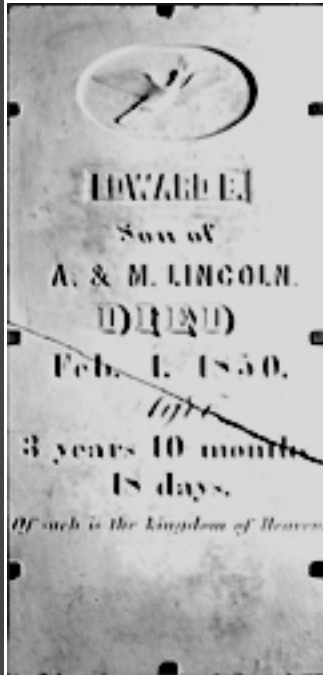


# PRAIRIE PAGES

February 12, 2009



**Eddie's Tombstone**  
**Died 02/01/1850**



**Robert**



**Tad**



**Willie**

Pictured are Mary and Abraham's sons. Unfortunately, no image exists of their son Willie. The image is of his tombstone. The epitaph reads: "of such is the kingdom of Heaven"

## Volume 8 Number 4

### Lincoln Bicentennial Issue: Lincoln's Years in Illinois 1830-1860

By Pete Harbison

SPRINGFIELD 1850 – 1861

#### A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

1850 began with great sadness for the Lincolns. The younger of their two sons, four-year-old Eddie, died in early February after a long illness. Both parents were heartbroken over the death of the little boy, and Mary experienced serious **depression** following Edward's death, a condition she would suffer from the rest of her life. Her spirits and Abraham's were revived by the birth of their third son, William (Willie), later that year on December 21. The fourth and last child of the

Lincoln family was born on April 4, 1853. He was named Thomas for Abraham's father, but was always called Tad by his parents.

#### KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT

William H. Herndon joined Lincoln in the practice of law in 1844, and the firm survived until Lincoln's death. The issue of slavery that was dividing the country took Lincoln from his law practice and brought him back into the political arena.

Americans were faced with a serious choice concerning slavery. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 overturned the

Missouri Compromise that had kept slavery from spreading into new territories and states. The Kansas-Nebraska Act created a legal way to expand slavery into Kansas and Nebraska. Lincoln took an outspoken position against the expansion of slavery, but he did not call for ending slavery in the existing states where it was legal. The Kansas-Nebraska Act caused Lincoln to become more active in politics as he worked with other political leaders to stop

#### GLOSSARY

*depression*—feeling extremely sad

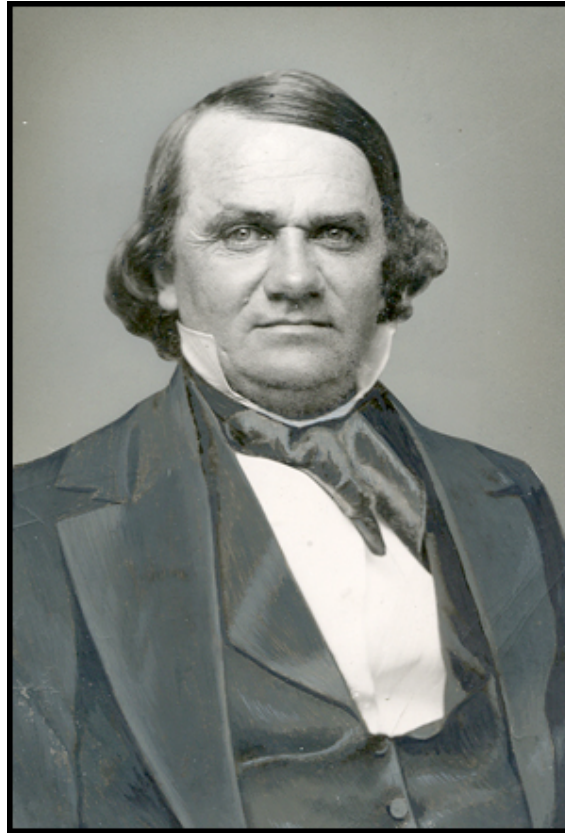
**GLOSSARY**

*debate, debater*—a formal, organized discussion of two sides of an issue or question; a *debater* is someone who participates in the discussion

*splintered*—to be broken into parts

*two-party system*—two political parties control most of the votes in an election

*electoral votes*—voters cast votes for elected representatives (electors) who formally elect the president and vice-president of the United States; voters do not directly elect the president and vice president of the United States



the spread of slavery in the United States.

Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas had sponsored the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress. He was trying to please both sides of the slavery issue but failed. Passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act on May 30, 1854, threatened to tear the Union apart.

The time was right for the founding of a new political party. Unhappy Democrats and Whigs, joined by others, united to form the new Republican Party. At first, Lincoln refused to join the new party, but when it took up issues that were important to him, he became a Republican.

**LINCOLN DOUGLAS DEBATES**

On June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln accepted the Republicans' nomination as candidate for the United States Senate. He delivered his "House Divided" speech in the Hall of Representatives of the Illinois State Capitol. Lincoln argued against the expansion of slavery in the speech.

**A house divided against itself cannot stand ... I do not expect the house to fall but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other ... I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.**

Democrat Stephen A. Douglas was Lincoln's opponent for the Senate seat. The candidates agreed to hold seven **debates**, one in each congressional district in Illinois. During these debates, the two powerful men argued the question of slavery and the future of the Union. Freeport, Ottawa, Quincy, Galesburg, Jonesboro, Alton, and Charleston played host to the debates.

Lincoln did well in the election, but Douglas was reelected to the United States Senate. Although he lost the election, Lincoln won state and national attention through his debates with Douglas. This strengthened his position within the Republican Party and made him a contender for the party's nomination for president in 1860.

**LINCOLN ELECTED PRESIDENT**

The Republican convention was held in Chicago on May 18, 1860. Abraham Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot to be the Republican candidate for president of the United States. He had more than one opponent in the election. Slavery had not only divided the country, it had also **splintered** the traditional **two-party system**.

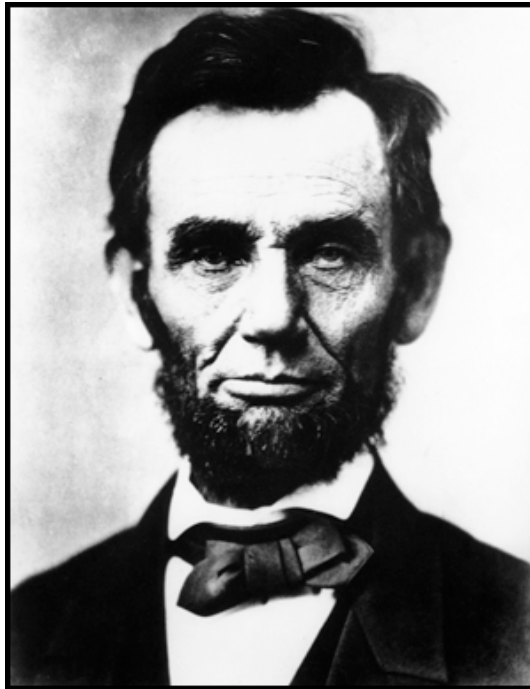
In the election of 1860, four candidates ran for president. The Northern Democratic Party nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, the Southern Democrats chose John C. Breckinridge, and the Constitutional Unionist nominated John Bell. Lincoln won the election with only about 40 percent of the popular vote but 180 of the 203 **electoral votes**.

**FAREWELL TO SPRINGFIELD**

At the Great Western Depot in Springfield on February 11, 1861, President-Elect Abraham Lincoln stood on the rear platform of a railcar and addressed the gathered crowd of friends and neighbors with these words:

**My friends, no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return ... I bid you an affectionate farewell.**

The train carrying Abraham, Mary, Tad, and Willie Lincoln pulled away from the station, heading east, speeding across the prairie. They were on their way to the White House. Abraham Lincoln would not return to Springfield until 1865 when the funeral train brought him home for burial.



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