

Chapter Four

“A Napoleon of Astuteness and Political Finesse”:

Frontier Legislator (1834-1837)

After leaving his paternal home, Lincoln discovered in New Salem a surrogate father, a rotund, humorous “reading man” from North Carolina named Bowling Green, twenty-two years his senior. Green served at various times as justice of the peace, canal commissioner, doorkeeper of the Illinois House of Representatives, judge of elections, county commissioner, sheriff, and candidate for the state senate.ⁱ He was known as a gifted spinner of yarns and “a whole-souled, jovial sort of fellow” who “took the world easy and cared little as to what transpired” so long as “a side of bacon hung in the smokehouse, and the meal barrel was full.” During Lincoln’s early days in New Salem, he boarded at Green’s house, which “was ever full of visitors,” for Green “would never allow a caller to leave until he had crossed his feet under the table.”ⁱⁱ

ⁱ James Short to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 7 July 1865, Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 74; Thomas P. Reep, Lincoln at New Salem (Petersburg: Old Salem Lincoln League, 1927), 99; Kunigunde Duncan and D. F. Nikols, Mentor Graham: The Man Who Taught Lincoln (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 104; William G. Webber, “Bowling Green: Friend of Abraham Lincoln,” M.A. thesis, Bradley University, 1954; annotated summary of Webber’s thesis, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Molly McKenzie, “A Demographic Study of Select New Salem Precinct Residents” (unpublished manuscript, 1979, Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Public Library, Springfield), 57-62.

ⁱⁱ William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 19; “Abraham Lincoln,” Illinois Woman’s Columbian Club of Menard County, Menard, Salem, Lincoln Souvenir Album (Petersburg, Illinois: Pantagraph, 1893), unpaginated.

FINDING A SURROGATE FATHER

Abner Y. Ellis reported that Lincoln “Loved Mr Green” as “his allmost Second Farther.” Green, in turn, “looked on him with pride and pleasur[e]” and “Used to Say that Lincoln Was a Man after his own heart.” Green told Ellis “that there Was good Material in Abe and he only Wanted Education.” Undertaking to provide that education, Green, like an effective mentor, nurtured his protégé, lending him books, encouraging him to study, and fostering his political career. Though a prominent Democrat, Green urged Lincoln, who opposed the Democrats, to run for the state legislature. Lincoln confided to Ellis “that he owed more to Mr Green for his advancement than any other Man.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Green stimulated Lincoln’s interest in the law by inviting him to attend sessions of his court. At first, Lincoln merely observed the proceedings, which were sometimes comical. When his poetry-loving friend Jack Kelso was sued by one John Ferguson for stealing a hog, Green ruled in Kelso’s favor, even though he had no proof and witnesses testified that the hog was Ferguson’s. Green announced that “the two witnesses we have heard have sworn to a — lie. I know this shoat, and I know it belongs to Jack Kelso. I therefore find this case in his favor.”^{iv} When Lincoln queried him about the verdict, Green explained that “the first duty

ⁱⁱⁱ Ellis added, “and I think Well he May Say.” Abner Y. Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 6 December 1866; enclosure by Abner Y. Ellis in Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 23 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 501, 173. On the role of a mentor for young men, see Daniel J. Levinson, The Seasons of a Man’s Life (New York: Knopf, 1978), 97-101. Green switched his political allegiance to the Whig party in the mid-1830s.

^{iv} James McGrady Rutledge, quoted in Ida M. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: McClure, Phillips, 1902), 1:200-1; “Abraham Lincoln,” Illinois Woman’s Columbian Club of Menard County, Menard, Salem, Lincoln, unpaginated. Another case involving pigs allegedly came before Green, who played the role of Solomon in deciding it. To the contending parties he said, “pick out what you think belongs to you, and keep it, if nobody else claims it. Kill all the rest and divide the meat among the claimants.” Duncan and Nikols, Mentor Graham, 113-14.

of a court is to decide cases justly and in accordance with the truth.”^v Green displayed a similarly casual approach to the niceties of the law when he asked attorney Edward D. Baker if a justice of the peace could preside over slander suits. After Baker replied that only courts of general jurisdiction could hear a slander case, Green expostulated: “Well, think again; you have not read law very well, or very long; try it again; now, have I not jurisdiction; can I not do it?” Once again Baker responded in the negative. After another round of such questioning, Green finally said: “I know I can; for, by Heaven, I have done it.”^{vi}

In time, Green allowed Lincoln to address the court.^{vii} Lincoln had learned some law from the books Green lent him, which he read in 1832 and 1833.^{viii} Because few lawyers lived in the New Salem area, the young would-be attorney was often requested to try suits in Green’s court. He accepted the challenge but turned down any remuneration. Initially the judge, who enjoyed Lincoln’s humor, allowed him to practice for amusement’s sake. Green’s fat sides would shake as he laughed at the young man’s laconic presentation of cases. Soon realizing that Lincoln was more than a mere comedian, Green came to respect his intellectual strength.^{ix}

^v Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, 81-83.

^{vi} Baker’s speech in the U.S. Senate, 3 January 1861, Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, 238.

^{vii} William G. Greene said Lincoln in 1832 “would and frequently did, as we say Pettifog before Justice of the Peace in and about the County. This was studiously & energetically Continued up to 1834.” Greene to Herndon (interview), Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 20.

^{viii} William G. Greene recalled that while he and Lincoln “clerked in Offutt[’]s store which was in 1832 & – 33 . . . he . . . Devoured all the Law Books he could get hold of.” Greene to Herndon, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 12. The first book Isaac Cogdal saw in Lincoln’s hands “was Blackstone – in 1832.” Cogdal, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], ibid., 440. Hardin Bale remembered that Lincoln “Commenced reading law in 1832 & 3 – read in the mornings & Evenings – would play at vari[ou]s games – jumping – running – hopping telling stories & cracking jokes. When his associates would return in the Evening to their various homes he would go to his reading & in the morning he would read till his associates would Come back the next day.” Bale to Herndon (interview), Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, ibid., 13.

^{ix} Jason Duncan to Herndon, [late 1866-early 1867], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 540.

Green and Lincoln performed a kind of comic duet during one trial. When quizzed by an attorney about the veracity of a bibulous shoemaker named Peter Lukins, Lincoln testified: “he is called lying Pete Lukins.” The lawyer then asked Lincoln if he would believe Lukins under oath. Lincoln turned about and said, “ask Esquire Green. He has taken his testimony under oath many times.” Green replied: “I never believe anything he says unless somebody else swears the same thing.”^x

Lincoln grew close to Green and his wife, the former Nancy Potter, an unusually maternal, hospitable woman.^{xi} In 1835, while suffering from depression, Lincoln repaired to the Greens’ cabin, where for three weeks they nursed him back to psychological health.^{xii} When apoplexy killed Green in 1842, his widow asked Lincoln to speak at the memorial service. He agreed to do so, but when “he arose he only uttered a few words and commenced choking and sobbing” and acknowledged that “he was unmanned and could not” go on; he therefore “got down and went to Mrs. Green’s old family carriage.”^{xiii}

^x I have standardized the spelling and punctuation of this passage. J. Rowan Herndon to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 3 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 69; T. G. Onstot, Pioneers of Menard and Mason Counties (Forest City, Illinois: Onstot, 1902), 166. For a biographical sketch of Lukins, see McKenzie, “A Demographic Study of Select New Salem Precinct Residents,” 74-76.

^{xi} Mrs. Green was a sister of Royal Potter and a half-sister to William G. Greene and to Rhoda Armstrong, wife of John Clary. Henry B. Rankin paid tribute to Mrs. Green’s hospitality: “How quiet and refreshing that home, how motherly and hospitable a welcome Mrs. Greene gave him and all who came to her house, I know personally. I recall the times, years later, when fishing and nutting excursions, on Saturdays or school vacations, were made by a half-dozen or more of us Petersburg boys. We would trail up the Sangamon with our fishing rods, until opposite the Bowling Greene home, where we were always sure to skip across the river-bottom for Mrs. Greene’s hospitable home welcome, and there we would fry our fish at the open fireplace on the kitchen hearth. Or, when we scampered over the hills back of old Salem nutting in the fall, we would come trooping down the bluff behind Mrs. Bowling Greene’s and into her big homey kitchen, with such voracious appetites for her hot biscuits smothered in butter and honey, her doughnuts and cookies, buttermilk, apples, and sweet cider!” Henry B. Rankin, Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1916), 82-83.

^{xii} William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Herndon’s Lincoln, ed. Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis (1889; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 95; Rankin, Personal Recollections, 81-83.

^{xiii} I have standardized the spelling and punctuation of this passage. A. Y. Ellis, statement for Herndon, enclosed in Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 23 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 173. Green died and was buried in February. The memorial service took place in September. See also Wilson

Even before he began attending Green’s court, Lincoln had shown interest in the law. In Kentucky, he had been sued for violating the rights of a ferry operator, and in Indiana, he had sat in on trials held before a neighboring judge. He may have actually done some pettifogging before this court, acting as a very junior attorney in minor matters.^{xiv} To Judge John Pitcher of Rockport, Indiana, young Lincoln expressed a desire to study law.^{xv} During his brief sojourn in Macon County in 1830, Lincoln read law books at the home of sheriff William Warnick.^{xvi}

Like many other Hoosiers, Lincoln often attended court sessions in Boonville, where conditions were doubtless primitive.^{xvii} A prosecuting attorney reported that court sessions in a similar community (Fall Creek) were conducted in a double log cabin where “the grand jury sat upon a log in the woods, and the foreman signed the bills of indictment which I had prepared, upon his knee.” No petit juror wore shoes.^{xviii} One Indiana judge quelled a

and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 95, and the reminiscences of William McNeely, 1882, in Osborn H. Oldroyd, ed., The Lincoln Memorial: Album Immortelles (New York: G. W. Carlton, 1883), 395.

^{xiv} Augustus H. Chapman, statement to Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 102. Chapman reported that Lincoln “attended to several suits before this Squire for his Neighbors & in most of which he was Successfull. the Justice[’]s Name was Griffitt.” Griffitt is unidentified. Ibid.

^{xv} Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, 14 July 1888, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 658; Pitcher, quoted by Jesse W. Weik, in Weik, The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 130; Alice L. Harper Hanby, “John Pitcher,” 3, paper read to the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, Evansville, 31 January 1922, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University.

^{xvi} Reminiscences of sheriff Warnick’s son, Robert Warnick, unidentified clipping, reproducing an undated article from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

^{xvii} Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 27 April 1933, 1 December 1938.

^{xviii} Oliver Hampton Smith, Early Indiana Trials and Sketches: Reminiscences by Hon. O. H. Smith (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys, 1858), 285.

disturbance with his fists, saying: “I don’t know what power the law gives me keep order in this court, but I know very well the power God Almighty gave me.”^{xix}

Just as Lincoln had served in Indiana as an amanuensis for neighbors wishing to write letters, so too in New Salem he drafted legal documents for the villagers. Daniel Burner remembered that he “was very kind and accommodating to the poor and was ever ready to place his talents at their disposal.” He had “acquired the knack of drawing up papers and did not need an office for the work.” Among the beneficiaries of his generosity was Isaac Burner, for whom he drafted a deed. When preparing such documents, he used a form book.^{xx} For these services he charged nothing.^{xxi}

^{xix} Frederick Trevor Hill, Lincoln the Lawyer (New York: Century, 1906), 20-21, 24. A French traveler in 1826 described a similar scene in a Florida court, which probably resembled conditions in Indiana: “A judge arrives, generally a man of merit, but not unfrequently, in this state of society, the refuse of the other tribunals. No court-house is yet in existence; the judge therefore selects the largest room of a tavern or a spacious loft. I have seen the court sitting in a warehouse, in which planks laid upon barrels of pork or meal formed the seats of the audience. A court-week is of course an occasion of excitement and profit for the inn-keepers. The people come in crowds from fifty miles round, either on business or out of curiosity. The epoch of this concourse is turned to account by all those who have any thing to gain by the public; one offers his negro for sale; another exhibits the graces of his stallion, that he may attract customers; the lawyers look out for clients; the doctor for patients. The sheriff opens the court and calls the causes, the noise ceases. Upon a couple of planks are ranged twenty-four freemen, heads of families, housekeepers, forming the grand jury. What an assemblage! from the hunter in breeches and skin shirt, whose beard and razor have not met for a month – the squatter in straw hat, and dressed in stuffs manufactured at home by his wife – the small dealer, in all the exaggerated graces of the counter, sitting beside the blacksmith; – up to the rich planter recently arrived: all ranks, all professions, are here confounded. Silence is commanded. The lawyers begin their pleadings with more or less talent. The judge makes his charge with as much dignity as if he sat at Westminster, and the verdicts savour nothing of the whimsical appearance of the court and jury.” Achille Murat to Count Thibeaudau, Lipona, July 1826, in Achille Murat, The United States of North America (2nd ed.; London: Effingham Wilson, 1833), 66-67.

^{xx} Wayne C. Temple, ed., “Lincoln and the Burners at New Salem,” Lincoln Herald 67 (1965): 69; Abner Y. Ellis, statement for Herndon, enclosed in Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 23 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 170. For examples of Lincoln’s early legal drafts, see a deed of Isaac Colson in the hand of Lincoln, 2 June 1834, photocopy, enclosed in J. C. Luther to Wayne C. Temple, Petersburg, Illinois, 17 August 1964, in the possession of Dr. Temple; Rufus Rockwell Wilson, ed., Uncollected Works of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; Elmira, N.Y.: Primavera Press, 1947-48), 1:38, 54, 57; and Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 1:3-4, 15-16, 18-19.

^{xxi} Mentor Graham to Herndon (interview), Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 10. See also William G. Greene, interview with Herndon, Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, and Caleb Carman, interview with Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 12 October 1866, ibid., 20, 374.

In addition to Bowling Green, Lincoln once pettifogged before Justice of the Peace Samuel Berry, uncle of Lincoln's ill-starred business partner, William F. Berry. The case involved a young woman impregnated by a swain who refused to marry her. Lincoln compared her plight with that of her seducer, likening the young man's honor to a white dress that, if soiled, could be washed clean; but the young woman's honor resembled a glass bottle that, once broken, was gone. Lincoln reportedly won a \$100 judgment for his client.^{xxii}

In 1832, Lincoln had considered studying law in earnest, but hesitated because he lacked the requisite educational background.^{xxiii} His trepidation was understandable, for the most widely used legal text, William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, recommended that the prospective law student should have "formed both his sentiments, and style, by perusal and imitation of the purest classical writers, among whom the historians and orators will best deserve his regard;" should be able to "reason with precision, and separate argument from fallacy, by the clear and simple rules of pure unsophisticated logic," and to "steadily pursue truth through any of the most intricate deductions, by the use of mathematical demonstrations;" should have "enlarged his conceptions of nature and art, by a view of the several branches of genuine, experimental philosophy;" should have "impressed on his mind the found maxims of the law of nature, the best and most authentic foundation of human laws;" and, finally, should have "contemplated those maxims reduced to a practical system in the laws of imperial Rome."^{xxiv}

^{xxii} Fern Nance Pond, ed., "The Memoirs of James McGrady Rutledge, 1814-1899," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 29 (1936): 84-85. The young woman's stepfather, a gentleman named Edwards, had asked Lincoln to help her.

^{xxiii} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:65.

^{xxiv} Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England (4th ed.; Dublin: John Exshaw, 1771), 1:33.

Two years later Lincoln was far less intimidated by the mysteries of Blackstone's Commentaries, a copy of which he bought at an auction.^{xxv} This change in attitude may have resulted from his experience in Springfield in April 1833, when he served as a witness in two cases and a juror in three others. Over half of the members of the bar that he might have observed in these proceedings had attended neither college nor law school. Moreover, the presiding magistrate may have been unimposing. In 1835, a New York attorney observed Judge Stephen T. Logan of the Sangamon Circuit Court "with his chair tilted back and his heels as high as his head, and in his mouth a veritable corn cob pipe; his hair standing nine ways for Sunday, while his clothing was more like that worn by a woodchopper than anybody else." If Lincoln beheld such a jurist, he may have overcome his self-consciousness about his own appearance.^{xxvi} Around that time, he told Lynn M. Greene that he "had talked with men who had the reputation of being great men, but could not see that they differed from other men."^{xxvii} Perhaps some of those "great men" were Springfield lawyers. Lincoln may also have been encouraged by his experience as a pettifogger before Bowling Green and Samuel Berry.

With his powerfully analytical mind, Lincoln might well have been drawn to lawyers as a class, for they were reputedly the most intelligent members of frontier society. In 1854, an Ohio Methodist minister said he could "recollect distinctly when, if a father had three sons and was able to give them an education, he selected the brightest for a lawyer, the next for a

^{xxv} William Dean Howells, Life of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Harry E. Pratt (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1938, facsimile edition with Lincoln's emendations in the 1860 edition), 31. Lincoln read this campaign biography and in the margin corrected errors. He let this story stand, casting doubt on another version of this story, which had Lincoln find a copy of Blackstone in a barrel of junk.

^{xxvi} Harry E. Pratt, "The Genesis of Lincoln the Lawyer," Bulletin of the Abraham Lincoln Association 57 (1939): 1-8. Logan was described by Richard H. Beach of New York City. History of Sangamon County (Chicago: Interstate Publishing, 1881), 183.

^{xxvii} L. M. Greene, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

doctor, and the dullest of all for a preacher.”^{xxviii} The high social status of attorneys was obvious because they often occupied the largest and best-appointed houses.^{xxix} Beyond these considerations, Lincoln’s appetite for politics, a field where lawyers had an advantage over non-lawyers, doubtless grew more intense after his 1834 electoral victory.^{xxx} As a student who worked with Lincoln observed, he “took up the law as a means of livelihood, but his heart was in politics.” Lincoln “delighted, he reveled in it [politics], as a fish does in water, as a bird disports itself on the sustaining air.”^{xxxi} Lincoln’s third law partner, William H. Herndon, varied the metaphor, declaring that politics was “his life and newspapers his food,” while the law merely served “as a stepping stone to a political life.”^{xxxii}

Further stimulating his ambition to become a lawyer was encouragement from the sophisticated, dapper, grave, dignified, college-educated attorney, John Todd Stuart.^{xxxiii} A colleague at the bar described the tall, slender Stuart as “the handsomest man in Illinois,” with “the mildest and most amiable expression of countenance.” He was ever “cheerful, social and good-humored” and “had the reputation of being the ablest and most efficient jury lawyer in the State.”^{xxxiv} Supreme Court Associate Justice David Davis called Stuart “a

^{xxviii} James B. Finley, Sketches of Western Methodism (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1854), 180.

^{xxix} James M. Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture: The Upper Ohio Valley, 1800-1825 (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1938), 58-59.

^{xxx} James W. Gordon, “Lawyers in Politics: Mid-Nineteenth Century Kentucky as a Case Study” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1980), 394-414; Heinz Eulau and John D. Sprague, Lawyers in Politics: A Study in Professional Convergence (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

^{xxxi} Gibson W. Harris, “My Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” Woman’s Home Companion, November 1903, 10.

^{xxxii} Herndon, “Lincoln the Lawyer,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

^{xxxiii} C. C. Brown, “Major John T. Stuart,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 7 (1902): 112.

^{xxxiv} Usher F. Linder, Reminiscences of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois (Chicago: Chicago Legal News, 1879), 348. Stuart was especially effective “in trespass and slander cases, preventing the recovery of large damages for the plaintiff when he was for the defendant.” Ibid. Another attorney deemed Stuart “one of the best men and ablest thinkers Illinois has ever produced.” Joseph Gillespie, quoted ibid., 19.

Christian gentleman of the old school,” a “generous man” with “polished manners and commanding presence” who served as a “peacemaker,” fomenting “no litigation.” Davis ranked him “among the best nisi prius [i.e., trial] lawyers in the state,” a man whose “persuasive address and captivating manner” went “to the heart of the average jurymen.”^{xxxv} A Springfield woman who spent much of her youth in Stuart’s home deemed him “a type of a gentleman of the olden times, so gentle and courteous – with as fine and gallant a bow for his laundress as for a Duchess.”^{xxxvi}

After graduating from Center College in 1826, Stuart studied law with Judge Daniel Breck in Kentucky, his native state. Two years later he settled in Springfield, where in 1833 he formed a partnership with Henry E. Dummer. The previous year Stuart had entered politics, running successfully for the legislature, where he quickly became a Whig leader in the House of Representatives.^{xxxvii} There he was known as “Jerry Sly” for “his great powers of sly management and intrigue.”^{xxxviii} William Herndon thought him “tricky” and a “dodger.”^{xxxix} Political opponents denounced Stuart as “indolent and inefficient,” condemned what they called his “low cunning,” and bestowed upon him the sobriquets “sleepy Johnny”

^{xxxv} David Davis, address to the Illinois State Bar Association, 13 January 1886, Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph, 6 February 1886.

^{xxxvi} Caroline Owsley Brown, “Springfield Society Before the Civil War,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 15 (1922): 490.

^{xxxvii} Although the term “Whig” was not adopted widely by the anti-Jackson forces till later in the decade, I have used it to describe the anti-Jacksonian element throughout the 1830s. As a leading historian of the party has noted, “To call all who opposed the Jackson administration before 1836 ‘Whigs’ or to speak of a ‘Whig party’ in the mid-1830s is more a literary convenience than an accurate description of fact. Although the opponents of Jackson could cooperate in Congress and although they cheered on each other’s efforts in different states, they had developed no central organization. More important, they had not yet formed any institutional loyalties to the new Whig party.” Michael Holt, The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39. In 1835 Stephen A. Douglas referred to the opposition party as “the self stiled ‘Whig Party.’” Douglas to Julius N. Granger, Jacksonville, 9 May 1835, Robert W. Johannsen, ed., The Letters of Stephen A. Douglas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 17.

^{xxxviii} Linder, Reminiscences, 348.

and “the Rip Van Winkle of the Junto.”^{xl} Stuart also served in the Black Hawk War, where he first met Lincoln.

In a third-person autobiographical sketch, Lincoln said that during the election campaign of 1834, “in a private conversation [John Todd Stuart] encouraged A[braham] to study law. After the election he borrowed books of Stuart, took them home with him, and went at in good earnest.”^{xli} According to Lincoln’s good friend David Davis, “Stuart saw at once that there must be a change of occupation to give Lincoln a fair start in life, and that the study and practice of law were necessary to stimulate his ambition and develop his faculties.” When Lincoln “stated difficulties which he deemed insurmountable,” Stuart overcame them, “and Lincoln agreed to give the matter thoughtful consideration.” Eventually Lincoln “yielded to Stuart’s solicitations, and read law at his country home, some distance from Springfield.”^{xlii} Jesse W. Fell also believed that Stuart played a vital role in persuading Lincoln to become a lawyer: “it is very questionable, indeed, whether he ever would have adopted this profession had he not been thus associated.” Lincoln at the time doubted “his capacity to make the practice of law a success.” In addition, he “always had an instinctive

^{xxxix} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 10 December 1885, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

^{xl} Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 May, 3 September, and 9 July 1841.

^{xli} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:65. Scripps, in his campaign biography of Lincoln, noted that during the 1834 canvass, his subject “was thrown considerably into the company of Hon. John T. Stuart To Lincoln’s great surprise, Mr. Stuart warmly urged him to study law. Mr. Stuart was a gentleman of education, an able lawyer, and in every respect one of the foremost men of the State. Advice of this character, tendered by one so competent to give it, could not be otherwise than gratifying to a young man, as yet unknown to fame outside of New Salem precinct, and being accompanied by a generous offer to loan him whatever books he might need, Lincoln resolved to follow it. As soon as the election was over, he took home with him a few books from the law library of Mr. Stuart, and entered upon their study in his usually earnest way.” John Locke Scripps, Life of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler and Lloyd A. Dunlap (1860; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 69-70. Nathaniel B. Thompson’s son William claimed that Lincoln borrowed law books from his father, but no evidence corroborates that assertion. Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 8.

^{xlii} David Davis, address to the Illinois State Bar Association, 13 January 1886, Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph, 6 February 1886.

aversion to the practice as too often followed, burying the man in the advocate.” Stuart, “with his knowledge of the world, of Mr. Lincoln and his surroundings,” was just the one to “overcome doubts and remove obstacles.”^{xliii} (Years later, Stuart predicted that he would be remembered only as “as the man who advised Mr. Lincoln to study law and lent him his law books.”)^{xliv}

Lincoln “claimed to have mastered forty pages of Blackstone during the first day after his return from Stuart’s office.”^{xlv} He recalled that after obtaining Stuart’s copy of Blackstone’s Commentaries, “I began to read those famous works, and I had plenty of time; for, during the long summer days, when the farmers were busy with their crops, my customers were few and far between. The more I read the more intensely interested I became. Never in my whole life was my mind so thoroughly absorbed. I read until I devoured them.”^{xlvi}

Blackstone was widely read by aspiring attorneys, though some authorities found it unsuitable for Americans. In 1844, a critic in the Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review observed acidly that the “renowned work of Blackstone has been universally, and continues to be generally, the first book put into the hand of the American Student; and, after he has tortured himself, and exhausted his patience for six long months in memorizing the

^{xliii} Jesse W. Fell to David Davis, Normal, Illinois, 15 December 1885, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 14 January 1886.

^{xliv} Brown, “Springfield Society Before the Civil War,” 490.

^{xlv} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 79. Much later, Stuart told a journalist that Lincoln kept the books in a still house where he worked for a time while in New Salem and read them “during leisure moments.” Washington correspondence, 26 November, Chicago Tribune, 1 December 1864. According to one of Daniel Green Burner’s descendants, Burner operated a small still in New Salem. Wayne C. Temple, introduction to “Lincoln and the Burners at New Salem,” in Charles M. Hubbard et al., eds., The Many Faces of Lincoln: Selected Articles from the Lincoln Herald (Mahomet, Illinois: Mayhaven, 1997), 178.

^{xlvi} Alban Jasper Conant, “My Acquaintance with Abraham Lincoln” (pamphlet; New York: De Vinne Press, 1893), 172. See also Conant, “A Portrait Painter’s Reminiscences of Lincoln,” McClure’s Magazine 32 (March 1909): 514. This quote also appears in Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, 53.

prerogatives of the crown, the sources of revenue, hereditary rights, the political and ecclesiastical constitution of the government, the feudal services, relations of knights and vassal, and the history of English jurisprudence from the invasion of William the Norman, he will be found on examination about as wise a lawyer as he would be, had he spent the same time upon the novels of Sir Walter Scott.”^{xlvi}

Like Bowling Green, Stuart became Lincoln’s mentor, though not a surrogate father (he was little more than a year older than Lincoln). Jesse W. Fell, who spent the winter of 1834-35 in Vandalia with Lincoln and Stuart while they served in the state legislature, called them “two congenial spirits not only boarding at the same house but rooming and sleeping together. Socially and politically they seemed inseparable.” David Davis believed that Lincoln and Stuart “loved one another.” Indeed, Fell said, they were “boon companions,” though quite different in temperament and appearance. Stuart, who had “all the adornments of a polished gentleman,” provided a startling contrast to Lincoln: “raw-boned angular, features deeply furrowed, ungraceful, almost uncouth; having little, if any, of the polish so important in society life.”^{xlvi}

When Lincoln began to “go at” the law “in good earnest” following the 1834 election, he once again “studied with nobody,” save Stuart. It was not difficult to become a member of the bar in Illinois. “Men in the west are admitted to practice much less qualified than they are in the east,” a resident of Champaign County reported. “An ordinary intelligent man with a

^{xlvi} Review of “Walker’s Introduction to American Law,” Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review, 1 (December 1844): 107, quoted in Mark Steiner, “Abraham Lincoln and the Antebellum Legal Profession” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Houston, 1993), 111.

^{xlvi} Jesse W. Fell to David Davis, Normal, Illinois, 15 December 1885, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 14 January 1886; David Davis, address to the Illinois State Bar Association, 13 January 1886, Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph, 6 February 1886. Stuart recalled that he and Lincoln were roommates at the time: “Lincoln and I were then rooming together in one of the up stairs rooms of one of those large frame houses in Vandalia.” Stuart, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 24 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 12.

moderate education can be admitted in about one year.”^{xlix} As an autodidact, Lincoln was unusual. In the 1830s and 1840s, most lawyers learned their craft in an attorney’s office; only a handful attended law school. He may not have missed much. Joseph Story maintained that “the dry and uninviting drudgery of an office” was “utterly inadequate to lay a just foundation for accurate knowledge in the learning of the law.”^l Josiah Quincy described the pedagogy in a typical law office unflatteringly: of “regular instruction there was none; examination as to progress in acquaintance with the law, – none; occasional lectures, – none; oversight as to general attention and conduct, – none.”^{li} In 1840, a New York attorney explained the inadequacy of mentoring for would-be lawyers: “The practitioners, to whose offices they are attached, do not pretend, generally speaking, to afford them this instruction. Receiving no compensation, and immersed in the cares and labors of practice, they have neither time nor inclination for the performance of this duty.”^{lii}

Lincoln followed a regimen that twenty-four years later he would prescribe to a young man who had asked him about “the best mode of obtaining a thorough knowledge of the law.” Lincoln replied: “The mode is very simple, though laborious, and tedious. It is only to get the books, and read, and study them carefully. Begin with Blackstone’s Commentaries, and after reading it carefully through, say twice, take up Chitty’s Pleadings, Greenleaf’s

^{xlix} Allen B. Clough to Andrew Clough, Tolono, Illinois, 16 November 1859, Clough Papers, Chicago History Museum.

^l “Memoir of the Late Mr. Justice Story,” The Legal Observer, or Journal of Jurisprudence (1846), 261.

^{li} Quincy, An Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Dane Law College in Harvard University, October 23, 1832, in Perry Miller, ed., The Legal Mind in America from Independence to the Civil War (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 210-11.

^{lii} Thomas W. Clerke, “Introductory Discourse, on the Study of Law, Delivered before the New York Law School, in the City Hall, in the City of New York, on the 23d. Nov. 1840,” in Rudiments of American Law and Practice, on the Plan of Blackstone; Prepared for the Use of Students at Law, and Adapted to Schools and Colleges (New York: Gould, Banks, 1842), xi.

