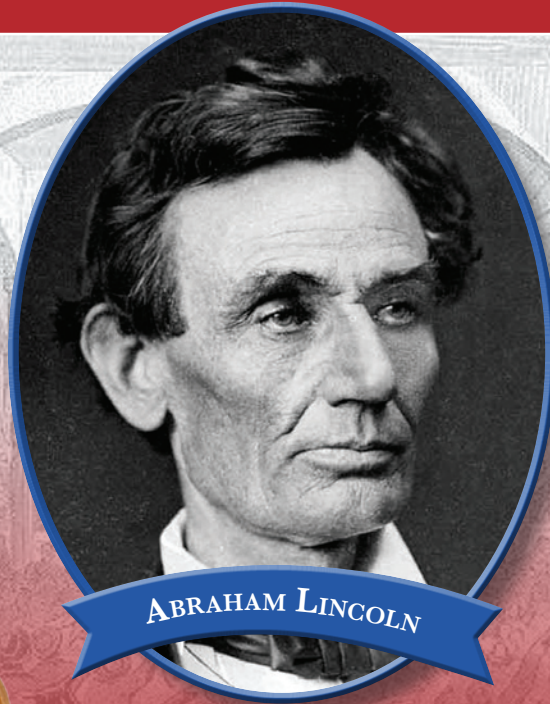


Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

CONSIDERED HIS MOST IMPORTANT SPEECH OTHER THAN THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS, LINCOLN'S COOPER UNION ADDRESS IS SAID TO HAVE PAVED THE WAY FOR HIS FUTURE PRESIDENCY.



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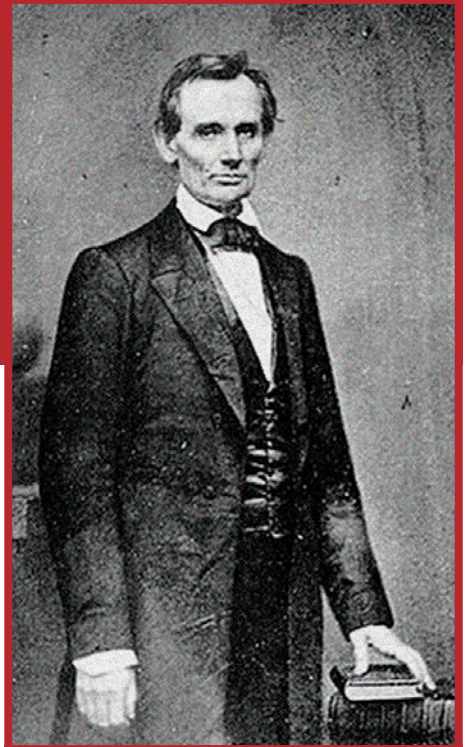
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Lincoln the Orator

BY HAROLD HOLZER

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www.americanheritage.com/content/lincoln-orator



Abraham Lincoln pictured February 27, 1860, the day of his famous Cooper Union speech.

“Had Lincoln not delivered such a triumphant address before the sophisticated and demanding audience that night, it is possible that he would not have been nominated, much less elected, to the presidency the following November.”

On February 27, 1860, Abraham Lincoln stood before a crowd of 1,500 at Cooper Union Hall in New York City. Until he had declared his candidacy for President of the United States, the former one-term Congressman had drawn little attention outside his home state of Illinois. Now the rail-thin prairie lawyer attracted a sizeable audience, including the “pick and flower of New York culture,” along with an army of journalists eager to record and reprint his words.

“Let us have faith that right makes might,” Lincoln challenged his listeners, “and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.” Here was no stump speech, but rather a powerful argument that extending slavery to new territories was not only wrong but also counter to the intent of the founding fathers. His delivery was eloquent, the argument carefully reasoned and fact-filled.

Had Lincoln not delivered such a triumphant address before the sophisticated and demanding audience that night, it is possible that he would not have been nominated, much less elected, to the presidency the following November. And had Lincoln not won the White House in 1860, the United States—or the countries it might

have fractured into—would probably look very different today.

How Lincoln crafted this brilliant and critical delivery has remained the topic of some debate over the years in part prompted by an interaction he had the following month. Lincoln had traveled from Springfield to Chicago to appear in what turned out to be his last big trial: the famous “sandbar case,” a complex civil dispute in which he represented his most important client, Illinois Central.

While in the city, Lincoln also agreed to sit for a wet-plaster life mask at the studio of sculptor Leonard Wells Volk. Chatting in the studio, their conversation turned to Lincoln’s nationally noticed appearance in New York a few weeks earlier. As Volk remembered it, Lincoln told him the astonishing fact “that he had arranged and composed this speech in his mind while going on the cars from Camden to Jersey City.”

By the time Volk published this revelation, almost as a postscript, in his engaging 1881 reminiscence of the sitting, Lincoln’s myth-worthy creative acumen and almost saintly self-effacement had emerged as crucial elements of the reigning image of the Great Emancipator.

Volk’s recollection about the Cooper

Union speech, clouded though it may have been by the passage of time, seemed well in keeping with the hagiography of the day. Besides, an orator who had supposedly been able to pronounce his masterful 1861 farewell to Springfield extemporaneously, or to create his greatest masterpiece on the back of an envelope while riding on a train to Gettysburg, surely could have written his Cooper Union address on a train in the few hours from Camden to Jersey City.

Of course, like the farewell address and Gettysburg legends, the Cooper Union story was entirely false, though one should not automatically exonerate Lincoln from the small crime of promulgating it. Lincoln cultivated his “modest man” image whenever it might serve: as presidential candidate, Republican nominee, president-elect, and chief executive. For the record, Lincoln delivered a reasonably cogent farewell speech in 1861 off the cuff, but then massaged it into a sublime masterpiece later at the urging of reporters. He wrote at least three drafts of the Gettysburg Address, 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.

Lincoln the Orator

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tested it out on at least one visitor, before deeming it finally ready for delivery. Few contemporaries knew these details. Thus it is not at all difficult to imagine his accepting a compliment about his recent triumph by protesting amiably that he had dashed it off at the last minute. Volk's version of Lincoln's creation of Cooper Union speech was particularly ironic, however, since Lincoln had never labored over an address as diligently, and over such an extended period, as he did to prepare for this engagement at New York.

Writing eight years later, Lincoln's longtime law partner, William H. Herndon, set the record straight: Lincoln had devoted an enormous amount of time to "careful preparation" of his lecture between his acceptance of the invitation and his journey east. "He searched through the dusty volumes of congressional proceedings in the State library, and dug deeply into political history. He was painstaking and thorough in the study of his subject."

His subject, of course, was slavery. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, then six years old, had supervised the Missouri Compromise, which had kept the lid on the smoldering slavery cauldron for more than 30 years. The Supreme Court's bitterly contested Dred Scott ruling—"a decision," not a "dictum," as Lincoln would later argue—had been rendered three years earlier. And it was only two years since the Lincoln-Douglas debates, at which Lincoln had carried his arguments against the expansion of slavery to new heights, his electoral defeat notwithstanding.

Such was the grave, brooding juncture of events when Lincoln came east. But from the moment he was asked to speak at Henry Ward Beecher's church in Brooklyn (a venue only later shifted to Cooper Union in Manhattan), he determined that his address there would be a political "lecture," not a stump speech. He would prove historically what he extension of slavery was not only wrong, but counter to the hopes and dreams of the founding fathers.



In Lincoln's Cooper Union Address, Lincoln argued that the Founding Fathers were not in support of slavery since they all signed the Declaration of Independence which says, "All men are equal".

And he would demonstrate moreover that recent efforts to nationalize slavery, like **Dred Scott v. Sandford**, were, as he first argued in 1857, "based on assumed historical facts which were not really true."

To construct his speech as a historical and political lecture kept faith with the spirit of the invitation, the integrity of the series of which his lecture was supposed to be a part, and the sacredness of the intended venue: Plymouth Church, an abolitionist shrine. Moreover it promised the chance to reinvigorate, and perhaps crown, Lincoln's bumpy career as a professional lecturer, which had seen more failures than successes and had embarrassed him before his friends. Finally, it offered him the opportunity to approach the wrenching issue of slavery from a new and challenging perspective: using the lessons and precedents of the American past.

It also called for inordinate toil. Unless we accept Herndon's account at face value, no one really knows precisely when the idea for a lecture on political history first gripped Lincoln. But once he settled on it, he realized that he would have to work terribly hard if he was to unearth the sources necessary to support his case.

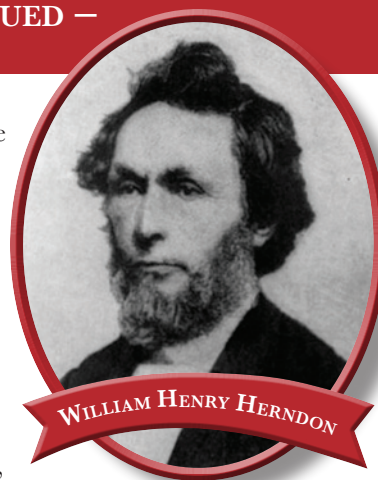
He employed no researchers to check references, no speechwriters to compose drafts. Lincoln wrote all of his orations himself, pen to paper, word by word. As his friend and former law partner Ward Hill Lamon noted, "no effort of his life cost him so much labor as this one."

A possible witness to those tense days was Henry Bascom Rankin, who claimed to have served as a young clerk in the Lincoln-Herndon office. Although he may have later exaggerated his professional connection, Rankin surely saw the pair and he recalled that "Herndon's patience was tried sorely at times" as Lincoln progressed "very slowly on the speech . . . loitering and cutting, as he thought, too laboriously" Census records show that Rankin was actually employed in early 1860 as a farmhand in nearby Petersburg, but it is certainly possible that he saw Lincoln in the capital from time to time, or heard from people about how the speech was prepared.

For three or four months, Rankin later testified, Lincoln worked assiduously at "writing and revising his great speech." He "spent most of his time, at first, in the study and arrangement of the historical facts he decided to use. These he collected

Lincoln the Orator

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or verified at the State Library” Lincoln also liked to talk and read aloud to gauge the reaction of potential audiences, and supposedly he held “frequent” discussions with Herndon “as to the historical facts and the arrangements of these in the speech.”

Lincoln might have stepped into the adjacent office of a fellow lawyer to go over one detail or another. Rankin, who insisted that he was “privileged to be present” on such occasions, seemed sure that Lincoln “devoted more time to the speech than any he ever delivered.” No one, not even verifiable eyewitnesses, ever contradicted him.

Whatever his access, Rankin was correct that Lincoln’s meticulous preparation demonstrated not only “the great grasp he had acquired in the discussion of political events,” but “his peculiar originality in moulding sentences and paragraphs.”

Going by contemporary accounts of his work habits, it is easy to imagine Lincoln grappling with his theme: bent over a table, pen in hand, squinting in the gaslight as he sat before piles of massive old volumes inside the handsome law library on the first floor of the state house across the square. Here, his head characteristically resting on his thumb, his index finger curved across his lips and up the side of his nose, his other fingers tightly clenched, he pored over law and history books with intense concentration. When engaged in writing, whether at his small desk in his bedroom at home, in the law library, or in his noisy office, he would set an elbow on the table, place his chin in his hand, and “maintain this position as immovable as a statue” for up to half an hour at a time, lost in thought.

