



MCHS News

May 2018

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 6 No. 3

Historical Museum
715 N Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Hours:
The museum is currently closed for renovation

Archival Library
801 N Main Street
Hours:
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm
Group Tours Available

Phone:
618-656-7569

Web Address:
madcohistory.org

E-mail:
info@madcohistory.org

About Us:
The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S JOURNEYS TO MADISON COUNTY

By Stephen Hansen

Abraham Lincoln holds a seemingly never-ending fascination for us. Nearly 153 years after his assassination, we still find inspiration in his deeds and in his words. It is only natural, therefore, that we should be curious about Lincoln's journeys through Madison County. When was he here? What did he do? Was there anything in his actions that would indicate his future greatness?

Even though Madison County is relatively close to Springfield, Lincoln did not have many reasons to travel to the county. Madison County was not part of the 6th Judicial Circuit in which he practiced law, and his early political career focused on the Congressional and Legislative districts around Sangamon and Morgan Counties. Lincoln did correspond with a number of Madison County residents on legal and political matters, but historians have documented only three occasions when he came to Madison County; once in 1842 and twice in 1858. Each visit was unique, and each visit has its own lore and legend.

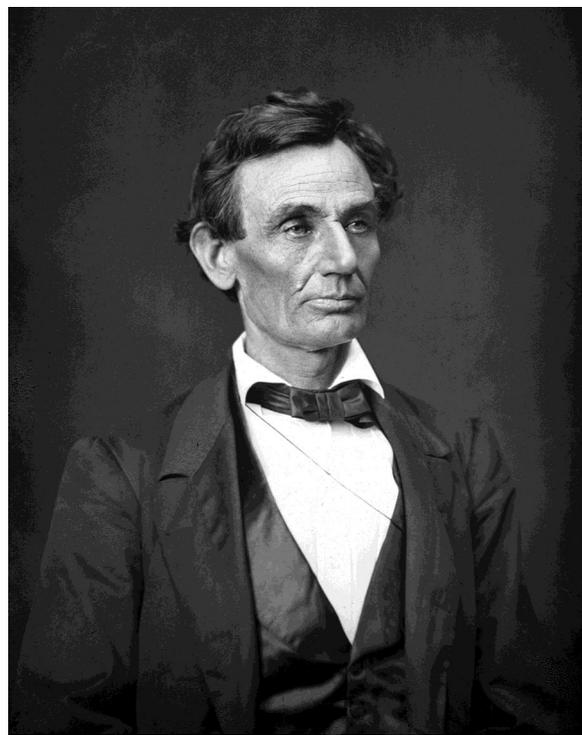


LINCOLN'S DUEL, 1842

On the morning of Sept. 22, 1842, Abraham Lincoln climbed into a boat at Alton along with Dr. Elias H. Merryman, William Butler and Albert Taylor Bledsoe. They rowed across the Mississippi River to Missouri, a state where dueling was not illegal. Along the muddy shores that morning, Lincoln and his seconds met James Shields accompanied by his second, Gen. John D. Whiteside, to settle a matter of honor. Looking back upon the incident years later, an embarrassed and wiser Lincoln purported to have said to an acquaintance, "I do not deny it, but if you desire my friendship, you will never mention it again." (Source: Donald 93).

Like many arguments, the dispute between the young Whig Party lawyer, Abraham Lincoln,

and the up-and-coming Democratic Party politician, James Shields, began innocently enough. Early in 1842, the State Bank of Illinois closed, the result of a crushing state debt caused by reckless spending on internal improvements and by irresponsible banking practices. By August, Governor Thomas Carlin, a Democrat, ordered the State Auditor, James Shields, to inform county tax collectors not to accept the pa-



This portrait of Abraham Lincoln by Alexander Hesler was taken in Springfield, Illinois on June 3, 1860, just two years after Lincoln's last visits to Madison County. (Illinois State Historical Society)

per notes from the State of Illinois Bank. Flooded with now worthless paper currency, the Illinois economy collapsed.

The Whig Party politicians pounced on the opportunity to attack their Democratic foes. Whig leaders focused their attacks on Auditor James Shields, a young, ambitious, and prominent Democrat, a man obviously marked for higher office. Young and ambitious himself,

Lincoln's Duel continued page 4

MCHS MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The Society is very grateful for all the generous and supportive members who renewed their membership in the Madison County Historical Society for another year. Thank you!

ABOUT US

MCHS BOARD

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VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. Please call if interested.

MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our web site, at the MCHS Museum or at the Archival Library.

PUBLICATIONS

MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

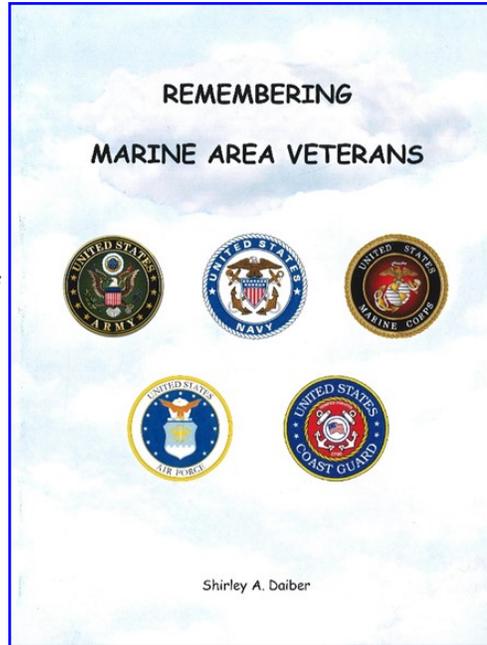
By Mary Westerhold

New books are always being added to the Archival Library collection. One of the more recent additions is "Remembering Marine Area Veterans" by local historian Shirley A. Daiber. Over 700 veterans are included in this book who meet the criteria that "they must have been born, lived, died or buried in Marine (the settlement, town, or village) or Marine Township." All wars and all branches of service are included in this book with the entries arranged by the war in which they served or dates of service if their enlistment was during peace time.

