

#### **Rolla Clymer correspondence**

Section 1230, Pages 36871 - 36900

This series of the Rolla Clymer collection includes sent and received correspondence arranged chronologically beginning in 1909. With few exceptions, the correspondence provides a continuous and very complete view of his activities. Much of the earliest correspondence in the Clymer collection pertains to information about the College of Emporia for the period Clymer was a student there. Scattered throughout the remainder of the correspondence is information about Emporia athletics and alumni activities and letters with former classmates. From 1914 to 1918, Clymer was editor and manager of the Olathe, Kansas, Register. In 1918, Rolla Clymer moved his young family to El Dorado, Kansas, where he became editor and manager of the El Dorado Republican. Except for a six month hiatus in 1937 as editor and manager of the Santa Fe New Mexican in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Clymer served the remainder of his professional career in El Dorado.

In his later years, Clymer devoted much of his time to efforts to preserve the Kansas Flint Hills region which he dearly loved. In addition to newspaper editorials, he wrote and published numerous widely circulated articles and poems about the Flint Hills. Perhaps his best known tribute was his poem "Majesty of the Hills," which helped earn him the designation as Poet Laureate of the Flint Hills. Rolla Clymer died on June 4, 1977, having been the editor of the El Dorado Times for fifty-nine years. For a complete contents list of the Rolla Clymer collection, see the External Links below.

Date: 1909-1977

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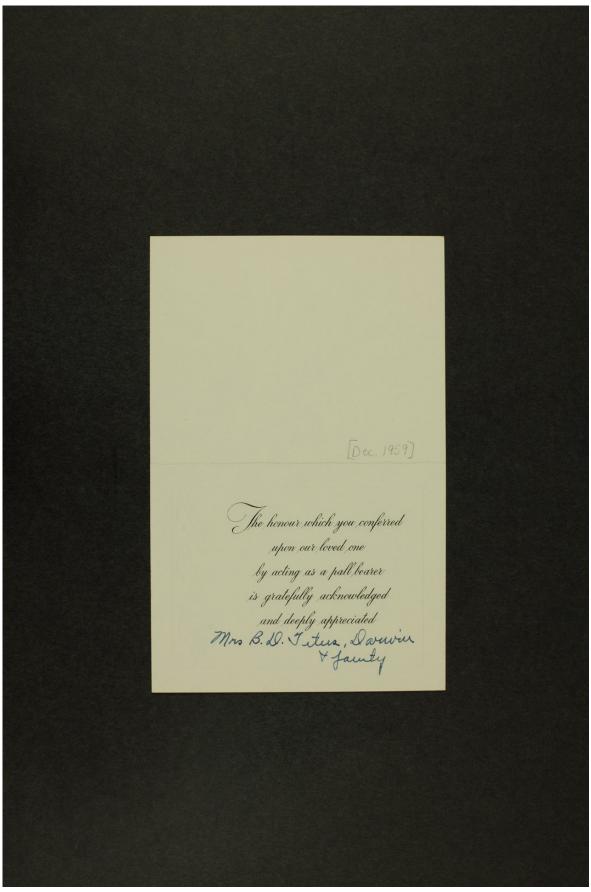
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# HISTORICAL SOCIETY

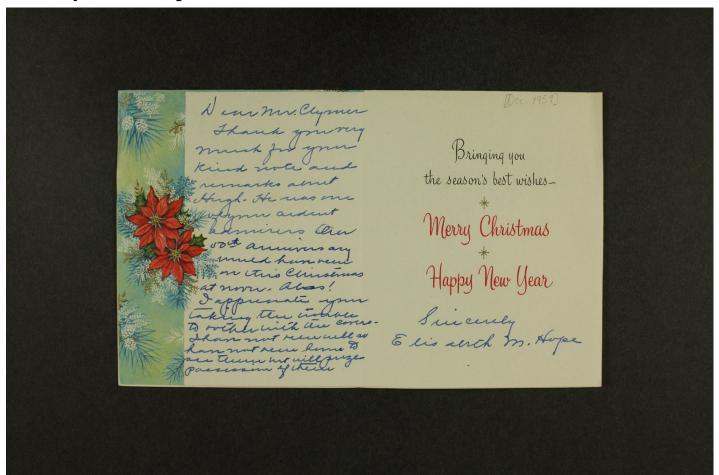
#### KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