Volk’s report of how casually Lincoln had brushed off the Cooper Union speech appalled Rankin, who charitably dismissed

the sculptor’s reminiscence as “an unfortunate lapse of memory.”

On this subject, Rankin and Herndon uncharacteristically found themselves in complete agreement—no small feat, considering that Rankin detested Herndon, and the feelings, if Herndon harbored any, were probably mutual. Subsequent generations of historians have occasionally questioned the accuracy of both men’s recollections, Rankin’s especially. In the final analysis, whether or not he knew the future president as well as he claimed, Rankin is certainly believable about the effort that the Cooper Union address caused Lincoln.

Another sculptor left far more believable testimony about Lincoln’s penchant for preparation. In late January and early February 1861, the president-elect began posing for Thomas Dow Jones, who had been commissioned by his Ohio patrons to execute a bust of Lincoln. The busy politician had little time to sit, but he agreed to visit Jones’s Springfield hotel room for an hour or so each morning, letting the sculptor work on a clay model while he opened his daily mail and did other paperwork.

At some of these sittings, Jones noticed Lincoln slowly writing on long sheets of lined paper. He discovered that the president-elect was drafting passages for some of the speeches he would be expected to make at his upcoming stopovers at Indianapolis and other cities on the journey to his inauguration. Although some eyewitnesses to these orations later criticized the talks for what they took as an all-too-

rambling spontaneity, in truth, Lincoln worked assiduously at his arguments for an orderly presidential transition.

Nearly three years later, Lincoln delivered yet another carefully prepared speech—at Gettysburg. A Massachusetts newspaper

noted that while “strong feelings and a large brain” had been its parents, “a little painstaking” had served as its “accoucheur. **Accoucheur** is a French word, archaic even in Lincoln’s day, that described the assistant to a doctor or a midwife at childbirth. The journalist who revived the word perceptively (if pompously) observed that even a brief speech like the Gettysburg Address required “work, work, work”—words Lincoln once used to advise an aspiring law student about his career.

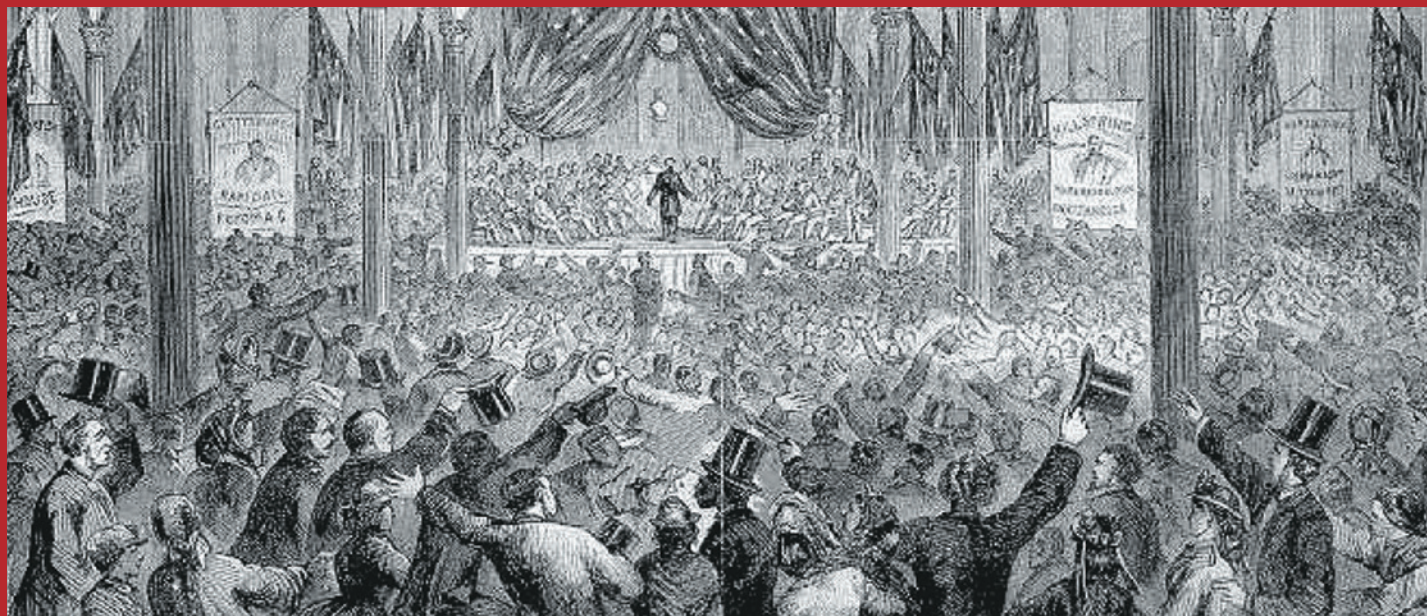
The Cooper Union speech had required much more than “a little painstaking” as its accoucheur. It had called for exhaustive scholarly investigation. And it required a distinctively cool and dispassionate approach—not quite reaching the depth of feeling later voiced at Gettysburg, but elevated beyond the kind of partisan invective that had characterized Lincoln’s earlier campaign speeches. As a singular summons requiring a once-in-a-lifetime approach, Cooper Union required—and elicited—from Lincoln burdensome research, cogent legalistic argument, and physical labor on a level he never before or again approached. That exhaustive research and solitary speechwriting became for Lincoln the rule, not the exception, marks him as one of the most gifted and dogged of all writer-presidents. ★

Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech That Made The Man

BY HAROLD HOLZER

AMERICAN HERITAGE | WINTER 2010 | VOLUME 59 | ISSUE 4

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/speech-made-man>



Cooper Union Hall

On the frigid and stormy evening of February 27, 1860, so the newspapers reported, Abraham Lincoln climbed onto the stage of the cavernous Great Hall of New York's newest college, Cooper Union, faced a room overflowing with people, and delivered the most important speech of his life.

Or so the myths maintained. In truth, a quarter of the hall's 1,800 plush seats remained empty for the evening's vigorously advertised political lecture. But not because of the weather—which was clear and balmy. Some eyewitnesses, and most historians since, would stubbornly report that a blizzard raged that night (“the profits were so small . . . because the night was so stormy,” insisted one organizer). But Lincoln supporters may have created that legend to explain away the empty seats. Chalk up the less-than-sold-out house to indifference and competition from other events and attractions.

Certainly the venue did not lack for appeal. Cooper Union, a \$600,000 brick wonder on Manhattan's Astor Place, had opened only months earlier to rave reviews. The **New York Times** praised the college's auditorium as “not equaled by any room of a similar nature in the city or the United States.” Dozens of gas-fed crystal chandeliers illuminated its mirrored walls and red-leather swivel chairs. The sole complaint (now, as then) was that cast-iron pillars obstructed clear views of the stage.

But was the orator of the evening worth seeing? The Republican politician from Illinois, veteran of the widely reported

Senate campaign debates with Stephen A. Douglas two years earlier, was making his first speech in the big city. Could he withstand the scrutiny of the fastest-talking, best-dressed, and most demanding audience on the planet? Other politicians had declined invitations to speak in the lecture series Lincoln was now bravely concluding. His decision to accept—to painstakingly research a lawyerly brief defending federal authority to regulate slavery, then undertake an exhausting journey from Springfield to New York—proved the savviest move of his political life. And it arguably changed history. Most in the crowd applauded when he appeared onstage that night and took his seat shortly before 8 p.m. Others gasped at the ungainly giant. “At first sight there was nothing impressive or imposing about him,” admitted one eyewitness. “His clothes hung awkwardly on his gaunt and giant frame; his face was of a dark pallor, without the slightest tinge of color; his seamed and rugged features bore the furrows of hardship and struggle. His deep-set eyes looked sad and anxious.”

The evening's master of ceremonies, erudite poet-editor William Cullen Bryant, worked hard to soothe the apprehension. “To secure your profoundest attention,” he pleaded, “I have only, my friends, to pronounce the name of”—and here he likely paused for full dramatic effect—“Abraham Lincoln of Illinois.”

With that, the speaker slowly unfolded himself from his chair, rose to his towering height, and shambled toward the lectern. To

Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech That Made The Man

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one alarmed onlooker, he appeared “rather unsteady in his gait.” Then, in that harsh, high-pitched trumpet tone with which he unavoidably launched his orations, he uttered his first public words in New York—in a discordant frontier twang that must have jolted every listener in the room: “Mr. **Cheerman** . . .”

At least that was what some onlookers remembered hearing that night. The following morning, newspaper reprints insisted that he began with a more expansive salutation: “Mr. President and Fellow-Citizens of New York.” On this point, as with so many other details of the event, much remains in dispute. Myth and memory have long obscured the Cooper Union address as thickly as the fog that had shrouded the city a few days before. All we know for sure is that, for the next two hours, Lincoln skewered Stephen Douglas, deftly allied the Republicans with the Founding Fathers, promised the South he meant no threat to slavery where it existed, and then insisted that slavery itself was unmistakably evil. For two hours, he held the crowd in the palms of his massive hands—taunting slavery expansionists at one moment, invoking Washington and Jefferson the next—and finally concluding in a soaring peroration that “right makes might,” to an avalanche of cheers and flying hats.

This much is certain: Had Abraham Lincoln failed at his or-die debut in New York, he would never have won his party’s presidential nomination three months later, not to mention election to the White House that November. Such was the impact of a triumph in the nation’s media capital. Had he stumbled, none of the challenges that roiled his presidency would ever have tested his iron will. To paraphrase his own later words, he would likely have “escaped history” altogether.

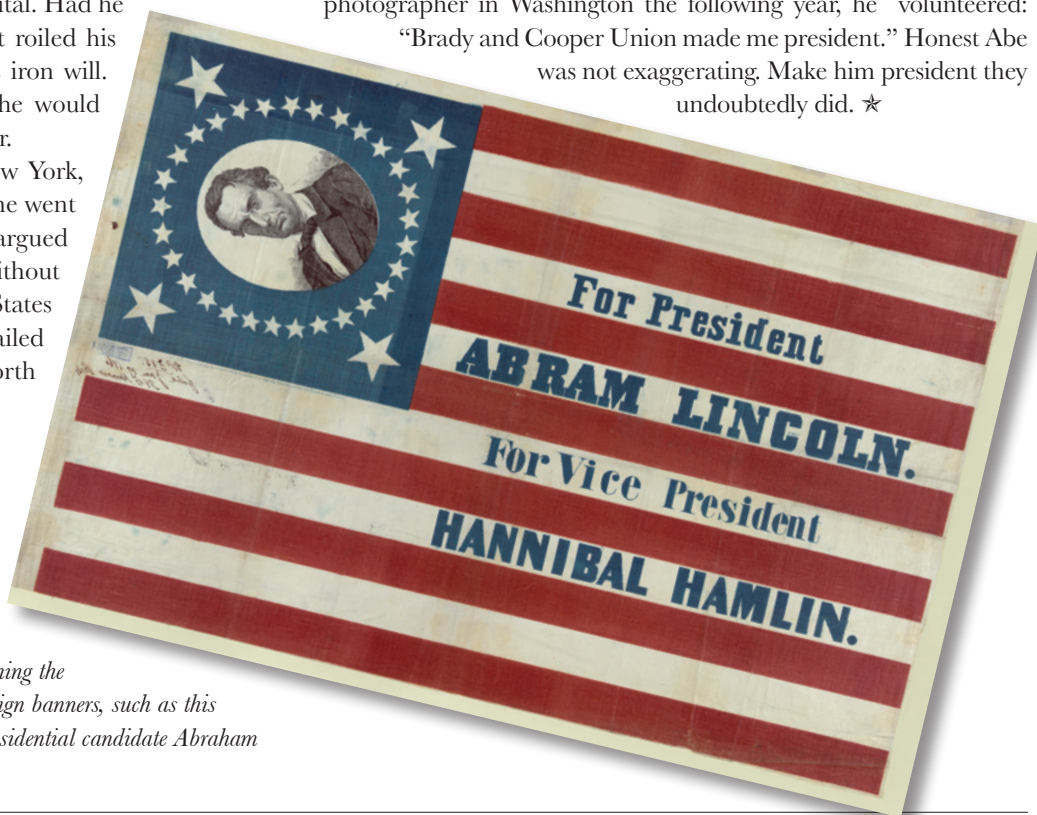
Moreover, had Lincoln failed in New York, few might recognize today the nation he went on to defend and rededicate. It can be argued that without Cooper Union, hence without Lincoln at the helm, the United States might be remembered today as a failed experiment that fractured into a North American Balkans.

