

Norman B. Judd, Abraham Lincoln's Close Friend

Norman B. Judd was a close friend of Abraham Lincoln's and actually helped Lincoln win the Republican nomination for President in 1860. In addition, his ties to Lake Forest are important. He frequently visited his brother-in-law Gilbert Rossiter, (Judd's wife Adeline was the sister of Gilbert Rossiter) and through politics and business connections he was friends of C.B. Farwell and D.R. Holt, to name a couple of prominent Lake Foresters. According to Arthur Miller, archivist at Lake Forest College, the Judds may have lived in Lake Forest from time to time staying with the Rossiters.

There is some controversy whether Abraham Lincoln was ever entertained in Lake Forest after giving a speech in Waukegan on April 2, 1860, and Norman Judd is part of this story. Judd, as Chairman of the Illinois Republican Committee, accompanied Lincoln by train to that speech. The Edward Arpee history of Lake Forest states that Lincoln came to the Rossiter house after the speech, (which is currently located just east of Gorton Community Center,) and so far it can't be proven one way or another. The Rossiter house was originally located on Deerpath road, near Triangle Park and was so close to the train station it is logical they might have stopped for a visit.

Waukegan takes credit for the honor of housing Lincoln that evening. In fact, the Lake County Historical Society has placed a plaque on the house which stands on the corner of County and Julian Streets. Whether or not Judd brought Lincoln to the Rossiter house on April 2, Norman Judd was a powerful and active figure in Illinois and Lake County politics and instrumental in the election of Abraham Lincoln at the 1860 Republican convention. He was an influential politician who helped organize the Republican Party in Illinois.

Judd moved to Chicago from New York in 1836 and developed his reputation as an expert on railroad affairs. He was elected City Attorney for Chicago from 1837-1839, then a small town, and from there he progressed to County Attorney. His political career blossomed while serving in the Illinois Senate from 1844 to 1860 and during this period he befriended Abraham Lincoln. In 1844, he married Adeline Rossiter and they had three children.

Judd's ties to Lincoln deepened with the formation of the state Republican Party. As Chairman of the Republican State Committee, Judd was instrumental in getting the 1860 Republican National Convention sited in Chicago. Lincoln was not considered a serious presidential candidate at the time so this was viewed as a "neutral" site. As a prominent railroad lawyer, Judd convinced the railroads to provide a "cheap excursion rate from all parts of the State to the convention". This allowed a mass of Lincoln's supporters to come to the convention. Judd also got the Chicago Press & Tribune (which covered the northern part of the state) to write a resounding editorial on behalf of Lincoln's candidacy. Not surprisingly, Judd had the honor of placing Lincoln's name in nomination for President of the United States at the convention.

When President-elect Lincoln started his journey by train from Springfield to Washington for his inaugural, Judd was among a handful of close friends who accompanied him. Judd played a key

role in getting the President-elect's itinerary changed in order to foil an expected assassination attempt in Baltimore. Judd had to convince Lincoln to heed the serious warning from Pinkerton detectives. He urged him to change his itinerary and as a result Lincoln safely slipped into Washington at night by train from Philadelphia.

Lincoln initially had Judd's name on his list for a Cabinet position, however, Mary Lincoln and Lincoln's campaign manager opposed the idea. As a consolation, he offered Judd a ministry post in Berlin where he served until 1865.

In 1866, Judd was elected to the U.S. Congress from the Chicago and northern counties district. He was re-elected in 1868. After leaving Congress, Mr. Judd was appointed Collector of Customs in Chicago where he served until his death in 1878. Many of his prominent friends from Lake Forest attended his funeral. He died impoverished after investing heavily in Colorado silver mines and as a result of the Panic of 1873. Judd's widow came back to live with the Rossiters in Lake Forest, and she subsequently donated his papers to Lake Forest College, so it is clear that the Judds felt close ties to the Lake Forest community.