The book started as a personal research project by Daiber. When she noticed a

veteran's name in an article when doing research or a veteran's tombstone when researching in a cemetery, she would make a note and later compile information on that veteran. When the idea of a memorial for Marine area veterans began to be discussed, Daiber volunteered to compile her research into a book. In addition, she asked veterans or their families to submit information for the book, especially for veterans beyond the World War I era.

This book is a MUST for anyone with Marine area veterans in their family. Check out your local library or visit the Madison County Archival Library to read about these veterans.



MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn VanBibber

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVENANCE

The Society has two items in its collection with a Lincoln connection, the blade of a hoe, and a piece of wood from Lincoln's Springfield law office. But, although the labels identify them as having belonged to Lincoln, it is difficult to substantiate any such claims without a trail of evidence. MCHS has a number of items with questionable ties to the past. That is to say that their history is a bit murky. Provenance, the proof of history for an object, is an extremely important and useful tool for both the museum and archival library. It helps the staff determine if the donor has clear title to give the item to MCHS and the absence of provenance also restricts the story that we can weave in regards to its Madison County story. A waistcoat purchased at a yard sale somewhere in the county is a neat piece, and a county resident may have worn that particular coat or something very similar, but without documentation, it is just a coat, not an historical artifact.

Some of an object's history is collected when the item is donated, but it is very helpful when the donor includes a written

history when donating the item. Information that donors provide help the staff to create more interesting exhibits. With a little provenance, a simple pair of leather shoes becomes wedding slippers that were part of a wedding ensemble the bride saved for by working as a housekeeper.

That is not to say that an item without provenance is not of importance. Many items in the collection are from various Madison County businesses, events, or places. These representative objects all fill an important role in the MCHS collection.



The label on this item donated by Augusta Isensee reads: "This hoe once belonged to Abraham Lincoln; it was given to Miss Augusta Isensee by a former pastor of the family."

While this hoe does have a bit of provenance, there is not a direct connection to Mr. Lincoln. There are a lot of questions left to be answered. Was the man a former pastor of the Lincoln family or Miss Isensee's? If the latter, how did he come across the item?

RENOVATION NEWS

Progress on the renovation of the museum continues as preparations are made for some of the major projects like plaster repair, painting and floor restoration. To that end, many smaller projects are underway or already completed. Preparation work is also nearly complete for contractors to begin installation of HVAC units.

The MCHS Board and Museum/Library staff have been attending dozens of meetings and appointments each month, all working towards a common goal of creating a new museum. The Society extends an invitation to interested MCHS members to join any of the following committees tworking towards completion of the renovation.

Fundraising Committee: The MCHS Board recently accepted a contract from Inland Design, a local graphic design firm with experience in fundraising campaigns. Working with this committee, Inland Design will provide the organization and graphics for a capital campaign to complete the museum (details in the July newsletter). The Fundraising Committee will bring fundraising suggestions and assignments for completing this exciting project to the full Board.

Ad Hoc Weir House Restoration and Renovation Committee: This committee works with contractors, painters, electricians and others to determine what work needs to be done and in what order. They also review bids and make recommendations to the Board for approval.

Collections Committee: This committee is currently reviewing the artifacts in the MCHS collections to determine whether or not each piece truly reflects a strong connection to Madison County history. In the past, some items were accepted that were antique, but not from Madison County.

Please call 656-3493 if you are interested in serving on one of the above committees. There is much still to be done, and as our ancestors learned long ago, "many hands make light work."

WINDOWS PROJECT ONGOING

MCHS continues its appeal to area residents for assistance in restoring the windows of the museum building. Donors are asked to consider adopting one or more windows of the Weir House, at a cost of \$2,400 each. For more information on the Windows Project, stop by the Madison County Archival Library for a donation form or visit the MCHS website at www.madcohistory.org.

2018 PROGRAMMING

MCHS programs this year are focusing on early Illinois history in recognition of the Illinois Bicentennial. Please note that until further notice MCHS programs will be held at Immanuel United Methodist Church at 800 N. Main Street in Edwardsville which is directly across the street from the Archival Library.

SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION IN ILLINOIS

SUNDAY, JUNE 10 - 2 P.M.

MCHS will host a program by Professor Bryan Jack on slavery and emancipation in Illinois on Sunday, June 10, at 2 p.m. The issue is often more complicated than people realize, and Illinois serves as an interesting case study. Illinois was in many ways a region of quasi-slavery. Chattel slavery in the territorial years, indentured servitude, slavery exemptions in at least five counties, and gradual emancipation all meant that unfree labor was a constant in Illinois leading up to the Civil War. Along with this difficult history, in 1865 Illinois became the first state to ratify the 13th Amendment.



Prof.essor Bryan Jack

Dr. Bryan Jack is an associate professor of historical studies at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. He earned his Ph.D. at Saint Louis University, and his M.A. from the University of Alabama. He is the author of numerous books and articles about African-American history, especially in this area, and is currently completing an article on memorialization of the slave trade in downtown St. Louis, Missouri.

Future Program Dates

LEWIS AND CLARK ENCAMPMENT IN ILLINOIS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19 - 2 P.M.

MADISON COUNTY DURING WORLD WAR I

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7 - 2 P.M.

DINING IN HISTORY: NOVEMBER 4

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

March 2018 ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

\$500 Elijah Lovejoy

Roger & Evelyn Weibusch

\$150

Robert & Mary Madoux

\$100 James Madison

City of Edwardsville
Edw. Children's Museum
Robert Malench
Jeff & Melinda Pauk
Joyce Reising
Six Mile Regional Library
David & Kay Werner
Carol Wetzel

\$50 Family

A. Lincoln Presidential Library
Patrick & Lynn Bury
Chris & Pam Farrar
Joe & Gen Hill
Kurt & Julie Johnson
Greg & Joan Mudge
William Mudge
Nick & Cheri Petrillo
Luther & Charleen Statler
Gayle Kassings Wolff

\$35 Individual

Miriam Burns
Suzanne Dietrich
Hayner History Library
Tina Hubert
Everett Loy
Theresa Morrison
Lois Noto
Marilyn Sulc

LINCOLN'S DUEL (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

Abraham Lincoln took an active role in the Whig assault. Approaching Simeon Francis, the editor of the *Sangamo Journal*, Lincoln proposed to write a satirical letter under the pseudonym of "Rebecca," a country woman who lived in "Lost Township." There had been previous letters from "Rebecca" to the newspaper written by others, but now, Lincoln, using local idioms and mimicking dialect, attacked Shields in what Lincoln thought was a humorous manner. Other Whig Party supporters decided to join in the fun. Notably Mary Todd and Julia Jayne wrote another "Rebecca" letter poking fun at Shield's reputation with the ladies.

