Manuscript: Lincoln's Nomination and After

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No man exerted a more decisive influence upon the career of Abraham Lincoln, or during his
early and critical days of his administration, than did
Andrew Gregg Curtin, the great war governor of Pennsylvania, who died in 1894. For these reasons
I have recited his recollections of Mr. Lincoln, with which in his latter days he was wont to
frequent, had more than ordinary value and interest. He never found because to put them on
paper, but the following is the result of several lengthy interviews which I had with him in the
winter of 1863 and 1864, and as they latter received the benefit of his revision and correction, can be "accepted
as accurate and authentic," said I at the outset, "It is a matter of record that you were
one of the two men who in the Republican National convention of 1860 brought about the nomination of
An Early Appearance of the "Rock
States in Presidential Convention.
Mr. Lincoln. Will you tell me the story of that convention from your own point of view?" To which

said Mr. Curtin,

"Since I shall have to explain the political conditions existing in Pennsylvania and Indiana
heavily. Have had been nominated for governor in the latter and I had been named for the same office in
the former state. Republican convention, in both of these states was doubtful, but it was absolutely essential that both should elect.
Republican governors in October to secure the election of the Republican candidate for president in Nov.

There were strong hopes of success in both states, but it was still an unsettled question both

to see if the rank and file of the old Whig party would join the new Republican party. For this reason

the strength and availability of the Republican nominee for president were felt by the more foreboding

Republicans both in Indiana and Pennsylvania to be matters of the first importance. A strong presi-

dential candidate would add greatly to the prospects of Republican success in these two pivotal

states. A victory at the state elections in October would have an inevitable effect upon the November contest.

Upon the other hand weighed with a weak presidential candidate both Mr. Lane and myself would probably

fail of an election, and our defeat would react most disastrously upon the national ticket. Before the as-

sembling of the national convention called to meet in Chicago on May 16, 1860, all indications seemed

to point to the nomination of Senator Seward, of New York. The great abilities, his noble character, and

his long and conspicuous public services easily placed him in the lead of all the other candidates.

caused a demand for his nomination from the majority of his party; despite these facts and though not

despite, I went to Chicago resolved to do all in my power to prevent the nomination of Mr. Seward.

I had no personal bias in the matter for, at that time I had never met either Mr. Seward or Mr. Lincoln,

who had been formally put forward as a candidate by the Republicans of Illinois a few weeks before.
who had been formally put forward as a candidate by the Republicans of Illinois a few weeks before.

A week, however, that in my own state at least a part of those who would support Bell and Everett If Mr. Brewer was nominated would under other circumstances come to me. Therefore, my sole opposition to Mr. Brewer was based upon his want of strength in Pennsylvania, as the natural and logical result of defeat in his state in October, would have been a national defeat in November. On my way to Chicago I rode for some distance with Henry P. Foster, my Democratic opponent in the gubernatorial campaign. Though people in politics we were otherwise warm friends, and the conversations I bad with him was a lengthy

I asked him what he thought of the political outlook, and he replied that if Mr. Seward 1870—

the Republican presidential nominee, as he seemed confident would be, Democratic success was certain in the state campaign. I then asked Mr. Foster if he thought he could be elected if some other man was nominated for president by the Republicans. His reply was that such a contingency would make the state contest a close and doubtful, and he could not predict its outcome. This conversation strengthened my former conviction that the nomination of Mr. Seward would be suicidal. Among the first gentlemen

I met after my arrival in Chicago was Henry S. Love, the Republican candidate for governor of Indiana. I told him what were my fears as to the consequences that would follow the nomination of Mr. Seward
told him what were my views as to the consequences that would follow the nomination of Mr. Seward.

He replied that the choice of the New York Senator as a candidate would prove equally fatal to
Republican chances in Indiana, and that the delegation from that state would vote solidly for Mr.
Lincoln as long as there was hope of his nomination. There we visited the delegations as they arrived
and advised them of what, in our opinion, was the honest course to follow. However, we found the
majority of them inclined to Mr. Seward, and when the convention met on Wednesday it was plain to be
seen that he was the favorite. An adjournment was taken over night, but on Thursday the situation had
changed but little and had the convention proceeded to ballot on that day Mr. Seward would have been
nominated beyond the question of a doubt. Fortunately for those of us who opposed his nomination the
business men of Chicago had tendered the delegates a ride on the lake. The temptation to enjoy the
sailing was stronger than the desire to ballot, and this, coupled with some delay in the delivery of the ballots,
the cause of which I have now forgotten, postponed the voting until Friday. Thursday night ColonelLincoln
and I again saw all the state delegations and told the delegates that with Mr. Lincoln as the candidate
we could carry Indiana and Pennsylvania in October by handsome majorities, but that if Mr. Seward
were nominated our defeat was almost certain. These interviews produced a marked effect and as one of the re-

ominated our defeat was almost certain. These interviews produced a marked effect and as one of the results of our labors it was agreed among the Pennsylvania delegates that after giving a complimentary vote to Mr. Cameron on the first ballot their entire strength on subsequent ballots should go to Mr. Lincoln.

