



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.
Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

September, 1979

Number 1699

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD FRIENDS: FRIENDS OF THE NEGRO

On June 24, 1847, Benjamin Bond offered a resolution to the Illinois Constitutional Convention "to report a provision prohibiting free negroes from emigrating into this State, and that no person shall bring slaves into this State from other States and set them free." Bond's motion eventually became Article 14 of the Illinois Constitution. Abraham Lincoln was not a member of the constitutional convention, and, since he assumed his seat in the United States House of Representatives in December, he was not in Springfield on March 6, 1848, to vote on the article. There is nothing on the subject in his surviving correspondence. Some of Lincoln's friends and political associates, however, were members of the convention, and many of his Springfield neighbors did vote on the constitution — and on Article 14, which was submitted separately for a vote — in the spring of 1848. The record of the convention and of the votes of his Springfield friends goes a long way towards dashing any argument that Abraham Lincoln's racial views were deeply rooted in Western negrophobia.

Benjamin Bond was a Whig, but his resolution stirred plenty of opposition among fellow Whig delegates to the constitutional convention. Stephen Trigg Logan, who had been Lincoln's law partner three years before, was one of the Whig delegates who had doubts about the resolution. "It was a subject of a good deal of delicacy," he suggested, "and one upon which it was difficult at all times clearly to distinguish between judgement and prejudice." John M. Palmer, a Democrat, detested "one idea" reformers, but "Every impulse of his heart and every feeling of his, was in opposition to slavery." Agitation of the subject blocked quiet movements to ameliorate the slaves' condition and "remove the great stain of moral guilt now upon this great republic." The proposition, therefore, should not be in the constitution. Logan, too,

wanted to leave the proposition out, in part because he "respected the abolitionists and believed them to be honest and sincere." Stephen A. Hurlbut, a Whig like Logan, "never would consent to" the proposition.

Lincoln's brother-in-law Ninian Wirt Edwards was also a member of the convention. A month after Bond offered his resolution, Edwards suggested a cleverly thought out amendment to the proposed bill of rights:

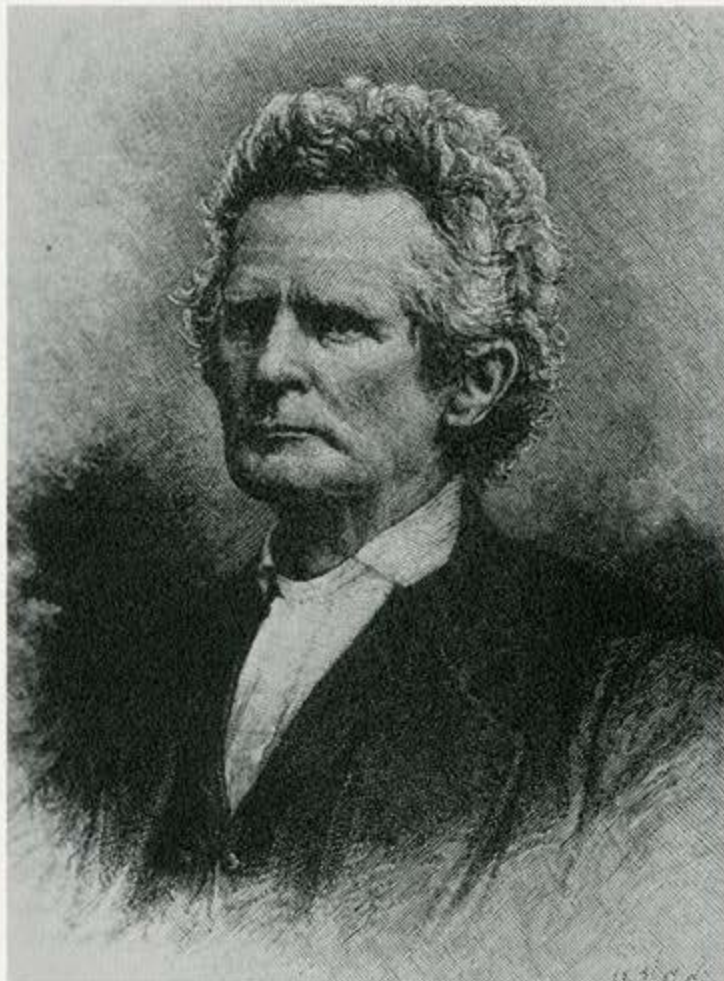
Whereas, so much of section nineteen of the bill of rights as provides for the restriction upon blacks, in connection with certain civil rights, privileges and immunities, is an implied admission of their possession of such rights, as citizens of this state and the United States, in the absence

