



# Lincoln Lore

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## Indiana's Reaction To Lincoln's Proclamation Of Emancipation

Editor's Note: This article bearing the title, "Hoosiers React to Emancipation" was first published in *The Indiana Teacher* January, 1961. It was then reprinted under the same title in a brochure called, "Indiana And The Civil War" which was published in 1961 by the Indiana Civil War Centennial Commission. On February 3, 1962 the article was published a third time by *The Indianapolis Recorder* under the title, "The Atomic Bomb of the Civil War." Because many subscribers of *Lincoln Lore* have not had access to the above mentioned publications the article is being published a fourth time. Needless to state the article was written by the editor.

While the Emancipation Proclamation is considered one of the great state documents of modern times, it was not readily accepted by conservative Republican politicians of Indiana. The people of the Old Northwest, while they hated the slavery institution, had long had an affinity with the South. The Civil War had vitally affected the economic habits of a large section of Indiana's population, because Hoosiers had enjoyed a lucrative trade with the South. Their grain and hogs had fed the slaves while they produced cotton for their southern masters.

Yet some Indiana leaders like Schuyler Colfax favored a Presidential pronouncement for "Abolition and Confiscation" and General Robert H. Milroy, while in the field, promised to convert his Indiana regiments into "the best abolitionists in the U. S." President Abraham Lincoln was under constant pressure from many abolitionists throughout the United States to emancipate the slaves, and undoubtedly he understood the political conflict in Indiana. The same political situation existed in Illinois.

Lincoln probably knew that Robert Dale Owen had become a pamphleteer for emancipation, and he must have heard how George W. Julian was verbally blasting the conservatives and denouncing the "persistent purpose of the administration to save the Union and save slavery with it." Such Indiana leaders as Caleb Smith, Secretary of the Interior, and Senator Joseph A. Wright were under severe attack by the radicals because they opposed emancipation.

### JOHN Q. ADAMS WARNED OF INSURRECTION

Lincoln finally yielded to radical pressure on September 22, 1862, and issued his preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation. Lincoln, from the beginning of his administration, had been the recipient of much advice as to what policy he should pursue with reference to slavery. He believed slavery to be morally and economically wrong. Yet it was true that Congress had no constitutional authority to abolish the institution within a state. But what about the executive power to abolish the institution? Interestingly enough, back in 1836, John Quincy Adams warned the friends of slavery that "should any state rise to insurrection because of slavery, or in a matter in which slavery was the existing cause, the situation would be changed. The National Government would then assume war powers under the Constitution and those powers might include that of the abolition of slavery."

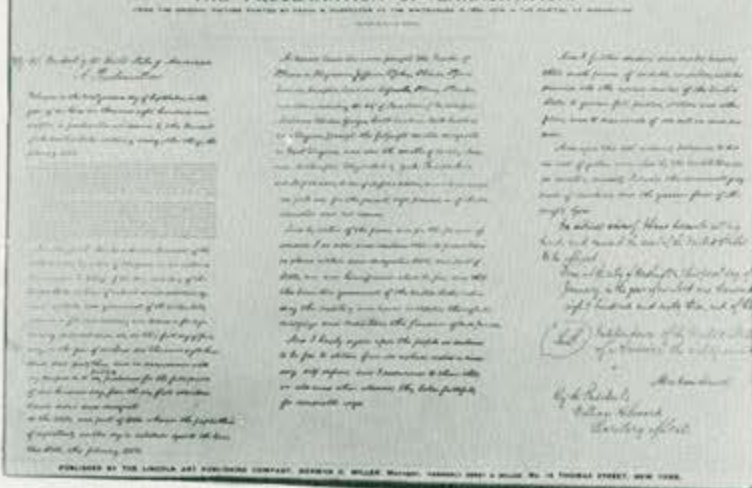
In such a crisis who would exercise the power of the national government? Lincoln believed the power was not legislative but that it belonged to the President as commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States. Lincoln determined to issue the Emancipation Proclamation under the pressure of military necessity. So on September 22, 1862, Lincoln proclaimed:

"That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, henceforward, and forever free, . . ."  
**HOOSIER NEWS-PAPERS CON-DEMN PROCLAMATION**

The news of the proclamation of September 22 came to Indiana as



THE PROCLAMATION OF EMANCIPATION.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

a great political shock. Kenneth M. Stampf in his work *Indiana Politics, During the Civil War*, published by





From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

President Lincoln and Secretary Seward signing The Proclamation of Freedom, January 1, 1863. Published in 1865 by Currier & Ives, 152 Nassau Street, New York.

the Indiana Historical Bureau, Indianapolis, has pointed out that Indiana conservative Union papers printed the proclamation without comment; however, the *New Albany Ledger* denounced it and changed its own political complexion by giving its editorial support to regular Democrats. The *Indianapolis Daily State Sentinel* called the President's proclamation "a confession of national weakness, a mortal blow to southern Union sentiment, and the final proof that the war had become a crusade against slavery."