Shields, however, found nothing funny about the letters. Infuriated, he demanded that Francis tell him the name of the author. Francis revealed to Shields that the author of the "Rebecca" letters was Lincoln. Many biographers claim that Lincoln authorized Francis to tell Shields that it was him in order to protect the reputations of Mary Todd and Julia Jayne. Regardless, upon learning from Francis that Lincoln was the author, an enraged Shield demanded satisfaction on a "field of honor." Selecting John D. Whiteside as his second, Shields rode to Tremont in Tazewell County where Lincoln was in court. Whiteside immediately presented Lincoln with Shield's demand for a retraction and an apology. Lincoln later said that Shields' note was so offensive that he could not possibly respond (Thomas 83).

Lincoln returned to Springfield after court, and if he had any hopes that he could avoid the escalating situation, they quickly evaporated. The town was abuzz with excitement and rumor over the demand from Shields. Lincoln, consequently, instructed his colleague Dr. Elias H. Merryman to negotiate with Shields. If Shields would submit a more temperate demand, Lincoln said, he would apologize; oth-

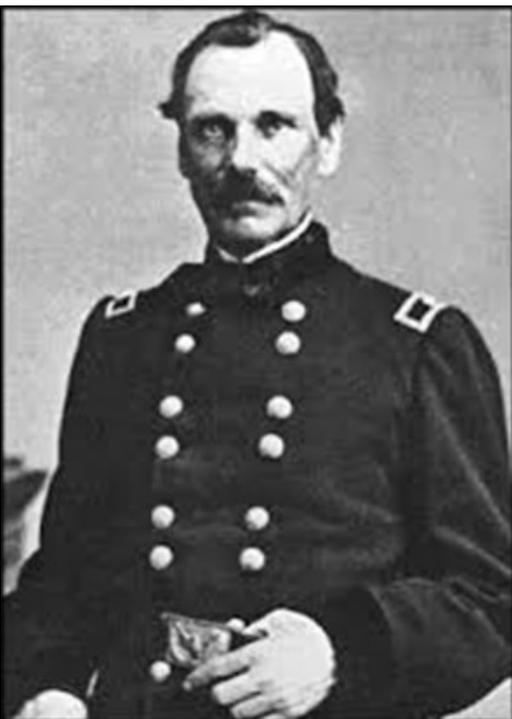
erwise he would have to accept Shields' challenge (Thomas 83). The negotiations failed and Merryman arranged with Whiteside for Shields and Lincoln to duel in Missouri on September 22.

As the person challenged, Lincoln had the prerogative of selecting the weapons. Knowing that Shields enjoyed a reputation as an outstanding marksman with pistols and with muskets, Lincoln chose broadswords. To make matters even more disadvantageous for Shields, Lincoln insisted that a board be placed on the ground across which they would fight and from which no man could retreat more than eight feet. Clearly, given his height and long arms, Lincoln had the overwhelming advantage.

It is difficult to know what Lincoln was thinking. Obviously, he was serious in proposing the terms of the duel, but was he hoping that Shields, at a distinct disadvantage, would retract his challenge? Lincoln knew that Shields was no coward, but perhaps by choosing broadswords Lincoln was trying to show Shields the absurdity of fighting a duel.

Exactly what happened next is uncertain. According to Lincoln lore, the seconds resumed negotiations after Lincoln stretched to his full height and casually whacked off a tree branch with his broadsword. The end result was that a bargain was reached. Lincoln disavowed any intention of injuring Shields' personal character and Shields subsequently withdrew his challenge. The men shook hands and returned to Illinois, reputations intact. It is interesting to note, however, the entire affair produced such rancor that Shields challenged one of Lincoln's seconds, William Butler, to a duel with muskets at 100 yards. This duel also failed to materialize. In the end, Lincoln never wished to be reminded again of his first trip to Madison County.

WHO WAS JAMES SHIELDS?



James Shields, shown at left, emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1822. He fought in the Second Seminole War, lived in Quebec, and settled in Kaskaskia where he read law. He was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1836 and then State Auditor in 1839. Interestingly, Shields was not yet a U.S. citizen when he was elected to office. He was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 1843 and fought in the Mexican War from 1846 to 1848, where he was wounded twice and eventually promoted to major general. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1848 but lost re-election to Lyman Trumbull of Alton in 1854. He moved to Minnesota and was elected as U.S. Senator in 1858. During the Civil War, he served as General in the Army of the Potomac, notably losing a battle to Stonewall Jackson in 1862. After the war, Shields moved to Missouri where he was again elected to the U.S. Senate. He is the only person to have been elected to the senate from three different states. Shields died in 1879 in Iowa.

WAS THE LINCOLN - SHIELDS DUEL ON BLOODY ISLAND?

Some books and articles incorrectly suggest that the infamous “Bloody Island” was the location of the Lincoln-Shields non-duel. Bloody Island was a sandbar that grew into an island about one mile in length and 500 yards wide. Maps show the island directly across from St. Louis. Because it was between Missouri and Illinois with uncertain jurisdiction, it became the site of a number of famous duels. Thomas Hart Benton, the future U. S. Senator from Missouri and close friend of Andrew Jackson, fought two duels against the same man on the island, killing his opponent in 1817. There were a number of other duels fought on the island by prominent public figures.



1853 map of St. Louis, Missouri, showing Bloody Island across from the city, center right.

The island continued growing and threatened to block the St. Louis levee. The Army Corps of Engineers, under Col. Robert E. Lee, built a series of dikes in 1838 that forced the main channel of the river to flow on the western side of island. The result was that the island soon disappeared, becoming part of the Illinois shore, four years before the Shields-Lincoln duel.

