

The original documents are located in Box 4, folder “Illinois Train Trip, October 15-16, 1976” of the Frances K. Pullen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Illinois Politics

Illinois has 24 Congressional districts, half of them are exclusively Chicago and Cook County. Of the twelve primarily non-Chicago districts, eight of the twelve are represented by Republicans. (Biographies and pictures are attached.)

In these so-called downstate districts, the Republican Congressional Committee thinks the only GOP incumbent with a tough race is George O'Brien, a two termer who represents the 17th.

The trip cuts across the 17th, which is a new district created by court order in 1971. The district, considered politically marginal, includes the southern edge of metropolitan Chicago and the fertile farmland of central Illinois. Joliet is the largest city in the district. O'Brien's opponent is millionaire farmer, Merlin Carlock.

The RCC thinks the best downstate Republican chance to unseat an incumbent is in the 15th, now represented by Democrat Tim Hall. This is Les Arends' old district, which has some of the Nation's finest farmland. Hall won narrowly in 1974.

The GOP nominee is Tom Cochran, a 37-year-old railroad executive. Cochran, who lives on a family farm in LaSalle County, is a vice-president of Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company. A graduate of Notre Dame, he was a legislative assistant to a state senator and worked in the State of Illinois office in Washington. He is married and has five children. His wife's name is Helenmarie.

Other downstate GOP challengers are Ralph McGinnis, a college professor running against George Shipley in the 22nd; Sam Drenovac against Melvin Price in the 23rd; and Peter Prineas challenging Paul Simon in the 24th. The RCC is pessimistic about all three races.

Neither Adlai Stevenson or Chuck Percy is up for re-election. There is an important gubernatorial contest

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Republican Jim Thompson and Democrat Mike Howlett. Howlett, Daley's candidate, defeated the incumbent, Dan Walker, in the primary. Recent stories on that race are in the final section. The bios and pictures are from the Illinois Blue Book.

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The Train Trip

The trip on the "Honest Abe" begins at Union Station in Joliet. This city of 83,000 has an economy based on manufacturing, chemical and shipping industries. Shipping on the Illinois-Michigan Canal is an important part of the Great Lakes to Gulf Waterway.

Congressman George O'Brien, R, describes Joliet as a blue-collar area with strong ethnic neighborhoods. The big issues are unemployment, crime, busing and the grain embargo. A sensitive issue for the President is the recent Presidential decision to close a large military arsenal in the Joliet area, which cost about 3,000 jobs.

Norman Keck, the mayor, is a Democrat. Joliet is also the home of the Illinois State Prison. There is no official record of a visit by President Ford to Joliet.

The city had scheduled a salute to Earl Butz on October 15th, but the event was cancelled. Apparently, Butz still has strong support in the area, and some think he got a bum rap from the press.

The handsome, old red brick depot at Pontiac is soon to be sold or demolished by its owner, the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad Company. This town of 10,000 is located in the 15th District, now represented by Democrat Tim Hall.

Pontiac is having hard times. Two major industries, Motorola and Sherwin Williams Paint Company, closed this year. The economic base includes stone quarrying, publishing, manufacturing and grain production. Mayor Joe Trainor is a Democrat.

Senator Percy's office reports Pontiac residents blame poor railroad transportation for the economic depression and oppose the President's proposal to implement new lock and dam construction.

The President visited Pontiac in 1968 for a fundraiser.

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Bloomington, a city of 40,000, is the site of Illinois Wesleyan University, and Illinois State University is located in suburban Normal. The city is also the headquarters of the Illinois Agricultural Association.

Located in the Nation's corn belt, Bloomington also manufactures a wide range of products from cosmetics and candy to farm machinery.

The Republican Party of Illinois was founded in Bloomington in May, 1956. President Ford spoke at a Lincoln Day Dinner in 1969 at Illinois Wesleyan. Jack visited Illinois State in the spring. Steve visited both campuses last weekend for homecoming activities.

This is also the home of Earl Butz's brother. Congressman Edward Madigan, who represents the 21st District, says support for Butz' agricultural programs and small independent businesses is important.

Mayor Walter Bitner is a Republican.

The Lincoln stop is for lunch at the Hotel Lincoln, an old hotel built to resemble an English pub. The town of almost 20,000 was founded in 1853, and it was the only town named after Lincoln before he was famous.

Lincoln christened the town in August 1853 by squeezing the juice of a watermelon on the ground. A monument near the railroad station marks the spot. The town hopes to turn the depot into a memorial to Lincoln. There is a replica of the Postville Courthouse, which Lincoln visited while on the judicial circuit between 1847 and 1857. Lincoln College, founded in 1865, has a museum with Lincoln memorabilia.

The economy of Lincoln is stable, centered around farming and including small industry. Industries include manufacture of small electric parts, cosmetics and boxes. Mayor Edward Malerick is a Republican, and Lincoln also is in Madigan's 21st District.

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The next stop is Springfield, the state capital with 90,000 residents. The Amtrak station is only two blocks from the Old State Capitol where Lincoln served in the state legislature. Other sites associated with Lincoln include the only home he ever owned, the home where he and Mary Todd were married and their tomb. Springfield also is the home of poet Vachel Lindsay.

The chief employer is the state government. The Franklin Insurance Company is headquartered there, and wholesale-retail services are important in the economy.

This is the President's third visit to Springfield, the most recent last March. Jack and Susan were there the first weekend of October to kickoff the People for Ford campaign.

Mayor William Telford is a Republican, and this is in Rep. Paul Findley's 20th District.

Carlinville, a town of about 6,000, is also in the 20th. The town depends primarily on agriculture and is presently involved with the harvest. There is concern over the low prices of corn, wheat and soybeans. Also in Carlinville is the Monterey Coal Company, which employs 400 people. There is a new deep shaft coal mine.

No incumbent President has ever visited the town. The area is heavily Democratic and Rep. Findley has never carried the area. Blackburn College, associated with the Presbyterian Church, is located there. It is noted for having every student perform several hours of manual work every day.

The final stop is Alton with a population of 40,000. The non-partisan mayor is Paul Lenz. This is also in the 20th District. Alton has a stable economy with a diversified industrial base, including Olin Corporation which manufactures copper and brass products and ammunition. There are also several refineries and Owens-Illinois Glass Company.

Historically, Alton was involved in the slavery controversy. Here, Elija Lovejoy, Abolitionist editor, was murdered while protecting his press from a pro-slavery mob. In 1858, Alton

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was the scene of the final Lincoln-Douglas debate.

The President has never visited Alton,

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