



Journal Divided – “Lincoln and Know Nothings”

Excerpt from Chapter 16 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1784-1789)

Link to full Chapter Sixteen

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

Page 2

In Putnam’s hometown of Buffalo, the leading American party newspaper praised Lincoln for qualities lacking in the corrupt Republican legislature at Albany. “Mr. Lincoln’s nomination . . . guarantees executive honesty. It assures us that no bargains have been made, no greedy disposition of the spoils already accomplished. His principles are our principles. We only differ from Republicans in the relative importance attached to the Slavery issue and in having perhaps a larger faith in the final triumph of the right. Thus holding, thus satisfied of the honesty of the party with which we act, we are unreserved in our support of Lincoln and Hamlin.”¹ Commenting on this endorsement, Washington Hunt, a leading conservative, said that the editor’s view of Lincoln, “unsound and fallacious as it is, operates upon many persons who are disposed to follow the current and take refuge in what they consider a strong and prosperous party.”² Other American party members shared the belief that voting for Bell would be futile, while electing Lincoln would rebuke the hated Democrats.³ The Know Nothings were “so jubilant over the defeat of Seward that all go in for the ticket,” noted another Buffalo Republican.⁴

¹ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, n.d., copied in the New York *Tribune*, 6 June 1860.

² Washington Hunt to John Bell, Lockport, 24 May 1860, John Bell Papers, Library of Congress.

³ Washington Hunt to John Bell, Lockport, 7 June 1860, John Bell Papers, Library of Congress; Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, 19 May, copied in the *Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), 23 May 1860.

⁴ James Sheldon to Elihu B. Washburne, Buffalo, 21 May 1860, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.