



# Lincoln Lore

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## THE VICE-PRESIDENCY TWICE BECKONS LINCOLN

by Louis A. Warren

*Editor's Note:* The history of the Lincoln National Life Foundation now spans forty-seven years. In that time it has had only three directors, all of whom are still active in the Lincoln field. Dr. Louis A. Warren, our first director, is ninety years old this month and has graciously consented to do this guest article for *Lincoln Lore*. Dr. Warren entered the Lincoln field in 1926 with a book, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, which Benjamin Thomas has called "the most thoroughly documented study of the Lincolns' Kentucky years." Thomas adds, "Warren is chiefly responsible for our more favorable view of Thomas Lincoln." Almost fifty years later, Dr. Warren is still making contributions to the Lincoln field.

M.E.N., Jr.

Press, radio, and television, over the past several months, have been giving preferential attention to sensational stories associated with the Vice-Presidency of the Nation. The climax may have been reached in a meticulous investigation by Congress into the private life of the recently installed incumbent. With the public eye still focused on this controversial office, it would appear to be a favorable time to observe how Abraham Lincoln reacted upon twice being recommended as a candidate for the next to the highest office in our political system.

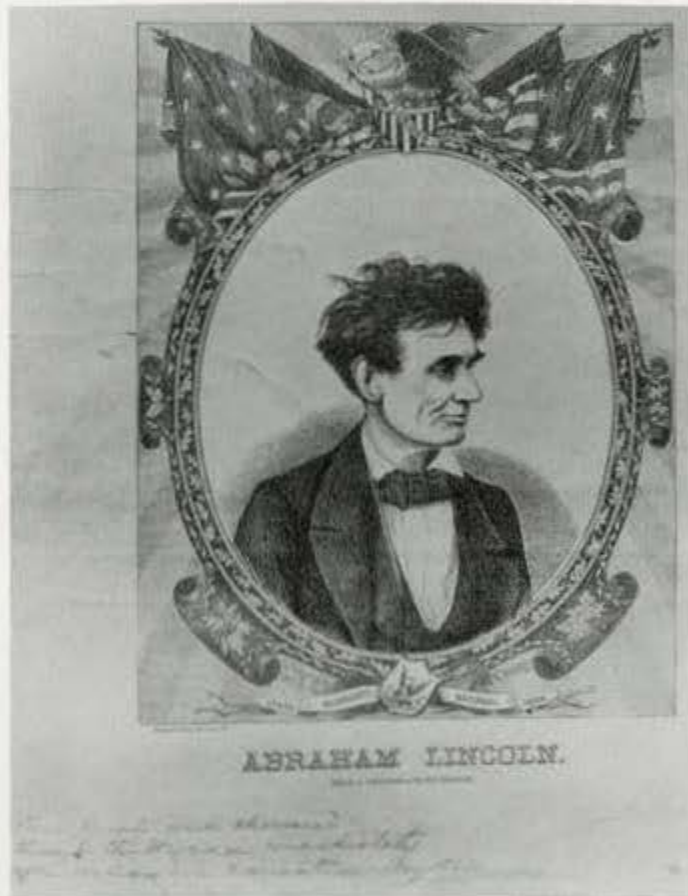
The unimpressive status of the position through the years is well set forth in the December, 1974, issue of *American History Illustrated*, under the abridged title, "Forgotten Men." This publication of the National Historical Society calls attention to the forty Vice-Presi-

dents who have occupied the office up to August, 1974. Thirteen of them were elevated to the Presidency, and seven others were selected who will be remembered for episodes unrelated to the office routine. The remaining twenty, or one half the total number of the men occupying this high station, were grouped in a category described as, "men past-recollection."

One commentator, on referring to the insignificance of the position, referred to it as a "sinecure," which, according to Webster, is "an office or position of value which involves little or no responsibility or service." One authority refers to the holder of the title as, "A second-rate man agreeable to the wire pullers, always smuggled in."