Instead, Abraham Lincoln **did** triumph in New York. He delivered a learned, witty, and exquisitely reasoned address that electrified his elite audience and, more important, reverberated in newspapers and pamphlets alike until it reached tens of thousands of Republican voters across the North. He had arrived at Cooper Union a politician with more defeats than victories, but he departed politically reborn.

To be sure, the event did not inspire from Lincoln an oration on a rhetorical par with his Gettysburg Address or second inaugural address. Perhaps this is why the 7,700-word speech remains frequently mentioned yet seldom quoted. Nor did it actually persuade many local voters to join the Lincoln bandwagon. The truth is, Lincoln never won the hearts (or ballots) of overwhelmingly Democratic and intractably racist New York City. Yet the speech may have accomplished more than any other he ever gave. At the Cooper Union, Lincoln became more than a regional curiosity. He became a national leader.

As a bonus, Lincoln’s Cooper Union appearance also inspired the most important single visual record of his, or arguably any, American presidential campaign: the image-transfiguring Mathew Brady photograph made earlier that same day. Its subsequent reproduction and proliferation in prints, medallions, broadsides, and banners did as much to herald the “new” Abraham Lincoln as did reprints of the speech itself.

Supposedly, when Lincoln, now president-elect, encountered the photographer in Washington the following year, he volunteered: “Brady and Cooper Union made me president.” Honest Abe was not exaggerating. Make him president they undoubtedly did. ★



The Cooper Union speech galvanized support for Lincoln and contributed to his gaining the Party’s nomination for the Presidency. Campaign banners, such as this one to the left, were created for Republican presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln and running mate Hannibal Hamlin.

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

THE COOPER UNION ADDRESS, 1859

<http://203.197.81.56/Heritage-Education/node/237>

INTRODUCTION

This is the speech that launched Lincoln on the path to the presidency. In October 1859, Lincoln accepted an invitation to lecture at Henry Ward Beecher's church in Brooklyn, New York. His law partner, William Herndon, wrote, "No former effort in the line of speech-making had cost Lincoln so much time and thought as this one".

The speech provides a good example of how constitutional scholars of the time approached constitutional review. Lincoln examined the historical evidence for the positions of the 39 signers of the Constitution on questions concerning slavery, and found that a majority of at least 21 held that Congress had the power to prohibit slavery in the territories and new states formed out of the territories, and thus to not allow it to expand beyond the states in which it was already established. Therefore, the Republican Party position to oppose expansion of slavery but not disturb it in the South was merely a continuation of the path begun by the Founding Fathers, which should not give cause to

Southerners who had threatened to secede if a Republican was elected President.

Before Lincoln arrived in New York, the Young Men's Republican Union had assumed sponsorship of the speech and moved its location to the Cooper Union, the board of which included such members as Horace Greeley and William Cullen Bryant, who opposed the nomination of William Seward for president by the upcoming Republican Convention. Lincoln had not then announced his candidacy, but was the subject of talk as a contender for higher office, following his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in his unsuccessful campaign to be elected to the U.S. senate from Illinois in the 1858 election, and the prospect of hearing a rising leader attracted a capacity crowd of 1,500 New Yorkers. The speech was widely reprinted in newspapers across the country, and provided the impetus to a movement to nominate Lincoln as the Republican presidential candidate. ★

(<http://www.constitution.org/csa/lincoln/cooper.htm>)

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW CITIZENS OF NEW YORK:

The facts with which I shall deal this evening are mainly old and familiar; nor is there anything new in the general use I shall make of them. If there shall be any novelty, it will be in the mode of presenting the facts, and the inferences and observations following that presentation.

In his speech last autumn, at Columbus, Ohio, as reported in "The New-York Times," Senator Douglas said:

"Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now."

I fully indorse this, and I adopt it as a text for this discourse. I do adopt it because it furnishes a precise and an agreed starting point for a discussion between Republicans and that wing of the Democracy headed by Senator Douglas. It simply leaves the inquiry: "What was the understanding those fathers had of the question mentioned?"

What is the frame of government under which we live?

The answer must be: "The Constitution of the United States." That Constitution consists of the original, framed in 1787, (and under which the present government first went into operation,) and twelve subsequently framed amendments, the first ten of which were framed in 1789.

Who were our fathers that framed the Constitution? I suppose the "thirty-nine" who signed the original instrument may be fairly called our fathers who framed that part of the present Government. It is almost exactly true to say they framed it, and it is altogether true to say they fairly represented the opinion and sentiment of the whole nation at that time. Their names, being familiar to nearly all, and accessible to quite all, need not now be repeated.

I take these "thirty-nine," for the present, as being "our fathers who framed the Government under which we live."

What is the question which, according to the text, those fathers understood "just as well, and even better than we do now?"

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

THE COOPER UNION ADDRESS, 1859

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It is this: Does the proper division of local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, forbid our Federal Government to control as to slavery in our Federal Territories?

Upon this, Senator Douglas holds the affirmative, and Republicans the negative. This affirmation and denial form an issue; and this issue—this question—is precisely what the text declares our fathers understood “better than we.”

Let us now inquire whether the “thirty-nine,” or any of them, ever acted upon this question; and if they did, how they acted upon it—how they expressed that better understanding?

In 1784, three years before the Constitution—the United States then owning the Northwestern Territory, and no other, the Congress of the Confederation had before them the question of prohibiting slavery in that Territory; and four of the “thirty-nine” who afterward framed the Constitution, were in that Congress, and voted on that question. Of these, Roger Sherman, Thomas Mifflin, and Hugh Williamson voted for the prohibition, thus showing that, in their understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything else, properly forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in federal territory. The other of the four—James M’Henry—voted against the prohibition, showing that, for some cause, he thought it improper to vote for it.

In 1787, still before the Constitution, but while the Convention was in session framing it, and while the Northwestern Territory still was the only territory owned by the United States, the same question of prohibiting slavery in the territory again came before the Congress of the Confederation; and two more of the “thirty-nine” who afterward signed the Constitution, were in that Congress, and voted on the question. They were William Blount and William Few; and they both voted for the prohibition—thus showing that, in their understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything else, properly forbids the Federal Government to control as to slavery in Federal territory. This time the prohibition became a law, being part of what is now well known as the Ordinance of ‘87.

The question of federal control of slavery in the territories, seems not to have been directly before the Convention which

framed the original Constitution; and hence it is not recorded that the “thirty-nine,” or any of them, while engaged on that instrument, expressed any opinion on that precise question.

In 1789, by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution, an act was passed to enforce the Ordinance of ‘87, including the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory. The bill for this act was reported by one of the “thirty-nine,” Thomas Fitzsimmons, then a member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. It went through all its stages without a word of opposition, and finally passed both branches without yeas and nays, which is equivalent to a unanimous passage. In this Congress there were sixteen of the thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution. They were John Langdon, Nicholas Gilman, Wm. S.

Johnson, Roger Sherman, Robert Morris, Thos. Fitzsimmons, William Few, Abraham Baldwin, Rufus King, William Paterson, George Clymer, Richard Bassett, George Read, Pierce Butler, Daniel Carroll, James Madison.

This shows that, in their understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor

anything in the Constitution, properly forbade Congress to prohibit slavery in the federal territory; else both their fidelity to correct principle, and their oath to support the Constitution, would have constrained them to oppose the prohibition.

Again, George Washington, another of the “thirty-nine,” was then President of the United States, and, as such approved and signed the bill; thus completing its validity as a law, and thus showing that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government, to control as to slavery in federal territory.

No great while after the adoption of the original Constitution, North Carolina ceded to the Federal Government the country now constituting the State of Tennessee; and a few years later Georgia ceded that which now constitutes the States of Mississippi and Alabama. In both deeds of cession it was made a condition by the ceding States that the Federal Government should not prohibit slavery in the ceded territory. Besides this, slavery was then actually in the ceded country. Under these circumstances, Congress, on taking charge of these countries, did not absolutely prohibit slavery within them. But

NO LINE DIVIDING LOCAL
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Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

THE COOPER UNION ADDRESS, 1859

— CONTINUED —

they did interfere with it—take control of it—even there, to a certain extent. In 1798, Congress organized the Territory of Mississippi. In the act of organization, they prohibited the bringing of slaves into the Territory, from any place without the United States, by fine, and giving freedom to slaves so bought. This act passed both branches of Congress without yeas and nays. In that Congress were three of the “thirty-nine” who framed the original Constitution. They were John Langdon, George Read and Abraham Baldwin. They all, probably, voted for it. Certainly they would have placed their opposition to it upon record, if, in their understanding, any line dividing local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, properly forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in federal territory.

In 1803, the Federal Government purchased the Louisiana country. Our former territorial acquisitions came from certain of our own States; but this Louisiana country was acquired from a foreign nation. In 1804, Congress gave a territorial organization to that part of it

which now constitutes the State of Louisiana. New Orleans, lying within that part, was an old and comparatively large city. There were other considerable towns and settlements, and slavery was extensively and thoroughly intermingled with the people. Congress did not, in the Territorial Act, prohibit slavery; but they did interfere with it—take control of it—in a more marked and extensive way than they did in the case of Mississippi. The substance of the provision therein made, in relation to slaves, was:

First. That no slave should be imported into the territory from foreign parts.

Second. That no slave should be carried into it who had been imported into the United States since the first day of May, 1798.

Third. That no slave should be carried into it, except by the owner, and for his own use as a settler; the penalty in all the cases being a fine upon the violator of the law, and freedom to the slave.

This act also was passed without yeas and nays. In the Congress which passed it, there were two of the “thirty-nine.” They were Abraham Baldwin and Jonathan Dayton. As stated in the case of Mississippi, it is probable they both voted for it. They would not have allowed it to pass without

recording their opposition to it, if, in their understanding, it violated either the line properly dividing local from federal authority, or any provision of the Constitution.

