



# Lincoln Lore

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## Hannibal Hamlin — Lincoln's Vice President (First Term)

Murat Halstead, a correspondent for the Cincinnati *Commercial*, made a circuit of all the national political conventions in 1860, and, after reporting in detail from Chicago the characteristic scenes and memorable events of Abraham Lincoln's nomination for the presidency on the Republican ticket, he made the statement that, "The nomination of (the) Vice-President was not particularly exciting." Hannibal Hamlin of Maine had only one competitor who made any show in the race, and that was Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky. The other candidates were Nathaniel P. Banks, A. H. Reeder, John Hickman, John M. Read, Henry Winter Davis, William L. Dayton and Sam Houston.

If the multitude in the convention hall could have had their way, Clay would have been nominated by acclamation; however, Hamlin possessed the attributes to strengthen the ticket; namely, he was a good friend of William H. Seward ("The fact of the convention, was the defeat of Seward rather than the nomination of Lincoln"), he was geographically distant from Lincoln and was once a Democrat. On the second ballot, Hamlin won the nomination by 367 votes to 86 for Clay and 13 for Hickman.

Clay congratulated Hamlin on his vice-presidential nomination in a letter dated May 22nd and Hamlin replied as follows on May 26th:

"Your very generous note of congratulations of the 22nd came duly to hand. I thank you truly, sincerely for the confidence you so kindly express, and am profoundly grateful to all my friends. Still I say to you in truth, that the position assigned by the Chicago Convention is one which I did not desire. I really would have preferred to have seen it conferred upon yourself. But as a true man, and a friend to the cause, I must not now shrink from it. I hope yet to live to do the Cause some effective good. At all events, I feel confident it shall receive no injury at my hands."

Hamlin's nomination for the vice-presidency was a surprise for him as he had pledged his lieutenants to keep his name entirely out of the convention. The nomination came about largely through the efforts of his political associates at Washington. (See *Lincoln Lore* No. 295, *Honorable*

*Hannibal Hamlin of Hampden*, December 3, 1934.)

A candidate for the presidential nomination, Edward Bates, of St. Louis, Missouri, who later became Lincoln's Attorney General, was criti-



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**Hannibal Hamlin**  
Republican candidate for  
Vice-President of the United States  
A lithograph published by E. B. & E. C. Kellogg, Hartford, Conn. The names of Hamlin and Lincoln were often curiously associated in the anagram *Abra/Hamlin/coln*.

cal of the vice-presidential nominee. He recorded the following statement in his diary:

"Mr. Hamlin is not the right person. He has no general popularity, hardly a general reputation, and his geography is wrong. His nomination can add no strength to the ticket . . ."

Hamlin was born on August 27, 1809, the son of Cyrus and Anna (Livermore) Hamlin at Paris Hill, Maine. By profession, a lawyer, he served in the Maine legislature, was elected as a Democrat to Congress in 1842 and re-elected in 1844. He was next chosen to the U. S. Senate for

four years in 1848 and re-elected in 1851. He resigned in 1857 to be inaugurated governor, having been elected as a Republican. He resigned the governorship less than one month afterward, as he had again been selected for a six year term in the United States Senate. He resigned his Senate seat in January, 1861, having been elected vice-president on the Republican ticket with Abraham Lincoln.

Hamlin, while decidedly anti-slavery, regarded the institution beyond the legislative authority of the national government. His views on the political issues of 1860 made him a logical running-mate for Lincoln. As Vice-President during the Civil War, Hamlin presided over the Senate with dignity and ability and was always on cordial terms with the Sixteenth President.

Like Lincoln, he was vigorously opposed to the extension of slavery into new territories. In fact, Hamlin gave as his reasons for changing his party allegiance, the Democratic party's platform in 1856, which incorporated the doctrine "that the flag of the Federal Union, under the constitution of the United States, carries slavery wherever it floats." He stated that: "If this baleful principle be true, then that national ode, which inspires us always as on a battle-field, should be re-written by Drake, and should read:

'Forever float that standard sheet!  
Where breathes the foe but  
falls before us,  
With slavery's soil beneath our feet,  
And slavery's banner streaming  
o'er us.'

Lincoln, after receiving the presidential nomination, could not recall ever having met Hamlin, and, on July 18, 1860, from Springfield, Illinois, he wrote him as follows:

"It appears to me that you and I ought to be acquainted, and accordingly I write this as a sort of introduction of myself to you. You first entered the Senate during the single term I was a member of the House of Representatives, but I have no recollection that we were introduced. I shall be pleased to receive a line from you."

