Wagner, J. J.

MARCHED IN LINCOLN RITES

KANSAS CITIAN RECALLS THE NATION'S SORROW IN 1865.

Store Fronts Were Painted Black and Business Was at Standstill, J. J. Wagner, Who Was in Masonic Escort, Says.

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The national sorrow at the death of President Harding recalled to one Kansas Citian the day America paid its tribute to another President who laid down his life for his country. J. J. Wagner, 6408 the Paseo, marched in the guard of honor that accompanied the body of President Lincoln to and from the New York hall, where it lay in state while thousands viewed the body of the emancipator.

Mr. Wagner was living in Williamsburg, N. Y., in 1865, the year John Wilkes Booth shot the President. Every morning he would take the ferry to New York to his place of business. The morning of April 16 the tug stopped in midstream in response to the whistles of another craft.

"Abe Lincoln is dead," shouted a voice from the signaling boat. There was a moment of silent surprise as every ear aboard the ferry was strained to catch the scarcely creditable news. A man on the upper deck threw a newspaper into the little crowd of ferry passengers. The account was meager, but across the top was a headline, "Lincoln Assassinated." There was a murmur of horror. Then a man's voice rose harsh and savage:

"I'm glad! I wish I had fired that shot myself."

THE COOLER HEADS PREVAIL.

Several men seized the speaker and threw him, cursing and threatening, over the side of the boat. The cooler heads prevailed, however, and the man was fished out with a boat hook, to cower and grumble until the ferry reached the New York side.

It was 7 o'clock when Mr. Wagner began his walk from the ferry to Broadway, but already a dozen stores he passed had been painted black. Painters and owners of buildings rapidly were changing the lettered fronts of buildings to black. Business was at a standstill, people gathered on street corners to await further details of the tragedy, and everywhere the national calamity was felt.

Mr. Wagner is 86 years old, but he says he has never experienced the pang and at the same time the thrill he felt as he marched behind the casket of the President in the Masonic escort.

HE HAD MET LINCOLN BEFORE.

Mr. Wagner had met the President some years before in Bloomington, Ill. He had been sent there to superintend the decoration of a new hotel. One day he found his men resumed work before three men had finished dinner. A paper hanger folded a strip of wall paper in the usual manner while he placed it. A little pompous man at the table eyed the worker's efforts with dissatisfaction.

"Here, you fellow," he called, "that piece of paper is too short. Can't you see?"

The workman made no response.

"Don't be a fool!" continued the pompous one. "You can't piece that job and make it look right."

The paper hanger kept silent and, having placed the paper, unrolled it with a deft motion and showed it fit exactly.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know what I was talking about," said the offender, abashed. "Come on in to the bar and have a drink."

One of the diners, an extremely tall and ungainly man, turned to the little pompous man.

"That's what I call adding insult to injury," he said. "First you tell this paper hanger he doesn't know his business, and then you attempt to make things right by giving him a glass of whisky."

Mr. Wagner later asked the tall man's name. It was Abraham Lincoln.