Evidence, & Story’s Equity &c. in succession. Work, work, work, is the main thing.”^{liii} Two years earlier, he had indirectly recommended the same course of study to another would-be attorney: “When a man has reached the age that Mr. Widner has, and has already been doing for himself, my judgment is, that he reads the books for himself without an instructor. That is precisely the way I came to the law.”^{liv} In 1855, he wrote to yet another potential law student: “If you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already. It is but a small matter whether you read with any body or not. I did not read with any one. Get the books, and read and study them till you understand them in their principal features; and that is the main thing. It is of no consequence to be in a large town while you are reading. I read at New Salem, which never had three hundred people living in it. The books, and your capacity for understanding them, are just the same in all places. . . . Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed, is more important than any other one thing.”^{lv}

In 1860, Lincoln gave similar advice to a young friend who had applied unsuccessfully for admission to Harvard. Though pained by the news of the lad’s rejection, Lincoln urged him not to despair: “there is very little in it, if you will allow no feeling of discouragement to seize, and prey upon you. It is a certain truth, that you can enter, and

^{liii} Lincoln to John M. Brockman, Springfield, 25 September 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:121. Joseph Chitty wrote A Practical Treatise on Pleading; and on the Parties to Action, and the Forms of Actions; with a Second Volume Containing Precedents of Pleadings (New York: Robert M’Dermut, 1809). Joseph Story wrote Commentaries on Equity Jurisprudence as Administered in England and America (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1836). Story’s Commentaries on Equity Pleadings and the Incidents Thereto, According to the Practice of the Courts of Equity of England and America (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1838) and Simon Greenleaf’s Treatise on the Law of Evidence (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1842) were published after Lincoln had completed his legal studies.

^{liv} Lincoln to James T. Thornton, Springfield, 2 December 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:344.

^{lv} Lincoln to Isham Reavis, Springfield, 5 November 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:327. He gave similar advice to William H. Grigsby. Lincoln to Grigsby, Springfield, 3 August 1858, in For the People: A Newsletter of the Abraham Lincoln Association 5 (summer 2003): 8.

graduate in, Harvard University; and having made the attempt, you must succeed in it. ‘Must’ is the word. I know not how to aid you, save in the assurance of one of mature age, and much severe experience, that you can not fail, if you resolutely determine, that you will not. . . . In your temporary failure there is no evidence that you may not yet be a better scholar, and a more successful man in the great struggle of life, than many others, who have entered college more easily.”^{lvi}

Some of his neighbors in New Salem were nonplussed by Lincoln’s resolute study of the law. Before he began preparing himself for an attorney’s life, he was regarded as a rather happy-go-lucky fellow. Parthena Hill told a journalist, “I don’t think Mr. Lincoln was overindustrious. . . . He didn’t do much. His living and his clothes cost little. He liked company, and would talk to everybody, and entertain them and himself.”^{lvii} George Kirby remembered him “as a ‘shiftless’ young man, who worked at odd jobs,”^{lviii} and Stephen T. Logan gained the impression that at New Salem, Lincoln “was a sort of loafer.”^{lix}

But when Lincoln devoted himself to legal studies, he seemed a different man. Russell Godbey recalled that “the first time I Ever Saw him with a law book in his hands he was Sitting astraddle of Jake Bail[’]s wood pile in New Salem – Said to him – ‘Abe – what are you Studying’ ‘Studying law’ – replied Abe.” Godbey exclaimed: “Great God

^{lvi} Lincoln to George C. Latham, Springfield, 22 July 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:87.

^{lvii} Parthena Hill, interview with Walter B. Stevens, 1886, Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 9.

^{lviii} Paul Hull, “Lincoln as a Wrestler,” New York Mail and Express, 11 January 1896, p. 11. See also Paul Hull, “Lincoln’s Life at New Salem,” 13 October 1895, unidentified clipping, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College. George Kirby (b. 1813) was the son of Cyrus Kirby, who moved from Kentucky to Illinois in the mid-1810s. He first bought land in New Salem in 1826. McKenzie, “A Demographic Study of Select New Salem Precinct Residents,” 69-71.

^{lix} Logan, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 6 July 1875, in Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 35.

Almighty!”^{lx} Some New Salemites thought Lincoln deranged. Henry McHenry remembered that when Lincoln “began to study law he would go day after day for weeks and sit under an oak tree on a hill near Salem, and read – moved round tree to keep in shade – was so absorbed that people said he was crazy. Sometimes he did not notice people when he met them.”^{lxi} For the first time since arriving in New Salem, Lincoln seemed anti-social, according to Robert B. Rutledge: “I think he never avoided men until he commenced the study of Law, further than to read & study at late hours after the business of the day was disposed of.” Rutledge recollected that “in the Summer season he frequently retired to the woods to read & study.”^{lxii} Once Lincoln began studying law, he quit reading poetry.^{lxiii} Henry McHenry and others “plagued Lincoln” because they found it strange that he walked all the way to Springfield for books.^{lxiv} (When they also teased him about his first name, he began signing letters and documents “A. Lincoln.”)^{lxv} Stuart’s law partner, Henry E. Dummer, was not so critical: “Lincoln used to come to our office in Spfgd and borrow books – . . . he was an uncouth looking lad – did not say much – what he did say he said it strongly – Sharply.”^{lxvi} Lincoln so enjoyed this informal legal training that many years later,

^{lx} Russell Godbey, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 449.

^{lxi} Henry McHenry, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. See also Henry McHenry to Herndon (interview), Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 14.

^{lxii} Robert B. Rutledge to Herndon, Oskaloosa, 30 November 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 426.

^{lxiii} Charles Maltby remembered that “when he became engaged in his law studies, those [poetical] works were laid aside; but their contents were retained in his memory, and he often made quotations from them.” Maltby, Lincoln, 31.

^{lxiv} Henry McHenry, interview with Herndon, [1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 534.

^{lxv} John McNamar, in Volney Hickox, “Lincoln at Home,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 October 1874.

^{lxvi} Henry E. Dummer, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 442.

when his son Robert expressed a desire to attend law school, he remarked: “Son, if you study law at Harvard you will doubtless learn more than I ever did, but you will never have as good a time.”^{lxvii}

After moving to Springfield in 1837, Lincoln continued to work hard at mastering the law. Herndon remembered that “Lincoln was not fond of physical exercise, but his mental application was untiring.” Sometimes he would “study twenty-four hours without food or sleep, . . . often walking unconscious, his head on one side, thinking and talking, to himself.”^{lxviii}

In 1836, Lincoln took some of the necessary formal steps to become a lawyer. In March, he obtained a certificate of good moral character from Stephen T. Logan, and six months later he received his license from the Illinois Supreme Court. After another six months, a clerk of that court officially enrolled him as a lawyer.^{lxix} No record survives of the required examination that Lincoln took, but it probably resembled the one administered to John Dean Caton by Justice Samuel D. Lockwood of the Illinois Supreme Court. (According to his family tradition, Lockwood examined Lincoln by taking him out for a walk and questioning him as they strolled along.)^{lxx} The judge asked Caton what books he had read and how long and with whom he had studied. Then he “inquired of the different forms of action, and the objects of each, some questions about criminal law, and the law of the

^{lxvii} Robert Todd Lincoln told this story to William H. Shaw. It was repeated in his obituary in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, *CHECK DATE 27 July 1926.

^{lxviii} Herndon, quoted in Volney Hickox, “Lincoln at Home,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 October 1874.

^{lxix} Statement by J. McCan Davis, clerk of the Illinois supreme court, Springfield, 15 March 1909, Joseph B. Oakleaf Papers, Indiana University.

^{lxx} Mary King Porter to Bernard J. Cigrand, Washington, D.C., n.d., quoted in an article by Cigrand, Chicago Daily News, 12 February 1916, clipping in William E. Barton’s scrapbooks, University of Chicago, “Abraham Lincoln,” vol. 1.

administration of estates, and especially of the provisions of our statutes on these subjects.”

The exam lasted no more than half an hour, after which Lockwood told Caton that “he would give me a license, although I had much to learn to make me a good lawyer, and said I had better adopt some other pursuit, unless I was determined to work hard, to read much and to think strongly of what I did read; that good strong thinking was as indispensable to success in the profession as industrious reading; but that both were absolutely important to enable a man to attain eminence as a lawyer, or even respectability.”^{lxxi} Gustave Koerner remembered undergoing a similarly casual examination, after which he and another candidate for the bar treated their examiners to a round of brandy toddies. Koerner found this quite a contrast to the bar exam he had taken in his native Germany, where leading jurists grilled him for four hours in Latin.^{lxxii}

FRESHMAN LEGISLATOR

In December 1834, legislative duties interrupted Lincoln’s self-education in the law. Until taking his seat in the General Assembly, he had been indifferent about clothing. He “went about a good deal of the time without any hat.” His “yellow tow-linen pants he usually wore rolled up one leg and down the other.”^{lxxiii} Overcoming his sartorial insouciance, the freshman legislator decided to purchase new garments. With a political ally, Hugh Armstrong, Lincoln approached his friend Coleman Smoot and asked: “Smoot, did you vote

^{lxxi} John Dean Caton, Early Bench and Bar of Illinois (Chicago: Chicago Legal News, 1893), 170-71.

^{lxxii} Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 1:373-76.

^{lxxiii} Parthena Hill interviewed by Walter B. Stevens in 1886, Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 9.

for me?” Upon receiving an affirmative answer, he replied: “Well, you must loan me money to buy suitable clothing for I want to make a decent appearance in the Legislature.” Smoot obliged with a generous loan, which Lincoln used to buy “a very respectable looking suit of jeans,” garb which made an ideological as well as a fashion statement; the Whig champion Henry Clay once wore similar apparel to demonstrate support for protective tariffs and the consumption of American-made goods.^{lxxiv} The outfit was probably inexpensive; much later he said, “I have very rarely in my life worn a suit of Clothes costing \$28.”^{lxxv}

In the capital city of Vandalia, a primitive village of about 800 souls located seventy-five miles south of Springfield, Lincoln and three dozen other newcomers joined nineteen returning veterans in the House of Representatives. Three quarters of the legislators were, like Lincoln, Southern-born.^{lxxvi} The second-youngest member of that chamber, he belonged to the minority anti-Jackson faction, which numbered only about eighteen in the lower house; the Democrats were thrice as numerous.^{lxxvii} The factions had not yet become parties in the modern sense of the term. “It is difficult to catch the hang of parties here,” reported an Illinoisan to his congressman in Washington, “for altho’ there is considerable party feeling

^{lxxiv} Coleman Smoot to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 7 May 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 254.

^{lxxv} Leonard Swett to Herndon, Chicago, 16 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 160.

^{lxxvi} Harry E. Pratt, “Lincoln in the Legislature” (pamphlet; Madison: Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, 1947), 4. For a general overview of Lincoln’s four terms in the Illinois state legislature, see Paul Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness: The Illinois Legislative Years (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), and Richard Lawrence Miller, Lincoln and His World: Prairie Politician, 1834-1842 (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole, 2008).

^{lxxvii} Charles Manfred Thompson, The Illinois Whigs Before 1846 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1915), 47. In 1834 and 1836, the anti-Jackson forces won only 38% of the seats in the Illinois House of Representatives. Holt, Rise and Fall of the Whig Party, 51. William C. Greenup estimated the “political character of the Legislature” as “about 60 for the [Jackson] administration & 21 against it.” William C. Greenup to Elias Kent Kane, Vandalia, 20 December 1834, copy made by Elizabeth Duncan Putnam, Putnam Family Papers, Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa.

there is very little party organization.”^{lxxviii} John Todd Stuart recalled that party discipline was lax: “things were done and measures were carried very much by personal influence and personal arrangement.” To illustrate his point, Stuart noted that “the Clay men elected all or nearly all the Circuit Judges.” Most of Clay’s supporters (but not Lincoln) also voted for Democrat Stephen A. Douglas as state’s attorney rather than their party colleague, John J. Hardin, “in order to get the vote to pass the Bank Bill.”^{lxxix} (The legislation establishing the Illinois state bank, one of the most important accomplishments of the Ninth General Assembly, passed the House by one vote.)^{lxxx} The anti-Jackson forces in Illinois did not formally coalesce to form the Whig party until 1838.^{lxxxi}

As a lawyer, Lincoln was in the occupational minority as well. Most of his colleagues were farmers, many of them unsophisticated.^{lxxxii} Representative Alfred W. Cavarly pronounced the word unique “you-ni-kue”; when someone asked for a definition, a wag replied that it was the “female of the unicorn.”^{lxxxiii} (A Springfield lobbyist remarked on Cavarly’s “very inordinate enlargement of the organ of self-esteem. This is shown in the pomposity of his delivery and the elevation of his ideas, which are sometimes so ‘dape and so profound,’ as Paddy O’Flanagan said of the preacher, ‘that the divil a word can you

^{lxxviii} Dr. James C. Finley to Joseph Duncan, Jacksonville, 27 May 1834, Duncan-Putnam Family Papers, Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa. See Kurt E. Leichtle, “The Rise of Jacksonian Politics in Illinois,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 82 (1989) 93-107.

^{lxxix} J. T. Stuart, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 24 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 13. On 10 February 1835, the legislature, by a margin of four votes, chose Douglas to replace Hardin as state’s attorney. The Whig Circuit Judges included Stephen T. Logan, Justin Martin Harlan, John Pearson, and Thomas Ford.

^{lxxx} The legislature established a state bank and rechartered two banks that had gone out of business. William Gerald Shade, Banks or No Banks: The Money Issue in Western Politics, 1832-1865 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), 32.

^{lxxxi} Thompson, Illinois Whigs, 60.

^{lxxxii} Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 21.

^{lxxxiii} Joseph Gillespie’s appendix to Usher Linder, Reminiscences, 401.

untherstand.”)^{lxxxiv} Representative Jesse K. Dubois said “imbroligo” instead of “imbroglio” and as a synonym used the neologism “embriggelment.”^{lxxxv} In 1840, David Davis observed that the “politicians of the State, of both parties, are of a medium order of intellect.” After serving in the General Assembly, Davis reported at the close of a session: “I do not think that the legislature has done much harm. We never inquire, whether it has ever done any good.” In 1847, he denounced the legislature as “the great source of evil in this State. If there had been none in session for 10 yrs. Ill[inoi]s w[oul]d have been a very prosperous state.”^{lxxxvi} An observer of the 1840-41 House of Representatives said that it “appeared to be composed all of young men, some of them mere boys; it forcibly reminded me of a debating school of boy students.”^{lxxxvii}

Thomas Ford, governor of Illinois in the 1840s, took a more charitable view of Illinois legislators, most of whom were, in his view, gladhanders. The “great prevailing principle upon which each party acted in selecting candidates for office was to get popular men,” he recalled. “Men who had made themselves agreeable to the people by a continual show of friendship . . . who were loved for their gaiety, cheerfulness, apparent goodness of heart, and agreeable manners.” Though unlearned, the members of the General Assembly were, Ford said, “generally shrewd, sensible men who, from their knowledge of human nature and tact in managing the masses are amongst the master spirits of their several

^{lxxxiv} “A lobby member” to the editor, 31 December 1840, Quincy Whig, 16 January 1841.

^{lxxxv} John G. Nicolay to John Hay, Washington, 29 January 1864, in Michael Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay, 1860-1865 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 12; Milton Hay to John Hay, Springfield, 8 February 1887, John Hay Papers, Brown University.

^{lxxxvi} Davis to William P. Walker, Bloomington, Illinois, 16 November 1840, Springfield, 2 March 1844 and 25 June 1847, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

^{lxxxvii} An “eastern visitor” quoted in the introduction to Harry E. Pratt, ed., Lincoln 1840-1846: Being the Day-by-Day Activities of Abraham Lincoln (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1939), xiv.

counties.”^{lxxxviii} Not all legislators were amiable conciliators, however; some hotheads challenged their opponents to duels.^{lxxxix}

The capitol was unprepossessing. The leader of the senate, William Lee Davidson Ewing, called the decade-old structure – with its falling plaster, sagging floors, cracked and bulging walls, and crumbling bricks – “manifestly inconvenient for the transaction of public business.”^{xc} The building’s style “was primitive and plain as a Quaker meeting house” and the furniture “was as plain and primitive as the structure. No cushioned chairs, but long, hard benches were the seats of the members.” The Speaker of the House of Representatives “sat on an arm chair on a platform hardly large enough to contain it, and a few inches high, with a board before him for a desk supported by several sticks.”^{xc} Built hurriedly on low, wet ground, this statehouse was replaced in 1836 with a more substantial edifice which was “plain, not to say ugly.”^{xcii}

Some members of the General Assembly thought the town “the dullest, dreariest place,” and the governor complained that “there is no young ladies in Vandalia.”^{xciii} The sleepy hamlet, which one of its founders called “a most dull and miserable village” when the

^{lxxxviii} Ford, A History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847, ed. Rodney O. Davis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 196, 199.

^{lxxxix} Linder, Reminiscences, 221-23.

^{xc} Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 23.

^{xc} The Rev. Mr. Thomas E. Lippincott, “Early Days in Madison County, No. 32,” Alton Telegraph, 17 March 1865. Lippincott served as Clerk of the Senate from 1822 to 1823.

^{xcii} Paul E. Stroble, Jr., High on the Okaw’s Western Bank: Vandalia, Illinois, 1819-39 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 103-5; Lester O. Schriver and Joseph C. Burtschi, “Lincoln and Vandalia,” (pamphlet; Peoria: n.p., 1946), 22.

^{xciii} John J. Hardin to Sarah Hardin, Vandalia, Illinois, 14 December 1836, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum; Joseph Duncan to Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan, Vandalia, 18 December 1836, Duncan-Putnam Family Papers, Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa.

General Assembly was not in session, came to life with the legislators' arrival.^{xciv} On the opening day of the 1834 session, a Vandalian reported that "last night, all night nearly this town has been a scene of busy, buzzing bargaining, etc. It is said 150 persons, some from the most distant parts of the State [are vying] for the appointments of Sergeant at Arms of the Senate and Doorkeeper of the House of Representatives."^{xcv}

Primitive as it was, Vandalia – with its book shop, jewelry store, furniture emporium, and other businesses – must have seemed glamorous to the rough young legislator from New Salem.^{xcvi} It certainly did to Representative John J. Hardin's wife, who in 1839 wrote from her home in Jacksonville: "I miss the intellectual feasts I enjoyed at Vandalia."^{xcvii} A friend of hers wondered "how can she bear with the dull monotonous town of Jacksonville after leaving the gay scenes of the splendid city of Vandalia."^{xcviii} In 1830, a visitor to the capital marveled that "three meetings of an antiquarian and historical society have already taken place, and the whole of their published proceedings are as regular, and as well conducted, and as well printed . . . as if the seat of society had been at Oxford or Cambridge."^{xcix} In the winter of 1838-39, lectures were given at the statehouse by an officer in Napoleon's army and a visitor from McKendree College, among others; the topics included temperance,

^{xciv} Frederick Hollman, "Autobiographical Sketch," photocopy of an unpublished manuscript, dated Platteville, Wisconsin, 1870, 21, Evans Public Library, Vandalia.

^{xcv} David Jewett Baker of Kaskaskia to Elias Kent Kane, Vandalia, 1 December 1834, copy made by Elizabeth Duncan Putnam, Putnam Family Papers, Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa.

^{xcvi} Stroble, High on the Okaw's Western Bank, 123.

^{xcvii} Sarah Smith Hardin to John J. Hardin, Jacksonville, 19 February 1839, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum.

^{xcviii} Lemuel H. Smith to John J. Hardin, Shelbyville, 2 March 1837, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum. Mrs. Hardin said of Jacksonville: "there are so few subjects of interest in this town that I am necessarily obliged to concentrate my feelings to my own family." Sarah Smith Hardin to John J. Hardin, Jacksonville, 27 April 1840, ibid.

^{xcix} James Stuart, Three Years in North America (2 vols.; Edinburgh: R. Cadell, 1833), 2:227.

phrenology, and Prussian education. James Hall, a journalist and litterateur, promoted intellectual life in the capital, helping to found schools and lyceums.^c During sessions of the legislature, parties, dances, and receptions enlivened society.^{ci}

Lincoln particularly enjoyed socializing with Senator Orville H. Browning of Quincy and his wife Eliza, a proud, friendly, ambitious, charming and witty woman.^{cii} Senator Browning told an interviewer: “Lincoln had seen but very little of what might be called society and was very awkward, and very much embarrassed in the presence of ladies. Mrs. Browning very soon discovered his great merits, and treated him with a certain frank cordiality – which put Lincoln entirely at his ease. On this account he became very much attached to her. He used to come to our room, and spend his evenings with Mrs. Browning. . . . most of his spare time was occupied in this way.”^{ciii} In 1839, Lincoln and three other legislators light-heartedly invited Mrs. Browning to come from her home in Quincy to the capital, “bringing in your train all ladies in general, who may be at your command; and all Mrs. Browning’s sisters in particular.”^{civ}

In the 1830s, the legislature wielded more power than it would later exercise. As Governor Thomas Ford described it, his office “was feeble and clothed with but little authority,” while the legislators “came fresh from the people and were clothed with almost

^c Stroble, High on the Okaw’s Western Bank, 106-20.

^{ci} William E. Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia: A Pioneer Portrait (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1949), 26.

^{cii} Maurice G. Baxter, Orville H. Browning: Lincoln’s Friend and Critic (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 12.

^{ciii} Browning, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 17 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 3-4.

^{civ} Lincoln, John J. Hardin, E. B. Webb, and John Dawson to Mrs. Browning, [Springfield, 11 December 1839], Basler, Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:156. She replied graciously. Eliza Browning to Lincoln et al., Quincy, Illinois, 20 December 1839, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum.

the entire power of government.”^{cv} Voters chose only the governor, lieutenant governor, senators, and representatives; all other state officers were selected by the General Assembly.^{cv} People paid little attention to government, so long as it left them alone. Politicians “took advantage of this lethargic state of indifference of the people to advance their own projects, to get offices and special favors from the legislature, which were all they busied their heads about.” Governor Ford decried the “fraud” and “deceit” that legislators employed in passing special legislation and creating offices and jobs, while ignoring the general welfare. He lamented that the “frequent legislative elections; the running to and fro of the various cliques and factions before each election; the anxiety of members for their popularity at home; the settlement of plans to control future elections, to sustain the party in power on the one side and to overthrow it on the part of the minority, absorb nearly the whole attention of the legislature and leave but little disposition or time to be devoted to legitimate legislation.”^{cvii} In 1835, Lincoln’s colleague in the General Assembly, fellow Whig William H. Fithian, complained from Vandalia that “Such times as we have here, are not well calculated to inspire desires to come here again. Too much blowing off steam, for expedition [of] business.” Four years later, he lamented that “We have been here now two weeks and as yet so far as I can judge, not one measure has been adopted for the benefit of

^{cv} Thomas Ford, History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847, ed. Rodney O. Davis (1854; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 212.

^{cv} Rodney O. Davis, “‘The People in Miniature:’ The Illinois General Assembly, 1818-1848,” Illinois Historical Journal 81 (1988): 95-108; Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 61.

^{cvii} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 201.

the people of Illinois.”^{cviii} The Chicago Democrat condemned Illinois legislators for passing “most of their time at drinking, gambling and bawdy houses.”^{cxix}

Legislatures throughout the West were held in low esteem. One Hoosier declared: “When I hear of the assembling of a Legislature in one of these Western States, it reminds me of a cry of fire in a populous city. No one knows when he is safe; no man can tell where the ruin will end.”^{cx} Judge David Davis, appalled by a particularly dangerous criminal standing before his bench, absently sentenced the miscreant to seven years in the Illinois Legislature, where Davis had served one term.^{cxii}

During the ten-week legislative session in 1834-35, Lincoln, under the tutelage of John Todd Stuart, remained inconspicuous, quietly observing his colleagues grant petitions for divorce, pass private bills to relieve individual citizens, appeal to Congress for money, declare creeks navigable, lay bills on the table, and listen to committee reports. Jesse K. Dubois, a Representative from southern Illinois, remembered that “Lincoln didn’t take much prominence in the first session of the legislature in 1834. Stuart at that time quite overshadowed him. Stuart had been there the session before – besides he had been practicing law, and generally had more experience than Lincoln.”^{cxiii} On roll calls, Lincoln sided with Stuart 101 times and voted against him on 26 occasions. On votes for public officials,

^{cviii} William H. Fithian to Amos Williams, Vandalia, 26 January 1835, Springfield, 2 December 1839, Woodbury Collection, Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in Donald G. Richter, Lincoln: Twenty Years on the Eastern Prairie (Mattoon, Illinois: United Graphics, 1999), 16, 33.

^{cxix} Chicago Democrat, n.d., quoted in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 23 April 1841.

^{cx} Caton, Early Bench and Bar of Illinois, 231.

^{cxii} Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader, 1874), 278-79. When Ward Hill Lamon called the judge’s attention to his slip, Davis corrected his mistake, substituting “penitentiary” for “legislature.” Leonard Swett, “David Davis: Address before the Bar Association of the State of Illinois” (pamphlet, n.d.), 8-9.

^{cxiii} Dubois, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 30.

Lincoln agreed with Stuart every time save one.^{cxiii} Stuart claimed that in 1834 and 1836 “he frequently traded Lincoln off.”^{cxiv} As he laid plans for a congressional race in 1836, Stuart groomed Lincoln to take over his leadership role in the General Assembly.^{cxv}

Lincoln’s first bill sought to limit the jurisdiction of justices of the peace; much amended, it won approval in the House but not the senate.^{cxvi} Two weeks into the session, he introduced a measure that did pass, authorizing the construction of a toll bridge over Salt Creek.^{cxvii} Appreciating his literary skill, colleagues pressed him to draft legislation for them; he also wrote reports for the Committee on Public Accounts and Expenditures.^{cxviii}

In addition, he composed anonymous dispatches about legislative doings for the Sangamo Journal, an influential Whig newspaper in Springfield which would over the years publish many of his unsigned articles.^{cxix} Lincoln had “undisputed use” of the columns of that paper. William Herndon said, “I frequently wrote the editorials in the Springfield

^{cxiii} Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 61-62; Rodney O. Davis, “‘I Shall Consider the Whole People of Sangamon My Constituents:’ Lincoln and the Illinois General Assembly,” in Abraham Lincoln and the Political Process: Papers from the Seventh Annual Lincoln Colloquium (Springfield, 1994), 15.

^{cxiv} John T. Stuart, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 481.

^{cxv} Jesse K. Dubois, interview John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 30; Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 62.

^{cxvi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:28.

^{cxvii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:29-30.

^{cxviii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1: 27-28, 30-33, 45-46, 30-31.

^{cxix} Andy Van Meter, Always My Friend: A History of the State Journal-Register and Springfield (Springfield: Copley Press, 1981), 48-49, 67-68; memo by William Henry Bailhache, San Diego, 14 January 1898, and statement of Col. J. D. Roper, 22 October 1897, enclosed in J. McCan Davis to Ida M. Tarbell, Springfield, 27 November 1897, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College; Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 1:183-84; William E. Barton, “Abraham Lincoln, Newspaper Man,” typescript, and “Lincoln Editorials,” handwritten memo, Springfield, 28 December 1928, and undated typescript of the same title, Barton Papers, University of Chicago; A. W. Shipton, “Lincoln’s Association with the Journal” (pamphlet; Springfield, Illinois: Copley Press, 1945); Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 62; Clyde C. Walton, “Abraham Lincoln: Illinois Legislator,” in Ralph G. Newman, ed., Lincoln for the Ages (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 76; Albert J. Beveridge to J. C. Thompson, 5 March 1925, copy, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress; Pratt, “Lincoln in the Legislature,” 6; Robert S. Harper, Lincoln and the Press (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 2; Glenn H. Seymour, “‘Conservative’—Another Lincoln Pseudonym?” Journal of the

Journal, the editor, Simeon Francis, giving to Lincoln and to me the utmost liberty in that direction.” Both partners submitted material to the Journal up to 1861.^{cxx} James Matheny, who was to be a groomsman at Lincoln’s wedding, recalled that when he served as deputy postmaster in Springfield in the mid-1830s, he “got to know Lincoln’s hand writing as such P. M – He Lincoln used to write Editorials as far back as 1834 – or 5 for [Simeon] Francis – [editor of] the Sangamon Journal.” Matheny “took hundreds of such Editorials from Lincoln to the Journal office.”^{cxxi}

Other Lincoln contemporaries claimed that he wrote for the Journal. The Democratic Illinois State Register of Springfield charged that the “writers of the Journal have had a late acquisition (Lincoln) – a chap rather famous not only for throwing filth, but for swallowing it afterwards.”^{cxxii} In 1840, the Register alleged that the author of a Journal article attacking Democrats “is no doubt one of the Junto, whose members deliberate in secret, write in secret, and work in darkness – men who dare not let the light of day in upon their acts – who seek to rule a free people by their edicts passed in midnight secrecy. . . . The mask is on them in all their acts.”^{cxxiii} This was doubtless an allusion to Lincoln, a leader of the Whig “Junto” and its most trusted writer. The following year, the Register charged that a member of the Junto had contributed pseudonymous articles, signed “Conservative,” to the Journal and had then tried to ascribe the authorship to Jesse B. Thomas: “the gang who control the Sangamo Journal wrote the articles which appear in that paper over the signature of ‘A Conservative,’

Illinois State Historical Society 29 (July 1936): 135–50; “Lincoln—Author of the Letters by a Conservative,” Bulletin of the Abraham Lincoln Association no. 50 (December 1937): 8–9.

^{cxx} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 143, 227–28.

^{cxxi} James H. Matheny, interview with Herndon, November 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 431.

^{cxxii} Van Meter, Always My Friend, 109.

and privately impressed it upon the minds of the friends of the [Martin Van Buren] administration that the Judge [Thomas] was the author. . . . The Junto resorted to this foul stratagem to render the Judge obnoxious to the friends of Van Buren, hoping that thereby he would be driven to become a Federalist [i.e., a Whig].”^{cxxiv}

Lincoln’s journalism is not easy to identify with certainty, though dozens of pieces from the 1830s seem clearly to be his handiwork, including dispatches from a Whig member of the legislature.^{cxxv} At first, those dispatches simply offered terse accounts of legislative activity; in time they grew longer and more partisan.^{cxxvi} A dispatch dated January 23, 1835, sarcastically referred to Whig legislators as “Aristocrats” and reported dissension within the Democratic ranks. Written in Lincoln’s characteristic bantering, satirical style, it concluded thus: “The thing was funny, and we Aristocrats enjoyed it ‘hugely’.”^{cxxvii}

In the first session of his initial term as a legislator, Lincoln made no formal speeches and only two brief sets of remarks. In one of the latter he humorously commented on the nomination of a surveyor to fill a post that, it turned out, had not been vacated: “if . . . there was no danger of the new surveyor’s ousting the old one so long as he persisted not to die,” Lincoln said he “would suggest the propriety of letting matters remain as they were, so that if

^{cxxiii} Douglas L. Wilson, Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Knopf, 1998), 302.