In 1819-20, came and passed the Missouri question. Many votes were taken, by yeas and nays, in both branches of Congress, upon the various phases of the general question. Two of the “thirty-nine”—Rufus King and Charles Pinckney—were members of that Congress. Mr. King steadily voted for slavery prohibition and against all compromises, while Mr. Pinckney as steadily voted against slavery prohibition and against all compromises. By this, Mr. King showed that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, was

violated by Congress prohibiting slavery in federal territory; while Mr. Pinckney, by his votes, showed that, in his understanding, there was some sufficient reason for opposing such prohibition in that case.

The cases I have mentioned are the only acts of the “thirty-nine,” or of any of them, upon

the direct issue, which I have been able to discover.

To enumerate the persons who thus acted, as being four in 1784, two in 1787, seventeen in 1789, three in 1798, two in 1804, and two in 1819-20—there would be thirty of them. But this would be counting John Langdon, Roger Sherman, William Few, Rufus King, and George Read each twice, and Abraham Baldwin, three times. The true number of those of the “thirty-nine” whom I have shown to have acted upon the question, which, by the text, they understood better than we, is twenty-three, leaving sixteen not shown to have acted upon it in any way.

Here, then, we have twenty-three out of our thirty-nine fathers “who framed the government under which we live,” who have, upon their official responsibility and their corporal oaths, acted upon the very question which the text affirms they “understood just as well, and even better than we do now;” and twenty-one of them—a clear majority of the whole “thirty-nine”—so acting upon it as to make them guilty of gross political impropriety and willful perjury, if, in their understanding, any proper division between local and federal authority, or anything in the Constitution they had

CONGRESS DID NOT, IN THE
TERRITORIAL ACT, PROHIBIT
SLAVERY; BUT THEY DID INTERFERE
WITH IT—TAKE CONTROL OF IT—
IN A MORE MARKED AND
EXTENSIVE WAY

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made themselves, and sworn to support, forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. Thus the twenty-one acted; and, as actions speak louder than words, so actions, under such responsibility, speak still louder.

Two of the twenty-three voted against Congressional prohibition of slavery in the federal territories, in the instances in which they acted upon the question. But for what reasons they so voted is not known. They may have done so because they thought a proper division of local from federal authority, or some provision or principle of the Constitution, stood in the way; or they may, without any such question, have voted against the prohibition, on what appeared to them to be sufficient grounds of expediency. No one who has sworn to support the Constitution can conscientiously vote for what he understands to be an unconstitutional measure, however expedient he may think it; but one may and ought to vote against a measure which he deems constitutional, if, at the same time, he deems it inexpedient. It, therefore, would be unsafe to set down even the two who voted against the prohibition, as having done so because, in their understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in federal territory.

The remaining sixteen of the “thirty-nine,” so far as I have discovered, have left no record of their understanding upon the direct question of federal control of slavery in the federal territories. But there is much reason to believe that their understanding upon that question would not have appeared different from that of their twenty-three compeers, had it been manifested at all.

For the purpose of adhering rigidly to the text, I have purposely omitted whatever understanding may have been manifested by any person, however distinguished, other than the thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution; and, for the same reason, I have also omitted whatever understanding may have been manifested by any of the “thirty-nine” even, on any other phase of the general question of slavery. If we should look into their acts and declarations on those other phases, as the foreign slave trade, and the morality and policy of slavery generally, it would

appear to us that on the direct question of federal control of slavery in federal territories, the sixteen, if they had acted at all, would probably have acted just as the twenty-three did. Among that sixteen were several of the most noted anti-slavery men of those times—as Dr. Franklin, Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris—while there was not one now known to have been otherwise, unless it may be John Rutledge, of South Carolina.

The sum of the whole is, that of our thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution, twenty-one—a clear majority of the whole—certainly understood that no proper division of local from federal authority, nor any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control slavery in the federal territories; while all the rest probably had the same understanding. Such, unquestionably, was the understanding of our fathers who framed the original Constitution; and the text affirms that they understood the question “better than we.”

But, so far, I have been considering the understanding of the question manifested by the

framers of the original Constitution. In and by the original instrument, a mode was provided for amending it; and, as I have already stated, the present frame of “the Government under which we live” consists of that original, and twelve amendatory articles framed and adopted since. Those who now insist that federal control of slavery in federal territories violates the Constitution, point us to the provisions which they suppose it thus violates; and, as I understand, that all fix upon provisions in these amendatory articles, and not in the original instrument. The Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott case, plant themselves upon the fifth amendment, which provides that no person shall be deprived of “life, liberty or property without due process of law;” while Senator Douglas and his peculiar adherents plant themselves upon the tenth amendment, providing that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution” “are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Now, it so happens that these amendments were framed by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution—the identical Congress which passed the act already mentioned, enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern

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Territory. Not only was it the same Congress, but they were the identical, same individual men who, at the same session, and at the same time within the session, had under consideration, and in progress toward maturity, these Constitutional amendments, and this act prohibiting slavery in all the territory the nation then owned. The Constitutional amendments were introduced before, and passed after the act enforcing the Ordinance of '87; so that, during the whole pendency of the act to enforce the Ordinance, the Constitutional amendments were also pending.

The seventy-six members of that Congress, including sixteen of the framers of the original Constitution, as before stated, were pre-eminently our fathers who framed that part of “the Government under which we live,” which is now claimed as forbidding the Federal Government to control slavery in the federal territories.

Is it not a little presumptuous in any one at this day to affirm that the two things which that Congress deliberately framed, and carried to maturity at the same time, are absolutely inconsistent with each other? And does not such affirmation become impudently absurd when coupled with the other affirmation from the same mouth, that those who did the two things, alleged to be inconsistent, understood whether they really were inconsistent better than we—better than he who affirms that they are inconsistent?

It is surely safe to assume that the thirty-nine framers of the original Constitution, and the seventy-six members of the Congress which framed the amendments thereto, taken together, do certainly include those who may be fairly called “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live.” And so assuming, I defy any man to show that any one of them ever, in his whole life, declared that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. I go a step further. I defy any one to show that any living man in the whole world ever did, prior to the beginning of the present century, (and I might almost say prior to the beginning of the last half of the present century,) declare that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the

Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. To those who now so declare, I give, not only “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live,” but with them all other living men within the century in which it was framed, among whom to search, and they shall not be able to find the evidence of a single man agreeing with them.

Now, and here, let me guard a little against being misunderstood. I do not mean to say we are bound to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did. To do so, would be to discard all the lights of current experience—to reject all progress—all improvement. What I do say is, that if we would supplant the opinions and policy of our fathers in any case, we should do so upon evidence so conclusive, and

argument so clear, that even their great authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand; and most surely not in a case whereof we ourselves declare they understood the question better than we.

If any man at this day sincerely believes that a proper division of local from federal

authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbids the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories, he is right to say so, and to enforce his position by all truthful evidence and fair argument which he can. But he has no right to mislead others, who have less access to history, and less leisure to study it, into the false belief that “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live” were of the same opinion—thus substituting falsehood and deception for truthful evidence and fair argument. If any man at this day sincerely believes “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live,” used and applied principles, in other cases, which ought to have led them to understand that a proper division of local from federal authority or some part of the Constitution, forbids the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories, he is right to say so. But he should, at the same time, brave the responsibility of declaring that, in his opinion, he understands their principles better than they did themselves; and especially should he not shirk that responsibility by asserting that they “understood the question just as well, and even better, than we do now.”

NO PERSON SHALL BE
DEPRIVED OF LIFE, LIBERTY OR
PROPERTY WITHOUT DUE
PROCESS OF LAW

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But enough! Let all who believe that “our fathers, who framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now,” speak as they spoke, and act as they acted upon it. This is all Republicans ask—all Republicans desire—in relation to slavery. As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked, as an evil not to be extended, but to be tolerated and protected only because of and so far as its actual presence among us makes that toleration and protection a necessity. Let all the guarantees those fathers gave it, be, not grudgingly, but fully and fairly, maintained. For this Republicans contend, and with this, so far as I know or believe, they will be content.

And now, if they would listen—as I suppose they will not—I would address a few words to the Southern people.

I would say to them:—You consider yourselves a reasonable and a just people; and I consider that in the general qualities of reason and justice you are not inferior to any other people. Still, when you speak of us Republicans, you do so only

to denounce us a reptiles, or, at the best, as no better than outlaws. You will grant a hearing to pirates or murderers, but nothing like it to “Black Republicans.” In all your contentions with one another, each of you deems an unconditional condemnation of “Black Republicanism” as the first thing to be attended to. Indeed, such condemnation of us seems to be an indispensable prerequisite—license, so to speak—among you to be admitted or permitted to speak at all. Now, can you, or not, be prevailed upon to pause and to consider whether this is quite just to us, or even to yourselves? Bring forward your charges and specifications, and then be patient long enough to hear us deny or justify.

You say we are sectional. We deny it. That makes an issue; and the burden of proof is upon you. You produce your proof; and what is it? Why, that our party has no existence in your section—gets no votes in your section. The fact is substantially true; but does it prove the issue? If it does, then in case we should, without change of principle, begin to get votes in your section, we should thereby cease to be sectional. You cannot escape this conclusion; and yet, are you willing to abide by it? If you are, you will probably soon find that

we have ceased to be sectional, for we shall get votes in your section this very year. You will then begin to discover, as the truth plainly is, that your proof does not touch the issue. The fact that we get no votes in your section, is a fact of your making, and not of ours. And if there be fault in that fact, that fault is primarily yours, and remains until you show that we repel you by some wrong principle or practice. If we do repel you by any wrong principle or practice, the fault is ours; but this brings you to where you ought to have started—to a discussion of the right or wrong of our principle. If our principle, put in practice, would wrong your section for the benefit of ours, or for any other object, then our principle, and we with it, are sectional, and are justly opposed and

denounced as such. Meet us, then, on the question of whether our principle, put in practice, would wrong your section; and so meet it as if it were possible that something may be said on our side. Do you accept the challenge? No! Then you really believe that the principle which “our fathers who framed the Government

under which we live” thought so clearly right as to adopt it, and indorse it again and again, upon their official oaths, is in fact so clearly wrong as to demand your condemnation without a moment’s consideration.

Some of you delight to flaunt in our faces the warning against sectional parties given by Washington in his Farewell Address. Less than eight years before Washington gave that warning, he had, as President of the United States, approved and signed an act of Congress, enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory, which act embodied the policy of the Government upon that subject up to and at the very moment he penned that warning; and about one year after he penned it, he wrote LaFayette that he considered that prohibition a wise measure, expressing in the same connection his hope that we should at some time have a confederacy of free States.

Bearing this in mind, and seeing that sectionalism has since arisen upon this same subject, is that warning a weapon in your hands against us, or in our hands against you? Could Washington himself speak, would he cast the blame of that sectionalism upon us, who sustain his policy, or upon you who

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repudiate it? We respect that warning of Washington, and we commend it to you, together with his example pointing to the right application of it.

