



Third Annual Friends of the Lincoln Collection High School Essay Contest

Primary Sources

Boston Globe Article 1888

Harper's Weekly Article 1881

Illinois State Journal Article September 8, 1858

Lincoln Douglas Postcard

Sunday News Times (Denver Colorado) article 1908

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates (Full Text:

<https://archive.org/details/politicaldebates00inline>)

PART II

THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS CAMPAIGN.

The mention of Abraham Lincoln's name in the convention which nominated Fremont and Dayton in 1856 was by no manner of means the introduction of that quaint personality to the politics of the country.

As early as the spring of 1832 he was a candidate for the Indiana Legislature, and in 1834 he was a successful candidate for that position to which he was re-elected in 1836, 1838 and 1840. In 1846 he went to Congress, where he signalized his presence by offering for consideration a scheme for the emancipation of the slaves in the District of Columbia. He was offered the governorship of Oregon Territory by President Taylor, but declined, largely because of the exactions of his rapidly-growing professional practice, and, because, too, having become recognized as the most influential exponent of the principles of the Whig party in the West, and especially in the State of Illinois, his friends dissuaded him from leaving to others a field which promised him such good results in the future. From 1854, at which time the entire country was profoundly agitated by the repeal of the Missouri compromise, political ambition and generous impulse in behalf of the down-trodden race kept pace, side by side, in Lincoln's breast. This act of Senator Douglas, for many years a warm and personal friend, and a bitter political opponent of Lincoln, aroused a feeling akin to distrust in the minds of his old friends, and emphasized the hatred of those who disliked and opposed him personally and politically. In spite of their friendly personal relations Lincoln and Douglas were brought face to face, as representatives each of a fighting party. The encroachments of slavery upon the Territories Lincoln regarded as a gross breach of faith, and in a series of remarkable political discussions attracted the attention of the nation to the virility of his arguments, and the breadth and scope of his constitutional apprehensions.

Senator Shields neared the close of his senatorial term.

A legislature was in session, and upon it devolved a senatorial choice. Lincoln was the favorite of the Whigs, Shields of the Democrats, with a few scattering votes among the Democrats for Lyman Trumbull. Trumbull was a Democrat who believed in the constitution and opposed the extension of slavery, and through the influence of Mr. Lincoln, who dreaded above all things the return of Mr. Shields, or any other Democrat who would stand by Douglas in the fight then imminent, and who urged his friends to vote for Trumbull, there was secured for the upper house a distinguished law giver, a statesman without fear and without blemish, who served his country and his constituents for many years thereafter with intelligence and earnestness of purpose.

It was a great fight.

Those days which tried men's souls, which turned pruning hooks into spears, made statesmen from politicians, and infused a spirit of patriotism into the boys and girls of the time, were not important simply because they led up to the greatest struggle of modern years, but because they afforded journalism, the pulpit, the schoolhouse, the debating societies tremendous scope for study, for investigation, for the drawing of inferences, the teaching of needed lessons, and the elevation of the entire people from the dead level of money grubbing to the higher planes of contest for free speech, free press, free men, free thought, the liberty for which the fathers suffered, bled and died.

Such times demanded leaders.

And, as in the great supernal fights, angels and archangels of light not only drew swords and gathered in mighty phalanx for the right, but angels and archangels were marshalled under the leadership of the prince of darkness, drawing their swords for determined resistance to all that was good and true and noble; so, Lincoln on the one hand, standing hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder with the other great names famous in the army of the just, Seward, Chase, Beecher, Greeley, Raymond, Lovejoy, Wade, was opposed by men of equal brain, of as wide experience, of a common determination, and a battle was begun, the very skirmishes preceding which challenged the attention of the world and furnished heroes for the page of history.

The first clash of arms came in Illinois. Anti-slavery men, formerly Whigs, joining hands with anti-slavery men formerly Democrats, were massed as Republicans under the leadership of Lincoln, who sought an election to the United States Senate in place of Douglas, then a senator seeking re-election, the one a recognized mouth-piece of the new party, the other blocking nominal as leader of the party in power. Being challenged by Mr. Lincoln to a joint discussion, Senator Douglas faced with his great rival a series of immense audiences in their own State. In these days of stenographic reports and universal use of the electric wire, verbatim reports of those mighty efforts, as adroit and specious in the mouth of Mr. Douglas as they were earnest, impassioned and genuine in that of Mr. Lincoln, would appear in every significant paper. As it was, even in that far-away period, so great was the interest throughout the nation that the metropolitan papers sent correspondents to follow the speakers from point to point, and to reproduce, in general terms, the arguments educed by both. A bold and significant utterance by Mr. Lincoln at that time would seem to be evidence of his prophetic genius. Said he: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I don't expect the Union to be dissolved, I don't expect the house to fall, but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward until it shall become alike lawful in all States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

The contest was nip and tuck.