^{cxxiv} Illinois State Register (Springfield), 25 July 1840.

^{cxxv} Beveridge, Lincoln, 1:171n, 183, 205n; Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 62; Wilson, Uncollected Works of Lincoln, 1:87-90, 96-100, 125-29, 133-35.

^{cxxvi} Sangamo Journal, 6 December 1834 (dispatch of December 1); 13 December (dispatch of December 10); 7 February 1835 (dispatch of January 28).

^{cxxvii} Sangamo Journal, 31 January 1835.

the old surveyor should hereafter conclude to die, there would be a new one ready made without troubling the legislature.”^{cxxviii}

Economic issues dominated the session. The most important bill considered by Lincoln and his colleagues dealt with the much-discussed proposal to dig a canal from Chicago to La Salle, connecting the Great Lakes with the Illinois River, which fed into the Mississippi.^{cxxix} (When completed in 1848, it helped make Chicago a metropolis.) Lincoln, who wished to be known as “the De Witt Clinton of Illinois,” voted with the majority to finance that internal improvement with \$500,000 in state bonds.^{cxxx} The most controversial national issue debated by the legislature involved the Bank of the United States, on which President Andrew Jackson had declared well-publicized war. Another was the distribution of funds generated by the sale of federal public lands. Lincoln introduced an unsuccessful resolution calling for the U.S. government to remit to the state at least one fifth of such proceeds collected in Illinois.^{cxxxi} In fulfillment of his pledge to Hugh Armstrong and Ned Potter, he also submitted a petition of “sundry citizens of the counties of Sangamon, Morgan and Tazewell, praying the organization of a new county out of said counties.” The Committee on Petitions reported against it.^{cxxxii}

In the winter of 1834-35, the General Assembly passed 191 laws, chiefly dealing with roads, corporations, schools, and acts to relieve individuals. A state bank was chartered; the

^{cxxviii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:31.

^{cxxix} John H. Krenkel, Illinois Internal Improvements, 1818-1848 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1958), 26-46; Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln’s Connections with the Illinois & Michigan Canal, His Return from Congress in ’48, and His Invention (Springfield: Illinois Bell, 1986), 1-16; Miller, Prairie Politician, 8-9.

^{cxxx} Joshua F. Speed, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 476. Clinton had been governor of New York when the Erie Canal was dug.

^{cxxxi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:32.

^{cxxxii} Harry E. Pratt, “Lincoln and the Division of Sangamon County,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 47 (1954): 400.

Illinois and Michigan canal received vital funding; public roads were encouraged; the state was divided into judicial districts; and four colleges were incorporated.^{cxxxiii} Lincoln voted on 131 of the 139 roll calls and was present for at least 59 of the 65 days when the legislature met.^{cxxxiv}

During that session, he had ostensibly achieved little. Stuart recalled that he “was the author of no special or general act” and that he “had no organizing power.”^{cxxxv} John Moses reported that he “arose in his place and spoke briefly on two or three occasions, without giving any special promise, however, of ability as a debater or speaker. He seemed rather to be feeling his way, and taking the measure of the rising men around him.”^{cxxxvi} He did virtually nothing to implement the three main proposals of his 1832 platform: expanding public education, improving navigation of the Sangamon, and curbing high interest rates. Usher F. Linder said that “if he won any fame at that session I have never heard of it.” In 1835, upon meeting Lincoln for the first time, Linder found him “very modest and retiring,” “good-natured, easy, unambitious, of plain good sense, and unobtrusive in his manners,” resembling “a quiet, unassuming farmer.”^{cxxxvii}

Not every observer agreed with Stuart, Moses, and Linder about Lincoln’s debut as a legislator. Jesse K. Dubois recalled that before the session ended, “Lincoln was already a

^{cxxxiii} Miller, Prairie Politician, 1-30.

^{cxxxiv} Harlan Hoyt Horner, “The Education of a Politician: Being the Experience of Abraham Lincoln in the Illinois Legislature,” p. 44, unpublished manuscript, Horner Papers, University of Illinois.

^{cxxxv} Stuart, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 481.

^{cxxxvi} John Moses, Illinois, Historical and Statistical (2 vols.; Chicago: Fergus, 1889), 1:403-4.

^{cxxxvii} Linder, Reminiscences, 37, 40; speech of Linder before the bar of Chicago, 17 April 1865, Washington Sunday Chronicle, 23 April 1865.

prominent man.”^{cxxxviii} John Locke Scripps asserted in an 1860 campaign biography that Lincoln “was faithful in his attendance, watchful of the interests of his constituents, acquired the confidence of his fellow-members as a man of sound judgment and patriotic purposes, and in this manner he wielded a greater influence in shaping and controlling legislation than many of the noisy declaimers and most frequent speakers of the body.”^{cxxxix}

If Lincoln achieved little renown, he learned a great deal: he had met legislators, lobbyists, judges, and attorneys from around the state; had observed a more civilized culture than he had known along Little Pigeon Creek or in New Salem; had paid heed to the shrewd advice of John Todd Stuart; and had seen first-hand how legislation was framed and passed. In addition, he had made friends, partly through his legendary skill at story-telling. John H. Bryant recalled hearing him tell many stories during the winter of 1836-37: “there was a great deal that was funny, and some things that were instructive, and some pathetic.”^{cxl}

Those ten weeks in Vandalia sharpened Lincoln’s already keen desire to escape the backwoods world of his father. He wanted to belong to this new realm, peopled with ambitious and talented men, and so he returned to New Salem resolved not only to continue studying law but also to smooth some of his rough edges. Abner Y. Ellis thought that “Lincoln improved rapidly in Mind & Manners after his return from Vandalia his first Session in the Legislature.”^{cxli}

^{cxxxviii} Dubois, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 31.

^{cxxxix} Scripps, Life of Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 68-69.

^{cxl} John Bryant to Francis Fisher Browne, Princeton, Illinois, 19 April 1886, Browne Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

^{cxli} Abner Y. Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 6 December 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 501.

ROMANCE

In Illinois, as in Indiana, the bashful Lincoln paid little attention to young women.^{cxlii} (In middle age, he admitted that “women are the only things that cannot hurt me that I am afraid of.”)^{cxliii} When he boarded with John M. Camron, he took no romantic interest in his host’s attractive daughters.^{cxliv} One of them described him as “thin as a beanpole and as ugly as a scarecrow!”^{cxlv} Between 1831 and 1834, when Daniel Burner and Lincoln both lived in New Salem, Burner never observed him with a girl. Because he could not sing “any more than a crow,” Lincoln avoided the singing school, where on weekends young men and women received elementary musical instruction and also courted.^{cxlvi} According to Hannah Armstrong, his New Salem contemporaries “thought him kind of queer. When there was a

^{cxlii} Interviews with William G. Greene and John Quincy Spears, dispatch dated “on the cars,” 15 April, by George A. Pierce, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 16 April 1881; William G. Greene to Herndon, Tallula, Illinois, 23 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 170.

^{cxliii} Henry R. Sanderson recalled Lincoln saying this on 7 October 1858, while in Galesburg, Illinois, for a debate with Stephen A. Douglas. Sanderson, who was Lincoln’s host in Galesburg, had asked his guest why he had seemed so bashful earlier in the day when accepting banners from attractive young women. Fred R. Jeliff, “The Lincoln-Douglas Debate,” Galesburg Republican-Register, 10 October 1896. The presentation of the banners was described by Leslie Robison to Ernest E. East. East to John H. Hauberg, [Peoria], 1 January 1948, carbon copy, East Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library.

^{cxliv} Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, 48; Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with William E. Barton, Lompoc, California, correspondence, 14 January, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 January 1922; H. Donald Winkler, The Women in Lincoln’s Life: Nancy Hanks, Ann Rutledge, Mary Todd, and Others (Nashville, Tennessee: Rutledge Hill, 2001), 47. Mrs. W. R. Walters, granddaughter of John M. Camron, alleged that Lincoln “wanted to marry my Aunt Vien[na],” six years Lincoln’s junior. Mrs. Walters evidently heard this story from her mother. Julia A. Drake, Flame o’ Dawn: The Story of Reverend John M. Camron, Who Boarded Lincoln at New Salem (New York: Vantage, 1959), 214. But when interviewed by a journalist, Vienna Camron Lyster (1815-1906) made no such claim. Mrs. Vienna Lyster in an unidentified newspaper clipping, 1906, “Reminiscences” folder, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana; unidentified newspaper story, ca. 30 December 1905, Drake, Flame o’ Dawn, 208. When reminiscing about New Salem days, Mrs. Lyster’s sister, Martha J. McCuiston (1822-1905), did not mention any romantic attachment Lincoln felt for Vienna or any of her other sisters. Obituary dated Ocean Park, 28 March, Los Angeles Times, 29 March 1905.

^{cxlv} Vienna Camron, quoted in Winkler, The Women in Lincoln’s Life, 47.

^{cxlvi} Temple, ed., “Lincoln and the Burners in New Salem,” 69; George C. Eggleston, The First of the Hoosiers: Reminiscences of Edward Eggleston (Philadelphia: Drexel Biddle, 1903), 85.

frolic, or any doings among them, he would always go, but never danced or cut up.”^{cxlvii} Jason Duncan, who left New Salem in 1833, recalled that Lincoln “was verry reserved toward the opposite sex.” Duncan could “not recollect of his ever paying his addresses to any young lady.”^{cxlviii} James Short said that Lincoln “didn’t go to see the girls much,” for “he cared but little for them,” and when he craved companionship, he “would just as lieve the company were all men as to have it a mixture of the sexes.”^{cxlix} At Abner Y. Ellis’s store, where Lincoln sometimes clerked, he was “a Verry shy Man of Ladies,” and disliked waiting on them. Even at mealtime, Lincoln avoided women. Ellis reported that one day “while we boarded at this Tavern there came a family containing an old Lady her Son and Three stilish Daughters from the State of Virginia and stoped their for 2 or 3 weeks and during their stay I do not remember of Mr Lincoln ever eating at the Same table when they did.”^{cl} A New Salem maiden said that in his mid-twenties, the “homely, very awkward” Lincoln was “a very queer fellow” and “very bashful.”^{cli} Robert Boal of Lacon, Illinois, testified that “Lincoln was not a ladies’ man . . . he did not court their society.”^{clii} Frances Todd Wallace stated that Lincoln

cxlvii Havana correspondence, 14 December 1865, Chicago Republican, n.d., copied in the Belleville Advocate, 5 January 1866.

cxlviii Jason Duncan to Herndon, [late 1866-early 1867], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 541.

cxlix Nathaniel W. Branson to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 3 August 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 91.

cl Statement by Ellis, enclosed in Ellis to Herndon, Moro, Illinois, 23 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 170.

cli Interview with Susan Reid Boyce, Calistoga, California, correspondence, 22 May 1897, San Francisco Call, n.d., copied in Iowa State Register (Des Moines), 6 June 1897. Susan Boyce was a witness in the case of Reed v. Fleming (1837-39), in which her father, Lewis E. Reed, purportedly a good friend of Lincoln, hired the firm of Stuart and Lincoln to bring suit against Samuel Fleming for the payment of \$200. The suit was filed eleven days after Lincoln moved from New Salem to Springfield. Martha L. Benner and Cullom Davis et al., eds., The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln: Complete Documentary Edition, DVD-ROM (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), hereafter cited as LPAL, file # L00874.

clii Chicago Times-Herald, 1 December 1895.

“did not go much [with girls], as some of the other young men did.”^{cliii} One historian speculated that it “was greatly to Lincoln’s advantage that he was not a favorite with society women. If he had been, most of his time and energies would have been wasted in agreeable frivolity.”^{cliv}

Women who claimed that Lincoln was drawn to them also testified that he was socially backward and not a particularly eligible bachelor. Martinette Hardin said he was “so awkward that I was always sorry for him.” He “did not seem to know what to say in the company of women.”^{clv} Polly Warnick, whom Lincoln allegedly tried to woo in Macon County, Illinois, had “little interest in a tall gangly youth with an Indiana accent.”^{clvi} A New Salem woman remembered that “Lincoln was not much of a beau, and seemed to prefer the company of the elderly ladies to the young ones.”^{clvii}

Those more mature women (in effect surrogate mothers) included Mrs. Bennett Abell, who encouraged Lincoln’s ambition. William Butler deemed her “a cultivated woman – very superior to the common run of women about here. Able, who was from Kentucky, had married her rich, and had got broken down there, and in consequence had come out here.”

^{cliii} Chicago Times Herald, 25 August 1895.

^{cliv} William E. Connelley, p. 3 of a commentary on chapter six of the first volume of Albert J. Beveridge’s biography of Lincoln, memo enclosed in Connelley to Beveridge, [Topeka, Kansas], 7 December 1925, copy, Beveridge Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

^{clv} Interview with Mrs. Alexander R. McKee (née Martinette Hardin), Marietta Holdstock Brown, “A Romance of Lincoln,” clipping identified as “Indianapolis, January 1896,” Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

^{clvi} Art Wells, “Incident Shaped Lincoln’s Future,” unidentified clipping, “Childhood and Youth – Illinois” folder, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Wells’s source was Florence Scott White, great-great-great granddaughter of Major Warnick. See also Charles Hanks to the editor of the Decatur, Illinois, Magnet, [ca. July 1860], copied in the Fulton County Ledger (Canton, Illinois), 31 July 1860; reminiscences of sheriff Warnick’s son, Robert Warnick, unidentified clipping, reproducing an undated article from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

^{clvii} A “Mrs. Rule,” of Tallula, Illinois, quoted in George A. Pierce’s dispatch dated “on the cars,” 15 April, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 16 April 1881. “Mrs. Rule” was perhaps Mary J. Godbey, who married H. K. Rule in

While boarding at Bowling Green’s house, Lincoln came to know the Abells, who lived close by. Mrs. Abell “evidently liked Lincoln, his genial manner and disposition to make himself agreeable.” In time Lincoln “boarded with Mrs. Able – she washed for him and he generally lived there in a sort of home intimacy.” Butler thought “it was from Mrs. Able he first got his ideas of a higher plane of life – that it was she who gave him the notion that he might improve himself by reading &c.”^{clviii}

Like Elizabeth Abell, Mary Spears – another surrogate mother – was a woman of uncommon intelligence. Lincoln “used to talk to her instead of talking to Men” and “said that if she had an Education she would have been Equal to any woman.” She, in turn, remarked that there was “a great promise – a great possibility in Lincoln.”^{clix} Lincoln called his first landlady in New Salem, Mrs. John M. Camron, “Aunt Polly” and “often referred to her in after years with great affection.”^{clx} She was, according to Charles Maltby, “an excellent woman whose hallowed influences reached out beyond the family circle, and her motherly kindness and counsels to Lincoln reminded him of the advice and instructions of a dear departed mother.”^{clxi} Hannah Armstrong, yet another surrogate mother, recalled that he “amused himself by playing with the children, or telling some funny story to the old

1859. She may well have heard stories about Lincoln from her parents, Russell and Elizabeth Godbey, who resided in New Salem when Lincoln was there.

clviii William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 19; Elizabeth Abell to Herndon, 15 February 1867, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 557. He boarded there when surveying in the fall of 1833.

clix John Q. Spears, grandson of Mary Spears, undated interview with Herndon, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 705.

clx Undated statement by Martha C. Camron, daughter of John M. Camron, in Drake, Flame o’ Dawn, 209.

clxi Maltby, Lincoln, 27-28.

folks.”^{clxii} Lincoln also liked to converse with Sarah Graham, the wife of Mentor Graham, often soliciting her advice about personal matters, including love.^{clxiii}

Romantic love entered Lincoln’s life in the person of Ann Rutledge, the daughter of one of his early New Salem landlords, James Rutledge.^{clxiv} Four years younger than Lincoln, she was, by all accounts, attractive, intelligent, and lovable. Her neighbors and family described her as “a woman of Exquisite beauty,” with “a very fair complexion,” “auburn hair,” “face rather round,” “Mouth well Made beautiful,” “good teeth,” “expressive, rather large blue eyes with a great deal in them,” and a “form well rounded.” She stood about five feet three inches tall, weighed approximately 120 pounds, and “dressed plainly, but Exceedingly neat.” “Studious,” “ambitious to learn,” with an intellect “quick” and “Sharp,” and possessing “the brightest mind of her family,” she was a “tolerably good Schollar in all the Common branches including grammar,” a “good conversationalist,” and had “a moderate education.” Seldom seen when “not engaged in some occupation – knitting, sewing, waiting

^{clxii} Havana, Illinois, correspondence, 14 December 1865, Chicago Republican, n.d., copied in the Belleville Advocate, 5 January 1866.

^{clxiii} Mrs. Graham’s daughter, Elizabeth Herndon Bell, interview with Herndon, [March 1887], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 606.

^{clxiv} Thanks to Ruth Painter Randall, wife of Lincoln scholar James G. Randall, the story of Lincoln’s love for Ann Rutledge was long thought a myth. Mrs. Randall, a biographer of Mary Todd Lincoln, deplored “the shabby manner in which the image of Ann [Rutledge] has tended to obscure the years of Lincoln’s love and devotion to Mary, his wife, and to belittle her love and devotion for him.” “Sifting the Ann Rutledge Evidence,” in J. G. Randall, Lincoln the President (2 vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945), 2:342. This curious appendix to Randall’s study of Lincoln’s presidency was primarily the handiwork of his wife, who wanted to include it in the main text. (In fact, it formed an early chapter in the original manuscript, now at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.) She undertook the project at the suggestion of her husband. Ruth Painter Randall, I, Ruth: Autobiography of a Marriage (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 165. J. G. Randall told a friend that his wife “helped me handsomely with the Ann Rutledge chapter. It is very largely her work.” Randall to Francis S. Ronalds, n.p., 3 February 1945, copy, Randall Papers, Library of Congress. In 1990, John Y. Simon showed that Mrs. Randall had badly misread the evidence. Later that year, Douglas L. Wilson, co-editor of William H. Herndon’s interviews and correspondence about Lincoln, corroborated Simon’s findings. John Y. Simon, “Abraham Lincoln and Ann Rutledge,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 11 (1990): 13-33; Douglas L. Wilson, “Abraham Lincoln, Ann Rutledge, and the Evidence of Herndon’s Informants,” Civil War History 36 (1990): 301-23. Three years later their interpretations were fleshed out in John Evangelist

on table, etc.,” she was known as “a good house keeper,” “industrious,” “very housewifely and domestic.” Her “amiable and lovable disposition” and “sweet and beautiful character” – “full of love, kindness, sympathy,” “sweet & angelic,” “kind and cheerful,” “gentle,” “tender,” and “good hearted” – made her “beloved by ev[e]ry body.” She was modest, “winsome and comely,” and “without any of the airs of your City Belles.”^{clxv} Her mother “said she had been noted for three things, her skill with the needle, being a good spinner and a fine cook.”^{clxvi} Her cousin James McGrady Rutledge called her “a girl whose company people liked . . . seeming to enjoy life, and helping others enjoy it.”^{clxvii} In the opinion of William G. Greene, her “Character was more than good: it was positively noted throughout the County. She was a woman worthy of Lincoln’s love & she was most worthy of his.”^{clxviii}

Walsh, The Shadows Rise: Abraham Lincoln and the Ann Rutledge Legend (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

^{clxv} James Short to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 7 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 73; William G. Greene, interview with Herndon, Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, ibid., 21; John McNamar to G. U. Miles, 5 May 1866, ibid., 253; Eshter Summers Bale, interview with Herndon, [1866], ibid., 527; Hardin Bale, interview with Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, ibid., 13; Robert B. Rutledge to Herndon, [ca. November 1866], ibid., 383; Mentor Graham, interview with Herndon, 2 April 1866, ibid., 242-43; L. M. Greene to Herndon, Avon, Illinois, 30 July 1865, ibid., 80; John McNamar, quoted in Volney Hickox, “Lincoln at Home: Reminiscences of His Early Life,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 October 1874; Harvey Lee Ross, Lincoln’s First Years in Illinois, ed. Rufus Rockwell Wilson (Elmira, N.Y.: Primavera Press, 1946), 10; interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by Margaret Flindt, Fairfield, Iowa, correspondence, 10 February, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 12 February 1899; interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by E. E. Sparks, Los Angeles Times, 14 February 1897; Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with William E. Barton, Lompoc, California, correspondence, 14 January, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 January 1922; Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with Katherine Wheeler, Chicago Tribune Magazine, 22 February 1922.

^{clxvi} Reminiscences of E. J. Rutledge, nephew of Ann Rutledge, Ottumwa, Iowa, Courier, n.d., typed copy, clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

^{clxvii} Ida M. Tarbell, The Early Life of Abraham Lincoln (New York: McClure, 1896), 211, 217.

^{clxviii} William G. Greene, interview with Herndon, Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 21.

Lincoln described Ann as “a handsome girl,” “natural and quite intellectual, though not highly educated,” who “would have made a good loving wife.”^{clxix} He may have been smitten with her when boarding at her father’s tavern in 1831, but she was then unavailable, having become engaged to the successful merchant John McNamar (who used the alias McNeil), a partner of Samuel Hill. The women of New Salem considered McNamar “the catch of the village,” for he had accumulated between \$10,000 and \$12,000 by the time he began courting Ann.^{clxx} But Ann’s father “had no use for him from the beginning,” perhaps because he was “ordinary looking,” twelve years Ann’s senior, and cold. (In 1836, McNamar evicted Ann’s widowed mother from her home when she fell behind in the rent.^{clxxi} After McNamar’s death, his widow recollected “that in all the years of their married life, though he was courteous and attentive and a good provider, there was no more poetry or sentiment in him than in the multiplication table, and that she really never became acquainted with him.”)^{clxxii} Around the time that Lincoln returned from the Black Hawk War, McNamar left New Salem to fetch his family from New York; he did not come back for three years. During that period he wrote to Ann so seldom that she believed he had cancelled their

^{clxix} Isaac Cogdal, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 440. A most unpersuasive critique of Cogdal’s reliability is offered in C. A. Tripp, “The Strange Case of Isaac Cogdal,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 23 (2002): 69-77.

^{clxx} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 91-93; Mrs. Samuel Hill, in Laura Isabelle Osborne Nance, A Piece of Time (In Lincoln Country), ed. Georgia Goodwin Creager (n.p.: n.p., n.d. [ca. 1967]), 26. The author, who wrote these memoirs in 1922, was wed to Mrs. Hill’s nephew, Albert G. Nance.

^{clxxi} Sarah Rutledge Saunders, sister of Ann Rutledge, interview with Katherine Wheeler, Chicago Tribune Magazine, 22 February 1922; Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with William E. Barton, Lompoc, California, correspondence, 14 January, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 January 1922. The widow Rutledge and six of her eight surviving children moved to Fulton County, Illinois, in 1836, and later migrated to Iowa. Her husband died a few months after Ann. For a defense of McNamar, see Lawrence B. Stringer, unpublished biography of Lincoln, written ca. 1927, pp. 58-59, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Walsh, Shadows Rise, 152-53.

^{clxxii} Rankin, Personal Recollections, 69-70. McNamar’s second wife told this to Rankin, who thought McNamar’s nature “cold and unsocial.”

engagement.^{clxxiii} (According to his son, McNamar bought a farm in New Salem for his parents, but shortly after he reached their New York home, his father took sick and died. Then he too became ill and was bedridden for a long while.)^{clxxiv}

Meanwhile Ann had moved with her family to Sandridge, a few miles from New Salem.^{clxxv} Lincoln began to court her, visiting Sandridge several times a week.^{clxxvi} Few details of that courtship survive. Parthena Nance Hill recalled that when McNamar stopped writing to his fiancée, “some of the girls lorded it over Ann who sat at home alone while we other young people walked and visited.” Lincoln, who thought highly of Ann and “felt sorry for her,” began escorting her on evening walks.^{clxxvii} Mrs. Hill told a friend “that Lincoln was deeply in love with Ann.”^{clxxviii} When visiting her family, Lincoln would cheerfully, if awkwardly, help Ann with household chores. They also studied together, poring over a copy of Kirkham’s Grammar which he had given her. In addition, they sang songs from an anthology called “The Missouri Harmony.”^{clxxix} Eventually, according to Ann’s sister Nancy,

^{clxxiii} McNamar’s silence may have resulted from his fear that he would have to assume financial responsibility not only for his own family in New York but also for the Rutledges, who were in dire financial straits. William E. Barton to Ida M. Tarbell, Foxboro, Massachusetts, 10 July 1926, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

^{clxxiv} Andrew McNamar to Oliver Barrett, Cottonwood, California, 17 October 1922, Sandburg-Barrett Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

^{clxxv} Interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by Margaret Flindt, Fairfield, Iowa, correspondence, 10 February, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 12 February 1899. Nancy Rutledge was fourteen when Ann died in 1835.

^{clxxvi} James Short to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 7 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 73.

^{clxxvii} Nance, A Piece of Time, 26. According to William Herndon, “Women are peculiar animals: they love to nettle & mortify one another: they love to see one another fall, like Ann.” Herndon, memo on “Miss Rutledge & Lincoln,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. Mrs. Hill, who married in the month before Ann’s death in 1835, was a close friend of Ann’s, according to Mrs. Josephine Chandler, who spoke with Mrs. Hill often. Interview with Mrs. Chandler by Malvina Lindsay, Washington Post, 7 July 1937.

^{clxxviii} Interview with Mrs. Josephine Chandler by Malvina Lindsay, Washington Post, 7 July 1937. As an adolescent, Mrs. Chandler spoke with Mrs. Hill about Ann Rutledge and Lincoln.

^{clxxix} Interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by E. E. Sparks, Los Angeles Times, 14 February 1897. Ann’s sister, Sarah Rutledge Saunders, basing her testimony on what her mother told her, reported that Lincoln’s “attention to Ann was given chiefly around the family fireside and there was never a word or act that

“he declared his love and was accepted for she loved him with a more mature and enduring affection than she had ever felt for McNamar. No one could have seen them together and not be convinced that they loved each other truly.” In early 1835, they evidently became engaged, but, as Nancy reported, they “decided to wait a year,” for “Annie wanted to go to school a while longer, and tho Mr Lincoln was beginning to have high aspirations, he was very poor, and both wished to better equip themselves for the position they would eventually occupy.”^{clxxx} (In July 1835, Ann’s brother David, a student at Illinois College in Jacksonville, wrote to her saying, “I am glad to hear that you have a notion of coming to school and I earnestly recommend to you that you would spare no time from improving your education and mind.”)^{clxxx} Ann consented to wait a year before wedding; during that time Lincoln would prepare to enter the bar.^{clxxxii} She also wanted to postpone marriage until she could honorably break her engagement to McNamar.^{clxxxiii} While awaiting McNamar’s return, Ann became sick, probably with typhoid fever, and died on August 25, 1835, after an illness of a few weeks.

bore the least tinge of simpering sentimentalism but the family were pleased with his honest and honorable relations.” Sarah Rutledge Saunders to Mrs. Bernice Babcock, n.p., n.d., quoted in Mrs. Babcock to William E. Barton, Little Rock, Arkansas, 29 July 1926, Barton Papers, University of Chicago.

^{clxxx} Interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by Margaret Flindt, Fairfield, Iowa, correspondence, 10 February, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 12 February 1899. See also William E. Barton, “Abraham Lincoln and New Salem,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 33 (1926): 119-21. One source alleged that her copy of Kirkham’s Grammar was given to her by her father, who had ordered it from St. Louis. “Abraham Lincoln,” Illinois Woman’s Columbian Club of Menard County, Menard, Salem, Lincoln Souvenir Album, unpaginated.

^{clxxx} D. H. Rutledge to Anna Rutledge, College Hill, 27 July 1835, photostatic copy, Lincoln Miscellaneous Collection, University of Chicago. This letter casts some doubt on the contention that David urged Ann to marry Lincoln without awaiting the return of her whilom fiancé. Robert B. Rutledge to Herndon, [ca. 1 November 1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 383.

^{clxxxii} Statement of James M. Rutledge, [March 1887], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 608.

^{clxxxiii} Robert B. Rutledge to Herndon, [ca. 1 November 1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 383.

Mary Harriet Spears, sister of Lincoln’s business partner William Berry, recalled that “One evening shortly before her death a terrible storm was raging. Someone at our gate called, ‘Hello!’

“Father went to the door, and looking out into the gathering darkness and rain, said: ‘Is that you, Abe?’

“‘Yes,’ answered Lincoln.

“‘Come in out of the storm.’

“‘No, I’m on my way to see Ann. Have you heard whether she is better?’

“‘We have not heard, but you cannot go on in this storm. Bring your saddlebags in and stop till morning.’ Finally he was prevailed upon to stay. However, he did not go to bed, but walked the floor all night, and very early in the morning, the storm having subsided, he started on his way.”^{clxxxiv}

According to her sister Sarah, Ann “had brain fever and was out of [her] head all the time till about two days before she died, when she came to herself and called for Abe.” Bowling Green fetched Lincoln. When he arrived, “everybody left the room and they talked together.” Emerging from that room, Lincoln “stopped at the door and looked back. Both of them were crying.”^{clxxxv} Dr. John Allen, who had been attending Ann, took the distraught Lincoln to his house for the night.^{clxxxvi}

^{clxxxiv} Charles T. White, article in an unidentified newspaper, clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. White misspells Mrs. Spears’s name “Sears.” Mrs. Spears was thirteen years old at the time of this incident. On Mary Spears (1822-1913), who wed Zarel C. Spears, see Zarel C. Spears and Robert S. Barton, Berry and Lincoln, Frontier Merchants: The Store that “Winked Out” (New York: Stratford House, 1947), 18-19. The Berrys lived along Rock Creek about three and a half miles southwest of New Salem.

