



Lincoln Lore

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A "NO CONFIDENCE" VOTE ON THE LINCOLN ADMINISTRATION?

"The Repudiation of Lincoln's War Policy in 1862" — that is how historian Harry E. Pratt described John Todd Stuart's victory over Leonard Swett in Illinois's Eighth Congressional District. Swett had been one of Lincoln's closest political associates, and his campaign involved many of Lincoln's old political friends in central Illinois. Stuart, Lincoln's law partner many years before, had long since parted ways with Lincoln politically. Both candidates professed personal liking for the President, but they divided sharply over his war policies.

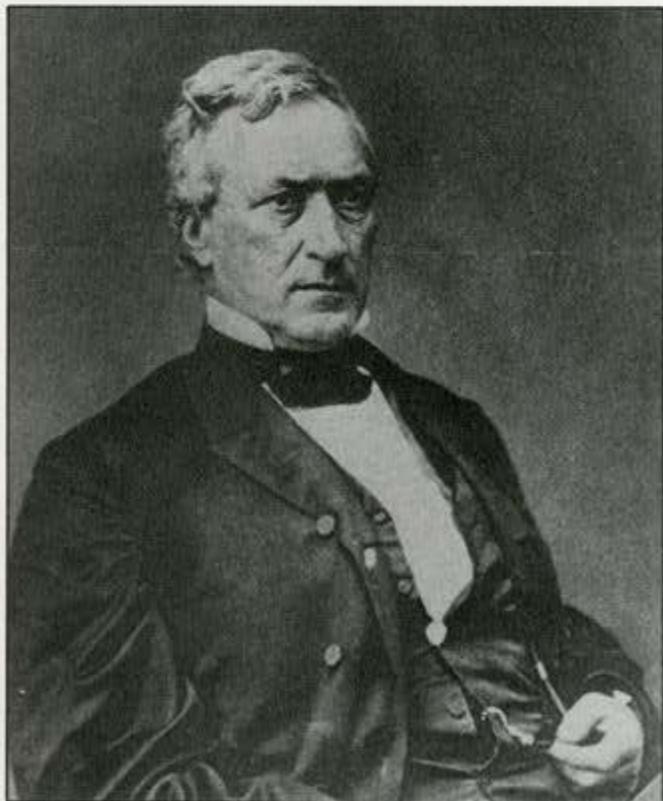
The off-year elections in 1862 were an important test of the Lincoln administration, made especially notable because they provided the first indications of public opinion on the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln announced his preliminary version of it on September 22, 1862, putting some Republican candidates in a tizzy. Stuart dodged the issue altogether, did little public speaking, and (if David Davis can be believed) spent a great deal of money. Swett, on the other hand, endorsed the Emancipation Proclamation boldly as morally right and constitutionally legitimate under the President's war powers.

The War Department's policy of shipping Southern "contraband" Negroes to Illinois, however, was more than Swett's campaign could sustain in race-conscious central Illinois. In the previous June, Illinois's voters had voted on the work of a

state constitutional convention. The referendum included separate votes on sections of the new constitution which forbade Negroes to enter the state or to vote. Illinois went 178,252 to 73,287 in favor of continuing to keep black people off their prairies and 211,405 to 37,548 for excluding the few black people in the state from the suffrage. Sangamon County, one of the two largest counties in the Eighth Congressional District, had supported the anti-Negro provisions 1,929 to 133 and 2,038 to 20 — little wonder, then, that Swett protested the War Department's policy as degrading to white labor. The War Department ended the practice about three weeks before election time.

