

Allan Pinkerton, Dundee's World Famous Detective

Pinkerton ran an underground railroad for runaway slaves, prevented the assassination of President-elect Abraham Lincoln and ended Jesse James' 16 year career of theft and murder. All this happened after he decided to become a detective while living in Dundee

by Teresa Przeniczny
Dundee Historical Society Photos

Allan Pinkerton, the most celebrated man who ever lived in Dundee, Ill., was during his lifetime a cooper, chartist, abolitionist, and one of the most famous detectives of world wide fame.

He maintained Dundee's underground railroad for runaway slaves, became an agent for the Chicago abolitionists, and became a friend of John Brown. He prevented the assassination of President-elect Abraham Lincoln be-

sergeant of police, was the goal of his life. This dream was shattered when one day his father, while on duty during one of the Glasgow riots received injuries which left him an invalid. Allan had to leave school, and with his brothers, John and Robert, support the family. At 12 years of age, he became an apprentice in the cooper trade. His father died when Allan was 14 years old.



ALLAN PINKERTON

fore his inauguration, organized and was the first chief of the secret service, and brought to an end Jesse James' 16 year career of theft and murder.

Allan Pinkerton was born on Aug. 25, 1819, in Glasgow, Scotland. To become a policeman like his father, William Pinkerton a

Because of the pinching poverty his family knew for years when he and his brothers were sole support of their widowed mother, Pinkerton became a chartist. By the time he was 18 years old he was second in command of a physical force battalion

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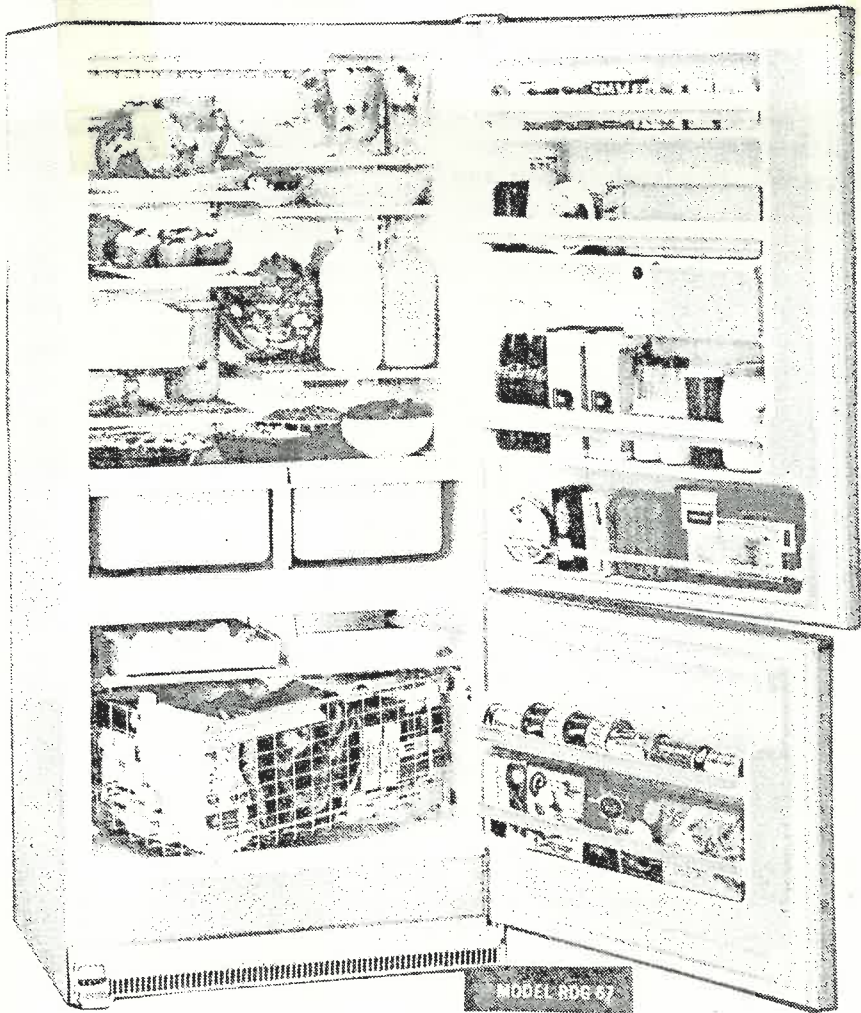


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Allan Pinkerton and Mrs. Warne, superintendent of Pinkerton's women operatives, are pictured above after the President-elect's family arrived on the detained train in Washington. Pinkerton and his agents followed in another carriage to be sure the president would arrive safely to the Willard's Hotel where they would stay until Mr. Lincoln would take the oath of office.

led by a tough River Clyde stevedore.