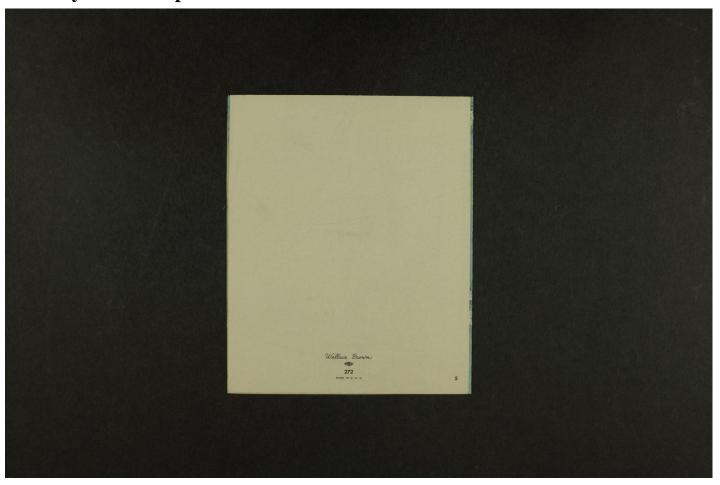




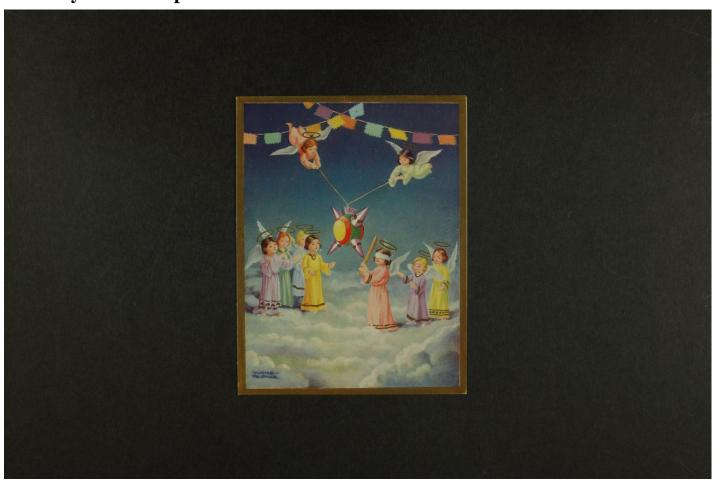




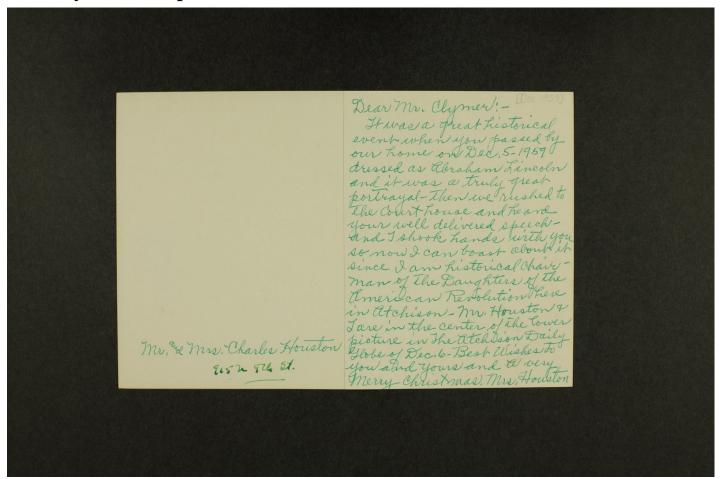












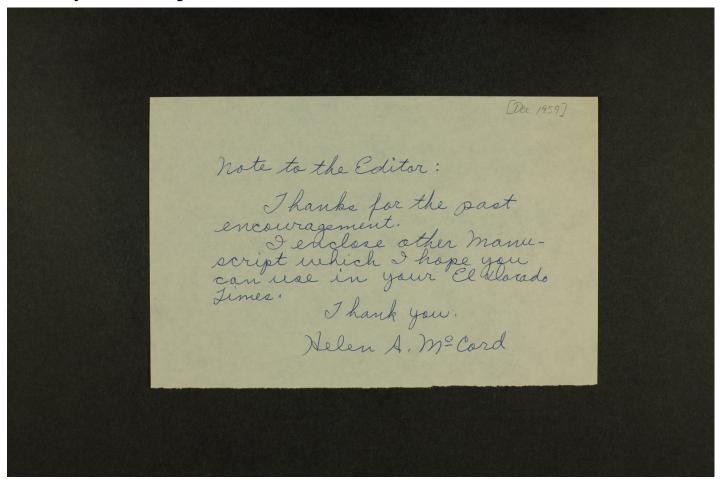




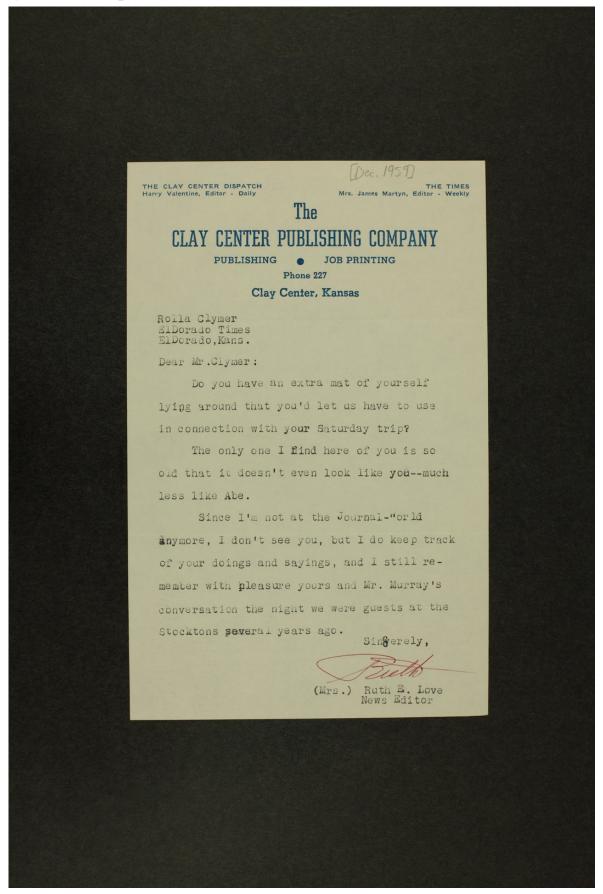


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omRoom
I thought with all of the holiday accidents and such - this little poet might make people think just a little bit more. If you can't use it, it is perfectly all right with me - I just did it on the spur of the mome sort of a hobby of mine.  Happy New Year!!  **Totma Norma L. (Gregersen) Martin

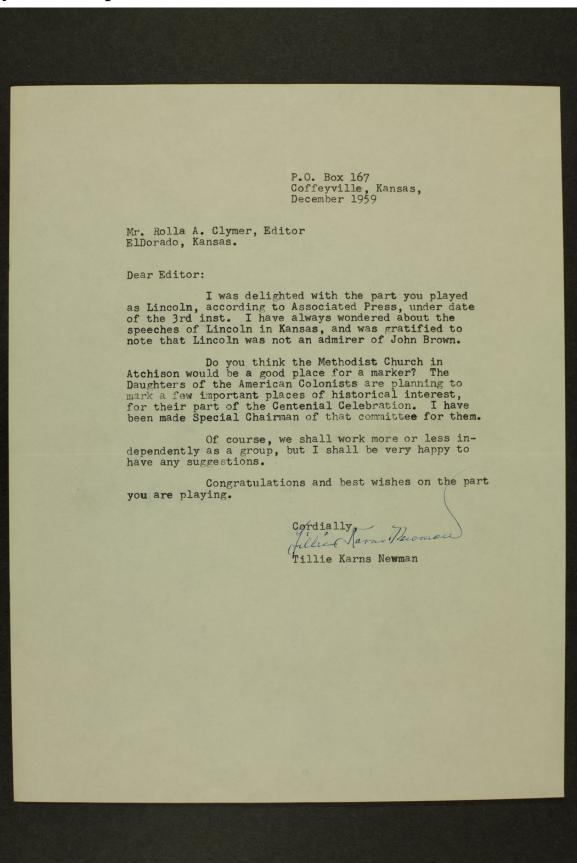














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Others will be coming. One hundred years ago an unannounced candidate for President spent a week in Kansas. What the recent visitors said and reports on the manner in which they were received got full attention in the state and all over the country. But the candidate who was in Kansas a century ago said important things in seven speeches. He made an impression on his audiences in most of which were many pro-slavery men. The crowds that heard the speaker were large, considering the populations of the communities and also considering another very important thing, the lack of publicity for his appearances. Newspaper accounts of the visit of this candidate were meager and in one instance the candidate was ignored by the local newspaper which was one of the best known in Kansas territory. The candidates recently in Kansas flitted over the state by sirplane. The candidate in 1959 traveled by horse-drawn vehicle in cold weather protected partly by a borrowed buffele robe from the bitter cold which he encountered.

