here that the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad intersects the Great Western Central Railroad, which extends from the Mississippi across the State to Indiana. The western division of this line, which extends fifty-five miles from Springfield to the Illinois River, has been in operation several years, under the title of the Sangamon and Morgan Railroad, the eastern portion of which is still in the process of construction. The Chicago and Mississippi Railroad is completed from Alton to Bloomington, a distance of

¹¹ *Ballou's Pictorial*, Boston, Saturday, November 15, 1856, page 1.

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East Side of the Public Square



Haerting's Drawing of the East Side of the Public Square: Circa 1860¹²

BUSINESSES ON THE EAST SIDE OF SQUARE, FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, 1858

Sangamon County Court House
State Bank of Illinois, afterwards occupied
by Springfield Fire Insurance Company
Alley

J. M. Burkhardt, dry goods and general store
Corneau & Diller, druggists
Wright & Brown, dry goods and crockery
Boream & Bacon, books and stationery
C. W. Matheny, dry goods
A. M. Converse, groceries¹³

THE ILLINOIS STATE BANK BUILDING, 1839

In 1839, a majestic Greek Revival bank building was constructed in the middle of the East Side of the Public Square for use by the Illinois State Bank. It was a perfect compliment to the newly constructed State House, its neighbor across Sixth Street. It is the second building from the left in the drawing above. It was called “the most chaste, beautiful and substantial building west of the Allegheny Mountains.”¹⁴

In 1848, the Illinois State Bank failed and in the spring of 1851 the newly organized Springfield Marine and Fire Insurance Company purchased the building and opened its banking house there. Robert Irwin, a resident of the Iles House from 1841 to 1865, was a charter member and cashier and Abraham Lincoln's personal banker.

¹² Drawn from nature on stone by H. Haerting, 1860, L. Gast Bros., St. Louis, Missouri. (Hereinafter referred to as “Haerting.”)

¹³ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

¹⁴ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 171.

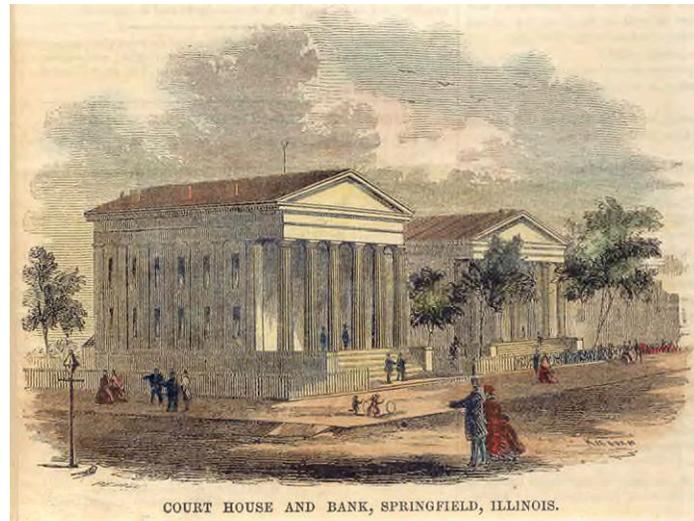
LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Photograph of Springfield Marine and Fire Insurance Company
on the East Side of the Public Square: Circa 1860's¹⁵

THE FOURTH SANGAMON COUNTY COURT HOUSE—1845-1877

“A special term of the County Commissioners’ Court was held on Saturday, April 5, 1845, to take into consideration the proposition for the purchase of ground for the erection of a new court house. The County Attorney, Stephen T. Logan, was instructed to purchase lots of James Dunlap and Robert Irwin, on the northeast corner of the square [Sixth and Washington Streets]. ...The ground was purchased and a contract entered into with Henry Dresser, on the 11th day of April, 1845, for the construction of the building. ...It was erected according to contract, and occupied until the purchase from the State of the old capital building [in 1876], when the offices were removed.”¹⁶



The Fourth Sangamon County Court House and the
Springfield Marine and Fire Insurance Company ¹⁷

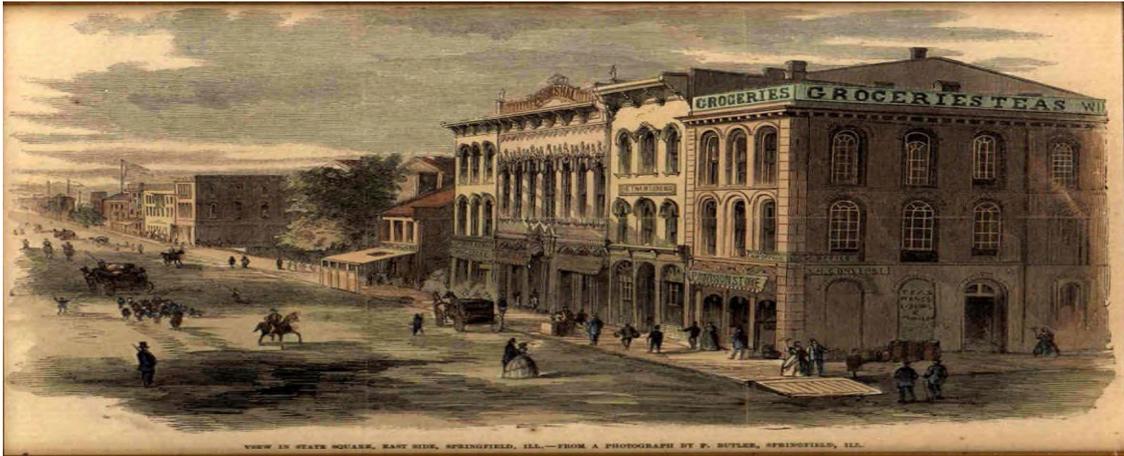
¹⁵ Photographic Division, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois. (Hereinafter referred to as “Lincoln Presidential Library.”)

¹⁶ *1881 History Of Sangamon County, Illinois*, Inter-State Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1881, p. 555. (Hereinafter referred to as “1881 History.”)

¹⁷ *Ballou's Pictorial*, Boston, Saturday, November 15, 1856.

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The Court House was just north of the Illinois State Bank and faced the Public Square and the State House. Like the State House and the Bank, it was a classic Greek Revival building, being two stories with a portico and a pediment supported by six columns and brick pilasters. Unlike the limestone Bank and sandstone State House, however, the Court House was brick instead of stone, and its Doric columns were of sand-covered hollow wood. In 1877, Sangamon County tore down the Court House and sold the subdivided lot.