While Hamlin could definitely recall having heard Lincoln deliver his famous "coat-tail" speech in the House of Representatives, and he

could remember him to be "the most striking looking man in Congress," he wrote his running-mate on July 23rd that, "although he was not sure, his recollection was that they had been formally introduced."

On November 8, 1860 (two days after the election), Lincoln again wrote Hamlin as follows:

"I am anxious for a personal interview with you at as early a day as possible. Can you, without much inconvenience, meet me at Chicago? If you can, please name as early a day as you conveniently can, and telegraph me; unless there be sufficient time, before the day named, to communicate by mail."

The final arrangements for the meeting were made, and the two candidates fixed the date of November 22nd to discuss, among other things, the formation of Lincoln's cabinet. Hamlin left Bangor by train for Chicago on November 19th. He arrived at his destination on the morning of November 22nd. His wife did not accompany him.

The President-elect's party traveled from Springfield to Chicago by train on November 21st. Included in the group were Mrs. Lincoln, Senator and Mrs. Lyman Trumbull and Judge and Mrs. Donn Piatt of Ohio. Enroute to Chicago, three short speeches were delivered by the President-elect at Lincoln, Bloomington and Lexington. Judge Piatt described the speeches as, "brief and all different."

Before leaving Springfield, Lincoln had corresponded with his old friend, Joshua F. Speed, of Louisville, Kentucky, who offered to visit Springfield to impart some information as to men and public sentiment. Lincoln suggested in a letter dated Novem-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation  
A caricature of Lincoln's Vice-President by the Ohio artist, James Albert Wales (1852-1886). Wales' political portraits have been described as, "in-cisive, sardonic, . . . well drawn and quite comparable to the best work being done."

ber 19th that Speed come to Chicago. He wrote his friend as follows:

"I shall be at Chicago Thursday the 22nd. Inst. and one or two succeeding days. Could you not meet me there? Mary thinks of going with me; and therefore I suggest that Mrs. S. accompany you. Please let this be private, as I prefer a very great crowd should not gather at Chicago."

Lincoln met Speed in Chicago at Speed's hotel, and he was offered a place in the cabinet, which the Kentuckian declined. Lincoln did make inquiries of Speed concerning James Guthrie of Louisville, who had served as Secretary of the Treasury under Franklin Pierce, as a possible selection as Secretary of War. Needless to state, Mary Lincoln and Fanny Speed visited in the Lincoln's presidential suite.

The President-elect's party resided at the Tremont House, and, when calling upon his running-mate, Hamlin found Lincoln alone in a room. "Mr. Lincoln arose, and, coming toward his guest, said abruptly: 'Have we ever been introduced to each other, Mr. Hamlin?' 'No sir, I think not,' was the reply. 'That also is my impression,' continued Mr. Lincoln; 'but I remember distinctly while I was in congress to have heard you make a speech in the senate. I was very much struck with that speech, senator — particularly struck with it — and for the reason that it was filled, chock up, with the very best kind of anti-slavery doctrine.' 'Well, now,' replied Hamlin, laughing, 'that is very singular, for my one and first recollection of yourself is of having heard you make a speech in the house — a speech that was so full of good humor and sharp points that I, together with others of your auditors, was convulsed with laughter.'"

While Hamlin accompanied Lincoln and the presidential party on a visit to the Wigwam, Post Office, Custom House and United States Court, the two men did not have a chance to discuss political matters. Finally, on November 24th, they secluded themselves with Trumbull at Lake View, home of Ebenezer Peck, and discussed cabinet business.

On November 26th, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln left Chicago at 9 A. M. and reached Springfield at 6:30 P. M. On the return trip, no ovations were received along the way on account of the rainy weather. Nevertheless, a reporter for the *Chicago Journal*, November 26th, wrote that Lincoln's return "is the delight of the reporters and a number of office-seekers, who have been lying in wait for him . . ." Mr. Hamlin left Chicago enroute to Washington, D. C. where he would attend the December session of Congress.