^{clxxxv} Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with Katherine Wheeler, Chicago Tribune Magazine, 22 February 1922; undated statement by Sarah Rutledge Saunders, enclosed in J. R. Saunders (her daughter) to Mary Saunders, Sisquoc, California, 14 May 1919, Saunders Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Sarah Rutledge Saunders to William E. Barton, Sisquoc, California, 7 March 1920, and statement of Sarah Rutledge Saunders to Barton, Lampoc, California, 22 July 1921, Barton Scrapbooks, University of Chicago; interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by Margaret Flindt, Fairfield, Iowa, correspondence, 10 February, Chicago Inter-Ocean, 12 February 1899; interview with Nancy Rutledge Prewitt, conducted by E. E. Sparks,

A grief-stricken Lincoln “became plunged in despair, and many of his friends feared that reason would desert her throne.”^{clxxxvii} John M. Camron’s daughter Vienna remembered “well the love of Lincoln for Ann, whose death was a severe blow” to the young man.^{clxxxviii} Henry McHenry recollected that “after that Event he seemed quite changed, he seemed Retired, & loved Solitude, he seemed wrap[p]ed in profound thought, indifferent, to transpiring Events, had but Little to say, but would take his gun and wander off in the woods by him self, away from the association of even those he most esteemed, this depression seemed to deepen for some time, so as to give anxiety to his friends in regard to his Mind.”^{clxxxix} William G. Greene testified that “after this sudden death of one whom his soul & heart dearly & lov[e]d,” Lincoln’s friends were “Compelled to keep watch and ward over Mr Lincoln,” for he was “from the sudden shock somewhat temporarily deranged. We watched during storms – fogs – damp gloomy weather Mr Lincoln for fear of an accident. He said ‘I can never be reconciled to have the snow – rains & storms to beat on her grave.’”^{cx} Greene reported that this depression did not pass quickly: “Long after Anne died, Abe and I

Los Angeles Times, 14 February 1897. Sarah Rutledge Saunders, who was a child of six when her sister Ann died, based her account on what she heard from her mother and from her sister, Nancy Prewitt. See also the Rev. Mr. Anthony M. Prewitt (son of Nancy Rutledge Prewitt) to Jane E. Hamand, Chowchilla, California, 7 November 1921, in Jane E. Hamand, comp., “Memories of the Rutledge Family of New Salem, Illinois,” typescript dated November 1921, pp. 18-19, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; and Honora DeBuck Smith to William E. Barton, Long Beach, California, 9 January 1921, Barton Scrapbooks, University of Chicago, describing Sarah Rutledge Saunders’ memories of Lincoln and Ann.

^{clxxxvi} Miranda Allen, a daughter or granddaughter of Dr. Allen, told this story to the mother of Sadie Caropresi. Sadie Caropresi to Cullom Davis, Dallas, Texas, 29 August 1994, copy in possession of the author. I am grateful to Cullom Davis for sharing this document with me. Cf. Walsh, Shadows Rise, 136. Thomas Reep asserted that “Dr. Allen ministered to Lincoln during the time following Ann Rutledge’s death.” Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, 84.

^{clxxxvii} Robert B. Rutledge to Herndon, [ca. 1 November 1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 383.

^{clxxxviii} Undated newspaper story, ca. 30 December 1905, in Drake, Flame o’ Dawn, 208.

^{clxxxix} Henry McHenry to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 8 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 155-56.

would be alone perhaps in the grocery on a rainy night, and Abe would sit there, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, the tears dropping through his fingers.”^{cxci}

One of Lincoln’s surrogate mothers, Elizabeth Abell, was impressed by the depth of Lincoln’s grief. She recalled that “he was staying with us at the time of her death,” which “was a great shock to him and I never seen a man mourn for a companion more than he did for her.” The “community said he was crazy” but “he was not crazy,” though “he was very disponding a long time.”^{cxcii} Another surrogate mother, Hannah Armstrong, saw “Lincoln weep like a baby over the death of Ann Rutledge.”^{cxciiii} Yet another surrogate mother, Nancy Green, recollected that Lincoln took Ann’s “death verry hard so much so that some thought his mind would become impa[i]red.” She reported that her husband, Bowling Green, was so afraid that Lincoln would lose his reason that he “went to Salem after Lincoln brought him to his house and kept him a week or two & succeeded in cheering him Lincoln up though he was quite molencoly for months.”^{cxciiv} At Green’s, he was visited often by Dr. Allen.^{cxci v}

^{cx c} William G. Greene, interview with Herndon, Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 21.

^{cxci} Greene in an 1887 interview, Paul Hull, “Another Lincoln Tale,” New York Mail and Express, 15 February 1896, p. 16. In that same article, Hull reported that “‘Aunt Sally’ Mullins, two years younger than Lincoln, who knew him during all his life in [New] Salem, told me that he went ‘plumb crazy’ after Anne’s death. ‘Abe ’lowed he thought a mighty sight of Anne,’ said Aunt Sallie. ‘He took on awful when she died, and went plumb crazy. Why, many a time when I’ve been goin’ to mill or grocery in Salem I’ve met Abe wanderin’ aroun’ in the woods, tryin’ to git the hypo off him.’”

^{cxcii} Elizabeth Abell to Herndon, n.p., 15 February 1867, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 556-57. See also John Hill to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 6 June 1865, ibid., 23.

^{cxciiii} Eliza Armstrong Smith, daughter of Hannah Armstrong, Springfield correspondence, 9 September, Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 19 September 1930.

^{cxci v} George U. Miles to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 23 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 236. Miles reported that both Mrs. William Rutledge and Mrs. Parthena Hill corroborated Mrs. Green’s version of events. According to Ward Hill Lamon’s biography of Lincoln, when Green came for him, Lincoln was at first reluctant, and “it required the most artful practices of a general conspiracy of all his friends to ‘disarm his suspicions,’ and induce him to go and stay with his most anxious and devoted friend.” Lamon, Lincoln, 164.

^{cxci v} Reep, Lincoln at New Salem, 109.

In despair, Lincoln thought of killing himself. According to John Hill, Lincoln was so “fearfully wrought up upon her death” that Samuel Hill “had to lock him up and keep guard over him for some two weeks . . . for fear he might Commit Suicide. The whole village engaged in trying to quiet him and reconcile him to the loss.” Hill recollected that “for a short time his mind wandered.”^{cxvii} The family of Jack Armstrong feared Lincoln “would go crazy.”^{cxviii} Henry Sears and his wife remembered that Lincoln took Ann’s death “awful hard,” so much so that he “strolled around the neighborhood for the next three or four weeks humming sad songs and writing them with chalk on fences and barns. It was generally feared that the death of Ann Rutledge would drive him insane.”^{cxviii}

This was evidently not the only time Lincoln considered suicide. He told Mentor Graham “that he felt like Committing Suicide often.”^{cxix} To Robert L. Wilson, he confided “that although he appeared to enjoy life rapturously, Still he was the victim of terrible melancholly. He Sought company, and indulged in fun and hilarity without restraint.” Yet, “when by himself, he told me that he was so overcome with mental depression, that he never

^{cxvii} John Hill to Ida M. Tarbell, Columbus, Georgia, 6 and 17 February 1896, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College. See also John Hill’s article, “A Romance of Reality,” Petersburg, Illinois, Menard Axis, 15 February 1862, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 25, and Hardin Bale’s interview with Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, ibid., 13.

^{cxviii} Eliza Armstrong Smith, daughter of Hannah Armstrong, Springfield correspondence, 9 September, Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 19 September 1930.

^{cxix} “Stories of Lincoln: Reminiscences Missed by His Biographers Gathered in the ‘Old Salem’ Region,” unidentified clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 1822, Henry Sears migrated to Illinois, spending most of his time in Sangamon and Menard Counties. In 1834, he settled in Walker’s Grove. He was, according to T. G. Onstot, “a man of undoubted integrity and honesty. His word was as good as his bond.” Onstot, Pioneers of Menard and Mason Counties, 340.

^{cxix} Mentor Graham, interview with Herndon, 2 April 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 243. William H. Herndon reported that “Lincoln often thought of committing suicide.” William Herndon, “Nancy Hanks,” notes written in Greencastle, Indiana, ca. 20 August 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

dared carry a knife in his pocket.”^{cc} In 1838, an unsigned poem about suicide, perhaps by Lincoln, appeared in the newspaper for which he regularly wrote anonymous pieces.^{cci}

^{cc} Robert L. Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 205.

^{cci} On August 15, 1838, the Sangamo Journal ran the following anonymous item: “THE SUICIDE’S SOLILOQUY. The following lines were said to have been found near the bones of a man supposed to have committed suicide, in a deep forest, on the Flat Branch of the Sangamon, sometime ago.

Here, where the lonely hooting owl
 Sends forth his midnight moans,
 Fierce wolves shall o’er my carcass growl,
 Or buzzards pick my bones.

No fellow-man shall learn my fate,
 Or where my ashes lie;
 Unless by beasts drawn round their bait,
 Or by the ravens’ cry.

Yes! I’ve resolved the deed to do,
 And this the place to do it:
 This heart I’ll rush a dagger through,
 Though I in hell should rue it!

Hell! What is hell to one like me
 Who pleasures never knew;
 By friends consigned to misery,
 By hope deserted too?

To ease me of this power to think,
 That through my bosom raves,
 I’ll headlong leap from hell’s high brink,
 And wallow in its waves.

Though devils yell, and burning chains
 May waken long regret;
 Their frightful screams, and piercing pains,
 Will help me to forget.

Decades later, when asked by Isaac Cogdal if he “ran a little wild” after Ann’s death, Lincoln replied: “I did really – I run off the track: it was my first. I loved the woman dearly & sacredly: . . . I did honestly – & truly love the girl & think often – often of her now.”^{ccii} The depth of Lincoln’s sorrow, and the severe depression he suffered after her demise, were probably a result, at least in part, of his unresolved grief at the death of his mother and siblings.^{cciii} Ann’s death unconsciously reminded him of those old wounds, which began to suppurate once again, causing him to re-experience “the bitter agony” he had endured as a youth.^{cciv} Such intense depression can lead to suicide, even among young and physically healthy people like Lincoln.^{ccv}

Yes! I’m prepared, through endless night,
 To take that fiery berth!
 Think not with tales of hell to fright
 Me, who am damn’d on earth!

Sweet steel! Come forth from out your sheath,
 And glist’ning, speak your powers;
 Rip up the organs of my breath,
 And draw my blood in showers!

I strike! It quivers in that heart
 Which drive me to this end;
 I draw and kiss the bloody dart,
 My last – my only friend!”

^{ccii} Cogdal, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 440.

^{cciii} See Robert V. Bruce, “The Riddle of Death,” in Gabor Boritt, ed., The Lincoln Enigma: The Changing Faces of an American Icon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 133.

^{cciv} See Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 92-113.

^{ccv} Kay Redfield Jamison, Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide (New York: Knopf, 1999), 100-15. According to Jamison, the average age of the onset of major depression is approximately twenty-six, which was Lincoln’s age at the time of Ann’s death. Twenty per cent of those suffering from major depression attempt suicide. Ibid., 109-10.

While recuperating from Ann’s death, Lincoln neglected his duties at the post office. He often started out for that destination but return without having reached it; instead he would wander about, absorbed in his thoughts, recognizing no friends or neighbors.^{ccvi} Three weeks after she died, a New Salem resident complained that the “Post Master (Mr. Lincoln) is very careless about leaving his office open & unlocked during the day – half the time I go in & get my papers &c without any one being there as was the case yesterday.”^{ccvii}

Years later, when his friend Joshua F. Speed suffered from depression, Lincoln suggested an antidote: “avoid being idle; I would immediately engage in some business, or go to make preparations for it.”^{ccviii} In the fall of 1835, Lincoln took this cure, throwing himself into the study of law. The previous summer, he had begun to go “at it in good earnest,” but a year later he returned to it in even better earnest. Mentor Graham recalled that “he was studious – so much so that he somewhat injured his health and Constitution. The Continued thought & study of the man Caused – with the death of one whom he dearly & sincerely loved, a momentary – . . . partial & momentary derangement.”^{ccix} Henry McHenry believed that Lincoln “read so much – was so studious – took so little physical exercise – was so laborious in his studies that he became Emaciated & his best friends were afraid he would craze himself.”^{ccx} Isaac Cogdal told Herndon about “the Crazy spell” following Ann’s

^{ccvi} Reminiscences by unidentified residents of Springfield, gathered by Elliott Danforth in 1901, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 10 February 1901, p. 19.

^{ccvii} Mathew Marsh to George M. Marsh, New Salem, 17 September 1835, Lincoln Papers, Addendum 1, Library of Congress. Marsh called Lincoln “a very clever fellow & a particular friend of mine.” Curiously, William E. Barton and some others have cited this letter to show that Lincoln was not distraught after the death of Ann Rutledge. Barton, “Abraham Lincoln and New Salem” (pamphlet reprinted from Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 1926), 19; Randall, Lincoln the President, 2:335. See Walsh, The Shadows Rise, 123-24, for a thoughtful discussion of the matter.

^{ccviii} Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, 13 February 1842, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:269-70.

^{ccix} Graham to Herndon, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 11.

^{ccx} Henry McHenry, interview with Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 14.

death: “It is my opinion that if Mr Lincoln was crazy it [was] only technically so – and not radically & substantially so. We used to say – you were Crazy about Ann Rutledge. He was then reading Blackstone – read hard – day & night – terribly hard – . . . was terribly melancholy – moody.”^{ccxi}

By December, 1835, Lincoln managed to pull himself together enough to attend a special session of the legislature, which the governor had called to modify the Illinois and Michigan Canal Act and to reapportion the General Assembly.^{ccxii} During his six-week sojourn in Vandalia, he won approval for the incorporation of the Beardstown and Sangamon Canal Company, which William Herndon called “Abe’s pet.”^{ccxiii} Lincoln bought stock in that corporation and at a public meeting urged others to do so; he even purchased land on the Sangamon a mile from the eastern terminus of the proposed canal, which was never dug.^{ccxiv} A Sangamo Journal article by “Sangamo” (perhaps Lincoln) examined the feasibility of the project and declared that “it must be of immense advantage to the country thro’ which it will pass, and to the great West generally.”^{ccxv}

A leading promoter of that enterprise, Francis Arnez, edited the Beardstown Chronicle, whose columns in November 1834 contained a slashing attack on Peter Cartwright, a prominent Methodist minister and Jacksonian politico. Though signed “Sam Hill,” the piece was actually written by Lincoln, who sent it to Arnez after the Sangamo Journal had rejected

^{ccxi} Cogdal, interview with Herndon [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 441.

^{ccxii} Joseph Duncan’s message to the General Assembly, 7 December 1835, House Journal, 1835-36, pp. 8-12. For an account of this session, see Miller, Prairie Politician, 48-70.

^{ccxiii} William H. Herndon memo, Ward Hill Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

^{ccxiv} Earl Schenck Miers et al., eds., Lincoln Day by Day: A Chronology, 1809-1865 (3 vols.; Washington: Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, 1960), 1:55 (entry for 27 February 1836); Olivier Fraysse, Lincoln, Land, and Labor, 1809-1860, trans. Sylvia Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 74-75. Enthusiastic letters to the editor (perhaps by Lincoln) extolling the merits and prospects of the canal, appeared in the Sangamo Journal, 13 and 20 February, 5 March 1836.

it. (Arnez agreed to run it only as a paid advertisement.) The irascible, vindictive Hill, known as “the rich man of the village” and “the potentate” with “a peculiar temper” so explosive that he could not drive a carriage team, had been quarreling with the belligerent Cartwright, who lived six miles from New Salem in Pleasant Plains. During an earlier squabble with Jack Armstrong, Hill had hired someone to thrash that leader of the Clary’s Grove boys.^{ccxvi} Now he employed Lincoln to attack Cartwright with a pen rather than fists. Lincoln had no special fondness for Cartwright, one of the four candidates who had beaten him out for a legislative seat in 1832. Lincoln’s inflammatory 1500-word philippic, dated September 7, 1834, accused Cartwright of being “a most abandoned hypocrite” and concluded that it was hard to tell whether he “is greater fool or knave” and that “he has but few rivals in either capacity.”^{ccxvii} (The attack was clever but unfair, based on a misreading of Cartwright’s writings.)^{ccxviii} Thus began a pattern of anonymous and pseudonymous journalistic assaults which did Lincoln little credit. He was to quit that ugly practice in 1842, when an offended target of his ridicule challenged him to a duel.

Lincoln participated actively in the special session of the legislature that winter. On December 12, he introduced a bill “for the relief of insolvent debtors,” which passed the House but not the Senate.^{ccxix} He consistently voted in favor of the Illinois and Michigan canal, whose supporters finally prevailed on Christmas eve, when the House by a 29-26

^{ccxv} Sangamo Journal, 23 June 1838.

^{ccxvi} A. G. Nance to Henry B. Rankin, n.p., 24 October 1914, Rankin Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; reminiscences of John Watkins, paraphrased by Thomas P. Reep, based on interview conducted by Reep in 1890, in Reep’s interview with Joseph F. Booton, Petersburg, Illinois, 18 October 1934, typescript, pp. 39-40, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

^{ccxvii} Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 63, 66; Robert Bray, Peter Cartwright: Legendary Frontier Preacher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 143-52.

^{ccxviii} Bray, Cartwright, 149-50.

margin authorized the establishment of a Board of Commissioners, empowered it to build the canal, and permitted the governor to borrow up to half a million dollars to fund the effort.

The struggle over the canal pitted northern Illinois against the southern part of the state.^{ccxx} Governor Thomas Ford explained that the former had been settled by “wealthy farmers, enterprising merchants, millers, and manufacturers” who “built mills, churches, school-houses, towns, and cities” and “made roads and bridges as if by magic.” Southern Illinois, on the other hand, attracted those who “were unambitious of wealth and great lovers of ease and social enjoyment” and who “entertained a most despicable opinion of their northern neighbors” as “close, miserly, dishonest, selfish getter[s] of money, void of generosity, hospitality, or any of the kindlier feelings of human nature.” By the same token, inhabitants of northern Illinois regarded their neighbors to the south as “long, lank, lean, lazy, and ignorant,” only a “little in advance of the savage state,” happy “to squat in a log-cabin with a large family of ill-fed and ill-clothed, ignorant children.” The legislators from southern Illinois opposed the canal “for fear it would open a way for flooding the State with Yankees.”^{ccxxi} (Lincoln enjoyed quoting a hard-shell Baptist preacher in southern Illinois who declared that the “mercy of God reaches from the Esquimaux of the frozen North to the

^{ccxix} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:41.

^{ccxx} Moses, Illinois, 1:391; Krenkel, Illinois Internal Improvements, 37-38.

^{ccxxi} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 194, 195. See also James E. Davis, Frontier Illinois (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 246-64; Richard Lyle Power, Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerner and Yankee in the Old Northwest (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1953); John D. Barnhart, “The Southern Influence in the Formation of Illinois,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 32 (1939): 358-78; and Theodore Calvin Pease, The Frontier State, 1818-1848 (vol. 2 of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1918), 6-18. A similar pattern marked the politics of neighboring Indiana, where, as a Whig leader put it, “the enterprising Yankee of Northern Indiana, despises the sluggish and inaminate North Carolinian, Virginian, and Kentuckian in the Southern part of the State, while the latter in return, regarding the ‘patriarchal institution’ [i.e., slavery] as the direct gift of God to man, looks upon the freeman who toils with his own hands and proclaims a belief in the patriotic sentiments of his fathers, as a fanatic and a fool.” Godlove S. Orth to Schuyler Colfax, Lafayette, 16 August 1845, in J. Herman Schauinger, ed., “The Letters of Godlove S. Orth, Hoosier Whig,” Indiana Magazine of History 39 (1943): 367.

Hottentot of the sizzling South; from the wandering Arab of Asia to the Injuns of the Western plains; there are some who say that it even extends to the Yankees, but I wouldn't go scarcely that far.”^{ccxxii}

Proponents of the canal bill overcame formidable obstacles. The difficulty “of persuading a purely agricultural people, scarcely any of whose products would sell for money at any price, most of whom were emigrants from the South, whose only markets were on the rivers flowing in that direction, to embark on such an expensive undertaking as the construction of a canal ninety miles long, from such an obscure and uninviting place, was a task which few men could have successfully accomplished.”^{ccxxiii} A leading champion of the canal, Gurdon Hubbard, doubted that the legislation could have been approved so quickly without Lincoln's “valuable help.”^{ccxxiv}

During the debates over reapportionment of the General Assembly, Lincoln supported a plan that would have kept the legislature relatively small. When that proposal failed, the General Assembly was expanded from fifty-five to ninety-one members. Under the new arrangement, Sangamon County had seven seats rather than four, constituting the largest delegation in the House of Representatives.

Fortunately for his political career, Lincoln had the prescience to oppose a seemingly minor bill “to improve the breed of cattle,” which stipulated that “no bull over one year old shall be permitted to run at large out of an enclosure.” Violators would be fined and the

^{ccxxii} Reminiscences of Col. L. H. Waters, Kansas City Star, 10 February 1907. See also Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, vol. 1 of A Life of Lincoln, ed. Marion Mills Miller (2 vols.; New York: Baker and Taylor, 1908), 1:163. Lincoln may have gotten this story from his good friend Joseph Gillespie, who identified the preacher as Father Biggs. Moses, Illinois, 1:391.

^{ccxxiii} Grant Goodrich to the editor, 1 December, Chicago Tribune, 2 December 1885.

^{ccxxiv} Hubbard's reminiscences, dated Chicago, 1882, Oldroyd, ed., Lincoln Memorial, 305; Lloyd Wendt, “Swift Walker”: An Informal Biography of Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986), 363-73.

proceeds distributed to the farmers with the three best cows, bulls, and heifers within the county. In the Jacksonian “Era of the Common Man,” the public regarded this statute as hopelessly elitist and voted its supporters out of office. Less than a year later the General Assembly overwhelmingly repealed the “Little Bull” law.^{ccxxv}

During the 1835-36 special session of the General Assembly, Lincoln answered all but 11 of the 130 roll calls. He spent three days writing the report of the Committee on Public Accounts and Expenditures.^{ccxxvi} By supporting the state bank and the canal, he remained true to his Whig principles. His most important contribution was the steadfast encouragement he gave to the Illinois and Michigan canal, which was begun in 1836 and completed twelve years later.

SOPHOMORE LEGISLATOR

In June 1836, two months after the Ninth General Assembly adjourned, Lincoln announced his candidacy for reelection in a campaign statement far more breezy and succinct than the one he had issued four years earlier. He began by paying obeisance to the regnant egalitarianism of the day: “I go for all sharing the privileges of the government, who assist in bearing its burthens.” But to that platitudinous opening he added a startling pendant: “Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage, who pay taxes or bear arms, (by no means excluding females.)”^{ccxxvii}

^{ccxxv} Miller, Prairie Politician, 67-68; Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 39-40; Fraysse, Lincoln, Land, and Labor, 68.

^{ccxxvi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:45.

^{ccxxvii} Letter to the editor of the Sangamo Journal, [New Salem], 13 June 1836, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:48.

At that time, the exclusion of blacks from the franchise was hardly controversial in Illinois, a state full of southerners devoted to white supremacy. Indeed, hostility to black voting prevailed throughout the Old Northwest.^{ccxxviii} The Illinois constitution of 1818 limited voting rights to “white male inhabitants” at least twenty-one years of age. Membership in the militia was open to “free male ablebodied persons, negroes, mulattoes, and Indians excepted.” Between 1819 and 1846, the General Assembly outlawed interracial marriage and cohabitation, forbade blacks to testify in court against whites, and denied them the right to attend public schools.^{ccxxix} In 1848, by a margin of 60,585 to 15,903 (79% to 21%), the Illinois electorate adopted a new constitution banning black suffrage; it voted separately on an article prohibiting black immigration, which passed 50,261 to 21,297 (70% to 30%). Thus Illinois became the only free state forbidding blacks to settle within its borders.^{ccxxx} (In the following decade Oregon and Indiana followed the lead of the Prairie State.)^{ccxxxi}

^{ccxxviii} Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 30-59. Between 1849 and 1857, black suffrage was rejected by voters in Michigan (by 72%), in Iowa (by 86%), and in Wisconsin (by 61%). See also Henry Clyde Hubbard, “‘Pro-Southern’ Influence in the Free West, 1840-1865,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review 20 (1933): 45-62.

^{ccxxix} Charles Zucker, “The Free Negro Question: Race Relations in Ante Bellum Illinois, 1801-1860” (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973), 157-66; Mason McCloud Fishback, “Illinois Legislation on Slavery and Free Negroes, 1818-1865,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 9 (1904): 414-34. Other states had similar laws. See Leon F. Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), passim, and Charles H. Wesley, “Negro Suffrage in the Period of Constitution-Making, 1787-1865,” Journal of Negro History 32 (1947): 143-69. In 1862 Illinois voters rejected black suffrage by more than a five-to-one margin. V. Jacque Voegeli, Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 27.

^{ccxxx} The legislature did not pass an act enforcing the ban until 1853, when it adopted “undoubtedly the most severe anti-Negro measure passed by a free state.” Berwanger, Frontier Against Slavery, 49. In 1862, by a margin of more than two-to-one, the voters of Illinois once again endorsed a prohibition on black immigration. Voegeli, Free but Not Equal, 17.

^{ccxxxi} Berwanger, Frontier Against Slavery, 44-47, 80-83.

Sangamon County was more Negrophobic than the Illinois average (90% of its voters opposed the new constitution and 78% opposed black immigration.)^{ccxxxii} Of the Springfielders voting on black immigration, 84% supported the ban, including one third of those who voted for the Free Soil ticket in 1848.^{ccxxxiii} A southern Illinoisan observed that his neighbors born in slaveholding states brought with them “many of the prejudices they imbibed in infancy, and still hold negroes in the utmost contempt; not allowing them to be of the same species of themselves, but look on negers, as they call them, and Indians, as an inferior race of beings, and treat them as such.”^{ccxxxiv} (Elsewhere in the nation anthropologists like Samuel George Morton, John Bachman and Louis Agassiz argued that blacks constituted the “lowest grade” of humanity, “an inferior variety of our species.”)^{ccxxxv}

Lincoln’s suggestion that women be enfranchised, however, was hardly a campaign cliché. His proto-feminist endorsement of women’s suffrage may have been inspired by participation in debating and literary societies which addressed that question. At a meeting of such an organization in Springfield, he contributed some verses about the sexual double standard:

Whatever spiteful fools may say,
 Each jealous ranting yelper,
 No woman ever went astray

^{ccxxxii} Pease, ed., Illinois Election Returns, 173-81.

^{ccxxxiii} Kenneth J. Winkle, The Young Eagle: The Rise of Abraham Lincoln (Dallas: Taylor, 2001), 261.

^{ccxxxiv} John Woods, Two Years’ Residence on the English Prairie of Illinois, ed. Paul M. Angle (1822; Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1968), 175.

^{ccxxxv} Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58-63.

Without a man to help her.^{ccxxxvi}

According to William Herndon, Lincoln’s “idea was that a woman had the same right to play with her tail that a man had and no more nor less and that he had no moral or other right to violate the sacred marriage vow.”^{ccxxxvii}

Lincoln’s support for women’s suffrage and his opposition to sexual double standards reflected his sense of fair play, the bedrock of his political philosophy.^{ccxxxviii} In later years, he would never publicly raise the issue of votes for women, but he would speak and act in ways that prefigured the feminist sensibility of generations then unborn. In the late 1850s, he told a youthful female suffragist: “I believe you will vote, my young friend, before you are much older than I.”^{ccxxxix} He often predicted to Herndon “that that question [women’s

^{ccxxxvi} James Matheny, a friend of Lincoln and a member of the literary society, told this to Jesse W. Weik. Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 70. In one of Lincoln’s favorite joke books, there appears a similar bit of doggerel: “If poor weak women chance to go astray,/ Their . . . are more in fault than they.” Quin’s Jests: or, The Facetious Man’s Pocket Companion (London: S. Bladon, 1766), 9.

^{ccxxxvii} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 23 January 1890, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. Cf. Herndon to James H. Wilson, n.p., 23 September 1889, copy of excerpt, and Herndon to Weik, Springfield, 23 July 1890, ibid.

^{ccxxxviii} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 11 February 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. David Herbert Donald interprets Lincoln’s endorsement of women’s suffrage as a joke, arguing that “everybody knew that under Illinois law women neither paid taxes (husbands or guardians paid them for women who owned property) nor served in the militia.” Donald ignores Lincoln’s later manifestations of proto-feminism. Donald, Lincoln, 59. John Mack Faragher makes a similar point. But Faragher also notes that widows paid taxes. In a community near Springfield, women comprised 7% of the taxpayers. Illinois law allowed widows, divorcees, and spinsters to buy, sell, and manage property, upon which they were taxed. Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 105-9; Stacy Pratt McDermott, “Women, Business, and the Law: The Story of Henrietta Ulrich,” Lincoln and His Contemporaries: Papers from the Fourteenth Annual Lincoln Colloquium, Springfield, 1999 (Springfield: Lincoln Home, 2000), 108; Christopher A. Schnell, “Wives, Widows, and Will Makers: Women and the Law of Property,” in Daniel W. Stowell, ed., In Tender Consideration: Women, Families, and the Law in Abraham Lincoln’s Illinois (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 129-58. As David Bromwich pointed out in questioning Donald’s interpretation, “Women’s suffrage was in the air in the 1830s.” David Bromwich, “Lincoln’s Constitutional Necessity,” Raritan 20 (2001): 2. Richard Lawrence Miller sensibly concluded that Lincoln was not joking because such levity would have been “reckless” in a campaign document. Miller, Prairie Politician, 75. Donald wrongly views other statements by Lincoln as jokes. See below, chapter 6, for a discussion of Donald’s mistaken treatment of the miller, Jacob Tiger.

^{ccxxxix} The young woman was Lillian Conlee, who told this story to her granddaughter, Helen Ruth Reed. Reed, “A Prophecy Lincoln Made,” Boston Herald, 9 February 1930.

suffrage] was one of time only.”^{ccxl} During his presidency, Lincoln readily spared the lives of soldiers condemned to death by courts martial; the Judge Advocate General of the army, however, recalled that his mercy did not extend to rapists. “He shrank with evident pain from even the idea of shedding human blood. . . . In every case he always leaned to the side of mercy. His constant desire was to save life. There was only one class of crimes I always found him prompt to punish—a crime which occurs more or less frequently about all armies—namely, outrages upon women. He never hesitated to approve the sentence in these cases.”^{ccxli}

Wife-beaters also angered Lincoln, who in 1839 warned a hard-drinking Springfield cobbler to stop abusing his spouse. When this admonition went unheeded, Lincoln and some friends became vigilantes, as one of them later remembered: “The drunken shoemaker had forgotten Lincoln’s warning. It was late at night and we dragged the wretch to an open space back of a store building, stripped him of his shirt and tied him to a post. Then we sent for his wife, and arming her with a good stout switch bade her to ‘light in.’” She was “a little reluctant at first,” but “soon warmed up to her work, and emboldened by our encouraging and sometimes peremptory directions, performed her delicate task lustily and well. When the

^{ccxl} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 11 February 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon to John C. Henderson, n.p., n.d., William Hayes Ward, ed., Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates, Reminiscences of Soldiers, Statesmen and Citizens (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895), 21.