HISTORIANS' INTERPRETATIONS

Historians and biographers of Lincoln have interpreted Lincoln's duel with Shields in a variety of ways. Carl Sandburg, writing in the 1920s, used the duel as evidence of Lincoln's cleverness, humor, and chivalry, protecting the reputations of Mary Todd and Julia Jayne. Benjamin B. Thomas, in his 1952 biography of Lincoln, argued that the near-duel was a source of acute embarrassment for Lincoln and taught him an important lesson about satire and ridicule as political weapons. Thomas maintained that Lincoln never again used such techniques. In his biography, David Donald said that the affair taught Lincoln to never use anonymous letters. Donald also maintained that the incident taught Lincoln how to better direct his humor. Ronald C. White echoed Thomas's earlier conclusion that the near duel with Shields was a matter of great embarrassment to Lincoln and reflected Lincoln's immaturity and inexperience as a politician.

Sources and suggested reading:

Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years* (New York 1925).

Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York 1952).

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York 1995).

WHO WAS JOHN WHITESIDE?

John D. Whiteside, James Shields' second, was the younger brother of William B. Whiteside, whose obelisk tombstone stands prominently above Bluff Road on the SIUE campus. John D. Whiteside commanded a brigade in the Black Hawk War, served in the Illinois Legislature, and was State Treasurer. The Whitesides were ardent Jacksonian Democrats. They were rough, not well-educated, and very anti-American Indian. Lincoln served under Samuel Whiteside in the Black Hawk War, a cousin of John and William. John D. Whiteside lived in Old Station in Monroe County and died in 1850.

John Reynolds, *Pioneer History of Illinois* (1852).

Ben Ostermeier, "Whiteside, William Bolin (1777-1833)," <https://madison-historical.siue.edu/encyclopedia/william-bolin-whiteside-1777-1833/>.

Guest Author Provides Resources

Dr. Stephen Hansen, is an SIUE emeritus professor of historical studies who served as the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research for many years. His area of study focused on 19th Century Political History, the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. The Society is grateful for his contributions to this newsletter as well as the sources and reading lists he has provided throughout the newsletter so that readers interested in a particular topic can visit their local library (or bookstore) to learn more about it.

LINCOLN IN EDWARDSVILLE AND HIGHLAND

Abraham Lincoln's second trip to Madison County came in September 1858, during the hotly contested U. S. Senatorial campaign against Stephen A. Douglas. On Friday, Sept. 10, Lincoln arrived in Alton from Hillsboro. He traveled to Edwardsville the next day, gave his speech around 1 p.m. and moved on to Highland where he gave another speech that evening. On Sunday, Sept. 12, Lincoln left Madison County and journeyed to Greenville where he delivered a two-hour speech the next day. Although his stay in Madison County was short, and his speeches in Edwardsville and Highland were brief, the trip was politically important.

The 1858 political map in Illinois was complicated. In the presidential contest two years earlier, Democrat James Buchanan garnered 34.4 percent of the vote in Madison County, while Republican presidential candidate James Fremont carried 26 percent of the vote. Significantly, the Know Nothings, led by former President Millard Fillmore, won Madison County with 39.3 percent of the vote. In 1858, no American Party candidates contested any of the elected offices in Madison County. For Lincoln and Douglas, consequently, winning the votes of these Know Nothings was the key to victory.

Lincoln had reason to be encouraged that he might persuade the Know Nothings to support the Republican candidates to the Illinois General Assembly. First, in 1856, despite losing the County in the presidential contest, a majority of Madison County voters supported the Republican candidate for the U.S. Congress and a plurality supported the Republican candidate for Governor. Second, Lincoln was a personal friend of Joseph A. Gillespie of Edwardsville, a leading figure in the now mostly defunct Know Nothing Party and a Republican Party candidate to the State Senate. Third, U.S. Senator Lyman Trumbull of Alton was a strong supporter of Lincoln.

Even with these advantages, Lincoln knew that the contest in Madison County would be close. In July, Lincoln wrote to Gillespie calculating the odds: "if *they* [the Democrats] get one quarter of the Fillmore votes and *you* three quarters, they will beat you [by] 125 votes. If they get one *fifth* and you four fifths, you beat them 179. In Madison [County] alone if our friends get 1000 of the Fillmore votes, and their opponents the remainder---658, we win by just two votes."

When Lincoln arrived in Edwardsville that quiet and clear Saturday morning, he met with local Republican Party

officials at the home of Matthew Gillespie, brother of Joseph Gillespie. The men moved on to the Marshall House, formerly known as Haskett's Tavern, where they ate a noon-time meal. Mary Rollins recalled that as an eleven-year-old girl, she had gotten up at midnight to peel potatoes. She said that she had to set two tables running the length of the room, each draped with flags and bunting. Mrs. Rollins remembered that she had to clear the tables three times to accommodate the diners. After the meal, Joseph Gillespie arranged for a band and a small parade to escort Lincoln to the Court House for his 1 p.m.

speech. One eyewitness reported that the parade was a "poor showing" while another recalled running alongside the small procession yelling racial slurs at Lincoln.

Lincoln carefully prepared his speech for what the sympathetic *Chicago Tribune* described as a respectful "cluster" of citizens. Knowing that he needed to appeal to the former Know Nothing voters, Lincoln organized his speech around four questions: what is the difference between the Democratic and the Republican parties? What is the opinion of Henry Clay on the issue of slavery in the

nation? What does Douglas' plan of Popular Sovereignty really mean? And lastly, what will happen after the next Dred Scott Decision?

Lincoln argued that the difference between the Democrats and the Republicans was that the Republicans "consider slavery a moral, social and political wrong, while the [Democrats]...*do not* consider it either a moral, social or political wrong; and the action of each, as respects the growth of the county and the expansion of our population, is squared to meet these views." He argued that government was instituted to secure the "blessing of freedom, and that slavery is an unqualified evil to the negro, to the white man, to the soil, and to the State." He then turned his attention to the antislavery positions of Henry Clay, the venerated and now deceased Whig Senator and presidential candidate from Kentucky. Lincoln paid tribute to Clay and referenced him in the speech not only because he genuinely admired Clay but also because he knew that many of the Know Nothing voters had been Whigs who fiercely supported Clay.

