One

By
A W French

Circular planting the first seed of the Republican party

In the summer of 1854 1854 there was held in the old court house of Springfield a little meeting which had been called to consider the condition of the country especially with reference to the encroachments of slavery and also some proposed nomination for offices. The Republican party had not yet been formed anywhere and the chief political division of the people was on the line of whig and democrat.

The agitation of the subject of slavery had drawn new lines between the adherents of both parties. Those who wished the continuance of existing conditions in the Southern States though born and bred whigs abandoned that party and became the most virulent and bitter democrats. A smaller portion of those who had from their first vote supported the democratic party seeing the evils attendant upon slavery and the steady encroachments of the slave power upon the rights of the citizens while not quite ready to become whigs could heartily join in denunciation of any man of whatever party who dared to say any thing adverse to the peculiar institution

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and the vindication of the natural rights of the black man would quickly bring on a physical conflict. Few of those who so stoutly upheld slavery had ever owned a slave. They were mostly from the ranks of the "poor white trash" who had come into a free state to better their condition and had succeeded but they were ready to fight to the death for the institution that had driven them from their native home.

The other moiety of the population mostly from the eastern states unaccustomed to epithets and vituperation for their opinions bore this browbeating in silence and claimed they were not more than half convinced that the negro was not an anomaly in nature and that the rights conceded to all other men were justly denied him. His interest in the matter was not sufficient to justify a quarrel with a friend or an affront to a good customer and the existing state of things was probably the best. It was not easy to get an opinion from these keepers of callous consciences as an offending word was like steel to flint and effervescence alone prevented collision. I was making

This period which had long existed of depression and cussion that the meeting was called. There were about thirty men present scattered about in the seats of the old courthouse. Mr Lincoln took his place in front of the rostrum. When he arose to state the objects of his mission Mr Herndon crouched down behind him so as scarcely to be visible to the audience. In the farthest corner of the hall (if that is the proper word for his attitude) Mr Lincoln's friend Judge Logan who in the course of the evening on huffy but keen remarked something about "abolitionizing the whig party". This phrase expressed the great fear of that domineering anti-slavery whigs all over the county. Mr Lincoln stood up boldly and uttered the noble sentiments which became so familiar to everybody during his debates with Douglas. Here he first gave public utterance to them and said if we hold these opinions in regard to the outrages upon the black man why should we fear to avow them and say what we think and do

what we were in behalf of right and
justice, Under the then existing state
of feeling in this state of which I have
attempted to give a faint suggestion
it required a real man to take this
stand and the nobleness of Mr Sinnett's
character on no subsequent occasion
was put to a severer test. There was not
a man in his scattered audience who
dared to go so far as to say so much
adverse to slavery as he, then did. The
meeting dissolved and most of the at-
tendants with a shame faced look. Straight
the street but words had been spoken
that shook a nation to its center.

C W Trueblood

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