The unannounced candidate 100 years ago was Abraham Lincoln. He came out from Springfield by train to St. Joseph, Mo., late on the afternoon of Nov. 30, 1859 and crossed the Missouri river to Elwood, then an important Kansas town opposite St. Joseph. He spoke in Elwood that night and the next day, Dec. 1, drove to Troy where he spoke in the afternoon. Then he went on to Doniphan where he spoke and spent the night. On Dec. 2 he rode into Atchison where he made a speech in the afternoon that was really a preview



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of his Cooper Union speech he was to make in February. On Dec. 3 he was driven from Atchison to Leavenworth. There he stayed until Dec. 7 and made three speeches. Then he returned to Illinois.

This was an important event in Kansas history and important to Lincoln, too. And yet the biographers of Lincoln have paid almost no attention to the Kansas tour. In the monumental biography of Lincoln by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, his Presidential secretaries, the bare statement is made that Lincoln was invited to speak in Kansas. In other biographies the visit is ignored. Carl Sandburg in his famed Lincoln biography—in the "Prairie Years"—did dedicate a few lines to the Kansas visit quoting what Lincoln said concerning John Brown. But Sandburg got the place of utterance wrong. So far as the historians and biographers of Lincoln are concerned they either did not know that Lincoln spent a week of his time, only eleven months before he was President-elect, in Kansas or considered the visit of no importance. There are some explanations that appear logical.

When Lincoln started to Kansas there was vast excitement all over the country over the impending execution of John Brown at Charlestown. The Harper's Ferry raid, with Brown's sentence to die on the gallows on Dec. 2, was the chief topic of conversation in the North. The newspapers had voluminous reports. Everywhere in the North there was nervousness and anxiety as the days passed. In the midst of this mounting public excitement Lincoln left Springfield to come to Kansas.



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The Illinois State Journal, the newspaper whose kindly relations with

Lincoln began early and continued through his lifetime, merely mentioned

that Lincoln left on a trip to Kansas to make some speeches. It appears that

no other newspapers had mention of the upcoming trip.

The recent visits of Presidential candidates to Kansas were widely publicized over the country. The lack of attention to the Lincoln trip undoubtedly not only was satisfactory to Lincoln but most likely was at his own suggestion. Arrangements had been made for Lincoln's address in New York. Lincoln was preparing for the Cooper Union appearance which he realized would affect his Presidential aspirations tremendously. Lincoln was an astute politician. Few American statesmen have had such a keen appreciation of so many factors that affect public thinking and the decisions of the voters. In looking shead to New York Lincoln saw the advantages of testing out his ideas for the speech on audiences. Naturally he did not want what he planned to say in New York to appear in the public prints . before the delivery in New York. The invitation to Kansas gave him the opportunity he wanted. He could quietly come to Kansas from which news reports to the east were meager anyway. What he said -- as an unannounced candidate for President -- would likely receive only local attention. Correspondents for the eastern papers -- even the Chicago papers -- would not be following him. He could talk to many Kansans in half a dozen communities and note the effect of his presentation. Certainly this idea of testing



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his views was coldly logical and practical. In these modern days the politicians talk about "sending up a trial balloon." That is what Lincoln plenned to do in Kansas. Unlike modern candidates of importance whose speeches are delivered anywhere in the country and reported all over the country and unlike these candidates who are anxious to obtain widest possible publicity, Lincoln did not want his speeches reported over the country and therefore he was not interested in countrywide publicity.

And so Kensans at Elwood, Troy, Doniphan, Atchison and Leavenworth heard from Lincoln himself what he repeated three months later at Coper Union in the speech which brought him powerful support.

These things undoubtedly account for the lack of attention which the writers of history and the biographers have given to Lincoln's visit to.

Kansas. The importance of the Little Kansas visit was not realized at the time owing to the lack of publicity and to Lincoln's own plans. So the week in Kansas was just another week on the Lincoln calendar so far as historians and biographers were concerned.

The comment of Lincoln at Atchison on John Brown would have been sufficient to give the Lincoln visit in Kansas high news value. Brown died on the gallows a few hours before Lincoln spoke in Atchison, Dec. 2, 1859.

Everyone who crowded into the Methodist church there had John Brown in mind that night. Lincoln sensed this and he met the situation head-on. There was no beating around the bush. From reports written from memory by several of



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those who heard him, including one young man, John J. Ingalls, there was constructed this passage which is the one Sandburg used as to what Lincoln said:

Old John Brown thought slavery was wrong, as we do; he attacked slavery contrary to law, and it availed him nothing before the law that he thought himself right. He has just been hanged for tresson against the state of Virginia; and we cannot object, though he agreed with us in calling slavery wrong. Now if you undertake to destroy the Union contrary to law, if you commit tresson against the United States, our duty will be to deal with you as John Brown has been dealt with.