Douglas, known as the Little Giant, was a powerful debater, and had spent his life on the stump and in public service. He had every chance upon his finger's end. He understood the flights of oratory and the tricks of rhetoric. He was personally acquainted with nearly every man in the State, his popularity was unbounded, and he was everywhere conceded to be a master mind. Mr. Lincoln had not the physical and personal advantages of his opponent, yet he was quite his match before a popular audience.

His manner was unique.

He had devoted friends.

His quick insight and intuitive perceptions enabled him to detect the weak points of his opposer, and his apparently inexhaustible fund of apposite stories and pregnant anecdotes, kept his audience in good humor from first to last. The weak point of Mr. Douglass was that he was on the wrong side, and Lincoln's greatest strength was found in the fact that the principle he contended for was deep-seated in the heart of every true American, the men he talked before being of that stamp. The interest felt in the debate was national, and, although the Legislature returned, was

of the complexion that re-elected Douglass to the Senate, the issue of the campaign placed Abraham Lincoln far in the forefront of the thinkers, as well as of the speakers of that time, when great thinkers lived and great orators talked. Lincoln knowing very well that Douglas cared at the time more for his momentary triumph than for the ultimate supremacy of his cause, adroitly pushed him, inch by inch, until, in Freeport, Ill., he cornered him by asking whether the people of a Territory could, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State constitution. Douglas replied that slavery could of course be excluded by unfriendly territorial legislation, whereupon Lincoln rejoined, "Judge Douglas would seem to hold that a thing may lawfully be driven away from a place where it has a lawful right to go." The momentary effect of that was great, but two years later, when what is known as the secession convention assembled in Charleston, and when the delegates from the nation were in hot debate as to which of the two, Jefferson Davis or Stephen A. Douglas, should be their banner carrier, the argument was used with great effect that "Mr. Douglas said in his Freeport speech that slavery might lawfully be excluded from any Territory by unfriendly territorial legislation."

The Republican party was new.

And like all new organizations the Republican party was in danger of being over-governed. It contained many elements bitterly hostile to each other, although united on one point of common interest—the non-extension of slavery beyond its existing bounds. In the first place, there were the original Abolitionists, who, as their name implied, fought for the destruction of slavery, pure and simple, wherever it existed, as contrary to the law of God and opposed to the honor of mankind. Then there were the Whigs with their peculiar notions, and the Democrats with theirs, and a great body of non-political thinkers, moralists they might be called, and each wing or section of the party had its peculiar leaders, favorites and candidates for promotion. Mr. Lincoln was known then simply as a Western man who had met Douglas on the field and contested the championship with him. He was invited East, and among other places he spoke in Cooper Institute, in New York, in February, 1860, taking as his text the unbroken record of the founders of the republic in favor of the restriction of slavery, and against its extension. That speech clinched the favor in which he was already held by thinking men, and went far toward the compromise made upon him in the Chicago convention a few weeks later.

FOOTNOTES 6. 27-1888

Harper's Weekly.
Mar. 1861.

LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS.

THE President of the Chicago Historical Society, Mr. ISAAC N. ARNOLD, who was a Representative in Congress during the war, and who has long been an eminent member of the bar of Illinois, has recently read an exceedingly interesting paper before the Bar Association of that State at Springfield. It is a sketch of professional reminiscences for forty years, and contains allusions, many of them new and vivid, to the great rivals, LINCOLN and DOUGLAS.

They were both, according to Mr. ARNOLD, strong jury lawyers, and Mr. LINCOLN, upon the whole, the strongest jury lawyer ever known in Illinois. They were both very able in bringing out distinctly the controlling points in a case; both very happy in the examination of witnesses; and LINCOLN unsurpassed in cross-examination. "He could compel a witness to tell the truth when he meant to lie. He could make a jury laugh, and generally weep, at his pleasure. LINCOLN on the right side, and especially when injustice or fraud was to be exposed, was the strongest advocate. On the wrong side, or on the defense, where the accused was really guilty, the client with DOUGLAS for his advocate would be more fortunate than with LINCOLN." A stranger listening a while to LINCOLN would be drawn to his side involuntarily. His statement of a case was often so clear and complete that the Court would dispense with argument, and say that if that were his case it would hear the other side. He had in the highest degree the art of persuasion and the power of conviction. He never misstated evidence, and his wit, humor, and anecdote were inexhaustible.