Governor Oliver P. Morton and his friends reeled under the political impact of Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. They had no alternative but to give it approval, but the Governor "passed over all moral justification" and declared the act as a "stratagem of



President Lincoln Writing The Proclamation of Freedom, January 1, 1863

This lithograph, which could easily be taken as a caricature, was printed in colors by Ehrigott, Forbriger & Co., after a painting by David G. Blythe. This extremely rare lithograph was published in Pittsburgh in 1864 by M. Deputy.

war." The *Indianapolis Daily Journal* read into the proclamation "a retaliation for the rebel violators of the Constitution" and a heavy blow to the rebellion.

#### REPUBLICANS FEARED FOR POLITICAL FUTURE

To most Hoosiers the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation seemed to indicate a failure of the administration's war policy. Throughout the state there was a feeling of depression and discontent over disastrous Union defeats. This hostile political reaction to Lincoln's proclamation seemed to confirm Caleb Smith's dire prediction that the measure would cause the Republicans to lose the state. In fact, violent demonstrations were feared by state authorities, but luckily the Democrats were content with verbal expressions of criticism.

On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. Lincoln had never been more confident of the righteousness of any act in all of his public career. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase had provided him with these closing words:

"And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of Justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

With a firm hand he signed his full name, "Abraham Lincoln."

#### HOOSIER RECRUITING CAME TO A STANDSTILL

But the proclamation brought no joy to disheartened Hoosier politicians, and this feeling was reflected in the war effort. Indiana troops became apathetic; a number of officers resigned their commissions in protest against the Emancipation Proclamation. Recruiting was at a standstill and desertion increased. There were many soldiers who were willing to fight to save the Union, but wholly unwilling to give their lives for the freedom of the Negro.

One of the chief opponents of the Emancipation Proclamation was Richard W. Thompson, an Indiana lawyer, who served as a Whig Congressman from 1847 to 1849, while Lincoln was a member of that branch of the federal government. At the suggestion of several conservative members of Congress, mostly from the border states, Thompson wrote Lincoln, twenty-six days after the Emancipation Proclamation had gone into effect, a seventeen-page letter setting forth in a masterful way the best arguments which the opposition could formulate against the document. Provisions were made for many signatures to be affixed to the letter.

Thompson's letter met with the general approval of such border state congressmen as Crittenden and Mallory of Kentucky, Etheridge and Hatton of Tennessee, and Harris of Virginia. But after some deliberation it was decided not to send it. This letter which might bear the title "A Still Further Step—Beyond the Law" is a part of the Thompson papers in the archives of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

#### FOE LATER PRAISED LINCOLN'S FARSIGHTEDNESS

Even Lincoln heard about the letter and asked Thompson about it. When Thompson explained its general purport, Lincoln replied that he had made one capital mistake, "There were no loyal slave owners in the South." Later Thompson confessed that "he had not seen as far as Lincoln or known as much." After Lincoln's assassination Thompson referred to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation as "one of the most important events of modern times and as the most important and far-reaching course of policy Lincoln could possibly have adopted."

Charles Roll in his biography, *Colonel Dick Thompson—The Persistent Whig*, another publication of the Indiana Historical Bureau, Indianapolis, stated that Thompson "believed that it (Emancipation Proclamation) was issued