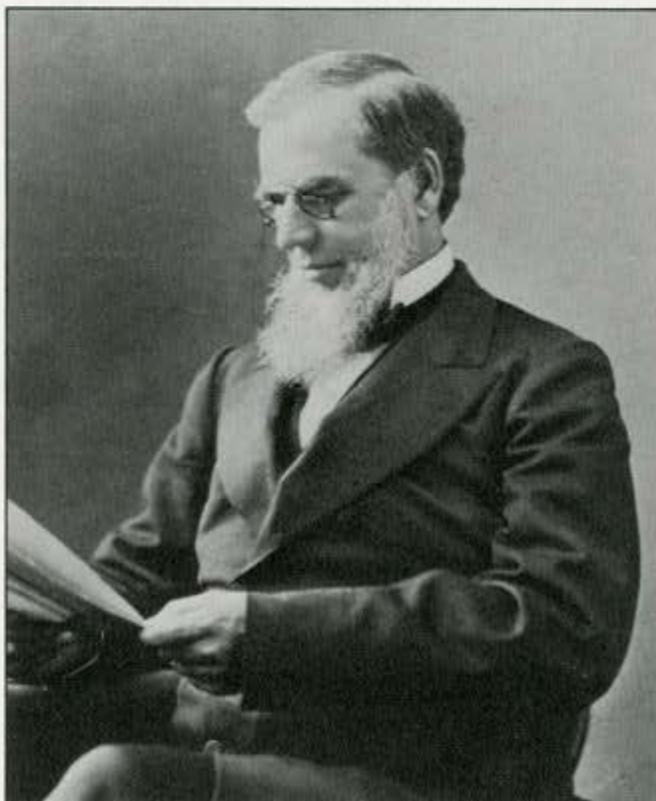
The configuration of any congressional district in America is rarely a matter of chance. The Eighth was peculiarly the embodiment of the ambitions of one man, Shelby M. Cullom, who was the Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives when the districts were reapportioned after the 1860 census. Cullom recalled in later years:

A little incident occurred at a reception given by Mr. Lincoln after he was elected President, but before he left his home to come to Washington, that vitally affected my life. In speaking to the President, I expressed a desire to visit Washington while he was President of the United States. He replied heartily: "Mr Speaker, come on." And that was about the



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FIGURE 1. John Todd Stuart.



Courtesy of the Lloyd Ostendorf Collection

FIGURE 2. Leonard Swett.

origin of my thinking seriously that I would like to come to Washington as a member of Congress.

The more I thought of the idea, the more interested I became, and I so shaped matters during that session of the Legislature as to secure a district in which some Republican could hope to be elected. In the apportionment under the census of 1860, I had our Congressional district elongated to the north and south rather than to the east and west, and let it be known that I would be a candidate.

Unfortunately for Mr. Cullom, Leonard Swett also wanted to run for Congress. Swett lived in the same new district, was older, and had a longer record of party service for smaller rewards than Cullom had already garnered. Swett eventually persuaded the younger man to drop out of the contention for the nomination.

The district which Swett inherited from Cullom's political estate consisted of seven counties: DeWitt, Livingston, Logan, McLean, Sangamon, Tazewell, and Woodford. Until 1862 they had formed parts of four different congressional districts, but the designing hand that brought them together to form the Eighth Congressional District had been guided by computations of county election returns. "The majority in the counties composing the district was ordinarily Republican," Cullom remembered years later — by which he obviously did not mean in each county but in the counties taken as a whole. So computed, the vote for Congressman in the seven counties had been narrowly Republican since 1856. If the actions of the Lincoln administration had not changed voter preferences in the district, if Swett did not make any mistakes, and if Stuart failed to excite some new voters or change anyone's mind, Leonard Swett should have won.

Instead, Swett lost, 12,808 to 11,443. The *New York Times* called it a "vote of want of confidence" in the President. And years later Harry Pratt endorsed the notion that Swett's loss was a repudiation of Lincoln's policies.

Downcast Illinois Republicans had a different explanation at the time, one that Republicans frequently trotted out to explain electoral losses during the Civil War. They said that the loss of the votes of the many Illinois soldiers taken away from the state by the war cost them their victory. One of Swett's associates explained it this way:

I presume you were much surprised at the result of our election. Swett was beaten about 1,500. When we take the figures of 1860 they show conclusively that he had no chance at the start. In the counties composing this district, Lincoln in 1860 had only 800 majority over all opposition. Then take the fact that out of these counties there were at least 12,000 soldiers, 8,000 of whom were voters. Five thousand of these at least did and would have voted the Union ticket. These figures, which I think the facts will sustain, placed Swett's hope in a fearful minority. . . .

