

Crowds gathered 150 years ago as Lincoln's funeral train passed through Syracuse

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By [Ken Sturtz](#) | ksturtz@syracuse.com

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on April 27, 2015 at 1:47 AM, updated April 27, 2015 at 7:06 AM

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Abraham Lincoln, seen in an 1864 portrait. Lincoln's funeral

train passed through Syracuse 150 years ago this week. *Library of Congress*

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- As early as 8 p.m. on April 26, 1865 the Vanderbilt Depot, on East Washington Street between South Salina and South Warren streets, was overflowing with people, waiting.

Abraham Lincoln's funeral train passed through the city of Syracuse 150 years ago this week.

Lincoln's train left Washington on April 21, a week after his assassination. It passed through seven states, traveling more than 1,600 miles to Springfield, Ill.

In Syracuse, a public eulogy had been held days earlier in Hanover Square on the same day as Lincoln's funeral in Washington. Businesses closed and buildings and people throughout the city were trimmed in black. A procession of some 3,000 people walked to Hanover Square.

"He is gone -- but he has left us the rich inheritance of a redeemed and regenerate and free country," former U.S. Rep. Charles B. Sedgwick told the crowd.

"The ... great stain upon our National character, the great source of strife and contention among our people, by his courage and fortitude, has been wiped out and removed. His name has become historic."



Vanderbilt Station, seen in an undated photograph, stood on

Washington Street, between South Salina and South Warren streets, in Syracuse. *Onondaga Historical Association*

When Lincoln had made his way to Washington in February 1861, his train stopped briefly in Syracuse. During the stop, he spoke to a crowd of 10,000 from the platform of his train car. He shook as many hands as he could and cheers erupted as his train slid back into motion and carried him away.

On the night of April 26, 1865, Lincoln's train carried the slain president through Syracuse again. When the train emerged from a tunnel on the city's eastern edge, guns fired and bells across the city tolled.

Some 30,000 people were gathered to pay their respects when the funeral train rolled into Vanderbilt Depot just after 11 p.m. In the crowd was Ansel Judd Northrup, a Lincoln supporter and young lawyer.

He noted in his diary that a pilot train arrived at 11:05 p.m. and that at 11:15 p.m. the funeral train pulled into the station, staying 15 minutes. The train left,

he wrote, to "the sad music of slowly booming cannon, mournfully tolling bells, the muffled bell of the engine at the same time tolling."

According to Post-Standard archives, the train's schedule allowed a stop of no more than 30 minutes and only a few thousand people passed through the funeral car. A 3-year-old girl reportedly placed a bouquet of flowers on Lincoln's coffin.

"A funeral dirge was chanted by the car while it remained, and soldiers on each side marched through the Depot with it as it moved slowly away," Northrup wrote. "The Depot was beautifully and tastefully trimmed with draped flags and black and white, while powerful locomotive head lights revealed the whole scene with startling distinctness. And that was the funeral train of Abraham Lincoln!"

The Onondaga Historical Association provided a transcript of Ansel Judd Northrup's diary entries.