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A HISTORY OF THE  
FREE SOIL MOVEMENT IN ILLINOIS,

TOGETHER WITH A REVIEW OF THE KINDRED POLITICAL ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENTS CULMINATING IN THE  
FORMATION OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY,

.. BY ..

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A HISTORY OF THE FREE-SOIL MOVEMENT

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The Free-Soil party was brought about by the Whigs nominating Zachary Taylor for President. A number of prominent Whigs had anticipated this nomination and as they were opposed to Taylor, pledged themselves to withdraw from the convention if he was nominated.

They agreed that an organized opposition should be made and soon a convention was called in Massachusetts for Whigs and all others who would co-operate for the defeat of Taylor and the platform he represented.

Prominent among this opposition party were Charles Frances Adams, Stephen C. Phillips, Charles Sumner, E. Rockwood Hoar, Edward L. Keyes, Francis W. Bird, Edward Walcutt and Henry Wilson.

General Taylor was a slave holder and a favorite candidate of those Whigs who were opposed to the policy of slavery prohibition. They were prominent in their party and determined to secure the nomination and election of the victorious captain.

But the friends of Clay, Webster and Scott were not idle either. They avowed that they were not only opposed to General Taylor, but to that of any other candidate not fully committed by his own acts or the declaration of the convention, to the Wilmot proviso. It was proposed in the convention that they pledge themselves against the nomination of any candidate not committed to the organization and policy of the Whig party. But this was received with a storm of opposition and General Taylor received the nomination on the fourth ballot.

A great deal of confusion was manifested after this was announced and a number of resolutions were offered, but were all hissed and jeered down.

General Taylor's nomination was another victory for the Slave power. He was the favorite candidate of the slave holders and had never identified himself with the Whig party. He had frankly said that he had never made up his mind on the leading questions at issue between the parties.

Mr. Wilson stated that the "purposes of this new party was to combine and create a public sentiment which would uphold those statesmen, who were in favor of the Wilmot proviso and break down those who opposed it; that they desired to unite all those who would resist and overthrow the dominating influences of the slave power and restore the government to the policy of its founders; that in fact they would make a "North." Wilson Vol 2, page 148.

On the 9th of August, 1848, the opponents of Slavery extension met in convention at Buffalo. The large number who gathered there were resolute and determined, of large intelligence and moral worth. The principles of the convention as read and accepted were; the members of the convention, obedient to the examples of the fathers and trusting in God, aimed to plant themselves upon the national platform of freedom, in opposition to the sectional platform of slavery; that, Slavery being a State institution, they proposed no interference with it by Congress; that the history of the ordinance of 1787 showed the settled policy of the fathers not to

extend, but to limit slavery; that the fathers of the constitution wanted to secure the blessings of liberty to all; that Congress had not more power to make a slave than to make a king; that the national government should relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence of slavery; that Congress should prohibit slavery by law in all free territory; that they accepted the issue forced upon them by the slave power; and that their calm and final answer was "No more Slave States, no more Slave Territory, no more compromises with Slavery; freedom for Oregon, California and New Mexico." Wilson. Vo. 2, page 151. The name "Free-Soil" was selected as the most significant and best embodying the ideas which the reformers had in mind.

Martin Van Buren was nominated for President and Charles Francis Adams for Vice President. Mr. Van Buren accepted the nomination as well as the platform of the new party.

This new party hardly expected victory, but were pleased when more than 290,000 men cast their vote for a principle. They secured no electoral votes and elected but five members of Congress. There were 15,774 votes cast in Illinois. This was the largest vote ever polled for an anti-slavery cause.

During the years from '48 - '52 a great many Democrats who had supported the Free-Soilers in the campaign of '48 were taken back into the fold of their old party and August, 1852, the remnant of the Free-Soil party met in Pittsburgh and nominated John P. Hale, of New Hampshire, as their candidate for President and Mr Julian of Indiana for Vice President. 156149 votes were cast for

Hale, Illinois giving him but 9,966.

Thus it may be seen that in four years the Free-Soilers lost nearly half the votes originally obtained. The national party lost 133,851 votes, and the party in Illinois lost 6,108; the percentage of loss in this State being about the same as the loss in the country at large. No further active interest in the party was ever again manifested in the State of Illinois. The convention of 1852 was the last strictly Free-Soil convention ever held.

Political Free-Soilers were confined to New York and were mainly the voters of that State's political organization, of which ex-President Van Buren had long been the recognized head. The Barnburners were followers of Van Buren and had fallen into this party.

However, the conscientious Free-Soilers were not confined alone to New York but were found in every northern State, and in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and Kentucky in the south. They were mainly the members of the Liberty party.

While Illinois was no true slave State, yet slavery existed in the State until 1840. The United States census of 1840 shows 331 slaves in the State, but by 1850 the institution had become utterly extinct, so far as the force of law governing it was concerned. Slavery, however, did not exist in the sense that it did in the south, but merely in the form of an indenture. During the administration of Governor Coles an effort was made to make Illinois a Slave State, but it failed.