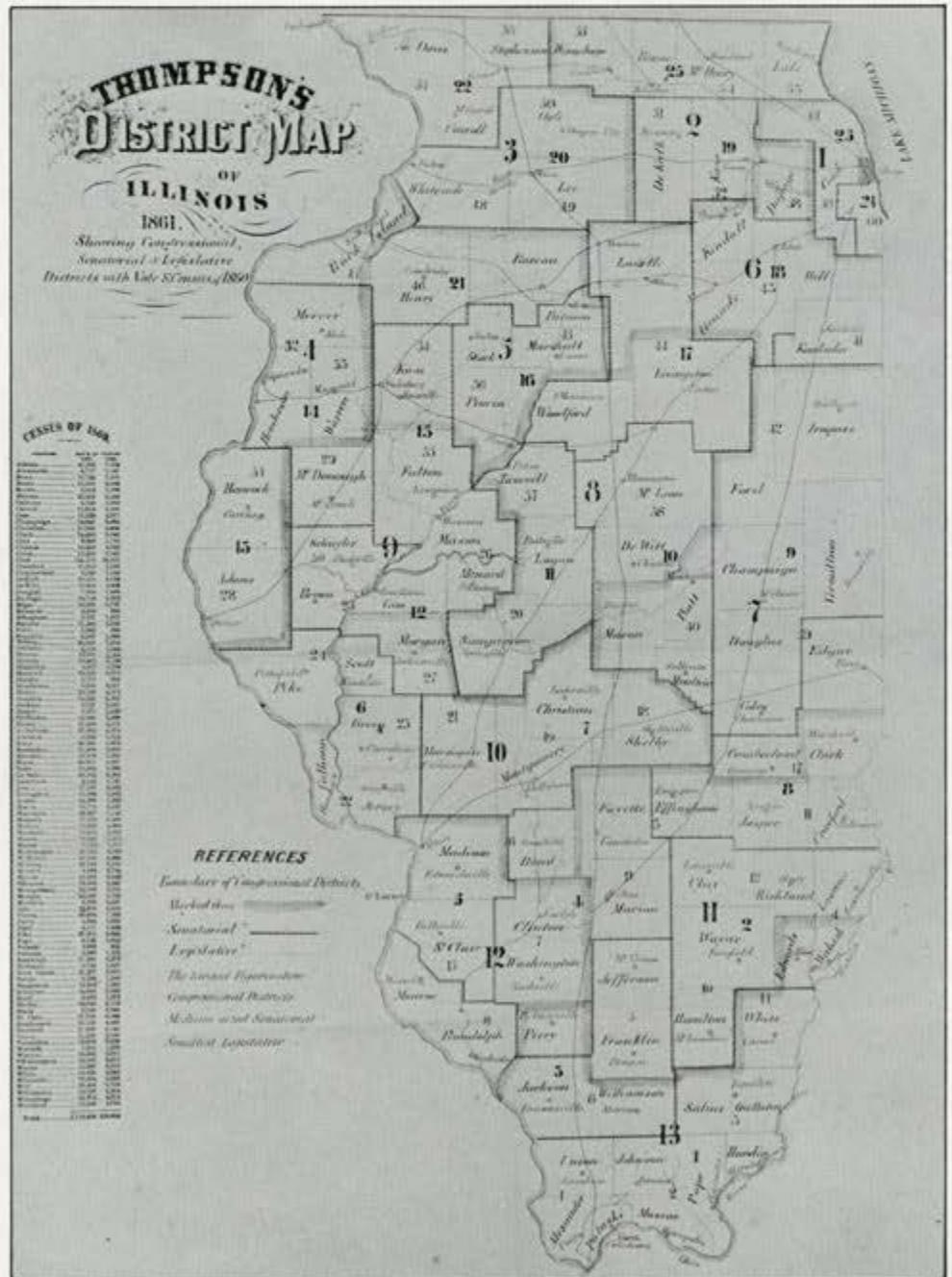
This promising analysis was, in fact, severely flawed. Lincoln's majority of around 800 was smaller than that of the Republican candidates for Congress, who beat their Democratic opponents in the combined counties of the new district by more than 1,500

votes. Swett's chances were perhaps better than that analysis suggested.