But you say you are conservative—eminently conservative—while we are revolutionary, destructive, or something of the sort. What is conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried? We stick to, contend for, the identical old policy on the point in controversy which was adopted by “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live;” while you with one accord reject, and scout, and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new. True, you disagree among yourselves as to what that substitute shall be. You are divided on new propositions and plans, but you are unanimous in rejecting and denouncing the old policy of the fathers. Some of you are for reviving the foreign slave trade; some for a Congressional Slave-Code for the Territories; some for Congress forbidding the Territories to prohibit Slavery within their limits; some for maintaining Slavery in the Territories through the judiciary; some for the “gur-reat pur-rinciple” that “if one man would enslave another, no third man should object,” fantastically called “Popular Sovereignty;” but never a man among you is in favor of federal prohibition of slavery in federal territories, according to the practice of “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live.” Not one of all your various plans can show a precedent or an advocate in the century within which our Government originated. Consider, then, whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge or destructiveness against us, are based on the most clear and stable foundations.

Again, you say we have made the slavery question more prominent than it formerly was. We deny it. We admit that it is more prominent, but we deny that we made it so. It was not we, but you, who discarded the old policy of the fathers. We resisted, and still resist, your innovation; and thence comes the greater prominence of the question. Would you have that question reduced to its former proportions? Go back to that old policy. What has been will be again, under the same conditions. If you would have the peace of the old times, readopt the precepts and policy of the old times.

THIS BRINGS YOU TO WHERE
YOU OUGHT TO HAVE
STARTED—TO A DISCUSSION
OF THE RIGHT OR WRONG
OF OUR PRINCIPLE.

You charge that we stir up insurrections among your slaves. We deny it; and what is your proof? Harper’s Ferry! John Brown!! John Brown was no Republican; and you have failed to implicate a single Republican in his Harper’s Ferry enterprise. If any member of our party is guilty in that matter, you know it or you do not know it. If you do know it, you are inexcusable for not designating the man and proving the fact. If you do not know it, you are inexcusable for asserting it, and especially for persisting in the assertion after you have tried and failed to make the proof. You need to be told that persisting in a charge which one does not know to be true, is simply malicious slander.

Some of you admit that no Republican designedly aided or encouraged the Harper’s Ferry affair, but still insist that

our doctrines and declarations necessarily lead to such results. We do not believe it. We know we hold to no doctrine, and make no declaration, which were not held to and made by “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live.” You never dealt fairly by us in relation to this affair. When it occurred,

some important State elections were near at hand, and you were in evident glee with the belief that, by charging the blame upon us, you could get an advantage of us in those elections. The elections came, and your expectations were not quite fulfilled. Every Republican man knew that, as to himself at least, your charge was a slander, and he was not much inclined by it to cast his vote in your favor. Republican doctrines and declarations are accompanied with a continual protest against any interference whatever with your slaves, or with you about your slaves. Surely, this does not encourage them to revolt. True, we do, in common with “our fathers, who framed the Government under which we live,” declare our belief that slavery is wrong; but the slaves do not hear us declare even this. For anything we say or do, the slaves would scarcely know there is a Republican party. I believe they would not, in fact, generally know it but for your misrepresentations of us, in their hearing. In your political contests among yourselves, each faction charges the other with sympathy with Black Republicanism; and then, to give point to the charge, defines Black Republicanism to simply be insurrection, blood and thunder among the slaves.

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Slave insurrections are no more common now than they were before the Republican party was organized. What induced the Southampton insurrection, twenty-eight years ago, in which, at least three times as many lives were lost as at Harper's Ferry? You can scarcely stretch your very elastic fancy to the conclusion that Southampton was "got up by Black Republicanism." In the present state of things in the United States, I do not think a general, or even a very extensive slave insurrection is possible. The indispensable concert of action cannot be attained. The slaves have no means of rapid communication; nor can incendiary freemen, black or white, supply it. The explosive materials are everywhere in parcels; but there neither are, nor can be supplied, the indispensable connecting trains.

Much is said by Southern people about the affection of slaves for their masters and mistresses; and a part of it, at least, is true. A plot for an uprising could scarcely be devised and communicated to twenty individuals before some one of them, to save the life of a favorite master or mistress, would divulge it. This is the rule; and the slave revolution in Hayti was not an exception to it, but a case occurring under peculiar circumstances. The gunpowder plot of British history, though not connected with slaves, was more in point. In that case, only about twenty were admitted to the secret; and yet one of them, in his anxiety to save a friend, betrayed the plot to that friend, and, by consequence, averted the calamity. Occasional poisonings from the kitchen, and open or stealthy assassinations in the field, and local revolts extending to a score or so, will continue to occur as the natural results of slavery; but no general insurrection of slaves, as I think, can happen in this country for a long time. Whoever much fears, or much hopes for such an event, will be alike disappointed.

In the language of Mr. Jefferson, uttered many years ago, "It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation, and deportation, peaceably, and in such slow degrees, as that the evil will wear off insensibly; and their places be, *pari passu*, filled up by free white laborers. If, on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up."

Mr. Jefferson did not mean to say, nor do I, that the power of emancipation is in the Federal Government. He spoke of Virginia; and, as to the power of emancipation, I speak of the slaveholding States only. The Federal Government, however, as we insist, has the power of restraining the extension of the institution—the power to insure that a slave insurrection shall never occur on any American soil which is now free from slavery.

John Brown's effort was peculiar. It was not a slave insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves, in which the slaves refused to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts, related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution. Orsini's attempt on Louis Napoleon, and John Brown's attempt at Harper's Ferry were, in their philosophy, precisely the same. The eagerness to cast blame on old England in the one case, and on New England in the other, does not disprove the sameness of the two things.

And how much would it avail you, if you could, by the use of John Brown, Helper's Book, and the like, break up the Republican organization? Human action can be modified to some extent, but human nature cannot be changed. There is a judgment and a feeling against slavery in this nation, which cast at least a million and a half of votes. You cannot destroy that judgment and feeling—that sentiment—by breaking up the political organization which rallies around it. You can scarcely scatter and disperse an army which has been formed into order in the face of your heaviest fire; but if you could, how much would you gain by forcing the sentiment which created it out of the peaceful channel of the ballot-box, into some other channel? What would that other channel probably be? Would the number of John Browns be lessened or enlarged by the operation?

But you will break up the Union rather than submit to a denial of your Constitutional rights.

WE KNOW WE HOLD TO
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That has a somewhat reckless sound; but it would be palliated, if not fully justified, were we proposing, by the mere force of numbers, to deprive you of some right, plainly written down in the Constitution. But we are proposing no such thing.

When you make these declarations, you have a specific and well-understood allusion to an assumed Constitutional right of yours, to take slaves into the federal territories, and to hold them there as property. But no such right is specifically written in the Constitution. That instrument is literally silent about any such right. We, on the contrary, deny that such a right has any existence in the Constitution, even by implication.

Your purpose, then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the Government, unless you be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please, on all points in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events.

This, plainly stated, is your language. Perhaps you will say the Supreme Court has decided the disputed Constitutional question in your favor. Not quite so. But waiving the lawyer's distinction between dictum and decision, the Court have decided the question for you in a sort of way. The Court have substantially said, it is your Constitutional right to take slaves into the federal

territories, and to hold them there as property. When I say the decision was made in a sort of way, I mean it was made in a divided Court, by a bare majority of the Judges, and they not quite agreeing with one another in the reasons for making it; that it is so made as that its avowed supporters disagree with one another about its meaning, and that it was mainly based upon a mistaken statement of fact—the statement in the opinion that “the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution.”

An inspection of the Constitution will show that the right of property in a slave is not “distinctly and expressly affirmed” in it. Bear in mind, the Judges do not pledge their judicial opinion that such right is impliedly affirmed in the Constitution; but they pledge their veracity that it is “distinctly and expressly” affirmed there—“distinctly,” that is, not mingled with anything else—“expressly,” that is, in words meaning just that, without the aid of any inference, and susceptible of no other meaning.

If they had only pledged their judicial opinion that such right is affirmed in the instrument by implication, it would be open to others to show that neither the word “slave” nor “slavery” is to be found in the Constitution, nor the word “property” even, in any connection with language alluding to the things slave, or slavery; and that wherever in that instrument the slave is alluded to, he is called a “person;”—and wherever his master's legal right in relation to him is alluded to, it is spoken of as “service or labor which may be due,”—as a debt payable in service or labor. Also, it would be open to show, by contemporaneous history, that this mode of alluding to slaves and slavery, instead of speaking of them, was employed on purpose to exclude from the Constitution the idea that there could be property in man.

To show all this, is easy and certain.

When this obvious mistake of the Judges shall be brought to their notice, is it not reasonable to expect that they will withdraw the mistaken statement, and reconsider the conclusion based upon it?

And then it is to be remembered that “our fathers, who framed the Government under which we live”—the men who made the Constitution—decided this same Constitutional question in our favor, long ago—decided

it without division among themselves, when making the decision; without division among themselves about the meaning of it after it was made, and, so far as any evidence is left, without basing it upon any mistaken statement of facts.

Under all these circumstances, do you really feel yourselves justified to break up this Government unless such a court decision as yours is, shall be at once submitted to as a conclusive and final rule of political action? But you will not abide the election of a Republican president! In that supposed event, you say, you will destroy the Union; and then, you say, the great crime of having destroyed it will be upon us! That is cool. A highwayman holds a pistol to my ear, and mutters through his teeth, “Stand and deliver, or I shall kill you, and then you will be a murderer!”

To be sure, what the robber demanded of me—my money—was my own; and I had a clear right to keep it; but it was no more my own than my vote is my own; and the threat of death to me, to extort my money, and the threat

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of destruction to the Union, to extort my vote, can scarcely be distinguished in principle.

A few words now to Republicans. It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great Confederacy shall be at peace, and in harmony, one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can. Judging by all they say and do, and by the subject and nature of their controversy with us, let us determine, if we can, what will satisfy them.

Will they be satisfied if the Territories be unconditionally surrendered to them? We know they will not. In all their present complaints against us, the Territories are scarcely mentioned. Invasions and insurrections are the rage now. Will it satisfy them, if, in the future, we have nothing to do with invasions and insurrections? We know it will not. We so know, because we know we never had anything to do with invasions and insurrections; and yet this total abstaining does not exempt us from the charge and the denunciation.

The question recurs, what will satisfy them? Simply this: We must not only let them alone, but we must somehow, convince them that we do let them alone. This, we know by experience, is no easy task. We have been so trying to convince them from the very beginning of our organization, but with no success. In all our platforms and speeches we have constantly protested our purpose to let them alone; but this has had no tendency to convince them. Alike unavailing to convince them, is the fact that they have never detected a man of us in any attempt to disturb them.

These natural, and apparently adequate means all failing, what will convince them? This, and this only: cease to call slavery wrong, and join them in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly—done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated—we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas' new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy

pleasure. We must pull down our Free State constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us.

I am quite aware they do not state their case precisely in this way. Most of them would probably say to us, "Let us alone, do nothing to us, and say what you please about slavery." But we do let them alone—have never disturbed them—so that, after all, it is what we say, which dissatisfies them. They will continue to accuse us of doing, until we cease saying.

I am also aware they have not, as yet, in terms, demanded the overthrow of our Free-State Constitutions. Yet those Constitutions declare the wrong of slavery, with more solemn emphasis, than do all other sayings against it; and when all these other sayings shall have been silenced, the overthrow of these Constitutions will be demanded, and nothing be left to resist the demand. It is nothing to the contrary, that they do

not demand the whole of this just now. Demanding what they do, and for the reason they do, they can voluntarily stop nowhere short of this consummation. Holding, as they do, that slavery is morally right, and socially elevating, they cannot cease to demand a full national recognition of it, as a

legal right, and a social blessing.

