

LINCOLN LORE

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FOUR NOTIFICATION DOCUMENTS—1860

One of the most interesting episodes which might be considered an aftermath of the Chicago Convention of 1860 was the trip to Springfield, Illinois, by the Notification Committee at which time Abraham Lincoln was officially informed he was the presidential nominee.

After Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Hamlin had both been duly nominated, Mr. Tuck of New Hampshire arose in the Convention and offered the following resolution: "Resolved that the president of this convention and the chairmen of the respective delegations be appointed a committee to notify Abraham Lincoln of Illinois and Hannibal Hamlin of Maine of their nomination by this convention as the candidates of the Republican party for the offices, respectively of President and Vice President of the United States." The resolution, amended to insert the word "unanimous" before "nomination," was adopted. The next morning after the adjournment of the Convention a fast locomotive of the Illinois Central Railroad hitched onto a single passenger coach containing about thirty Republican leaders and started for Springfield.

The notification committee carried with them an official letter from the officers of the Republican National Convention which is exhibited here.

EXHIBIT #1

Chicago, May 18, 1860.

To the Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois.

Sir: The representatives of the Republican Party of the United States, assembled in Convention at Chicago, have this day, by a unanimous vote, selected you as the Republican candidate for the office of President of the United States to be supported at the next election; and the undersigned were appointed a Committee of the Convention to apprise you of this nomination, and respectfully to request that you will accept it. A declaration of the principles and sentiments adopted by the Convention accompanies this communication.

In the performance of this agreeable duty we take leave to add our confident assurance that the nomination of the Chicago Convention will be ratified by the suffrages of the people.

We have the honor to be, with great respect and regard, your friends and fellow-citizens.

George Ashmun, of Massachusetts,
President of the Convention.

Wm. M. Evarts, of New York; Joel Burlingame, of Oregon; Ephraim Marsh, of New Jersey; Gideon Wells, of Connecticut; D. K. Carter, of Ohio; Carl Schurz, of Wisconsin; James F. Simmons, of Rhode Island; John W. North, of Minnesota; Geo. D. Blakey, of Kentucky; Peter T. Washburn, of Vermont; A. C. Wilder, of Kansas; Edward H. Rollins, of New Hampshire; Francis S. Corkran, of Maryland; Norman B. Judd, of Illinois; N. B. Smithers, of Delaware; Wm. H. McCrillis, of Maine; Alfred Caldwell, of Virginia; Caleb B. Smith, of Indiana; Austin Blair, of Michigan; Wm. P. Clarke, of Iowa; B. Gratz Brown, of Missouri; F. P. Tracy, of California; E. D. Webster, of Nebraska; G. A. Hall, of District of Columbia; John A. Andrew, of Massachusetts; A. H. Reeder, of Pennsylvania.

There seems to be much difference of opinion as to the kind of a reception the committee received by the citizens of Springfield. Charles C. Coffin, a press correspondent who accompanied the delegation, says:

"The arrival of the committee had

awakened no enthusiasm on the part of the townspeople. A dozen citizens gathered in the street."

In the recent book "Here I Have Lived" by Paul M. Angle the following account is given of the reception tendered the committee:

"On the evening of the day following the convention the official notification committee reached Springfield. A huge crowd greeted the special train at the station. Behind a band from Philadelphia, reputed to be the best in the country and escorted by two hundred members of the visiting delegation with rails over their shoulders, the committee marched to the Cheney House.