Drawing of the East Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859¹⁸

“Concerning the little two-story building with the wooden awning just south of the Springfield Marine bank, according to William Ridgely it was once the Illinois State bank, which was founded by his father, Nicholas R. Ridgely...A house which long stood south of the state bank was the home of the Ferguson family. The... daughter married Jacob Bunn. The old drug store of Corneau & Diller on this site became famous as the “loafing place of some of the best known citizens of Springfield, including Abraham Lincoln, who here told some of his best stories.”¹⁹

THE FEBRUARY 13, 1858 FIRE

Fires were a constant threat and from time to time an unfortunate reality of life in mid-19th century Springfield. In the 1850's the Public Square suffered a number of very destructive fires. One of the most destructive occurred on the east side of the Public Square on Saturday, February 13, 1858.

“On Saturday night [February 13, 1858] our city was visited by one of the largest and most destructive fires which we have yet been called to record. Before it was finally stayed, it consumed six stores, almost one-half [the south half] of the East side of the square...”²⁰

After the fire, the east side was rebuilt with four, three-story brick buildings. One of them housed a large public hall on the second floor. It came to be known as Cook's Hall

¹⁸ Original in collection of Richard E. Hart. (Hereinafter referred to as “Hart.”)

¹⁹ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

²⁰ *Springfield State Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, February 15, 1858. The newspaper had various names over time. (Hereinafter referred to as “Journal.”)

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and was a popular place for public gatherings, theatrical performances, balls and parties and drills of the Springfield Grays. It is the third building from the right in the following picture.

“When Metropolitan Hall was finished in 1855 its seating capacity of 1,200 was the largest in the state, but three years later it was forced to yield, in popular favor at least, to the hall which John Cook built on the second floor of the building which he erected south of the Marine and Fire Insurance Company. In Cook’s opinion the distinctive features of this auditorium—its size, its gallery, the gas lights—could be adequately represented only by the name “Illiopolitan Hall,” but this was too much for Central Illinois, and so it quickly came to be known by its owner’s plain but familiar name.”²¹



Preston Butler’s Photograph of the East Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859²²

CALL FOR SPRINGFIELD REPUBLICAN CONVENTION AT COOK’S HALL

March 14, 1859. A mass Convention of the Republicans of Springfield will be held on Monday, the 21st inst., at 7 P.M.

At Cook’s Hall for the purpose of nominating candidates for municipal officers at the approaching City Election. A full and punctual attendance is requested..... A. Lincoln²³

LINCOLN LECTURES AT COOK’S HALL

Thursday, April 26, 1860. SPRINGFIELD. To “a large and intelligent audience” at Cook’s Hall, Lincoln repeats his lecture of a year ago on Discoveries and Invention. “The lecture was a first class production,” the Journal commented, “and gave much pleasure to the audience. It was of the most instructive and entertaining character, and we doubt not that it cost its talented author much time and labor.”²⁴

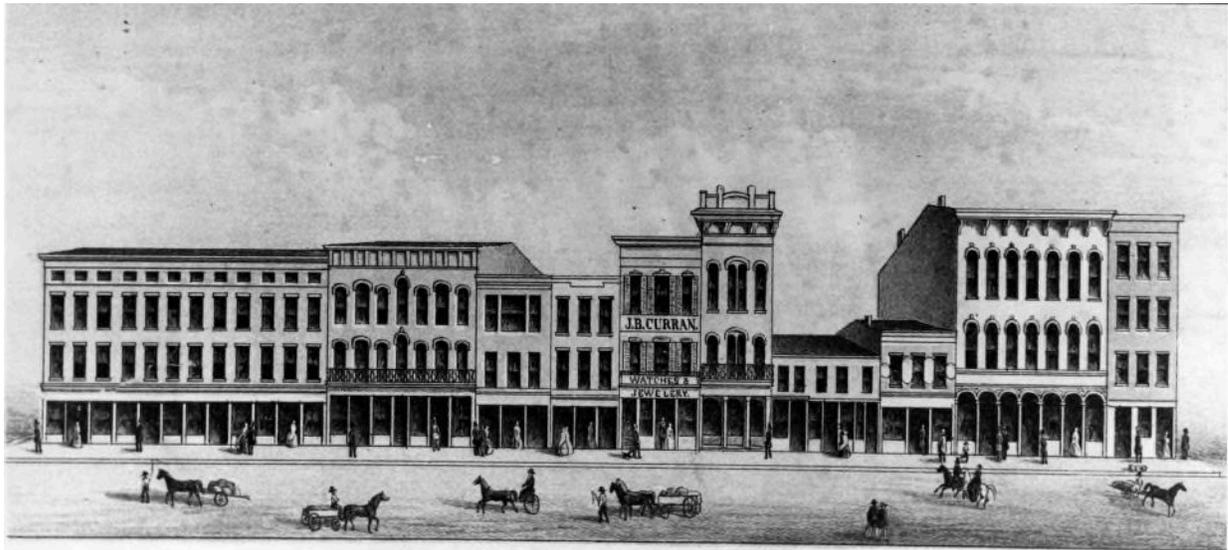
²¹ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 175.

²² Original photograph by Preston Butler, Springfield, Illinois. *Hart*.

²³ *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois, Roy P. Basler, Editor, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey. v. III, p. 372.

²⁴ *Lincoln: 1854-1861, Being the Day-by-Day Activities of Abraham Lincoln From January 1, 1854-March 4, 1861*, by Paul M. Angle, published by The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois, p. 330.

South Side of the Public Square



SOUTH SIDE OF PUBLIC SQUARE.

Haerting's Drawing of the South Side of the Public Square: Circa 1860²⁵

BUSINESSES ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE SQUARE, FROM EAST TO WEST, 1858

Hurst & Co., dry goods	William Carmean, auctioneer
Yates, Smith & Co., dry goods	Thomas Brady, saloon
Campbell & Fondy, insurance	J. H. Adams, hats and caps
W. B. Fondy, dry goods	M. Hirschfield, clothing
Lamb, Brown and Company, pork and beef packers	David Hickey, confectioner
E. R. Wiley, tailor	E. B. Pease & Bro., hardware
R. F. Ruth, harness and leather	E. B. Hawley & Co., dry goods
J. Thayer & Co., dry goods	Preston Butler, photographer
W. W. Watson, confectioner	T. S. Little, clothing
Birtchell & Owen, druggists	J. Bunn, grocery ²⁶
Ives & Curran, watches and jewelry	

LINCOLN CELEBRATES ELECTION AS PRESIDENT AT WATSON'S SALOON

In the 1850's and early 1860's, W. W. Watson operated Watson's Saloon, a popular eating-place housed in a building opposite the south entrance to the State House. It was not a saloon in the modern idiom as it served no liquor. Watson advertised that he was a confectioner. It was here on the evening of November 6, 1860 that Abraham Lincoln celebrated his election as President of the United States.

“While they were waiting for the news from New York which would clinch the victory [November 6, 1860 - Presidential Election], the little group [Lincoln, Dubois, Hatch] in the telegraph office was invited to Watson's Saloon which the Republican women of the town had taken over for the night. As Lincoln

²⁵ Haerting.

