

LINCOLN LORE

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN—A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY (Continued from No. 253)

By 1840 his political influence was reaching out. He became a Presidential Elector for Harrison, and this campaign took him, in one instance, back to his native state, Kentucky. In 1844 he was Presidential Elector for Clay, and, after campaigning throughout the state of Illinois, he went to Indiana—where he grew up—and spoke in several communities. The climax of his early political efforts in Illinois was reached in 1846, when he was elected as a Whig Representative to Congress.

Political recognition also brought to Lincoln domestic attention. He first met Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky, in 1839 at Springfield. They were soon betrothed, but the engagement was broken in January, 1841. Drawn together again they were married on November 4, 1842, at Springfield. Four sons, Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas or "Tad" were born to them.

With his political achievements recognized and his domestic habits established, Lincoln was not idle in building up his law practice. First he became a junior partner of John T. Stuart, later he became associated with Stephen T. Logan, as a junior partner, and in 1844 he became the senior partner of the firm of Lincoln and Herndon. He was known as the outstanding trial lawyer in the Eighth Judicial Circuit.

Washington—A Congressional Term 1847-1849

In the month of October, 1847, Abraham Lincoln left Springfield for Washington as the lone Whig Representative of the state. He took his seat in Congress on the first Monday in December. The most important act which he sponsored during his term of office was the introduction of a bill providing for the abolition of slaves in the District of Columbia. It failed to become a law, but it attracted wide attention.

His pacifist attitude towards the question involved in the Mexican War reacted greatly to his political disadvantage. He introduced the "spot resolutions" as they were termed, which severely criticized the administration for waging war against Mexico.

Lincoln's travels during this period, rather than his official duties, proved to be of more far-reaching value to him. A few weeks spent in Kentucky, while enroute to Washington, gave him a new view of slavery at work. His attendance at the Whig National Convention at Philadelphia in June, 1848, paved the way for his recognition at a later convention, and a speaking tour in New England during the fall of the same year won much favor for him.

Springfield, Illinois—Second Decade 1849-1859

Again established in Springfield, he turned aside from politics and for the next five years paid strict attention to his legal practice. This resulted in his state-wide recognition as a leader in the profession, and his retention as an attorney for the Illinois Central Railroad indicates his superior legal standing. The McCormick Reaper case and the Rock Island Bridge case gave him a national reputation as a lawyer. The Armstrong murder trial, in which an almanac was introduced as evidence with telling effect, won much local fame for him.

Lincoln was awakened from his political lethargy by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. This act brought to the front the slavery question which had always been of supreme interest to him. The keynote speech of his return to politics was delivered at Springfield on October 4, 1854. It was called the "Anti-Nebraska Speech." A few days later the address was repeated at Peoria in reply to Stephen A. Douglas. Upon the persuasion of his friends, in the fall of 1854, Lincoln again became a candidate for the Illinois General Assembly and was elected by a large majority. He resigned before taking his seat in order

that he might become a candidate for Congress. He was defeated for this office, however, but not disheartened. The "Lost Speech" at Bloomington the following year indicated he was still alert to current political situations.

The Republican National Convention at Philadelphia in 1856 honored Lincoln by giving him one hundred and ten votes as a nominee for the vice presidency. Lincoln did not know his name was to be used, and, with no organized effort on his behalf, the nomination went to another. Encouraged by this recognition at Philadelphia, Lincoln considered running as a candidate for the United States Senate. He was nominated at the Springfield Convention, on June 16, 1858, at the time he delivered his famous "House Divided" Speech. Lincoln challenged the opposition senatorial candidate, Stephen A. Douglas, to a series of debates. Douglas accepted and on July 30 named the places of meeting and dates of the contests as follows: Ottawa, August 21; Freeport, August 27; Jonesboro, September 15; Charleston, September 18; Galesburg, October 7; Quincy, October 13; and Alton, October 15. The major questions discussed at the debates held in these Illinois towns was "Should slavery be extended in the United States and Territories." Although Lincoln received a popular majority of over 4,000 votes in the general election, an unjust division of political districts gave Douglas fifty-four votes to Lincoln's forty-six when the Assembly was finally organized.

Election Year—1860

On February 27, 1860, at "Cooper Institute" in New York, Lincoln made the most far-reaching address of his career. Then followed his second speaking itinerary in New England where he made eleven addresses. He returned to Springfield, Illinois, a prospective nominee for the presidency of the United States. The Illinois Republican Convention convened at Decatur on May 9 and 10. At the most critical moment two rails split by Lincoln near Decatur in 1830 were brought into the convention bearing this legend: "Abraham Lincoln—The Rail candidate—For President in 1860." The delegates went wild for Lincoln.

The Republican National Convention, which met at the Chicago Wigwam one week later, borrowed much of its enthusiasm from the Decatur meeting. Sentiment for Lincoln was at full tide and could not be stayed. On the third ballot he was named the choice of the convention. In the campaign which followed no political speeches were made by Lincoln. On June 20 he appeared for the last time as a practitioner in the United States Circuit Court at Springfield. On the sixth day of November, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the sixteenth president of the United States of America. The electoral college gave Lincoln, 180 votes; Breckinridge, 72 votes; Bell, 39 votes; and Douglas, 12 votes.

Between the election and his departure from Springfield for the Inaugural, Lincoln absented himself from Springfield just twice. Once he went to Chicago for a conference with Vice President-Elect Hannibal Hamlin, and just before his departure for Washington he journeyed to Coles County to bid farewell to his stepmother. On February 11, 1861, the day before he became fifty-two years of age, he spoke his farewell words to the citizens of Springfield, and on February 23 reached Washington.

The new family which occupied the White House consisted of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln and their three sons, Robert, William, and Thomas or "Tad," ages seventeen, ten, and eight respectively. Robert, however, was away at school. President Lincoln's official family comprised the following men: William H. Seward, Secretary of State; Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Simon Cameron, Secretary of War; Edward Bates, Attorney General; Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General; Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy; and Caleb B. Smith, Secretary of the Interior.

(To be Continued)