All accounts seem to agree, however, that Lincoln's boys, Willie and Tad, ages ten and seven respectively, were at the front gate of the Lincoln home to meet the delegates. The committee entered the home of Mr. Lincoln and arranged themselves around three sides of the room, Mr. Lincoln having withdrawn to one side. Mr. Ashmun, before handing Mr. Lincoln the official notification letter, said:

EXHIBIT #2

"I have, sir, the honor, on behalf of the gentlemen who are present—a committee appointed by the republican convention recently assembled at Chicago—to discharge a most pleasant duty. We have come, sir, under a vote of instructions to that committee, to notify you that you have been selected by the convention of the republicans at Chicago for President of the United States. They instruct us, sir, to notify you of that selection; and that committee deem it not only respectful to yourself, but appropriate to the important matter which they have in hand, that they should come in person, and present to you the authentic evidence of the action of that convention; and, sir, without any phrase which shall either be personally laudatory to yourself, or which shall have any reference to the principles involved in the questions which are connected with your nomination, I desire to present to you the letter which has been prepared, and which informs you of your nomination, and with it the platform, resolutions and sentiments which the convention adopted. Sir, at your convenience, we shall be glad to receive from you such a response as it may be your pleasure to give us."

Just how Mr. Lincoln received this greeting is revealed by William D. Kelley, who served on the notification committee as a substitute for Mr. Reeder of Pennsylvania. He had never met Mr. Lincoln and so the following reminiscence is his first impression:

"While Mr. Ashmun spoke, Mr. Lincoln's form and features seemed to be immovable; his frame was slightly bent, and his face downcast and absolutely void of expression. It was evident that the voice which addressed him was receiving his exclusive attention. He had no eye nor ear for any other object, and as I contemplated his tall, spare figure, I remembered that of Henry Clay, to whom I noticed a more than passing resemblance; and that of General Jackson, as I had seen him in 1832, forced itself upon my memory. It was not, however, until the conclusion of Mr. Ashmun's few

sentences, that I beheld the being, upon whose rough casket I had been gazing. The bowed head rose as by an electric movement, the broad mouth, which had been so firmly drawn together, opened with a genial smile, and the eyes, that had been shaded, beamed with intelligence and the exhilaration of the occasion. The few words, in which fitting response to Mr. Ashmun's address was made, flowed in a pleasant voice, and, though without marked emphasis, each syllable was uttered with perfect clearness."

Mr. Lincoln's remarks follow:

EXHIBIT #3

"Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen of the Committee: I tender to you, and through you to the republican national convention, and all the people represented in it, my profoundest thanks for the high honor done me, which you now formally announce. Deeply and even painfully sensible of the great responsibility which is inseparable from this high honor—a responsibility which I could almost wish had fallen upon some one of the far more eminent and experienced statesmen whose distinguished names were before the convention—I shall, by your leave, consider more fully the resolutions of the convention denominated the platform, and, without any unnecessary or unreasonable delay, respond to you, Mr. Chairman, in writing, not doubting that the platform will be found satisfactory, and the nomination gratefully accepted. And now I will no longer defer the pleasure of taking you, and each of you, by the hand."

Many of the delegates who visited Springfield had never seen Mr. Lincoln before, and there were many different reactions as to how he would be received. One delegate said, after meeting him for the first time, "Well, we might have done a more brilliant thing, but we could hardly have done a better thing." Carl Schurz said that some others "could not quite conceal their misgivings as to how this single minded man, this child of nature, would bear himself in contact with the great world and in the face of the large and complicated problems for grappling with which he had apparently so scant an equipment."

In the course of the next two or three days this formal letter of acceptance was forwarded to the president of the Republican National Convention:

EXHIBIT #4

Springfield, Ill., May 23, 1860.

Hon. George Ashmun:
President of the Republican National Convention

Sir:

I accept the nomination tendered me by the Convention over which you presided, and of which I am formally apprised in the letter of yourself and others, acting as a Committee of the Convention, for that purpose.

The declaration of principles and sentiments, which accompanied your letter, meets my approval; and it shall be my care not to violate, or disregard it in any part.

Implying the assistance of Divine Providence, and with due regard to the views and feelings of all who were represented in the Convention; to the rights of all the States and Territories, and people of the nation; to the inviolability of the Constitution, and the perpetual union, harmony, and prosperity of all, I am most happy to co-operate for the practical success of the principles declared by the Convention.

Your obliged friend, and fellow-citizen,
A. Lincoln