²⁶ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

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walked through the door a hundred feminine voices sang out, "How do you do, Mr. President!" and as he sat down at a long table piled with food the old refrain was started:

Ain't you glad you joined the Republicans?
Joined the Republicans,
Ain't you glad you joined the Republicans?
Down in Illinois?

"While the voices were still ringing the long-expected dispatch from New York was delivered. Returns from New York City indicated certain victory in the state. The word spread throughout the room in a flash, and congratulations came in an avalanche."²⁷



Preston Butler's Photograph of the South Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859²⁸

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY PRESTON BUTLER

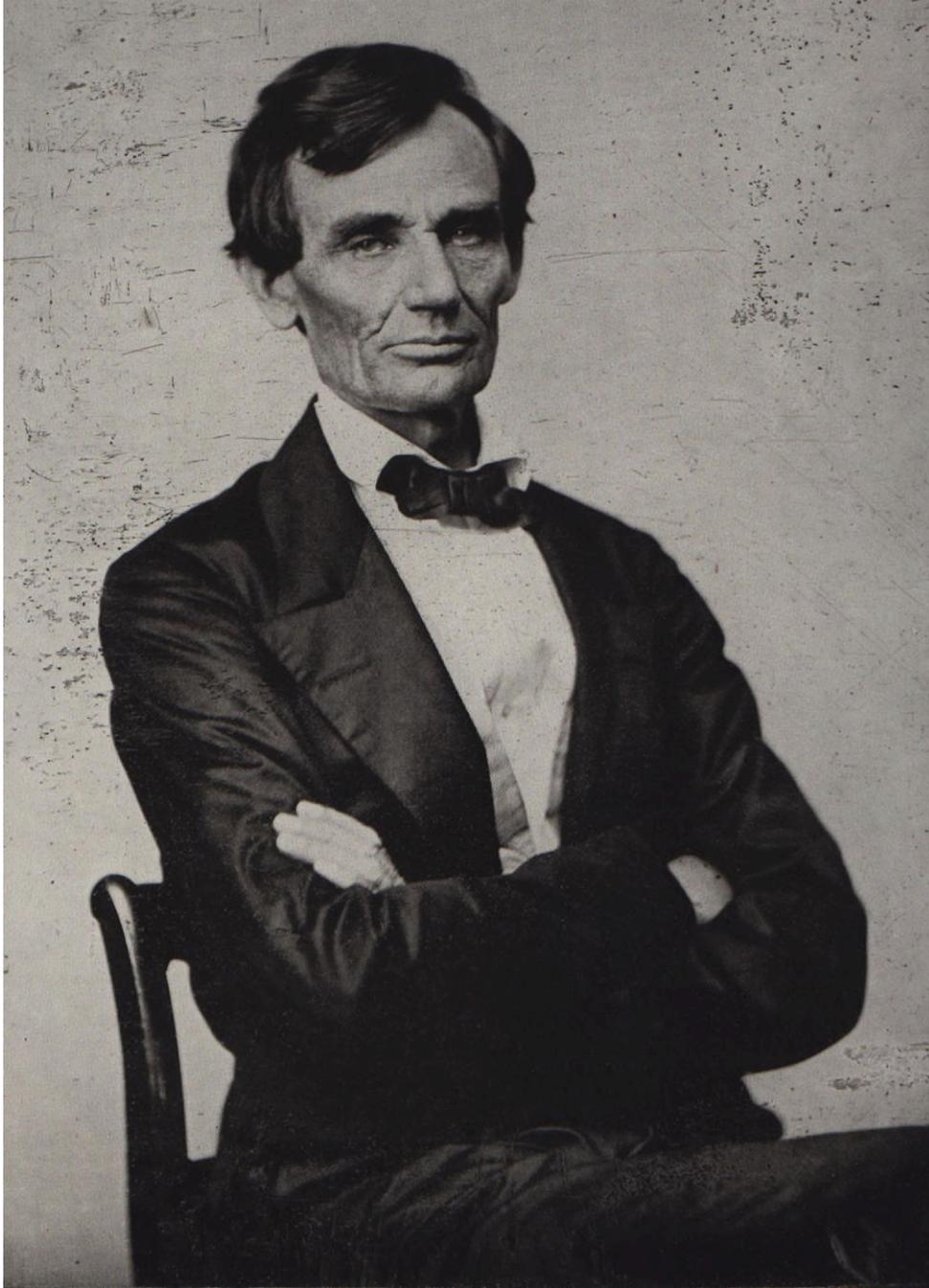
Preston Butler was an early photographer in Springfield. His studio was in the upper floor of a building on the South Side of the Square. It is shown in the above photograph with a sign on the top of the building to the left of T. S. Little's clothing store. On September 1, 1859, the *Daily State Register* contained the following advertisement for Butler's photographs of the four sides of the Public Square.

"Butler is showing some capital photographic work at his gallery, in the shape of views of the public square, embracing all its sides. He had them upon one sheet, making a very pretty collection for a single frame. He offers copies for sale."

²⁷ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 252.

²⁸ Original photograph by Preston Butler, Springfield, Illinois. *Hart*.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



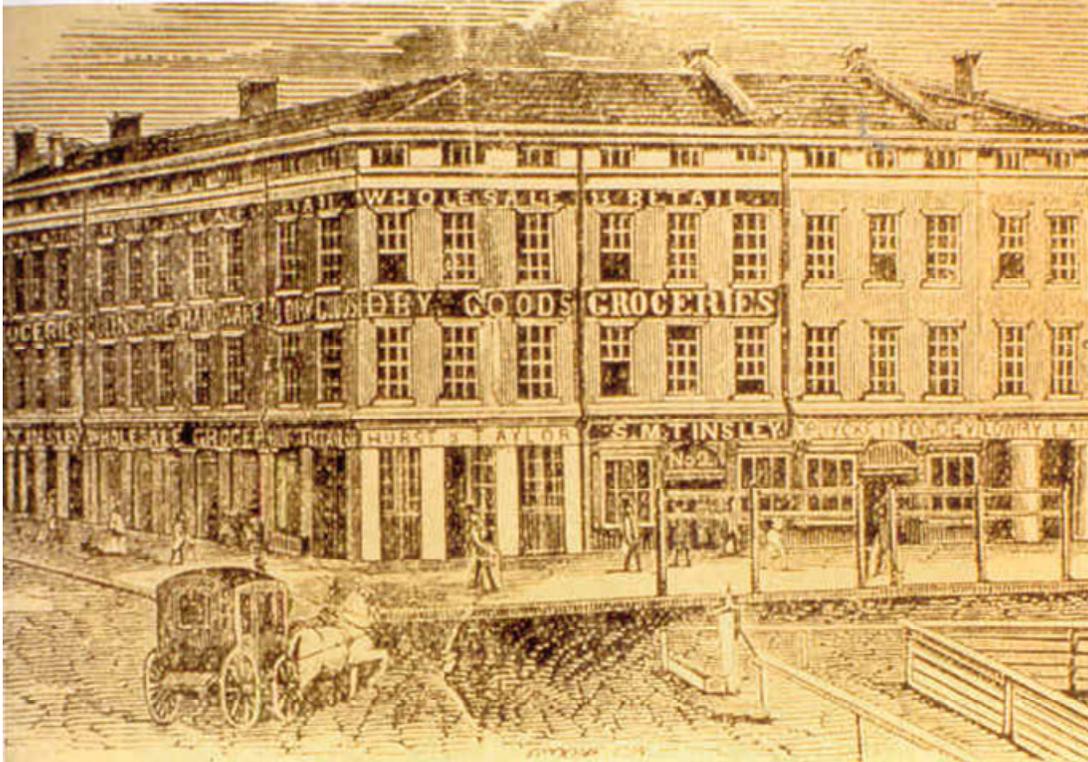
**Preston Butler's Photograph of Abraham Lincoln Taken on August 13, 1860
at Butler's Gallery on the South Side of the Square²⁹**