^{ccxli} Joseph Holt, interview with John G. Nicolay, 29 October 1879, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 69-70. For Lincoln’s handling of six individual rape cases, see Thomas P. Lowry, Don’t Shoot That Boy!: Abraham Lincoln and Military Justice (Macon City, Iowa: Savas, 1999), 56, 209, 214, 245-48, 255-56. Lowry has painstakingly examined the records of tens of thousands of Civil War court martial cases. Of the 276 Union soldiers executed during the Civil War, 22 were found guilty of rape. Once convicted, they were speedily dispatched, usually within seventy-two hours. Robert I. Alotta, Civil War Justice: Union Army Executions under Lincoln (Shippensburg: White Mane, 1989), 30. Alotta notes that Lincoln “provided clemency for all types of military offenders, except rapists.” Ibid., 31. On July 18, 1863, after spending six hours with the president and with Holt on courts martial decisions, John Hay noted in his diary: “I was amused at the eagerness with which the President caught at any fact which would justify him in saving the life of a condemned soldier. He was only merciless in cases where meanness or cruelty were shown.” Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettlinger, eds., Inside Lincoln’s White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 64.

culprit had been sufficiently punished, Lincoln gave the signal ‘Enough,’ and he was released; we helped him on with his shirt and he shambled ruefully toward his home. For his sake we tried to keep all knowledge of the affair from the public; but the lesson had its effect, for if he ever again molested his wife we never found it out.”^{ccxlii}

Lincoln “never indulged in gossip about the ladies, nor aided in the circulation of village scandal.” His “conversation was free from injurious comment in individual cases – freer from unpleasant allusions than that of most men.”^{ccxliii} (He was not always chivalrous. In New Salem, he once used his sharp wit to humiliate a young woman. While he was serving food at a party, “a girl there who thought herself pretty smart” protested that he filled her plate to overflowing. She remarked “quite pert and sharp, ‘Well, Mr. Lincoln, I didn’t want a cart-load.’” Later, when she returned for more food, he announced in a loud voice, “All right, Miss Liddy, back up your cart and I’ll fill it again.” The guests all laughed while Miss Liddy “went off by herself and cried the whole evening.”)^{ccxliv}

In a public letter announcing his candidacy for reelection in 1836, Lincoln also promised that as a legislator he would be guided by the wishes of his constituents insofar as he knew what those wishes were, and otherwise by “what my own judgment teaches me will best advance their interests.” The only policy issue he addressed was internal improvements,

^{ccxlii} James Matheny, quoted in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 70-71. Weik’s notes of Matheny’s statement read thus: “tied him to a post near a well back of [the] Court House[,] stripped his shirt—sent for his wife—who whaled him tremendously.” Lincoln had “wanted to do it himself a few days before.” James Matheny, interview with Jesse W. Weik, 12 September 1888, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 667. Lincoln’s other friends involved in this affair were Evan Butler and Noah Rickard.

^{ccxliii} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 82.

^{ccxliv} Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 7.

which he said should be funded with proceeds from the sale of federal lands rather than by state taxes and borrowing.^{ccxlv}

In the 1836 campaign, Lincoln joined the Whig leadership and became a virtuoso belittler of Democrats.^{ccxlv} A legislative colleague from Sangamon County, Robert L. Wilson, “said that Lincoln was by common consent looked up to and relied on as the leading Whig exponent; that he was the best versed and most captivating and trenchant speaker on their side; that he preserved his temper nearly always, and when extremely provoked, he did not respond with the illogical proposal to fight about it, but used the weapons of sarcasm and ridicule, and always prevailed.”^{ccxlvii}

Such weaponry was not uncommon in the arsenals of frontier politicians. Alexander P. Field, secretary of state of Illinois and a political ally of Lincoln, was “a fearful and terrible opponent in a political campaign,” “withering in sarcasm and repartee,” and possessed of “a marvelous capacity for invectives, which he used unsparingly.”^{ccxlviii} Congressman Thomas L. Harris, the leading Democrat in Menard County in the 1840s and 1850s, was celebrated for “his gift of sarcasm” as “keen as a Damascus blade.”^{ccxlix} A fellow Democrat in that county, Peter Cartwright, was known as a debater who “falls upon his

ccxlv Lincoln to the editor of the Sangamo Journal, 13 June 1836, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:48.

ccxlvii Robert Bray, “‘The Power to Hurt’: Lincoln’s Early Use of Satire and Invective,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 16 (1995): 43-51; W. A. Dahlberg, “Lincoln the Wit,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 31 (1945): 424-27; Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 147-55.

ccxlviii Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 127-28.

ccxlix Linder, Reminiscences, 206; John M. Palmer, Personal Recollections of John M. Palmer: The Story of an Earnest Life (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company, 1901), 31.

ccclx Illinois Woman’s Columbian Club of Menard County, Menard, Salem, Lincoln Souvenir Album (Petersburg, Illinois: Pantagraph, 1893), unpaginated.

antagonist with irresistible vigor and crushes him with sarcasm.”^{ccl} A Whig leader in Chicago, Justin Butterfield, “wielded the weapons of sarcasm and irony with crushing power, and was especially effective in invective.”^{ccli} Through the speeches of Richard Bissell, governor of Illinois from 1857 to 1860, ran “a vein of scathing and burning satire.”^{cclii} Kirby Benedict, a Democratic leader in Decatur, “was a master of satire, sarcasm and ridicule.”^{ccliii} In neighboring Indiana, the young Whig orator Caleb B. Smith (whom Lincoln would appoint secretary of the interior) crushed opponents with “his scathing sarcasm.”^{ccliv}

In the campaigns of 1832 and 1834, Robert L. Wilson recalled, Lincoln had been “bashful and timid” and had “confined himself to the strictly rural districts.” But in 1836, “he put away his maiden reserve, and spoke as unrestrainedly at Springfield as at New Salem. He gained the approval and applause of his friends and the respect and fear of his enemies, and became, by that very canvass, a leader of his party in Sangamon County, which distinction he never lost.”^{cclv} Wilson noted that Lincoln “nearly always” kept his temper. A week after he declared his candidacy, however, he found it difficult to do so. When Colonel Robert Allen, a leading Democrat known as a “great blow,” a “wild exaggerator, & somewhat of a l[ia]r,” told New Salemites that he could destroy the young politician by revealing information that he had learned, but that he would forbear releasing it, Lincoln charged that Allen would be “a

^{ccl} Frederick J. Jobson, America, and American Methodism (London: J. S. Virtue, 1857), 210, quoted in Bray, Peter Cartwright, 180.

^{ccli} Isaac N. Arnold, “Recollections of the Early Chicago and Illinois Bar,” Chicago Bar Association Lectures, no. 22 (Chicago: Fergus, 1882), 13.

^{cclii} Linder, Reminiscences, 177.

^{ccliii} Ralph Emerson Twitchell, Old Santa Fe: The Story of New Mexico’s Ancient Capital (Santa Fe: Santa Fe Mexican Press, 1925), 351.

^{ccliv} Richard J. Thomas, “Caleb B. Smith: Whig Orator and Politician – Lincoln’s Secretary of Interior” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1969), 29.

^{cclv} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 129. Whitney said of Wilson: “From Mr. Wilson, whom I knew intimately . . ., I learned much of the career of the great President in those early days.” Ibid., 140.

traitor to his country’s interest” if he refused to make public his supposedly damaging facts.^{cclvi} Later in the campaign, Lincoln called an anonymous critic “a liar and a scoundrel” and threatened “to give his proboscis a good wringing.”^{cclvii}

When angry, Lincoln often resorted to sarcasm and ridicule. In July 1836, during a debate at Springfield, he was attacked by George Forquer, a Democratic leader whom Lincoln had derided in the Sangamo Journal as “King George,” “the royal George,” and “the most unpopular of all the party.”^{cclviii} Forquer, who had recently converted from the anti-Jacksonians to the Democratic party and had subsequently won appointment as register of the Springfield land office, owned a splendid home, widely considered the finest in Springfield. Adorning it was a lightning rod, an invention that fascinated Lincoln.^{cclix} In a “slasher-gaff” speech, Forquer said: “This young man will have to be taken down; and I am truly sorry that the task devolves upon me.” Lincoln responded witheringly: “The gentleman commenced his speech by saying that this young man would have to be taken down, alluding to me; I am not so young in years as I am in the tricks and trades of the politician; but live long, or die young, I would rather die now than, like the gentleman, change my politics, and

^{cclvi} Lincoln to Allen, New Salem, 21 June 1836, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:48-49; William Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 23 January 1886, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 113-14; Paul Selby to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 16 August 1885, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 594; J. C. Thompson to Albert J. Beveridge, Springfield, 8 January 1925, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cclvii} Undated handbill [ca. July 1836], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln 8:429.

^{cclviii} Vandalia correspondence, 26 and 27 December 1835, Sangamo Journal, 2 January 1836.

^{cclix} On Forquer’s switch from the Whig to the Democratic party, see Anson G. Henry’s letters in the Sangamo Journal, 6 and 13 June 1835, and Henry to Forquer, Springfield, 14 June 1836, ibid., 18 June 1836. On his house, see Tom Cavanaugh, “A City Is Not Buildded in a Day: The Architecture of Springfield, Illinois, 1819-1949” (thesis, University of Illinois, Department of Art, 1949), 6-8.

simultaneous with the change receive an office worth \$3,000 per year, and then have to erect a lightning-rod over my house to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God.”^{cclx}

In that same canvass, Lincoln attacked other Democratic leaders, most notably Dr. Jacob M. Early, a physician and Methodist minister known as “The Fighting Parson,” whose skinning by Lincoln became a legend in Sangamon County.^{cclxi} At a Springfield meeting, Lincoln, Early, John Calhoun, Peter Quinton, and Ninian W. Edwards addressed a large audience in the courthouse. After Edwards opened the event, the impulsive, hot-tempered Early, “who was regarded as one of the most effective debaters in the State,” followed. He “was severe upon Edwards,” who “climbed on a table so as to be seen by Dr Early and every one in the house, and at the top of his voice told Early that the charge was false.”^{cclxii} Among other things, Early had said that a Springfield Whig (perhaps Edwards) had chided the Democrats for their stand on black suffrage and “would sooner see his daughter married to a negro than a poor white man.”^{cclxiii} Edwards was “constitutionally an aristocrat” who “hated democracy as the devil is said to hate holy water.”^{cclxiv}

^{cclx} Joshua F. Speed, Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln and Notes of a Visit to California: Two Lectures (Louisville: John P. Morton, 1884), 17-18; Speed’s statement, Louisville, 1882, Oldroyd, ed., Lincoln Memorial, 143-45; Speed, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 478; Speed, statement for Herndon, [by 1882], *ibid.*, 589. Lincoln’s complaint that Forquer had sold out his political principles for an office had long been a staple of Whig campaign rhetoric. Sangamo Journal, 6 and 13 June 1835, 19 November 1836. For a similarly effective retort used by Alexander P. Field, see Linder, Reminiscences, 206-7.

^{cclxi} Arnold, Life of Lincoln, 49; John Richard Weber, “An Episode of Journalism in 1840,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 23 (1930): 508.

^{cclxii} Robert L. Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 203.

^{cclxiii} Account of the meeting by “Up to the Hub,” Sangamo Journal, 16 July 1836. Early responded by challenging Edwards to a duel, which was cancelled when friends intervened. Two years later Early was killed by a political opponent. Harry E. Pratt, “Abraham Lincoln’s First Murder Trial,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 37 (1944): 242-49.

^{cclxiv} Linder, Reminiscences, 280.

Provoked by Early's speech, Lincoln challenged him. A witness reported that at first, "he appeared embarrassed, and his air was such as modest merit always lends to one who speaks of his own acts. He claimed only so much credit as belonged to one of the members of the last Legislature, for getting the State out of debt." As he progressed, Lincoln's "speech became more fluent, and his manner more easy." He "lifted the lid, and exposed to the eye the wretched condition of some of the acts of the Van Buren party. A girl might be born and become a mother before the Van Buren men will forget Mr. Lincoln. From beginning to end Mr. Lincoln was frequently interrupted by loud bursts of applause from a generous people."^{cclxv} Lincoln spoke "in that tenor intonation of voice that ultimately settled down into that clear Shrill monotone Style of Speaking, that enabled his audience, however large, to hear distinctly the lowest Sound of his voice."^{cclxvi} According to John Locke Scripps's 1860 campaign biography, when Lincoln took his seat, "his reputation was made." He had not only "achieved a signal victory over the acknowledged champion of Democracy, but he had placed himself, by a single effort, in the very front rank of able and eloquent debaters. The surprise of his audience was only equaled by their enthusiasm; and of all the surprised people on that memorable occasion, perhaps no one was more profoundly astonished than Lincoln himself."^{cclxvii}

Lincoln also belittled others. In July at Springfield, he "skinned" Richard Quinton, and at a meeting in Mechanicsburg he "peeled" another Democrat.^{cclxviii} Such tactics could be

^{cclxv} Account of the meeting by "Up to the Hub," Sangamo Journal, 16 July 1836.

^{cclxvi} Robert L. Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 203. See also John B. Weber, interview with Herndon, Pawnee, Illinois, [ca. 1 November 1866], ibid., 388.

^{cclxvii} Scripps, Life of Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 73-74.

^{cclxviii} James Gourley, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 451.

dangerous, for violence was not unknown in Illinois politics. After Usher Linder ridiculed the mayor of Quincy, that official ambushed him with a stout cudgel, landing several blows on the back of his head. Theophilus W. Smith, a state supreme court justice, once pulled a gun on Governor Ninian Edwards, who seized the weapon and broke Judge Smith's jaw with it. At Springfield in 1839, Isaac P. Walker, after absorbing verbal abuse from attorney E. G. Ryan, flogged his traducer. Fifteen years later, Paul Selby, editor of the Morgan Journal, was caned on the streets of Jacksonville for criticism appearing in that paper.^{cclxix}

What Lincoln said as he peeled and skinned his victims during the campaign is unrecorded, but many abusive, insulting, heavy-handed anonymous and pseudonymous attacks on Democrats, probably by him, appeared in the Sangamo Journal. In 1835 and 1836, that Whig paper ran satirical letters ostensibly written by prominent Democrats, making their authors look ridiculous.^{cclxx} Lincoln almost certainly wrote them. In February 1836, the Journal published two such epistles over the signature "Johnny Blubberhead," a mocking sobriquet for George R. Weber, co-editor of Springfield's Jacksonian newspaper, The Republican. Composed in a primitive dialect like that of Lincoln's 1842 pseudonymous "Rebecca" missive (whose authorship Lincoln acknowledged), the first "Blubberhead" letter satirized various Democratic leaders and the recently-introduced convention system. John Calhoun, a prominent Democrat, was burlesqued shamelessly. Blubberhead (Weber) reports to Democratic Congressman William L. May: "Since Cal[houn] lost part of his ear against

^{cclxix} Linder, Reminiscences, 240-42, 260, 357, 378; Springfield correspondence, 13 January, Alton Telegraph, 25 January 1840; Selby v. Dunlap (1853-54), case file # 00871, Martha L. Benner and Cullom Davis et al., eds., The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln: Complete Documentary Edition, DVD-ROM (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Walker later became a U.S. senator and Ryan a justice of the Wisconsin state supreme court.

^{cclxx} Sangamo Journal, 18 and 25 July, 1, 15, and 22 August, 24 September, 31 October, 7 November, 5 and 12 December 1835; 30 January, 12, 19, and 26 March, 2 and 30 April, 4, 11, and 25 June, 5, 12 and 19 November, and 10 December 1836.

the mantel piece he's been lopsided, and I thinks it hurt his eyedears. He's given greatly to talking to heself; and I heard him talk tother day so I was afeared that somethin was brewen. He said if he took \$200 twas nobodys business; he needed it – he'd worked for the party – and he'd be (and then he used an awful word) if he did'nt blow up the whole party if they didn't do somthin for him." Blubberhead (Weber) recommended firing all the postmasters and outlawing the distribution through the mail of the Sangamo Journal as the "way what would make dimocrats of the Van Buren system." He complained that May had allowed another printer, William Walters of Vandalia, to receive government patronage in Illinois: "This aint fair; you promised to give me all the printin and I holds you to your bargain. I would'nt a left the anti-masons if you had'nt promised me." Alluding to charges against May involving theft and lechery, Blubberhead warned him against trying "your old Edwardsville tricks."^{cclxxi}

May was an easy target for ridicule. A "man of good address and a capital stump-speaker," he served in the Illinois House of Representatives in the late 1820s and subsequently in the U.S. House of Representatives (1834-1839).^{cclxxii} With "a very fair complexion and sandy hair" and a "powerful frame," he had "received a fair education, but that was all. He was a politician by profession, and was a fairly good lawyer as well."^{cclxxiii} In 1834, a Springfield clergyman said that a "greater compound of meanness and stupidity was never mingled" than in May, who "was accused of having been guilty of a burglary a few years since. This charge was published in a newspaper. He immediately wrote to some of his

^{cclxxi} Johnny Blubberhead to "My inestemable friend," Springfield, 17 February, Sangamo Journal, 20 February 1836.

^{cclxxii} History of Sangamon County, Illinois (Chicago: Inter-State, 1881), 91.

^{cclxxiii} Caton, Early Bench and Bar, 117-18.

friends who were acquainted with the transaction, and published a reply from one of them, which stated that at the time of the trial, it was the general impression that he [May] did not enter the House in the night time with a design to commit murder, but for the sake of an illicit intercourse with some female there. This, Mr. May published as his defense, and called upon the people to overlook the follies of his youth!”^{cclxxiv}

The second Johnny Blubberhead letter was equally crude. Its author bemoaned the failure of the country to go to war with England in order to enhance Martin Van Buren’s electoral prospects. “We is very sorry that England has offered to mediate. Why did’nt you tell Mr. Van Buren not to accept it. If we can get a war agoing, as you say, we can use up all the revenue so that [Henry] Clay’s Bill [to distribute revenues from land sales to the states] can’t pass – and so as we can have thousands of officers to electioneer for Mr. Van Buren.” Blubberhead declared that “I is sorry Mr. Adams has become a dimocrat – because as how a good many of our friends thinks it strange; and if they should come to find out that Mr. Van Buren depends altogether on the federals for his election, they will go off from us like shot from a shovel.”^{cclxxv}

The following month, the Sangamo Journal published a letter ostensibly by Congressman May, but doubtless by Lincoln, in which the author laments to Weber that “the difficulty with France is settled. As we must have a war at any rate, we are determined it shall be directed against the surplus funds of the [federal] treasury. If we help ourselves to those funds, we can elect any man President we please. You know the potency of the ‘spoils.’ Do all you can against Clay’s Land Bill by talking; but don’t publish anything on the subject.

^{cclxxiv} B. Willis to Artemas Hale, 26 December 1834, Lincoln Presidential Library, quoted in Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 19.

^{cclxxv} Johnny Blubberhead to “My Dear Friend,” Springfield, 29 [sic] February, Sangamo Journal, 27 February 1836.

Should that bill pass and the surplus funds be divided among the States to make rail roads and canals and pay school-masters, the thing would be out with us. If we were to be deprived of the ‘spoils,’ we should be as weak as was Samson when shorn of his locks by Delilah.”^{cclxxvi}

William Walters had reportedly urged Congressman May to admit publicly that in 1832 he had written a letter recounting the story of a corrupt bargain involving two Whigs, George Forquer and John Calhoun, who allegedly agreed to switch parties in return for appointment to government offices.^{cclxxvii} In his supposed reply, May expressed anxiety that “the people of the West are too independent and highminded to submit to our dictation.” But Van Buren assured him that in time they would come around: “He says the people of New York proved somewhat refractory when the harness was first put upon them, and frequently kicked out of the traces, and occasionally broke the heads of their drivers; but by a free use of the whip and spur, holding a tight rein, and making examples of a few of the first offenders, they became so docile and gentle, that he could guide them without reins by the crook of his finger, or wink of the eye.” In Washington, the system worked well: “Every thing that is determined by our chief is promptly executed, right or wrong. This thing of political honesty, which our opponents stickle so much about, has long since been ‘expunged’ from the vocabulary of our party.” Blubberhead regretted that May’s opponent would be John Todd Stuart: “This I have been dreading for a long time. You know he has ever been a thorn in our side, and that all our efforts to break him down, have failed.”^{cclxxviii}

^{cclxxvi} Letter by “May,” Washington, 13 February, Sangamo Journal, 19 March 1836.

^{cclxxvii} Letter dated Springfield, 23 March, Sangamo Journal, 2 April 1836. See also Sangamo Journal, 19 March 1836 (letter by “May” dated Washington, 13 February 1836).

^{cclxxviii} Letter dated Springfield, 9 April, Sangamo Journal, 30 April 1836.

Other satirical letters purportedly by Democrats, full of sarcastic humor, focused on voting rights for blacks. Martin Van Buren, the Democratic presidential heir-apparent, had fifteen years earlier endorsed limited suffrage for free blacks in New York.^{cclxxix} In 1840, Lincoln would openly attack Van Buren for this stand.^{cclxxx} In 1836, he may have done so publicly, but the meager record of his speeches for that year does not show it. Anonymous and pseudonymous journalism probably by Lincoln, however, bristles with such assaults, which were not uncommon throughout the country. (There is a grim irony in Lincoln's denunciation of Van Buren's support of limited voting rights for blacks, for in 1865 John Wilkes Booth murdered Lincoln for publicly endorsing that very policy.)

To embarrass Van Buren and his supporters, Whigs in the 1835-36 special session of the Illinois legislature introduced a resolution condemning several policies that Democrats generally favored, including the following: "Colored persons ought not to be admitted to the

^{cclxxix} In August 1821, a constitutional convention assembled in Albany, where a committee on voting rights proposed an amendment stipulating that "[e]very white male citizen of the age of 21 years who shall have resided in the state for six months next preceding any election, and shall within one year preceding the election have paid any tax assessed upon him . . . shall be allowed to vote." John Jay moved an amendment striking out the word "white," thus allowing free blacks to vote; it passed by a narrow margin (63-59), Van Buren siding with the majority. In October, Van Buren voted for an amendment which would enfranchise only those blacks who owned at least \$250 worth of property. He also supported a plan exempting blacks from taxation until they had accumulated enough property to be eligible for the suffrage. In explaining his vote, he said "he had voted against a total and unqualified exclusion, for he would not draw a revenue from them (the blacks) and yet deny them the right of suffrage. But this provision met his approbation. They were exempted from taxation until they had qualified to vote. The right was not designed to exclude any portion of the community who will not exercise the right of suffrage in its purity. This held out inducement to industry, and would receive his support." Nathaniel H. Carter and William L. Stone, Reports of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of 1821 Assembled for the Purpose of Amending the Constitution of the State of New-York (Albany: Hosford, 1821), 255-65, 367-68, 376. On the convention of 1821, see Phyllis F. Field, The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 35-37; Peter J. Galie, Ordered Liberty: A Constitutional History of New York (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 76-77; John Anthony Casais, "The New York State Constitutional Convention of 1821 and its Aftermath" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1967); Dixon Ryan Fox, "The Negro Vote in Old New York," Political Science Quarterly 32 (1917): 258-63. The committee charged with dealing with black suffrage recommended that the limited access to the ballot which free blacks had enjoyed for over forty years be entirely removed. Some protested that all property requirements should be removed regardless of race. Neither side prevailed; the convention decided to allow blacks who met a \$250 property qualification to vote while simultaneously removing property qualifications for whites. By 1825, only 298 blacks (out of a total black population of 29,701) were able to meet that qualification.

^{cclxxx} Speech of 2 May 1840, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:210.

right of suffrage.”^{cclxxxix} When, as expected, the Democrats voted against that omnibus resolution, Whigs, including Lincoln, taunted them for implicitly endorsing black voting rights.^{cclxxxii} The Sangamo Journal protested that Illinois “is threatened to be overrun with free negroes” and suggested that such undesirables be sent to Van Buren’s home state of New York.^{cclxxxiii} (The census of 1835 showed that of the 17,523 people in Sangamon County, only 104 were black.) The editor denounced Van Buren’s running mate, Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky, as “the husband of a negro wench, and the father of a band of mulattoes.” (In fact, Johnson had a black mistress who bore him two children.) As election day drew near in 1836, the Journal asked: “If Mr. Van Buren be made the president, is it not reasonable to suppose that before his term of service expires, free negro suffrage will prevail throughout the nation? If Col. Johnson be elected, will not every future aspirant to the vice presidency, set about qualifying himself for public favor by marrying a negress? If these men be elected, how long before poor white girls will become the waiting maids of sooty wenches? How long before we shall have a negro president? How long before white men and black men will have passed away, and the whole population of the country become one huge

^{cclxxxix} The other resolutions were: “President making is foreign to the duties of legislatures. President making destroys the harmony of legislation. Every man who is eligible to an office has an undeniable right to become a candidate for the same. The people have a right to vote for whom they please without the sanction of caucuses or conventions. Public officers should not attempt to influence elections. The price of public lands ought to be reduced. There should be no property qualification to entitle a man to vote. Pre-emption rights ought to be granted to actual settlers upon public lands.” Sangamo Journal, 16 January 1836.

^{cclxxxii} A Whig aspirant for the General Assembly, Andrew McCormick, said in his declaration of candidacy, “some of the supporters of that gentleman [Van Buren] have declared themselves in favor of extending the right of suffrage to free blacks. I am opposed to this doctrine.” Similarly, John Dawson announced his support for “the great principle of civil liberty: that all white men, rich or poor, have an equal right to elect, or to be elected, to office.” Lincoln’s good friend from Athens, Robert L. Wilson, declared: “I most unqualifiedly hold that all white male inhabitants possessing a constitutional qualification, whether opulent or indigent, should exercise the inestimable right of electing or being elected to any office with the gift of the People.” Ninian W. Edwards of Springfield stated that “if any believe in the propriety of extending the right of suffrage to free negroes, such an opinion must be the result of ignorance or a want of principle.” J. M. S. Smith of Carlinville “unqualifiedly” opposed the “extension of the right of suffrage to free negroes.” Sangamo Journal, 18 and 25 June, 2 July 1836.

^{cclxxxiii} Sangamo Journal, 7 November 1835.

mass of degenerate and stupid mulatoes?”^{cclxxxiv} Many opponents of Van Buren harped on Johnson’s domestic life.^{cclxxxv}

In January 1836, Lincoln’s anonymous dispatch to the Sangamo Journal chastised Democratic legislators for opposing the proposition “that the elective franchise should be kept free from contamination by the admission of colored voters.”^{cclxxxvi} Four months later, as the political campaign heated up, a letter in the Sangamo Journal, probably by Lincoln, put the following words into the mouth of a Democratic congressman: “if we could only carry our plan into effect to allow free negroes to vote . . . I think our democratic principles would flourish for a long time.”^{cclxxxvii} In the same issue of the Sangamo Journal appeared a letter ostensibly written by a black gentleman named “Sees-Her,” but in all likelihood composed by Lincoln:

“Massa Prenter:

“When I was up dare in Springfield the pepul kep axin me, How’s the election gwine down in your parts? Now I couldnt den exactly precisely tell how de folks was gwine – but I been asken all around sence, and I gest wants to tell presactly how it is. De gemm’en ob coler all gwine for dat man wat writes de epitaphs of truth and vartue wid a syringe – some to Mr. Katshoun [Calhoun], and skuire the Builder [William Carpenter]. Dis brings me to a write understandin – for to no what make de niggers all vote for dese men.

^{cclxxxiv} Sangamo Journal, 3 September 1836. Johnson, the paper said, “when young, took to his bed a negress, made her the mother of a family of mulatoes, and finally upon her death, took a second daughter of Africa, and by whom he may become the parent of a second edition of mulatoes.” See also ibid., 24 September 1836.

^{cclxxxv} Thomas Brown, “The Miscegenation of Richard Mentor Johnson as an Issue in the National Election Campaign of 1835-36,” Civil War History 39 (1993): 5-30.

^{cclxxxvi} Vandalia correspondence, 6 January, Sangamo Journal, 16 January 1836.

^{cclxxxvii} Letter dated Washington, 27 April, Sangamo Journal, 4 June 1836.

“Now I spose you knows as how you sees dese men goes for Wanjuren [Van Buren], and that dare tudder man wat lub de nigger so. Wanjuren says de nigger all shall vote, and dat oder man in Kentucky state [Richard M. Johnson], is goin to make all the nigger women’s children white. Oh hush, ha, he, ho! Youd split your sides laffin to hear Capun [Calhoun] – tell how much Wanjuren is goin to do for de nigger – de ways deys goin for him, man – oh, hush! and dat man who used to buse old Jackson so, case as how he was ginst the niggers votin – ah, law! de way he roots for Wanjuren now is sorter singular – he look precisely like a pig off in a Corn Field – wid one ear marked, so he massa know ‘em. De way de niggers is goin for him now, oh hush! And skuire, the builder, de ways dey is going to run him ahead em all aint nobodys business – kase as how hese goin to sen all dese poor white folks off to Library [Liberia], and let the free niggers vote – and wen we send all dese tarnal white folks off, we’s e goin to send him to Kongress, and den de niggers will be in town! oh, hush!

“In grait haist, yours.”^{cclxxxviii}

In June, Lincoln evidently composed a letter purportedly written by a Democrat lamenting that some party loyalists had grown disenchanted with their legislative ticket of “three preachers and an advocate for the right of suffrage to be extended to negroes.”^{cclxxxix} That month, another such letter (probably by Lincoln) had a Democrat complain: “The people are up in arms about the matter [the Democrats’ vote in the legislature on black suffrage.] They say . . . that they don’t like that a free negro should crowd them away from the polls.” They were upset because “two of the Van Buren Electoral Ticket . . . voted that . . . free negroes ought to vote at elections.”^{ccxc} Into the mouth of a Democratic editor whose

^{cclxxxviii} Sangamo Journal, 4 June 1836.