Occasionally, during the past few years, the advancement of the Vice-President to the Presidency through constitutional procedure has occurred. This has had a tendency to make the office seem more desirable than heretofore. The recent appointment to the Vice-Presidency of a well known statesman of recognized ability, a member of one of America's first families, may suggest a revision of the public opinion about the status of the formerly unwanted office. Certainly it will be more inviting to the political aspirants.

Before this new appraisal of the seat is accepted, it is important that it should be reviewed in retrospect to appreciate more fully how Abraham Lincoln, fortunately, escaped the ordeal of the



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This lithograph of "Abraham Lincoln" from a photograph by Hesler bears the imprint of E. H. Brown, Del & Sc, Chicago. On the lower margin there is a pencil notation by George William Curtis: "These prints were showered through the Wigwam immediately after Mr. Lincoln's nomination May 1860. (Geo. Wm. Curtis)." The Lincoln National Life Foundation also owns another print of this same lithograph which carries a notation in ink by John G. Nicolay: "The above was circulated in Chicago on the day of Lincoln's first nomination for President." These are the only two known examples of this lithograph in existence.



Vice-Presidency. The earliest threat was at the first National Republican Convention in Philadelphia in 1856 and once again at the convocation in the Chicago Wigwam in 1860.

Abraham Lincoln's political rebirth occurred about five years after he had served a term in Congress. His return to the political forum is recorded in a third-person autobiographical sketch: "In 1854, his profession had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the repeal of the Missouri compromise aroused him as he had never been before." Inasmuch as the repeal was passed by the Senate on March 5, 1854, and subsequently signed by the President, it was called the birthday of the newly organized Republican party. The official birthday was later established as July 6, 1854.

An observer's account of Lincoln's return to the political scene is recorded by Richard Yates, at what is known as "The Springfield Jubilee," celebrating the Republican victories in 1860. He stated: "I had spoken and voted against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and when on my return home at the close of the long session of 1854, having published a card that I would not be a candidate for re-election, I was met at the depot in Springfield by Mr. Lincoln. He said I had taken the right course on this question, and though he could not promise me success in a district so largely against us, yet he hoped for the sake of the principle, I would run, and if I would, he would take the stump in my behalf."

Lincoln briefly referred to the original Compromise in these words: "At length a compromise was made, in which, like all compromises, both sides yielded something. It was a law passed on the 6th day of March, 1820, providing that Missouri might come into the Union with slavery, but that in all the remaining part of the territory purchased of France, which lies north of 36 degrees and 30 minutes north latitude, slavery should never be permitted."

Four months after Lincoln had been awakened by its repeal and had again entered the political arena, another incident occurred which greatly stimulated his newly acquired interest in the "No Extension of Slavery" movement. On July 10, 1854, Cassius Marcellus Clay of Lexington, Kentucky, a relative of Henry Clay, paid a visit to Springfield. The presence of the anti-slavery exponent in the capital city must have aroused in Mary Todd Lincoln many reminiscences of her early Lexington days. While Cassius was attending Transylvania University in Lexington, the dormitory burned and Cassius was one of the students who found temporary lodging in the Todd home. He stated on one occasion: "I was on very agreeable terms with the Todd Family, who were always my avowed friends during my antislavery career." He later graduated from Yale, and, while in New Haven, he was greatly influenced by William Lloyd Garrison and became an exponent of the abolitionist's philosophy. Later, at Lexington, a month before his visit to Springfield, he established an anti-slavery newspaper called *The True American*.

Upon Clay's visit to Springfield, the Secretary of State refused him permission to speak in the State House. Cassius responded that even in his own state — a slave state — the common courtesy of citizenship had never been withheld from him; no court-house or state-house door had ever been shut in his face. He gave his speech in Mather's Grove. This rebuff recalls an incident which illustrates the dynamic personality of Cassius Clay.