The chartist movement was made up by the working man who felt he should be able to vote whether or not he owned property. They believed that if they were able to own property, every man would have a good house to live in, with a garden, good food and drink to make him look and feel happy. They felt these goals could be reached when everyone could vote.

The day after he married Joan Carfae in 1842, they hurriedly left for Canada. He was fleeing from arrest as an active agitator in the chartist's proletarian movement.

They sailed for Halifax but were shipwrecked when the pilot had run aground at Sable Island, 200 miles off course. It is said that fortunately no lives were lost. By schooner the Pinkertons reached the St. Lawrence and via the Great Lakes arrived at Detroit. Not finding any work, Pinkerton and his wife bought a horse and wagon with the last of their money for their trek further west to Chicago, where they arrived late in December.

In Chicago Pinkerton found a work as a cooper in Lill's Brewery for which, it is said, he was paid 50 cents per day. Within a year they moved 38 miles northwest to the beautiful village of Dundee, containing about 300 inhabitants. The village is located on the romantic Fox River, called

the Pish-ta-ka in the original Potawatamie language, according to Pinkerton.

In one of his many books Pinkerton wrote, "The town rests there on the banks of this beautiful river stream and between the guardian hills upon either side, like twin nests where there is always song and gladness. The town was originally settled by a few sturdy people, the hardy Scots, as its name would indicate."

At either end of the one bridge that crossed the river, were clustered on each side of the street, all the stores and shops of the place, a few country stores, a post office, a blacksmith shop or two, a mill and two small taverns, save one. This was Pinkerton's shop which was located the farthest of any from the business center of the village, and stood back of, and facing the main highway, upon the crest of a fine hill, about 300 yards distant from the bridge. This was his home and shop.

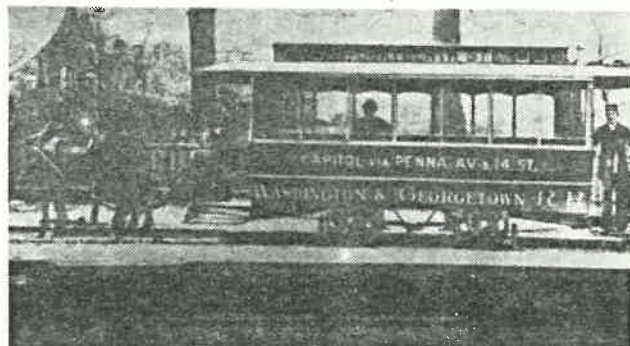
Pinkerton's cooper shop and house were one building. A long, one-story frame building with a garden about, some fine old trees near, and always stacks of staves and hoop poles quite handy.

This was his quiet, but altogether happy mode of life in Dundee, in the summer of 1847, at which time his career as a detective begins.

Pinkerton was too poor to purchase the materials he needed to make the barrels, so he was com-

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Trains in 1861 were transferred from one line to another by ferryboat and horses.



pelled to cut his own hoop poles and split his own staves. He found a little island in the Fox River, a few miles above Dundee, and but a few rods above Algonquin, where poles were both plentiful and of the best quality. One day while working there, he found traces that the island was being used. He informed B. C. Yates, the sheriff at Geneva, of his finds.

From the information Pinkerton gave, the sheriff was able to trace outlaws to this island, where subsequently the officers captured the coin counterfeiters, a formidable gang, consisting of men and women, securing their implements and a large amount of bogus coin.

In honor of this event, the island was given the name of "Bogus Island." Of later years, this historical spot was known as "Basswood Island."