^{cclxxxix} Anonymous letter from North Fork, 4 June, Sangamo Journal, 11 June 1836.

^{ccxc} Letter dated Springfield, 14 June, Sangamo Journal, 18 June 1836.

paper (The Republican) had collapsed, an anonymous satirist (probably Lincoln) put these words: “We were the more anxious to keep the Republican agoing, because we wished to defend the conduct of our friends in the Legislature last winter, in regard to their votes in favor of negro suffrage I do believe if free negroes were allowed to vote here, they [the Democrats] would get every vote.”^{ccxcxi}

In July, a letter by a “Democrat” (probably Lincoln) had another Democrat explain why one of their candidates, William Carpenter, had dropped out: “at the last session of the Illinois Legislature the squire voted to allow free negroes the right of suffrage.” This “Democrat” then asked: “Now if this is an objection against the squire, will it not apply with double force to Mr. Van Buren, our candidate for the Presidency? Did not Mr. Van Buren first bring forward this odious measure in the New York Convention? I say most positively that he did; and for proof of the statement I refer you to the journals of the Convention of 1821, Sept. 19, page 106.”^{ccxcii} (Democratic candidates for the legislature denied that they favored black suffrage.)^{ccxciii}

In fact, Van Buren disliked slavery but believed it should be dealt with by state and local governments, not the federal government; supported the abolition of property qualifications for white New Yorkers in 1821 and the retention of such qualifications for blacks; and opposed the abolition of slavery in Washington, D.C. During the 1836 campaign, he publicly declared: “I must go into the presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of any attempt on the part of congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the wishes of the slave holding states; and also with the determination equally decided to

^{ccxcxi} Letter dated Springfield, 23 June, Sangamo Journal, 25 June 1836. George R. Weber and William Walters edited the Springfield Republican.

^{ccxcii} Letter from a Democrat, Lick Creek, 2 July, Sangamo Journal, 9 July 1836.

^{ccxciii} Among them were Stinson H. Anderson and Richard Quinton. Sangamo Journal, 9 July 1836.

resist the slightest interference with the subject in the states where it exists.”^{ccxciv} In private, Van Buren urged important New York friends to attack abolitionists.^{ccxcv} This assault on Van Buren’s support for limited black suffrage would be repeated vigorously in 1840 and was still being cited as late as the presidential campaign two decades thereafter.^{ccxcvi}

When not engaged in race-baiting, Lincoln excoriated the Democrats’ newly established convention system, which Ebenezer Peck and Stephen A. Douglas had introduced in December 1835.^{ccxcvii} Previously, any Democrat who wished to run for office simply announced his intention and entered the race; now candidates must win endorsement at a nominating convention.^{ccxcviii} Lincoln called adherents of this innovation “slaves of the magician [Martin Van Buren],” “eastern trading politicians,” and “Hartford Convention federalists from New England,” whereas Democrats opposing Peck’s innovation were men “born and raised west of the mountains” and “south of the Potomac.”^{ccxcix} The author of some satirical letters to the Journal (probably Lincoln) had a Democrat bemoan his party’s failure to hold a county caucus to nominate officers: “The people are not yet sufficiently drilled for this purpose.”^{ccc} Writing under the name “Spoon River,” a correspondent (probably Lincoln) denounced the convention system for assuming “that six men can regulate the affairs of Fulton County better than six hundred; that our old backwoodsmen, squatters, and pioneers

^{ccxciv} Van Buren to Junius Amis et al., 4 March 1836, quoted in William G. Shade, “‘The Most Delicate and Exciting Topics’: Martin Van Buren, Slavery, and the Election of 1836,” Journal of the Early Republic 18 (1998): 478.

^{ccxcv} Holt, Rise and Fall of the Whig Party, 44.

^{ccxcvi} “Foolish Falsehoods,” Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, 23 October 1860.

^{ccxcvii} Robert W. Johannsen, Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 41-42; Sangamo Journal, 12 December 1835 (dispatches of December 7 and 8).

^{ccxcviii} James Stanton Chase, “Jacksonian Democracy and the Rise of the Nominating Convention,” Mid-America 45 (1963): 22-49.

^{ccxcix} Sangamo Journal, 2 and 16 January 1836 (dispatches of December 26 and January 6).

have no right to think, and act, for themselves, when with the aid of this machine six men can do it for them, with perfect ease.”^{ccci}

In a letter ostensibly by the Democratic state printer, William Walters, the author (probably Lincoln) ridiculed Stephen A. Douglas for imposing the convention system on his district: “To cap the climax of our mishaps lately, I am told that our faithful man Douglas admitted in public that he was the father of the convention system in Morgan county, and did pass a resolution declaring that no man should be supported by the republicans of Morgan for office unless he was nominated by this convention. Now, really, this is too bad: he must be laboring under mental derangement; for he certainly has sense enough, when himself, to keep from cutting his own jugular, to say nothing of the party. It would seem that the old proverb is about to be verified, ‘that the devil helps us into difficulties, but never helps us out.’ Something must be done for him, notwithstanding he has done us more harm in this instance than he can do us good in a life time. He must be dismissed from service and put upon half pay.”^{cccii}

Lincoln also ridiculed George Forquer. When U.S. Senator Elias Kent Kane died in 1835, Lincoln poked fun at the Democrats who scrambled to replace him: “This news had the magic effect, to produce much of both feigned sorrow and heart-felt rejoicing.” Kane’s “greatest political friends are glad of it, not that they loved him less, but that they loved his

^{ccc} Letter dated Springfield, 23 March, Sangamo Journal, 2 April 1836.

^{ccci} Undated letter by “Spoon River,” Sangamo Journal, 11 June 1836.

^{cccii} Letter from Springfield, 9 April, Sangamo Journal, 30 April 1836.

office more.”^{ccciii} (Forquer denounced the author of this piece as “a monster, devoid of the ordinary susceptibilities of humanity.”)^{ccciv}

While ridiculing political foes, Lincoln praised his friends, like John Todd Stuart. Referring to the passage of the canal bill, he declared that northern Illinois “is under the strongest obligations to the untiring zeal of Mr. Stuart . . . , who has spared no pains in a high minded and honorable way to secure the accomplishment of this great work.”^{cccv} Lincoln called Archibald Williams “much the closest reasoner in the Senate” and asserted that it would “be a gratification to any man to hear him tear in tatters the new democracy. Did I say man? That is wrong; for I do not expect the hired tools of Van Buren to be pleased with any remarks leading to the exposure of their hollow professions.”^{cccv}

Lincoln assailed the “Monster party” for delaying construction of the Illinois and Michigan canal.^{cccvi} He claimed the Democrats were blocking that internal improvement until they could vest the legislature with the power to appoint canal commissioners. Lincoln caustically observed that “there are men hanging on here who are bankrupt in principle, business habits, and every thing else who have the promises of these offices as soon as they shall be made elective.”^{cccviii} Lincoln referred to Democratic supporters of Martin Van Buren as “ruffle-shirted Vannies,” whereas supporters of his own favorite candidate for the Whig presidential nomination (Tennessee Senator Hugh Lawson White) he called “the people.”^{cccix}

^{ccciii} Sangamo Journal, 2 January 1836 (dispatches of December 26 and 27).

^{ccciv} Springfield Republican, n.d., quoted in the Sangamo Journal, 16 January 1836.

^{cccv} Sangamo Journal, 16 January 1836 (dispatch of January 7).

^{cccv} Sangamo Journal, 19 December 1835 (dispatch of December 14). See also Linder, Reminiscences, 239.

^{cccvii} Sangamo Journal, 19 December 1835 (dispatch of December 13).

^{cccviii} Sangamo Journal, 2 January 1836 (dispatch of 26 December 1835).

^{cccix} Sangamo Journal, 19 December 1835 (dispatch of December 13) and 16 January 1836 (dispatch of January 7). “There is no one here whose sole business it is to puff Judge White; consequently I seldom hear his

(Though White was a Jacksonian, his candidacy was viewed by many in the South and West as a protest against the “dictation” of northern Democrats who had selected Van Buren.)

Lincoln and other Whigs called Democrats “locofocos,” a term originally applied to the most radical faction of the party, which allegedly had abandoned Jeffersonian and Jacksonian principles. When opponents denounced that tactic, Lincoln responded with a story about a farmer who captured a skunk in his hen house. In response to the varmint’s protest that he was no polecat, the farmer said: “You look like a polecat, . . . act like one, smell like one and you are one, by God, and I’ll kill you, innocent & friendly to me as you say you are.” The locofocos, Lincoln continued, “‘claim to be true democrats, but they are only locofocos—they look like locofocos, . . . act like locofocos,’ and turning up his nose and backing away a little . . . as if the smell was about to smother him, ‘are locofocos by God.’” Lincoln’s audience “nearly bursted their sides laughing.”^{cccx}

One of his fellow Whig candidates for the legislature, Robert L. Wilson of Athens, recalled that in the 1836 canvass “Lincoln took a leading part, espouseing the Whig side of all those questions, manifesting Skill and tact in offensive and defensive debates, presenting his arguments with great force and ability, and boldly attacking the questions and positions taken by opposing Candidates.” Wilson ascribed Lincoln’s success in debates to his unusual approach: “He was, on the stump, and in the Halls of Legislation a ready Debater, manifesting extraordinary ability in his peculiar manner of presenting his subject.” Eschewing “the beaten track of other Speakers, and Thinkers,” Lincoln “appeared to

name except when I go among the people, where (God be praised!) I hear nothing else.” Vandalia correspondence, 13 December, Sangamo Journal, 19 December 1835. In the 1836 presidential election, the Whigs held no nominating convention. White ran for president as the favorite among anti-Jackson forces in the South, while William Henry Harrison ran as the favorite of the West and Daniel Webster filled that role in New England.

comprehend the whole situation of the Subject, and take hold of its first principles.” His “remarkable faculty for concentration” enabled him “to present his subject in such a manner as nothing but conclusions were presented.” He did not reach “conclusions from premises, laid down, and eliminated; but his mode of reasoning was purely analytical; his reasons and conclusions were always drawn from analogy.” Wilson likened his memory to “a great Store house in which was Stored away all the facts acquired by reading but principally by observation; and intercourse with men Woman and children, in their Social, and business relations; learning and weighing the motives that prompt each act in life.” That unusually retentive memory supplied Lincoln “with an inexhaustible fund of facts, from which he would draw conclusions, and illustrating every Subject however complicated with anecdotes drawn from all classes of Society, accomplishing the double purpose, of not only proving his Subject by the anecdote, But the anecdote itself possessing so much point and force, that no one ever forgets, after hearing Mr Lincoln tell a Story, either the argument of the Story, the Story itself, or the author.”^{cccxi}

One of Lincoln’s stiffest political opponents, John Hill (son of the New Salem merchant Samuel Hill), offered a similar analysis of his remarkable eloquence.^{cccxii} “The convincing power of Mr. Lincoln’s plain conversational method of address,” recalled Hill, was “marvelous and almost ir[r]esistable, Plain, candid and honest, without the slightest

^{cccX} Herndon’s recollection of a story he heard Lincoln tell often, n.d., Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. See also his similar spoofing of Democrats in his speech on the sub-treasury, 26 December 1839, in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:177-78.

^{cccxi} Robert L. Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 202-5.

^{cccxii} On Hill’s opposition to Lincoln, see Hill, Lincoln’s Abolitionism (St. Louis: Missouri Republican, 1860); Hill, Opposing Principles of Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln (St. Louis: Knapp, 1860); Hill, Speech of John Hill, Delivered at Petersburg, Ill. August 28th, 1860 . . . (St. Louis: Knapp, 1860); and Jay Monaghan, “New Light on the Lincoln-Rutledge Romance,” Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 3 (1944): 138-45. In addition to running the family business, Hill (1839-98) edited the Menard Axis, a Democratic newspaper.

effort at display or oratory.” He carried his auditors “along to unconscious conviction. The benign expression of his face and his earnest interest in the subject, asserted with such simplicity, secured sympathetic absorption. All listened in close attention to the end, and when he had finished there pervaded a momentary solemn silence before his audience realised that it was the end.” Hill described Lincoln as “the plainest man I ever heard.” He “was not a speaker but a talker.” Such was his “honesty, candor, and fairness” that it “was scarcely possible for an auditor not to believe every word [he] uttered. The same in conversation. He left behind him on all occasions, a feeling one can not express of respect and that accompanied by affection for a good man.”^{cccxiii} Lincoln’s fellow attorney and Whig politician Albert Taylor Bledsoe detected in Lincoln’s speeches “a homely strength, and a rustic beauty of expression, which are more effective than the oratorical periods of an [Edward] Everett or a [George] Bancroft. His simple, terse, plain, direct English, goes right home to the point.”^{cccxiv}

On August 1, 1836, Lincoln handily won reelection, finishing first in a field of seventeen.^{cccxv} In New Salem, he ran well ahead of the victorious Whig ticket.^{cccxvi} (Three

^{cccxiii} John Hill to Ida M. Tarbell, Columbus, Georgia, 4 April and 17 February 1896, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

^{cccxiv} Bledsoe, review of Ward Hill Lamon, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, The Southern Review 12 (April 1873): 333-34.

^{cccxv} Lincoln received 1716 votes, William F. Elkin 1694, Ninian W. Edwards 1659, John Dawson 1641, Daniel Stone 1438, Robert L. Wilson 1353, and Andrew McCormick 1306. Theodore Calvin Pease, ed., Illinois Election Returns, 1818-1848 (Springfield: Lincoln Presidential Library, 1923), 299.

^{cccxvi} Of the 145 voters who cast ballots in the village’s polling place, 107 voted for Lincoln for the lower house of the General Assembly. The next highest Whig vote-getters for that post were William Elkin with 84, John Dawson with 82, Dan Stone with 81, Robert L. Wilson with 69, and Andrew McCormick with 67. The most successful Democratic candidate for the Illinois House, Thomas Wynne, received 71 votes. In the other New Salem precinct, outside the village, Lincoln won 50 of 76 votes cast. Lincoln’s mentor John Todd Stuart, running for Congress, beat his Democratic opponent, William L. May, 86 to 59 in the village precinct but ran behind May in the outlying precinct, 40 to 34. Mark E. Neely, Jr., “The Political Life of New Salem, Illinois,” Lincoln Lore no. 1715 (January 1981), 1-3; New Salem Lincoln Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

months later, Van Buren captured the presidency with the help of Illinois’s electoral votes.) As he had been a leader in the campaign, so too that winter Lincoln would spearhead the Whigs in the General Assembly, filling the place vacated John Todd Stuart, who had run for Congress unsuccessfully. The reapportioned legislature had ninety-one members, thirty-six more than its immediate predecessor. Of these, less than one fourth were incumbents.^{cccxvii} Colleagues in the General Assembly recalled that during the 1836-37 session, “Lincoln was very prominent,” that he “had by that time become the acknowledged leader of the Whigs in the House,” because “Stuart had gone out and left him a clear field.” He “was always put forth to squelch some poor wight of a Democrat (who had made himself particularly obnoxious) by one of his inimitable stories.”^{cccxviii} In 1839, a Democratic legislator identified ten colleagues, among them Lincoln, who “take up more time than all the members.”^{cccxix}

Another member of the General Assembly, Robert L. Wilson, recalled that “Lincoln was a natural debater; he was always ready and always got right down to the merits of his case, without any nonsense or circumlocution.” As comfortable in the House of Representatives as he was in the houses of New Salem, “he had a quaint and peculiar way, all of his own, of treating a subject, and he frequently startled us by his modes – but he was always right.” To Wilson, he “seemed to be a born politician.” The Whigs “followed his lead, but he followed nobody’s lead; he hewed the way for us to follow, and we gladly did so.” His quick mind “could grasp and concentrate the matters under discussion, and his clear

^{cccxvii} Rodney O. Davis, “Lincoln and the Illinois General Assembly,” 16.

^{cccxviii} Jesse K. Dubois, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 30; Joseph Gillespie to Isaac N. Arnold, Edwardsville, Illinois, 6 September 1881, in Isaac N. Arnold, “Abraham Lincoln: A Paper Read before the Royal Historical Society, London, June 16th, 1881” (pamphlet; Chicago: Fergus, 1881), 194b.

^{cccxix} Thomas J. Nance to Catherine Nance, Springfield, 19 December 1839, Fern Nance Pond, ed., “Letters of an Illinois Legislator: 1839-1840,” Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 5 (1949): 42. In addition to Lincoln, the

statement of an intricate or obscure subject was better than an ordinary argument.” Wilson said Lincoln virtually “did our thinking for us, but he had no arrogance, nothing of the dictatorial; it seemed the right thing to do as he did.” His manner was such that he “excited no envy or jealousy,” for his colleagues acknowledged that he was “so much greater than the rest of us that we were glad to abridge our intellectual labors by letting him do the general thinking for the crowd,” inspiring “absolute respect, although he was utterly careless and negligent.” Whig Representatives “would ride while he would walk, but we recognized him as a master in logic; he was poverty itself when I knew him, but still perfectly independent. He would borrow nothing and never ask favors. He seemed to glide along in life without any friction or effort.”^{cccxx}

Yet Lincoln did not glide easily through the opening days of the 1836-37 legislative session. Shortly after the General Assembly convened, he wrote from Vandalia to a friend: “my spirits [are] so low, that I feel I would rather be any place in the world than here. I really can not endure the thought of staying here ten weeks.”^{cccxxi} He may have been downcast because he had nothing to do. On the day before Lincoln penned his dispirited letter, a Vandalia newspaper reported that “little business has been done in either the Senate or the House of Representatives thus far” because of “the unfinished situation of the State House. The plastering is new and damp, and it became necessary to the comfort and health of the members to have additional stoves put up.”^{cccxxii}

loquacious attorneys included E. D. Baker, John J. Hardin, E. B. Webb, Orlando Ficklin, Archibald Williams, and Josiah Fisk.

^{cccxx} Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 140.

^{cccxxi} Lincoln to Mary Owens, Vandalia, 13 December 1836, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:54-55.

^{cccxxii} Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 12 December 1836.

Somehow Lincoln managed to recover from his depression in time to help shape important legislation. With special vehemence he championed the state bank. On January 11, 1837, he ridiculed Usher F. Linder, a Democrat who had attacked that institution.^{cccxxiii} Sarcastically acknowledging that Linder was his superior in “the faculty of entangling a subject, so that neither himself, or any other man, can find head or tail to it,” Lincoln dismissed his opponent’s arguments as “silly” and harshly declared that if Linder were unaware of Illinois’s usury statute, “he is too ignorant to be placed at the head of the committee which his resolution proposes.” If, on the other hand, he were aware of that usury law (which he did not mention in his flings against the bank), Linder was “too uncandid to merit the respect or confidence of anyone.” Lincoln denounced “capitalists” who “generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people,” and politicians, “a set of men who have interests aside from the interests of the people, and who, to say the most of them, are, taken as a mass, at least one long step removed from honest men.” (Lincoln immediately added that “I say this with the greater freedom because, being a politician myself, none can regard it as personal.”) In his peroration, he denounced “that lawless and mobocratic spirit, whether in relation to the bank or any thing else, which is already abroad in the land; and is spreading with rapid and fearful impetuosity, to the ultimate overthrow of every institution, or even moral principle, in which persons and property have hitherto found security.”^{cccxxiv}

^{cccxxiii} Linder had been put up to this action by Theophilus W. Smith, a justice of the Illinois supreme court. Linder, Reminiscences, 260-61. Smith had enthusiastically supported the establishment of the bank, hoping he would be among its leaders. When fellow stockholders thwarted his bid for power, he turned against the institution. Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 118-21. Albert J. Beveridge speculated that Linder’s speech may have been “an attack upon Springfield to prevent that town from being selected as the site of the state capital.” Beveridge to Jessie Palmer Weber, n.p., 14 January 1925, copy, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cccxxiv} Speech of 11 January 1837, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:61-69.

In this partisan speech, Lincoln did not forthrightly address all the criticisms of the bank.^{cccxxv} When the legislature incorporated the Bank of Illinois, it anticipated that its stock would be bought primarily by in-state investors. Instead, most shares were purchased by financiers in the East who deviously used the names of Illinois farmers as “owners” of the stock.^{cccxxvi} Linder had justly accused the bank commissioners of violating the law. This Lincoln dismissed as a quarrel among selfish capitalists which was of no concern to the people. In fact, the law had been undermined. Lincoln was also disingenuous in alleging that the bank had met its legal requirement to redeem its notes in specie. This provision of the law was virtually nullified through clever arrangements by which the nine branches of the Bank of Illinois printed notes which could only be redeemed at the issuing branch. To ensure that few such requests for redemption were made, the branches brought their notes into circulation at remote sites.^{cccxxvii}

Though somewhat demagogic, Lincoln’s speech was predicated on the sound notion that economic growth required banks and an elastic money supply. His political opponents, with their agrarian fondness for a metallic currency, failed to understand this fundamental point. Banks, he knew, had a vital role to play in financing the canals and railroads essential for ending rural isolation and backwardness, a goal he cared about passionately.^{cccxxviii} (In fact, the state bank had been revived in the 1830s to finance internal improvements without

^{cccxxv} Albert J. Beveridge was surprised that Lincoln gave such an “aggressive and even bel[l]icose” speech when he was “scrupulously careful not to offend any member of the Legislature or risk the possibility of losing a single vote” as he led the forces trying to have Springfield chosen as the state capital. Beveridge to Jessie Palmer Weber, n.p., 14 January 1925, copy, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cccxxvi} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 118.

^{cccxxvii} Gabor S. Boritt, Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1978), 18.

^{cccxxviii} Boritt, Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream, 15-23; Fraysse, Lincoln, Land and Labor, 72.

raising taxes.)^{cccxxxix} In addition, he sought to protect the assets earned by ordinary people in the sweat of their brows; he predicted that the destruction of the bank would “annihilate the currency of the State” and thus “render valueless in the hands of our people that reward of their former labors.”^{cccxxx} Banks also allowed the “honest, industrious and virtuous” poor to get ahead through loans. Without internal improvements and banks, argued the Sangamo Journal, the poor would remain “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for the rich “as long as they live.” By making credit difficult to obtain, the Democrats forced the “industrious poor” to accumulate capital on their own before starting a business, a process which might take decades. The Whigs, by making the surplus capital of the rich available through banks, thus expanded economic opportunity for the poor.^{cccxxxi}

Lincoln’s chief goal in the winter of 1836-37 was to have Springfield chosen as the new state capital. By law, Vandalia would retain that honor until 1839; thereafter some other town might replace it. A change made sense, for in 1819, when Vandalia had been selected, most Illinoisans lived in the southern part of the state, where Vandalia was located; during the 1820s and 1830s, however, more and more settlers flowed into the middle and northern counties, availing themselves of cheap transportation provided by the Erie canal, completed in 1825, and by Great Lakes steamboat connections to Chicago, opened in 1832. The state’s rejection in 1824 of attempts to introduce slavery discouraged some potential immigrants from the South.^{cccxxxii} By 1833, Vandalia seemed inadequate, as one critic put it, because of its “remoteness . . . from the centre, from the most populous districts of the State, and from

^{cccxxxix} Francis Murray Huston, Financing an Empire: History of Banking in Illinois (4 vols.; Chicago: Clarke, 1926), 1:76.

^{cccxxx} Speech of 11 January 1837, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:69.

^{cccxxxi} “The Difference,” Sangamo Journal, 13 October 1838.

^{cccxxxii} Davis, Frontier Illinois, 190-93.

practicable navigation; its known and striking destitution of any commanding commercial facilities; the unsightly, monotonous appearance, comparative barrenness and flatness of the country immediately surrounding it, rendering it as unhealthy as incommodious, unpleasant, and insusceptible of dense settlement and successful cultivation.”^{cccxxxiii} Transportation to Vandalia was poor. For two weeks in December 1836, communications between the capital and Springfield were “entirely cut off, owing to the condition of the roads.”^{cccxxxiv} A decade earlier, a traveler had complained that the “road for three miles east of Vandalia is . . . impassable with wagons, and nearly so on horseback. It is a perfect marsh or swamp, of soft clay, extremely tenacious into which a horse will sink at every step to his knees, and for the whole distance covered with water to the depth of six or eight inches.” That observer described the countryside surrounding Vandalia as “hard and sterile, covered with stunted oaks and apparently unproductive.” Prophetically he remarked, “its location was injudicious and, consequently, I think that it can never be a place of much importance.”^{cccxxxv}

A Hoosier warned that “Vandalia was so sickly that every body left it in the summer season,” when it became “a charnel-house, a burying place, for all strangers who venture to go there.”^{cccxxxvi} In 1842, another visitor to Vandalia warned that “[b]ilious fever prevailed here, and there were several patients in the hotel where we stayed.”^{cccxxxvii} In the mid-1820s,

^{cccxxxiii} “Seat of Government,” by “The People,” Sangamo Journal, 1 June 1833.

^{cccxxxiv} Vandalia correspondence, 25 December, Sangamo Journal (Springfield), 31 December 1836.

^{cccxxxv} Chester A. Loomis, A Journey on Horseback through the Great West in 1825 (Bath, N.Y.: Plaindealer Press, n.d.), unpaginated (entries for July 4 and 5).

^{cccxxxvi} Letter by “An Eye Witness,” Vandalia, 25 June, Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 29 June 1838.

^{cccxxxvii} William Oliver, Eight Months in Illinois (Newcastle upon Tyne: William Andrew Mitchell, 1843), 99-100.

that same disease had killed many Vandilians.^{cccxxxviii} To convince skeptics that Vandalia was unhealthy, critics noted that five legislators had died there between 1830 and 1836.^{cccxxxix} In response, a local booster protested that the “trouble was busthead whiskey” which was made too freely available to the lawmakers at Ebenezer Capps’ store, a favorite gathering place for members of the General Assembly.^{cccxl} Moreover, critics protested, Vandalia offered inferior lodgings and food. In 1836, Justice Samuel D. Lockwood of the state supreme court complained that “all the accommodations are indifferent.”^{cccxli} Many years later, John Todd Stuart told an interviewer: “I remember that one of the objections that were urged against keeping the seat of government at Vandalia was that they did not feed us on anything but prairie chickens and venison. A piece of fat pork was a luxury in those days – we had such a longing for something civilized.”^{cccxlii} (One day legislators organizing a deer hunt asked Lincoln to join them. He declined, remarking: “You go get the deer, [the hotel proprietor] Mattox can cook it and I’ll eat all you can get.”)^{cccxliii} Vandalia was also notorious for its lawlessness. In 1837, residents deplored the “frequent recurrence of brawls and drunken frays in our streets” and lamented that “our town has come to the pass, that it is almost dangerous for one to walk the streets, unless he is armed with dirks, pistols, &c.”^{cccxliv}

^{cccxxxviii} Frederick Hollman, “Autobiographical Sketch,” pp. 19-20, photocopy of an unpublished manuscript, dated Platteville, Wisconsin, 1870, Evans Public Library, Vandalia.

^{cccxxxix} Historical Souvenir of Vandalia, Illinois (Effingham, Illinois: National Illustrating Co., 1904), 16.

^{cccxl} Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 14.

^{cccxli} Samuel D. Lockwood to Mary V. Nash Lockwood, Vandalia, 15 December 1836, Lockwood Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

^{cccxlii} Stuart, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 24 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 13. See also Brown, “Springfield Society Before the Civil War,” 478.

^{cccxliii} Recollections of Benjamin F. Lee (1817-1916) as told to a Mr. Goad, Vandalia Union, 28 December 1916. With his family, Lee had moved to Vandalia in 1821 and remained there the rest of his long life.

^{cccxliv} “An Observer,” Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 22 December 1837; “Spectator” to the editor of the Vandalia Free Press, 23 December 1837, copied ibid., 2 March 1838.

In addition to Springfield, other towns aspired to become the new state capital, including Alton, Decatur, Peoria, and Jacksonville. In an 1834 statewide referendum on relocating the seat of government, Alton had received 7511 votes, Vandalia 7148, and Springfield 7044.^{cccxlv} Three years later, Lincoln headed the Springfield forces in the legislature, even though he was the youngest of the nine-member Sangamon County delegation. As Stephen T. Logan recalled, Lincoln “was at the head of the project to remove the seat of government here [Springfield]; it was entirely entrusted to him to manage. The members were all elected that session upon one ticket. But they all looked to Lincoln as the head.”^{cccxlvi} That delegation, consisting of men whose average height was slightly over six feet, was contemptuously labeled by the Springfield Republican “the Long Nine,” after a type of cheap cigar.^{cccxlvii}

To win support for Springfield, Lincoln and his colleagues did what legislators usually do: they cut deals. In 1836, the representative from Morgan County, John J. Hardin, observed that “too frequently does it happen, that members support measures that they would not otherwise vote for, to obtain another member’s vote for a friend.”^{cccxlviii} To his wife, Hardin described the legislature as a “Den of legislative trading” and declared “I have fully made up my mind to renounce politics. A man has no business here [in Vandalia] unless he

^{cccxliv} Sangamo Journal, 27 September 1834.

^{cccxlvi} Logan, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 6 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 36-37. The eldest of the delegation was John Dawson (45); the others were William F. Elkin (44), Job Fletcher (43), Archer G. Herndon (41), Daniel Stone (37), Andrew McCormick (35), Robert L. Wilson (31), and Ninian W. Edwards (28). Lincoln was also 28. Lincoln Lore no. 138 (30 November 1931); Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 28 February 1937.

^{cccxlvii} Sangamo Journal, 1 July 1837.

^{cccxlviii} Hardin to the editor, 15 December, Jacksonville Patriot, 22 December 1836, copied in the Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 30 December 1836.

will debase himself to bargain & trade for his rights.”^{cccxlx} In 1839, David Davis told his father-in-law that “Legislation in our Western States is generally based upon barter, trade & intrigue – ‘You vote for my measure, & I will vote for yours’ seems to be the way in which things go hereabouts.”^{cccl} That same year a resident of Stephenson County protested against the “log-rolling” which had shaped the General Assembly’s internal improvements legislation.^{cccli} When the legislature first began to meet in Springfield, one member bemoaned the fact that he and his colleagues were “much scattered over the town and have not the usual facilities for log-rolling and drilling, which were afforded at Vandalia.”^{ccclii} In the first session of the General Assembly held in the new capital, a journalist reported: “Log rolling is now in most successful operation; and that party which understands the art of buying and selling votes the best will succeed. In every sense of the word, ‘the longest pole will knock off the persimmon.’”^{cccliii}

In 1836-37, the most coveted persimmons were roads, canals, railroads, and river improvements, which were universally desired and which the legislature was eager to provide. Illinoisans were “perfectly insane” and “crazed considerably with the mania” for

^{cccxlx} Hardin to Sarah Smith Hardin, Vandalia, 14 December 1836 and 26 February 1837, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum.

