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Scott Trostel. *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln*. Ohio: Cam-Tech Publishing, 2012.

## Book Review

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Jennifer Thompson

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This book traces the route followed by the Lincoln funeral train, with each chapter covering one day of the journey, and shows the nation's response to the loss of her sixteenth president. The city of Springfield, Illinois immediately reacted to his death, requesting to be his burial site. Mrs. Lincoln wanted him buried in Chicago and wanted him to lie in state only in state capitals along a straight path to Chicago. She did not like the idea of "an extended funeral train, extended public memorials and a Springfield burial."<sup>1</sup> Multiple cities requested the funeral train travel through their towns so they could pay their respects. By April 19, she finally chose a cemetery north of Springfield, but she did not escort his remains.

Trostel recorded how railroads offered special trains and cars for the journey, how they decorated the trains and cars in mourning, how each city erected memorials and held services, and how people gathered along the railroad tracks to pay their respects, even in the rain. He explained the special rules followed by the train, which included safety signals used at each switch and bridge, the speed of five miles per hour, and the tolling of the bell at each station. Telegraph officers sent telegrams to the next station to alert them that the train was coming, and security along the way ensured safe passage of the train. He described the two primary cars of the train. The funeral car, the *United States*, bore the bodies of Lincoln and his son Willie and the officers' car carried the family, high-ranking officers, and the guard escort. Lincoln had planned to view this new presidential car, the *United States*, on the day he died. At least nine cars made up the funeral train; however, the railroads changed locomotives and added and removed passenger cars along the way. The train used at least forty-two locomotives and eighty passenger cars during the journey.

Trostel recorded the weather conditions along the way, predominantly rain, and how the memorial bunting needed to be frequently changed. He recorded how each city and town along the way showed their respects with elaborate displays,

flowers, memorial services, and long lines to view the remains. He also recorded the names of those boarding and leaving the funeral train procession. He also recorded some of the problems faced along the route. Flowers thrown onto the tracks by schoolchildren became crushed by the engine wheels and “became so slippery that the train almost stalled more than once.”<sup>2</sup> Heavy rains shortened funeral processions through towns. Pickpockets stole from the crowded mourners. The train failed to stop in or skipped towns along the way. A wooden sidewalk in Chicago collapsed under the weight of mourners marching in a procession.

Trostel concluded his book with Lincoln’s final funeral and burial in Springfield. He included lists naming the guard escort, cities holding official memorials, hotels providing means and lodging, governors on board the train, railroads traveled and ferry boats used along the way, and the cars and locomotives provided for the train. This well-written book provides a great tribute to a well-loved president and will be a great asset for those planning to see the Lincoln Funeral Train following the same route for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015.

## End Notes

1. Scott Trostel, *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln* (Fletcher, Ohio: Cam-Tech Publishing, 2012), 16.

2. *Ibid.*, 65.

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Our reviewer: Jennifer Thompson is an adjunct professor at American Public University Systems / American Military University. She graduated from APUS in 2006 with her MA in Military Studies / Civil War. She earned her BA in General Studies from Indiana University. Since 2006, she has served as editor for the Indianapolis Civil War Round Table's newsletter, *Hardtack*. She is happily married for thirty-five years to her husband Jerry. They have two grown children, Jeremy and Rose, and four grandchildren, Crystal, James, Shyann, and Cherokee.