It was said that Allan Pinkerton achieved the beginnings of his fame while in Dundee. However, Pinkerton might have felt as one who had greatness thrust upon him, when following the Bogus Island episode, he was asked to apprehend a counterfeiter who was in town.

H. E. Hunt, keeping a small general store in, and becoming a wealthy merchant at Dundee, and Increase Bosworth, another

storekeeper of the village, later to become a retired capitalist of Elgin, asked for Pinkerton's help when ten dollar counterfeits of the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance's Bank appeared in the village. They were so well executed as to cause trouble to farmers and country dealers. "Old Man Crane" lived in Libertyville not 35 miles distant and evidence proved he was engaged in distributing worthless money for eastern counterfeiters.

Pinkerton at first objected to their request as not knowing anything about counterfeiters but then agreed to try to help the storekeepers.

Inside Eaton Walker's harness shop, he found John Craig who had asked directions to "Old Man Crane's," and made arrangements to meet him in a ravine across the river. Here Craig confessed the business he was in and exhibited two of the counterfeit bills. The terms were 25 per cent; \$125 in good money brought \$500 in the counterfeit ten dollar bills.

They then met on the hilltop, now crowded by Elgin Academy, where at that time the first floor of a building stood unfinished. After Craig paid over the money, Pinkerton confessed interest in being a "Wholesale agent." They



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sheriff's sympathy.

The event was widely discussed. Its two far-reaching effects made the region unhealthy for counterfeiters and made the fame of Allan Pinkerton. His business increased threefold and he had to enlarge his shop and hire several helpers. Some of these were negroes. The same intolerance of oppression that made Pinkerton a chartist also made him an ardent antislavery man. His cooperage shop was one of the busiest underground railroad stations in Illinois.

Prominent Illinois abolitionists called upon Pinkerton with thanks for his work. They knew the risks this underground foreman ran, not only to his pocketbook but to his freedom. In Illinois the aiding and abetting of runaway slaves was a criminal offense. When Sheriff Bates appointed Pinkerton a deputy sheriff of Kane County in 1846, he had to overlook the fact that if any pro-slaver in the country wished to inform the state authorities of his activities, the Scot would go to jail.

His abolitionist work came to a temporary halt when Sheriff William Church of Cook County

post office then borrowed him as a special agent. He was kept busy with postal work — fraud, extortion, and blackmail cases until a new project developed: the organization of a regular police department from the loosely knit constabulary of Chicago.

Pinkerton's hard work and growing reputation resulted in his appointment as the first detective on the Chicago police force, and the only one at that time.

After posing as a ticket agent for the Rock Island Railroad and solving a series of embezzlements, Detective Pinkerton, one day in March in 1850, met with the president of the line, John F. Tracy, who suggested that Pinkerton go into private business. Tracy and other railroad owners would guarantee him \$10,000.

Mrs. Pinkerton had recently given birth to twins named Robert and Joan, and Pinkerton hesitated to make the change. His wife, being in favor of the agency, encouraged him by saying they could always fall back on the \$3,000 they received from the sale of their cooperage shop in Dundee, to Wilhelm Schult.

His first business named Pinkerton's North Western Police Agency, a few years later to be

by medical students forced to steal newly buried bodies for purposes of anatomical research since no legal provisions existed for obtaining them, or by young thugs who were desecrating graves out of sheer malice. He knew if he would capture one group he would frighten off the other. The apprehension of three medical students who confessed to some but not all the grave robberies stopped the vandalism.

The next morning Chicago newspapers told of the capture of the grave robbers; by that afternoon the waiting room at 89 Washington street was full of clients. It was never to be empty again.

Pinkerton's apprehension and conviction of John Harmond of St. Louis, Missouri, for theft of money and jewels from people staying at the Waverly House Hotel was awarded by a contract with the hotel. His agency was to provide the hotel with round-the-clock protection against guests of Harmond's particular talents.

In the late fall of 1856, Pinkerton's reputation became nationwide when he arrested and convicted a famous French swindler about whom the New York City police could do nothing.