“Included in the 118 daguerreotypes, Ambrotypes and photographs of Lincoln are several made by Springfield photographers. One was by Preston Butler at his “Photographic and Ambrotype Gallery” on the south side of the square...”³⁰

²⁹ *Lincoln in Photographs An Album of Every Known Pose*, Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, Morningside, Dayton, Ohio, 1985, p. 63. (Hereinafter referred to as “Ostendorf.”)

³⁰ *Springfield's Public Square in Lincoln's Day: 1861-1941*, Harry E. Pratt, Springfield, Illinois, Williamson Printing & Publishing Company (1941?) (Hereinafter referred to as “Public Square.”)

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Woodcut of the Tinsley Building, South Side of the Public Square: June 4, 1850³¹

LINCOLN PRACTICES LAW AND WRITES FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN TINSLEY BUILDING

“The Tinsley Building, erected in 1840, at Sixth and Adams streets, was the first three-story building on the south side of the square and the finest brick business house in central Illinois. ...In 1841 the mercantile firm of S. M. Tinsley & Co., occupied the ground floor. Immediately above was the United States court room in which Lincoln practiced until 1855. Logan & Lincoln moved its office in late 1843, or early 1844, to the third floor, front. Here the firm remained until the dissolution of the partnership in the autumn of 1844, and here began the firm of Lincoln & Herndon. “The furniture,” says one who was a student in the office, was “somewhat dilapidated, consisting of one small desk and a table, a sofa or lounge with a raised head at one end, and a half dozen wooden chairs. The floor was never scrubbed. If cleaned at all it was done by the clerk or law student who occasionally ventured to sweep up the accumulated dirt. Over the desk a few shelves had been enclosed; this was the office bookcase holding a set of Blackstone, Kent’s Commentaries, Chitty’s Pleadings, and a few other books.

“West of the Tinsley Building stood the store of Yates & Smith. In late January 1861, Lincoln wished to write his inaugural address. The crowds that came to see him at his office made work on the address there difficult. Mr. Smith offered the use of a back room on the third floor above his last store room, an offer which was accepted.”³²

Today a portion of the Tinsley Building still stands and is a State of Illinois historic site known as the Lincoln & Herndon Law Offices.

³¹ *Lincoln Presidential Library.*

³² *Public Square.*

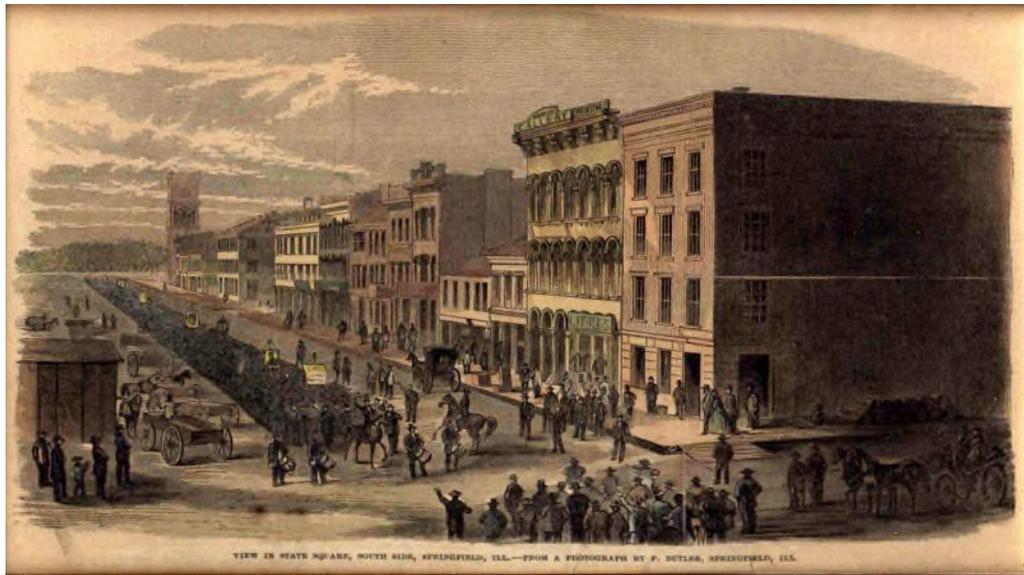
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THE AMERICAN HOUSE HOTEL



Photograph of the American House Hotel at the Southeast Corner of the Public Square
Built by Elijah Iles in 1836-1839³³

“When the legislature met for the first time in Springfield, in December 1839, the well-to-do members took up their residence in the American House recently completed at the southeast corner of the square. It was a three-story brick structure. Its forty rooms, large lobby and elegant dining room gave foundation to its claim of being the finest hotel in the west. For more than a decade this building was a center of social and political life in Springfield. Lincoln was one of the managers of a cotillion given here for members of the legislature. President Martin Van Buren and Vice President Richard M. Johnson were among the notables who stopped at the American.”³⁴



Drawing of the South Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859³⁵

³³ Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.

³⁴ *Public Square*.