The first ballot showed 178 1/2 votes for Seward, 102 for Lincoln, 50 1/2 for Cameron, 49 for Chase and 47 for Bates. On the second ballot, as had been previously arranged, the Pennsylvania delegation changed their vote from Cameron to Lincoln, which caused an immediate and fatal break in the lines of the Seward men.

Before the ballot closed the Vermont and New Jersey delegates, among whom we had done effective work the night before, deserted Seward for Lincoln and the announcement of the vote showed 184 1/2 votes for Seward and 318 1/2 for Lincoln, those to Lincoln followed each other in rapid succession during the progress of the third ballot, and before it was ended Lincoln had 2,514 1/2 votes, 2,333 being required for nomination. Then Mr. Scott, who had arrived in time to vote, turned four votes from the Ohio delegation to Lincoln, assuring his nomination, and before the balloting closed 954 out of the 1,446 delegates had declared in his favor. Next, Evarts and Raymond, the Seward leaders, who until the last had been confident of the nomination of their favorite, were amazed and dismayed by the result, but Mr. Evarts promptly moved that Lincoln's nomination should be made.
and with the enthusiasm that usually attends a motion of this kind, the motion was carried. In Penn-
sylvania, Mr. Lincoln secured half of the Democratic faction upon which the Bell and Everett leaders had con-
fidently relied, and his nomination was so, as I had all along believed, that it would, the very strongest that
Mr. Curtis's account of Lincoln's journey from Harrisburg to Washington in 1861
could have been made. "When did you first meet Mr. Lincoln, governor?" President Lincoln on his way to Wash-
ington to take office arrived in Harrisburg on February 22, 1861, and it was there that I met him for the
first time. He addressed the state legislature in the afternoon and later held a public reception. The
reception a private conference was held in the parlor of the hotel at which the presidential party was

Topping. There were present beside Mr. Lincoln, Norman B. Judd, Ward H. Lamon, David Davis, Adj
Ford, E. V. Sumner, and one or two more of those who were travelling with the president-elect. Mr. Jeff

and me that from two different sources - Allen Pinkerton in the first and a party of New York detectives

in the second instance - information had been received of a plot to assassinate Mr. Lincoln during his
message through Baltimore, and to guard against danger it had been arranged that he should return
by a special train to Philadelphia that evening and take the night express on the Philadelphia, Wil-

ington and Baltimore railroad, thus thwarting the conspirators who expected him to go to Washington.
Washington and Baltimore railroad, chose throwing the conspirators, who expected him to go to Washington,
over the northern central railroad, off the spot. Encouraged by Mr. Lincoln's cool and collected bearing,
but first opposed the idea of a secret journey, advising the President-elect to travel by daylight, or to
being to go with him in person. But when full and convincing proof of the plot was laid before us
by Mr. Judah, knowing that the assassination of the head of the government would bring national ruin,
I instantly changed my mind and joined in devising means to secure his safety. In the evening a public
dinner was given the President-elect, and at its close I invited him to go and spend the night at my

He accepted the invitation, and to allay suspicion, all the members of his party except Colonel Damon
left behind at the hotel. We were at once driven in a closed carriage to the outskirts of the city, where a
special train, consisting of an engine, tender, and passenger car, was standing. I stood on the street, waiting
until I saw Mr. Lincoln and Colonel Damon enter the car and then went home. The journey between Harris-
burg and Washington, and between the former city and Philadelphia had already been cut to prevent
any news of these movements getting abroad; and, with Colonel Damon as his only companion, Mr. Lincoln
started on the journey to the capital. Early the next morning we received word that the trip had been
made in safety and that Mr. Lincoln was in Washington.
made in safety and that Mr. Lincoln was in Washington. What were your first impressions of Mr. Lin-

coln? I asked. "Mr. Lincoln," said the governor, "when I first met him did not impress me as being a

great man. The greatness was then in a measure still dormant. The war developed and brought out the fact

that the greatness within him that would never have become manifest save under such trying con-

ditions. As a judge of men and as a gauge of public opinion and sentiment he was almost infallible.