A Kentucky town in which he was to speak posted warnings that "no anti-slavery speeches will be permitted under penalty of death." Upon Clay's arrival, says William H. Townsend in *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, "he walked unattended down the center aisle of the packed court-room, mounted the rostrum and calmly faced the muttering, jostling crowd." These were his introductory remarks: "For those who support the laws of the country," he announced in an even, steady voice, "I have this argument," and he placed a copy of the Constitution on one end of the table. "For those who believe in the Bible, I have an argument from this," and he placed a copy of the New Testament on the other end of the table. "And for those who regard neither the laws of God or man I have this argument," and he laid a brace of long black-barreled pistols with his bowie-knife on the table in front of him. Then he plunged, without interruption, into his speech."

Sometime after Clay returned from the Springfield visit he remarked: "Lincoln gave me a most patient hearing. I shall never forget his long, ungainly form, and his ever sad and homely face. . . . I flatter myself, when [I recall how] Lincoln

listened to my animated appeals for universal liberty for more than two hours, that I sowed seed in good ground, which in the providence of God produced in time good fruit."

The Illinois contingent of the newly organized party was somewhat tardy in perfecting the state organization, but on May 29, 1856, a state convention was called to meet at Bloomington. Among the many speeches made, the closing address by Lincoln was easily the feature of the day and possibly his most eloquent declaration during his Illinois years. It became known as "The Lost Speech," inasmuch as the reporters became entranced by his oratory and no one of them made an available recording of it.

The Washington press on January 17, 1856, published a call to "The Republicans of the Union to meet at Pittsburg on the 22nd. of February, for the purpose of perfecting a national organization." Another incentive was "the providing for a National Delegate Convention of the Republican Party on a subsequent date, to nominate candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency." There was also released an urgent appeal to take a stand on "the only great issue now before the Country—slavery or freedom."

Nineteen days after the Illinois convocation at Bloomington, the national convention opened its sessions at Philadelphia on Tuesday, June 17, 1856. The permanent chairman was Colonel Henry S. Lane of Indiana. John C. Fremont of California was chosen as the Presidential nominee on the first ballot. The chief order of business for the second day was the selection of a candidate for the Vice-Presidency. The trial ballot for the nomination recorded these several aspirants with the total number of votes each one received: William L. Dayton, New Jersey, 253; Nathaniel P. Banks, Massachusetts, 46; Abraham Lincoln, Illinois, 110; David Wilmot, Pennsylvania, 43; John A. King, New York, 9; Charles Sumner, Massachusetts, 35; Lieut. Thomas Ford, Ohio, 7; Cassius M. Clay, Kentucky, 3; Jacob Collamer, Vermont, 15; Joshua R. Giddings, Ohio, 2; Whitfield S. Johnson, New Jersey, 2; Henry C. Carey, Pennsylvania, 3; Aaron S. Pennington, New Jersey, 1; Henry Wilson, Massachusetts, 1; Gen. Samuel C. Pomeroy, Kansas, 8. It will be observed that Dayton received less than one half the total votes, while Lincoln was given twice as many votes as any of the other participating candidates.

A Pennsylvania delegate, John Allison, placed Lincoln's name in nomination, but, when the totals showed a majority of the votes were cast for Dayton, in order to reach a unanimous choice, Lincoln's name was withdrawn, followed by all of the other competitors. During the nominating speeches, Lincoln received many complimentary comments. It was an honor indeed to be the runner-up and a popular candidate for the Vice-Presidential nomination at the first national convention of the newly organized Republican party.

One of the stories of how Lincoln was first informed about the results of the voting, associates him with David Davis, the presiding judge on the Eighth Judicial Circuit of Illinois, where Lincoln practiced law. Davis was at the hotel in the town where the court was in session, when the mail arrived with news from the convention. He observed Lincoln coming down the street which caused him frantically to wave the paper reporting that Lincoln had received 110 votes for the Vice-Presidency at the convention. When Lincoln arrived and was given the information, he commented: "I reckon that ain't me; there's another great man in Massachusetts named Lincoln, and I reckon it's him." But, he was mistaken.