A declaration on issues today by a Presidential candidate visiting in Kansas gets prompt reporting. Yet there has been no such excitement as that aroused by the hanging of Brown for these recent visitors to discuss.

It has been noted that the Atchison Champion did not mention the visit of Lincoln and, of course, did not "dover" his speech. So far as the Champion was concerned there was no such man as Lincoln. The reasons for this peculiar newspaper behavior appear to be quite obvious. John A. Martin, the editor, was a strong supporter of William H. Seward for the Republican Presidential nomination. Seward was the leading candidate. He had been a friend of the free state cause in Kansas. Martin evidently



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thought it would be an act of treason to Seward to publish a report of
Lincoln's visit and speech. It is more likely that this was his attitude than
that he did not appreciate the importance of Lincoln, although that might
have been possible. The way the Champion ignored Lincoln has a place in
Kansas newspaper history.

Martin was to have a long career in Kansas affairs following conspicuous Civil War service. He was to hear something of the treatment of Lincoln by the Champion. And he was to explain that the reason the Champion had to ignore Lincoln and his visit was that there was so much news about Brown and the Charlestown hanging that the Champion did not have space for anything else. A perusal of the Champion has shown that it devoted many columns to John Brown and his execution at the time of the Lincoln visit. Martin was quoted in his later years as saying John Brown was bigger news in Kansas than Abraham Lincoln.

Noble Prentis who spent many of his last years as an editorial writer on the Kansas City Star worked for Martin on the Champion for many years, including the years of Martin's terms as governor. He and Martin were the closest of friends. Prentis wrote a history of Kansas as a textbook to be used in the Kansas public schools about 1899. But this history overlooked completely the visit of Lincoln to Kansas. There was not a word in the first edition that was issued. It could have been that Prentis was as loyal to his old friend Martin as Martin was loyal to Seward. Somebody caught

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the omission and in another edition of the Prentis history a few lines were inserted about the Lincoln visit.

History writing is a precarious undertaking. The Lincoln visit affords a good example. A noted Kansan, D. W. Wilder, was one of two men who met Lincoln in St. Joseph. The other was Mark W. Delahay of Leavenworth who had a distant (by marriage) relationship to Lincoln. During the summer of 1859 Wilder had talked to Lincoln in Springfield and it is said he urged Lincoln to come to Kansas. Wilder was a newspaper man who was to spend much of his life in newspaper work or in public office. He conceived the idea of producing a Kansas history by the compilation and publication of daily events. The "Annals of Kansas" down to the end of 1885 resulted from this phoject of Wilder. The big volume is indispensable to the writers of Kansas history. It was so valuable that the Kansas State Historical Society fifteen years ago obtained from the legislature the money with which to set up a project to continue the Annals. Two volumes of these later "Annals" have been published. But in his Annals, Wilder gave brief mention to the visit of Lincoln in Kansas. One item said that Lincoln arrived in Kansas on Dec. 1, 1859.

To get the truth about dates, a report on what Lincoln did is necessary.

Lincoln arrived in St. Joseph by train on an afternoon. Late in the afternoon he crossed the Missouri river to Elwood and spoke that night in



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the Great Western hotel, the best and biggest in the territory. A man went around the town pounding a gong and announcing that Lincoln would speak. He spent the night at the hotel and the next day went by horse and buggy to Troy. He spoke in Troy in the afternoon, talking nearly two hours. From Troy he was driven to Don phan where he spoke to a small audience and spent the night. The next day he went on to Atchison where a meeting was arranged and advertised after his arrival which must have been about the middle of the morning. At Atchison in a speech that night he made his comment on the hanging of John Brown that day. So that day had to be Dec. 2. Consequently, if Lincoln's arrival in Kansas was as Wilder's Annals had it on Dec. 1, he had to start his tour from Elwood on the morning of Dec. 2. It was a physical impossibility, of course, for him to drive 32 miles to Atchison on 1859 Kansas roads, with a stop at Troy to make a speech nearly two hours long. But the evidence is conclusive that he spoke in Doniphen the night of that day. The evidence also is conclusive that he reached Atchison about the middle of a morning -- and that was the morning of Dec. 2. There are other proofs that the Wilder item is not correct. The St. Joseph Gazette, published on the morning of Dec. 1, said that Lincoln "passed through the city yesterday on his way to Kansas." Reports published in two other newspapers of the area, the Weekly Free Democrat of St. Joseph and the Kensas Chief of White Cloud confirm the Gazette statement as to dates.