of such constitutional restrictions; and, *whereas*, the directions therein given to the Legislature presupposes that any portion of the people of this state would be in favor of conferring such rights and privileges (as is therein denied) to colored people; and *whereas*, the Legislature would have no power to allow to persons of color to hold office and without any constitutional prohibition have already passed laws with severe penalties, not only making intermarriage and marriage contracts between them and the whites a criminal offence, but null and void, therefore,

Resolved, That said article be committed to the committee on Revision with instructions to omit so much of said section as refers to persons of color.

Springfield voted overwhelmingly to bar entry of Negroes into Illinois, 774-148. The minuscule 16% minority which defied prejudice, however, contained a number of people whose names are quite familiar to Lincoln students.

STEPHEN TRIGG LOGAN was true to his stand at the convention. On voting day he voted against the exclusion clause. A Kentuckian, like Lincoln, Logan had been Lincoln's law partner from 1841 to 1844, when the partnership was amicably dissolved so that Logan could bring his son David



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FIGURE 1. Stephen Trigg Logan grew timid in old age, but in 1848 he said "no."

into his firm. Lincoln and Logan were close associates in the Whig party in the 1840s, and Logan would be the Whig candidate for Lincoln's Congressional seat the next August.

NINIAN WIRT EDWARDS was also true to his position at the convention and voted against the exclusion clause. Edwards, also a Kentuckian by birth, had married Mary Todd Lincoln's sister Elizabeth in 1832. Edwards was also a Whig, though his political views differed considerably in tone from Lincoln's. Usher F. Linder recalled that the socially prominent Edwards hated "democracy . . . as the devil is said to hate holy water." In August he would run for the Illinois House of Representatives.

ANSON G. HENRY, who was one of Lincoln's closest political associates in the 1840s as well as his doctor, voted against the clause barring Negroes from Illinois. Lincoln and Henry were perhaps the most organization-minded Whigs in the state, and the doctor was a tireless letter-writer and political worker. Henry had been born in Richfield, New York, but had lived in Illinois since the early 1830s. Later in 1848, he and Lincoln would stump the district for Zachary Taylor.

SIMEON FRANCIS, who also voted against the exclusion clause, was the editor of Springfield's Whig newspaper, the *Illinois State Journal*. After what Lincoln referred to as the fatal first of January, 1841, Mrs. Francis had been instrumental in getting Lincoln and Mary Todd back together again. Simeon Francis frequently opened the *Journal's* pages to Lincoln. He had been born in Connecticut, but he moved to Springfield in 1831. By 1848 he was thinking of moving to Oregon, and a year later Lincoln would seek his appointment as Secretary of Oregon Territory from the Taylor administration.

JAMES COOK CONKLING, another opponent of the exclusion clause, was a Princeton graduate, born in New York City. When he moved to Springfield in 1838, he very quickly moved into genteel society. He married Mercy Ann Levering, one of Mary Todd Lincoln's best friends. A Whig in politics, Conkling had been elected mayor of Springfield in 1844.



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FIGURE 2. John Todd Stuart abstained.



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FIGURE 3. The Reverend Charles Dresser abstained.

