



Journal Divided – “Why Lincoln Won in 1860”

Excerpt from Chapter 16 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1859-1862)

Link to full Chapter Sixteen

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2016.pdf>

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In the absence of opinion surveys and exit polls, it is difficult to say with precision why these groups were more likely to vote Republican than Democratic or Constitutional Unionist. Correspondence, newspaper commentary, and other anecdotal sources suggest that Lincoln’s victory was in part due to his character, biography, and public record. In July, John A. Kasson reported from Iowa: “I never talk to an audience of farmers without noticing the intense interest as they listen to the story of his early life & trials in making himself what he is, – the ablest & most eminent man in the West.”¹ An Ohio farmer praised Lincoln as “a self-made man, who came up a-foot. We like his tact – we like his argumentative powers – we like his logic, and we like the whole man.”² A resident of Champaign, Illinois, wrote that “[e]very man who is struggling to improve his fortune by honest toil and patient endeavor, feels that in Abraham Lincoln he has a generous and confiding friend, and dignified representative. Instances are daily accumulating, here, of men who from early bias, and the force of party influence, have voted the Democratic ticket; but who now find themselves irresistibly impelled by their reverence for the public virtues of Mr. Lincoln.”³

¹ John A. Kasson to Horace Greeley, Des Moines, Iowa, 1 July 1860, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

² A letter from “an intelligent and substantial farmer in Union County, Ohio,” New York *Tribune*, 6 June 1860.

³ Letter by “Sangamon,” Champaign County, 25 May 1860, Chicago *Press and Tribune*, 30 May 1860.