



## When Abraham Lincoln Came To Town

The old town was astir at dawn. Flags flew from dooryards and windows; bells rang. Republican Westfield was preparing to welcome a new leader, who had emerged from the obscurity of a Kentucky cabin, to become the first Republican President, in a critical hour. Yes, Abraham Lincoln was coming! He would soon be leaving Jersey City en route to Washington to be inaugurated, and would say a few words to his friends of Union County from the platform of his special train, at the Pennsylvania depot, Elizabeth. Every party worker in town was going and taking his family with him; some by train, some by stage and carriage—all hoping for an opportunity to shake the hand of the man who was to lead them safely through the cruelest Civil War in history.

It was a balmy Feb. 21, 1861, and the procession of vehicles moved slowly onto the main road, leading eastward. The head coach was nearing Crane's Ford when a halt was called. The driver of a cart, traveling in an opposite direction, was blocking the road and the men folks stopped to see what was the matter. The driver was standing in the middle of the road, pointing with his whip toward an open carriage approaching from Gallops Hill Road. "Look! Look!" he shouted. "Here comes Abe Lincoln! Durned if it ain't or I'll eat them whiskers!"

"Durned if it ain't," echoed a voice from the roadside. "Durned if it ain't!"

The word passed quickly down the line and vehicles were soon emptied of their occupants, who gathered in groups at the cross-road. Hopes ran high. That must be Mr. Lincoln on the front seat. And could that be Mrs. Lincoln driving? And who were the two bewhiskered gentlemen in the back seat. Members of Mr. Lincoln's cabinet—perhaps? And how did they get 'way out here in the country at this early hour? No telling. Honest Abe had his own way of doing things. He was called a man of mystery.

As the carriage drew near, a stout little fellow stepped in front of the crowd and offered "three cheers for President Lincoln." They were given with some restraint and he was about to call for more, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder and a deep voice spoke into his ear. "Shut up, you sim-

pleton! That ain't Abe Lincoln. That's young Gid Ludlow taking his best girl to see the president." This commanding person was recognized as Dr. Stryker, family physician, who knew everybody and spoke his mind on all occasions.

A murmur went through the crowd. When the carriage arrived and the lady driving exchanged nods with Dr. Stryker, the cheer leader made a wry face and disappeared.

"Gid," explained the doctor, "you've fooled half of Westfield with that hat and those whiskers. All these folks were expecting to pay their respects to Abraham Lincoln."

Gideon Ludlow was a most deliberate and calculating young man. He removed the lap robe and gradually elevated his angular frame to a standing position. Though he was but 22, he was accustomed to public speaking, having won the prize in oratory at Miss Hannah Miller's private school and addressed a town meeting on the slavery question. Lifting his glistening top hat, he bowed, first to his lady companion; then to the crowd. "Thank you, my fellow countrymen," he said, solemnly. "I hope to prove myself worthy of the flattering compliment you have paid me on this momentous occasion. We all want to be like Honest Abe. He is a man of the people. He will be a great president."

Dr. Stryker joined in the applause which followed. "Gid," said he, taking his horse by the bridle, "that was a first-rate speech and we're going to put you up in front of this Westfield delegation. Any one who looks as much like Lincoln as you do ought to be the first to shake his hand."

And so it happened that when the special train arrived in Elizabeth, Gideon Ludlow was among the dignitaries waiting to welcome Mr. Lincoln. Every one there said he looked like the president and was not unlike him in manner. To the worshipful Gideon this was indeed a "momentous occasion"—the most momentous in his lifetime of 92 years. Never would he forget Mr. Lincoln's kindly smile and warm handclasp as they stood facing each other on the car platform. If these two had met in this age of invention and discovery, a score of cameras would have clicked and the story would have traveled 'round the world.