Nor can we justifiably withhold this, on any ground save our conviction that slavery is wrong. If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it, are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away. If it is right, we cannot justly object to its nationality—its universality; if it is wrong, they cannot justly insist upon its extension—its enlargement. All they ask, we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask, they could as readily grant, if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right, and our thinking it wrong, is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy. Thinking it right, as they do, they are not to blame for desiring its full recognition, as being right; but, thinking it wrong, as we do, can we yield to them? Can we cast our votes with their view, and against our own? In view of our moral, social, and political responsibilities, can we do this?

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity

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arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the National Territories, and to overrun us here in these Free States? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man—such as a policy of “don’t care” on a question about which all true men do care—such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to

Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance—such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it. ★

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science & Art, Third & Fourth Avenues, New York, NY as it look in 2007, below.

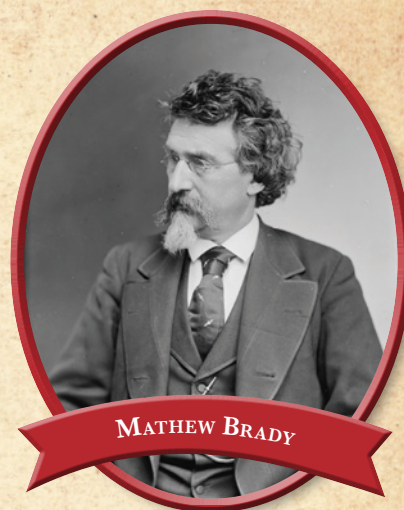
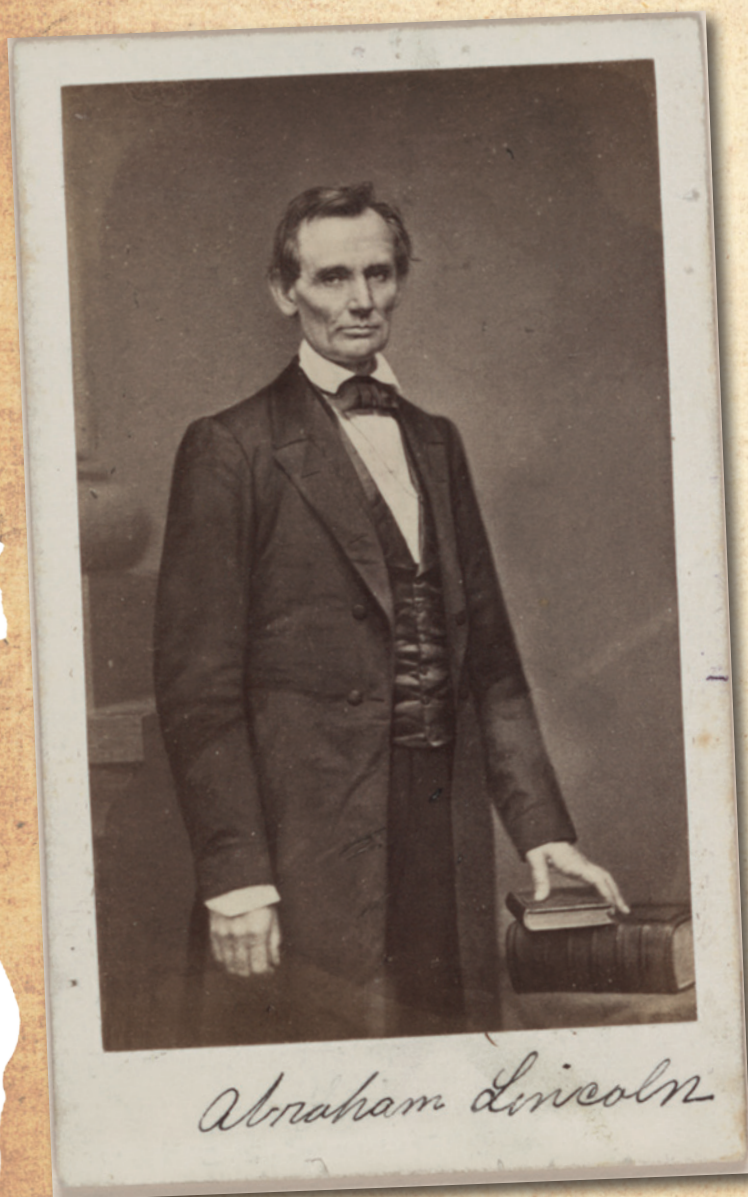


DAVID SHANKBONE

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

<http://myloc.gov/exhibitions/lincoln/rise/therunforpresident/roadtothenomination/exhibitobjects/mathewbradyphotographoflincoln.aspx>

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON THE DAY OF HIS SPEECH AT THE COOPER UNION



February, 27, 1860.

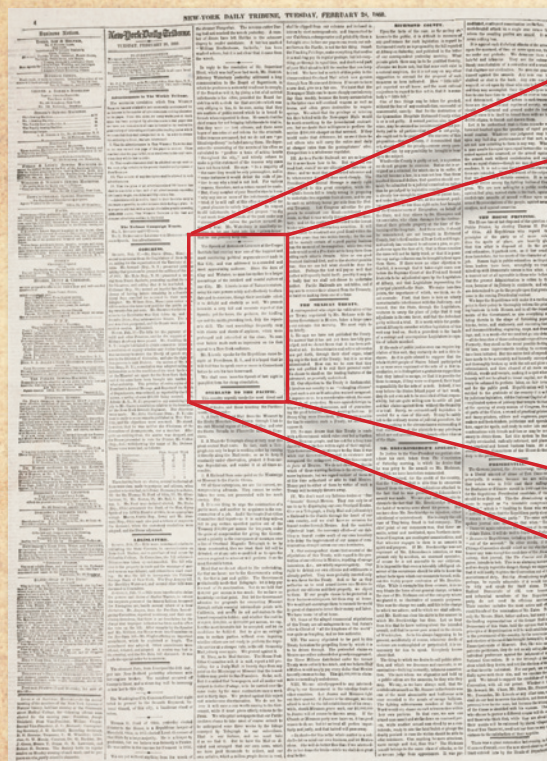
Photographer Mathew Brady took this portrait of Abraham Lincoln at his studio in New York City on the same day that Lincoln gave his now-famous Cooper Union address. Brady retouched the photograph, smoothing facial lines and straightening his subject's "roving" left eye. The effect was striking, and what Lincoln jokingly referred to as his "shadow" later appeared on hundreds of campaign buttons, posters, and small printed cartes-de-visite.

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1860-02-23/ed-1/seq-4/>

THE *NEW YORK DAILY TRIBUNE* | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1860
(Brief Article in third column about Lincoln's speech at the Cooper Union)

New-York Tribune.



The Speech of ABRAHAM LINCOLN at the Cooper Institute last evening was one of the happiest and most convincing political arguments ever made in this City, and was addressed to a crowded and most appreciating audience. Since the days of Clay and Webster, no man has spoken to a larger assemblage of the intellect and mental culture of our City. Mr. Lincoln is one of Nature's orators, using his rare powers solely and effectively to elucidate and to convince, though their inevitable effect is to delight and electrify as well. We present herewith a very full and accurate report of this Speech; yet the tones, the gestures, the kindling eye and the mirth provoking look, defy the reporter's skill. The vast assemblage frequently rang with cheers and shouts of applause, which were prolonged and intensified at the close. No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New-York audience.

Mr. Lincoln speaks for the Republican cause tonight at Providence, R. I., and it is hoped that he will find time to speak once or more in Connecticut before he sets his face homeward.


We shall soon issue his Speech of last night in pamphlet form for cheap circulation.



"The Speech Abraham Lincoln at the Cooper Institute last evening was one of the happiest and most convincing political arguments ever made in this city, and was addressed to a crowded and most appreciating audience. Since the days of Clay and Webster, no man has spoken to a larger assemblage of the intellect and mental culture of our City. Mr. Lincoln is one of Nature's orators, using his rare powers solely and effectively to elucidate and convince, though their inevitable effect is to delight and electrify as well. We present here with a very full and accurate report of this Speech: Yet the tones, the gestures the kindling eye and the mirth-provoking look, defy the reporters skill, the vast assemblage frequently rang with cheers and shouts of applause, which were prolonged and intensified at the close. No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New-York audience. Mr. Lincoln speaks for the Republican cause tonight at Providence, R.I. and it is hoped that he will find time to speak once more in Connecticut before he sets his face homeward. We shall soon issue his Speech of last night in pamphlet form for cheap circulation." ☆

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S COOPER UNION ADDRESS, AS READ BY SAM WATERSTON
MAY 23, 2004



In Mr. Lincoln's famous address, which many credit with earning him the presidency, Mr. Lincoln argued against the spread of slavery to the Western states. The speech is the subject of a new book by Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union:*

The Speech That Made Abraham Lincoln President, published by Simon and Schuster. Prior to Waterston's speech, Mr. Holzer described the culture that produced the speech, Lincoln's presidential campaign, and the speech's impact. Mr. Holzer introduced Sam Waterston's presentation. Actor Sam Waterston delivered Abraham Lincoln's Cooper Union Address in the Great Hall of Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, where it was originally delivered on February 27, 1860.

VIDEO IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT:
<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/181864-1>

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.2629860.0026.207>

BOOK REVIEW BY CHANDRA MILLER MANNING

LINCOLN AT COOPER UNION: THE SPEECH THAT MADE ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENT, BY HAROLD HOLZER

(NEW YORK: SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2004. Pp. 338.)

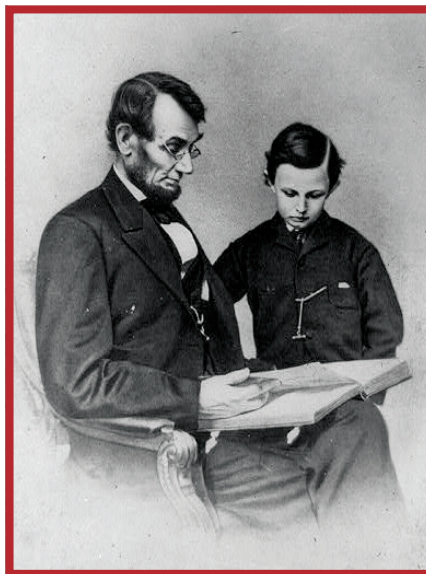
In this book about Abraham Lincoln's Cooper Union address, Harold Holzer claims, "Never before or since in American history has a single speech so dramatically catapulted a candidate toward the White House" (235). While historians have long agreed that the February 27, 1860, speech somehow accounted for Lincoln's rise from obscurity outside Illinois to the presidency of the United States, no one has really explained how or why. Now, with meticulous attention to the political, social, and technological context of New York and the nation in 1860, Holzer fills that gap. Arguing that "Cooper Union proved a unique confluence of political culture, rhetorical opportunity, technological innovation, and human genius," Holzer deftly re-creates the world that enabled Lincoln's rapid rise, while also emphasizing Lincoln's deliberate role in his own trajectory (232). In short, Holzer explains precisely why and how the Cooper Union speech mattered.