This gift in the respect races truly monobous and have never to my knowledge been equalled. Every time

that I met him, and for four years I was in daily contact with him, almost weekly, I was more and more impressed with

the greatness of his character, brought into strong relief as it was by the lights and shadows of the war.

An Important Conference with Lincoln at the Beginning of His

administration.

Soon after Mr. Lincoln's inauguration I received a message from him requesting me to come to Washing-

to without delay, as he wished to confer with me. I went and found the president desirous that some of the

states should take action recognizing that civil war existed. Months before from trusted special agents whom

I had sent through the South I had learned that the leaders of the South by now were planning to set up

an independent confederation of states, based upon the principle of human rights and in accordance with

my instructions. And I had also recognized that Pennsylvania, lying on the border ground of the war, came to follow

an attempt would be especially subject to danger and to all the evils growing out of a great military

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An attempt would be especially subject to danger and to all the evils growing out of a great military

onfence, when the President asked me to make the declaration he had in mind I at once accepted the

responsibility. I returned to Harrisburg on a Monday morning determined to send a message to the legis-

lature that day, but some of my friends urged me to postpone action for the time being and I finally yielded
to their advice. Tuesday morning, however, brought a message from the President with this note: Tell you

and nothing yesterday. I think if your action is to have any value you ought to come out without delay.

On receipt of this message I resolved to act forthwith and before noon sent to the legislature a message

in which, in the strongest terms at my command I placed before the people the doctrine that no state or con-

stitutional state could voluntarily secede from the union nor absolve themselves from their obligations. It

was preserved the union was the first thing to be considered and that to divorce it too great a sacrifice

could not be made. Events showed that this message, as suggested and urged by Mr. Lincoln, could not have

been better timed. A bill was at once introduced into the lower house of the legislature giving me power to raise

and equip troops and appropriating half a million dollars for the purpose. Startled at this proof of the

fronaries of purpose of the friends of the union, the members of the legislature who leaned to disloyalty joined

hands in a desperate attempt to prevent the passage of the bill. Their efforts, however, were in vain and fait
died in a desperate attempt to prevent the passage of the bill. Their efforts, however, were in vain and forty

eight hours after its introduction the bill was a law. After it had passed the house and while it was on its

final passage in the senate, news of the firing on Fort Sumter, was read from the clerk's desk, silencing for

a time all the enemies of the bill. I made prompt use of the authority granted me, and when the president

issued his call for 75,000 men for 100 days the Pennsylvania soldiers were the first to reach the imperilled

capital. From that time until the close of the war I was one of those Mr. Lincoln called into council in my

Lincoln's words. Saved Pennsylvania from draft riots.

critical emergency. It was one of the shining traits of Mr. Lincoln's greatness,
town only in a few sections, but in one place, Bass Township, Schuylkill county, open revolt against the
threatened. Bass township was a Molly Maguire centre, and infected with a lawless and criminal element.

Three murders had been committed in the district in the short space of five years and not a single
indictment had followed. The secret organization which prompted these crimes cut federal as well as
authority at defiance and it was only with extreme difficulty that the draft was made in the township.

Worse still, when the time came for the conscripts to leave for Harrisburg, the boldest ones not only
themselves refused to leave home, but gathered at the railroad station and by force prevented the others from
leaving. The emergency was a critical one and called for prompt and courageous action. Without
The emergency was a critical one and called for prompt and courageous action. Without delay the facts were reported to Secretary Stanton. That officer, with equal promptness, replied that the draft must be enforced at all hazards, and instructed me to send two regiments, which he placed at my disposal for the purpose, one being stationed at the time at Philadelphia and the other at Harrisburg, at once to the scene of revolt. I clearly realized the probable consequences of a conflict between the soldiers and citizens, and therefore telegraphed a more detailed account of the situation to Mr. Stanton, urging him to give the subject further and more careful consideration. He replied as before that the law must be enforced, and ordered the two regiments to move at once. The soldiers in company reached Pettisville the following day.

