

Mississippi State University

Scholars Junction

Lincolniana Original Manuscript Collection

Lincolniana Manuscripts Collections

1930

Transcription of Zachary Shuler's Recollections of the Gettysburg Address, undated

Chester E. Shuler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/fvw-manuscripts-original-manuscripts>

Recommended Citation

Transcription of Zachary Shuler's Recollections of the Gettysburg Address, undated, Original Manuscript Collection, Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, Mississippi State University Libraries.

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the Lincolniana Manuscripts Collections at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lincolniana Original Manuscript Collection by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

Zachary Taylor Shuler, age 83, of Montgomerys Ferry, Perry County, Pennsylvania, (RFD #3, Newport, Pa.), is one of the few living veterans of the Civil War who was present and heard Lincoln deliver his famous speech at the dedication of the Gettysburg Battlefield, November 19, 1863. He relates his recollections of that occasion as follows:

"My boyhood home was in Liverpool, Perry County, Pennsylvania. I was given permission to go to Harrisburg on a canal boat, to visit a friend. While there, I walked down to the railroad station. A train was lying there. Perhaps it had only three or four cars. The conductor said, "All aboard for Gettysburg!" I was 15 years old then. I thought it would be great to go to Gettysburg, and got aboard.

"In due time I arrived at Gettysburg station. I walked up to the square. A lot of people were there. They were forming into a sort of line. I got into the line too. After a while we began to move out the street, to the Citizen's Cemetery. We marched through under a brick arch or entrance. Then we crossed a stone fence. (This fence has since been torn away).

"The battlefield did not look like it does to-day. Instead, it resembled a ploughed field pretty much. It was very rough. Where they had dug hundreds of graves it looked like a ploughed field.

"I pressed toward the speakers' stand. Finally I was standing not very far away from Mr. Lincoln. Of course I didn't know then that he was going to make such a famous speech, and boy-like, I didn't pay any too much attention to the matter. But when he did speak, I could hear him, though I could not see him very well. The crowd was too thick. I don't believe there is anyone living today who can really say whether Mr. Lincoln looked

at his notes or whether he spoke without any notes. I could hear him well enough, but I was too young to know the meaning or importance of his words. It didn't take him long to say his speech.

"I am often asked how many people were there. I estimated the crowd at about 300 persons. They looked mostly like farmers and common people --the kind Lincoln said God must love "because he made so many of them." I didn't see any women there in the crowd. There were no soldiers that I could see only a few high officials of the government. There was no cheering and no hand-clapping when Mr. Lincoln finished speaking.

"Edward Everett was the speaker of the day. He spoke before Mr. Lincoln, and it took him quite a long time. I don't remember what he said.

"The stand from which they spoke was built of rough lumber. The seats were made of rough boards--and there were no nice chairs as shown in modern pictures you have seen. Just a board seat along behind the speakers' stand.

"Lincoln looked like the pictures we commonly see of him. He wore a full beard but not a heavy one. It was not all over his face. He was very tall. He wore a "Stove-pipe" silk hat, a frock-tail coat with pockets in the tail. His voice was not very strong, but very mild and kindly. He spoke just as he would talk to one. He seemed to be talking to us.

"We left the cemetery and went back to the station. But the train for Harrisburg was too crowded and I didn't leave on it. We had to stay in Gettysburg over night. A man, evidently a farmer, saw me at the square. He said, "You seem to be alone. Is no one with you ?" I replied, "No." He said, "You come along with me, because may be we can't get in any-place tonight." But we hunted around and found a place where we could sleep on the floor. There were very few places in Gettysburg those days that you could stop over night. It was by no means the tourist resort it is now !

"About 11 o'clock next morning I was on the train for Harrisburg. I was in the car two or three hours before it left. It was very full. I

knew if I left my seat I could not get it again. So I held it. A man came through the cars selling a little book. He called it "History of the Invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania". It cost 60 cents.

I took one of the books. I thought my father would be interested in reading it. I did not know then that I had unknowingly, quite by accident, attended the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg--nor that the speech I heard Mr. Lincoln deliver would one day be so famous.

"Perhaps I should add that this evidently was a free excursion to Gettysburg, because it cost me no fare, going or coming.