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Pinkerton became a firm friend of John Brown, and when he stopped at the Pinkerton home on the night of March 11, 1859, the Chicago Detective gave him \$500 in cash and tickets on the Michigan Central Railroad to get Brown and his band to Detroit, the next stop on their violent eastward journey.

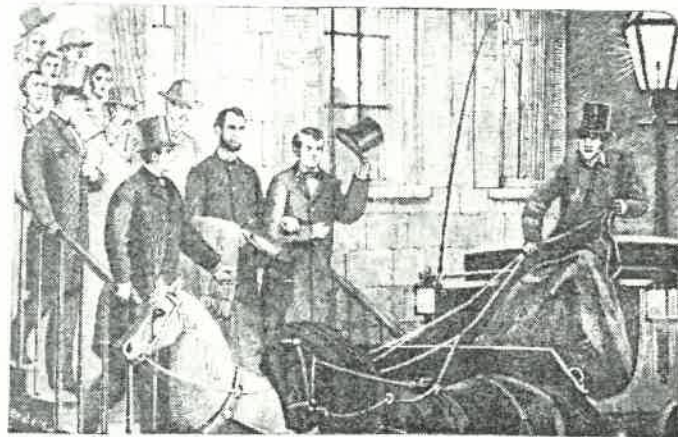
Early in the year of 1861, Pinkerton was called from his headquarters in Chicago to Philadelphia by Mrs. Samuel H. Felton, the president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, to investigate rumors of the intentions of roughs and secessionists of Maryland to injure the railroad. It was feared that their designs to prevent travel upon the road was either by destroying the ferry-boats which then carried the trains across the Susquehanna River at Havre de Grace or by demolishing the railroad bridges over the Gunpowder River and other streams. This road was the connecting link between the metropolis of the country and the capital of the nation.

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16-B



Captain Ferdinandina (left), leader and president of a secret society, was a known active conspirator in the plot to assassinate President-elect Abraham Lincoln. He is pictured above, overcome by his emotion, as he drew a knife, and waving it aloft, exclaimed: "This hireling Lincoln shall never, never be President. My life is of no consequence in a cause like this, and I am willing to give it for his. As Orsini gave his life for Italy, I am ready to die for the rights of the South and to crush out the abolitionist." This was one incident that occurred that convinced Allan Pinkerton that a plot was actually being planned to assassinate the President. The clever plot to prevent the assassination of President-elect Lincoln began at 5:45 p.m. (right), when a message was delivered to him that a carriage was waiting at the side entrance of the hotel. Mr. Lincoln, Gov. Curtin of Penn. and Mr. Lamont immediately arose from the dinner table and changing into traveling clothes entered the carriage in Harrisburg to be taken to the special train to Philadelphia, where Allan Pinkerton would be waiting with a coach to take them to the next railroad station on their journey to Washington.



planned to meet at the Sauganash Hotel in Chicago where Pinkerton and his friend (a police officer) were to deliver the good money. Craig, perhaps suspecting a trap, refused to recognize Pinkerton, who then arrested him. Craig, taken back to Geneva never faced trial. He turned up missing one day, thanks, it is believed to the sheriff's sympathy.

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asked him to come to Chicago as a special agent. He would have no special title, and he would be doing police work of various kinds.

After discussing this offer with his wife, Joan, Pinkerton accepted the job and went to work investigating murders, burglaries, and mundane stabbings. The Chicago post office then borrowed him as a special agent. He was kept busy with postal work — fraud, extortion, and blackmail cases until a new project developed: the organization of a regular police department from the loosely knit constabulary of Chicago.

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named Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, had the trademark of a wide-open eye with the slogan "We Never Sleep."

Pinkerton and his detectives solved the vandalism at the old French Cemetery on Lake Michigan. After extensive research, he knew the vandalism had to be by medical students forced to steal newly buried bodies for purposes of anatomical research since no legal provisions existed for obtaining them, or by young thugs who were desecrating graves out of sheer malice. He knew if he would capture one group he would frighten off the other. The apprehension of three medical students who confessed to some but not all the grave robberies stopped the vandalism.