Holzer beautifully narrates Lincoln's path to Cooper Union. On Saturday, October 15, 1859, after spending the week out of Springfield on legal business, Lincoln returned home to a swarm of political admirers and a pile of mail. One day earlier, voters in key states (including Ohio, where Lincoln had been stumping in the early fall) had elected Republican candidates to state and local offices. On October 16, John Brown and a small band of zealots seized an armory in Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Into this charged political climate, Abraham Lincoln was about to enter as a presidential candidate. After rousing debates and a bitter loss to Democrat Stephen Douglas in the 1858 Illinois Senate contest, Lincoln saw the 1859 Republican victories as evidence that his young party could do well in the 1860 presidential race. Moreover, he saw the possibility that he could be the Republican nominee. First, he would need to transform from a local party operative to a national candidate. In the mail awaiting him on October 15, Lincoln recognized his ticket of entry into the race: an invitation to speak in New York.

If the stakes were high in New York, so was the risk. Success in the nation's largest metropolis would make news nationwide, but so

would failure, and what was more, New York was home to William Seward, front-runner for the Republican nomination. Even the party leaders behind the invitation favored Salmon Chase of Ohio. Lincoln was one of a series of western Republicans (including Francis Blair of Missouri and Cassius Clay of Kentucky) intended to help Chase by dimming enthusiasm for Seward. Exercising instinctive political timing, Lincoln delayed the speech from its proposed date in November 1859 until early 1860, closer to the Republican's national convention scheduled for May. He also went to work on the most meticulously prepared speech he had ever written, spending hours at the Illinois State House's library, just across the street from his law office. Between court appearances, Lincoln pored over the Constitution, the Northwest Ordinance, and weighty volumes such as Jonathan Elliott's *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, in 1787*. His goal, Holzer explains, was to "prove historically what he had long argued politically: that the extension of slavery was wrong" and that it contradicted the intentions of the nation's founders (31). The months of diligent labor would, Lincoln hoped, help to establish him as a serious contender for national office. But even after the gangly Lincoln purchased a new suit for his trip east, his law partner William Herndon worried about the impression a rough-hewn westerner would make on a metropolitan audience.

The four-day, three-night, five-train journey did little to improve Lincoln's rumpled appearance, new suit notwithstanding, and upon arrival in New York just two days before delivering the most important speech of his life, Lincoln learned of another wrinkle. The venue for his speech had changed from its initial location—Henry Beecher's church in Brooklyn—to Cooper Union in Manhattan. Settling in at the Astor House, Lincoln began accommodating his remarks to the larger and slightly different audience likely to gather at Cooper Union under the auspices of the Young Men's Republican Union. He also played host to a parade of local callers. On Sunday, Lincoln heard Beecher preach



Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

— CONTINUED —

at his church in Brooklyn before rushing back to the Astor House to continue revising his speech.

By the time Lincoln awoke on February 27, 1860, the date on which he would deliver his address at Cooper Union, he was not the only one who had been making preparations. Earlier that month, Illinois Republican newspapers in Springfield and Chicago had endorsed Lincoln for president. In New York, Richard McCormick, a member of the Young Men's Republican Union, had generated admirable publicity. Mason Brayman, a Democrat from Springfield who knew Lincoln from his own earlier days as a lawyer for the Illinois Central Railroad, called on Lincoln, and agreed to stand in the back of the hall for the speech and signal if Lincoln's voice could not be heard. With all these details in place, Lincoln finally did some sight-seeing. His most important stop was Mathew Brady's photographic studio, where Lincoln sat for a photograph that would turn out to be, Holzer argues, nearly as pivotal as the Cooper Union speech. Between Lincoln's pressed lips, which gave his image a firm, determined appearance, and Brady's skillful developing techniques, which corrected the roving eye and harsh facial lines that plagued earlier portraits of Lincoln, the resulting image conveyed an air of gravity and statesmanship. What was more, new photographic technology enabled easy reproduction of inexpensive prints that could be distributed throughout the campaign season. Finally, that evening, Lincoln took his place on the Cooper Union stage alongside more than twenty organizers.

Contrary to legend, it did not snow in New York on February 27. The streets were slushy after an unseasonable warm spell, but the evening itself was dry. By 8 o'clock, more than twelve hundred men and women had filed in, filling about three-quarters of the hall. After William Cullen Bryant introduced the evening's speaker as one of the "children of the West," Lincoln unfolded himself from his chair and made his way to the lectern, his vaguely unkempt appearance seeming to merit the patronizing connotations of Bryant's introduction (107). At first, Lincoln's high-pitched voice grated, yet soon he settled into his rhythm. When he finished, the house "broke out in wild and prolonged enthusiasm," according to one eyewitness, while another decided that Lincoln was the "greatest man since St. Paul" (146). Old friends and urbane New Yorkers alike marveled at the westerner's transformation from a countrified stump speaker to a dignified statesman with what Mason Brayman called the "world [as] his audience (145). New York Times editor Henry Raymond christened Lincoln a national leader of "pre-eminent ability" and New York's second choice for the Republican nomination (148).

Triumphant though the February 27 performance was, Holzer devotes forty percent of the book to what happened after the speech, emphasizing that "Cooper Union did not mark the end of

Lincoln's rise; it represented the beginning" (170). That very night, Lincoln made his way to the offices of the New York Tribune to correct proofs of his speech for inclusion in the newspaper the following day. In the weeks that followed, technology and Lincoln's own energy translated one evening's success into an effective bid for national office. Besides the Tribune, several other newspapers reprinted and circulated the speech. Meanwhile, Lincoln combined a visit with Robert, his son studying at Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, with an eleven-speech, twelve-day New England speaking tour, which Holzer describes as a "calculated follow-up to his acclaimed eastern political debut" (179). By the spring of 1860, annotated pamphlet versions of the Cooper Union speech did a brisk circulation in the North and West, just as the Brady portrait did. The resulting momentum propelled Lincoln into strategic place as the second choice of many delegates who gathered at the Republican convention in May. When Seward failed to gain enough votes for the nomination, a sufficient number of delegates were willing to go to their second choice to make Lincoln the Republican nominee for president in 1860. Without Cooper Union, Holzer argues, that never could have happened.

The speaking tour, pamphlets, and portrait all contributed to Lincoln's nomination, but none of them would have mattered without the central source of Cooper Union's impact: the words of the speech. Accordingly, at the center of Holzer's book rests a chapter analyzing the speech. In addition, the book's appendix contains the full annotated version distributed by Lincoln's hosts, the Young Men's Republican Union of New York. In many ways, Cooper Union was both a statement of Lincoln's beliefs and a campaign speech on a tightrope. It sought to distance Republicans from John Brown's violent radicalism while distinguishing Lincoln from William Seward's dire predictions of an irrepressible conflict and Stephen Douglas's moral indifference to slavery. In the Cooper Union speech, Lincoln argued that the intentions of the nation's founders established that the federal government could regulate slavery in the territories, while the moral repugnance of slavery meant that the federal government should use that power to bar slavery from the territories as a means of eventually eliminating the institution altogether.

Lincoln divided the speech into three sections. The first section bore witness to his long hours in the law library. Responding to Stephen Douglas's claim that the nation's founders endorsed popular sovereignty (the ability of white men in a territory to vote on slavery), Lincoln conceded Douglas's statement that "our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now" (120). Lincoln then examined the actions of the signers of the Constitution to establish that the "fathers" of whom Douglas spoke actually supported the duty of Congress to regulate slavery in the

Lincoln the Orator AND Lincoln at the Cooper Union: The Speech that Made the Man

— CONTINUED —

territories. Systematically going through votes on such measures as the Northwest Ordinance, the Missouri Compromise, and acts to organize the Mississippi and Louisiana territories. Lincoln showed that of the thirty-nine men who signed the Constitution, twenty-three had other opportunities to vote on federal authority over slavery in the territories; of the twenty-three, twenty-one voted to ban slavery from the territories. Turning to the remaining sixteen Constitution signers who did not leave later votes, Lincoln argued that fifteen of them opposed slavery and left “significant hints” that they would have voted to restrict it from the territories if given the opportunity to do so (128). In the end he announced a thirty-six to three decision from the framers that Congress could ban slavery in the territories.

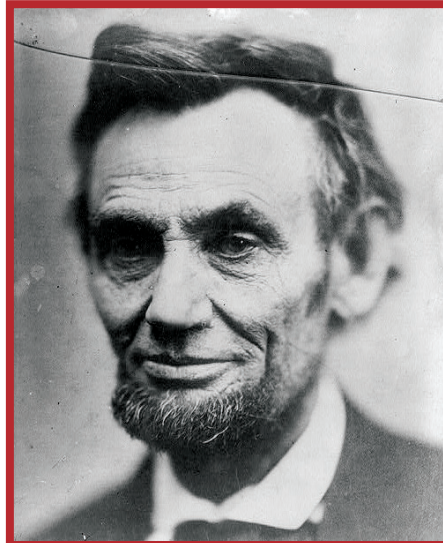
The second section of the speech turned rhetorically to the South, though Lincoln admitted that it was unlikely that his words would be heeded there, and therefore mainly sought to instruct northerners on how best to cope with southern insistence on ever-increasing federal protections for slavery. In demanding active intervention on behalf of slavery, an institution that the founders by and large hoped would disappear and therefore certainly never intended to promote, southerners, not Republicans, strayed from the legacy of the framers. In threatening to break up the Union if the North did not acquiesce in its novel demands, the South, not the Republican Party, betrayed the founders. Placating the South with half-measures like popular sovereignty would abandon the intentions of the framers, Lincoln argued, and it would fail because nothing short of federal activism on behalf of slavery would satisfy southern demands. Barring slavery from the territories, therefore, emerged as an eminently reasonable, and faithful, approach.

While the first two sections of the speech succeed chiefly by taking coolly logical approaches to emotional subjects, the final section, which is also the shortest, appeals to moral high ground. All legalistic proof that the federal government could restrict the spread of slavery meant little without a reason to restrict the spread of slavery, Lincoln maintained. Republicans could not lose sight of the immorality of slavery, because without it, the party had no compelling reason to exist. “If slavery is right,” he urged his fellow party members to recognize that “all words, acts, laws, and constitutions” (and, he might have added, political parties), “against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away... All they ask, we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right.” Only a platform based on the conviction that slavery was not right,

but wrong, could justify the party’s existence, let alone assure its success. Finally, Lincoln concluded the speech by imploring his fellow party members not to delude themselves into “groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong” which did not exist, but instead to “have faith that right makes might, and in that faith ... dare to do our duty as we understand it” (142–43).