The most famous of popular political debates was the controversy of LINCOLN and DOUGLAS upon the stump in Illinois. It made DOUGLAS Senator, and LINCOLN President. Mr. ARNOLD quotes from a speech of LINCOLN's in 1856, a friendly tribute to DOUGLAS, but it is even more remarkable for its simple expression of that fidelity to conscience and to humanity which is the true splendor of LINCOLN's renown:

"Twenty years ago Judge DOUGLAS and I first became acquainted; then we were both ambitious, I, perhaps, quite as much as he. With me, the race of ambition has been a failure; with him, it has been a splendid success. His name fills the nation, and it is not unknown in foreign lands. I affect no contempt for the high eminence he has reached. So reached that the oppressed of my species might have shared with me in the elevation, I would rather stand on that eminence than wear the richest crown that ever pressed a monarch's brow."

It is pleasant to think of the two men standing side by side at LINCOLN's inauguration confronting civil war with a common patriotism. It is still pleasanter to reflect that Mr. LINCOLN did reach the highest human eminence, and that, according to his desire, the oppressed of his species shared his exaltation.

GREAT DEBATE BETWEEN

LINCOLN and DOUGLAS

AT FREEPORT.

FIFTEEN THOUSAND PERSONS PRESENT.

The Dred Scott Champion "Trotted Out" and
"Brought to his Milk."

IT PROVES TO BE STUMP-TAILED.

Great Caving-in on the Ottawa Forgery.

HE WAS "CONSCIENTIOUS" ABOUT IT.

Why Chase's Amendment was Voted Down.

LINCOLN TUMBLES HIM ALL OVER
STEPHENSON COUNTY.

The second great debate between Lincoln and Douglas came off at Freeport on Friday afternoon. The day broke chilly, cloudy and lowering. Alternations of wind and sunshine filled up the forenoon. At 12 o'clock the weather settled diamally and at 11, 18th p. and the afternoon carried out the program, the morning with the single exception of a rain.

The crowd, however, was enormous. At nine o'clock the Carroll county delegation came in with a long procession, headed by a band of music and a banner, on which was inscribed:

CARROLL COUNTY

FOR

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

At 10 o'clock a special train from Amboy, Dixon and Polo, arrived with twelve cars crowded full. Mr. Lincoln was on this train, and some two thousand citizens of Freeport and vicinity had assembled to escort him to the Brewster House. Six deafening cheers were given as our next Senator stepped from the cars; after which the whole company formed in procession and escorted him around the principal streets to the elegant hotel. Here the reception speech was delivered by Hon. Thomas J. Turner—to which Mr. Lincoln responded in a few appropriate remarks. Half an hour later a train of eight cars arrived from Galena. Another procession was formed, preceded by a banner on which was inscribed:

THE GALENA LINCOLN CLUB.

The delegation marched to the Brewster House and gave three rousing cheers for Abraham Lincoln. Mr. L. appeared on the balcony and returned his thanks amid a storm of applause. But the special train on the Galena road from Rockford, Marengo and Belvidere, eclipsed the whole—consisting of sixteen cars and over a thousand persons. They also marched to the Brewster House with a national flag bearing the words:

WINNEBAGO COUNTY

FOR

"OLD ABE."

Mr. Lincoln was again called out and received with loud cheers.

Douglas arrived in Freeport Thursday evening, and was escorted from the depot by what purported to be a torchlight procession. It was held to be a torchlight procession by a number of Dred Scottites who were in the secret; but with the mass of the community it passed for a small pattern, candle box mob of Irishmen and street urchins. "Plenty of torches, gentlemen!" cried the chief lieter; "plenty of torches; won't cost you a cent. Don't be afraid of 'em." He succeeded in "passing" about seventy-five of them. The rest will be good for next time.

At two o'clock the people rushed to the grove, a couple of squares in the rear of the Brewster House. The crowd was about one third larger than that at Ottawa. It formed a vast circle around a pyramid of lumber in the centre, which had been erected for the speakers and reporters.



LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS DEBATE IN 1858.