JAMES HARVEY MATHENY was also a Whig associate of Lincoln's. He was probably the best man at Lincoln's wedding in 1842. In 1858 Stephen A. Douglas would call Matheny, Lincoln's "especial confidential friend for the last twenty years." He was an Illinois native.

ALBERT TAYLOR BLEDSOE was the chief editorial writer for the *Illinois State Journal* while Lincoln was in Congress. Born in Kentucky, he was a West Point graduate, an Episcopal minister at one time, and, for a time, the law partner of Lincoln's friend Edward D. Baker. A Whig in politics, Bledsoe would move from Springfield later in 1848 to take up residence in Mississippi, where his racial views would change a great deal.

BENJAMIN S. EDWARDS voted, as his brother Ninian Wirt did, against the exclusion article. A Yale graduate, his legal career had brought him many of the same acquaintances Lincoln had. After studying law in New Haven, he read law in Stephen T. Logan's office, was briefly associated with Edward D. Baker, and in 1843 became John Todd Stuart's partner. Stuart had been Lincoln's first law partner. Edwards was a Whig.

Some people who voted for the constitution did not vote on the Negro exclusion clause. The meaning of an abstention on this issue is not altogether clear, but it shows at least a lack of aggressive prejudice, a willingness not to bait the race issue, and a contentment with leaving the free Negro alone.

JOHN TODD STUART abstained on the exclusion article. A Kentuckian who became Lincoln's political mentor in the Illinois Legislature, Stuart was also the man who encouraged Lincoln to study law. Thereafter, he showed his faith in the New Salem railsplitter by taking him as his partner.

CHARLES DRESSER also abstained from voting on the exclusion article. Born in Connecticut, he became Springfield's Episcopal Rector in 1838. On November 4, 1842, he solemnized the marriage vows of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd.



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FIGURE 4. John M. Palmer.

Not all of the voters against the Negro exclusion clause were Whigs or friends of Abraham Lincoln, of course. Peter Cartwright, an ardent Democrat whom Lincoln had defeated in his race for Congress in 1846, voted against the article. And John Calhoun, another Democrat who had appointed the penniless Lincoln as his deputy surveyor in New Salem, abstained from voting on the article.

Nor were Lincoln's personal and political friends unanimous in their opposition to the exclusion of free Negroes from Illinois.

WILLIAM HENRY HERNDON voted for the exclusion article. At the time of the vote, he was Lincoln's law partner and enthusiastic Whig ally. They were having a dispute, however, over Lincoln's opposition to the Mexican War. Herndon could not understand Lincoln's stand in a constitutional, moral, or political sense, though Lincoln sent him letter after letter explaining his position.

DAVID LOGAN did not vote the way his father Stephen Trigg Logan voted. He supported the exclusion of Negroes from the state.

WILLIAM BUTLER, famed for his ability to predict the outcome of elections, was born in Kentucky. A friend of Stephen T. Logan's, he was an active Whig and a political associate of Lincoln's. He supported the exclusion article.

The preponderance in number as well as in importance in Lincoln's life lay with those who opposed the exclusion article. Lincoln's friends opposed it, though there were significant exceptions — most notably, William Herndon.

The vote on this constitutional article is not a reliable predictor of later political behavior. Hurlbut became a Republican and was entrusted by Lincoln in 1861 with a delicate information-gathering mission to South Carolina. Palmer also became a Republican and a sturdy supporter of Lincoln's political career. Lincoln in turn made him a brigadier general. Other members of the constitutional convention who protested anti-black legislation had very different political careers. Edwards became a Democrat — a move that shocked Lincoln — and he opposed Lincoln's

election in 1860. Logan's politics during the Lincoln administration were murky. Herndon said that he was like other "monied men": "old & timid — disturbed and terrified." During Reconstruction he became a Democrat, though he later returned to the Republican fold.