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Simply stated, Lincoln came into Kansas on Nov. 30, made a speech and spent the night at Elwood and started his tour the morning of Dec. 1.

Lincoln, the politician and aspirant for the Presidency, could not have overlooked the fact that Kansas was to send half a dozen delegates to the national convention. That could have been an additional factor in causing him to decide to come to Kansas. He knew before he came and certainly he found it to be true that Kansas Republican leaders had committed themselves to Seward. Wilder in his newspaper had declared for Seward. Men at Atchison, including, of course, Martin were for Seward. Leavenworth which he reached on Dec. 3 had many Seward men. But it is a notable fact that on his Kansas visit the Seward men gave hi ma hearty welcome--except Martin. Everybody went out to hear him, including pro-slavery sympathizers.

Lincoln could have no complaint about the hospitality he received. If anybody peckled Lincoln as he spoke, no record was made of it.

Arriving in Leavenworth mid-afternoon of Dec. 3, Lincoln made a short talk at a reception given for him and spoke in Stockton Hall that Saturday night. Numerous requests for him to speak again brought him again to Stockton Hall for another speech Monday. On Tuesday, Dec. 6, he witnessed the first state election. The next day Lincoln left to return to Springfield by way of St. Joseph. Some of those who have written of Lincoln's trip say he went to St. Joseph by way of steamboat. But since there was ice six inches thick on the Missouri river at Leavenworth,

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steamboats were not running. The trip to St. Joseph was made by horse drawn vehicle, buggy or carriage.

In the Kansas speeches Lincoln dealth with the slavery question with the skill, forcefulness and clarity that he had demonstrated in the debates with Stephen A. Douglas in Illinois the year before. That he made a deep impression on his hearers is evident from the meager records that have been kept. He maintained that slavery was wrong but that the nation would have to decide sooner or later whether it was right or wrong. But he stressed that the Republican party's object was to prevent the extension of slavery. "We must not disturb slavery in the states where it exists," Lincoln said, "because the Constitution and the peace of the country both forbid us. But we must by a national policy prevent the spread of slavery in the new states or free states, because the Constitution does not forbid us and the general welfare does demand such prevention. We must prevent a revival of the African slave trade, because the Constitution does not forbid us and the general welfare does require the prevention. We must prevent these things being done by either Congresses or courts. The people -- the people -- are the rightful masters of both Congress and courts -- not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who pervert it."

On this theme the Kansas speeches of Lincoln were built. That the speeches had a tremendous impact on his hearers was generally conceded but the fact was not shown in the political reactions. He was speaking only



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hours shead of the state election. Whatever effect was had was confined to the small areas in which the speeches were delivered. So far as Lincoln's candidacy itself was concerned, the visit was not a success. The six delegates of Kansas to the Republican convention at the Wigwam in Chicago voted for Seward and never did vote for Lincoln. One of the six delegates was John A. Martin of Atchison.

Saturday, Dec. 5, the centennial of the Lincoln tour of Kansas will be celebrated. The cities of Leavenworth, Atchison and Troy are preparing events in connection with the caravan which will start at Elwood in the morning, stop at Troy at 9 o'clock, have a luncheon stop at Atchison and move on to Leavenworth for an efternoon celebration. 'In the caravan will be the famous carriage in which Lincoln rode for at least part of his trip to Leavenworth, in Leavenworth and probably back to St. Joseph. The 2-horse carriage will make the trip on a "low-boy" truck. The permanent home of the carriage is the Fort Leavenworth museum.

Lincoln will be represented on the caravan and in the events of the day by Rolla A. Clymer, famed editor of the El Dorado Times, past president of the Kansas State Historical Society and a member of the board of directors of the Kansas Centennial Commission. Clymer will speak at Troy, Atchison and Leavenworth, describing the visit of Lincoln and outlining briefly the Lincoln speeches. Clymer will wear a Lincoln hat and a Lincoln coat. But it will not be necessary for him to wear Lincoln whiskers



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12 unless he desires to do so. Lincoln did not have whiskers when he visited Kansas. The Lincoln celebration was proposed by the Kansas Centennial Commission as one of three Centennial celebrations preliminary to the state Centennial in 1961. All the high officials of Kansas, including senators and representatives, are being invited to participate in the caravan. But there is a general open invitation to everyone who desires to join the caravan for the entire trip or any part of it. The route followed generally will be along the route taken by Lincoln, a distance of about 50 miles. At Troy the caravan stop is expected to start off a local celebration. At Atchison a parade is planned in mid-town and up to the courthouse grounds where a stone marker marks the spot where Lincoln spoke. A luncheon will follow. At Leavenworth there will be another parade followed by a program at 3 o'clock and a reception at the Fort Leavenworth museum will conclude the celebration.