Seven years earlier Lincoln had visited the Bay State where he had spoken in favor of Zachary Taylor, Whig candidate for the Presidency. His schedule brought him to Worcester on September 13, 1848, where he was entertained at dinner in the home of Levi Lincoln, mayor of the city, and the Governor of the State from 1825 to 1834. Several distinguished guests were present and one of them recalled: "I well remember the jokes between Governor Lincoln and Abraham Lincoln as to their presumed relationship." At last the latter said: "I hope we belong, as the Scotch say, to the same clan; but I know one thing, and that is, that we are both good Whigs."

This episode recalls a visit which the author made to this same house in which Abraham Lincoln was entertained. My host, Waldo Lincoln, grandson of Levi Lincoln, mentioned at dinner that I was seated in the same position at the table, possibly in the same chair, which Abraham Lincoln had occupied, when a guest in 1848. It was the above mentioned Waldo



Lincoln who prepared the exhaustive genealogy of the Lincoln Family, showing the relationship of the Illinois and the Worcester, Massachusetts, branches. Abraham had properly identified Levi as "the great man in Massachusetts named Lincoln." Sidetracked by ancestral and personal references, we should return to Philadelphia for a final comment.

It is evident from Abraham's complete surprise and apparent confusion about the identity of the Lincoln who had been the runner-up on the trial ballot at Philadelphia, that he was unaware of any state-wide plans, then underway or previously made, to place his name among the candidates for the Vice-Presidential nomination in 1856. While his term in Congress had been of local significance, the beckoning gesture for the national office had lifted him out of local politics and raised him to a station of nationwide attention. He could now be considered as a leading Western representative of the newly organized Republican party.

One of his earliest recognitions of leadership was revealed in the state convention of 1858, which named him, "The first and only choice for a seat in the United States Senate." His acceptance address, which clearly set forth the issue for the subsequent campaign, became known as "The House Divided Speech," so designated because of his startling premise, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

His opponent in the contest, Stephen A. Douglas, was nationally known and the series of debates arranged attracted the attention of political America. Recognizing Douglas as the key figure in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and Lincoln as the chief Western spokesman for the "No Extension of Slavery" contingent, the contest became something more than a local combat. While Lincoln failed to gain the senatorial seat, he did poll the larger number of popular votes and established himself as the leading Westerner opposed to the extension of slavery.

Lincoln's rise to fame, because of his solid arguments during the debates, assured for him serious consideration for a place on the national ticket of his party in the next Republican Convention. One of the earliest feelers which arrived was a letter from Thomas J. Pickett of Rock Island, suggesting that the press of Illinois put Lincoln forward for the Presidency of the United States. On April 16, 1859, Lincoln replied to this suggestion as follows: ". . . I do not think myself fit for the Presidency. I certainly am flattered, and gratified, that some partial friends think of me in that connection. . . ." Reflecting on the vote at the Philadelphia Convention, he may have felt he was "fit" for the Vice-Presidency.

Two books were published in 1859, presenting the names of those who might be contestants in the presidential race of 1860. One was by D. W. Bartlett with the title, *Presidential Candidates*, listing twenty-one prospective contenders. The other was by John Savage with the caption, *Our Living Representative Men*, noting thirty-four qualified leaders. It is noteworthy that the later published Savage book named all of the Bartlett list with but two exceptions. This combined list of important men might serve as a political "Who's Who" for 1860 and is submitted with party affiliations noted:

Democrat: John Minor Botts, John C. Breckenridge, Albert G. Brown, Howell Cobb, Caleb Cushing, George M. Dallas, Jefferson Davis, Daniel S. Dickinson, Stephen A. Douglas, James Guthrie, James H. Hammond, Sam Houston, R.M.T. Hunter, Andrew Johnson, Joseph Lane, James L. Orr, John M. Read, Horatio Seymour, John Slidell, Alexander H. Stephens, Henry A. Wise.

