



Haverford Township Historical Society



ABRAHAM LINCOLN CAME AND WENT THROUGH HAVERFORD

By Richard D. Kerr

Abraham Lincoln, of Springfield, Illinois was President-elect on February 11, 1861, when he boarded his inaugural train. As the train left Springfield, Lincoln embarked on a twelve-day tour through seven states with stops in eighteen cities, on a ceremonial tour to Washington DC for his inauguration as the 16th President of the United States. By February 21, Lincoln's train was in New York, which it departed to pass through Trenton, New Jersey and arrive in Philadelphia later the same day.

Following more public appearances, fireworks and a night's stay, Lincoln again boarded the train on the morning of February 22, bound for Harrisburg. He would ride westward on the former Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad, which had been built as part of the ambitious "Main Line of Public Works," a state-built combination of railway, canal and incline systems connecting Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in 1834.

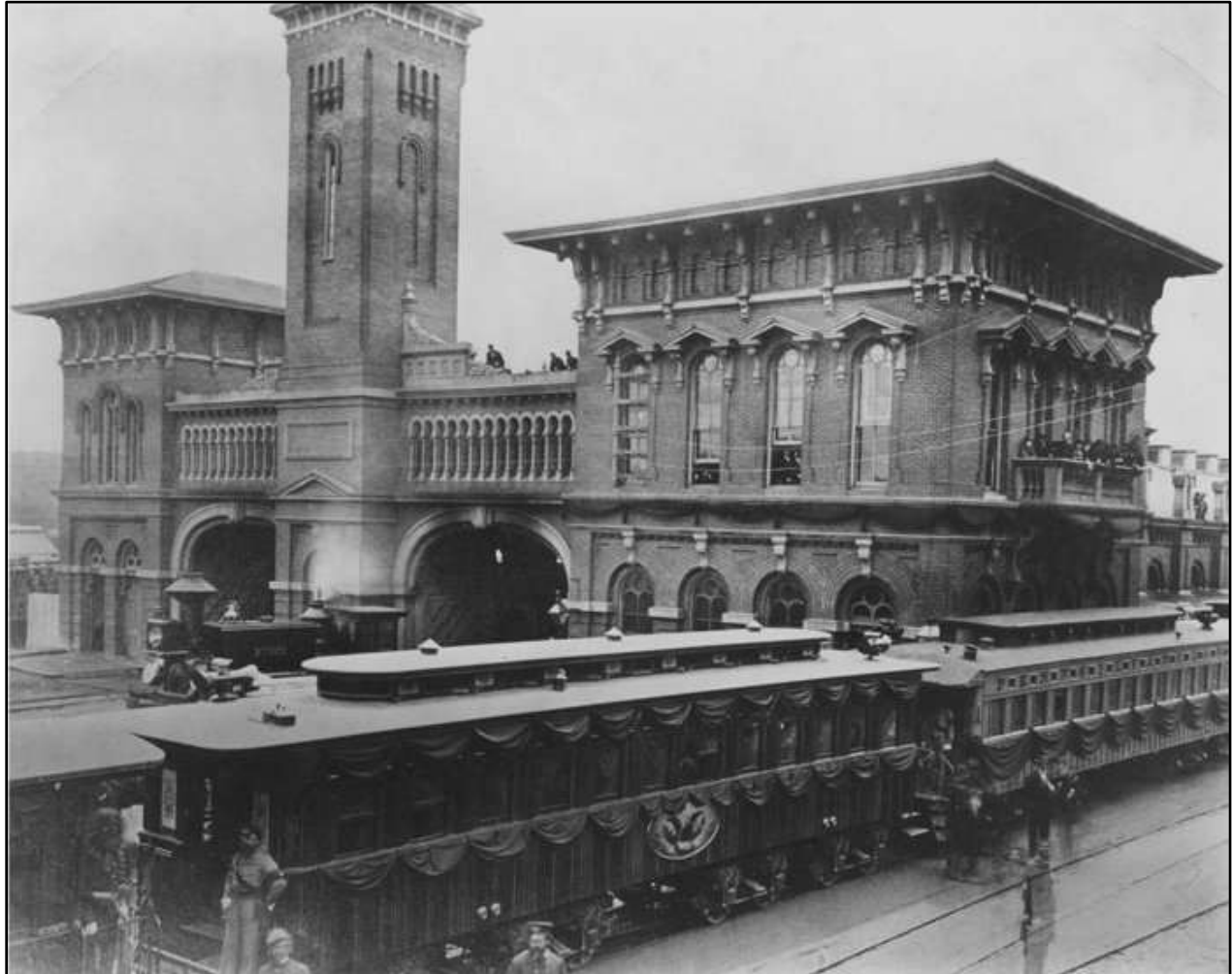
The Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad was one of the nation's earliest railroads, so early that the basic railway technology that we know today had not yet been refined. Stone blocks were sunk into the ground to support long, parallel timber "stringers." Iron straps fastened along the tops of the stringers created the running surface for the flanged wheels. The wagons that travelled along the rails were exactly that – specially-wheeled wagons pulled by horses or mules. The railroad operated using the same methods as the closest model of that era, a turnpike. Individuals paid a fee to operate their own freight wagons or passenger "coaches" on the line, pulled with their own team. Only later did steam engines appear, supplied by the railroad itself, as that early technology also was refined. Subsequently, the wagons were coupled together into trains, as the mechanical engines became more powerful, and wooden crossties bearing heavier iron or steel rails replaced the old stones, stringers and iron straps. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania sold the Main Line of Public Works, including the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad, to the growing Pennsylvania Railroad in 1857, just a few years before Lincoln's train. From these origins our area is known as "the Main Line" today.

