

8. THAT NAME "ABE"

The instances were no doubt rare when Mr. Lincoln in mature years was addressed as "Abe." Lincoln had dignity. His presence imperceptibly restrained a cheap familiarity. One can sense this about the man from some of his photographs. Two contemporaries and close friends of Abraham Lincoln discuss how people of his day addressed him.

But although I have heard of cheap fellows, professing that they were wont to address *him* as "Abe," I never knew of any one who ever did it in my presence. Lincoln disdained ceremony, but he gave no license for being called "Abe." His preference was being called "Lincoln" with no handle at all. I don't recollect of his applying the prefix "Mr." to any one. When he spoke to Davis, he called him "Judge," but he called us all on the circuit by our family names merely, except Lamon, whom every one called "Hill." We spoke of him as "*Uncle Abe*," but to his face we called him "Lincoln." This suited him; he *very* much disliked to be called "Mr. President."

This I knew, and I never called him so once. He didn't even like to be called "Mr." He preferred plain "Lincoln."

HENRY C. WHITNEY, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*.

In all my journeyings with him I never heard any person call him "Abe," not even his partner, Herndon. There was an impalpable garment of dignity about him which forbade such familiarity. I have read pretended conversations with him in books and newspapers where his interlocutors addressed him as Abe this or Abe that, but I am sure that all such colloquies are imaginary.

HORACE WHITE, *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates*.

9. LINCOLN IN HIS LAW OFFICE

Much of the valuable Herndon material on Lincoln is in the form of letters Herndon wrote to Jesse W. Weik when the latter was collaborating in the preparation of the work commonly known as Herndon's Lincoln. The following excerpt from one such letter gives an intimate glimpse into the Lincoln and Herndon law office in Springfield. It also is a valuable comment on the man Lincoln. The second selection, a recollection of Whitney's, discloses the extraordinary fiscal and accounting arrangement that existed in the Lincoln and Herndon partnership.

As I said to you, a law office is a dry place. There is nothing in it but work and toil. Mr. Lincoln's habit was to get down to his office about 9 a.m., unless he was out on the circuit, which was about six or eight months in the year. Our office never was a headquarters for politics. Mr. Lincoln never stopped in the street to have a social chat with anyone; he was not a social man, too reflective, too abstracted; he never attended political gatherings till the thing was organized, and then he was ready to make a speech, willing and ready to reap any advantage that grew out of it, ready and anxious for the office it afforded, if any in the political world. If a man came into our office on business, he stated his case, Lincoln listening generally attentively while the man told over the facts of his case. Generally Lincoln would take a little time to consider. When he had sufficiently considered, he gave his opinion of the case plainly, directly, and sharply; he said to the man: "Your case is a good one," or "a bad one," as the case might be. Mr.

Lincoln was not a good conversationalist, except it was in the political world, nor was he a good listener; his great anxiety to tell a story made him burst in and consume the day in telling stories. Lincoln was not a general reader, except in politics. On Sundays he would come down to his office, sometimes bringing Tad and Willie and sometimes not, would write his letters, write declarations and other law papers, write out the heads of his speeches, take notes of what he intended to say. How do you expect to get much of interest out of this dry bone, a law office, when you know that Lincoln was a sad, gloomy, melancholic, and an abstracted man? Lincoln would sometimes lie down in the office to rest on the sofa, his feet on two or three chairs or up against the wall. In this position he would reflect, decide on what he was going to do and how do it; and then he would jump up, pick up his hat and run, the good Lord knows where.

HERNDON TO WEIK, FEBRUARY 24, 1887.