Constitutional Union: John Bell, John J. Crittenden, Edward Everett, Millard Fillmore.

Republican: Nathaniel P. Banks, Edward Bates, Simon Cameron, Salmon P. Chase, William L. Dayton, John C. Fremont, John P. Hale, John McLean, William H. Seward, Henry Wilson.

Unclassified: John E. Wool.

It is not strange that the name of Lincoln is missing, as the manuscripts were prepared before his name had become prominent in the East. His address at Cooper Union in New York City on February 27, 1860, and the subsequent trip to New England are recognized as his introduction to that section of the country. The Cooper Union Address before the Young Men's Republican Union of New York is accepted as the most comprehensive political address which he had given up to that time.

One of the aspirants for the Presidency in 1860 was Simon

Cameron, a Senator from Pennsylvania. As early as October 14, W.E. Fraser, one of his supporters, wrote to Lincoln proposing a Cameron-Lincoln combination for the Republican ticket. On November 1, 1859, Lincoln replied: ". . . I shall be heartily for it, after it shall have been fairly nominated by a Republican national convention. . . ." This statement documents the assertion, that he was not irresponsive to being named as a Vice-Presidential candidate, but the reply also left open the opportunity for an ultimate decision before the convention was called to order. Lincoln's refusal to approve the ticket immediately did not prevent the publication of a campaign pamphlet entitled *Address of the Cameron And Lincoln Club of the City of Chicago, Ill., To The People Of The North West*. This final appeal in the pamphlet gives emphasis to Lincoln's anticipated contribution as a member of the team: "The nomination of Mr. Lincoln will secure us the votes of Illinois and Indiana, and we hope to carry Oregon and California also. We may succeed with other candidates; with Cameron and Lincoln, we will."

Lincoln, when en route to New York for his speech at Cooper Union, while passing through Philadelphia, was handed the cards of Simon Cameron and David Wilmot but was unable to contact them before leaving the city. Four months had passed since they first solicited Lincoln's partnership on the ticket, but apparently they feared he would make some agreement about the Vice-Presidency with Seward, while in New York. It is evident that a Seward-Lincoln ticket had already been proposed.

It seems probable that the Young Men's Republican Union may have had some specific reason for offering Lincoln 200 dollars to speak in New York, and very likely it had political relevancy. His appearance was a rousing success and his introduction to leading celebrities of the East opened up new political horizons.

En route to New Hampshire to visit his son Robert, attending Exeter Academy, he was joined on the train by Frederick Smyth who was to introduce him at Manchester. Lincoln had been reading an address Seward had delivered before the United States Senate, and laying the paper down he said to Smyth, "That speech will make Mr. Seward the next President of the United States." However, when Smyth came to the conclusion of his introductory remarks, in presenting Lincoln he said: "The next President of the United States!"

An interesting phase of his New England trip was his purposely passing through Massachusetts without making a single speech. The state had already announced its support of Seward, and apparently Lincoln did not wish to exhibit any display of rivalry. Upon his return to New York, however, the situation there seems to have changed. One of the young men advised him: "When he came, they thought he might make a good running mate for Seward, but after hearing him, they are for him for President, regardless of what happens to Seward."

Succeeding the New York visit, Lincoln was the most coveted Vice-Presidential candidate in the nation. These possible pairings were published in the press: Cameron and Lincoln, Seward and Lincoln, Chase and Lincoln, also Horace Greeley's choice, Dayton and Lincoln, possibly others. In 1860 the Vice-Presidency beckoned Lincoln in preference to all others. Lincoln had numerous advantages as a Vice-Presidential nominee (and, as it turned out, as a Presidential nominee). Unlike Salmon Chase and Simon Cameron, who had bitter factional enemies in their home states, Lincoln's support in Illinois was secure and united, and the Republicans needed Illinois. Unlike Cameron and Edward Bates, he was sound on the slavery issue because he had steadily opposed slavery as a moral evil. He had an instinct, too, for avoiding controversial stands on unessential issues. Personally temperate, Lincoln had avoided the prohibition agitation, especially when it became a hot issue in Illinois after 1853. Despising the principles of the Know-Nothing agitation, Lincoln avoided public condemnations of that party's adherents. He also avoided the side issue of disobedience to the Fugitive Slave Law.

