



Journal Divided – “Writing Lincoln’s Lives”

Excerpt from Chapter 16 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1773-1777)

Link to full Chapter Sixteen

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

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Publishers scrambled to meet the great demand for information about the little known Republican candidate, who at first was often referred to as Abram Lincoln.¹ Thurlow Weed’s suggestion that Charles G. Halpine be given the task of writing a campaign biography came to nothing.² The most informative of the thirteen campaign lives that did appear in 1860 were by William Dean Howells, a young Ohio journalist who was to achieve literary fame, and by John Locke Scripps, editor of the *Chicago Press and Tribune* and a good friend of Lincoln.³ For Howells, Scripps, and other authors, Lincoln prepared an autobiographical sketch which, though brief, was longer than the one he had drafted in 1859 for Jesse W. Fell. In this political document he said little about slavery, other than to reproduce his 1837 resolution denouncing the peculiar institution as based on “injustice and bad policy” and assert that his views had not changed since then. He devoted much more space to his Mexican War stand, correctly assuming that the Democrats would once again attack his record on that conflict.⁴

¹ Lincoln to George Ashmun, Springfield, 4 June 1860, Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 68.

² Halpine alienated Weed by supporting Greeley in the public quarrel that broke out soon after the Chicago Convention. William Hanchett, *Irish: Charles G. Halpine in Civil War America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970) 30-32.

³ Edward J. Wessen, “Campaign Lives of Abraham Lincoln, 1860: An Annotated Bibliography,” *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1938), 188-220.

⁴ Autobiography written for John L. Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:60-67; Cairo Gazette, n.d., copied in the *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), 21 August 1860; “Mr. Lincoln and the Mexican War,” *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), 2 June 1860.