^{cccl} David Davis to William P. Walker, Bloomington, 26 January 1839, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. In 1846, a former legislator announced to a friend that he was going to visit the state capital “where I shall remain some days, perhaps weeks – logrolling.” George W. Harrison to Daniel Francis Hitt, Vandalia, 15 December 1846, D. F. Hitt Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, quoted in Rodney O. Davis, “Lobbying and The Third House In the Early Illinois General Assembly,” The Old Northwest 14 (1988-89): 267.

^{cccli} Letter by “Stephenson” to the editor, n.p., n.d., Galena Gazette and Advertiser, 1 February 1839.

^{ccclii} Springfield correspondence, 12 December, The Illinoisan (Jacksonville), 21 December 1839.

^{cccliii} Springfield correspondence by G., 18 December, Alton Telegraph, 28 December 1839.

canals and railroads.^{cccliv} A colleague of Lincoln in the General Assembly reported that “our State seems wild to follow the eastern States in improvements.”^{ccclv}

The Long Nine, under Lincoln’s direction, promised to support various internal improvements throughout the state in return for endorsement of Springfield’s aspirations to become the new capital. Helping Lincoln was his mentor, John Todd Stuart, who lobbied behind the scenes.^{ccclvi} Since Sangamon County’s delegation was the largest in the General Assembly, it had significant leverage when its members voted as a bloc. One of the Long Nine, Robert L. Wilson, recalled that “acting during the whole Session upon all questions as a unit, gave them a Strength and influence that enabled them to carry through their measures, and give efficient aid to their friends.”^{ccclvii} Governor Thomas Ford alleged that the Sangamon County delegation, whose ranks included “some dexterous jugglers and managers in politics,” during the entire session “threw itself as a unit in support of or opposition to every local measure of interest, but never without a bargain for votes in return on the seat of government question. Most of the other counties were small, having but one representative, and many of them with but one for a whole district; and this gave Sangamo county a decided

^{cccliv} John Reynolds, My Own Times, Embracing Also the History of My Life (Chicago: Fergus, 1879), 324.

^{ccclv} William Brown to Jeremiah Brown, Jr., Vandalia, 4 December 1834, typed copy, Jesse W. Fell Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccclvi} John J. Hardin to Sarah Smith Hardin, Vandalia, 26 February 1837, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum; Beveridge, Lincoln, 1:178; Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 59; Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 85.

^{ccclvii} Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 204. Paul Simon showed that the Long Nine did not always vote as a unit. Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 83. Rodney O. Davis drew more reasonable inferences from this pattern of bloc voting than did Simon. Davis, “Illinois General Assembly,” 17-18. Davis examined thirty-two key roll call votes on the internal improvements plan, which show strong cohesion, if not perfect unanimity, among the House members of the Long Nine. Of those, he found that Lincoln voted pro-improvements thirty times, Ninian Edwards thirty-one times, William Elkin twenty-nine times, John Dawson twenty-five times, Andrew McCormick twenty-six times, Robert Wilson twenty-six times, and Dan Stone (who was frequently absent) eighteen times. Davis to the author, personal communication, 17 February 1998. The Long Nine acted as a unanimous bloc on fifteen of the twenty-four recorded votes on the bill to establish and maintain a general system of internal improvements.

preponderance in the log-rolling system of those days.” By using “such means ‘the long nine’ rolled along like a snow-ball, gathering accession of strength at every turn until they swelled up a considerable party for Springfield, which party they managed to take almost as a unit in favor of the internal improvement system, in return for which the active supporters of that system were to vote for Springfield to be the seat of government.”^{ccclviii}

^{ccclviii} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 127. One historian, evidently regarding such bargains as sinister, denied that Lincoln made any. Simon, Lincoln’s Preparation for Greatness, 76-105. For a thoughtful discussion of the difference between logrolling and corruption, see Mark W. Summers, The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849-1861 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181-82. Simon’s conclusions have been persuasively challenged by Rodney O. Davis, “Illinois General Assembly,” 16-18. Before Simon’s book appeared, most historians accepted Governor Ford’s version of the log-rolling story. Clinton L. Conkling said that the “members from any given locality were ready to trade or ‘log roll’ for votes favoring the construction of a railroad, canal or mail route through their own particular county. The members from Sangamon County gave their special attention to securing votes for the selection of Springfield as the capital. This singleness of purpose, with help judiciously given to others in the advancement of their projects, produced a favorable impression for Springfield While the internal improvement bill was pending the ‘Long Nine’ were busy. They said little or nothing in reference to locating proposed railroads, but would assist other localities, where votes could be secured for locating the capital at Springfield.” Conkling, “Movement for a Third Capital,” in Newton Bateman and Paul Selby, eds., Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, vol. II, part 1 (Chicago: Munsell, 1912), 646-47. John Moses concurred: “The single measure, to the success of which the ‘long nine’ bent all their energies, was the permanent location of the capital at Springfield. They had no favorite route for a railroad, and were thus left perfectly untrammelled to assist and promote the pet schemes of others, who were willing to reciprocate in kind. Nine solid votes would go far toward turning the scale in favor of any close question, and were always thrown where they would accomplish the most satisfactory results. . . . The fact that the internal-improvement and canal schemes, and that for the removal of the seat of government, were made to support each other, secured many votes for each which it might not have been able to obtain on its own merits. The friends of the canal were menaced with defeat if they failed to support the general-improvement bill, while the promoters of the latter threatened to withhold support from the canal unless their measure went through. The counties which failed to secure any railroads or canals were placated with the promise of \$200,000, to be divided among them according to population. The ‘long nine’ in the meantime stood ready on all occasions to apply their strength where the most valuable returns might be obtained.” Moses, Illinois, 1:412-13. In 1857, Fred Gerhard offered a similar account: “Private interests, intrigues, and corruption, had been actively at work to ensure the adoption of this system. Thus it was, that . . . politicians, who were anxious to have the seat of government removed to Springfield from Vandalia, would support or oppose any scheme of improvement, if they could or could not obtain votes in favor of the removal of the seat of government to Springfield in return for it.” Gerhard, Illinois As It Is (Chicago: Keen and Lee, 1857), 84. John F. Snyder claimed that the Long Nine succeeded “by log rolling with their friends of every other measure presented; or threatening to withhold their support from the same, the canal and other internal improvements especially; and by the practice of all arts of persuasion and coercion known to influence recalcitrant, or indifferent, members.” John F. Snyder, Adam W. Snyder and His Period in Illinois History, 1817-1842 (2nd ed., rev.; Virginia, Illinois: E. Needham, 1906), 221. John H. Krenkel, however, concluded that the “evidence on the connection between the internal improvement system and the location of the seat of government is . . . inconclusive.” Krenkel, Illinois Internal Improvements, 73. Both Krenkel and Simon ignored or discounted the testimony of trustworthy first-hand observers like Stephen T. Logan, Robert L. Wilson, Jesse K. Dubois, Richard S. Walker, Edwin B. Webb, Christian B. Blockburger, John McCown and William L. D. Ewing, as well as the common understanding of the day that legislation was passed by a process of bargaining and trade.

Throughout December and January, as legislative business was “progressing very slowly,” the Long Nine cultivated friends by promising support for internal improvement projects tailored to needs of each county.^{ccclix} (The bill that was eventually adopted, funding many more projects than the committee which drafted it had recommended, directly benefited forty-four of the state’s sixty counties; the other sixteen received cash grants.) Representative Richard S. Walker from Morgan County complained “of the bargain and sale that was brought about to make Springfield the successful candidate.”^{ccclx} In 1838, the leading Whig paper in that county declared that the internal improvement legislation “was carried through the Legislature by bargain and trade. It was a perfect log-rolling affair, and was avowed to be such by many of its supporters.”^{ccclxi} In 1844, an editor of that paper, John J. Hardin, told the U.S. House of Representatives during a debate on an internal improvements bill, “I do not wish to enter into a system of log-rolling to carry through this measure. I have seen the evils of that system carried to the extreme in the legislation of my own State; and we are now suffering too severely from its unfortunate results, for me to be willing to see it adopted here.”^{ccclxii} Vandalia’s champion, William L. D. Ewing, decried “the foul corruption by which the seat of Government, contrary to justice and the constitution, was removed to Springfield.”^{ccclxiii} He contended “that the law had been passed by chicanery and trickery,” and that the Long Nine “had sold out to the internal improvement men, and

ccclix Samuel D. Lockwood to Mary V. Nash Lockwood, Vandalia, 30 December 1836, Lockwood Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

ccclx Walker in the Jacksonville Gazette and News, n.d., copied in the Sangamo Journal, 20 May 1837.

ccclxi “The Internal Improvements System,” Jacksonville Illinoisian, 10 February 1838. The editor later called the means for passing the internal improvement legislation “bargain and sale.” John J. Hardin to Josiah Lucas, Vandalia, 21 January, ibid., 26 January 1839.

ccclxii Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, 236 (17 January 1844).

ccclxiii Letter by Ewing, 9 July, in “The Seat of Government,” Sangamo Journal, 21 July 1838.

had promised their support to every measure that would gain them a vote to the law removing the seat of government.”^{ccclxiv} In July 1838, State Representative Christian B. Blockburger reported witnessing the Long Nine “acting in firm and united phalanx throughout the whole session on this subject. I saw the dangerous influence their numbers enabled them to exert. I saw how votes were swapped off and exchanged, and how quickly the local measures of other members were voted for, when Springfield could receive a vote in return.”^{ccclxv} That same month, a dozen others joined Ewing and Blockburger in deploring the machinations of the Long Nine: “Having staked their all upon this one measure, and having so strong a delegation to act upon the system of log rolling, it was not difficult for them to secure the votes of members who felt but little interested in the subject. Every art, device, and argument that could possibly be used to gain votes were resorted to.”^{ccclxvi} In 1843, a shrewd observer of Sangamon County politics declared that the internal improvements law “and all its sad consequences, are more justly attributed to the ‘log rolling’ of the ‘LONG NINE,’ than any other men or set of men.”^{ccclxvii} Lincoln’s friend and political ally George T. M. Davis, editor of the Alton Telegraph, alleged that Springfield was chosen capital “as a portion of the ‘quid pro quo’ in securing the passage of the Internal Improvement system through the Legislature” by the use of “the basest stratagem and intrigue.”^{ccclxviii} In 1846, the Springfield Illinois State Register said Lincoln “was one of the

^{ccclxiv} Linder, Reminiscences, 62.

^{ccclxv} Statement made at a public meeting, Vandalia, 7 July, Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 20 July 1838. Blockburger (1790-1845) had served as the probate justice of the peace as well as a state representative from Montgomery County. Illinois State Register (Springfield), 5 September 1845.

^{ccclxvi} Statement by a committee headed by N. M. McCurdy, Vandalia, July 1838, Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 10 August 1838.

^{ccclxvii} Letter by “Oregon,” Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22 September 1843.

^{ccclxviii} “Removal of the Seat of Government,” Alton Telegraph & Democratic Review, 24 May 1845.

‘long nine,’ but for whom it [the internal improvements plan] never could have passed into a law: the State House at Springfield being the consideration for which they gave their votes, as we have always understood.”^{ccclxix}

Legislators also favored the internal improvements scheme because of patronage considerations. One observer noted that the statute “would never have passed had it not been for the multitude of new offices which it created, and the confident expectation that the friends of the measure [in the legislature] would fill those offices.” Shortly after the adoption of the statute, “the chairman of the committee who reported the bill to the legislature received an office under the law with a salary of three thousand dollars a year.” Most of the men appointed to the board of public works were “party leaders who had never been conspicuous for any thing but their blind devotion to the dominant party.” None “had the least experience in the important duties assigned them,” but because “they had done something for ‘the party,’” they “had to be provided for, and if they knew nothing else, they knew that they got good salaries, and that was of course satisfactory.”^{ccclxx} A case in point was Democrat John J. McClernand, who broke with his party to support the measure and as a reward was named treasurer of the Illinois and Michigan canal.^{ccclxxi}

Lincoln acknowledged openly that he had engaged in log rolling. In 1839, the Vandalia Free Press, a Whig newspaper, said: “Lincoln admitted that Sangamon county had received great and important benefits, at the last session of the Legislature, in return for giving support, thro’ her delegation to the system of Internal Improvement; and that though

^{ccclxix} “The Late Gov. Duncan,” Illinois State Register (Springfield), 15 May 1846.

^{ccclxx} “Internal Improvements, No. VI,” by E[dson] H[arkness], Peoria Register and North-Western Gazette, 8 September 1838.

^{ccclxxi} Victor Hicken, “From Vandalia to Vicksburg: The Political and Military Career of John A. McClernand” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1955), 12.

not legally bound, she is morally bound, to adhere to that system, through all time to come!”^{ccclxxii} Another Vandalia journal, perhaps describing the same remarks, alleged that one night during the 1838-39 legislative session, Lincoln and Edward D. Baker clashed over the internal improvements system. After Baker “pronounced himself against the system,” Lincoln “replied tartly to his colleague that he for himself and every other Representative of Sangamon county, present and future, should forever support the system of internal improvements because the Sangamon delegation had obtained the seat of Government at Springfield by an understanding with the friends of the system. Mr. L. said he considered the pledges then made as forever binding, not only on him but on Sangamon county itself.”^{ccclxxiii}

The work of the Long Nine did not proceed smoothly. As Lincoln remarked eleven years later, the subject of internal improvements was fraught with difficulty because it was impossible to please everyone: “One man is offended because a road passes over his land, and another is offended because it does not pass over his; one is dissatisfied because the bridge, for which he is taxed, crosses the river on a different road from that which leads from

^{ccclxxii} Vandalia Free Press, 21 February 1839, in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:144.

^{ccclxxiii} “Mr. Lincoln,” Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 5 April 1839. That editorial began thus: “The last Illinois Republican [the Democratic paper in Springfield] contains a letter of A. Lincoln . . . and some comments thereon, concerning a remark attributed to Mr. L. in reference to the internal improvement system. As we understand it, this controversy has grown out of a very remarkable night scene which occurred in the House of Representatives at its late session, at which some astonishing developments were made, but which, in charity, we then forbore to publish.” When the Sangamo Journal denied that Lincoln had made such remarks, the Illinois State Register replied that the “statement we published will certainly stand as true in every particular, until the Journal publishes the account which Mr. Lincoln himself gives of the extraordinary debate in question. We presume Mr. Lincoln will not deny that a warm conversation did occur in the House between him, Mr. Baker, Mr. Hardin, and some others, in reference to certain pledges which Mr. Lincoln said he and his colleagues were under to support the internal improvement system. This conversation was a subject of general remark next day in Vandalia. There is no doubt it did occur, as the whole house was a witness to it. Mr. Lincoln said he was under solemn pledges to support the system, and most emphatically called down heavy punishments upon himself if he should violate those pledges. His object appeared to be, to convince Mr. Baker and Mr. Calhoun, that they, as delegates of Sangamon, were equally bound with himself to fulfill the pledge.” Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 3 May 1839. (The Sangamo Journal probably ran its denial in the issue of 19 April 1839, which is missing from the microfilmed file of that newspaper.) See also “The Long Nine – The Internal Improvement System – The Special Session,” and “Broken Pledges,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 9 November 1839 and 8 January 1840.

his house to town; another can not bear that the county should be got in debt for these same roads and bridges; while not a few struggle hard to have roads located over their lands, and then stoutly refuse to let them be opened until they are first paid the damages. Even between the different wards, and streets, of towns and cities, we find this same wrangling, and difficulty.”^{ccclxxiv} Resistance to the internal improvement scheme was led by fiscal conservatives “opposed, as a matter of principle, to incurring a public debt for such purposes.” They believed that private funds, not tax dollars, should underwrite river and harbor improvements, railroads, canals, and turnpikes. Some “old fogies were opposed to railroads for the reason that they would be too destructive of timber, believing that the roads were made of split wooden rails laid closely together ‘corduroy’ fashion!”^{ccclxxv}

On December 13, 1836, a further threat to the Long Nine emerged when John Taylor of Springfield submitted a petition to divide Sangamon County.^{ccclxxvi} Taylor and his lieutenant, John Calhoun, had speculated in land which they hoped would become county seats and thus appreciate in value.^{ccclxxvii} (If a town became a county seat, it “would have social and political prestige and preferential treatment in roads, public buildings, and county jobs. It also meant that a town would have a county fair . . . as well as be able to attract retail

^{ccclxxiv} Speech of 20 June 1848 in the U.S. House of Representatives, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:488-89.

^{ccclxxv} Snyder, Adam W. Snyder, 200.

^{ccclxxvi} Lincoln to Mary Owens, Vandalia, 13 December 1836, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:54-55; John Taylor to William Walters, Vandalia, 8 February 1837, Illinois State Register (Vandalia), 13 February 1837.

^{ccclxxvii} Pratt, “Lincoln and the Division of Sangamon County,” 400-1; “The Seat of Government,” Sangamo Journal, 21 July 1838; Robert L. Wilson to C. R. Matheny, Vandalia, 31 December 1836, Sangamo Journal, 8 July 1837; undated, unsigned letter to the voters of Sangamon County, Sangamo Journal, 1 July 1837; editorial, “The Election This Day,” ibid.; letter by “Sangamon,” ibid., 4 August 1838. Taylor owned most of the town of Petersburg, which in 1839 became the county seat of the newly-created county of Menard, carved from Sangamon.

business.”)^{ccclxxviii} In addition, Taylor and others had bought up land at the geographical center of the state, a locale which they named Illiopolis and hoped to make the capital.^{ccclxxix} Not wanting to see the delegation reduced in size while it was seeking votes to make Springfield the capital, Lincoln adopted delaying tactics, urging that the question be postponed until Springfield had achieved its goal.^{ccclxxx} When signatures on a petition favoring division of the county proved fraudulent, the measure failed.^{ccclxxxi} In late January 1837, another attempt to divide the county was made, which was condemned at a mass meeting in Springfield.^{ccclxxxii} Soon thereafter, Springfield’s champions submitted a remonstrance bearing more signatures than the original petition, thus killing the proposal.^{ccclxxxiii}

Other crises soon arose. Jesse K. Dubois, a fellow legislator who became Lincoln’s good friend, recalled that “Lincoln came to my room one evening and told me that he was whipped – that his career was ended – that he had traded off everything he could dispose of, and still had not got strength enough to locate the seat of government at Springfield.” Yet, he said, “I can[’]t go home without passing that bill. My folks expect that of me, and that I

^{ccclxxviii} Robert E. Norris and Haring L. Lloyd, Political Geography (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1980), 198.

^{ccclxxix} William Butler recalled that “Duncan and others had bought about 1200 acres of land out here at Illiopolis 16 miles east of here [Springfield], and had laid out a town there, and were trying to have that made the capital.” William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 21.

^{ccclxxx} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:55-57; Pratt, “Lincoln and the Division of Sangamon County,” 400-1.

^{ccclxxxi} Sangamo Journal, 4 August 1838; Pratt, “Lincoln and the Division of Sangamon County,” 401-3; Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 93-97; Van Meter, Always My Friend, 55.

^{ccclxxxii} Sangamo Journal, 4 February 1837.

^{ccclxxxiii} Sangamo Journal, 25 February 1837.

can[']t do – and I am finished forever.”^{ccclxxxiv} Robert L. Wilson of the Long Nine also remembered discouraging moments: “The contest on this Bill was long, and severe; its enemies laid it on the table twice, once on the table till the fourth day of July and once indefinitely postponed it.” Removing bills from the table “is always attended with difficulty; but when laid on the table to a day beyond the Session, or when indefinitely postponed, [it] requires a vote of reconsideration, which always is an intense Struggle. In these dark hours, when our Bill to all appearance was beyond recussitation, and all our opponents were jubilant over our defeat, and when friends could see no hope, Mr Lincoln never for one moment despaired, but collect[ed] his Colleagues to his room for consultation.” His “practical common Sense, his thorough knowledge of human nature then, made him an overmatch for his compeers and for any man that I have ever known.”^{ccclxxxv}

On February 17, the motion to table the bill passed 39 to 38; four days later it was taken off the table. A key swing vote was cast by Edward Smith of Wabash County, an engineer who championed the internal improvements scheme, which passed the legislature on February 23. Two days later, the council of revision (consisting of the governor and the state supreme court) refused to approve that bill; Smith’s decision to change his vote may have been influenced by his fear that the House of Representatives would not override the council’s action. He probably struck a deal with the Long Nine to support the removal of the capital to Springfield in return for the Long Nine’s votes to secure final passage of the

^{ccclxxxiv} Dubois, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 31. Dubois offered some recommendations: “first pass the bill to move the seat of government, and Springfield, Jacksonville, Peoria, and every other town that expects to get the seat of government will vote for that bill, Vandalia alone excepted. Then pass a joint resolution, locating the seat of government, and for beginning a suitable building so as to have it ready by the time provided in the Constitution for moving it.”“ Lincoln allegedly replied, “By jings, I reckon that will do it.” That night “he had a bill ready,” Dubois recalled, “and we passed it. When we went into joint session the other fellows saw the trap, but it was too late. We carried the measure for Springfield.” Ibid.

internal improvements measure.^{ccclxxxvi} Opponents of the internal improvements system claimed that its supporters “found out the price of certain members” and “bought up” enough votes to pass it.^{ccclxxxvii} The council’s veto was overridden, and the bill to move the capital to Springfield passed on February 28.

Thus ended a hard-fought battle. Robert L. Wilson and another legislator, Henry L. Webb of Alexander County, reported that on “several occasions their opponents deemed that they had circumvented the movement, and incautious ones crowed lustily over the supposed defeat and discomfiture of Lincoln and his colleagues.” Some pessimists among the Long Nine “supposed the measure was lost, but Lincoln was tenacious and resolute.” His unexpected flanking movements “would revive their chances.” Thus “under his adroit leadership, the bill was carried, although the only political strength in its favor at the start was seven votes in the house [of representatives] and two in the other [house], with no natural allies, and several delegations of active enemies.” The passage of the bill “was felt to be one of the greatest of political triumphs, and its credit was freely ascribed to Lincoln.” Wilson maintained that “had Lincoln not been there, it would have failed.”^{ccclxxxviii}

Lincoln’s most important maneuver may have been an amendment he offered on February 24, stipulating that the legislature “reserves the right to repeal this act at any time hereafter.”^{ccclxxxix} This tautological measure won the support of four legislators who had

^{ccclxxxv} Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 204.

^{ccclxxxvi} Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 106; Harry E. Pratt, ed., Lincoln: 1809-1839 (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1941), li; Pratt, “Lincoln in the Legislature,” 7. By a simple majority the legislature could override the council’s veto.

^{ccclxxxvii} Representative John Hogan of Madison County, paraphrasing the charges of the system’s opponents, speech in the House, 30 January, Alton Telegraph, 10 May 1837.

^{ccclxxxviii} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 131-32.

^{ccclxxxix} House Journal, 1836-37, 702.

previously been in opposition. As amended, the bill was adopted that same day, facilitating Springfield's victory.^{ccccxc} Helping expedite that choice was another amendment suggested by Lincoln and formally introduced by Alexander P. Dunbar, requiring the town selected as the capital to donate two acres of land and pay \$50,000 to help cover the cost of a new statehouse. This measure, which virtually eliminated the smaller towns from competition, passed 53-26.^{cccxc}

By the end of February, when balloting for the removal of the capital took place, the Long Nine had cobbled together an alliance of twenty-three legislators who lived in or near Sangamon County; nine who represented counties which would benefit substantially from the internal improvements bill that had just passed; and three who fit neither category.^{cccxcii} Two of those three unclassifiable representatives were Jesse K. Dubois and Henry L. Webb, friends of Lincoln who wanted to accommodate him. Dubois later said that Lincoln “made Webb and me vote for his scheme to move the rest of government to Springfield. We belonged to the southern end of the State,” where proposals to remove the capital northward were unpopular. “We defended our vote before our constituents by saying that necessity would ultimately force the seat of government to a central position. But in reality we gave the vote to Lincoln because we liked him and because we wanted to oblige our friend, and because we recognized his authority as our leader.”^{cccxciii} Webb called the legislative triumph

^{ccccxc} House Journal, 1836-37, 702-3; Davis, “Lincoln and the Illinois General Assembly,” 17-18. The four swing votes were James Shields, Francis Voris, George Hinshaw, and Alpheus Wheeler. The vote on the amendment was 43-41; the vote on the bill as amended was 46-37. The Alton representatives were allegedly mad at Vandalia because voters of that town had supported a move to extend the National Road from the capital to St. Louis rather than Alton. They therefore threw their support to Springfield to spite Vandalia when it became clear that Alton would not itself win the capital sweepstakes. Historical Souvenir of Vandalia, 17-18.

^{cccxc} Simon, Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness, 58.

^{cccxcii} Baringer, Lincoln's Vandalia, 108.

^{cccxciii} Dubois, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 4 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 30.

of the Long Nine “the master stroke of diplomacy of the Western Hemisphere” and deemed Lincoln “a Napoleon of astuteness and political finesse.” According to Henry C. Whitney, Webb “voted for the measure because of his admiration of Lincoln and the inability to resist his importunities. His [original] policy was to leave the capital at Vandalia but yielded to Lincoln.”^{cccxciv} (Jason Duncan was so impressed by Lincoln’s political skills that he often said “he would not be surprised if Abe Lincoln got to be governor of Illinois.”)^{cccxcv} These thirty-five votes made Springfield the clear front runner; on the first ballot, Vandalia and Peoria each received only sixteen votes, Alton fifteen, Jacksonville fourteen, and Decatur four. On the second ballot, Springfield picked up nine more votes. On the third, its total again swelled by nine. On the fourth and final ballot, twenty more legislators sided with Springfield, putting it over the top.^{cccxcvi}

In the joyful celebration of this victory, Lincoln was toasted as “one of Nature[’]s Noblemen.”^{cccxcvii} Robert L. Wilson “thought that if any man was entitled to that compliment it was he.”^{cccxcviii} Orville H. Browning praised the Long Nine: “It was to their judicious management, their ability, their gentlemanly deportment, their unassuming manners, their constant and untiring labor” that Springfield owed its success.^{cccxcix} Echoing Browning,

^{cccxciv} Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, manuscript version, 174, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. This passage was omitted from the published edition of Whitney’s biography. Henry L. Webb (1795-1876) was a younger brother of James Watson Webb, editor of the New York Courier and Enquirer. He settled near Cairo, Illinois, and served several terms in the state legislature. He was an officer in the Black Hawk War and the Mexican War. In 1852, he moved to Virginia, Illinois, where Whitney got to know him. Ibid.

^{cccxcv} Statement by Daniel Green Burner, brother-in-law of Duncan, for J. McCan Davis, 1895, in J. McCan Davis, How Lincoln Became President (Springfield: The Illinois Company, 1909), 21.

^{cccxcvi} Baringer, Lincoln’s Vandalia, 108-9.

^{cccxcvii} Sangamo Journal, 29 July 1837.

^{cccxcviii} Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 206.

^{cccxcix} Sangamo Journal, 29 July 1837.

William Pickering commended Lincoln for his “continuously moral and self-reliant conduct,” which “formed a striking contrast with the general manners of nearly all by whom he was surrounded, and with whom he mingled all the time[,] for Strong language and Strong drink, were almost universally prevalent, in that early age of Legislation – but I never heard Mr. Lincoln use a profane expression, in his own conversation, nor did I ever know him to make use of any stimulating liquid of any kind – but he was always as cheerful as any man who most constantly made use of the strongest beverage so very fashionable in that age.”^{cd} Nor did Lincoln distribute money to win votes. According to Joshua Speed, he was given \$200 to dispense while promoting the internal improvements project, but only used 75¢, explaining afterwards, “I didn’t Know how to Spend it.”^{cdi}

Helping Lincoln and the other members of the Long Nine in their efforts to round up votes was William Butler, who later told an interviewer: “I was sent down to Vandalia to work in the interest of Springfield. [Peter] Van Bergen was also sent down there with me – though he did no good – but to hear him tell it he did it all. Lincoln and [Usher F.] Linder were the two principal men we relied on in the Legislature to make speeches for us. John T. Stuart was the man we depended upon in caucus. Lincoln was not worth a cent in caucus.”^{cdii}

Not all of Lincoln’s friends praised him for effecting the transfer of the capital to Springfield. Several of them presciently foresaw that the internal improvements scheme was far too ambitious for the meager resources of the new state and was therefore bound to

^{cd} Pratt, Lincoln: 1809-1839, liii.

^{cdi} Speed, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 475.

^{cdii} William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 21.

fail.^{cdiii} Among the skeptics was Stephen T. Logan, who recalled that “I was in Vandalia that winter and had a talk with Lincoln there. I remember that I took him to task for voting for the Internal Improvement scheme. He seemed to acquiesce in the correctness of my views as I presented them to him. But he said he couldn’t help himself – he had to vote for it in order to secure the removal here of the seat of government.”^{cdiv} Usher F. Linder, who regretted his support for the system, apologetically explained many years later that at the time he, Lincoln and other enthusiasts “were all young and inexperienced men.”^{cdv}

No such misgivings were voiced when the internal improvements bill passed, an achievement attributable in part to the able leadership of Democrat John A. McClernand.^{cdvi} A dispatch from the capital, probably by Lincoln, described the jubilation: “the huzzas and acclamations of the people were unprecedented. – All Vandalia was illuminated. Bonfires were built, and fire balls were thrown, in every direction.”^{cdvii} Paying for the system would be simple, according to Representative John Hogan, “a fluent and interesting speaker” who “maintained that instead of there being any difficulty in obtaining a loan of the fifteen or twenty millions authorized to be borrowed,” the bonds “would go like hot cakes, and be sought for by the Rothschilds and Baring Brothers,” and “that the premium which we would obtain upon them would range from fifty to one hundred per cent.,” which by itself “would

^{cdiii} Alexander P. Field was emphatically opposed to the scheme as too expensive and Utopian. Linder, Reminiscences, 205-6.

