

Primary Source: President Lincoln's Funeral Train

by The Philadelphia Inquirer April 25, 1865

On April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot by an assassin at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. He died the next day. Lincoln died just days after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant, essentially ending the American Civil War.

Lincoln's assassination stunned and saddened the country. Arrangements were made to transport Lincoln's body by train from Washington to Springfield, Illinois where Lincoln had lived before he was President. There he would be buried with his son Willie who had died in 1862. Burial in Springfield took place on May 4, 1865.

The train left Washington on April 21, 1865. The train took basically the same route as Lincoln's inauguration train in 1861 except in reverse. Below is a description from a Philadelphia newspaper of the procession as it begins its journey from Philadelphia to New York City. The "State House" mentioned is Independence Hall in Philadelphia. There had been a public viewing of the coffin there for two days.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S REMAINS IN INDEPENDENCE HALL

OUR DEAD PRESIDENT

Departure of the Remains from Philadelphia.

PASSAGE OF THE CORTEGE THRO' NEW JERSEY.

Thousands of Mourners Along the Route.

Progress of the funeral train.

New York, April 24, 10 A.M. —The funeral party started from the Continental Hotel at two o'clock this morning, and halted before the State House until the coffin was conveyed to the funeral car. The transparency which adorned the front of the building, the portrait of the President, with a dark border representing a coffin, afforded a relief to the surrounding gloom of the morning -- the words, "Rest in Peace" still blazing from the gas-jets above it. The Invincibles, and other city organizations, with torches, composed a part of the procession, and the City Guard acted as the escort. A band of music played dirges on the march.

The procession reached Kensington Depot at four o'clock. Thousands of men, women and children were still in the streets, and not a few half-dressed residents in that neighborhood, who, apparently, had just risen from their beds, ran forward to join the already large crowd in waiting at the depot.

The funeral party with difficulty pressed their way to the cars. Mr. W. H. Gatzmer, General Agent, and Messrs. A. W. Markley, Joseph P. Bradley and John L. McKnight, Directors of the Camden and Amboy Railroad Company, and F. Wolcott Jackson, General Superintendent, are among the civilians.

The running of the road was under the direction of Mr. R. S. Van Rensselaer.

At a few minutes after four o'clock the train started. A locomotive preceded it by ten minutes. The engine is trimmed with the national flag draped with mourning, and there is a telegrapher and two signal men accompanying it to guard against accidents.

The train consisted of nine elegant cars, provided by the Camden and Amboy Railroad, all tastefully trimmed. The funeral car last night was additionally decorated; heavy silver fringe being placed at the end of the black coverings of the several panels, and the festoons being fastened with stars and tassels of similar material.

First Lieutenant J. A. Durkee, and Lieutenant. Murphy spent the entire of last night in thus improving the exterior of the car and clothing the interior with additional drapery. The materials were contributed by Philadelphians.

There was on board the cars a committee from Newark, consisting of the Mayor of that city, Joseph P. Bradley, Esq., and the President and other members of the Councils, together with eight additional citizens. These and the Mayor of Washington and other civilians, occupied seats in the front car.

Next in order were Senators and members of the House of Representatives, with their respective officers. Then followed the Iowa and Illinois delegations and representatives of the several States and Territories. The Guard of Honor occupied the next car, and after this was that containing the remains of the late President and his little son Willie. The last car was occupied by Rear Admiral Davis, Major-Generals Dix and Hunter, Brigadier. General. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General of the United States Army. (Adjutant General Thomas is detained at home by sickness.) Brevet Brigadier General Barnard, Generals Caldwell, Eaton, Ramsey, Major Field of the Marine Corps, Captain Taylor and Captain Penrose, and other army and navy officers.

At a few minutes past four o'clock the train left the Kensington station, and soon reached Bristol, where several hundred persons had assembled. The sun was now rising in its full glory, beautifully illuminating the rural scenes.

Gov. Parker came on board at the State line at Morrisville with his staff, consisting of Adjutant General R. F. Stockton, Quartermaster-General Perrine and others of his staff. They were accompanied by U.S. Senator John P. Stockton, Rev. D. Henry Miller and Colonel Murphy, and were received by Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania, who had joined the funeral party at Harrisburgh.

The Delaware River was crossed at 5 1/2 o'clock. As the trains passed through Trenton the bells were tolled. Immense throngs of spectators had gathered on every hilltop, and the line of the road, and other advantageous points were occupied. The train proceeded onward until it reached the station, where it stopped for thirty minutes.

The population were assembled in much larger numbers, for this was the more attractive point. The station was elaborately festooned, and the national banner deeply draped. A detachment of the Veteran Corps was drawn up in line on the platform, showing that the people of Trenton, like all other true patriots, were not unmindful of the great loss which had befallen the nation in the violent death of a beloved and honored president.

Questions

1. How did the railroad "guard against accidents"?
2. How many railroad cars were with the train?
3. What does *festooned* mean here: "The station was elaborately festooned"?
4. Based on this article, how do you think the people of Philadelphia and Trenton felt about President Lincoln? Use quotations from the article to support your claim.

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. adorned
2. proceeded
3. fringe
4. festoons
5. assembled
6. immense
7. draped

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) “The transparency which **adorned** the front of the building, the portrait of the President, with a dark border representing a coffin, afforded a relief to the surrounding gloom.”

- a. Covered b. decorated c. hid d. advertised

2) “The train **proceeded** onward until it reached the station...”

- a. moved left b. moved back c. moved forward d. moved right

3) “The funeral car last night was additionally decorated; heavy silver **fringe** being placed at the end of the black coverings of the several panels...”

- a. edging b. flaps c. sequins d. pictures

4) “...and the **festoons** being fastened with stars and tassels of similar material. “

- a. windows b. coffins c. decorations d. tires

5) “At a few minutes past four o’clock the train left the Kensington station, and soon reached Bristol, where several hundred persons had **assembled**.”

- a. rioted b. gathered c. danced d. brought gifts

6) “**Immense** throngs of spectators had gathered on every hilltop, and the line of the road...”

a. small b. wide c. large d. loud

7) "The engine is trimmed with the national flag **draped** with mourning..."

a. wrapped b. painted c. decorated d. uncovered