In addition to analyzing the speech, Holzer also re-examines the conventional characterization of Cooper Union as an essentially conservative speech. Certainly, Lincoln gave listeners and historians reason to consider the speech conservative. After all, the first sentence of the speech begins, “the facts with which I shall deal this evening are mainly old and familiar,” and the strategy of

the first two sections of the speech consists of persuading listeners that pro-slavery southerners, not Republicans, were trying to steer the nation off the course set by the founding generation. Moreover, a policy of ending slavery by stopping its spread sounds positively staid by modern lights. Yet, Holzer argues, “there is nothing conservative about it by 1860 standards” (134). In making this claim, Holzer asks readers to consider 1860 on its own terms. At that time, abolitionism remained unpopular North and South, and the might of slavery had been steadily growing for four decades. In such a context, telling listeners that being true to their own best ideals required a turnaround in national policy toward slavery—an old and powerful institution not to mention the source of

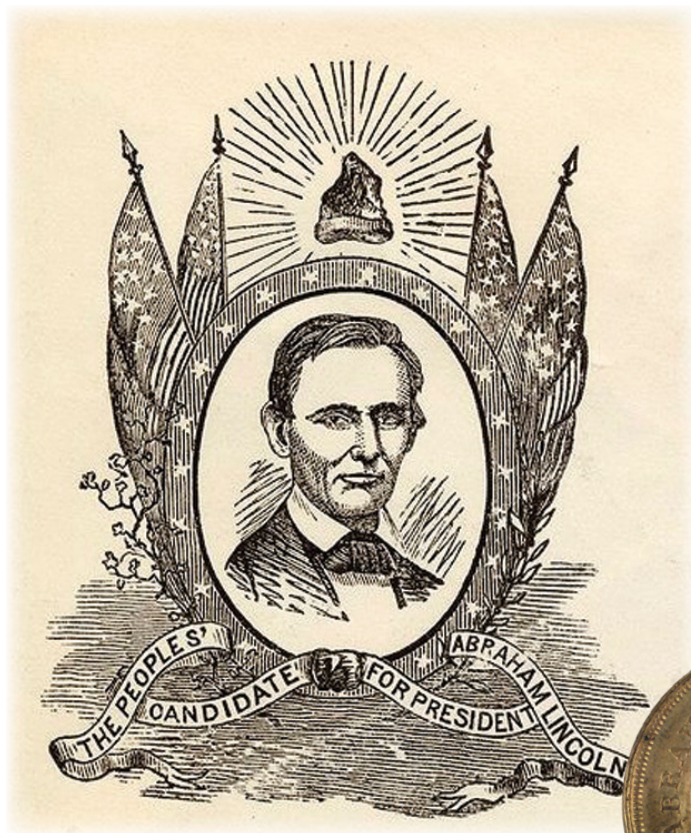


magnificent wealth—was not conservative at all. Precisely because what he was demanding of listeners was difficult and (for its time) progressive, Lincoln couched his appeal in language designed to reassure listeners that his proffered course of action returned to original intentions rather than set out for uncharted territory. As a presidential hopeful who aspired to national office, Lincoln crafted a speech, says Holzer, that was “conservative in tone, but liberal in message” (139). Holzer could strengthen that point by placing this aspect of Cooper Union in the context of Lincoln’s other writings. The genius of Lincoln’s speeches, most notably the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, often rested in their ability to prod listeners toward more progressive stances while reassuring them that they had really been there all along. In this regard, treating Cooper Union as a manifestation of one of Lincoln’s characteristic patterns, rather than portraying it as something wholly unique, would further strengthen Holzer’s case.

In fact, Holzer’s tendency to single out the Cooper Union speech stands as one of very few weak spots in a genuinely delightful

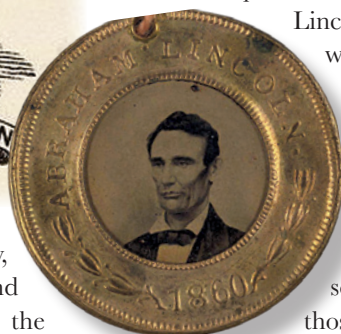
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the extended treatise Douglas published in the September 1859 edition of Harper's New Monthly Magazine, but it might help readers to draw more explicitly the connections between the 1858 face-off between the two Illinoisans and Lincoln's triumph in New York in 1860. Another oddity pertains to sources. The book draws impressively on newspapers and firsthand accounts of people who heard and saw Lincoln in New York and New England, but it avoids recent biographical scholarship on Lincoln, instead citing dated studies in order to deny their contentions that Lincoln undertook the Cooper Union speech and the New England tour innocent of personal ambition. Holzer is right, of course, that any such denials underestimate "Lincoln's political ambition—and his political acumen," but since more recent biographers (David Herbert Donald, William Gienapp) have been making that point for quite some time, it is not as new as readers are led to believe (178).

Still, quibbles pale beside the strengths of Holzer's book. Holzer tells an engrossing story explaining exactly what the Cooper Union speech did and did not do. The speech did not make Lincoln popular among New York City voters, who overwhelmingly voted against him in the presidential election, and it did not deter New York delegates from supporting William Seward rather than Abraham Lincoln at the Republican convention in May. Yet by providing Lincoln with a stage from which to campaign nationally (without appearing to do so), allowing him to refine his position against those of Stephen Douglas and William Seward, granting him access to the New York press which ultimately meant access to the press throughout the North and West, and requiring him to universalize his appeal, Cooper Union created the necessary opportunity for Lincoln to transform himself from a regional personality into a viable national candidate—and in a city equipped with the print and photographic technology to help spread his image nationwide. Moreover, Holzer convincingly re-creates a moment when words genuinely made an impact, not just on a New York crowd one February night, but on a nation. ★



book, because in insisting on the speech's singularity, Holzer runs the risk of disembodiment of Cooper Union and undermining his own persuasive explanation of how the speech "made Abraham Lincoln President," as the book's subtitle declares. Holzer presents the speech as the beginning of Lincoln's rise to national prominence, but the speech's impact makes more sense if Cooper Union is seen as a link between the Republican nomination in 1860 and the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, which garnered Lincoln enough national attention to warrant the Cooper Union invitation in the first place. Holzer does note the speech's repeated references to Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty, and he also points out Lincoln's eagerness to rebut

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<http://www.mrlincolnandnewyork.org/inside.asp?ID=16&subjectID=2>

LINCOLN AS THEY SAW HIM

BY HERBERT MITGANG

NEW YORK EVENING POST

P. 156-158 | FEBRUARY 28, 1861

William Cullen Bryant wrote in the New York Evening Post:

When we have such a speech as that of Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, delivered at the Cooper Institute last evening to a crowded, deeply interested and enthusiastic audience, we are tempted to wish that our columns were indefinitely elastic.

We have made room for Mr. Lincoln's speech notwithstanding the pressure of other matters, and our readers will see that it was well worthy of the deep attention with which it was heard. That part of it in which the speaker places the republican party on the very ground occupied by the framers of our constitution and fathers of our republic, strikes us as particularly forcible.

In this great controversy the Republicans are the real conservative party. They simply adhere to a policy which had its origin with George Washington of Virginia, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Abraham Baldwin of Georgia, Alexander Hamilton of New York, and other men from other states worthy to be named with them.

It is remarkable how perfectly all the eminent statesmen of that age were agreed upon the great question of slavery in the territories. They never thought of erecting the slaveholding class into an oligarchy which was to control the political administration of the country, dictate to the judiciary, and invade and occupy the new regions possessed by the confederation. They regarded it — and

this fully appears from authentic and undisputed records — by a consent next to unanimous, as a class which was never to exist beyond the limits of the old thirteen states.

At that time the slave holders were content to await, within the limits they occupied, the hour, which Washington, himself one of their number, benevolent and liberal-minded as he was, hoped was not far distant, when our republic should present to the world the spectacle of 'a confederacy of free states.'

All the clamor about northern aggression, all the menaces of a dissolution of the Union, have only this grievance as their cause, that we think as Washington thought, hope as he hoped, and act as he acted; and they have only this object in view — to force us from the course he approved and which our conscience approves still, and to compel us to adopt a new policy, new measures, new views of the meaning of the constitution, opening the gates of the territories of the barbarian institution which our fathers intended should wither into decrepitude, and pass to its dissolution within its original limits.

All this may not be new, but it is most logically and convincingly stated in the speech — and it is wonderful how much a truth gains by a certain mastery of clear and impressive statement. But the consequences to which Mr. Lincoln follows out the demands of these arrogant innovators give an air of novelty to the closing part of his argument.



What they require of us is not only a surrender of our long-cherished notions of constitutional rights, inherited from our ancestors and theirs; not only a renunciation of the freedom of speech, but a hypocritical confession of doctrines which revolt both our understanding and our conscience, a confession extorted by the argument of the highwayman, the threat of violence and murder. There is to be no peace with the South till the slaveholders shall have forced us to say that slavery is right — not merely to admit it by silence, but to shout the accursed doctrine with all the strength of our lungs.

With the renunciation of the creed of liberty must come the reconsideration and rejection of our free constitutions. Every one of the constitutions of the free states puts the stigma of public abhorrence upon slavery, and is an offense and an insult to the slaveholder. They who cannot submit to allow the natural lawfulness of slavery to be questioned in public debate, or in the discussions of the press, certainly will not tolerate the more solemn declaration of the right of all men to freedom embodied and proclaimed in the state constitutions of the North and West. One by one these state constitutions must be given up, torn to pieces, and trampled under foot at the bidding of the preachers of the new political gospel. ★

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<http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/lincoln/rise/TheRunforPresident/RoadtotheNomination/Pages/Transcription.aspx?ex=1@80c0f443-c812-4a43-b89d-fc8a14edcc85@7&asset=80c0f443-c812-4a43-b89d-fc8a14edcc85:29d29969-957e-4ab7-8c43-34c7585951bd:33>

LETTER FROM ABRAHAM LINCOLN TO MARY TODD LINCOLN MARCH 4, 1860

Inspired by newspaper accounts of Lincoln's Cooper Union Address, New England Republicans asked Lincoln to speak in their states. He made a whirlwind tour, appearing in eleven cities in twelve days. Lincoln's frustration at having to prepare at least nine different speeches during his tightly packed campaign through New England is clearly evident in this letter to Mary Todd. He was not accustomed to such sophisticated audiences who would have read his prior speeches in newspapers. His reputation with words preceded him and he worried that he might have little new to say.

Exeter, N.H. March 4, 1860

Dear Wife:

When I wrote you before I was just starting on a little speech making tour, taking the boys with me. On Thursday they went with me to Concord where I spoke in day light, and back to Manchester where I spoke at night. Friday we came down to Lawrence the place of the Penn. better Mill being tragical - where we remained four hours awaiting the train back to Exeter - When it was slow to Exeter where the boys got off, and I went down and spoke there Sunday evening. Saturday back to Exeter, reaching here about noon, and the boys all night, having caught up with them. Bob has a letter from you saying Willie is very sick the Saturday night after I left. I have from you, and having one from Springfield, of Mr. Ditzky, saying nothing about our family, little fellows and wees again.

This is Sunday morning, and according to Bob's order, I am to go to Church once today. Tomorrow I have foreseen to the boys, go to Hartford, Conn. and speak there on the evening. Tuesday at Mendon, and Wednesday at New Haven and Thursday at Norwich, R.I. Then I start home, and think I will not stop - I may be out again in New York City in two or three days. I have been unable to escape the fact. If I had foreseen it I think I would not have come East at all. The speech at New York, being within my calculation before I started, went off passably well, and gave me no trouble whatever. The difficulty was to make nine others, before reading audiences, who have already seen all my ideas in print.

I remain, your affectionate husband,
Abraham Lincoln

43401

"If I had foreseen it I think I would not have come East at all. The speech at New York, being within my calculation before I started, went off passably well, and gave me no trouble whatever. The difficulty was to make nine others, before reading audiences, who have already seen all my ideas in print."