³⁵ *Hart*.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Drawing of the West Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859³⁹

LINCOLN PURCHASES WEDDING RING AT CHATTERTON'S JEWELRY STORE

“G. W. Chatterton, dealer in watches, jewelry and pianos, was situated near the center of the block, present site of the Resich Building, on the west side of the square. From this firm Lincoln purchased the wedding ring, engraved with the words “Love is Eternal,” which he placed on the finger of Mary Todd November 4, 1842.”⁴⁰

THE DECEMBER 31, 1853 FIRE

“The Jewelry Store of Geo. W. Chatterton on the west side of the Public Square, was discovered to be on fire about ten o'clock on Thursday evening. The fire extended to every part of the front room, burning and charring his entire stock of fixtures, clocks, and fancy article, silver and plated wares. By timely and energetic efforts at pump-handles in the neighborhood, in communications with buckets and strong arms, the fire was quenched out from further destruction, and the alarm of the neighboring shops put to rest.”⁴¹

THE MAY 11, 1855 FIRE

“The sun this morning rose upon a scene in Springfield the like of which has never before been witnessed here. More than half the block on the west side of the Square, commencing from the north, was in ruins, and the goods and furniture, not destroyed, were scattered about mostly on the state-house square, presenting further evidence of the melancholy catastrophe.”⁴²

“Not until more than half the block on the west side of the square burned on the night of May 11, 1855, did the city take action. Prodded by the most disastrous fire in the town's history, the council requested the mayor to call on the citizens with a subscription paper for raising the money for two fire engines and other apparatus. The citizens, scared, subscribed enough for one engine.”⁴³

³⁹ Hart.

⁴⁰ *Public Square*.

⁴¹ *Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, December 31, 1853.

⁴² *Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, May 12, 1855.

⁴³ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 181.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Preston Butler's Photograph of the West Side of the Public Square Looking North: Circa 1859⁴⁴

The Chatterton Jewelry Store where Lincoln bought his wedding ring had survived the fire of 1853 but was destroyed in the 1855 fire. The two-story buildings shown on the left side of the above photo are probably typical of the pre-1850's buildings on the Public Square. They survived the fire of May 11, 1855. After the 1855 fire, the north end of the west side of the Square was rebuilt with a number of three-story, brick buildings. The façade of one of those buildings, the Chatterton Jewelry Store, is pictured below. An upper floor of this building was occupied by Christopher Smith German, a Springfield photographer, who took the last known photograph of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield before he left for Washington.



Photograph of G. W. Chatterton's Jewelry Store and Christopher Smith German's Photographic Studio on the West Side of the Public Square⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Original photograph by Preston Butler, Springfield, Illinois. *Hart*.

⁴⁵ *Lincoln Presidential Library*.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)

“On January 13, 1861, Abraham Lincoln went to the photographic gallery of Christopher German on the West Side of the Square above Chatterton’s Jewelry Store. German took two photographs of Lincoln. On February 9, 1861, two days before leaving for Washington, Lincoln had his last Springfield photograph taken by Christopher Smith German.”⁴⁶

Christopher Smith German took the back cover photograph on February 9, 1861, at his studio above Chatterton’s Jewelry Store on the West Side of the Public Square. The photographs below were taken in the 1870’s and picture three-story, brick commercial buildings constructed on the west side of the Public Square after the fire of 1855.



**1870’s Photographs of the West Side of the Public Square
and the Southwest Corner of Fifth and Washington Streets⁴⁷**

After the fire of 1855, the building pictured above at the southwest corner of Fifth and Washington Streets was built on the site of the Joshua Fry Speed store where Abraham Lincoln lived from April 1837 until 1841.

⁴⁶ Ostendorf, p. 70.

⁴⁷ *Lincoln Presidential Library*.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Photograph of Freeman's Corner, Northwest Corner of Fifth and Washington Streets⁴⁸

This old photograph pictures the northwest corner of Fifth and Washington Streets, known in the 19th century as Freeman's Corner. The building on the extreme left was known as the Enterprise Building and still stands in 2004. The stretch of two-story buildings to the right in the picture were along Fifth Street and was known as Hoffman's Row. It was here in 1837 that Abraham Lincoln located his first law office with senior partner John T. Stuart.

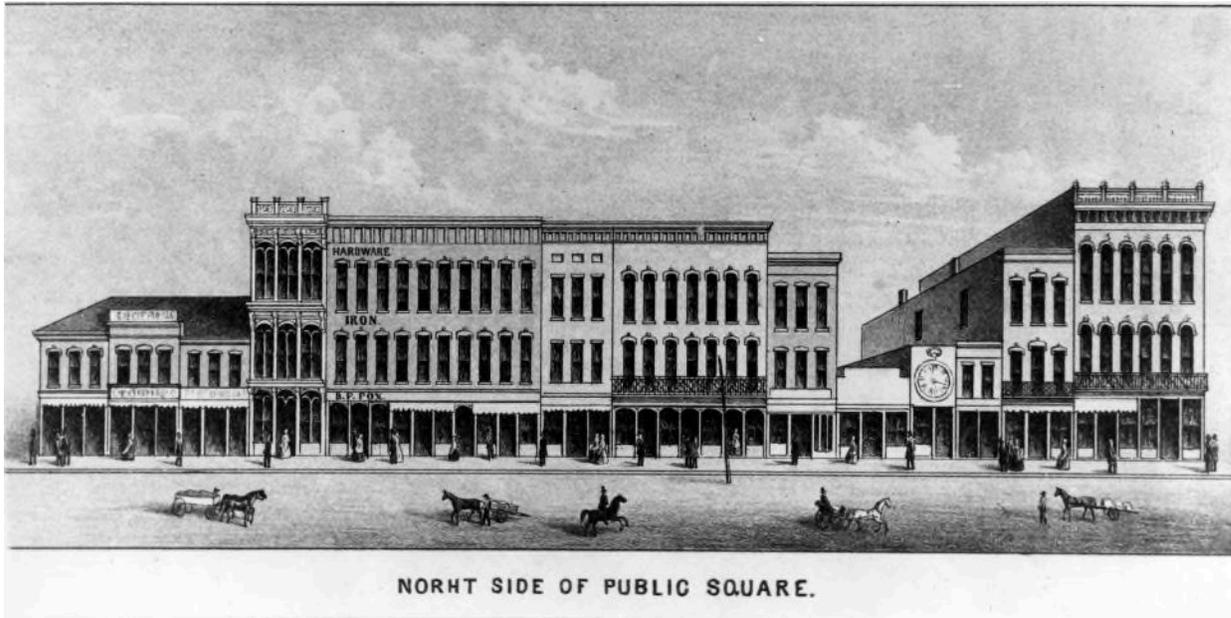
"Never before in the annals of our city were there such manifestations of progress and improvement as during the present season [1855]. ...Messrs. Freeman on the North West corner, are building a three story brick, twenty feet front by ninety feet deep. The improvement will add very materially the appearance of that corner."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.