^{cdiv} Logan, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 6 July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 37.

^{cdv} Linder, Reminiscences, 61.

^{cdvi} John A. McClernand to Henry Eddy, Vandalia, 2 February 1837, Eddy Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Hicken, “Political and Military Career of McClernand,” 8-12.

^{cdvii} Vandalia correspondence by “Illinois,” 23 February, Sangamo Journal, 4 March 1837.

be sufficient to construct most of the important works, leaving the principal sum to go into our treasury, and leave the people free from taxation for years to come.”^{cdviii}

Hogan’s rosy scenario proved wildly inaccurate. Lincoln’s leadership in the capital transfer struggle benefited Springfield at the expense of Illinois. Governor Thomas Ford declared that “by giving the seat of government to Springfield was the whole State bought up and bribed to approve the most senseless and disastrous policy which ever crippled the energies of a growing country.”^{cdix} In 1832, Lincoln had sensibly warned voters about the “heart-appalling” costs of railroads and canals. Four years later he cavalierly ignored his own good advice and that of friends like Stephen T. Logan, Orville H. Browning, John J. Hardin, Alexander P. Field, and Edwin B. Webb, thus helping saddle Illinois with a \$14,000,000 system of internal improvements that its population of 500,000 could ill afford.^{cdx} Among the internal improvements were the laying 1300 miles of railroads, deepening the channels of five rivers, constructing a mail route from Vincennes to St. Louis, and awarding \$200,000 to compensate the counties through which neither canal nor railroad would pass.^{cdxi} The interest on the necessary loans exceeded the entire revenue raised by the state in 1836.^{cdxii} When the economy collapsed in 1837, any slight chance that the state could pay for the many projects

^{cdviii} Linder, Reminiscences, 59-60.

^{cdix} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 127.

^{cdx} Browning to the citizens of Adams County, Quincy, 10 February, Quincy Whig, 15 February 1840; Baxter, Browning, 11-12, 25-26; Stevens, “Alexander Pope Field,” 24-25; formal protest by Webb and Senator John McCowan, House Journal, 1836-37, 680-83 (23 February 1837). On 11 December 1840, Hardin said that he “had always been opposed to the system.” Remarks in the Illinois General Assembly, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 18 December 1840. Two years earlier, he wrote that he had favored an internal improvements system far more modest than the one adopted: “I wanted a system adapted to our wants and resources not one like ours, which embraced more Rail-Roads than was ever undertaken by a single State or Nation in the world.” Hardin, “Internal Improvements,” Jacksonville Illinoisian, 9 June 1838. In the House, Hardin led the opposition forces. John A. McClernand to Henry Eddy, Vandalia, 2 February 1837, Eddy Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

^{cdxi} Krenkel, Illinois Internal Improvements, 47-76.

^{cdxii} Pratt, “Lincoln in the Legislature,” 8.

went glimmering. Illinois suspended interest payments on its debt, and for years thereafter its credit rating was poor and its treasury strapped. The state “became a stench in the nostrils of the civilized world.”^{cdxiii} In 1843, John Todd Stuart complained: “Our reputation is very much that of a set of swindlers.”^{cdxiv} Only in 1880 did Illinois finally pay off the loans incurred for the internal improvement system.^{cdxv}

When the General Assembly voted to increase its members’ pay from \$3 per day to \$4, protests arose. One indignant constituent, “a blunt, hard-working yeoman,” berated Lincoln, for he “could and would not understand why men should be paid four dollars per day for ‘doing nothing but talking and sitting on benches,’ while he averaged only about one [dollar] for the hardest kind of work.” He asked angrily, “what in the world made you do it?” Lincoln replied: “I reckon the only reason was that we wanted the money.”^{cdxvi}

In addition to passing the internal improvements bill, the statute removing the capital to Springfield, and the pay hike, the legislature continued its routine work of incorporating businesses, schools, and towns; of authorizing roads and declaring streams navigable; and defining the boundaries of counties. Lincoln participated in these matters, answering all but seventeen of the 220 roll calls taken during the first session of the Tenth General Assembly.^{cdxvii}

DEALING WITH SLAVERY

^{cdxiii} Ford, History of Illinois, ed. Davis, 152.

^{cdxiv} Stuart to John J. Hardin, Washington, 24 January 1843, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum.

^{cdxv} Krenkel, Illinois Internal Improvements, 126-49, 200-17; Pease, Frontier State, 194-235.

^{cdxvi} Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 29 November, New York Herald, 4 December 1860.

Between the time that he declared his candidacy in 1832 and his triumph as the champion of Springfield's bid to become the state capital, Lincoln had become an adept partisan, renowned for log rolling and insulting Democrats, but little more.^{cdxviii} The day before the General Assembly adjourned, however, he took a step that foreshadowed the statesmanship of his more mature years.

On March 3, 1837, he and another member of the Long Nine (Dan Stone) filed a protest against anti-abolitionist resolutions that the legislature had adopted six weeks earlier by the lopsided vote of 77-6 in the House and 18-0 in the senate. The tiny minority opposed to the resolutions, comprising less than 7% of the entire General Assembly, included Lincoln and Stone.^{cdxix} Those overwhelmingly popular resolutions, introduced at the behest of Southern state legislatures which were outraged by the American Anti-Slavery Society's pamphlets depicting slave owners as cruel brutes and by a massive petition drive calling for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, declared that Illinois legislators "highly disapprove of the formation of abolition societies, and of the doctrines promulgated by them," that "the right of property in slaves is sacred to the slave-holding States by the Federal Government, and that they cannot be deprived of that right without their consent," and that "the General Government cannot abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the will of the citizens of said District without a manifest breach of good faith."^{cdxx}

^{cdxvii} Horner, "Education of a Politician," 129.

^{cdxviii} Horace White, "Introduction," William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life (2 vols.; New York: Appleton, 1909), 1:xxi-xxii; Joel Silbey, "'Always a Whig in Politics': The Partisan Life of Abraham Lincoln," Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 8 (1986): 21-42.

^{cdxix} The other representatives joining Lincoln and Stone were Andrew McCormick of Sangamon County, Gideon Minor of Edgar County, John H. Murphy of Vermilion County, and Parvin Paullen of Pike County. House Journal, 1836-1837, 311.

^{cdxx} House Journal, 1836-37, 241-44. The resolutions were debated and may have been slightly amended, but the House Journal does not describe those changes. Because there was evidently little debate, such alterations were probably minimal.

Lincoln wrote a protest and circulated it among his colleagues, all of whom refused to sign except for Stone, a native of Vermont and a graduate of Middlebury College. Stone was not seeking reelection because he would soon become a judge.^{cdxxi} Lincoln declared in the document which he and Stone spread on the journal of the House of Representatives “that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy,” foreshadowing his great 1854 Peoria speech denouncing the “monstrous injustice of slavery.” In 1860, a newspaper widely regarded as his organ explained that “Lincoln could not, and did not vote in favor of the resolutions . . . because the old Calhoun doctrine embraced in the second of the series [‘that the right of property in slaves is sacred to the slave-holding states by the Federal Government’] was abhorrent to his ideas of the true meaning of the Constitution.”^{cdxxii}

To announce that “slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy” was a remarkably bold gesture for 1837, when antislavery views enjoyed little popularity in central Illinois – or elsewhere in the nation.^{cdxxiii} Several months after Lincoln and Stone issued

^{cdxxi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:74-75; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols.; New York: Century, 1890), 1:151; Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 119-20. In 1860, Lincoln said in a third-person autobiographical reminiscence that “he placed upon the . . . Journal, his own views upon the subject, in his own well considered language.” Fragment of an answer to John Hill, [September 1860?], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:108. On Dan Stone, see John Carroll Power, History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois (Springfield: Edwin A. Wilson, 1876), 690; Pamela S. Powell to Harry E. Pratt, Middlebury, Vermont, 8 April 1942; Eleanor S. Wilby to Harry E. Pratt, Cincinnati, 13 and 25 April 1942, reference files of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. The delay between the vote on the resolutions in January and the introduction of the protest in March was probably due to the signers’ wish to avoid offending legislators while the question of removing the state capital was still pending. That matter had finally been resolved on February 28.

^{cdxxii} Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 25 August 1860.

^{cdxxiii} Indeed, as Ward Hill Lamon’s biography of Lincoln noted, it “required uncommon courage and candor in the day and generation in which it was done.” Lamon, Lincoln, 201. For a thoughtful, extensive discussion of the Lincoln-Stone protest, see William Lee Miller, Lincoln’s Virtues: An Ethical Biography (New York: Knopf, 2002), 116-29. The Illinois State Register claimed that Lincoln and Stone issued their protest as a way of backing down from the vote they had earlier cast regarding abolitionism. “Lincoln had heard from home. His Sangamon constituency were outraged at his vote, and he and Stone, both aspirants for future political honors, trumped up the ‘protest.’” Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 August 1860. No contemporary evidence supports this theory. Stone was not seeking reelection. On the unpopularity of abolitionism, see Litwack, North

their protest, the quasi-Democratic governor of Illinois, Joseph Duncan, speaking for many of his constituents, denounced all efforts “to agitate the question of abolishing slavery in this country, for it can never be broached without producing violence and discord, whether it be in a free or slave State.” Duncan added that “if I read my Bible right, which enjoins peace and good-will as the first Christian duties, it must be wicked and sinful to agitate this subject in the manner it has been done by some Abolitionists, especially after our Southern neighbors have repeatedly and earnestly appealed to us not to meddle with it, and assured us their having done so has not only jeopardised their own safety and domestic peace, but in many cases has caused bloodshed and rebellion, which has compelled them, as a measure of prudence and protection, to use more rigidity and severity with their slaves.” Abolition without the consent of the Southern states would violate the Constitution, Duncan argued. He believed that “it will neither be consistent with sound policy or humanity by a single effort to free all the slaves in the Union, ignorant, vicious, and degraded as they are known to be, and then turn them loose upon the world without their possessing the least qualification for civil government, or knowledge of the value of property, or the use of liberty.”^{cdxxiv}

of Slavery; Leonard L. Richards, “Gentlemen of Property and Standing”: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 1967; Linda K. Kerber, “Abolitionists and Amalgamators: The New York City Race Riots of 1834,” New York History 48 (1967): 28-39; John Runcie, “‘Hunting the Nigs’ in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1834,” Pennsylvania History 39 (1972): 187-218; Lorman Ratner, Powder Keg: Northern Opposition to the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1840 (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Joel H. Silbey, “Pro-Slavery Sentiment in Iowa, 1838-1861,” Iowa Journal of History 55 (1957): 289-318; Gilbert Osofsky, “Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism,” American Historical Review 80 (1975): 889-97; Morton M. Rosenberg and Dennis V. McClurg, The Politics of Pro-Slavery Sentiment in Indiana, 1816-1861 (Muncie, Indiana: Ball State University, 1968); Gerald S. Henig, “The Jacksonian Attitude toward Abolitionism in the 1830’s,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly 28 (1969): 42-56; Larry E. Tise, Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840 (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Murray E. Heim binder, “Northern Men with Southern Principles: A Study of the Doughfaces of New York and New England” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1971); Gossett, Race.

^{cdxxiv} Duncan explained that “I was born and lived more than half my life in a slave State [Kentucky], long enough to be convinced that the degraded condition of the slave and slavery itself is a great moral and political evil, and we should earnestly implore God to open the way by which they may be enlightened and improved in their condition, and, when prepared to enjoy it, and it can be done without violating the constitution, the peace

Political leaders outside of Illinois held similar views. Henry Clay, Lincoln’s “beau ideal of a statesman,” condemned abolitionists as “extremely mischievous” firebrands who “would see the administration of the Government precipitate the nation into absolute ruin” and “nullify the Constitution.” He predicted that “if they are not checked in their progress,” the day would come “when the free States will have to decide on the alternative of repudiating them or repudiating the Union.”^{cdxxv} In 1836, Massachusetts governor Edward Everett urged the state legislature to outlaw abolitionists, arguing that “Everything that tends to disturb the relations created by this compact [i.e., the Constitution] is at war with its spirit, and whatever by direct and necessary operation is calculated to excite an insurrection among the slaves has been held by highly respectable legal authority an offence against the peace of this Commonwealth.”^{cdxxvi} New York Governor William L. Marcy, who called abolitionists “sinister, reckless agitators,” advised his legislature that it might behoove the Free States to provide “for the trial and punishment by their own judicatories, of residents within their limits, guilty of acts therein, which are calculated to excite insurrection and rebellion in a sister State.”^{cdxxvii}

and union of the State, we should pray to see them all set at liberty.” Duncan to Gideon Blackburn, Jacksonville, 12 December 1837, Julia Duncan Kirby, Biographical Sketch of Joseph Duncan, Fifth Governor of Illinois (pamphlet; Fergus Historical Series, no. 29; Chicago: Fergus, 1888), 50-51. When asked to support Illinois College, a hotbed of abolitionism, Duncan replied: “Believing that it is wrong, morally and politically, for any citizen or public institution to teach or advocate doctrines or principles in this country which can not be carried into practice peaceably without violating the constitution of the United States, or forcibly, without civil war, the risk of disunion, and the destruction of our free and happy government, I can not with my present convictions of the course pursued by its faculty, consistently hold any connection with this institution.” Duncan to Samuel D. Lockwood, Jacksonville, 10 October 1838, ibid., 54.

^{cdxxv} Clay to Calvin Colton, Lexington, 2 September 1843 and to John Sloane, Lexington, 27 October 1843, James F. Hopkins et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Clay (11 vols.; Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1959-92), 9:852, 874.

^{cdxxvi} Paul Revere Frothingham, Edward Everett: Orator and Statesman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 132.

^{cdxxvii} Albany Argus, 7 January 1837, quoted in Ratner, Powder Keg, 72; Marcy, message of 5 January 1836, quoted in Ivor Debenham Spencer, The Victor and the Spoils: A Life of William L. Marcy (Providence: Brown University Press, 1959), 104.

Seven months after Lincoln and Stone issued their protest, when the Presbyterian synod gathered in Springfield, the town residents publicly condemned abolitionism. They banded together to disrupt the proceedings in response to the proposed delivery of an antislavery sermon.^{cdxxviii} Mob violence was averted, but some townspeople met on October 23 and adopted the following resolutions: “as citizens of a free State and a peaceable community, we deprecate any attempt to sow discord among us, or to create an excitement as to abolition which can be productive of no good result . . . the doctrine of immediate emancipation in this country, (although promulgated by those who profess to be christians,) is at variance with christianity, and its tendency is to breed contention, broils and mobs, and the leaders of those calling themselves abolitionists are designing, ambitious men, and dangerous members of society, and should be shunned by all good citizens.”^{cdxxix} Simeon Francis’s newspaper rejoiced “that public opinion in the frontier states is likely to check at once the perfidy of these fanatical men [i.e., the abolitionists].” Westerners “could not be induced to visit upon the South such an accumulation of horrors as is embraced in the meaning of those two words – ‘universal emancipation.’”^{cdxxx}

Francis was right; the antislavery movement had great difficulty taking root in Illinois. Between 1817 and 1824, some Illinoisans had waged a successful battle against the introduction of slavery into their state constitution, but thereafter enthusiasm for the antislavery cause dramatically waned.^{cdxxxi} Before 1837, only one county in the state – Putnam – had an auxiliary of the American Antislavery Society, although there were 215

cdxxviii Merton L. Dillon, “The Antislavery Movement in Illinois, 1809-1844” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1951), 242.

cdxxix Sangamo Journal, 28 October 1837.

cdxxx Van Meter, Always My Friend, 30.

cdxxxi Dillon, “Antislavery Movement in Illinois,” 34-219.

affiliates of the Society in thirteen states by 1835.^{cdxxxii} Attempts to circulate antislavery petitions in 1837 fizzled.^{cdxxxiii} In 1841, when the Illinois Antislavery Society dispatched an agent to spread the abolition gospel, Springfield authorities denied him permission to speak.^{cdxxxiv} Three years later, Ichabod Coddington's attempt to deliver an abolitionist lecture in the capital was thwarted by a mob of "perhaps 150, with sticks, boards, horns, &c." which "made such a noise that it was impossible for him to proceed. Several eggs were thrown at his head." Springfield's police "looked on and laughed."^{cdxxxv} Simeon Francis noted that abolitionist "is an odious epithet among us; and we do not believe that there are a dozen men to be found in Sangamon county to whom it can be properly applied."^{cdxxxvi} In 1845, a Morgan County abolitionist wrote that there were many "warm friends to the slave" in his town. Yet "quite a large portion of western people, who are anti-slavery in principle and who will subscribe to all the views of the abolitionists when presented to them in private conversation, still abhor the name abolitionist," which they associate with "not only all that does belong to it, but every thing that possibly can be attached to it that is false, such as amalgamation, circulating inflammatory papers among the negroes in order to instigate them to insurrection, and a desire to do away with slavery by physical force. They also attach to the name all the views of [William Lloyd] Garrison."^{cdxxxvii} An Urbana newspaper observed that abolition is "considered synonymous with treason, . . . disunion, civil war, anarchy and

^{cdxxxii} On the Putnam county antislavery society, founded in 1833, see Merton L. Dillon, "Abolitionism Comes to Illinois," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 53 (1960): 389-403.

^{cdxxxiii} Dillon, "Antislavery Movement in Illinois," 234.

^{cdxxxiv} Harris, Negro Servitude in Illinois, 125, 138-39.

^{cdxxxv} Illinois State Register (Springfield), 7 June 1844.

^{cdxxxvi} Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 19 October 1854.

^{cdxxxvii} E. M. to Messrs. Leavitt and Alden, Morgan County, Illinois, 22 June, Emancipator and Weekly Chronicle (Boston), 16 July 1845.

every horror [of] which an American can conceive.”^{cdxxxviii} In such a region at such a time, Lincoln could scarcely expect criticism of slavery to win him popularity.

Yet Lincoln clearly had come to loathe slavery by 1837. Two decades later he said that “I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist.” He had not emphasized the slavery issue before 1854, he explained, because until then the peculiar institution seemed to be on the wane.^{cdxxxix} His friend Samuel C. Parks asserted that “Lincoln told the truth when he said he had ‘always hated slavery as much as any Abolitionist’ but I do not know that he deserved a great deal of credit for that for his hatred of oppression & wrong in all its forms was constitutional – he could not help it.”^{cdxli} Lincoln expressed compassion for white men forced to labor like slaves. One day at Beardstown, he observed a steamboat crew “lugging freight on board, working like galley slaves and being cursed every moment by the brutal mate.” To a friend he “freely expressed his disgust at the tyranny of the mate and his tender sympathy for the white slaves.”^{cdxlii} In 1864, Lincoln publicly declared that “I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel.”^{cdxliii} In 1858, he said: “the slavery question often bothered me as far back as 1836-1840. I was troubled and grieved over it.”^{cdxliv} A friend remembered that in 1837, “Lincoln was talking and men were standing up around him listening to the conversation. . . . One of them asked him if he was an abolitionist. Mr.

^{cdxxxviii} Our Constitution (Urbana), 16 August 1856.

^{cdxxxix} Speech at Chicago, 10 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:492.

^{cdxli} Parks to Herndon, Lincoln, Illinois, 25 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 239.

^{cdxlii} Ralph Hoyt, “Personal Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,” unidentified clipping [15 April 1900], Lincoln Shrine, A. K. Smiley Public Library, Redlands, California.

^{cdxliii} Lincoln to A. G. Hodges, Washington, 4 April 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:281.

^{cdxliv} Robert H. Browne, Abraham Lincoln and the Men of His Time (2 vols.; Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1901), 1:285.

Lincoln in reply, reached over and laid his hand on the shoulder of Mr. [Thomas] Alsopp who was a strong abolitionist and said, ‘I am mighty near one.’”^{cdxlv} In 1860, Lincoln stated that the protest which he and Stone had issued in 1837 “briefly defined his position on the slavery question; and so far as it goes, it was then the same that it is now.”^{cdxlv}

Lincoln and Stone, while condemning slavery, also criticized abolitionists: “the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate its [slavery’s] evils.” In this, they faintly echoed the committee report to which they were objecting. That document asserted that abolitionists “have forged new irons for the black man,” have “added an hundred fold to the rigors of slavery,” have “scattered the fire brands of discord and disunion,” and have “aroused the turbulent passions of the monster mob.” The committee could not “conceive how any true friend of the black man can hope to benefit him through the instrumentality of abolition societies.”^{cdxlv} This view was not uncommon, even among foes of slavery. Elijah P. Lovejoy, the antislavery editor who would die a martyr’s death later in 1837, had three years earlier denounced abolitionists as “the worst enemies the poor slaves have” and charged that their efforts were “riveting the chains they seek to break.”^{cdxlvii} Henry Clay declared that abolitionists “have done incalculable mischief . . . to the very cause which they have espoused.” Their actions, Clay insisted, “are highly injurious to the slave himself, to the master, and to the harmony of the Union. I believe that, instead of accelerating, they

^{cdxlv} Reminiscences of John E. Roll, in John Linden Roll, “Sangamo Town,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 19 (1926-27): 159.

^{cdxlv} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:65.

^{cdxlv} House Journal, 1836-1837, 241-42 (12 January 1837). The language used by Lincoln and Stone, as William Lee Miller pointed out, “was several notches less critical of abolition than was the assembly’s.” Miller, Lincoln’s Virtues, 129.

^{cdxlvii} Merton Dillon, Elijah P. Lovejoy, Abolitionist Editor (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 47. In 1836, the Presbyterian Synod of Illinois, to which Lovejoy belonged, unanimously disapproved the doctrine

will retard, abolition, and, in the mean time, will check other measures of benevolence and amelioration.”^{cdxlviii} In 1838, another Whig leader, the future president William Henry Harrison, similarly remarked that the efforts of the abolitionists (“deluded men”) would “end with more firmly riveting the chains . . . of those whose cause they advocate.”^{cdxlix} Edward Everett predicted that abolitionist agitation “by exasperating the master, can have no other effect than to render more oppressive the condition of the slave.”^{cdl} In 1854, the Springfield Register claimed that if it had not been for abolitionism, “slavery would have been abolished in Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and probably in other states. The south by the war made on her rights by the abolitionists, is compelled, by every principle of self respect and local pride, to maintain her position, and she will do it so long as this war is kept up. The abolitionists, instead of aiding the emancipation of the blacks, only perpetuate their bondage.”^{cdli}

Some abolitionists indulged in harsh rhetoric while carrying out what they termed “the duty to rebuke which every inhabitant of the Free States owes to every slaveholder.”^{cdlii} In 1831, an Illinois antislavery advocate, William M. Stewart, pronounced slave owners guilty of the “most unhallowed and heaven-daring theft and robbery” and declared that they were “much more guilty and deserving of death than many who have been hanged for

“that immediate emancipation is the duty of the master, and the right of the slave, irrespective of all consequences.” Dillon, “Antislavery Movement in Illinois,” 222-23.

^{cdxlviii} Clay’s speech delivered in Lexington, Kentucky, 13 November 1847, Hopkins, ed., Papers of Clay, 10:372; Clay to John Greenleaf Whittier, Lexington, Kentucky, 22 July 1837, ibid., 9:64.

^{cdxlix} Speech at Vincennes, Indiana, quoted in The Old Soldier (Springfield, Illinois), 2 March 1840.

^{cdl} Frothingham, Everett, 132.

^{cdli} Illinois State Register (Springfield), 15 April 1854.

^{cdlii} Right and Wrong in Boston, no. 2, 53, quoted in Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844 (1933; New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1964), 25.

kidnapping.”^{cdliii} Antislavery petitions denounced the “villainous enslavers of souls” as “land pirates.”^{cdliv} William Lloyd Garrison thundered that “every American citizen, who retains a human being in involuntary bondage, as his property, is a MAN-STEALER.” He characterized the “desperadoes from the South, in Congress” as “the meanest of thieves and the worst of robbers” who were not “within the pale of Christianity, of republicanism, of humanity.”^{cdlv} Garrison called the U.S. Constitution a “covenant with death, and an agreement with hell.”^{cdlvi} Such heated rhetoric offended some of Garrison’s abolitionist allies like Samuel May, who pleaded: “Oh, my friend, do try to moderate your indignation, and keep more cool!”^{cdlvii} Brown University president Francis Wayland condemned Garrison’s newspaper for its “menacing and vindictive” stance toward slaveholders, which only worsened the plight of the slaves.^{cdlviii} To such critics, Garrison famously replied in the first issue of The Liberator: “I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On

^{cdliii} Illinois Intelligencer, 12 March 1831, quoted in Dillon, “Abolitionism Comes to Illinois,” 395.

^{cdliv} William Lee Miller, Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress (New York: Knopf, 1995), 108, 129.

^{cdlv} “Declaration of Sentiments,” written for the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, quoted in Miller, Arguing About Slavery, 71; The Liberator (Boston), 11:191, quoted in Wendell Phillips Garrison, et al., William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told by His Children (4 vols.; New York: Century, 1885-89), 3:32-33.

^{cdlvi} The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, ed. Walter M. Merrill (6 vols.; Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-81), 1:249; The Liberator (Boston), 3 February 1843.

^{cdlvii} John L. Thomas, The Liberator: William Lloyd Garrison, a Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 126.

^{cdlviii} Henry Mayer, All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 124.

this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation.”^{cdlix} Such an approach to reform was diametrically opposed to Lincoln’s.^{cdlx}

In a temperance address delivered in 1842, Lincoln criticized hectoring approaches to reform: “It is an old and true maxim, that a ‘drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall.’ So with men. If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend.” Previous temperance efforts had failed, Lincoln said, because they were led by “Preachers, Lawyers, and hired agents” whose lack of “approachability” proved “fatal to their success.” They “are supposed to have no sympathy of feeling or interest, with those persons whom it is their object to convince and persuade.” They indulged in “too much denunciation against dram sellers and dram drinkers,” a strategy that proved “impolitic, because, it is not much in the nature of man to be driven to any thing; still less to be driven about that which is exclusively his own business; and least of all, where such driving is to be submitted to, at the expense of pecuniary interest, or burning appetite.” To expect denunciation to bring about reform “was to expect a reversal of human nature, which is God’s decree, and never can be reversed. When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion, kind, unassuming persuasion, should ever be adopted.” During the Civil War, Lincoln bemoaned what he called “the self-righteousness of the Abolitionists” and “the petulent and vicious fretfulness of many radicals.” He doubtless felt the same way about some abolitionists of the 1830s, whose vituperative, intolerant style alienated potential recruits to their worthy cause. In fact, Lincoln may have been trying to persuade abolitionists to exercise more tact. Clearly the abolition of slavery was on his mind, for in the peroration of this temperance address there appeared a seeming non sequitur: “When the victory shall

^{cdlix} The Liberator (Boston), 1 January 1831.

be complete—when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth—how proud the title of that Land, which may truly claim to be the birth-place and cradle of both those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory.”^{cdlxi}

Lincoln may also have been repelled by the anti-Catholic bigotry of some abolitionists, including Elijah P. Lovejoy, a contentious, sternly Puritanical newspaper editor, Presbyterian minister, and “bigot who believed, with little reason, that slavery was a papist product.”^{cdlxii} In 1836, he was hounded out of St. Louis, whose numerous Catholics disliked his reference to their church as the “Mother of Abominations” and his warning that Catholicism “was approaching the Fountain of Protestant Liberty” with a “stealthy, cat-like step” and a “hyena grin,” seeking to “cast into it the poison of her incantations, more accursed than was ever seethed in the Caldron of Hecate.”^{cdlxiii} (One Catholic warned Lovejoy that “should you continue to advance in your dishonest and dishonorable cause of vilifying my religion, I venture to predict your speedy extinction as an Editor in St. Louis.”)^{cdlxiv}

Fifteen years after the Lincoln-Stone protest, Lincoln criticized abolitionists who, like Garrison, marched beneath the banner inscribed “No Union with Slaveholders.” In a eulogy on Henry Clay, Lincoln criticized Garrisonians: “Those who would shiver into fragments the

^{cdlx} Lucas Morel, Lincoln’s Sacred Effort: Defining Religion’s Role in American Self-Government (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 10, 125-26.

^{cdlxi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:271-79; William D. Kelley to the editor of the New York Tribune, Philadelphia, 23 September 1885, in William D. Kelley, Lincoln and Stanton (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1885), 86; Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 216 (entry for 1 July 1864). For thoughtful discussions of the temperance address, see Morel, Lincoln’s Sacred Effort, 125-51, and Miller, Lincoln’s Virtues, 140-42, 147-53. Lincoln gave other temperance addresses. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:487.

^{cdlxii} Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 78.

^{cdlxiii} Dillon, Lovejoy, 40-41. Lovejoy once denounced a judge as “a Papist” whose decision in a case revealed “the cloven foot of Jesuitism.” The Observer (St. Louis), quoted in Dillon, “Antislavery Movement in Illinois,” 207.

^{cdlxiv} Shepherd of the Valley (St. Louis), 28 February 1834, in “Elijah P. Lovejoy As An Anti-Catholic,” Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia 62 (1951): 174 (no author given).

Union of these States; tear to tatters its now venerated constitution; and even burn the last copy of the Bible, rather than slavery should continue a single hour, . . . have received, and are receiving their just execration.” He praised more moderate opponents of slavery, like Clay, and condemned those pro-slavery apologists who “are beginning to assail and to ridicule” the Declaration of Independence.^{cdlxv}

The Lincoln-Stone protest further declared that “the Congress of the United States has the power, under the constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; but that power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of said District.” Lincoln had unsuccessfully tried to amend the original resolution to permit abolition in the District “if the people of said District petition for same.” (Twelve years later, as a member of Congress, he would frame legislation to rid the District of slavery with such consent.) Unlike the committee report to which Lincoln and Stone responded, their protest clearly asserted that the Constitution empowered Congress to abolish slavery in the District, a question that was hotly debated at the time and became a litmus test distinguishing the friends of slavery from its foes.^{cdlxvi}

The boldness of the Lincoln-Stone protest was uncharacteristic of Lincoln in his twenties and thirties. When in March 1837 he moved to Springfield from the dying hamlet of New Salem, he was essentially a skillful partisan whose promise of future statesmanship would long remain unfulfilled.

^{cdlxv} Eulogy on Henry Clay, 6 July 1852, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:130.

^{cdlxvi} See Miller, Arguing about Slavery, 65-149.