



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>

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Lincoln was disappointed by the opposition of John J. Crittenden, who warned that although the Republican nominee was “an honest, worthy and patriotic man,” nevertheless as “the Republicans’ President” he “would be at least a terror to the South.”¹ A former congressman (and future senator) from the Blue Grass State, Garrett Davis, called Lincoln “an honest man of fair ability” but found him unacceptable because “for some years past he has been possessed of but one idea – hostility to slavery.”² Another American party leader who needed to be cultivated was David Davis’s cousin, Congressman Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, who was so influential that the committee of twelve at the Chicago Convention had asked him to run for vice president. He declined lest his candidacy ruin the ticket in the Northwest. Like many other Know Nothings, he objected to the Republican platform’s “supremely foolish” plank denouncing “any change in our naturalization laws or any state legislation by which the rights of citizenship hitherto accorded to immigrants from foreign lands shall be abridged or impaired” and favoring “a full and efficient protection to the rights of all classes of citizens.”³

¹ Crittenden’s speeches of 2 August and 30 October, Louisville correspondence, 2 August, *New York Times*, 8 August 1860, Cincinnati *Commercial*, 31 October 1860.

² Davis to an unidentified correspondent, n.p., n.d., *New York World*, 24 July 1860.

³ *Proceedings of the Convention*, 132.