It has been reported that while in Chicago, Lincoln said to Hamlin: "You shall have the right, Mr. Hamlin, to name the New England member of the Cabinet." On December 24, 1860, Lincoln wrote Hamlin that: "I need a man of Democratic antecedents from New England . . . I think of Governor Banks, Mr. Welles, and Mr.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

#### Hannibal Hamlin

*The Christian Inquirer*, of New York City, in reporting Hamlin's death on July 4, 1891, lamented the fact that he was stricken at a club house card table with a pack of playing cards in his hand. The editors of the *New York Metropolis*, in reply to such absurd comments, reminded its readers that, "all theatre-going is not dissipation (Lincoln was assassinated in a theatre), nor is all card-playing gambling."

Tuck. Which of them do the New England delegation prefer? Or shall I decide for myself?" Needless to state, Hamlin assumed the responsibility for making the selection and Gideon Welles was his choice. He wrote Lincoln on December 29th that he had ". . . no hesitation in saying that . . . Mr. Wells (sic) is the better man for New England . . ." Welles received the Navy portfolio on March 5, 1861. However, it has been alleged that Lincoln "induced the Vice President-elect to choose Welles as his contribution to the cabinet."

This acquaintance so cordially began at Chicago, ripened into a personal friendship and, during the turmoil of the Civil War years, Lincoln appeared to have the utmost confidence in his official associate. However, the position of Vice-President was essentially a powerless office, and the President, who had it within his power to confer significant posts of authority on him, gave him no important assignments. Hamlin never became an indispensable member of the party in power, and his name was hardly a household word.

During his term as Vice-President, Hamlin became a strong advocate of emancipation and, on June 18, 1862, more than a month before Lincoln informed his cabinet of his plans to issue a proclamation of emancipation, the President confided in Hamlin the plan and read the document aloud to the Vice-President.

On September 25, 1862, Hamlin wrote the President expressing "sin-

ere thanks for your Emancipation Proclamation. It will stand as the great act of the age. It will prove to be wise in statesmanship as it is patriotic. It will be enthusiastically approved and sustained, and future generations will, as I do, say God bless you for this great and noble act."

Hamlin was to eventually find the office of Vice-President to be a position of frustration — an office of great inherent power, but one of no immediate power whatsoever. He preferred to be on the floor of the Senate with a vote (not just when there was a tie) and patronage to distribute. Hamlin wrote J. Watson Webb on November 29, 1862 that, "he would have declined the vice-presidential nomination had he been at Chicago."

Eventually, Hamlin became identified with the "Radicals" of Congress, and one historian has summarized the decline of his political availability as a Vice-President in 1864 as follows: "If his nomination in 1860 had been due largely to party exigencies, his failure to receive a renomination in 1864 may be attributed to the same cause."

A question which has long fascinated students of Lincoln's administration is whether or not the President played a vital role in Hamlin's defeat for renomination. H. Draper Hunt in his biography, *Hannibal Hamlin Of Maine, Lincoln's First Vice-President*, Syracuse University Press, 1969 stated that: "In my view, logic and the weight of evidence clearly establish that Abraham Lincoln played the leading role in Hannibal Hamlin's downfall in 1864." Hunt further asserted that: "For what the President deemed compelling reasons, Hamlin had to make way for Andrew Johnson." A grandson of the Vice-President, Charles Eugene Hamlin, the author of *The Life And Times Of Hannibal Hamlin*, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1899, takes a decidedly opposite view regarding his grandfather's failure to be renominated in 1864.

From the standpoint of excitement, the vice-presidential nominations in the 1864 convention were far more spirited than for the higher office. This was in direct contrast to the contest of 1860. On the first ballot, the vote was 200 for Johnson, 150 for Hamlin and 108 for Daniel S. Dickinson. Before a second roll call could be taken, the switching of votes led to the official result of 494 for Johnson, 27 for Dickinson and 9 for Hamlin.

An old politician had remarked in 1848, when Hannibal Hamlin was elected to the United States Senate, that, "Your name ought to make you president some day." The prophecy would have come true except for the last-minute shift from Hamlin to Andrew Johnson for vice-president in the Baltimore convention of 1864. (See *Lincoln Lore*, No. 684, *The Hamlin vs Johnson Contest*, May 18, 1942.)

After retiring from the vice-presidency, Hamlin served about a year as collector of the Port of Boston, then for two years he served as president

of a railroad (Bangor to Dover), and, finally, he was re-elected to the Senate serving from March 4, 1869 to March 3, 1881. After retiring from the Senate, he served for a brief period as minister to Spain. Eventually, he retired in Bangor and became an elder statesman and one of the last surviving personal friends of President Lincoln.