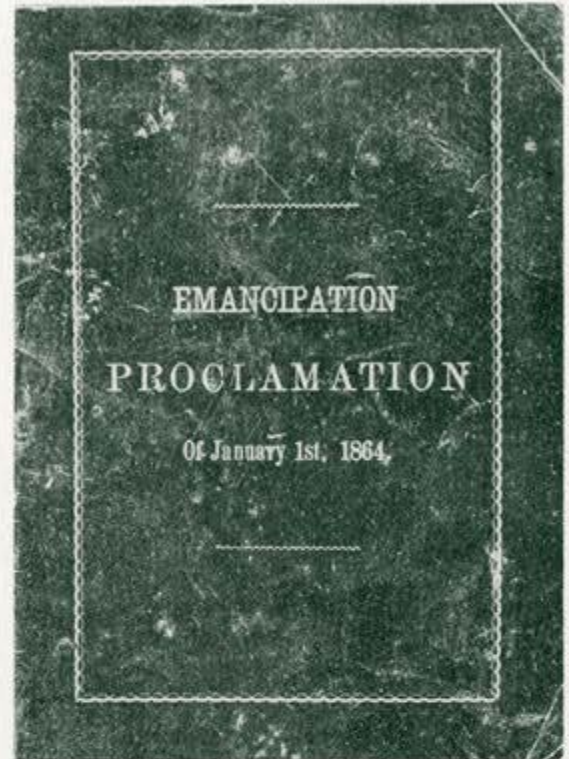


at exactly the right time to insure its success, and that it would not have succeeded if it had been done at any other time, in any other manner, and by any other man."

Nation-wide, the immediate effect of the Emancipation Proclamation was not favorable to Lincoln and his cause. Even English newspapers declared that the document "had no legal force" and that "Lincoln and his accomplices had come to the end of their chatter." Editors branded it as "high-handed usurpation" and "pointed out the absurdity of Lincoln's point of view." One English newspaper condemned the Emancipation Proclamation because it ignored a moral principle: "It promised the emancipation of slaves not because freedom was right, but because it was believed that such a move would weaken the enemy."

Lincoln once told his cabinet that his Proclamation of Emancipation was in fulfillment of a covenant he had made with God. But if the Deity approved, Lincoln had little immediate evidence of the fact. The abolitionists were not happy; they thought the proclamation should have been issued sooner and should be applicable to loyal states as well as those in rebellion. The stock market declined, and there were fewer soldiers in the armies after the issuance of the proclamation than before.

Gradually, the states of the Old Northwest as well as the other states of the Union began to appreciate the wisdom of the Emancipation Proclamation. For one thing, it had cut the ground from under the European interventionists. After the Emancipation Proclamation Lincoln was fighting not only for Union but human freedom, and Europe gave heed to the fact. It proved in its over-all aspects to be a great leap toward ultimate Union victory. It was in reality the atomic bomb of the Civil War.



*From the Lincoln National Life Foundation*

The cover page of this miniature pamphlet (not listed in Monaghan's bibliography) measuring  $3\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{5}{8}$  inches entitled "Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st, 1864" bears an incorrect date. Printed copies of the Emancipation Proclamation bear the correct dates of September 22, 1862 or January 1, 1863. This pamphlet contains the January 1, 1863 proclamation and it was published in 1864 to aid in the sales promotion of the engraving entitled "Reading

The Emancipation Proclamation" which was copyrighted by Lucius Stebbins. The engraving was published by S. A. Peters and Company, Hartford, Connecticut, and is signed by J. W. Watte, Sc and H. W. Herrick, Del. It measures  $18 \times 27\frac{1}{2}$  inches and is a work of unusual merit.

On page eight of the pamphlet is to be found a "Description of the Engraving" which is shown on this page of *Lincoln Lore*:

"Old man at the right with folded hands, Grand-father; old lady at the left with cane in hand, Grand-mother; man leaning on ladder, the father; woman with child in her arms, the mother; lad swings his hat, oldest son; little girl, oldest daughter; infant in the arms of its mother. Young woman with two children, the house servant of her master, not belonging to the cabin but happened to be in on the occasion. Party reading, Union Soldier.

"The internal view of the cabin is true to nature. The stone chimney, garrett, ladder, side of bacon, rough cradle, piece of sugar cane and cotton balls etc., all combine to give a correct idea of the slaves home."

Another miniature Emancipation Proclamation pamphlet (M 147) measuring  $3\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$  inches is to be found in the Foundation collection. It contains the preliminary (September 22, 1872) Proclamation of Emancipation. The back cover wrapper contains an excerpt from a "Speech of Alex. H. Stephens, vice president of the so-called Confederate States, delivered March 21, '61." The excerpt under the title "Slavery The Chief Corner-Stone" follows:

"This stone (slavery), which was rejected by the first builders, is become the chief stone of the corner in our new edifice."



*From the Lincoln National Life Foundation*

Reading The Emancipation Proclamation



