



Highlights of Abraham Lincoln's Political Life While at Springfield

Abraham Lincoln's political career started at New Salem. His political philosophy was based upon the original Founding Father's intent as written in the original United States Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Ironically, the future President that would run the great war from the War Room via T-messages and orders, started as an anti-war U.S. representative giving a speech against President Polk's "Mexican War."

His political career would parallel his legal career, and was a great help in his understanding of the making of and enforcement of laws. This understanding would help him in becoming the President, in-charge of enforcing federal law.

Lincoln's political life can be studied in these general areas:

- The Whig Party
- Running for legislative seats in Illinois, and losing some of these efforts/ a platform to help the citizenry
- Serving in the House at Vandalia/ The Tall Nine
- Winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives/ Anti-War speech
- Running for the U.S. Senate and losing twice
- Charleston and Coles County political supporters and opponents
- The Lincoln-Douglas Debates
- Cooper-Union Speech
- The new Republican Party
- Nominated for President
- Mary's role in Abraham's political career
- Winning the Presidency

- Farewell to Illinois and the journey to Washington

ABOUT POLITICS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

A recap of the 1830's

Abraham Lincoln's Political Activities in the 1830's

In 1830 the Thomas Lincoln family, including a 21 year-old Abraham move to Macon County (Decatur) Illinois from southern Indiana.

Abraham would move to New Salem a year later, and then interest in politics would arise.

A bare-footed Abraham Lincoln gives his first political speech in Decatur. His platform was improving the navigation of the Sangamon River

Abraham moves to New Salem in 1831, and joins a debating society.

August 4, 1834, at age 24, is elected to the Illinois General Assembly as a member of the Whig party.

August 1, 1836, is re-elected to the Illinois Gen. Assembly and by now is a leader of the Whig party.

1837, helps to get the Illinois state capital moved from Vandalia to Springfield.

August 6, 1838, re-elected to the Illinois Gen. Assembly, becoming Whig floor leader.

August 3, 1840, re-elected to the Illinois Gen. Assembly

THE PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES, 1840'S

Free-Soil Party formed from the Liberty Party in 1848, and opposed the
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extension of slavery into the western territories. The main slogan of the party was "free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men."

Liberty Party became Free Soil Party in 1848. Some members of the Anti-Slavery Society were dissatisfied with the radical leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, and in 1839 formed a rival organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The following year they formed their own political party, the Liberty Party. James Gillespie Birney ran for president 1840 & 1841, but lost. Gerrit Smith ran for president in 1848 & 1852 and lost.

Jacksonian Democrat Party emerged under Thomas Jefferson in the 1790s in opposition to the Federalist Party. It initially drew most of its support from Southern planters and Northern farmers. Martin Van Buren was president in 1840. James K. Polk was President, 1844-1848. Lewis Cass ran for president in 1848, but lost.

The **Whigs** was established in 1834 by politicians opposed to the "executive tyranny" of Andrew Jackson, and the Democrats. William Henry Harrison: President was elected President in 1840. Henry Clay was a presidential candidate in 1844 and lost. Winfield Scott was a presidential candidate in 1852 and lost. Zachary Taylor was elected President in 1848-1850 and died in office.

Political Parties & Presidents in the 1850's

1854, re-enters politics opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Elected to Illinois legislature but declines the seat in order to try to become U.S. Senator.

1854, does not get chosen by the Illinois legislature to be U.S. Senator

May 29, 1856, helps organize the new Republican party of Illinois. At the first Republican convention Lincoln gets 110 votes for the vice-presidential nomination, bringing him national attention. Campaigns in Illinois for Republican presidential candidate, John C. Frémont.

June 26, 1857, in Springfield, Lincoln speaks against the Dred Scott Decision.

June 16, 1858, nominated to be the Republican senator from Illinois, opposing Democrat Stephen A. Douglas. Gives "House Divided speech" at the state convention in

Springfield. He also engages Douglas in a series of seven debates with big audiences.

1858, Illinois legislature chooses Douglas for the U.S. Senate over Lincoln by a vote of 54 to 46.

The Major Parties of the early and mid-19th Century

(Northern) Democrats started out with President Jackson stressing state's rights, and strict following of the Constitution. Andrew Jackson had always attempted a neutral policy towards slavery. The 1850's Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, would help to cause a separation of the northern and southern Democrat Party. Franklin Pierce was President 1852-1856. James Buchanan was President 1856-1860. Stephen Douglas was Presidential candidate in 1860, but lost to Abraham Lincoln

Southern Democrat Party Members of the U.S. Democratic Party who reside in the U.S. South. In the early 1800s, they were the definitive pro-slavery wing of the party, opposed to both the anti-slavery, Republicans (GOP) and the more liberal Northern Democrats. John Breckinridge was the presidential candidate in 1860 but lost.

American Party formed because of the Compromise of 1850, and was the big issue during Fillmore's time as Senate President. He wouldn't state whether he supported the Compromise or not, but put his support for it shortly before Taylor's death. The American Party was also known as the Know Nothing Party. Millard Fillmore finished Zachary Taylor's term, 1850-51 but was not nominated for his own term.

The Whig Party was considered integral to the Second Party System and operating from 1833 to 1856, the party was formed in opposition to the policies of President Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party. In particular, the Whigs

supported the supremacy of Congress over the Executive Branch and favored a program of modernization and economic protectionism. Zachary Taylor ran for president in 1848, and died in office, 1850. Winfield Scott was the presidential candidate in 1852, but he lost. Abraham Lincoln was a Whig, but the Whig party disintegrated in about 1860, because of its neutral stance toward slavery. The Republican Party would become the party for many former Whigs

Other Parties of the early and mid-19th Century

The Know-Nothing Party was also known as the American Party. See the description of the American Party in the previous party list.

Free-Soil Party was formed from the Liberty Party in 1848. Their Platform was basically non-expansion of slavery and anti-slavery. John P. Hale was the 1852 presidential candidate and lost.

Constitutional Union Party, Election of 1860 was made up of conservative former Whigs who wanted to avoid disunion over the slavery issue. These former Whigs teamed up with former Know-Nothings to form the Constitutional Union Party. Its name comes from its extremely simple platform, a simple resolution "to recognize no political principle other than the Constitution...the Union...and the Enforcement of the Laws." They hoped that by failing to take a firm stand either for or against slavery or its extension, the issue could be pushed aside.

Liberty Party was an early advocate of the abolitionist cause. It broke away from the American Anti-Slavery Society due to grievances with William Lloyd Garrison's leadership. Became Free Soil Party in 1848. Gerrit Smith was a presidential candidate in 1848 & 1852 and lost.

Republican Party founded in 1854 by anti-slavery expansion activists and modernizers. It would later be known as the party of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but became closer to that during the last years of the Civil War. John Frémont ran in the 1856 Presidential contest, but lost. Abraham Lincoln ran for President 1860-1865 and was assassinated April 13, 1865.