Senator Henry L. Dawes described Hamlin as, "a born democrat, an interesting conversationalist, and an inveterate smoker and card player." Dawes also mentioned as characteristic of the man that he wore "a black swallow-tailed coat, and . . . clung to the old fashioned stock long after it had been discarded by the rest of mankind."

William A. Robinson in his biographical sketch of Hamlin prepared for *The Dictionary Of American Biography*, Volume IV, page 197, describes his physical appearance:

"Hamlin had a stocky, powerful frame and great muscular strength. His complexion was so swarthy that in 1860 the story was successfully circulated among credulous Southerners that he had negro blood."

Hamlin was married twice: on December 10, 1833, to Sarah Jane Emery (died April 17, 1855) and on September 25, 1856, to Ellen Vesta Emery, a half-sister of his first wife. The former vice-president died on July 4, 1891. He was survived by his wife and several children.

Most biographers and students are in agreement that Hamlin's association with Lincoln was the most important phase of his long political life, at least, that is the way it seemed to him.

### Woman's Lib

Editor's Note: The propagandist would hardly research the writings of Abraham Lincoln for quotations to strike a blow for women's liberation. Lincoln was a man's man and he lived in a man's world, although he did occasionally have something nice to say about women. However, modern woman liberationists would likely brand Lincoln for his male chauvinism — an element that undoubtedly existed in his thinking that was typical for his day and age. A few random quotations provide us with some insight into what Lincoln thought about women in general and their problems in particular.

R.G.M.

#### By No Means Excluding Females

"I go for all sharing the privileges of the government, who assist in bearing its burthens (sic). Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage, who pay taxes or bear arms, (by no means excluding females.)"

To the Editor of the  
Sangamo Journal  
New Salem, June 13, 1836

#### To Do Right — In All Cases With Women

"I want in all cases to do right, and most particularly so, in all cases with women."

To Mary S. Owens  
Springfield, Aug. 16th, 1837

### Woman's Work

" . . . the very first invention was a

joint operation, Eve having shared with Adam in the getting up of the apron. And, indeed, judging from the fact that sewing has come down to our times as 'woman's work' it is very probable she took the leading part; he, perhaps, doing no more than to stand by and thread the needle."

Second Lecture on Discoveries  
and Inventions  
(February 11, 1859)

#### A Business Which I Do Not Understand

"The truth is I have never corresponded much with ladies; and hence I postpone writing letters to them, as a business which I do not understand."

To Mrs. M. J. Green  
Springfield, Sep. 22, 1860

#### God Bless The Women Of America

" . . . I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women; but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of woman were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war. I will close by saying God bless the women of America!"

Remarks at Closing of  
Sanitary Fair,  
Washington, March 18, 1864

#### I Would Not Offer Her, Or Any Wife, A Temptation To A Permanent Separation From Her Husband . . .

" . . . Neither do I personally know Mrs. Hunt (Sallie Ward Hunt, wife of Daniel Hunt). She has, however, from the beginning of the war, been constantly represented to me as an open, and somewhat influential friend of the Union. It has been said to me, (I know not whether truly) that her husband is in the rebel army, that she avows her purpose to not live with him again, and that she refused to see him when she had an opportunity during one of John Morgan's raids into Kentucky. I would not offer her, or any wife, a temptation to a permanent separation from her husband; but if she shall avow that her mind is already, independently and fully made up to such separation, I shall be glad for the property sought by her letter, to be delivered to her, upon her taking the oath of December 8, 1863."

To Whom It May Concern  
Washington, April 11, 1864

#### The Laboring Women In Our Employment, Should Be Paid . . .

"I know not how much is within the legal power of the government in this case; but it is certainly true in equity, that the laboring women in our employment, should be paid at the least as much as they were at the beginning of the war. Will the Secretary of War please have the case fully examined, and so much relief given as can be consistently with the law and the public service."

To Edwin M. Stanton  
July 27, 1864

Note: Lincoln's endorsement is written on a letter from Governor Andrew G. Curtin forwarding a printed petition, which appeared to him "just and reasonable." The petition of twenty thousand working women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is to be found in *The Collected Works Of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, Editor, Vol. VII, 1863-1864, page 467.