⁴⁹ *Journal*, July 14, 1855, p. 3.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)

North Side of the Public Square



Haerting's Drawing of the North Side of the Public Square: Circa 1860⁵⁰

BUSINESSES ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE SQUARE, FROM WEST TO EAST, 1858

Condell, Stockdale & Co., dry goods
Wolf & Bergman, clothing
Reuben Coon & Br., boots and shoes

John Williams & Co., dry goods
B. F. Fox, hardware
Hammerslough Bros., clothing
William Perce, dry goods and groceries
Grover Ayers, dry goods
Artsman & Felheim, clothing

Merchants & Farmers' Bank;
Clinton Hall, upstairs
D. J. Boynton & Co.,
tinware and house furnishing goods
Francis Clinton, confectioner and baker
W. D. Ward, jeweler
Elder & Bro., stoves and tinware
James Fagan, saloon
E. B. Fisher, dry goods
Pride & Beers, groceries
William Carpenter, grocer⁵¹

"... the north side of the square... were mostly one-story frame structures, and known in those days as "chicken row."⁵²

"The four sides of the square and the adjacent blocks contained the business houses, some, like the State Bank, adequate and imposing, others, like those on "Chicken Row," no better than eyesores."⁵³

The second building from the right—the Buck Building—was built in 1855 and still stands in 2004.

⁵⁰ Haerting.

⁵¹ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

⁵² *1881 History*, p. 652.

⁵³ *Abraham Lincoln*, Benjamin P. Thomas, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1952, p. 75.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Drawing of the North Side of the Public Square: Circa 1859⁵⁴

John Williams & Company Dry Goods Store

“The history of the north side of the square contains one particular feature in the commercial life of Springfield that stands out above all others. Near the corner of Fifth and Washington streets, John Williams & Company conducted a dry goods store. Colonel Williams being the successor of Elijah Iles, who kept the first store in Springfield.”⁵⁵

“... [at the west end of the north side of the square] the store of John Williams stood in the 30’s. Here Lincoln probably came for the first time in the company of Denton Offutt, his New Salem employer, who shipped Tennessee seed corn for Williams to sell. When the store was operated later as Robert Irwin & Co., Lincoln served the owner as attorney, made many of his purchases there and deposited his spare cash with the proprietor.”⁵⁶

“We notice the other day the great improvements in the store room of John Williams & Co. It is now one of the largest and best arranged store rooms in the city. The main sales room is 20 feet front and runs back 70 feet. The upstairs is divided into three apartments; the front room is spacious counting room, the center room is used entirely for piece goods, boots and shoes, etc.; the other room is used exclusively for wall paper and carpets.”⁵⁷

In 1857, John Williams built a banking house on the North Side of the Public Square. It is the first three-story building from the left in the above picture.⁵⁸

“Banking house of John Williams & Co., north side Square. Size 20 by 80 feet; three stories; with ornamental front, entirely of iron, from the celebrated works of Miles Greenwood, Cincinnati; Sutton & Brother, builders; brick work by Geo. Wise; painting by E. G. Johns. The roof is of iron, known as Outcalt’s elastic, metallic roof being the first of that kind introduced here; it was put on by P. A. Dorwin & Co. This building, when completed, will be highly ornamental, and will attract much attention. Cost 7,000 dollars.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Hart.

⁵⁵ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

⁵⁶ *Public Square*.

⁵⁷ *Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, March 30, 1854.

⁵⁸ The “First National Bank” name on the side of the building was added to the photograph at a later date as a touch up.

⁵⁹ *Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, 1857 Improvements, p. 8.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Preston Butler's Photograph of the North Side of the Public Square Looking East: Circa 1859⁶⁰

“In the days immediately preceding the civil war the north side of the square was the scene of perhaps more diversified business interests than any of the other blocks with which the square is bounded. With but few exceptions the store buildings were all three story brick structures, and there were no vacant rooms. The business represented included dry goods, groceries, shoes, clothing jewelry, hardware, stoves, tinware and one saloon. Near the center of the block was also located the Merchants and Farmers' Bank.”⁶¹

The Reed and Donner Emigrant Party

“A party was organized in the vicinity of Springfield, Sangamon county, Ill., and started from that city, April 14, 1846, for California and the Pacific coast. It has always been spoken of by the people of Sangamon county as the “Reed and Donner emigrant party.” They were not lured there on account of gold, for it had not then been discovered. When they left Springfield the company numbered thirty-four persons.”⁶²

A notice of their departure was printed in the *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, on April 23, 1846, under the headline “Ho! For Oregon and California.”

“The company which left here last week for California embraced 15 men, 8 women and 16 children. They had nine wagons. They were in good spirits, and we trust they will safely reach their anticipated home.”

⁶⁰ Original photograph by Preston Butler, Springfield, Illinois. *Hart*.

⁶¹ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917.

⁶² *Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois*, John Carroll Power, Springfield, Illinois, 1876, pp. 601-609.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Photograph of the West End of the North Side of the Public Square: Circa Winter 1858⁶³

“This wonderful sight, of covered wagons on the square, reminds me that the captains of the ill-fated Donner Party, brothers George and Jacob Donner and James Reed, and their families, were all from Springfield and launched their ill-fated journey from there in May of 1846. Somewhere I learned that the point of the departure was the public square, since the main outfitters were there.”⁶⁴

“One of the most tragic stories of the American frontier was that of the Donner party, a group of immigrants to California led by brothers George and Jacob Donner and James Reed and their families, all of Springfield [Sangamon County], Illinois. The party, numbering some 87 people, left Springfield in May 1846, headed for the fertile farmlands of central California. They made good progress all the way to Fort Bridger, in ...southwestern Wyoming. There, most of the party turned north to use the well-known Oregon Trail to head further west. Reed, the Donners, and a number of others chose, against the advice of local guides, to use a shortcut to California that had been recommended to them by an unreliable guide.... Encountering rough terrain ..., they fell behind schedule and were trapped by snow in the Sierras in the winter of 1846-47. They set up camp on what is now Donner Lake, on the California-Nevada border, and there they underwent terrible suffering. Three rescue parties were organized by James Reed... By the time the rescue parties arrived, the immigrants had been decimated by starvation and cold. Many had resorted to cannibalism to survive. More than half the party eventually died, including both Donner brothers and their families and almost all of the single men.”⁶⁵

⁶³ *Lincoln Presidential Library.*

⁶⁴ William Howarth, correspondence of September 19, 2004.