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When Abraham Lincoln Came to Kansas

Late in 1859, Kansas territory entertained a famous visitor--Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Lincoln was not then as well known as he was destined to become. He had only come into national prominence during the preceding year when he engaged in the memorable Illinois debates with Stephen A. Douglas.

Lincoln came to Kansas for a variety of reasons. He had never been in the territory, yet Kansas played a large part in the debates with Douglas. Lincoln was a candidate for the presidential nomination in 1860 and wanted the votes of the six Kansas delegates to the Republican national convention. He had speeches which he wanted to try out on a new audience—speeches which he would use within the next few months as campaign messages for Eastern audiences. So he was glad to accept an invitation from Mark W. Delahay, Leavenworth lawyer, whose wife was a distant relative of Lincoln, to visit Kansas.

Delahay and D. W. Wilder met Lincoln at St. Joseph, Mo., and brought him across the river to Elwood. Here, on November 30, 1859, he made his first speech in Kansas. The Elwood <u>Free Press</u> reported favorably on Lincoln's talk in which he encouraged Kansas to take her place among the Free states of the Union.

The next day Lincoln and his companions journeyed to Troy, where he spoke to a small audience in the courthouse. From there he continued to Doniphan where he addressed a group at the hotel.

At Atchison on December 2 he spoke in the Methodist church. The house was full and he was received so enthusiastically that he talked for two and one-half hours.

On the morning of December 3 a delegation from Leavenworth escorted Lincoln into town where a royal welcome had been prepared. A crowd with a band met him, a parade followed and crowds were large. That night at Stockton's Hall he discussed the principle



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of Popular Sovereignty. Lincoln's Kansas speeches pointed out that the aim of the Republican party was to prevent the extension of slavery and more than once he touched upon the subject of John Brown and the Harper's Ferry raid. In the latter case he stated that Brown's use of violence was wrong and that punishment for treason was what he could expect. Lincoln spoke again in Leavenworth on December 5.

The Leavenworth <u>Times</u>, December 5, 1859, commented on Mr. Lincoln's first address: "The first characteristic of Mr. Lincoln is truthfulness. He has no clap trap in or about him. He is simple and downright. No matter how he deals with parties, or the measures of parties, he deals with them plainly and justly. No speaker, in our belief, is freer from prejudice. . . . He sees what he believes to be truth and he presents it as he sees it. . . .

"The second characteristic of Mr. Lincoln is common sense. . . . Mr. Lincoln . . . is true to principle without being ultra. . . . But better yet, Mr. Lincoln is full of hope and of faith. . . . No man can speak as he speaks or work as he works, without sowing seed which will bear rich fruits."

The Leavenworth <u>Herald</u>, solid in its Democratic partisanship, was not so kind to Lincoln but it did mention him. The Atchison <u>Champion</u>, Republican through and through, is reported not to have mentioned Lincoln at all. Editor John A. Martin's loyalty to William Seward, the other Republican presidential hopeful, is the only explanation for his ignoring one of the biggest news stories in Kansas history.

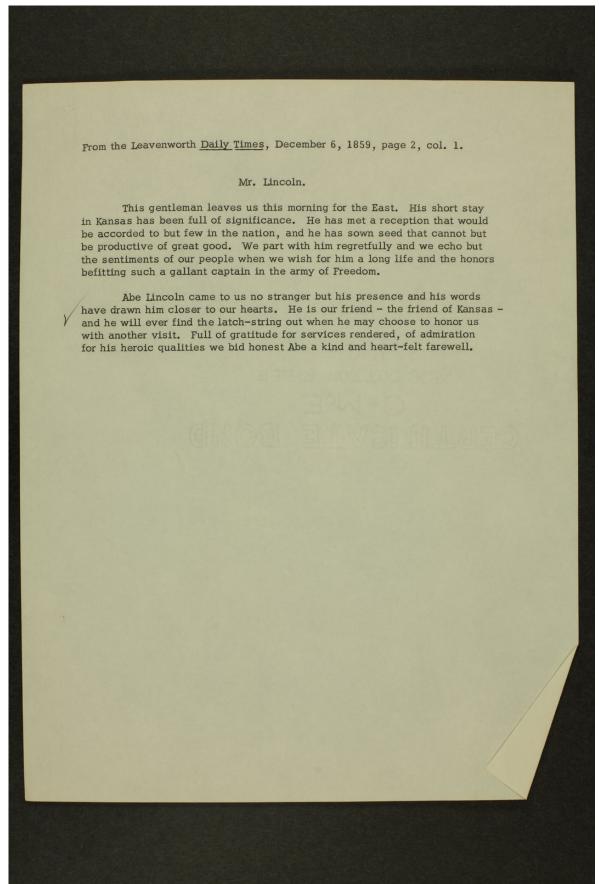
Lincoln stayed in Kansas until after the December 6 election of officers under the new Wyandotte constitution. When he left on December 7 the Leavenworth <u>Times</u> said: "Abe Lincoln came to us no stranger but his presence and his words have drawn him closer to our hearts. He is our friend—the friend of Kansas—and he will ever find



