

"My friends.

No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

The February 12, 1861 *Illinois State Journal* newspaper noted, "It was a most impressive scene. We have known Mr. Lincoln for many years; we have heard him speak upon a hundred different occasions; but we never saw him so profoundly affected, nor did he ever utter an address, which seemed to us as full of simple and touching eloquence, so exactly adopted to the occasion, so worthy of the man and the hour. Although it was raining fast when he began to speak, every hat was lifted, and every head bent forward to catch the last words of the departing chief. When he said, with the earnestness of a sudden inspiration of feeling, that *with God's help he should not fail*, there was an uncontrollable burst of applause."

LINCOLN'S FAREWELL ADDRESS FEBRUARY 11, 1861

On February 11, 1861, Abraham Lincoln extemporaneously delivered his farewell address from the back platform of a train leaving Springfield, Illinois bound for his inauguration in Washington, DC. On the way, someone asked Lincoln for a copy of the address for publication.

All we know for sure is that Lincoln started to write the speech from memory, but only the first third is in Lincoln's handwriting. The rest was written by his secretary, John Nicolay. There are conflicting legends as to why he did not complete the transcription himself. One legend is that the train ride was so jerky, he eventually stopped writing and dictated his words to his secretary, who finished transcribing the speech. A second legend holds that after shaking the hands of all those in attendance for his speech, his hand was too sore to continue writing, and he dictated the remainder to his secretary.

It has been confirmed that the first portion, down to the eighth line where a line crosses over two words is in Lincoln's handwriting. The balance of the speech is in the handwriting of John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary.

The small notation at the bottom of the page was written by Lincoln's son Robert T. Lincoln.

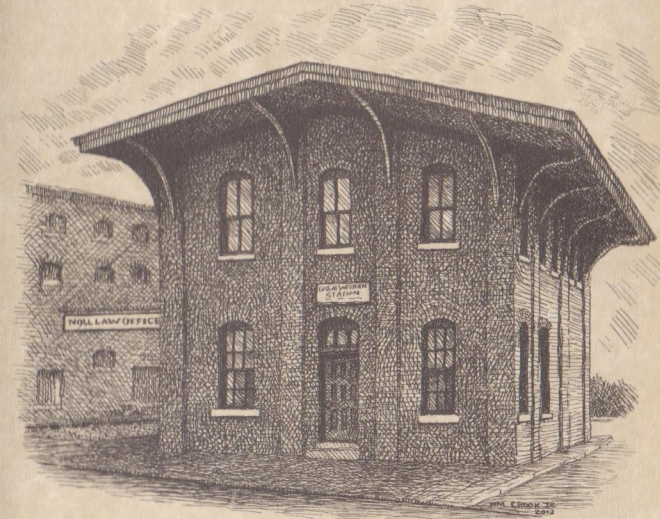
The original manuscript is housed in The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.



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LINCOLN'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

February 11, 1861



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[Feb 11 1865]

My friends.

No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Now, my little ones are leaving me, and I am alone. I now ~~have~~ have not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, ~~who~~ ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let me confidently leave you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

* See as to this mss. note at p. 291 Vol III Nicolay & Hay

[The notation is in the handwriting of Robert T. Lincoln]