

Gen. John A. McClernand on Inauguration.

(Interview Oct. 19, 1898.)

Gen. John A. McClernand, of Springfield, Ill., was Congressman from the Springfield district in 1861. In an interview he says:

"I had occasion to call on Lincoln at Willard's Hotel a few days before the inauguration. This incident was preceded by a call on President Buchanan at the White House. Although I was a Democrat, I had long and intimately known Mr. Lincoln, had been his near neighbor in Springfield, and we were personally very friendly. I was doing all in my power to stay the tide of rebellion. President Buchanan was weakly yielding to the insistence of the Southern Representatives in Congress to acquiesce in the seizure of our forts and dock-yards. I resolved that there should be a protest from Northern Democrats and accordingly called a meeting of some of my political friends, mainly Congressmen from the West. We had information that Buchanan had promised the Southern leaders that ~~if they would~~ ~~so long as the South refrained from open, violent war he would~~ offer no resistance to their schemes of secession. We proceeded in the a body to the White House, and, acting as spokesman of ~~our~~ delegation, I stated the object of our visit. I put the case strongly to Buchanan, protesting against his acquiescence in secession on two grounds: First, that he could not do it consistently with his high duty as President, for he owed it to the country to preserve the government and transmit it unimpaired to his successor; secondly, that a status of civil war existed, and that it was his duty to suppress it. Up to

that time, I had believed him a Union man, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
~~xxxxxxxx~~ lacking only in positive courage, but I left him that day
 convinced that he was at heart a secessionist. I told him emphati-
 cally that the great West would never submit to the establishment of
 a Southern Confederacy; that a foreign government at the South
 would cut the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ Western people off from the sea coast and make
 them a nation of herdsmen. This point seemed to make the strongest
 impression on him. Our interview was quite spirited; we indulged
 in exceedingly plain talk. I remember at one point President
 Buchanan interrupted me with the question:

"Do you wish to see the country engaged in a fratricidal
 war?"

"D---n it," said I, out of patience with him, 'that is
 exactly what we have now. Our ports have been seized, the free
 navigation of the Mississippi has been obstructed, and the South at
 this moment is in a state of rebellion.'

"Immediately following this interview, I called on Mr.
 Lincoln at Willard's hotel and told him of what had occurred. He
 listened attentively, but I do not remember that he had anything in
 particular to say. Shortly afterward, Lincoln, Stanton and myself
 took a carriage-ride by moonlight through Georgetown and discussed the
 situation. Stanton told me that I was the first man to move Buchanan
 on the question of secession, citing as proof the fact that a day or
 two after the interview the President had ordered a garrison of
 troops stationed in Washington City.

8--McClernand.

"I witnessed the inauguration, but remember no special incident worthy of note. I saw more or less of Lincoln during the special session of Congress that summer, but do not recall anything he said more ^{than} a general concurrence in my suggestions, for we agreed on practically everything relative to the conduct of the war."

J. McCan Davis.