Lincoln then focused on his last two questions in his relatively brief speech. First, using humor, Lincoln attacked Douglas' idea of Popular Sovereignty as a solution to the issue of slavery in the territories. It meant nothing more, Lincoln argued that to give white people the right to whip slaves in the territories under the self-proclaimed right of



The Old Edwardsville Hotel, an Old Historic Landmark.

Cook Photo.

Lincoln's noon meal was in the dining room located in a rear addition of the hotel shown above. The dining hall is gone, but the front portion of the building, shown here, still stands at 1101 North Main Street. The Court House in 1858 was located only a block away, on the grounds of what is today the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities at 1210 North Main Street. Matthew Gillespie's home, although enlarged and renovated in the 1890s, still stands at 606 North Main Street. (MCHS)

(Cont page 7)

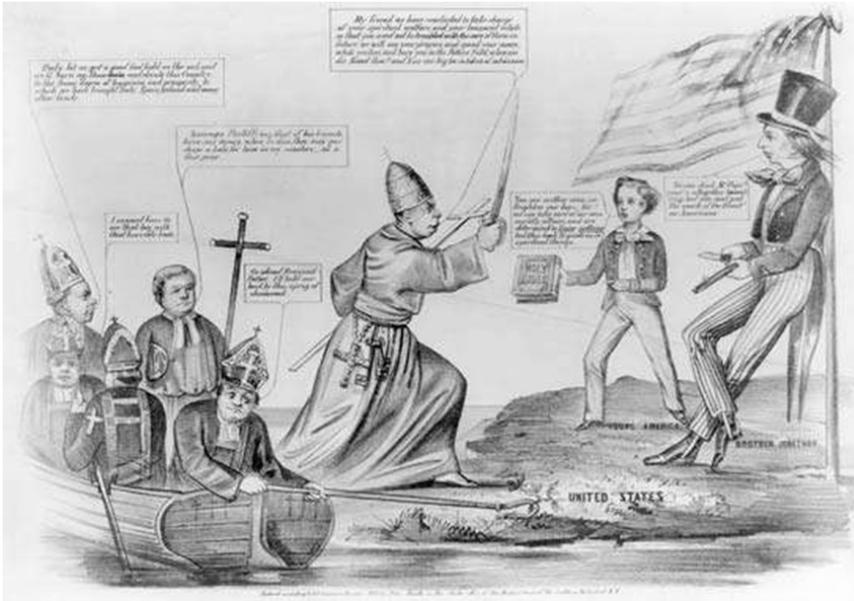
LINCOLN'S VISIT TO EDWARDSVILLE AND HIGHLAND (CONT.)

self-government. Second, Lincoln concluded his speech by asking what might happen next after the Dred Scott Decision ruled that the federal government could not prohibit slavery in the territories. Lincoln told his audience to prepare for the Supreme Court to rule next that a State could not prohibit slavery anywhere which meant that slavery could be introduced into Illinois. The *Alton Weekly Courier* reported that Lincoln's speech received "loud applause."

Lincoln did not linger long in Edwardsville. He traveled

quickly to Highland where he gave another talk that evening. Unfortunately, no record remains of what Lincoln said in Highland. Neither any of the newspapers nor Lincoln's own papers have any notes about his Highland speech. On Sunday, Sept. 12, he left for Greenville, where he gave a two-hour speech the next day. Lincoln would come back to Madison County later the same year for the last of the seven debates with Senator Stephen A. Douglas on Oct. 15 in Alton.

WHO WERE THE KNOW NOTHINGS?

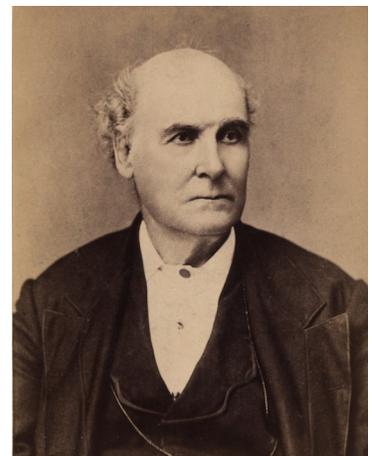


Political Cartoon depicting Catholics invading America. (Library of Congress)

The Know Nothings made their first appearance in Illinois politics early in 1855. Initially, they were a secret fraternal organization that began in the 1840s and flourished in the 1850s. Originally named the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner, they earned their name as Know Nothings because when asked about the Order, they responded by saying "I know nothing." The Know Nothings were ardently anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic. As the number of immigrants rapidly increased, the Know Nothings became more political. In Illinois alone, the number of German immigrants increased nearly five-fold, the number of Irish quadrupled, and the number of immigrants from England doubled. The nativists felt that the American way of life was being threatened and overwhelmed by the tide of mostly Catholic immigrants. The Know Nothings began organizing themselves into the American Party in 1854, and by 1856, the American Party threatened to replace the defunct Whig Party as the major opposition to the Democratic Party. The Know Nothings, however, soon split over the issue of slavery, and had mostly disappeared as an organized political movement by 1860, although nativism would resurface many more times later in our nation's history.

JOSEPH GILLESPIE

Joseph Gillespie was a prominent attorney and legislator who lived in Edwardsville and in Wood River. Born in New York in 1809, his father moved the family to Edwardsville in 1819. Joseph Gillespie served in the Black Hawk War when he probably met Abraham Lincoln. Gillespie was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1839. In 1840, he was one of Whigs who, along with Lincoln, jumped out of a window to prevent a quorum when the Democrats tried to pass legislation against the Whig supported State Bank. Gillespie served in the Illinois House and in the State Senate at various times until 1860. He was a Whig and then a Know Nothing before joining the Republican Party in 1856. He was always a strong supporter and close political ally of Lincoln. He died in 1885 and is buried in Oak Lawn Cemetery in Glen Carbon. For additional information about Gillespie, see Paul D. Nygard, *Judge Joseph Gillespie of Illinois: Whig, Know Nothing, Republican*, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville: M.A. Thesis, 1992.



