

**REMINISCENCES OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND
NOTES OF A VISIT TO
CALIFORNIA: TWO LECTURES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649018758

Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln and Notes of a Visit to California: Two Lectures by Joshua F. Speed

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JOSHUA F. SPEED

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1858
CALIFORNIA
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

VISIT TO CALIFORNIA.

—BY—

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BY
JOSHUA F. SPEED.

With a Sketch of His Life.

LOUISVILLE, KY.

PRINTED BY JOHN P. MORTON AND COMPANY.

1884

67 1/2

JOSHUA FRY SPEED.

Joshua Fry Speed was born November 14, 1814. His parents were John Speed and Lucy G. Speed. They came from Virginia to Kentucky in 1783, in their early youth. The father of John Speed was Captain James Speed, who was born in Mecklinburg, Va., and obtained his title by service in the Revolutionary War. The father of Lucy G. Speed was Joshua Fry. Captain James Speed and Joshua Fry are both noted in the early history of Kentucky. The former, as a member of the Conventions by which the State was separated from Virginia and became a separate commonwealth; the latter for his connection with educational interests. The ancestors of each came from England, and settled in Virginia prior to the beginning of the last century.

John Speed and Lucy G. Fry were married in 1809. They lived at the old homestead, known as Farmington, on the Louisville and Bardstown Turnpike road, about five miles from Louisville. There Joshua F. Speed was born, the fifth in a family of ten children, all of whom except one survived him. He was well educated at the schools in Jefferson County, and under the tuition of Joshua Fry, and at St. Joseph's College, at Bardstown.

It is related that when at school as a child he replied to questions in the same frank, pointed, and comprehensive manner that characterized him as a man. He was always positive and direct, and often his plainness of speech amounted to bluntness.

While at college he fell sick, and was cared for at the house of his uncle, who lived near Bardstown. When he recovered he rode home to his father on horseback, that being the mode of traveling in that day.

His father was anxious for him to return to college, but he steadfastly refused, declaring he was old enough to begin to make his own way in the world. He then spent between two and three years as a clerk in the wholesale store of Wm. H. Pope, then the largest establishment in Louisville.

After this he spent seven years of his life as a merchant in Springfield, Ill. He makes reference to this in his lecture upon Abraham Lincoln. At Springfield he became an intimate friend not only of Mr. Lincoln, but also of Stephen A. Douglas, Col. John Hardin, Col. Baker, Gen. Shields, Judge Gillespie, Nathaniel Pope, and others.

It is noticeable that his association was with men of that class. From his boyhood he regarded life with a serious business-like gravity, which led him to seek the companionship of young men of like disposition, or of persons older than himself.

His life at Springfield furnished many incidents amusing and interesting, which he was fond of relating.

Often in after years, in a circle of friends, his memory would recur to that period, and he would tell his experiences as a country merchant in his crisp narrative style, half playful, half serious, so as to charm all who heard him.

Among his friends at Springfield he showed the same characteristics that became more conspicuous in later years. He took a lively interest in public affairs, and assisted in editing a newspaper, but his personal friends and associates were in all parties. His friendships were never affected by political or religious views differing from his own.

He returned from Springfield to Kentucky in the year 1842, and engaged in farming for about nine years. He was married February 15, 1842, to Miss Fanny Henning, a sister of James W. Henning, of Louisville. They made their home on a farm, in the Pond Settlement neighborhood, about thirteen miles from Louisville, on the Salt River road.

It was a very pretty place, lying at the foot of the knobs. The dwelling was a log house. They both often recurred to their farm-life as the happiest part of their lives. She was particularly fond of flowers, and in this respect he was a genial companion. The grounds about the house were covered with roses, the beauty of which was the subject of remark by all their neighbors and visitors from the city. In addition to the enjoyment of these, they spent many hours together in the fields and woods, seeking rare species of wild flowers. He

had a vein of sentiment in his nature which made him fond of flowers and poetry, which his active business never eradicated. Evidences of this are found in his letters and lectures, and his friends recall how often it was manifested in his conversation.

In the year 1848, while he lived on the farm, he was elected to represent Jefferson County in the State Legislature. Though often solicited, he would never again consent to become a candidate for or hold any office.

He moved into the city of Louisville in 1851, and formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, James W. Henning, in the real-estate business. This relation continued until his death. Until the year 1861 his life was uneventful, he pursued his vocation with great success, devoting to it his entire time and energy. The firm of Henning and Speed became one of the best known in Louisville. It transacted a very large and important business. The two partners were admirably suited to each other. Mr. Henning possessed an unequaled knowledge of the real estate in the city and county. Mr. Speed had no superior as a financier. Their business embraced agencies for many of the largest owners of city property, and they were trustees of many large estates. The public records show the large interests intrusted to their care by wills, deeds of trusts, and appointment by the courts. In the division of estates and valuation of property they were constantly appealed to. In all such matters their judgment was so much relied on that the courts, of their own motion, not infrequently

directed litigants to obtain the testimony of one or the other before deciding a controversy.

Among their agencies were estates of real and personal property belonging to persons who resided in the South during the war. In the midst of that destructive conflict, these persons apprehended their possessions were swept away; but when the war ended they found every thing preserved with the steadily accumulated earning of four years. Their gratitude naturally found expression in beautiful tokens of remembrance.

Joshua Speed also managed the estates of his widowed mother and his unmarried and widowed sisters.

The uniform positive and emphatic testimony of all is in praise of his ability, fidelity, and fairness. He gave his personal attention to all business intrusted to him. No one knew better how to invest money, or how to buy and sell property. His skill and sound judgment not only built up for himself a handsome fortune, it was all put forth to the best advantage for the benefit of all whose interests were in his hands.

In 1861 his whole heart was in the Union cause, and the intimate acquaintance he had with Mr. Lincoln enabled him to exert all his ability directly for that cause.

One of the fruits of their intimacy was a visit of Mr. Lincoln to Kentucky some years prior to the war. He saw, at the old Farmington homestead, slavery in the form often spoken of as patriarchal—the mildest, best phase of it. But on his return, he witnessed on the