### The Lady Would Be Appointed Chaplain

"This lady would be appointed Chaplain of the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery, only that she is a woman. The President has not legally anything to do with such a question, but has no objection to her appointment."

To Edwin M. Stanton  
November 10, 1864

Note: Lincoln gave this communication to Ella E. Gibson (Mrs. Ella E. G. Hobart), who was an ordained minister. After being elected Chaplain and the election confirmed by the Colonel, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton declined to recognize the mustering on account of her sex, not wishing to establish a precedent.

### First Ladies Of The White House

A lithograph published in 1903 by Thomas H. Devereux & Company, Chicago, U. S. A. is entitled "Ladies Of The White House." Twenty-two first ladies are depicted in the picture. All are wives of the Presidents except Martha Jefferson Randolph (Jefferson's daughter), Harriet Lane (Buchanan's niece), Martha Patterson (Andrew Johnson's daughter) and Mary Arthur McElroy (Arthur's sister). Actually, there are twenty-eight first ladies (including wives and

hostesses) up to the Theodore Roosevelt administration.

The artist who created this composite picture for some reason failed to include Elizabeth Monroe, Anna Harrison, Margaret Taylor and Jane Pierce. Rachel Jackson should not have been included in the group, as she died a few months before her husband's inauguration. Neither is Martha Patterson included in most compilations.

The Franklin Mint is currently minting commemorative silver medals of "The First Ladies Of The United States." They are featuring forty, first ladies (wives of Presidents) with the exception of: Martha Randolph (Jefferson's daughter), Emily Donelson (married Andrew Donelson, Jackson's ward), Sarah Jackson (married Jackson's adopted son), Angelica Van Buren (married Van Buren's son), Harriet Lane (Buchanan's niece), Mary McElroy (Arthur's sister) and Mary McKee (Harrison's daughter).

An attractive 41 page pamphlet by Gertrude Zeth Brooks entitled *First Ladies Of The White House* accompanies the forty medals which are being struck by the Franklin Mint. The biographical sketch of Mrs. Lincoln follows:

### A Controversial Figure

"With her radiant prettiness and winsome smile, Mary Todd Lincoln had been accustomed to getting everything she wanted from her well-to-do parents. But during the Civil War, she not only fulfilled the

social obligations imposed by her position as First Lady, but also provided the comforts of home for her husband, Abraham Lincoln.

"The times were exceedingly painful for her. Edward, the first of three Lincoln sons to die, had passed away in 1850. Her husband was Commander-in-Chief of the Union Army, while her three half-brothers and her brother-in-law died fighting for the Confederacy.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Obverse and reverse of the commemorative silver medal of Mary Lincoln produced by The Franklin Mint, Franklin Center, Pennsylvania 19063. This is one of a series of forty medals of "The First Ladies Of The United States." Only one other medal in the Foundation's vast collection of Lincoln medallion art bears the likeness of Mary Todd Lincoln.



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The first ladies are listed (back row left to right) as follows: Martha Washington, Martha Jefferson Randolph, Rachel Jackson, Angelica Van Buren, Lelitia Christian Tyler, Harriet Lane, Mary Todd Lincoln, Eliza McCardle Johnson, Martha Patterson, Julia Dent Grant, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Mary Arthur McElroy. (Front Row) Abigail Adams, Louisa Catherine Adams, Sarah Childress Polk, Dorothy P. Madison, Abigail Fillmore, Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Lucy Webb Hayes, Mrs. Benjamin Harrison and Mrs. Wm. McKinley.

Mary measured up to the pressures even though the strain eventually took its toll on her health.

"Though Mary soothed her husband during his term of office, she couldn't fully appraise the difficult political situations into which he had been thrust. She was at times unable to control her temper which terrorized the servants and estranged friends. She bought expensive clothing and jewelry. As a result of the death of her 11-year-old son, Willie, in 1862, Mary's life was even more tormented. The public chose her as a target upon which to vent its frustration with the Civil War, and she was accused of personal ambitions for power. After a third son, Tad, died of typhoid, Mary's last son, Robert, took legal measures to put her in a place of safety. She was pronounced insane by a jury after her son testified that she had not been normal since the assassination.

"In the custody of her sister, Mary's last years were spent in the house in Springfield, Illinois, where she and Abe had been married. On July 16, 1882, Mary Todd Lincoln died wearing her wedding ring engraved with the words: 'Love is Eternal.'"