Where the Republican analyst got his estimates about soldiers is unknown. They show some cognizance of reality: not all soldiers were Republicans, and many were too young to vote. Even so, the analysis seems quite wide of the mark. Adding 8,000 votes to the Swett-Stuart turnout of 24,251 gives 32,251 votes in the district, more than ever voted for a congressman from 1856 to 1864. And more important, it is a far larger total than voted in the previous off-year election of 1858, when 22,703 turned out.

The impact of the potential soldier vote will probably never be known, but Swett did not really need such an excuse to explain his loss to Stuart. The number of votes for Swett, 11,443, slightly exceeded the number won by Republican candidates for Congress in the counties in the last off-year election, 1858. Unless there was a dramatic population change in the counties, Swett turned in an average performance for a Republican. Stuart simply did rather better. The Democratic candidate held on to the 11,000 Democrats of 1858 and added another 1,808 to them.

If Swett's loss was a repudiation of the administration, it was not a very dramatic one, and it hardly merited notice all the



From the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 3. M. H. Thompson's political map of Illinois.

way out in New York. Some falloff from the level of support of a Presidential election year was to be expected. Lincoln announced the most controversial act of his entire administration less than two months before election day, and it was a measure certain not to please the race-conscious voters of central Illinois. Nevertheless, Swett maintained the level of Republican support in the last off-year election. It is possible that the acts of the Lincoln administration energized Democrats who usually did not vote in off years, but Lincoln's policies apparently had little ill effect on the voters who normally went to the polls.

Shelby Cullom hinted at another possible explanation of the Republican loss: "... while the Congressional district was made by me, and for myself, I gave way to Mr. Swett, and the opposition carried it." This explanation would ignore the effect of the issues that intervened between the redistricting and the election and focus on the candidate's assets. Such an explana-

tion probably exaggerates Cullom's political acumen (as well as his power in the Illinois legislature), but it is clearly true that many things besides national issues were at work in producing the result. Swett's performance, compared to the 1858 results, shows a superior standing in McLean County and an inferior one in Sangamon County, a phenomenon best explained not by the issues but by the fact that Swett was a resident of McLean County. Incidentally, Cullom won the district by thumping majorities in 1864 and 1866.

For Harry Pratt's sake, it must be said that it is much easier to criticize an attempt to define the meaning of an election than it is to find another meaning. Pratt did the pioneering work on this contest, and little enough has been done on Illinois politics in this period that we should be grateful for any careful work. The time has come to build on that work and to deepen our knowledge of the political history of Lincoln's home state.

VOTES FOR CONGRESS IN THE SEVEN ILLINOIS COUNTIES WHICH BECAME THE EIGHTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

County	1856		1858		A.D.I.	1860		1862		1864	
	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.		Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Union	Dem.
DeWitt	644	749	992	755	262	1206	1084	837	954	1271	1070
Livingston	560	463	986	794	1	1451	1097	1110	938	1754	1095
Logan	1111	837	1315	1174	6	1741	1498	1523	1490	1725	1375
McLean	1946	1818	2570	2155	26	3447	2613	2944	2339	4017	2588
Sangamon	2751	2174	2803	3010	112	3628	3629	2583	3845	3610	3909
Tazewell	1245	1555	1783	1960	9	2345	2184	1632	1971	2162	2302
Woodford	609	813	811	1152	27	1265	1424	814	1271	1273	1688
	8866	8409	11260	11000	443	15083	13529	11443	12808	15812	14027

THE ART OF PHILANTHROPY: THOMAS BARBOUR BRYAN AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Thomas Barbour Bryan, a Virginian who never met Abraham Lincoln, did as much to immortalize Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation as any single man. Born in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1828, Bryan was a blood relation of prominent Old Dominion politicians. A graduate of Harvard University and of Harvard Law School, he was a genuinely cultured man, a German scholar who was also proficient in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. He moved to Newport, Kentucky, in 1848, where he married the daughter of an army chaplain.

After practicing law in Cincinnati, across the river from his Kentucky home, Bryan moved to Chicago in 1853. Real estate speculation there brought him a considerable fortune. He was also a life insurance agent and president of a fire insurance company. He became a Republican in politics and a patron of the arts.

Art, rather than politics, brought Bryan his connection with Abraham Lincoln. By the late 1850s, George Peter Alexander

Healy, a successful painter with life portraits of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, John Tyler, and many other eminent Americans to his credit, was a neighbor of Bryan's in rural Cottage Hill (now Elmhurst), Illinois. The artist was financially strapped, and Bryan made him an offer he could not well refuse. In exchange for Healy's Cottage Hill property and more than thirty canvases, Bryan sold Healy eighty acres, four miles north of Chicago, for \$12,000 in cash, to be paid over three years while Healy lived rent free at Cottage Hill.

Bryan had built a concert and lecture hall on Clark Street across from the courthouse, and, with the acquisition of Healy's paintings, he turned some of the rooms in Bryan Hall, as he called it, into a gallery. There visitors could see Healy's immense historical paintings, *Franklin before Louis XVI, urging the claims of the American Colonies* (eight feet by five feet) and *Webster in reply to Hayne in the U.S. Senate*, as well as the portraits.

Editors friendly to the cause will please give insertion in their papers to the following:

A PERFECT FAC SIMILE OF THE
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT
OF THE
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION.

To be sold for the Benefit of the Permanent Soldiers' Home,
FOR THE SUM OF TWO DOLLARS.

Appeal to the Citizens of the Loyal States in
Behalf of Disabled Union Soldiers.



The establishment of a permanent HOME FOR SICK AND DISABLED SOLDIERS, is prompted by the dictates of humanity, and by gratitude to our patriotic sons and brethren. Thousands who have gone forth to battle for the preservation of our glorious institutions, the unity of the States and to extend the area of freedom, will return to us with mangled limbs, and shattered frames, incapacitated for labor during the remaining period of their existence here. To such can we refuse a Christian welcome and a comfortable home? But we are persuaded that a generous public needs

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FIGURE 4. Circular for Bryan's facsimile.

On November 10, 1860, along with a printed circular advertising Bryan Hall, the Chicago real estate speculator and philanthropist sent President-elect Abraham Lincoln a letter of introduction to be handed to him by Healy. The painter was on his way South, and Bryan had commissioned him to stop in Springfield and gain two or three sittings by Lincoln on which to base a portrait for his gallery. Despite being a Virginian, Bryan wrote, he was heartily glad to know that Lincoln would soon occupy the White House. The President-elect apparently granted the artist's request, and the result was, in Harold Holzer's words, "a romanticized three-quarters profile" of Lincoln. If Healy's reminiscences as a very old man are to be trusted, Lincoln at one of the sittings had just finished reading a letter from a woman who complained about his looks. "It is allowed to be ugly in this world," said Lincoln, "but not as ugly as I am." Among Lincoln's minor preoccupations at the time was his musing on growing a beard, and he asked Healy, "Will you paint me with false whiskers? No? I thought not." Perhaps the kindly President-elect was worrying about the future worth of Healy's portrait if he made it "obsolete" by changing his appearance with whiskers.

An invitation to visit Bryan's gallery in Chicago followed in about two weeks. The President-elect could find time to sit for a portrait, but a trip to Chicago for gallery browsing was out of the question. "I now fear I can not find leisure to avail myself of this Mr. Bryan's kindness," Lincoln replied. The invitation, interestingly enough, was to view a "Gallery of the Presidential Portraits from Washington to Lincoln inclusive." If the description of the gallery was accurate, then Healy must have turned his portrait out in a very brief time indeed!

During the Civil War, Bryan was active in several home-front patriotic movements and served as president of the Chicago Soldiers' Home, established to entertain or comfort

soldiers on leave in the city. It later became an institution for the care of disabled veterans, and it did so in part by means of another of Bryan's financial-artistic-political ideas.

At the Northwestern Fair for the Sanitary Commission in Chicago late in 1863, Thomas B. Bryan purchased at auction for \$3,000 the last draft of the final Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln contributed this historic document, the official engrossed copy of which freed hundreds of thousands of persons, to the fair, though he "had some desire to retain the paper." Bryan must already have had his scheme in mind when he bought the document because he acted very quickly thereafter. He let the Soldiers' Home hold the proclamation "in trust for the benefit of the sick & disabled soldiers in the Union Army." Bryan had a Chicago lithographer named Edward Mendel copy the handwritten document for reproduction along with Lincoln's letter conveying the draft to the ladies in charge of the sanitary fair. By late December, 1863, Bryan was advertising the Mendel facsimile in the circular shown in FIGURE 4.

On January 7, 1864, Bryan wrote President Lincoln, sending him "the two first copies of the lithographed Facsimile of your Proclamation of Freedom." The letter went on to explain:

It may interest you to know that the Original Manuscript, which you had "some desire to retain", will be held by our Soldiers Home in trust for the benefit of the sick & disabled soldiers of the Union Army. — Although I purpose donating a share of the avails of my copyright to the Home, as mentioned in the certificates on the face of the print, yet at the voluntary suggestion of Dr. Bellows of New York, all copies sold in the East will yield a fund for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, of which he is Pres. . . . The caption will therefore be changed, my desire being to donate the net proceeds to the soldiers.

Lincoln responded on the 18th, remarking in his always cautious and precise way, "I have to say that although I have not examined it in detail, yet it impresses me favorably as being a faithful and correct copy."

Charles Eberstadt's standard work, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, which discusses "in chronological sequence" the "historical course of the writing and publication of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation," identifies three different editions of the Mendel lithograph published before 1866. Curiously, Eberstadt assigns an earlier number to the edition which was vertical in format and carried the inscription: "BY AN ARRANGEMENT WITH HON. T. B. BRYAN, THE U.S. SANITARY COMMISSION DERIVES A LIBERAL SHARE OF THE PROFITS FROM THE SALE OF EACH OF THIS FAC-SIMILE" with the signature of Henry W. Bellows below it. The edition that was horizontal in format and lacked any mention of Bellows or the Sanitary Commission is given a later number. Bryan's letter to Lincoln is, admittedly, ambiguous, but it sounds distinctly as though the message about Bellows was to be added to the version Lincoln saw, the first version. It seems quite possible that the horizontal version was really the first, though this judgment would not explain the existence at Brown University of a copy of the vertical version lacking Bellows's signature. However, Eberstadt does note that the copy of the horizontal version at the Library of Congress has "Filed Dec. 30, 1863" written on it and "Copyright 17 Aug 64" stamped on it. The weight of the evidence points to the horizontal version as the one Lincoln saw.

It is a small matter. If the circular promoting the sale of the lithograph can be believed, a "lady solicitor" was assigned to each district in Chicago to sign up subscribers for the facsimile. Bryan recommended that the same be done in other areas. The campaign appears to have been successful. One source notes that the Soldiers' Home "realized thousands of dollars from the sale of lithograph copies," and the lithographs are not uncommon today. By mixing money, art, and politics, Thomas B. Bryan did much to spread far and wide Lincoln's image and the text of his greatest proclamation.

In the Next *Lincoln Lore*

A call for papers on Lincoln.

A call for papers on Illinois history.

News of a summer institute on the Civil War.