Judge Joseph Gillespie (MCHS)

1858 THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE IN ALTON



Above is a copy of the Robert Marshall Root painting of the Lincoln-Douglas debate at Charleston, Illinois, on September 15, 1858. Abraham Lincoln is standing and Douglas is the man seated on the left next to Lincoln. The National Park Services has transcripts of the speeches given by both men at all the events on their web site. (National Park Service)

Even stripped of all the lore and legend, the Lincoln-Douglas Debates were momentous occasions. While debates and stump speaking by political candidates were common in Illinois, this campaign was unprecedented. It was exceptional because first, politicians did not campaign directly for the U.S. Senate. Senators were chosen by the State Legislature, not by the voters. Campaigning for the U.S. Senate was highly irregular. Second, the campaign was unusual because of the intensity of partisanship. Newspapers, in particular, viciously attacked each candidate. Another measure of the campaign's passion was the fact that voter turnout would reach over 80 percent. The third factor that made the campaign exceptional was the level of national interest. The Richmond, Virginia, *Enquirer* wrote that the "great battle of the next Presidential election is now being fought in Illinois" while the *New York Times* wrote that Illinois was "the most interesting political battleground in the Union." (Donald, 214)

On October 14, 1858, Lincoln, along with fellow passenger Stephen Douglas, left Quincy, Illinois, the site of the sixth debate, and traveled by steamer to Alton, the site of the next debate. The *City of Louisiana* reached Alton by 5 a.m. on Friday morning Oct. 15. Both men were hoarse and near exhaustion from the strain of the campaign, and both were probably glad it was nearly over. Lincoln made his way to the Franklin House to rest where he met Mary Todd and their eldest son, Robert, both of whom had arrived by train that same morning from Springfield.

The day was dreary, blustery, and damp. Nevertheless, people began arriving early in the morning. They came by

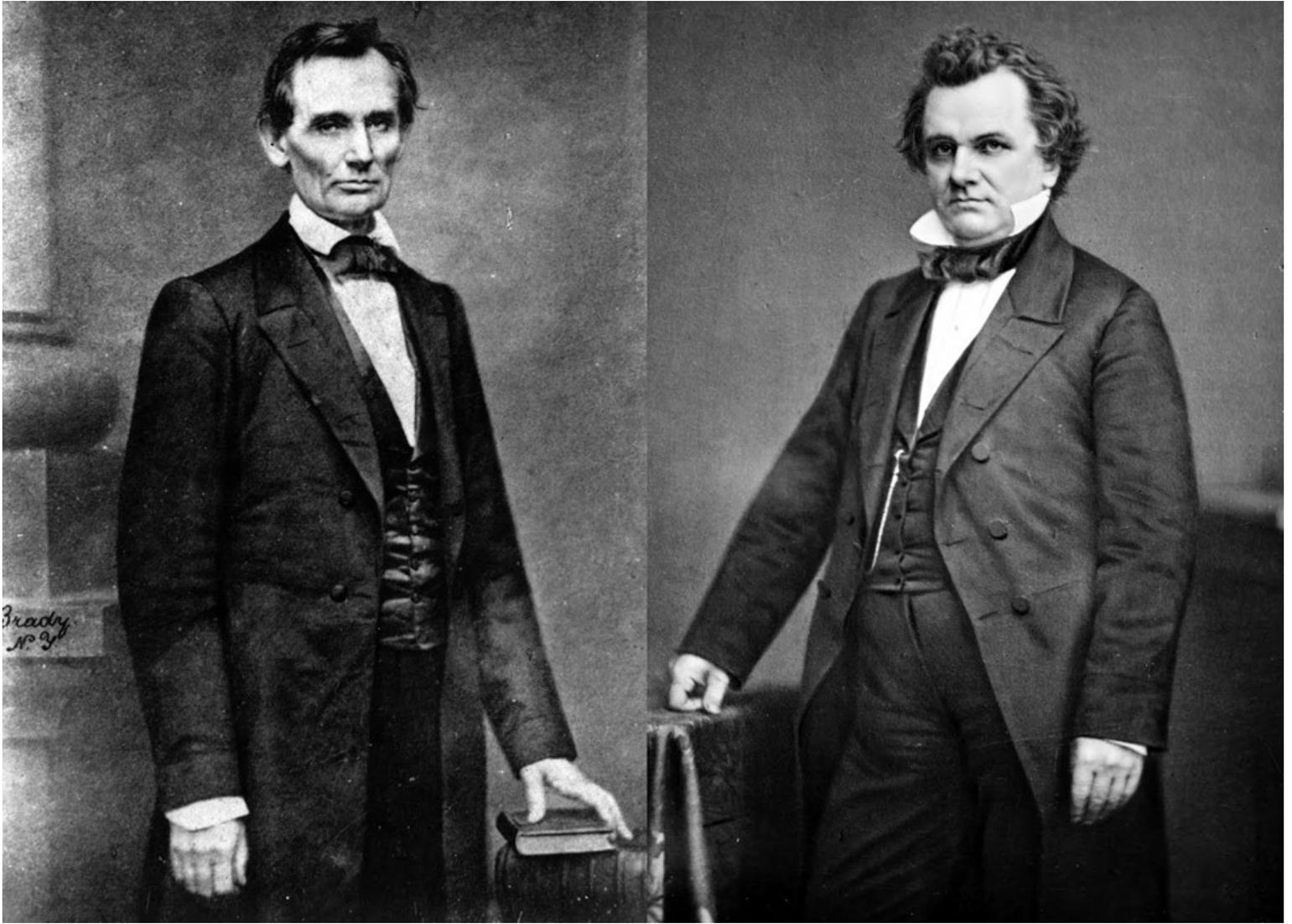
horseback, carriage, and every other imaginable kind of wagon. The steamer *Baltimore* from St. Louis brought a load of passengers in the morning. By about 10:30, the train on the Chicago, Alton & St. Louis Railroad brought people from "Springfield, Auburn, Girard, Carlinville, Brighton, and Monticello." The *Alton Weekly Courier* reported that other trains, one with "eight full cars," also unloaded passengers from an unknown number of towns. About noon, an extra steamer from St. Louis, the *White Cloud*, landed at the levee.

Into this hubbub of about 6,000 spectators marched the Springfield Cadets, a military company that paraded through the streets. The company camped by Merritt's Coronet Band which played music for the milling crowd. Early in the afternoon, a band from Edwardsville arrived to "charm the senses and soothe dull care away."