⁶⁵ “Donner party,” Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



**Photograph of the Eagle Block or Carpenter's Building
at the Northwest Corner of Sixth and Washington Streets Circa 1870's⁶⁶**

“A brick block on corner of Washington and Sixth streets, on the north side of the square; size 37 feet on Washington, and 88 feet on Sixth street, better known as the Eagle block, named from the profusion of bronzed eagles which adorn the two fronts, and give it quite an American appearance. The main front on Washington street is divided into two store rooms; the front shutters are on the improved plan of sliding; the first story in front is of iron; the window caps and sills are of iron; roof of tin; the second floor is designed for offices; the third for a public hall. It is a fine, substantial building, an ornament to our city, and a credit to both owner and builder. Owned by William Carpenter... Cost \$15,000.”⁶⁷

Colonel Elmer Ellsworth Trains Springfield Grays

“In the upper story of the Carpenter building was located the armory of the “Springfield Grays,” the crack military company that was drilled by [Colonel Elmer] Ellsworth and others...”⁶⁸

“The military spirit was abroad in those days, and although the nation had not yet been plunged into war, a number of young men of the city had organized what was known as the “Springfield Grays” and were receiving military instruction at the hands of competent drill masters on the top floor of the Carpenter building. Many who were members of this organization afterward achieved honor on the field of battle, during the four years beginning with April, 1861.”⁶⁹

Colonel Ellsworth traveled with President-elect Abraham Lincoln to Washington, D. C. and was killed in Virginia in 1861, the first officer casualty of the Civil War.

⁶⁶ Lincoln Presidential Library.

⁶⁷ *Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, 1857 Improvements, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.

⁶⁹ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 13, 1917

The Funeral

May 3-4, 1865



Photograph of the Illinois State House Draped in Mourning May 3-4, 1865

From May 3rd to 4th, 1865, Abraham Lincoln's body lay in state in the Illinois State House.

“For ten days a large number of men and women worked almost night and day in decorating the State House. The whole building was draped in mourning on the exterior...The ladies of Springfield bore their full share in these arduous labors. ...About fifteen hundred yards of black and white goods were used in the decorations, exclusive of the catafalque.”⁷⁰

“At ...the State House—sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty men and women—some volunteers, others paid professionals—were working at the same time, swarming all over the big stone Capitol. This building was the throbbing heart of Springfield and Lincoln had known it since the first great blocks of yellow limestone were dragged from the quarry seven miles out of town to begin building in 1837. ...The City Council had met on April nineteenth ...to vote the allocation of twenty thousand dollars...to be spent on the funeral in Springfield.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Abraham Lincoln His Life, Public Services, Death and Great Funeral Cortege*, John Carroll Power, H. W. Rokker, Publisher, Chicago and Springfield, Illinois, 1869, p. 207. (Hereinafter “Power.”)

⁷¹ *Twenty Days*, Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Castle Books, Secaucus, New Jersey, 1977, p. 253. (Hereinafter referred to as “Twenty Days.”)

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Photograph of the Illinois State House Draped in Mourning May 3-4, 1865⁷²

“There was enough black to sheathe the entire copper dome of the State House but the columns below were twisted spirally with both white and black cloth, the white more prominent. The same thing was true of the festoons along the cornices of the building—an impression of white was given although black rosettes were numerous. There were black curtains at the windows with white streamers falling from the center top. From the window sills hung square black pieces of cloth edged in white which gave balance to the curtains above them. The great fluted columns were decorated with ropes of evergreen, cut in Michigan and brought to the Capitol by hay wagon.”⁷³

“E. B. Hawley & Company on the south side of the Public Square sold the State of Illinois \$221.30 worth of mourning goods to drape the State House.”⁷⁴

⁷² *The Lincoln Funeral: A Pictorial Record*, The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly, March, 1941, The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois, insert of photographs after page 272. (Hereinafter “The Lincoln Funeral.”)

⁷³ *Twenty Days*, p. 254.

⁷⁴ *Illinois' Fifth Capitol: The House That Lincoln Built And Caused To Be Rebuilt (1837-1865)*, Sunderline Wilson Temple and Wayne C. Temple, Phillips Brothers Printers, Springfield, Illinois, 1988, p. 198.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



**Photograph of the North Side of the Public Square
Showing the Arch Constructed for the Funeral and Mourners Waiting to Enter
the North Door of the State House May 3-4, 1865⁷⁵**

“The first place any visitor to Springfield on that Wednesday of May third went was straight to the State House for the viewing. Long before the imposing procession arrived from the station, interminable motionless lines had stretched away from the north gate.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *The Lincoln Funeral*.

⁷⁶ *Twenty Days*, p. 256.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



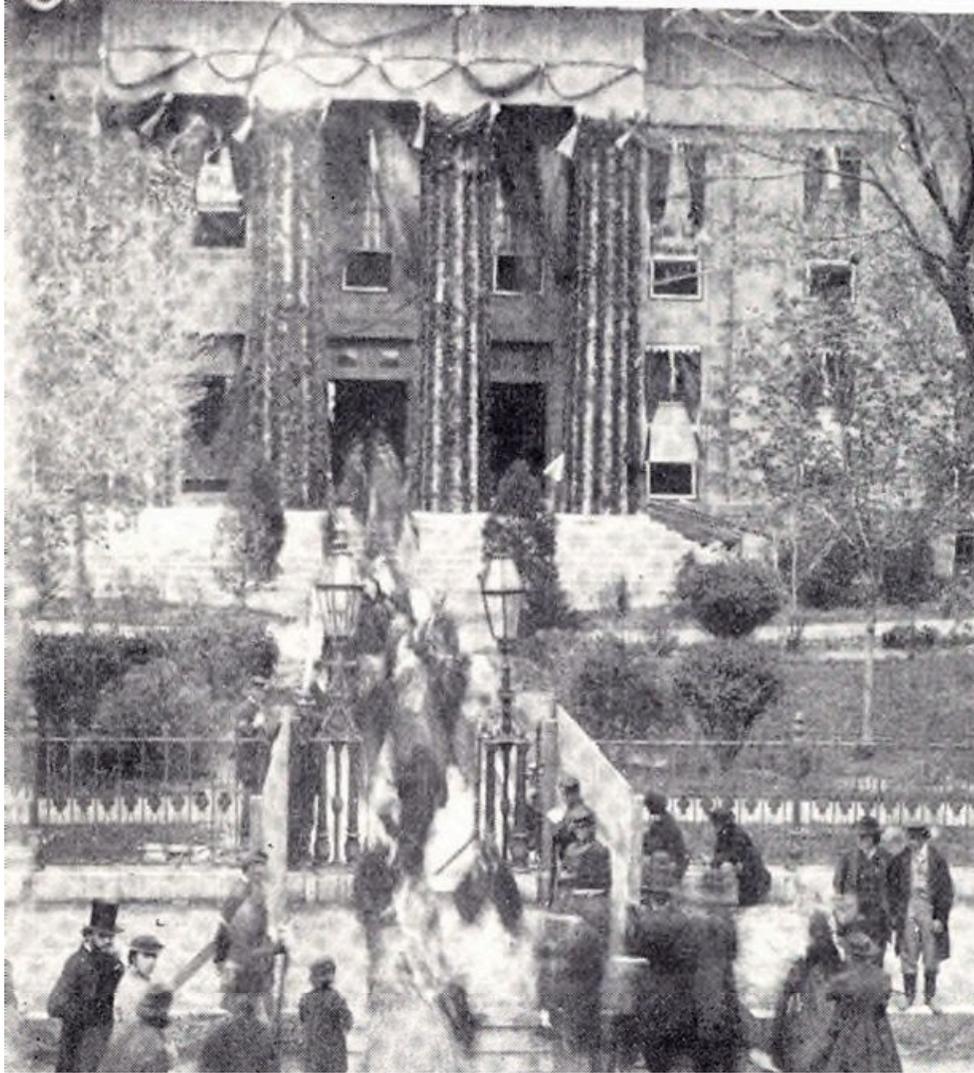
Photograph of Mourners Waiting in Line to Enter
the North Door of State House, May 3-4, 1865⁷⁷

