

**PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF  
EARLY DECATUR, ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN, RICHARD J.  
OGLESBY AND THE CIVIL WAR**

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Personal recollections of early Decatur, Abraham Lincoln, Richard J. Oglesby and The Civil War by Jane Martin Johns

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**JANE MARTIN JOHNS**

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Mrs. Jane Martin Johns

# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

Early Decatur  
Abraham Lincoln  
Richard J. Oglesby  
and The Civil War



By JANE MARTIN JOHNS

*Edited by* HOWARD C. SCHAUB



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## FOREWORD

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**D**ATIONS and men and women are born, run their course and die, but the records of their lives and deeds go on either as a warning or encouragement to those who follow after.

The Decatur Chapter of the Society of Daughters American Revolution was formed with fifteen charter members, February 4, 1896, at the home of Miss Myra Belle Ewing, who was elected its first Regent. The chapter now numbers eighty-five members with the following officers:

Regent.....	Mrs. Frank P. Roach.
Vice Regent.....	Mrs. Mary E. Haworth.
Secretary.....	Miss Harriet C. Jenkins.
Treasurer.....	Mrs. Henrietta S. McNulta
Registrar.....	Miss Mary L. Johnson.
Historian.....	Mrs. W. A. Cash.
State Historian.....	Mrs. E. L. Pegram.

As stated in the Constitution the object of the organization is: "To perpetuate the memory of the spirit of the men and women who achieved American independence, by the acquisition and protection of historic spots; by the erection of memorial tablets and monuments; by the encouragement of historical research; by the promotion and celebration of all patriotic anniversaries and by the preservation of documents, relics and records." The members are also pledged to cherish, maintain and extend the institutions of America; to foster true patriotism and love of country and to aid in securing for mankind all belongings of liberty.

While Decatur Chapter has not distinguished itself by any great achievements it has accomplished some worthy work. In June, 1905, the members placed a large granite boulder bearing a

suitably engraved bronze tablet to mark the site near Decatur of the first home in Illinois of Abraham Lincoln.

In the year 1907 the old Macon County courthouse where Abraham Lincoln practiced law was moved to Fairview Park, rebuilt and restored to its original condition. It is now the Chapter House of the Decatur Chapter Daughters American Revolution.

In June, 1912, the grave of William Dickey, a soldier of the Revolutionary War, who was buried at Argenta, Ill., was suitably marked with a handsome bronze marker.

One great duty which devolves upon our organization is the collecting and compiling of local history.

While taking up the study of the history of Illinois at one of our meetings at the home of Miss Carrie Powers, Mrs. Jane M. Johns gave a reminiscence of Decatur and Macon County in the early days. She said: "The usefulness and intensity of life in those years can never be realized by the younger generation. Like conditions can never again exist."

This expression suggested to some of the members of the chapter the advisability of asking Mrs. Johns to write a book relating the experiences and problems which confronted the pioneers of Macon County.

Notwithstanding the great amount of work and research this entailed upon her, she has kindly consented to do it. Appreciating as we do the literary ability of Mrs. Johns and her marvelous recollections of the days that are no more; also realizing how few persons we now have with us who lived in Decatur and Macon County during the eventful years of which she writes, it is indeed with pride and pleasure that the Decatur Chapter Daughters American Revolution present this work with the faith that it will interest many readers; preserve a record of many important events and add a valuable chapter of authentic history to the records of our illustrious state—

"Not without thy wondrous story  
Illinois, Illinois,  
Can be writ the nation's glory,  
Illinois, Illinois."



What could be more fitting than that the wondrous story of Illinois should be writ in chapters by the old residents of each county and these chapters be bound into a volume that shall be a true, complete, and priceless chronicle of the events of the pioneer days of our state?

LUCY ELEANOR ROANE CASH,  
Decatur, Ill., August, 1912.  
Historian Decatur Chapter Daughters American Revolution.

## PREFACE

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THE Decatur chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has, in pursuance of its desire to "preserve local history," asked me to write these recollections.

Though rather a serious undertaking for a woman of eighty-five years, I commenced the work, little dreaming of the magnitude it would eventually assume.

My intention has been, not to write a history, but to tell a story, in a form that will incite this generation to an interest in, and a study of, the most interesting and important period in the history of our nation.

My chief purpose was to chronicle the magnificent work of the women of the county during the Civil war, but my story, almost unconsciously, grew into a record of Decatur's part in that history-making epoch.

We are in danger of losing the true inwardness of the soul-stirring times, when the life of the nation was in peril. It has proved almost impossible to secure reliable statistics of local events. No files of local newspapers dealing with that period have been preserved, and soldiers do not seem to have been able to bring back with them letters from home. The great majority of those who were personally identified with the stirring scenes of the time have passed away, while from those who remain only dim recollections, of a trifle here and a trifle there, have been of any value.

My memory has been like a storehouse of those little Japanese cones which, when touched with fire, begin to unroll layer after layer of beautiful, iridescent, snake-like coils. An indistinct, colorless recollection, when fired by the mention of some trifling event, or the name of a friend, long since dead and almost forgot-

ten, unrolls a coil of memories, distinct and forceful. Then, when I go to history to prove it is not all an illusion, lo! other cones are fired, and the indistinct memories grow into mountains of long sought for facts.

These papers do not aspire to the dignity of history, but I have tried, by painstaking research of records, and the assistance of old letters and papers, to recall and chronicle not only the events of the times, but their causes and effects.

In order to give these papers any historical value I have been obliged to supplement my personal reminiscences with a good deal of legislative and political history, for most of which I am indebted to "Illinois, Historical and Statistical," by John Moses.

I have quoted largely from a "History of Macon County," by John Smith, a former resident of Decatur. Some extracts from that book will also appear in the appendix to this work, as a means of perpetuating valuable and interesting history of early times, which is in danger of being lost. Mr. Smith's book is out of print and is already becoming very rare.

The secretary's book of the old Hospital Aid Society has been placed at my disposal, but the records are so meagre that they have only served to fire my memory of the thrilling events which they so slightly record.

My manuscript looks to me like a mass of quotations, for when ever I have found that some one else has told the tale I wish to tell, in better language than I can command, I have quoted. Moses, Logan, Moore, Wilkie, Smith, The Decatur Review and The Decatur Herald have all reinforced my memory and added to the quotation marks, but I find that in many instances I have so cut and adapted their language that it is no longer either theirs or mine.

To Mr. Howard C. Schaub, who has kindly consented to edit these papers, I am under many obligations for assistance and advice.

The Decatur Review's catalog record of events has proved of incalculable value in securing dates of importance, and I wish to thank the management for giving me free access to it.

It has been impossible to eliminate the personal note from