

LINCOLN LORE

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SIMON CAMERON — SECRETARY OF WAR

Simon Cameron was by far the most influential political leader which the state of Pennsylvania produced during the middle part of the nineteenth century and was considered one of the most astute statesmen in all American history. Like so many successful leaders in the field of politics his ownership of newspapers opened the way for his political adventures. His first appointment was received in 1826 from J. Andrew Shutz, governor of Pennsylvania, who made him adjutant general of the state. It was this early office which caused him throughout his life to be known as General Cameron.

First elected to the United States Senate in 1845 as a Democrat and later in 1857 as a Republican he came into the stretch for the Presidential nomination race in 1860 as a strong contender and it was in this contest that his name first became associated with that of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln must have often seen Cameron in Washington while both were in the thirtieth Congress. The fact that Cameron was a senator from the populous state of Pennsylvania and Lincoln a freshman in the House of Representatives coming from Illinois may not have brought them together. There does not seem to be any evidence that they were acquainted.

The names of Cameron and Lincoln were first brought together in the fall of 1859 when there was an effort on the part of Cameron's friends to run the Pennsylvanian for the presidency. It is evidence of Lincoln's political status, nationally, that the wise Pennsylvania politicians selected Lincoln as the potential running mate for Cameron and he was immediately put forth for that office. A Chicago paper however observing the announcement of a Cameron-Lincoln ticket stated that the ticket was "wrong end to" and that it should be reversed to Lincoln and Cameron. Although little or no encouragement was forthcoming from Lincoln with respect to this move a pamphlet of eight pages was printed by the Chicago Cameron and Lincoln Club and published in January 1860 under the caption *Address of the Cam-*

eron and Lincoln Club of the city of Chicago, Illinois to the People of the Northwest.

This movement it will be observed was previous to Lincoln's appearance at Cooper Institute in New York City on February 27, 1860, where he was to be courted by the Seward interests for the same vice-presidential roll. He stopped on February 25 in Philadelphia enroute to New York and Cam-

SIMON CAMERON

Born, Lancaster County, Penn., March 8, 1799

Journeyman printer at Lancaster, Harrisburg and Washington

Editor of newspaper at Doylestown and Harrisburg

Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, 1826

Elected to U. S. Senate as a Democrat, 1845

Became identified with the People's Party, 1854

Elected to U. S. Senate as a Republican, 1857

Candidate for nomination as President at Republican Convention, 1860

Appointed Secretary of War, 1861

Advocated arming fugitive slaves, 1861

Resigned as Secretary of War, Jan. 11, 1862

eron and David Wilmot sent him an invitation to visit them at their hotel. Lincoln called at the Girard Hotel but they were out. He sent a card from New York the following day stating:

"I regret being so near, we did not meet but hope we may yet meet before a great while."

Apparently it was not until after his election that Lincoln met Cameron and then it was at Lincoln's own solicitation that Cameron came to Springfield the last of December for a conference on cabinet positions. Cameron left Springfield on December 31 with the following letter in hand.

"I think fit to notify you now, that by your permission I shall at the proper time nominate you to the U. S. Senate for confirmation as Secretary of the Treasury or as Secretary of War—which of the two I have not definitely decided. Please answer at your earliest convenience."

Three days later however and before Cameron had replied Lincoln withdrew his offer stating that it was "not from any change of my views as to the ability or faithfulness with which you would discharge the duties of the place." Another letter ten days later reveals a hornet's nest had been stirred up in Pennsylvania politics by the suggestion of Cameron as a cabinet member, presumably as a nominee for Secretary of the Treasury.

Cameron had been serving as Secretary of War but a short time before he was just as anxious to get out as he had been to get in. The correspondence which passed from Lincoln to Cameron on January 11, 1862, only about 10 months after his appointment is of special interest because Lincoln again confirms his statement made a year previous that he had explicit confidence in Cameron. In fact Lincoln makes it clear that he would have consented to relieve Cameron earlier as the Secretary had requested had he not felt it would have been misunderstood.

In the famous personal letter of January 11, 1862, Mr. Lincoln advises Cameron that the return of Mr. Clay from Russia enables him to make the appointment as minister to Russia and "at the same time evince my personal regard for you, and my confidence in your ability, patriotism, and fidelity to public trust . . . you will bear with you the assurance of my undiminished confidence, of my affectionate esteem."

It is doubtful if any of the other cabinet members received a more complimentary endorsement and it makes one feel that possibly there might be said at least one good word for Cameron or Lincoln was greatly deceived.