

LINCOLN FUNERAL TRAIN PASSES THROUGH NEW JERSEY

By Jean R. Walton

One hundred fifty years ago, President Lincoln’s death overwhelmed this country with grief. He died on April 15, after having been shot by Booth at the Ford Theater the evening before – a story familiar to most Americans.

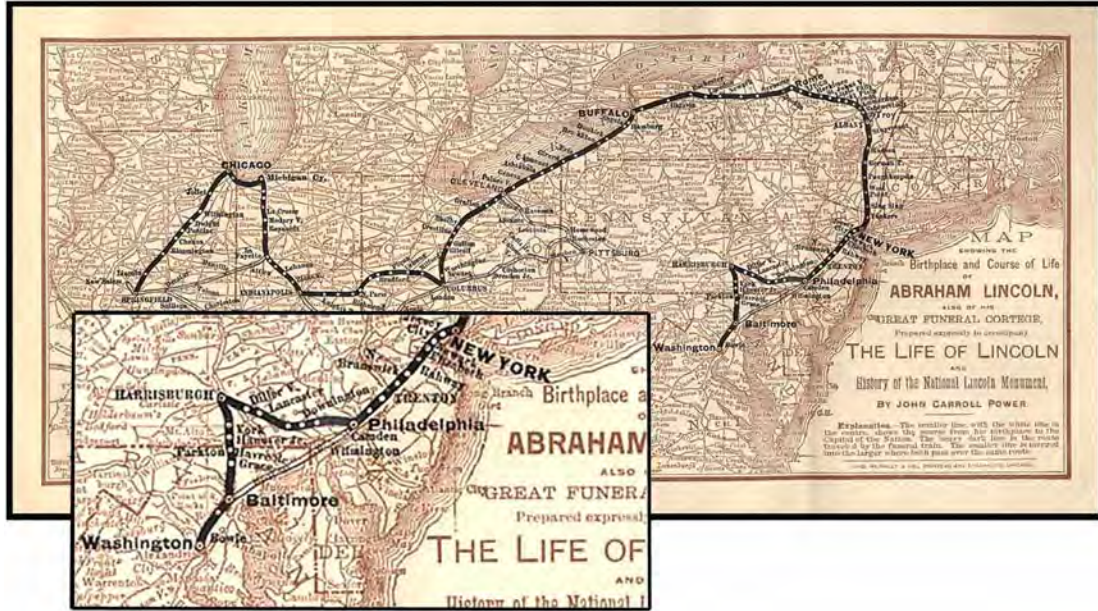


Fig. 1: Route of the original Funeral Train on its journey back to Springfield. It passed through New Jersey between viewings in Philadelphia and New York, on April 24, 1865.

The funeral arrangements were made quickly, and a plan was made to carry Lincoln’s body by train, to be returned to Springfield, Ill. for burial. His body would accompany that of his son, Willie, who had died in 1862, to be reinterred with his father. A specially designed car was prepared for this trip, which would follow the same route that Lincoln had taken as President-Elect when he came to Washington, D.C.

The train left Washington on April 21, passing through Baltimore, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia. After a viewing in Philadelphia, the President’s remains were put aboard the nine-car train at the Kensington Station between 1 and 4 AM on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The train travelled the Philadelphia and Trenton RR tracks to Trenton, where it arrived at 5:30 AM. It was met by a large crowd of mourners, despite the hour. It was changed to the New Jersey RR (forerunner of the PRR), and Governor Joel Parker and others came aboard to accompany the train across the state. It proceeded across the state to New Brunswick and Newark, and then to Jersey City, where the special train car was put aboard a ferry around 10 AM, to cross the Hudson from the NJRR depot at Exchange Place to the foot of Desbrosses St. (just below the present Holland Tunnel) to lie in State at City Hall in New York City.



Fig. 2: At left, the funeral car with mourners, as it travelled from Washington, DC to Springfield, Illinois.

Leslie’s Illustrated, May 13, 1865, Library of Congress LC-USZ62-6937 <sup>1</sup>

*Fig. 3: This view shows the funeral train car on the ferry Jersey City, as it travelled across the Hudson from Jersey City to Manhattan Island. As the car was carried from the train to the ferry, German choirs sang a dirge, and mourners (those able to get tickets) gathered on the balconies of the NJRR depot to pay their last respects.*



NYC Corrections web site<sup>2</sup>



*Fig. 4: This mourning cover for Lincoln, part of the Richard Micchelli Collection, was sent unpaid to Switzerland from Newark on May 26, 1865, with deficiency markings.*

This year, for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this first mournful voyage, it was hoped to recreate the funeral car and have it follow the same route back to Springfield. While the funeral car was created, the planned journey did not happen, at least not in the East, because of lack of funds.

Very little was done in the State of New Jersey to commemorate this past event. However, the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, in conjunction with the City of Jersey City, marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date Lincoln’s funeral train stopped in Jersey City with a plaque installed on Owen Grundy Pier at the foot of Montgomery Street, commemorating the four times Abraham Lincoln was present in Jersey City. The area was a rail and water terminus at that time, and is where New Jersey said its last goodbyes to our 16<sup>th</sup> President.<sup>3</sup>

**ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540, LC-USZ62-6937 (b&w film copy neg.), from Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper, vol. 20, no. 502 (1865 May 13), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> History of Mayor Gunther at <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/gunther/gunther06.html>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, the oldest continuously operating organization in the country honoring the 16<sup>th</sup> President, visit the website [www.thelincolnassociationofjerseycity.com](http://www.thelincolnassociationofjerseycity.com).