

Wm. Lincoln
The 9th General Assembly of Illinois to which Abraham Lincoln was elected in August 1834, ^{had} held its opening session in the winter of 1834-35. It was Lincoln's first experience as a legislator and it was a rather tame one. In December 1835 the members were called to an extra session which proved to be in every way more exciting and more portentous than its predecessors. The chief reason for its being called was in itself calculated to exhilarate the hopeful young law-givers. A census had been taken since their last session and so large an increase in population had been reported that it was considered necessary to summon the assembly to re-apportion the legislative districts. When the re-appointment was done it was found that the general Assembly was increased by 50 members, the number of senators being raised from 26 to 40, of representatives from 55 to 91. In 1851, the Assembly had been increased from ~~to 61~~ to 81, a growth of 50 members in 4 years excited the imagination of the State and inspired the legislators. The dignity, ~~in prosperity~~, and importance of Illinois suddenly assumed ^{new} colossal proportions. ^{It was} ~~they~~ imagined that the story of New York's growth in wealth and influence was to be repeated in ^{their} new country and every ambitious man ^{in the Assembly} ~~among them~~ determined to lead in the rise of the state which now seemed assured.

The work begun in the previous session on internal improvements took a new form. The governor in calling the members together had said: "While I would urge the most liberal support of all such measures as tending with perfect certainty to increase the wealth and prosperity of the state, I would at the same time most respectfully suggest the propriety of leaving the construction of all such works wherein it can be done consistently with the general interest to individual enterprise." The legislators acquiesced and in this session began to grant a series of private

charter
 characters for internal improvements which had they been carried out would have given the state communications in 1840 almost *if not quite* equal to those of to-day. The map on page shows the incorporations of railroad and canal companies in the extra session of the Ninth Assembly, 1835-36 and in the regular session of the Tenth, 1836-37, 16 of the railroads were chartered in the former session. ~~Lincoln~~ *Lincoln* and his colleagues did not devote their attention entirely to chartering railroads, however. Ten schools were chartered in this same session, some of them exist to-day. *much*
in the
will session 12 academies and 18 colleges received
 These were the Danville Academy, Carnis Academy, Franklin Manual Labor School, Burnt Prairie Manual Labor School, McDonough College, Catham Manual Labor School, Mt. Carmel Academy, Bloomington Female Seminary, Alton Female Institute and Franklin Institute. *Chartered*

The absorbing topic of the winter, however, and the one in which Lincoln was chiefly concerned was the threatened naturalization of the convention system in Illinois. Up to this time candidates for office in the *United States* state had generally nominated themselves as we have seen Lincoln doing. The only formality they imposed upon themselves was to consult a little unauthorized *l.e.* caucus of personal friends. The disapproval of this caucus did not stand in their way at all, unless they were exceptionally cautious persons. So long as party lines were indistinct and the personal qualities of a candidate were considered rather than his platform this happy-go-lucky, democratic method of nomination was possible. *but* It had been gradually changing, however, in the case of Presidential candidates the convention with its delegates and platform had just appeared the first full fledged one being held but 3 years before in 1832. Along with the presidential convention came the "machine," an organization of all those who belonged to *a* party in such a way as to secure unity of

effort. By means of primaries and conventions one candidate was put forward by a party instead of a dozen being allowed to offer themselves. The strength which this convention gave the democratic party which first adopted and developed it was enormous. Naturally the whigs opposed the new institution, and taking a lofty pose they declared it "was intended to abridge the liberties of the people by depriving individuals, on their own mere motion, of the privilege of becoming candidates and depriving each man of the right to vote for a candidate of his own selection and choice."

The efficacy of the new method was so apparent, however, that let the whigs preach as they would, it was rapidly adopted. By 1835 the whole machinery was well developed in New England and New York and had ~~begun~~ to appear in the West. In the north of Illinois the democrats had begun to organize under the leadership of two men of eastern origin and training, Ebenezer Peck of Chicago, and Stephen A. Douglas of Jacksonville, and this session of the Illinois legislature of the convention system became a subject of discussion.

The Whigs, Lincoln among them, violently opposed the new scheme. It was a Yankee contrivance they said favored only by Yankees like Douglas or worse still by monarchists like Peck. They recalled with pious indignation that Peck was a Canadian brought up under an aristocratic form of government that he had even deserted the liberal party of this government to go over to the ultra monarchists. In spite of their warnings, however, the convention system ~~was~~ was approved by a vote of 26 to 25.

They declared it - a remarkable fact that no man from and raised west of the mountains, a south of the Potomac had yet ventured to introduce - "The wholesale system of conventions"