“From the time the coffin was opened, at ten o’clock on the morning of May third, there was no cessation of visitors. All through the still hours of the night, no human voices were heard except in subdued tones; but the tramp, tramp, of busy feet, as men and women filed through the State House, up one flight of stairs, through the hall, and down another stairway, testified the love and veneration for Abraham Lincoln in the hearts of his old friends and neighbors.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *The Lincoln Funeral.*

⁷⁸ *Power*, p. 207.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



**Photograph of the South Side of the State House
with Mourners Leaving After Viewing Lincoln's Body May 3-4, 1865⁷⁹**

“Now passed those who had known him long. They were part of the seventy-five thousand who passed. They were awed, subdued, shaken, stony, strange. They came from Salem, Petersburg, Clary’s Grove, Alton, Charleston, Mattoon, the old Eighth Circuit towns and villages. There were clients for whom he had won or lost, lawyers who had tried cases with him and against, neighbors who had seen him milk a cow and curry his horse, friends who had heard his stories around a hot stove and listened to his surmises on politics and religion. “We,” wrote Bill Herndon, “who had known the illustrious dead in other days, and before the nation lay its claim upon him, moved sadly through and looked for the last time on the silent, upturned face of our departed friend.

“All day long and through the night the unbroken line moved, the home town having its farewell.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *The Lincoln Funeral.*

⁸⁰ *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years*, Volume 4, Carl Sandburg, Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York, 1939, p. 413. (Hereinafter referred to as “War Years.”)

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



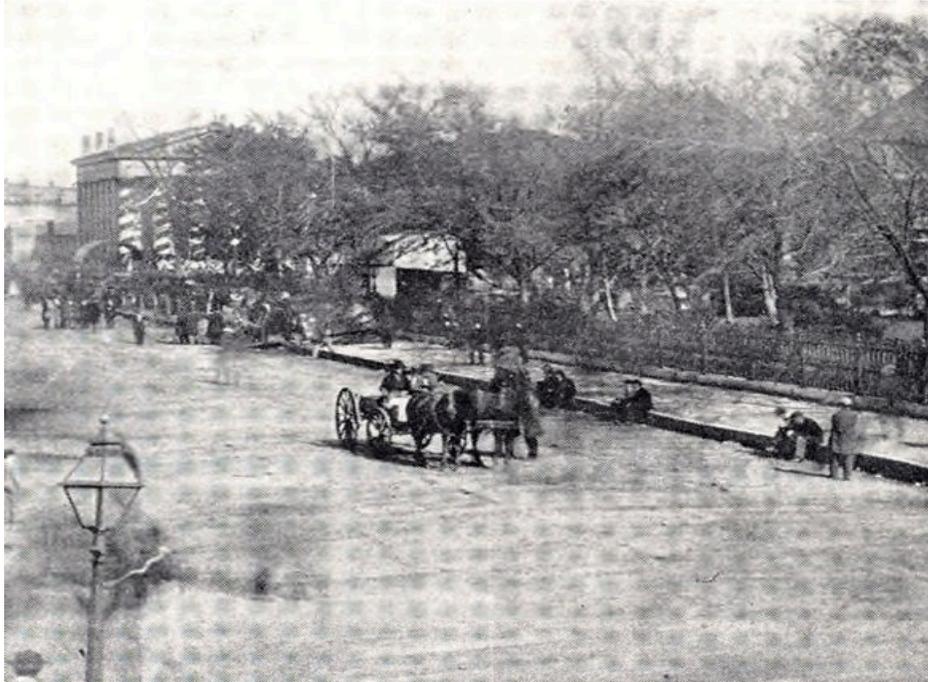
**Photograph of the East Side of the Public Square
Showing the Bunting-Draped Columns of the Sangamon County Court House May 3-4, 1865⁸¹**

“To the right of the imposing Sangamon County Courthouse is Lincoln’s bank, the Marine Fire and Insurance Company, and the sliver of a building just to its right is Lincoln’s drugstore—Diller’s”⁸²

⁸¹ *Twenty Days*, p. 280.

⁸² *Twenty Days*, p. 280.

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



**Photograph Looking East Along Washington Street
Adjacent to the North Side of the State House Grounds May 3-4, 1865⁸³**

“The coffin was closed at ten o’clock on the morning of May 4th and while it was being conveyed to the hearse the choir sang Pleyel’s hymn *Children of the Heavenly King*.”⁸⁴



“The procession...received the corpse at the north gate of the State House square, and moved east on Washington street to Eighth...”⁸⁵

“...and twenty-one guns were fired. Now the soldiers drawn up on Washington Street began to move forward with Major General Joseph Hooker at their head, and the final funeral procession began its ritual march, the drumbeats as insistent and maddening as ever.”⁸⁶

⁸³ Above: *The Lincoln Funeral*. Below: Unidentified Springfield, Illinois newspaper clipping.

⁸⁴ *Power*, p. 210.

⁸⁵ *Power*, p. 214.

⁸⁶ *Twenty Days*, pp. 277-278.

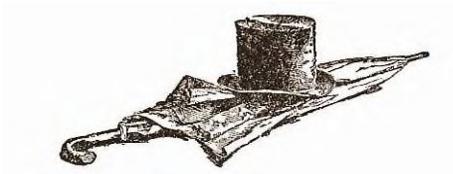
LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD: THE PUBLIC SQUARE (1823-1865)



Photograph of the State House Draped in Mourning May 3-4, 1865
From the Corner of Sixth and Washington Streets Looking Southwest⁸⁷

“With General Hooker at its head, the long procession started towards Oak Ridge.”⁸⁸

“And the night came with great quiet.
And there was rest.
The prairie years, the war years, were over.”⁸⁹



If you are a resident of Springfield or work here or you are a tourist or student visiting here, stop for a moment in the Public Square. No other place in America is so closely connected to Abraham Lincoln and the American Experience. Stop for a moment and allow your imagination and spirit to experience this place.

⁸⁷ *The Lincoln Funeral*.

⁸⁸ *Here I Have Lived*, p. 292.

⁸⁹ *War Years*, p. 413.