In compliance with the order I felt that a conflict between the military and citizens must be averted if possible and so directed Col. A. R. McCollum, who had charge of the draft, to telegraph the President in
...it was evident that the capture of Fort Sumter was inevitable. The...

day and our anxiety was keen when night came and no reply had been received from Mr. Lincoln. The following morning, however, brought to Harrisburg General Tannenfeld, of the United States army, with the verbal message from the president: "I am anxious that the laws should be executed, but it might be best, in an extreme emergency, to be content with the appearance of executing them. Stanton and McCollum will know best what to do. With this hint from the President a course of action was instantly decided upon. The commissioner of draft for Schuylkill county was Benjamin Bannan, of Pottsville, a man fertile in resource and of resolute and upright character. Mr. Bannan was summoned to Harrisburg and reached the...
and of absolute and upright character. Mr. Bauman was summoned to Harrisburg and reached the capital the same day. Mr. Lincoln's message was made known to him and it was also explained to him that in many cases evidence had been presented, after the quotas had been adjusted and the draft ordered, to prove that the quota had been filled by volunteers who had enlisted in some town or city out of their townships; and that in all such cases the order for the draft had been revoked. Only by the production of such evidence from base townships, it was pointed out to Mr. Bauman, could a collision between the military and the citizens be avoided. He saw at a glance what was needed, and left at once for Pottsville, where he returned to Harrisburg the following evening bringing with him a number of affidavits executed in proper form by citizens of base townships to the effect that their quotas were entirely filled. A critical examination of this testimony was not thought necessary under the circumstances and Colonel
The clause at once induced upon it that as the quota of base township had been filled by volunteers, the draft was imperative in that district and its conscripts would not be held to service. Meanwhile, I had sent at Pottsville the regiments put in motion by Stauton, and now stood on their face the base had been successfully executed, they were or done elsewhere. Stauton was never informed of the president's interference in this affair, but I am fully persuaded that had the secretory been allowed to have heard his way he would have inaugurated an interminable conflict in Pennsylvania that would have proved most disastrous to "The true story of the conference of the poor governors at Altoona."

"The loyal cause," you know," said I, "the conference of the poor governors held at Altoona, Pa., in September,"
The loyal cause."

"Governor," said I, "the conference of the 11 governors held at Altoona, Pa., in September, 1862, has been a subject of frequent discussion. Is it true, as has often been stated, that the president's emancipation proclamation came as a surprise to those participating in the conference?"

"Most emphatically not," was the reply. "As a matter of fact there was a full and complete agreement between Mr. Lincoln and the gentlemen who took part in the Altoona conference. That conference had its inception in a dispatch which I sent to Governor Andrews, of Massachusetts, early in September, 1862, telling him that in my opinion the time had come to give the war a definite aim and end, and that it seemed to me that the governor of the loyal states should take prompt, united and decided action in the matter. Governor Andrews replied that he shared the same views and a voluminous correspondence between us and the governors of the northern states followed. After the Governor Andrews and I went to see the president. He told us that he was preparing a proclamation emancipating the slaves, and asked us if it would not be advisable for the president..."
in to wait until we had requested him to act before issuing it. We told him that by all means he should issue it first and we would at once follow it up with a strong address of commendation and support.

A result of our interview with the president it was agreed that the course Andrew and I proposed should follow. With that understanding the conference met at Altoona, September 24, 1862. Though the president's proclamation had already appeared we found several of the governors hesitating and

However, the majority favored unswerving support of the president, and after a conference of several hours Andrew and I were selected to draft the address. Governor Andrew wrote it that evening, I think.
hours Andrew and I were selected to draft the address. Governor Andrew wrote it that evening, sitting by his side and making suggestions and changes as he went along. When it was finished he arose and walked the floor nervously. Both of us felt keenly the weight of the tremendous results that would follow our action; and I looked back with pride and pleasure to the fact that I was the first to begin a address. Governor Andrew asked me to and the others an hour or so later. The following afternoon, having gone from Altoona to Washington for the purpose, we presented our address to the president. He

thought at the time did the bold step and we had taken would cost us one election, but subsequent events showed that the president had struck while the iron was hot and had touched the popular chord. 

Lincoln, the Greatest Man of the Century.

Governor, I asked in conclusion, “what is your matured and final estimate of Mr. Lincoln?” He was easily the greatest man of the century,” was his carefully considered reply, “but his was a strange and conflicting personality, and one most difficult of analysis. No one ever fully understood him and no one
for, without being distrustful, he was the most oracular man I have ever known, and not one whom he trusted most enjoyed his entire confidence. He hated deceit and falsehood, but trusted only as it served his purpose, and with studied regard for each man's usefulness. He knew his best wire from that I say in this regard, but was he was the guileless man many have represented him to be. His frank and wise discrimination were without parallel among the public men of his time. He never was always willing to receive it, and had he attained the object sought by the independent mind of his foreseeing reason and discernment. Though singularly self-reliant he was always a student of the popular will, and all his actions were governed and guided by it. This made more than any other, made him, in the achievement of enduring results, the master politician of this time. The portion of my own career to which I look back with the greatest pride and satisfaction is the fact I took in writing this wise and sagacious man president of the republic at the most trying and critical period in our history.