Simeon Francis, Anson Henry, and James Cook Conkling became Republicans. Conkling was staunchly antislavery and told President Lincoln of his hope that Union military victories would leave "no question as to the condition and rights of American citizens of African descent."

Matheny, on the other hand, dragged his feet in becoming a Republican, entering the party much later than Lincoln. Edwards became a Republican in 1856, but he switched to the Democratic party a year later. Albert Taylor Bledsoe, far from becoming a Republican, grew gradually to advocate slavery as biblically justified. He was the Assistant Secretary of War of the Confederate States of America!

The complexities of American politics in the middle of the nineteenth century prevent attaching any clear racial views to those of Lincoln's friends who opposed the exclusion article. Their later political views were not necessarily consistent with a friendly stance towards the Negro. Moreover, the extremism of the article probably caused some to doubt its constitutionality, no matter what their sentiments on racial questions. Still, the mass of voters certainly did not think it extreme, and over 80% of Springfield's citizens supported it. To be a part of so small a minority in opposition was a significant, even heroic, act.

Editor's Note: Archivist Dean DeBolt of the Sangamon State University Library generously sent microfilmed copies of the poll books on which this article is based.

R. GERALD McMURTRY LECTURES PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Printed copies of the 1979 R. Gerald McMurry Lecture, Don E. Fehrenbacher's *The Minor Affair: An Adventure in Forgery and Detection*, are available on request. A few copies of the 1978 lecture, Richard N. Current's *Unity, Ethnicity, & Abraham Lincoln*, are still available as well. Requests will be filled as long as supplies last.

THE MINOR AFFAIR

An Adventure in Forgery and Detection

DON E.
FEHRENBACHER

THE SECOND ANNUAL
R. GERALD McMURTRY LECTURE
DELIVERED AT
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA
1979



CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1978-1979

by Mary Jane Hubler

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, 50 Chatham Road, Harwich Center, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E.B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 175 E. Delaware Place, 5112, Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

1978

HAMILTON, LEE DAVID

1978-25

Lee David Hamilton/The Lincoln Calendarbook 1979/(Picture of French's statue of Lincoln)/(Cover title)/(Copyright 1978 by Lee David Hamilton. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any matter is prohibited. Bookcalendar copyright and Calendarbook copyright in 1978. Published by The Prairie River Press, Post Office Box 8, Greenville, Wisconsin 54942.)

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 8 1/2" x 7", 60 pp., illus. Calendarbook on Lincoln containing text, plain and colored illustrations, and a 1979 calendar.

SCHILDT, JOHN W.

1978-26

Four/Days/In/October/by/John W. Schildt/[Copyright 1978 by John W. Schildt. Published by Craft Press.]

Brochure, paper, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", v p., 71 (4) pp., illus., price, \$2.00.

STROZIER, CHARLES B.,

PH.D. 1978-27

(Portrait)/Abraham Lincoln/Charles B. Strozier, Ph.D./Associate Professor of History/Sangamon State University/Springfield, Illinois/Lecturer in Psychiatry/Rush Medical College/Chicago, Illinois/(Caption title)/(Copyright 1978 by Warner/Chilcote. All rights reserved. Published by *Psychobiography*, Vol. 1, No. 2.]

Pamphlet, paper, 10 7/8" x 8 1/8", 15 (1) pp., illus.

LOUIS A. WARREN LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, THE 1978-28

Lincoln Lore/Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor./Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the/Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801./Number 1685, July 1978 to Number 1690, December 1978.

Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 4 pp., illus. Number 1685, Five Ex-Presidents Watched The Lincoln Administration, July 1978; Number 1686, Pale-faced People and Their Red Brethren, August 1978; Number 1687, A "Great Fraud"? Politics in Thomas Ford's *History of Illinois*, September 1978; Number 1688, Recent Acquisitions: Important Fiftieth-Anniversary Gift From Lincoln National Life's Agency Heads, October 1978; Number 1689, Don E. Fehrenbacher On The Dred Scott Case: A Review, November 1978; Number 1690, Index for 1978, December 1978.

