

LINCOLN LORE

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PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION OF 1856

This week the Republican National Convention will be held in Philadelphia where the party followers first assembled to nominate a Presidential candidate in the year 1856. Inasmuch as the name of Abraham Lincoln first received national recognition in the early Republican assembly in Philadelphia, it seems appropriate at this time to give a brief review of the proceedings as they relate to the efforts of Lincoln's friends to have him considered for the Vice-Presidency.

The Philadelphia Convention of 1856 was held pursuant to a call of the National Committee appointed at Pittsburgh on February 22. The delegates assembled on Tuesday, June 17, and were called to order by Hon. Edwin D. Morgan of New York.

Hon. Robert Emmet of New York was made temporary chairman and pointed to the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise as the motivating urge that brought into being the new party. He pleaded that all the "isms" in America might be merged into patriotism.

The permanent chairman of the convention was Col. Henry S. Lane of Indiana, who remarked that they had come together from "a sense of a common danger . . . and consequently they were there forgetting their former party ties, for the common good of all and because of their sacred love of liberty."

On the second day of the convention John C. Fremont of California was elected Presidential nominee on the first ballot. The following day, Thursday, June 19, the convention proceeded to choose a Vice-President. Mr. Edward W. Whelpley proposed the name of Hon. William L. Dayton of New Jersey, and with the consent of the convention read a speech Mr. Dayton had delivered at a Republican meeting. Mr. Jay of New Jersey, an Old-Line Democrat, also spoke in favor of Mr. Dayton.

According to the report of the convention: "Mr. Allison (John Allison of Pennsylvania) in continuation, said he had been requested to nominate as a candidate for the Vice-Presidency, Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois. (Cheers.) He knew him to be the prince of good fellows, and an Old-Line Whig. (Cheers.)"

Hon. John Palmer of Illinois, was recognized by the chair and said:

"I rise, like my friend from New Jersey. I, too, have been an Old-Line Democrat, and am very sorry for my last vote. (Applause.) I rise to second the presentation of the name of Abraham Lincoln for the Vice-Presidency. I have known him long, and I know he is a good man and a hard worker in the field, although I never heard him—for when he was on the stump, I always dodged. He is my first choice; Dayton, of New Jersey, is the next, and David Wilmot is the next. I admire Judge Wilmot, and I am going to name my next boy after him. (Laughter and applause.) We can lick Buchanan any way, but I think we can do it a little easier if we have Lincoln on the ticket with John C. Fremont."

Col. Wm. B. Archer addressed the chair and said he "would not detain the Convention but a moment. He had been acquainted with the man who had been named for 30 years. He had lived in Illinois 40 years. He had gone there when Illinois was a territory, and had lived there until it had grown to be a populous and flourishing State. During thirty years of that time, he had known Abraham Lincoln, and he knew him well. He was born in gallant Kentucky, and was now in the prime of life—just about 55 (47) years of age—and enjoying remarkably good health. (Applause.) And, besides, the speaker knew him to be as pure a patriot as ever lived. He would give the Convention to understand, that with him on the ticket, there was no danger of Northern Illinois. Illinois was safe with him, and he believed

she was safe without him. (Laughter.) With him, however, she was doubly safe."

"Judge Spaulding, of Ohio—"Can he fight?"

"The Speaker — (Emphatically) — 'Yes! (Great applause.) Have I not told you that he was born in Kentucky? (Applause.) He's strong mentally—he's strong physically—he's strong every way'."

On the first ballot the vote cast for the Vice-Presidential nomination resulted in the following totals:

"For William L. Dayton, of New Jersey, 253 votes; Nathaniel P. Banks, of Massachusetts, 46; Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, 110; David Wilmot, of Pennsylvania, 43; John A. King, of New York, 9; Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, 35; Lieut-Governor Thomas Ford, of Ohio, 5; Cassius M. Clay, of Kentucky, 3; Jacob Collamer, of Vermont, 15; Joshua R. Giddings, of Ohio, 2; Whitefield S. Johnson, of New Jersey, 2; Henry C. Carey, of Pennsylvania, 3; Aaron S. Pennington, of New Jersey, 1; Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, 2; Gen. Samuel C. Pomeroy, of Kansas, 8."

The following states gave Lincoln one or more votes on the trial ballot: Maine, 1; New Hampshire, 8; Massachusetts, 7; Rhode Island, 2; New York, 3; Pennsylvania, 11; Kentucky, 5; Ohio, 2; Indiana, 26; Illinois, 33; Michigan, 5; and California, 12.

After it was apparent that Dayton would be elected on the formal vote, Judge Palmer of Illinois interrupted the balloting and said:

"In behalf of the delegation of the State of Illinois, I return thanks to such members of this Convention as have honored the favorite of our State with their vote. Illinois asks nothing for herself in this contest. She is devoted—and I trust that the result of the next election will prove that she is devoted—to the great cause that has brought us together. (Cheers.) She knew that in Abraham Lincoln we had a soldier tried and true. We offered him to the Republican party of the United States for the position that we have indicated, but we are content to prefer harmony and union to the success even of our cherished favorite. Therefore, we say to those of our friends who have honored us, we commend them to withdraw the votes thus cast for Mr. Lincoln, and give them that direction that will make the vote unanimous and harmonious for Wm. L. Dayton. (Loud applause.)"

After the balloting Mr. Van Dyke of New Jersey addressed the convention, and in the course of his remarks said:

"Gentlemen, I have another duty to perform, and it is to return my thanks for the very handsome manner in which Illinois has yielded her preferences (LOUD CHEERS) to New Jersey's favorite son. Gentlemen from Illinois, it was my pleasure to know right well the long 'Sucker' you presented. I knew Abraham Lincoln in Congress well, and for months I sat by his side. I knew him all through, and knew him to be a first-rate man in every respect; and if it had not been the will and pleasure of the Convention to have selected William L. Dayton, I know with what perfect alacrity I would have gone for him. I know we of New Jersey would have all gone for him if New Jersey had been called upon to make another sacrifice, and I know that none would have more readily consented to the sacrifice than the victim himself. (Loud cheers.) I thank you, therefore, gentlemen from Illinois, for the graceful manner in which you yielded your own preferences and unanimously voted for Mr. Dayton of New Jersey."

When Abraham Lincoln, then on the circuit at Urbana, Illinois, heard of his having been mentioned in the convention for the Vice-Presidency, he remarked that the Lincoln named must have been one of the famous Lincolns in Massachusetts. Apparently he had no inkling that his name was to be submitted.