According to the *Weekly Courier* as people went up and down the streets, some "hurrahed for Lincoln" and others shouted "huzzahs for Douglas." Crowds of people jostled each other in the stores, choked the street corners, and thronged the streets. Arguments broke out among passionate supporters. Fists shook but few punches were thrown. All the while, vendors hawked their wares. Saloons filled up with people looking for food and for drink. With flags flapping and signs waving, the *Weekly Courier* pronounced the entire affair a glorious display of democracy.

By agreement, neither Lincoln nor Douglas organized a parade or demonstration as they made their way to the platform. At 2 o'clock, in front of the new city hall, Lincoln and Douglas began their three-hour debate. The people

1858 THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE IN ALTON



These three-quarter portraits of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were both taken by famed Civil War era photographer Matthew Brady. Both were taken circa 1860. (Library of Congress)

crowded in to hear. Douglas opened the debate, speaking for an hour. Lincoln followed with a 90-minute rejoinder and Douglas closed the debate with a 30-minute conclusion.

In his opening, Douglas used many of the same arguments against Lincoln that he had employed throughout the campaign. Specifically, Douglas said that Lincoln's "House Divided" speech showed that the Republicans were an extreme party of radicals that opposed the legitimate ruling of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case. The "Little Giant" also attacked Lincoln for supporting the equality of the races. He then turned to his own defense. Douglas declared that he was the true moderate between two extremes; the abolitionist Republicans in the North and the fire-eating slave-owners in the South. Douglas said that he was trying to preserve the nation as the Founding Fathers had created it and that he was defending our freedoms against radicals and extremists.

Lincoln's response was calculated to show that he and the Republicans, not Douglas, were the conservatives, the defenders of the original intent of the Founding Fathers. Lincoln argued that it was slavery that threatened freedom and

democracy and that its advocates had perverted the Constitution and the founding principles of the nation. If left unchecked, he declared, the slave power would eventually take away our freedom, first by making the territories open for slavery and then by making it illegal for any State to prohibit slavery. Lincoln shrugged off the charge of being in favor of racial equality by saying that he had "no purpose...to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races."

The pro-Republican *Chicago Tribune* reported that the speakers did not generate more than ordinary applause. Perhaps the lack of enthusiasm reflected the drab weather or perhaps the crowd mirrored Lincoln's and Douglas' emotional and physical exhaustion. Regardless, the two candidates made their cases to the general, albeit muted, satisfaction of the voters. Lincoln left Alton the next day by train, heading to Lincoln, Illinois while Douglas took a train to Decatur. In a few short weeks, a majority of voters in Madison County would support Democratic Party candidates who would help re-elect Stephen A. Douglas to the U.S. Senate. Unfortunately, neither Lincoln nor Douglas would return to Madison County.

WHY ALTON?

The campaign between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln began at least a month before the men made any formal arrangement to debate. Lincoln had been following Douglas from city to city, often speaking on the same day in the same location as the “Little Giant.” Douglas complained about Lincoln’s tactics, and Democratic newspapers jeered that Lincoln skulked after Douglas like a frightened dog. Stung by the criticism, the Republican supporting *Chicago Tribune* proposed that the two men divide time equally before the same audiences. Lincoln suggested 50 such speaking engagements but Douglas countered with an offer to debate seven times, once each in the congressional districts in which they had not already spoken. Alton was chosen as the site for the debate in the 8th congressional district because of the size of its population and because of its location on the river and at the junction of a number of railroads.

The other 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate locations were in Ottawa (Aug. 21), Freeport (Aug. 27), Jonesboro (Sept. 15), Charleston (Sept. 18), Galesburg (Oct. 7) and Quincy (Oct. 13).



The newspaper clipping (below) from the *Chicago Tribune* and the reconstructed material (below, right) from an article in the *Chicago Daily Times* published on October 18 and 17, 1858, respectively, demonstrate how 19th century newspapers were not expected to be unbiased. In fact many newspapers then were founded as political voices for their parties.. There was no effort to provide a fair or balanced account of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Seventh and Last Debate Between
LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS
 At Alton, Friday, October 15th.
 Douglas' Seventh Rehearsal of "That Speech."
 ADMIRABLE SUMMING UP OF THE ISSUES
 OF THE CAMPAIGN BY MR. LINCOLN.
 Verbatim Report of Mr. Douglas' Speech, Mr. Lincoln's Reply and Mr. Douglas' Rejoinder.
 The final passage-at-arms between Lincoln and Douglas came off at Alton on Friday last—

MID-19TH CENTURY CAMPAIGNING

**GRAND RALLY
 OF THE
 LINCOLN MEN
 OF
 OLD TAZEWELL!**

WE HONOR  **THE HONEST**

The opponents of those twin cherries on a split stem, BUCHANAN and DOUGLAS, in TAZEWELL and adjoining counties, are requested to assemble in
GRAND COUNCIL
 AT PEKIN, ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 1858.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN!
 Will address the People at 2 o'clock, P. M. on the Political Topics of the day. Let good men of every name and tongue who love the political principles of the Father of our Country, come together and sustain the man who represents those principles. While President, Senator and Supreme Court Justice, he made the constitution every where, all over our free states and territories, it is time for the people to rise in their might and sustain our glorious Union upon the cherished Republican Principles of Washington, Jefferson, Clay and Lincoln.

WM. KELLOGG!
 Candidate for reelection to Congress, will also address the meeting.

HON. LYMAN TRUMBULL
 is expected to speak in the evening.
 President of the day, DAVID MARK, Esq.

**FARE ON STEAMERS WILE AND DELTA
 HALF PRICE.**

T. J. PICKETT, T. KING, Jr., J. WAGENSELLER, D. A. CHEEVER, C. GRONDEBERG, I. A. HAWLEY, THOS SMITH, Committee of Arrangements.
 Printed at Pickett & Dowdell's Job Office, Fifth Mail, over Bergstrom's store, Pekin, Illinois

Above is a typical 1858 campaign poster.