1979

BURGESS, LARRY E., DR.

1979-3

Powderly, Lincoln/And The Shrine/By Dr. Larry E. Burgess, Archivist/Head Of Special Collections/A. K. Smiley Public Library/(Portraits of Powderly and Lincoln)/A Keepsake/February 12, 1979/Lincoln Memorial Shrine/Redlands, California/(Cover title)/(Printed at the Beacon Printery, Redlands, California.)

Pamphlet, paper, 8 5/8" x 5 1/2", (4) pp., printing on inside back cover, illus. Limited edition No. 219.

GUTMAN, RICHARD J. S. AND KELLIE O. GUTMAN

1979-4

John Wilkes Booth/Himself/Richard J. S. Gutman/Kellie O. Gutman/Hired Hand Press/Dover, Massachusetts 1979/[Copyright 1979 by Richard J. S. Gutman & Kellie O. Gutman. Printed by Thomas Todd Company, Boston.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/2" x 8 1/2", 87 (1) pp., inlaid photograph of Booth on front cover, illus., price, \$17.50. No. 162 of limited edition of 1,000 copies. Autographed copy by authors.

HYMAN, HAROLD M.

1979-5

Harold M. Hyman/*With Malice Toward Some: Scholarship (or/Something Less) on the Lincoln Murder*/(Caption title)/(Copyright 1979 by the Abraham Lincoln Association. Published by the Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois.)

Pamphlet, paper, 9" x 6 1/4", fr., 23 (1) pp.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1979-6

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Spring 1979/Vol. 81, No. 1/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./[Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", 60 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$3.00.

LLOYD, JOHN A.

1979-7

Snowbound/With/Mr. Lincoln/John A. Lloyd/Vantage Press/New York Washington Atlanta Hollywood/[Copyright 1979 by John A. Lloyd. All rights reserved. First edition.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/4" x 5 1/2", fr., 125 (11) pp., illus., price, \$6.95.

MCCRARY, PEYTON

1979-8

Abraham Lincoln And/Reconstruction/The Louisiana Experiment/by Peyton McCrary/(Face of Lincoln)/Princeton University Press/Princeton, New Jersey/[Copyright 1978 by Princeton University Press. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/2" x 6 3/8", xviii p., 423 (3) pp., illus., price, \$25.00.

(SHIMIZU, HIROSHI)

1979-9

(Title: Lincoln)/(Copyright 1979 by Gakken, Tokyo. Published by Gakken, Tokyo. Printed in Japan. Entire contents of book printed in Japanese language.)

Book, hard boards, 8 15/16" x 6 1/8", 144 pp., entire text is a comic book, black and white and colored illustrations. Juvenile literature.

WEBER, GEORGE W.

1979-10

Did John Wilkes Booth Take His Own Life/At Enid, Oklahoma?/By George W. Weber/Madison, Wisconsin/(Portrait of Lincoln)/Bulletin Of 35th Annual Meeting/of/The Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin/held at Milwaukee, Wisconsin/April 16, 1978/Historical Bulletin No. 34/1979/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10" x 7 9/16", 16 pp., illus., price, \$1.25. Send to Mrs. Carl Wilhelm, c/o State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1107 Emerald Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715.

LOUIS A. WARREN LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, THE

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Lincoln Lore/Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor./Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the/Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801./Number 1691, January 1979 to Number 1696, June 1979.

Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 4 pp., illus. Number 1691, James Speed, A Personality Indeed, January 1979; Number 1692, Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library And Museum Is Recipient Of Baroness/Lincoln Award, February 1979; Number 1693, Peyton McCrary On Lincoln's Louisiana Experiment: A Review, March 1979; Number 1694, The Confederacy As A Revolutionary Experience, April 1979; Number 1695, Lincoln And Washburne, May 1979; Number 1696, Lincoln And The Hateful Poet, June 1979.

