

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN DRAWS THE ISSUE Steps to the Wigwam, No. 5

Abraham Lincoln's strategy which won for him the Republican nomination at Chicago in 1860 is being presented in this course of discussions as a series of Steps to the Wigwam. Possibly the ascent might be more correctly interpreted by visualizing a landing midway of the approach, indicating a two year period of political inactivity just before the final rise to fame. A careful checking of manuscripts, in the now accessible "Lincoln Papers," reveals that they contain no letters on politics written or received by Lincoln between June 1856 and January 1858.

We have presented thus far in the series four closely coordinated episodes occurring at Springfield, Decatur, Bloomington and Philadelphia, respectively, which occurred within a period of sixteen months. The following two-year interval of seclusion, beginning with the Republican National Convention in 1856, was brought abruptly to a conclusion by Lincoln's famous "House Divided Speech." The occasion for this address, which featured the prophetic pronouncement that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," was the acceptance speech of his nomination on June 16, 1858 at the state convention, as the "first and only choice" to represent the Illinois Republicans in the United States Senate. This speech in which Lincoln drew the issue for the subsequent campaign, while of tremendous importance in the light of what followed, was especially timely for the immediate occasion. It not only held the Lovejoy abolitionists in line but it forever silenced influential men in the party who were in favor of endorsing Douglas in his break with Buchanan.

The recently acquired Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress reveal in the correspondence, just previous to the State Convention, one of the most surprising displays of political subterfuge and intrigue that one will discover in the chaotic upheavals of the period. Excerpts from this unpublished correspondence directed to Lincoln, chronologically arranged, will give a good picture of the difficulties confronting Lincoln previous to his nomination for the Senate, at the Springfield Convention on June 16, 1858.

These letters will also reveal the immediate necessity for some startling announcement that would bring Lincoln's wavering associates to their senses.

### Running after Douglas

"Some of our friends here act like fools in running after and flattering Douglas. He encourages it and invites such men as Wilson, Seward, Burlingame, Parrott, etc. to come and confer with him and they seem wonderfully pleased to go."

Jan. 3

Lyman Trumbull

### Douglas for Lower House

"I was questioned a day or two ago about the propriety of naming Douglas for the lower house in this district . . . He is coming to us sure as shouting."

April 14

Charles H. Ray

### Seward and Weed for Douglas

"I have just returned from New York, I fear that Seward, Weed, and others of that school are for Douglas . . . I fear Lincoln you are sold for the Senate by men who are drinking the wine of Douglas at Washington."

April 19

John Wentworth

### Douglas Welcomed

"I spoke of Douglas of probably being with the Republicans hereafter and for one I should welcome him as a valuable and indomitable ally, and so I should if he came to us, but I had no idea of making him Senator, or making him a leader."

May 2

Lyman Trumbull

### Wentworth Support

"The story is afloat that the terms on which Mr. Wentworth will support you are, that in case of your election to the United States Senate, you and your friends in southern Illinois are to support him for governor. This to you is a damaging story."

May 18

E. T. Bridges

### Republican-Buchanan Collusion

"It is reported in this part of the country that an effort would be made to unite the Republican and Buchanan parties in order to defeat Douglas and you are given as authority in the matter."

May 25

Samuel Wilkinson

### Douglas Repudiates Republicans

"Douglas has ceased associating with our folk but is very thick with the other side. He is understood to repudiate sympathy with Republicans and desires no support from them."

May 31

Elihu B. Washburne

### Lawyers Oppose Lovejoy

"It is commonly represented that all the lawyers on the circuit with Judge Davis, and of all parties, are in conspiracy to defeat Lovejoy."

June 4

Abraham Smith

### Lincoln Should Withdraw

"Dick Thompson and N. K. Sargent came to me . . . Their object is this. To get Lincoln to hold off and let Douglas be elected, to secure the grand triumph over Buchanan in '60."

June 6

J. M. Lucas

### First, Last, and Only Choice

"We have secured passage of a strong resolution in all the conventions (Washington, Jackson and Union counties), indicating you as our *first, last, and only* choice for U. S. Senator."

June 9

David L. Phillips

### Douglas, Good Republican

"I see very many of the Republicans who express themselves very freely upon the subject of Douglas's course—and some of them say 'he is good enough Republican for them.' I tell you this is a dangerous element—a dangerous endorsement."

June 9

Ward H. Lamon

### Denial of Seward's Interference

"Seward, has not, directly or indirectly, verbally or in writing, made any movement or devised any course having for its objective the election of Mr. Douglas or anybody else to the U. S. Senate."

June 9

James Watson Webb to George C. Bates

### The Negro Question

"It will not do of course to get mixed up with the negro question and in my judgment it will be best to say nothing about the admission or non-admission of any new slave states."

June 12

Lyman Trumbull

### Stop Fighting Lovejoy

"I told everyone that it was worse than folly to keep up a fight longer (against Lovejoy) and that it would injure you. Your friends are devoted, and really think the fact that your election to the senate might be hazardous by a missmove."

June 14

David Davis

The first reaction, recorded in the Lincoln Papers, to the "House Divided Speech" came from John Locke Scripps on June 22, who was visiting in Kentucky. He said that they objected to the pronouncement by Lincoln that the nation would either become all slave or all free as it "is an implied pledge on behalf of the Republican Party to make war upon the institution in the States where it now exists." The "House Divided Speech" was Lincoln's opening gun in the Senatorial campaign and the harbinger of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates.