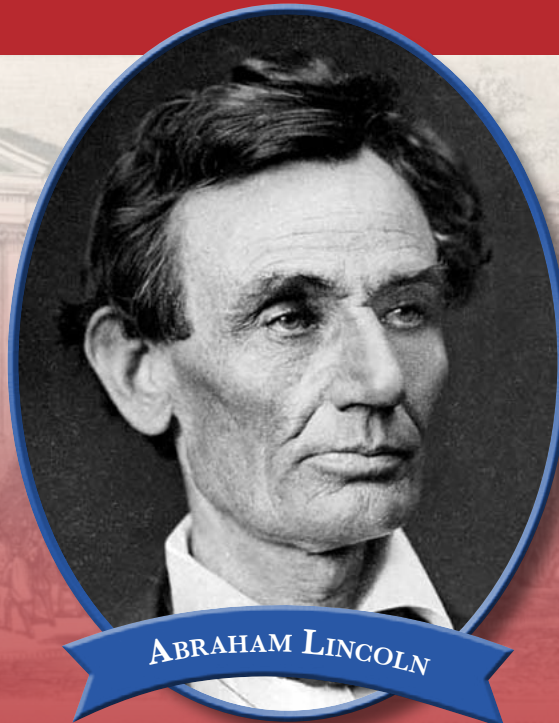


America's Oddest Election

BY HAROLD HOLZER



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[http://www.americanheritage.com/
content/americas-oddest-election](http://www.americanheritage.com/content/americas-oddest-election)

Harold Holzer is a frequent contributor to American Heritage magazine and winner of a 2005 Lincoln Prize for Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech That Made Abraham Lincoln President (Simon & Schuster 2006), has written more than 40 books about the 16th president. He currently chairs The Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation and was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President George W. Bush in 2008. Holzer, educated at the City University of New York, first worked as a newspaper editor for The Manhattan Tribune, served as a political campaign press secretary for Congresswoman Bella S. Abzug and Governor Mario Cuomo, and currently works as a Senior Vice President at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Just six months before the presidential election of November 1860 and only days after winning his party's nomination, Abraham Lincoln received some stunning advice from one of his chief supporters, William Cullen Bryant. The influential editor of the pro-Republican *New York Evening Post* beseeched him to "make no speeches, write no letters as a candidate, enter into no pledges, make no promises." Only three months earlier, Bryant had urged a large audience at New York City's Cooper Union to pay heed to Lincoln's every word. Now, warned Bryant, silence was the only way of "preventing any mistake on your part."

The irony of this strategy was not

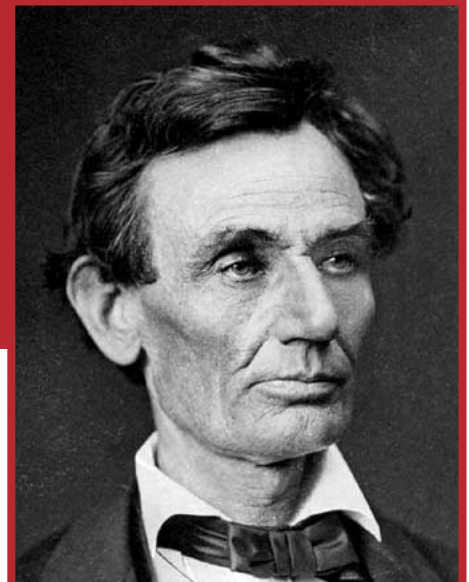
lost on Lincoln: just two years earlier he had vaulted to national prominence largely on the oratorical skills he had exhibited during seven wildly successful public debates with Stephen A. Douglas in a race for an Illinois seat in the U.S. Senate. Although Lincoln lost the contest, the lengthy debates were printed in newspapers across the nation and appeared in book form, setting the stage for his bid for the presidency.

Ever the astute politician, Lincoln followed Bryant's recommendation to the letter. For the next six months, Lincoln said precious little in person or in print to advance his cause, limiting his public appearances to posing for painters and photographers, and watching mutely as one giant campaign parade lumbered past his Springfield, Illinois home in August. Two of his three opponents in the unparalleled four-way race remained similarly invisible: Tennessee's John Bell, running on the Constitutional Union ticket, who pledged to preventing secession; and Kentucky's John C. Breckinridge, the choice of Southern Democrats, who was committed to saving slavery. The fourth candidate, his longtime rival, Stephen Douglas, running on the Northern Democratic Party, chose not to keep quiet, a decision that would have ramifications.

Although the clear favorite at the Democratic National Convention in Charleston, South Carolina, Douglas had irritated Southern delegates by his long-held beliefs that new territories could, if their voters wished, reject slavery. Southerners had stormed out of the convention and



New York City's Cooper Union, left, where Lincoln delivered his dramatic speech on February 27, 1860, opposing Stephen A. Douglas on the question of federal power to regulate and limit the spread of slavery to the federal territories and new States. The speech galvanized support for Lincoln and contributed to his gaining the Party's nomination for the Presidency.



Abraham Lincoln, 1860.

nominated Breckinridge, while Northern Democrats had reassembled to anoint Douglas. While many historians have insisted that Lincoln's victory became a foregone conclusion with the split opposition, the final outcome remained very much in doubt—up to and even beyond Election Day.

The rupture in the Democratic Party certainly left Lincoln convinced by October that no "ticket can be elected by the People, unless it be ours." But would any candidate amass enough electoral votes to win the presidency outright? If none could, the election would shift to the House of Representatives, the field narrowed to the top three vote getters. Each state would cast a single vote. Anything might happen in such a scenario, because the slaveholding Southern states, which were overwhelmingly Democratic, would exercise more power than they did in the electoral college.

Sensing—and privately encouraging—an opening that would send the election to the House, Douglas defied presidential campaigning tradition and decided to travel east to visit his ailing mother in New England. He chose an indirect and southerly route that would give him ample opportunities for speeches whenever his train stopped for fuel. His less-than-subtle

America's Oddest Election

— CONTINUED —

campaign swing inspired one cartoonist to depict him as “Little Stephen in Search of His Mother.” Worse still, Douglas’s trip did little to overcome opposition to his signature “popular sovereignty” policy, which the Republicans opposed because it would give voters the right to expand slavery into the West. Southern Democrats didn’t like it because it gave voters the option to restrict the peculiar institution.

The low profile of the other candidates did not dampen public enthusiasm for the campaign. Americans thronged to rallies, marched in parades, distributed handbills, and turned campaign biographies into best sellers. Partisans ignited enough cannon to suggest that war had already begun. A record-breaking 82 percent turned out to vote on November 6, 1860.

Election Day dawned sunny but cold in Lincoln’s hometown of Springfield, Illinois. At approximately 3:30 p.m., the nominee slipped out of his hideaway office inside the state capitol building and “walked leisurely” to a nearby courthouse to vote. As supporters greeted him with “wild abandon,” Lincoln calmly “deposited the straight Republican ticket” after first modestly cutting off his own name from the ballot.

That night Lincoln coolly awaited returns at the city’s telegraph office. Early reports favored the Republicans, but scant news emerged from New York State, whose mother lode of 35 electoral votes might determine whether the election was decided that very night or later by Congress.

Lincoln eventually took a break, strolling to a nearby “ice cream saloon” where a ladies’ group had set up midnight refreshments. Here the long-anticipated dispatch from the Empire State finally arrived, confirming that Lincoln had won the day’s biggest prize—and with it, the presidency. At this news, Lincoln supporters “fell into each other’s

arms shouting and crying, yelling like mad, jumping up and down,” remembered neighbor William H. Bailhache. All the seemingly impassive victor said to his supporters was: “Well, the agony is almost over and you will soon be able to go to bed.” Lincoln carried every Northern state but New Jersey, earning 180 electoral votes in all—comfortably more than the 152 required for a majority. But not until he was en route to Washington in February would he learn with certainty that the electoral votes had been safely counted without the violent interruption threatened by secessionists.

Lincoln could also take comfort from winning 1,866,452 votes, more popular votes than anyone who had run for president. Yet in the few Southern states where his name appeared on ballots, his support was anemic: Virginia gave the Lincoln ticket barely 1 percent of its 167,223 votes. And in his birth state of Kentucky, Lincoln won only 1,364 out

of 146,216 votes, less than 1 percent. While he did win a decisive 54 percent in the North and West, he earned only 2 percent in the entire South (mostly from German Americans in St. Louis). It would prove the most lopsided vote in American history.

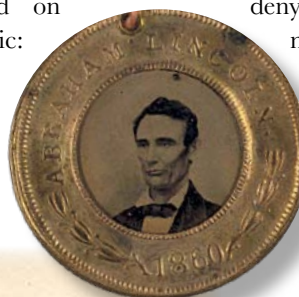
Had a few thousand Americans voted differently in Indiana, California, and New York, the outcome may well have changed. If the vote had gone to the House would Lincoln have won? Possibly not. Although he took 17 states (compared to the 16 for all three of his opponents combined), lame duck House delegations would have felt no obligation to respect their states’ Election Day outcomes. Deals and compromises would have remained on the table—especially if Congress concluded (as many Republicans and Democrats soon did) that

denying Lincoln the White House might preserve the Union.

Within weeks influential Northerners such as James Alexander Hamilton, son of the founding father, began suggesting that Lincoln electors throw their votes to others so that the House would get the final decision. Lincoln’s fragile victory ultimately held. But would the Union?

Even on election night, Lincoln seemed to sense the grim future. One friend noticed that the “pleasure and pride at the completeness of his success” quickly evaporated. “It seemed as if he suddenly bore the whole world upon his shoulders, and could not shake it off.”

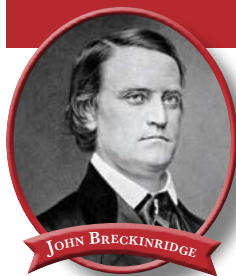
As Lincoln left for home that historic night to tell his wife of the victory that more Americans lamented than celebrated, he was heard to mutter: “God help me, God help me.” ★



1860 Abraham Lincoln’s campaign button, above, and campaign poster, left.

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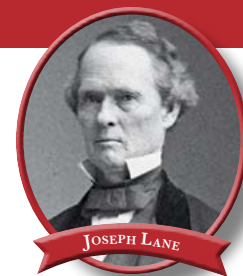
JOHN BRECKINRIDGE

DEMOCRATIC TICKET.

OUR PRINCIPALS THE CONSTITUTION.

FOR PRESIDENT JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE OF KENTUCKY
FOR VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH LANE OF OREGON.

Lith of Hoyer & Ludwig, Richmond, Va., 1860.



JOSEPH LANE

DEMOCRATIC TICKET

OUR PRINCIPLES
The Constitution
The Sovereignty & Equality of the States, The Repeal of the Missouri Restriction, The People of the Territories in forming State Governments to adopt their own Institutions, Equal protection to Citizens Native & Naturalized, & to every species of Property

FOR PRESIDENT
JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE
of Kentucky
FOR VICE PRESIDENT
JOSEPH LANE
of Oregon

ELECTORS

1st District—William Lamb, of Norfolk City
2d do Thomas F. Goode, of Mecklenburg
3d do John R. Edmunds, of Halifax
4th do Thomas T. Tredway, of Prince Edward
5th do James L. Kemper, of Madison
6th do James Lyons, of Henrico
7th do Rich'd A Claybrook, of Northumberland
8th do Beverley B. Douglas, of King William
9th do Eppa Hunton, of Prince William
10th do Thomas M. Isbell, of Jefferson
11th do James W. Massie, of Rockbridge
12th do Wm. H. Anthony, of Botetourt
13th do Isaac B. Dunn, of Washington
14th do John G. Newman, of Kanawha
15th do Zedekiah Kidwell, of Marion

Write your name on the back of this Ticket
Election on Tuesday November 6th 1860
Lith of Hoyer & Ludwig Richmond Va

Text

DEMOCRATIC TICKET OUR PRINCIPLES

The Constitution

The Sovereignty & Equality of the States; The Repeal of the Missouri Restriction; The People of the Territories in forming State Governments to adopt their own Institutions. Equal protection to Citizens Native & Naturalized, & to every species of Property.

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Write your name on the back of this Ticket
Election on Tuesday November 6th 1860

America's Oddest Election

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MARYLAND STATE TICKET. ELECTION, TUESDAY NOVEMBER 6TH, 1860 . . .
FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES JOHN BELL OF TENNESSEE.
FOR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
EDWARD EVERETT OF MASSACHUSETTS. 1860.

Text

Maryland State Ticket

Election, Tuesday, November 6th, 1860.

“The Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of the Laws.”

For President of the United States,
JOHN BELL,
 Of Tennessee.

For Vice President of the United States,
EDWARD EVERETT,
 Of Massachusetts.

For Electors of President and Vice President of
 United States.

CHARLES F. GOLDSBOROUGH,
J. DIXON ROMAN.

1st District **JAMES U. DENNIS.**
 2d..... “ **JOHN E. SMITH.**
 3d..... “ **SAMUEL M. RANKIN.**
 4th “ **WILLIAM PRICE.**
 5th “ **JAMES S. CARPER.**
 6th “ **ALEXANDER B. HAGNER.**

Maryland State Ticket.

Election, Tuesday, November 6th, 1860.



“The Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of the Laws.”

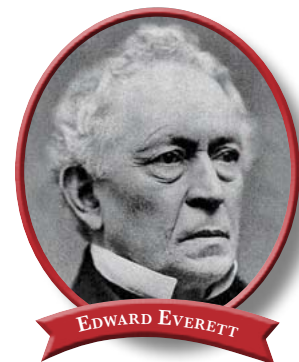
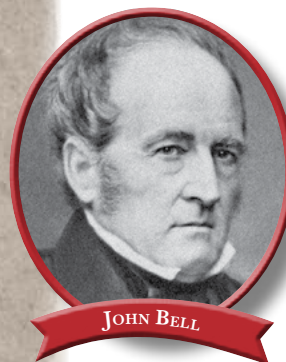
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 5th “ **JAMES S. CARPER.**
 6th “ **ALEXANDER B. HAGNER.**



America's Oddest Election

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003690790/>

**THE UNION MUST AND SHALL BE PRESERVED.
FOR PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN OF ILLINOIS.
FOR VICE PRESIDENT HANNIBAL HAMLIN OF MAINE.**

Lith. by W[illiam] H. Rease, cor. 4th & Chestnut Sts., Philada.

Published by W.H. Rease, Philadelphia, c1860.

Summary

Print shows a campaign banner for the Republican ticket. Oval bust portraits of the two candidates are enclosed in rustic bent-twig frames, intended perhaps to recall Lincoln's much-publicized backwoods origins. A rail fence appears above the portraits, draped with a banner with the motto, "Free Speech, Free Homes, Free Territory." An eagle stands on top of it, spreading his wings, surrounded by American flags. Below, between the portrait ovals, stand two American laborers flanking a shield marked "Protection to American Industry." On the left is a smith holding a hammer and standing before an anvil. On the right stands a woodman with his ax. The ax-head is embedded in a large, fallen tree. Behind the shield are several smokestacks and the sails of a ship. At the shield's base are two cornucopia.



America's Oddest Election

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**PRESIDENT, STEP. A. DOUGLAS,
VICE PRESIDENT, H. V. JOHNSON.**

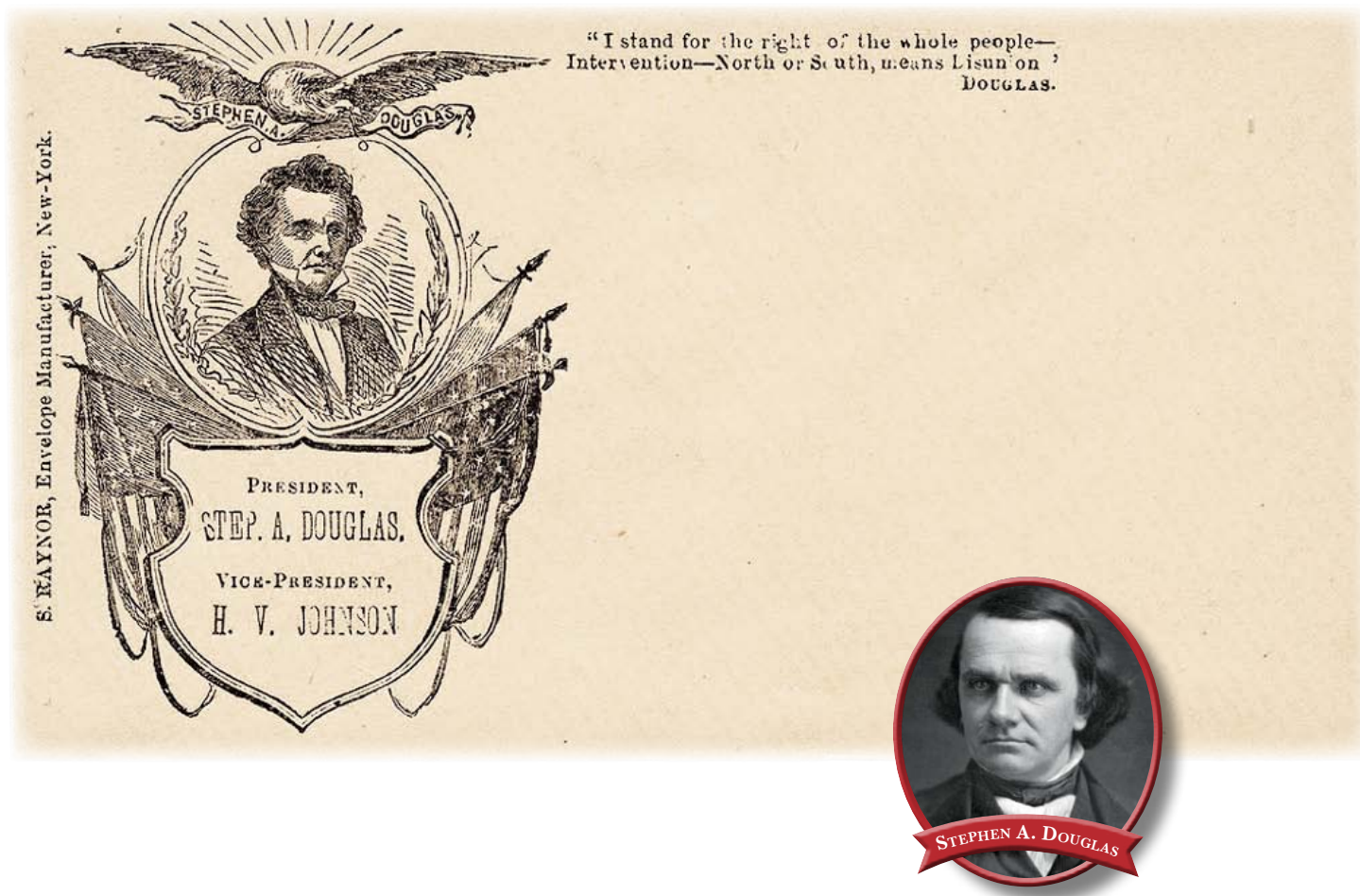
[Pictorial envelope]. Raynor, S., manufacturer, 1860.

Summary

Portrait of Stephen Douglas, surrounded by flags and eagle. Cream envelope with black ink. Image on left.

Text

“I stand for the right of the whole people—
Intervention—North or South, means Disunion.”
DOUGLAS.



America's Oddest Election

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IT APPEARS TO ME VERY SINGULAR THAT WE THREE SHOULD STRIKE
“FOUL” AND BE “PUT OUT” WHILE OLD ABE MADE SUCH A “GOOD LICK.”

Text

Figure 1 (John Bell): Speech Bubble Text: It appears to me very singular that we three should strike “foul” and be “put out” while old Abe made such a “good lick.”

Belt Text: Union Club | Bat Text: Fusion

Figure 2 (Stephen Douglas): Speech Bubble Text: That’s because he had that confounded rail to strike with, I thought our fusion would be a “short stop” to his career.

Belt Text: Little Giant | Bat Text: Non Intervention

Figure 3 (John Breckinridge): Speech Bubble Text: I guess I’d better leave for Kentucky for I smell something strong around here and begin to think that we are completely “skunk’d.”

Belt Text: Nat. Dem. Club | Bat Text: Slavery Extension

Figure 4 (Abraham Lincoln): Speech Bubble Text: Gentlemen, if any of you should ever take a hand in another match at this game, remember that you must have “a good bat” and strike a “fair ball” to make a “clean score” & a “home run.”

Belt Text: Wide Awake | Bat Text: Equal Rights and Free Territory



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<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003674574/>

AN HEIR TO THE THRONE, OR THE NEXT REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE.

New York : Published by Currier & Ives, c1860.

Summary

The Republicans' purported support of Negro rights is taken to an extreme here. Editor Horace Greeley (left) and candidate Abraham Lincoln (resting his elbow on a rail at right) stand on either side of a short black man holding a spear. The latter is the deformed African man recently featured at P.T. Barnum's Museum on Broadway as the "What-is-it." (A poster for this attraction appears on the wall behind.) Greeley says, "Gentlemen allow me to introduce to you, this illustrious individual in whom you will find combined, all the graces, and virtues of Black Republicanism, and whom we propose to run as our next Candidate for the Presidency." Lincoln muses, "How fortunate! that this intellectual and noble creature should have been discovered just at this time, to prove to the world the superiority of the Colored over the Anglo Saxon race, he will be a worthy successor to carry out the policy which I shall inaugurate." The black man wonders, "What, can dey be?"



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NATIONAL REPUBLICAN PLATFORM ADOPTED BY NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CONVENTION, HELD IN CHICAGO. MAY 17, 1860.

Chicago, Press & Tribune office [1860].

Text

Resolved, That we, the delegated representatives of the Republican electors of the United States, in Convention assembled, in discharge of the duty we owe to our constituents and our country, unite in the following declarations:



The Republican Party.

1. That the history of the nation during the last four years, has fully established the propriety and necessity of the organization and perpetuation of the Republican party, and that the causes which called it in {Omitted text, 1w} existence are permanent in their nature, and now, more than ever before, demand its peaceful and constitutional triumph.

Its Fundamental Principles.

2. That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Federal Constitution, "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the {Omitted text, 2w} that to secure these rights, governments are instituted {Omitted text, 2w} deriving their just powers {Omitted text, 1w} the preservation {Omitted text, 1w} and shall be preserved.

{Omitted text, 1w} Union.

3. That to the {Omitted text, 1w} the States, this nation owes its unprecedented increase of population, its surprising development of material resources, its rapid augmentation of wealth, its happiness at home and its honor abroad and we hold in abhorrence all schemes for Disunion, come from whatever source they may: And we congratulate the country that the Republican member of Congress has uttered or countenanced the threats of Disunion so often made by Democratic member? without {Omitted text, 1w} and with applause from their political associates; and we {Omitted text, 1w} those threats of Disunion, in case of a popular overthrow of their ascendancy as denying the vital principles of a free government, as an avowal of contemplated treason, which it is the imperative duty of an indignant People sternly to rebuke and forever silence.

State Sovereignty.

4. That the maintenance inviolate of the Rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depends; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

Sectionalism of the Democracy.

5. That the present Democratic Administration has far exceeded our worst apprehensions, in its measureless subserviency to the {Omitted text, 1w} of a sectional interest, as especially evinced in its desperate exertions to force the infamous Lecompton Constitution upon the protesting people of Kansas; in construing the personal relation

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Image: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbpe&fileName=rbpe01/rbpe0180010a/rbpe0180010a.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbpebib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbpe+0180010a\)\)&linkText=0](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbpe&fileName=rbpe01/rbpe0180010a/rbpe0180010a.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0180010a))&linkText=0)

America's Oddest Election

— CONTINUED —

between master and servant to involve an unqualified property in persons; in its attempted enforcement, everywhere, on land and sea, through the intervention of Congress and of the Federal Courts, of the extreme pretensions of a purely local interest; and in its general and unvarying abuse of power entrusted to it by a confiding people.

Its Extravagance and Corruption.

6. That the people justly view with alarm the reckless extravagance which pervades every department of the Federal Government; that a return to rigid economy and accountability is indispensable to arrest the systematic plunder of the public treasury by favored partisans; while the recent startling developments of frauds and corruptions at the Federal metropolis, show that an entire change of administration is imperatively demanded.



A Dangerous Political Heresy.

7. That the new dogma that the Constitution, of its own force, carries Slavery into any or all of the Territories of the United States, is a dangerous political heresy, at variance with the explicit provisions of that instrument itself, with contemporaneous exposition, and with legislative and judicial precedent; is revolutionary in its tendency, and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country.

Freedom, the Normal Condition of Territories.

8. That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of Freedom: That as our Republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that "no person should be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law," it becomes our duty, by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the Constitution, against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States.

The African Slave Trade.

9. That we brand the recent re-opening of the African Slave Trade, under the cover of our national flag, aided by perversions of judicial power, as a crime against humanity and a burning shame to our country and age; and we call upon Congress to take prompt and efficient measures for the total and final suppression of that execrable traffic.

Democratic Popular Sovereignty.

10. {Omitted text, 1w} the recent vetoes, by their Federal Governors of the sets of the Legislatures of Kansas and Nebraska, prohibiting Slavery in those Territories, we find a practical illustration of the boasted Democratic principle of Non-Intervention and Popular Sovereignty embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska, Bill and a demonstration of the deception and fraud involved therein.

Admission of Kansas.

11. That Kansas should, of right, be immediately admitted as

a {Omitted text, 1w} under the Constitution recently formed and adopted by her people, and accepted by the House of Representatives.

Encouragement of American Industry.

12. That, while providing revenue for the support of the general government by duties upon imports, sound policy requires such an adjustment of these imports as to encourage the development of the industrial interests of the whole country; and we commend that policy or national exchanges, which secures to the working men liberal wages, to agriculture remunerating prices, to mechanics and manufacturers an adequate reward for their skill, labor and enterprise, and to the nation commercial prosperity and independence.

Free Homesteads.

13. That we protest against any sale or alienation to others of the Public Lands held by actual settlers, and against any view of the Free Homestead policy which regards the settlers as paupers or suppliants for public bounty; and we demand the passage by Congress of the complete and satisfactory Homestead Measure which has already passed the House.

Rights of Citizenship.

14. That the Republican party is opposed to any {Omitted text, 1w} in our Naturalization Laws or any State Legislation by which {Omitted text, 2w} of citizenship hitherto accorded to {Omitted text, 1w} from {Omitted text, 1w} shall be abridged or impaired, and in favor of giving a full and {Omitted text, 1w} protection to the rights of all classes of {Omitted text, 3w} whether native or naturalized, both at home and abroad.

River and Harbor Improvements

15. The appropriations by Congress for River and Harbor Improvements of a National character, required for the accommodation and security of an existing commerce, are authorized by the Constitution, and justified by the obligation of Government to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

A Pacific Railroad.

16. That a Railroad to the Pacific Ocean is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country that the Federal Government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction; and that, as preliminary thereto, a daily overland Mail should be promptly established.

Co-operation Invited.

17. Finally, having thus set forth our distinctive principles and views, we invite the co-operations of all citizens, however differing on other questions, who substantially agree with us in their affiance and support.

For sale at the PRESS & TRIBUNE OFFICE, Chicago.—Price, 60 cents per 100.

America's Oddest Election

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dem1860.asp

DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM, JUNE 18, 1860.

Text

1. **Resolved**, That we, the Democracy of the Union in Convention assembled, hereby declare our affirmance of the resolutions unanimously adopted and declared as a platform of principles by the Democratic Convention at Cincinnati, in the year 1856, believing that Democratic principles are unchangeable in their nature, when applied to the same subject matters; and we recommend, as the only further resolutions, the following:

2. Inasmuch as difference of opinion exists in the Democratic party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a Territorial Legislature, and as to the powers and duties of Congress, under the Constitution of the United States, over the institution of slavery within the Territories,

Resolved, That the Democratic party will abide by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States upon these questions of Constitutional Law.

3. **Resolved**, That it is the duty of the United States to afford ample and complete protection to all its citizens, whether at home or abroad, and whether native or foreign born.

4. **Resolved**, That one of the necessities of the age, in a military, commercial, and postal point of view, is speedy communications between the Atlantic and Pacific States; and the Democratic party pledge such Constitutional Government aid as will insure the construction of a Railroad to the Pacific coast, at the earliest practicable period.

5. **Resolved**, That the Democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the Island of Cuba on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain.

6. **Resolved**, That the enactments of the State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, are hostile in character, subversive of the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

7. **Resolved**, That it is in accordance with the interpretation of the Cincinnati platform, that during the existence of the Territorial Governments the measure of restriction, whatever it may be, imposed by the Federal Constitution on the power of the Territorial Legislature over the subject of the domestic relations, as the same has been, or shall hereafter be finally determined by the Supreme Court of the United States, should be respected by all good citizens, and enforced with promptness and fidelity by every branch of the general government.

—June 18, 1860.



ST. ANDREW'S HALL, CHARLESTON, HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE WOOD DELEGATION AT CHARLESTON.—[FROM A SKETCH BY OUR OWN ARTIST.]



HIBERNIAN HALL, HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE NORTHWESTERN DELEGATION.—[FROM A SKETCH BY OUR OWN ARTIST.]



YATES HALL.—ONE HUNDRED AND NINE COTS FOR DELEGATES.—[FROM A SKETCH BY OUR OWN ARTIST.]



COMMITTEE-ROOM OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DELEGATION.—[FROM A SKETCH BY OUR OWN ARTIST.]

[South Carolina - Charleston - Democratic National Convention 1860. 4 scenes: St. Andrew's Hall, exterior; Hibernian Hall, exterior; Yates Hall, interior, sleeping hall full of cots; Committee room of the Massachusetts delegation]

America's Oddest Election

http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/union_or_secession/doc/rail_splitter

"THE LAST RACE OF THE RAIL-SPLITTER," BROADSIDE, CA. 1861

Broadside, 186- .L34 BOX, Special Collections, Library of Virginia.



THE LAST RACE OF THE RAIL-SPLITTER.

When Zerxes and when Cyrus led;
When Bonaparte and Washington,
They took the field, as it is said,
Not so King Lincoln, finds his fun.

Says Old Abram, as is he,
Soak'd with whiskey or with rum,
In the city safe I'll be,
And the bullets, I will shun.

When dying soldiers strew the plain,
In Washington he keeps his guard,
Far from the peril and the pain,
Prepar'd to run from Beauregard.

Says Old Abram, as is he,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
In the city safe I'll be,
And the bullets, I will shun.

But there's a race he'll likely take,
When Southern troops shall press him hard,
Some morning, when he early wakes,
And hears the guns of Beauregard.

Says Old Abram, at his tea,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
"In the city safe I'll be,"
In the morning, HE WILL RUN.

In that great race, he'll be the first,
And Northward streak his hurried way;
When Baltimore he cannot trust,
And Washington's too hot to stay.

Says Old Abram, as is he,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
Seward, we had better flee,
Take a drink and let us run.

Quick—out of bed—no time for pants;
Says he, from bullets we must run;
The shirts they fly—the linen flaunts—
The little dog laughs at the fun.

Says Old Abram, we will be,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
Seward, let's the bullets flee,
Take a drink and let us run.

As frightened rats, when houses burn,
Escape before the ruin falls,
So honest Abe, his tail will turn,
To save his skin from rifle balls.

Says Old Abram, as is he,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
Seward, we had better flee,
Take a drink, and let us run.

He was so scar'd that dreary night,*
When hidden like a cask or bail,
In railroad cars, from ev'ry sight,
He pass'd this city on the rail.

Said Old Abram, as is he,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
These city boys, are death to me,
'Tis safer hide and from them run.

The night he hid, and sent his wife,
Where dead next day she might be found,
And lose, on Central Road, her life,
Whilst hidden, he went dodging round.

Said Old Abram, as was he,
Soak'd with whiskey, or with rum,
My wife is very good, you see,
To die for me and let me run.

* It will not be forgotten that Lincoln, after his election, on his way to Washington, heard at Harrisburg, that a plan was laid to run the cars off, and kill him on the Northern Central Road, or in Baltimore; (a mere invention, when not a soul thought of hurting a hair on his head,) and to avoid the imaginary danger to himself, he slipped around in the night, in disguise, by the Philadelphia Road, and sent his wife and son by the cars, which were to be smashed up, to be killed in his place.

This undated broadside, highly critical of Abraham Lincoln, was probably published sometime late in 1861. The footnote refers to his secret passage through Baltimore late in February 1861 on his way to Washington to be inaugurated as president on March 4, 1861, but the second stanza also mentions Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard, who commanded Southern troops at the First Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861. Following that defeat of Union forces, civilians and soldiers fled back toward Washington. The verses also contain two references to United States Secretary of State William H. Seward.

The image at the top closely resembles woodcuts that appeared in advertisements that slaveowners placed in Southern newspapers seeking the return of runaway slaves, probably to reinforce Southern beliefs that Lincoln's administration was a threat to slavery.

See full text on next page.

America's Oddest Election

— CONTINUED —

"The Last Race of the Rail-Splitter" Text

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