

Journal Divided – “Republicans Gather at Chicago”

Excerpt from Chapter 15 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1671-73)

Link to full Chapter Fifteen:

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2015.pdf>

Page 1:

The convention opened on Wednesday, May 16, with David Wilmot of Pennsylvania serving as temporary chairman.¹ Orville Browning called him “a dull, chuckle headed, booby looking man” who “makes a poor presiding officer.”² The convention hall, specially built for the occasion, was known as the Wigwam because it resembled an Indian longhouse. A large, clumsy, solid, barn-like structure, measuring 100 x 180 feet, with a capacity of twelve thousand people, it was constructed “of rough timber, decorated so completely with flags banner, bunting, etc., that when filled it seemed a gorgeous pavilion aflame with color and all aflutter with pennants and streamers.” The interior resembled a huge theater whose stage was occupied by the delegates and the press. The acoustics were so good that an ordinary voice could easily be heard throughout the building.³ One journalist deemed it a “small edition of the New York Crystal Palace.”⁴

¹ For a thoughtful description of the convention, see Kenneth M. Stampp, “The Republican National Convention of 1860,” in Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 136-62.

² Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning* (2 vols.; Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925-33), 1:407 (entry for 16 May 1860).

³ Lloyd Wendt, “Swift Walker”: An Informal Biography of Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986), 433-35; Isaac H. Bromley, “Historic Moments: The Nomination of Lincoln,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 14 (November 1893): 647; Murat Halstead, “A Historic Day,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 1892; Chicago correspondence by Murat Halstead, 15 May, *Cincinnati Commercial*, 18 May 1860.

⁴ Gary Ecelbarger, *The Great Comeback: How Abraham Lincoln Beat the Odds to Win the 1860 Presidential Nomination* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2008), 203.