THE CAMPAIGN IN ILLINOIS.
 THE LAST JOINT DEBATE.
 DOUGLAS AND LINCOLN AT ALTON.
 5,000 TO 10,000 PERSONS PRESENT!
 LINCOLN AGAIN REFUSES TO ANSWER WHETHER HE WILL VOTE TO ADMIT KANSAS IF HER PEOPLE APPLY WITH A CONSTITUTION RECOGNIZING SLAVERY.
 APPEARS IN HIS OLD CHARACTER OF THE "ARTFUL DODGER."
 TRIES TO PALM HIMSELF OFF TO THE WHIGS OF MADISON COUNTY AS A FRIEND OF HENRY CLAY & NO ABOLITIONIST,
AND IS EXPOSED!!
 GREAT SPEECHES OF SENATOR DOUGLAS.

WHO WON THE 1858 LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES?

Generally, most historians acknowledge that Stephen Douglas won the debates – at least in the short term. One reason why historians concluded that Douglas won the debates is because of comments by contemporary observers. Overall, Douglas was recognized as the more energetic and dynamic speaker. One newspaper likened his speaking style to that of a prizefighter. “He has...pluck, quickness, and strength: adroitness in shifting his positions, avoiding his adversary’s blows, and hitting him in unexpected places in return.” (quoted in Robert Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, New York 1973). His speaking style reflected his pugnacious and commanding personality.

Lincoln’s speaking style, on the other hand, in 1858, was generally more stilted, certainly less emotional than Douglas’. Apparently Lincoln was expecting the debates to be like how he presented evidence to a jury; cool, reasoned, and dispassionate. The ferocity of Douglas’ debating style seemed to have caught Lincoln off guard because at the first debate in Ottawa he was hesitant and seemingly unprepared to meet Douglas’ aggressive rhetorical attack. Lincoln’s supporters were gravely concerned. Charles Ray of the *Chicago Tribune* chided Lincoln to be more aggressive (Donald 217). Lincoln seemed to have listened to this advice because he became more forceful in his style and pointed in his rhetoric.

Regardless, historians still credit Douglas with having the upper hand during the debates.

In the long run, however, historians clearly argue that Lincoln made a more positive impression on voters. Historians are quick to note that the relatively obscure politician from Illinois gained national attention as a result of the debates, attention that earned him important speaking engagements across the North, including the all-important speech at the Cooper Institute in New York City in 1859 which launched his bid for the Republican Party nomination for President. Historians also emphasize that Douglas lost the debates in the long run because, although he won reelection to the Senate, his positions cost him the support of the slave-owning South for the 1860 Presidential election.

For additional reading, see:

Rodney O. Davis and Douglas L. Wilson, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*. Urbana, 2008.

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*. New York, 1995.

Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas: The Battle that Defined America*. New York, 2008.

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness, Lincoln in the 1850s*. California, 1962.

HOW DID MADISON COUNTY VOTE IN 1858?

Precincts	State Senate Buckmaster (D)	State Senate Gillespie (R)	U.S. Congress Fouke (D)	U.S. Congress Baker (R)
Alton	597	488	596	485
Upper Alton	181	216	177	228
Edwardsville	279	251	289	236
Marine	117	113	115	114
Omphghest	48	97	46	99
Bethalto	129	65	126	64
Highland	110	170	96	186
Six Mile	119	36	120	34
White Rock	74	45	74	44
Looking Glass	60	60	68	57
Monticello	67	119	67	117
Saline	30	45	29	46
Alhambra	41	60	41	60
Troy	77	123	78	123
Silver Creek	39	27	38	27
Madison	115	8	112	7
Collinsville	147	110	130	129
TOTAL	2221	2037	2186	2054

The voters of Madison County supported Democratic Party candidates by a slim majority in 1858. Samuel A. Buckmaster defeated Joseph Gillespie by 184 votes for the State Senate. Phillip Fouke, a loyal Douglas supporter, won the Congressional district with 57 percent of the vote, but barely edged out the Republican Joseph Baker in Madison County. The table shows the vote in Madison County in 1858 by precinct as reported by the *Alton Weekly Courier*. While Lincoln apparently wasn’t able to convince enough of the former Know Nothing voters to support Republican candidates in 1858, he was able to carry Madison County in 1860. Madison County voters gave Lincoln a slim 161 vote plurality over Douglas in the 1860 Presidential election.

Note: The numbers do not total. The errors are in the numbers reported for the precincts since the totals correspond to the official county totals. The precinct level errors may have resulted from the newspaper printing or from transcribing.



Madison County Historical Society

Opening Doors to Madison County History

801 N. Main Street
Edwardsville, IL 62025

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62025

SUMMER CALENDAR

SUNDAY, JUNE 10

2 P.M.

SLAVERY & EMANCIPATION IN ILLINOIS

PRESENTER: PROFESSOR BRYAN JACK

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19

2 P.M.

LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION IN ILLINOIS

PRESENTER: BRAD WINN

PROGRAM LOCATION:

IMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

800 N. MAIN STREET

EDWARDSVILLE, IL

(LOWER LEVEL; ENTRANCE ON SOUTH SIDE)

MARY'S RESEARCH TIP

I love genealogy conferences and seldom miss an opportunity to attend one locally. I always learn at least one new thing.

On Apr. 7, the St. Louis Genealogical Society held their Annual Conference. There were two options for each of the five one-hour sessions, including two sessions each on Ancestry and FamilySearch, two on Working with Your DNA Results, and sessions on FindMyPast, Missouri State Archives, Online Books, and Verifying Information on Family Trees. Since several of us attended together, we split the sessions and then shared the information and notes from each session.

So what did I learn? Being an avid spreadsheet user, I learned how to manage my DNA results using a spreadsheet so I could make sense out of the results. (Have I mentioned how much I love using spreadsheets?) I also learned a few new tricks using Ancestry, like using the Card Catalog feature, and a new source for online books. For the online books, I already use the Internet Archive (archive.org) and Google Books (books.google.com) but Saturday I was introduced to the HathiTrust Digital Library (hathitrust.org).

So my tip for this month is to take advantage of these local conferences! They are usually reasonably priced, educational, and fun!

REMINDER

The Historical Museum Remains Closed for Renovations



The Archival Library is Open Regular Hours:

Wed-Fri 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sun 1 - 4 p.m.