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the latchstring out when he may choose to honor us with another visit. " Although the Democratic press naturally was unfavorable to him and the Atchison paper ignored him, Lincoln did receive kind comment from opposition partisans. A former Kentuckian and a slaveholder said, "I have heard during my life, all the ablest public speakers, all the eminent statesmen of the past and the present generation, and while I dissent utterly from the doctrines of his address, and shall endeavor to refute some of them, candor compels me to say that it is the most able--the most logical-speech I ever listened to. " Ironically enough, the Kansas delegation at the Republican convention in Chicago in the spring of 1360 stayed with Seward until the end, never switching to Lincoln. Kansas missed the Lincoln bandwagon altogether.







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From the Leavenworth Daily Times, December 5, 1859, page 2, col. 2.

Mr. Lincoln's Speech.

We desire to dwell briefly upon the speech made by Mr. Lincoln, and as our brother methodists so often say, to make an exhortation after it.

The first characteristic of Mr. Lincoln is truthfulness.

He has no clap trap in or about him. He is simple and downright. No matter how he deals with parties, or the measures of parties, he deals with them plainly and justly. No speaker, in our belief, is freer from prejudice, or those passions which cloud intellect or narrow it. He sees what he believes to be truth and he presents it as he sees it. Men of of heart and of truth, consequently, consider what he urges, whether they agree with him or not.

The second characteristic of Mr. Lincoln is, <u>common sense</u>.

Oratory is an art. The mellow voice falls sweetly on the ear, and the rounded period dies away as a musical note. Yet there may be - often there is - no grit, no marrow, no food for reflection or thought - on the part of those thus gifted. It is all manner - passionate, persuasive, vehement - but it is the passion the persuasion, the vehemence, generally of shallow feeling or animal impulse, and nothing more. Mr. Lincoln, on the contrary, taking a broad common sense view of principles and measures, presents and argues them with a broad common sense strength. He is clear and solid. His clearness and solidity, too, are felt, must be felt by bitterest opponents, save those among them who live upon the stimulus of party, or who seek to lead party.

Mr. Lincoln, consequently, is true to principle without being ultra.

He plays no part, and he would have no political organization play a part, in State or national affairs. There is the Constitution of the Union. He stands by it and will do so while he lives. There is its great principle of freedom. He will compromise that for no triumph - yield it up for no defeat. Either the slaveholder has the right under the Constitution to bring his human chattels into the Territories of the Union, or he has not. If he has, we must submit. If he has not, we must restrain him. Hence he repudiates Squatter Sovereignty, and all and every clap trap which conceals or seeks to conceal the true issue, and he does it, too, with a force of logic which cannot be successfully resisted - with a power of reasoning which no mind or party can overthrow.

But better yet, Mr. Lincoln is full of hope and of faith.

The impatient sink down after defeat, and the impulsive grow weary after victory. He avoids both errors, and the people must avoid them, if they would defend their own rights or secure their own progress. It is the iron will - it is the steady and oft repeated blow - it is the energy which never flags after victory or pales before defeat - which conquers. - All history establishes this truth. All human experience proves it. Looking, then, to the progress of the cause of constitutional liberty, in the near past, and to the certainty of its success in the future, Mr. Lincoln earnestly advocates the use of those means essential to win it. What is worth having, is worth working for. Let us be hopeful and active - let us have faith, and never tire whether defeat or victory crown our efforts.

Mr. Lincoln's visit will do good to the Territory. No man can speak as he speaks or work as he works, without sowing seed which will bear rich fruits.