Abraham's auspicious speaking itinerary in the East gave a new impetus to his political aspirations considering the forthcoming convention. David Davis appears to have assumed the leadership of the voluntary group of Lincoln's supporters, combining their strength with the Chicago constituency. When the convention opened, it appeared like a one-man show with Seward apparently so far ahead it forecast a



"no contest." One news correspondent put it this way: "Senator Seward is head and shoulders above all competitors, in experience, in statesmanship, in authority, in influence, in every quality which can fit a man for the Presidency." Horace Greeley, the night before the balloting began, advised his *New York Tribune* associates that Seward would be victorious. It is known he was violently opposed to Seward.

The printer's delay in making the ballots ready, causing postponement of the balloting to the following day, was greatly in Lincoln's favor, as during the night considerable opposition to Seward had been generated. There were four, and possibly more, objections which caused the dissatisfaction: 1. He had failed to gain the support of important Pennsylvania. 2. Greeley and his *New York Tribune* were against him. 3. Corruption in the Legislature of New York while he was governor. 4. The dictatorial manner of his delegates at the convention.

The fact that Lincoln had been the Vice-Presidential choice of all the leading opponents gave him a great advantage over any other second choice. The first ballot gave Seward, 193, Lincoln, 102; second, Seward, 184, Lincoln, 181; third, Lincoln, 354, Seward, 110 1/2. No other candidate polled more than 50 1/2 votes.

One of the most convincing exhibits to support the supposition that there was a concerted effort to procure the Vice-Presidential nomination for Lincoln is a poster of his profile, now on display in the Lincoln National Life Foundation. On the margin of this eight and one-half by eleven inch lithograph is this note inscribed by George William Curtis, a Seward delegate from New York: "These prints were showered through the Wigwam immediately after Mr. Lincoln's nomination." There is no printed information on the broadside to reveal what office this pictorial candidate seeks, no name of the sponsoring organization, nor even the commercial printer. The fact that the circulars were not distributed until after Mr. Lincoln had been nominated for the Presidency, eliminates any indication that they were prepared as flyers to assist in his nomination for the Chief Executive office in the Nation.

Three possible distributors of the handbills were the Seward, Cameron, and Lincoln committees. The fact that Curtis of New York made no comment in his inscribed note about the origin of the posters, implies that the Seward group had no part in the distribution and no desire to boost Lincoln. The most likely sponsors were the Cameron-Lincoln loyalists, the earliest public advocates of Lincoln for the Vice-Presidency. Their western offices were in Chicago where the "tousled hair" photograph was made and used in producing the lithograph. While its rustic appearance would win votes in the West, it is doubtful if it would have any value in garnering votes in the East.

It is evident that the Lincoln convention group had nothing to do with the origin of the "tousled hair" flyer. The failure to use it before or during the balloting for the Presidency almost nullifies any connection of the lithograph with Lincoln's winning the office.

The distribution of the prints, however, does present a strong argument that Lincoln was a recognized contender for the Vice-Presidency at the Wigwam Convention. The conclusion might also be drawn, that inasmuch as Lincoln was the publicized selection for the minor office of at least four of the Presidential hopefuls, it is quite natural that if their first choice failed, the delegates would swing to their junior partner on the ticket as their next choice, to salvage at least a part of their original ticket. There seems to have been little attention paid to the potential strength of these original supporters of Abraham Lincoln as Vice-President.