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His new reputation brought him more and wealthier clients. He rose rapidly in the law-enforcement business, but still studiously maintained the Chicago junction of the underground railroad. Legend has the Pinkerton household so crowded with runaway slaves that Mrs. Pinkerton many times was forced to call in the neighbors to help her feed them.

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16-B

To obtain this information, Pinkerton located his men at various towns along the road.

On the day prior to Lincoln leaving his home in Springfield, on Feb. 11, Allan Pinkerton received a letter informing him of an oath that was taken to assassinate him and to look after Lincoln if possible.

Pinkerton knew Lincoln and admired him from the days when he was investigating robberies for the Illinois Central Railroad which the new president had served as counsel.

Obtaining Felton's authority to check the validity of the assassination plot, Pinkerton placed his operatives in strategic cities to infiltrate the secret societies

changed into traveling clothes, carrying a shawl over his arm with a soft felt hat protruding from his coat pocket.

President-elect Lincoln, Gov. Curtin, and a Mr. Lemon entered the carriage and were quickly driven away. In a short time Lincoln was upon the special train and speeding toward Philadelphia, where they arrived shortly after 10 o'clock to find Pinkerton waiting for them with a carriage. They proceeded directly to the depot of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad.

As they approached the train they were met by Mrs. Warne, Pinkerton's superintendent of women operatives, who familiarly greeted the President as her

Although President-elect Abraham Lincoln was told about the plot to assassinate him, he told his staff and Allan Pinkerton that he first had to fulfill his promise to raise a new flag. At 6 a.m., on Feb. 22, 1861, at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, he hoisted the new flag with a 34th star in honor of the newly admitted State of Kansas. In his speech, the President-elect declared that if the country could not be saved without giving up the principle of equality as embodied in the Declaration of Independence, then—"I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it."



to discover the plans and method to be used for the assassination.

Having gathered enough evidence of the plot, Pinkerton made arrangements to inform Norman B. Judd, Esq., of the Presidential party about the plot.

President-elect Lincoln at first scoffed at the information but when being informed of the plot by Mrs. Frederick H. Seward who was sent from Washington by his father and General Scott to warn him of the danger of passing through Baltimore, and to urge him to go directly to Washington, he evinced no further hesitancy in the matter, and signified his readiness to do whatever was required of him.

All the preliminaries had been successfully arranged. The special train, ostensibly to take the officers of the railroad company back to Philadelphia was waiting on the sidetrack just outside the town. The telegraph lines were temporarily put out of service.

At a quarter of six everything was in readiness. Lincoln was notified, left the dinner table and

brother, and entered the sleeping car by the rear door without anyone being aware of the distinguished passenger.

Mrs. Warne had previously, according to plan, engaged the rear half of the sleeping car for the accommodation of her invalid brother, and that portion of the car was entirely separated from the rest of the car by a curtain.

Their presence in Baltimore was entirely unsuspected as they were drawn by horses through the streets to the Washington station. Here they remained for two hours due to the detention of the train from the west. At length they arrived in Washington about 6 a.m. Lincoln and his party were driven down Pennsylvania avenue to the Willard Hotel followed by Allan Pinkerton and his men in another vehicle.

Lincoln thanked Pinkerton for his part in securing the President's safe arrival, after which Pinkerton returned to Baltimore.

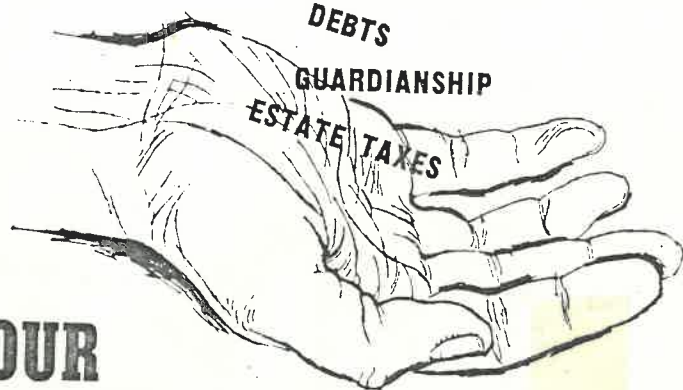
More on Pinkerton, including his capture of Jesse James will appear in next month's countryside.

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