

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

No. 264

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 30, 1934

THE TRIUMPHS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Much has been written about the failures of Abraham Lincoln, and many incidents which must have given him considerable personal satisfaction have been interpreted so as to present him in a mood of humiliation. It will be admitted that he often suffered disappointment, but this is not an uncommon experience for those who are ambitious and aim high.

There is a note of despondency in Lincoln's first public speech which biographers have carried down through the years as evidence that he was continually disheartened by humiliating defeats. On March 9, 1832, when he was but twenty-three years of age, he concluded a political address with these words, "If the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."

Within six weeks after Lincoln drew this rather gloomy picture of his early life, an event occurred which he claimed gave him more pleasure than any other experience up to the time of his election to the presidency. He was elected a captain by a volunteer company in the Black Hawk War. It was this military service which more than any other factor prevented him from making the political canvass in 1832 and resulted in what some may consider a political failure, but which in reality was his first great triumph at the polls.

The fact is that Lincoln succeeded in nearly every activity to which he gave his attention for any period of time. In his primitive occupation as a woodsman none excelled him. As a riverman he became an expert authority on waterways. The accuracy of his work as deputy surveyor has been demonstrated over and over again. In athletic achievements he had few superiors. He became the recognized head of the Illinois bar. His political ambitions were only satisfied when he became President of the United States.

Space will not permit a review of his successes in these various enterprises, but the triumphs which he achieved in the last mentioned effort will illustrate how he moved on from one elevation to another with steady and sure progress, until he was given the highest honor which America has to offer.

1832—A NOVICE SURPRISES THE VETERANS

A resident of Illinois but two years and of Sangamon County but eight months, with but five days to campaign he ran seventh among thirteen candidates for the legislature. He polled all but three of the 281 votes in his own precinct and ran but 159 votes behind Peter Cartwright, one of the successful candidates.

1834—HIS FIRST VICTORY A DECISIVE ONE

Lincoln's showing in 1832 encouraged him to announce for the legislature again in 1834. Of the four successful candidates he polled within fourteen votes as many as the largest number cast for any single candidate. His total vote in 1834 jumped to 1,376. This was a notable achievement for so young a politician.

1836—WHIG FLOOR LEADER OF ILLINOIS

Sangamon County elected seven representatives to the legislature in 1836, and Lincoln led the ticket with 1,716 votes. He was made the Whig floor leader, although but twenty-eight years of age.

1838—MINORITY CHOICE FOR SPEAKER OF HOUSE

Step by step Lincoln gained preeminence among the Whigs of Illinois and was given the complimentary vote as Speaker of the House by the minority party in 1838.

1840—A HARRISON AND TYLER ELECTOR

Supplementing his being elected to the legislature, making four conclusive terms in which he was successful, he was chosen one of the Harrison and Tyler electors. He went back to Kentucky, his native state, for an address, which was possibly his first public address outside of Illinois.

1844—PRESIDENTIAL ELECTOR FOR HENRY CLAY

His political leadership was further recognized by his being made presidential elector for Henry Clay. During this campaign he addressed groups near his old home in Indiana.

1846—THE LONE WHIG CONGRESSMAN FROM ILLINOIS

Elected as a representative from Illinois to the Congress of the United States, he was the only one from the state to represent the Whig party. He made important political speeches in New England at this time.

1854—HIS CONGRESSIONAL TERM VINDICATED

He was again elected to the General Assembly of Illinois which appears to vindicate, as far as his own party is concerned, his term in Congress. He resigned, however, to become the party's candidate for the United States Senate.

1856—RECEIVED LARGE UNSOLICITED VOTE AS VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE

At the first National Republican Convention in Philadelphia, Lincoln received 110 votes as a candidate for the Vice Presidency of the United States without any effort put forth on his part.

1858—THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE FOR SENATOR

Pitted against the strongest man in the United States Senate, Stephen A. Douglas, he received a larger popular vote than his famous rival, which would indicate he was the people's choice for senator.

1860—THE SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The popular vote for Lincoln in 1860 was 1,866,452. This total was the largest ever cast for a president up to that time and 511,295 more than was cast for Douglas, the runner-up. The fact that he received a majority of the popular votes in his home precinct at Springfield seemed to give him the most satisfaction of any of the election returns. The elective votes were as follows: Lincoln, 180; Breckinridge, 72; Bell, 37; and Douglas, 12.

1864—HIS ADMINISTRATION CONFIRMED

The election of 1864 was a real test of the popular reaction to his administrative policies, and the overwhelming victory must have been a fitting climax to his political triumphs.