At the time of Lincoln's train, the railroad followed an earlier route through our area, which weaved about to secure a more level path. It basically came from Philadelphia parallel to the general route of present-day Montgomery Avenue, through the Ardmore station area, then swung to the west along present-day Railroad Avenue through the northeast corner of Haverford Township. It then crossed diagonally through the intersection of County Line Road and Bryn Mawr Avenue onto present-day Glenwood Avenue. As it went where Railroad Avenue is today, it skirted the Haverford College campus.

As the inaugural train passed by the college, we are told, Lincoln appeared on the open platform at the rear of the train, doffed his hat and bowed to students assembled along the bank down to the track and at the simple station shelter that served the small college at that time.

The next time that Abraham Lincoln passed by train through Haverford Township, four years later after the end of the Civil War, was just as ceremonial, but not at all celebratory. It was the occasion of the funeral train carrying the assassinated President's remains from Washington DC back to his hometown

of Springfield, Illinois for burial. On April 22, 1865, with Lincoln's casket in a lavish special funeral coach, the solemn nine-car train came eastbound from Harrisburg to Philadelphia along the same track. It passed slowly through Haverford Township and along the edge of the college in mid-afternoon. Students had draped their station shelter in black for this somber occasion, and people lined the track (the men with hats removed) to pay their last respects to Abraham Lincoln.



"The Lincoln Special" funeral train in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on the morning of April 22, 1865, before passing through Haverford Township on its way to Philadelphia. Note the special four-truck funeral coach.

Just a few years later, the Pennsylvania Railroad straightened their rail line through our area along its present four-track alignment, creating the Main Line of today. The earlier pioneering railroad track, the one that had borne Abraham Lincoln twice through Haverford Township, was removed. Today it is memorialized only by the street name "Railroad Avenue."

Explore for More... Abraham Lincoln Came and Went Through Haverford

A brief entry on the funeral train passing Haverford College can be found at the top of page 333 of *A History of Haverford College for the First Sixty Years of Its Existence*, published in 1892:

<http://archive.org/details/historyofhaverfo00have>

©2013-2018 by Haverford Township Historical Society. Personal non-commercial use permitted; all other rights reserved.