Lincoln's reflections on the Vice-Presidency did not cease with his own nomination to the higher office. Quite naturally, he would have considerable interest in the selection of his running mate. He must have observed with more than common curiosity that in the balloting for the nomination the runner-up to the successful nominee was none other than Cassius Marcellus Clay. He had been active in securing Lincoln's nomination for the Presidency and made a speech from which this argument is excerpted: "It makes a great deal of differ-

ence to you whom you nominate. . . and it makes a much more vital difference to us [Kentuckians]. . . We call upon you to nominate Abraham Lincoln, who knows us and understands our aspirations."

Even before Lincoln had an opportunity to meet the Vice-Presidential nominee, Hannibal Hamlin of Hamden, Maine, there were certain press releases that made Lincoln anxious to confer with his partner for the subsequent campaign. No sooner had the names of the two successful candidates reached the East than some newspapers announced surprise and dissatisfaction with the selections. One of the first reactions was the arrangement of the names of the victorious contestants. Many regarded Hamlin, an Eastern man, to be superior to his Western associate and referred to the combination as "The Upside-down Ticket."

While the new Presidential nominee may not have been as well known as Hamlin, the name Lincoln was a household word with the Hamlins. When Hannibal was but nine years old, a lawyer from Worcester, Massachusetts, whose name was Enoch Lincoln, came to live in the Hamlin home. Within the next five years, Enoch was elected to Congress and next became Governor of the State of Maine. He was Hannibal's hero and eventually young Hamlin went to Congress and also became Governor of Maine. Enoch Lincoln was a brother of Levi Lincoln, the host of Abraham Lincoln at Worcester in 1848.

Inasmuch as this commentary has relied on current public sentiment for a congenial atmosphere in which to develop this argument, it would seem agreeable to bring it to a conclusion in a similar fashion. The first person who put in writing a declaration with reference to Abraham Lincoln's eventually becoming President of the United States, was not a contemporary politician, but a "woman," Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky. While she was living with her sister, Mrs. Ninian Edwards at Springfield, Illinois, she became engaged to, and later married, Abraham Lincoln, a member of the Illinois Legislature. She wrote to one of her girl friends, Margaret Wickliffe, a daughter of the Governor of Kentucky, and after a playful, but not a very flattering, description of the man of her choice, she continued: "But I mean to make him to be President of the United States all the same. You will see that, as I always told you, I will yet be the President's wife." Governor Wickliffe, years later, after Lincoln had become President, came across the letter and wrote on it this endorsement, "the most remarkable letter ever written by one girl."

Researchers observing the intellectual training this young lady acquired at Lexington, "The Athens of the West," are agreed that her advanced formal education was superior to that of any other First Lady who occupied the Executive Mansion up to the time of Mrs. Lincoln's tenure. The cultural atmosphere which she created and nourished in her home, barely mentioned by most of her biographers, contributed greatly to the mental capacity of her husband.

We have observed that Lincoln was first a prospect for national recognition by becoming the runner-up in the contest for the nomination of Vice-President in the first National Republican Convention at Philadelphia in 1856. This nod, for one of the two Chief Executive offices, may have contributed more to his political advancement than we have recognized.

The multiple nods made to Lincoln as a Vice-Presidential nominee in the campaign of 1860 are almost inconceivable. It is doubtful if, ever before or since, one political aspirant has been the first choice as a running mate by so many different candidates for the Presidential nomination. Would it be presumptuous to assume that these unusual political alliances may have been largely responsible in elevating him to the office which his superiors coveted? As the dwindling hopes for the first place on the ticket faded out, in order to salvage a part of the preferred combination, would they not swing to their junior partner rather than to one of their competitors?

The National Republican Convention, convening at the Chicago Wigwam in 1860, had the unique distinction of making a beckoning gesture to a Vice-Presidential hopeful and announced that Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was the duly elected Presidential nominee.