In the earlier history of Illinois and at the time of this effort to make it a Slave State, the population consisted largely of southerners, either former slave holders or friends of slave holders in the south. A number of wealthy planters passed through the State with their slaves, expressing a desire to settle here, but could not with their slaves and so they passed on into Missouri.

About this time emigrants began to come in from the east, settling largely near the eastern, northern and central part of the State. The foreign element was quite numerous, representing a large number of the European nations. The census of 1850 shows the relative population to be about one foreigner to every seven native Americans. Gerhard, page 225.

These foreigners were strongly in favor of a free state and free soil in general. They had a purpose in this, as most of them were forced to make a living as day laborers and as long as slaves were used there was no chance for them to make their way.

The southerners predominated however, and although they were unable to make Illinois a slave State, there were comparatively few in the State who had very strong anti-slavery views.

All abolitionists were looked upon with suspicion and many a man who desired the abolition of slavery from the very bottom of his heart was afraid to come forward and make known his views. This he knew would make for him but few friends and very many enemies. Taking the treatment of Judge Cunningham, of this city,

as a fair example, we may judge what the feeling about the State must have been. Judge Cunningham was a graduate of Oberlin College, in Ohio, and left it with the same Abolitionist tendencies that predominated at that institution. When he settled in Urbana in 1853, he was recognized as an upright, intelligent young man. He was an abolitionist, however, and that fact alone was enough to bar him out of holding any office in the city or county for many years prior to the war.

Nevertheless the anti-slavery feeling grew. In 1840, Illinois cast but 149 votes for James G. Birney, of Michigan, the abolitionist candidate for President. In 1844, the same man, running for the same party received 3,570 votes in Illinois. This is a fair example of the increase and growth of the abolition sentiment over the State and country at large.

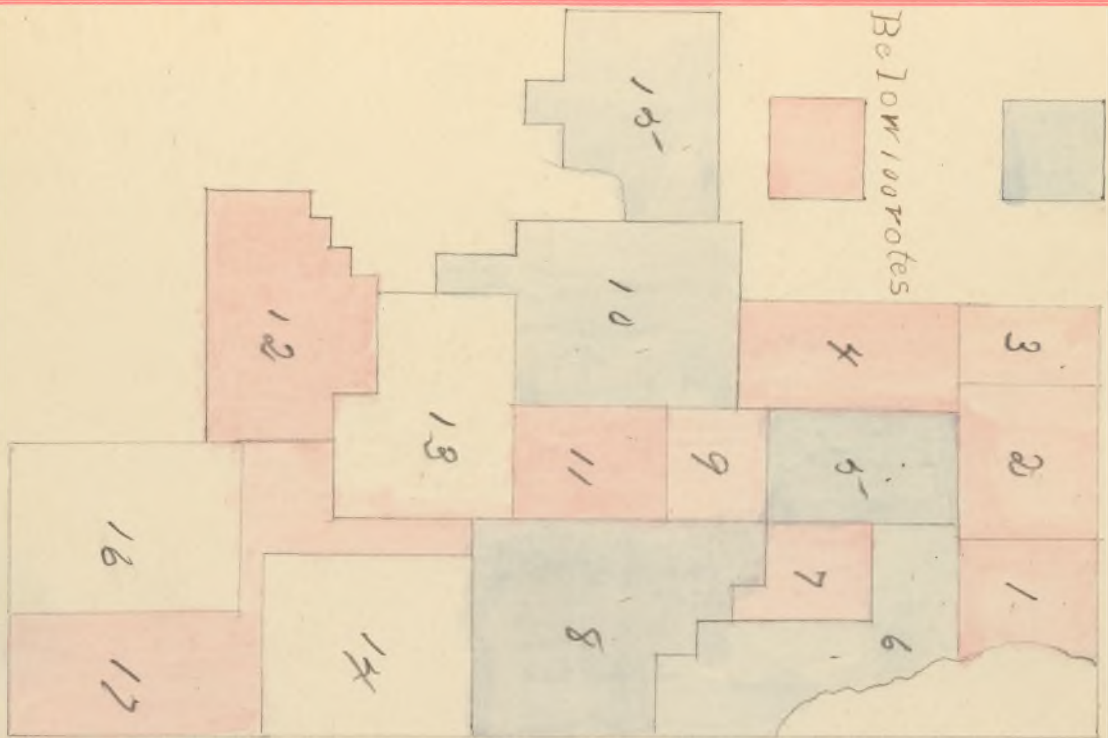
The 4th Congressional District of Illinois at this time comprised the following counties - Boone, Bureau, Champaign, Cook, De Kalb, Du Page, Grundy, Iroquois, Kane, Kendall, Lake, La Salle, Livingston, McHenry, McLean, Vermillion and Will.

Following are given the votes cast by this district and some of the counties in it during this period of Abolition growth and developement. Champaign County is the only county in this district which never cast an anti-slavery vote and apparently had little use for Abolitionists.

The vote in this district in the first Monday in August, 1843, shows 1137 votes for Abolitionist candidate for Congress.

Over 100 votes

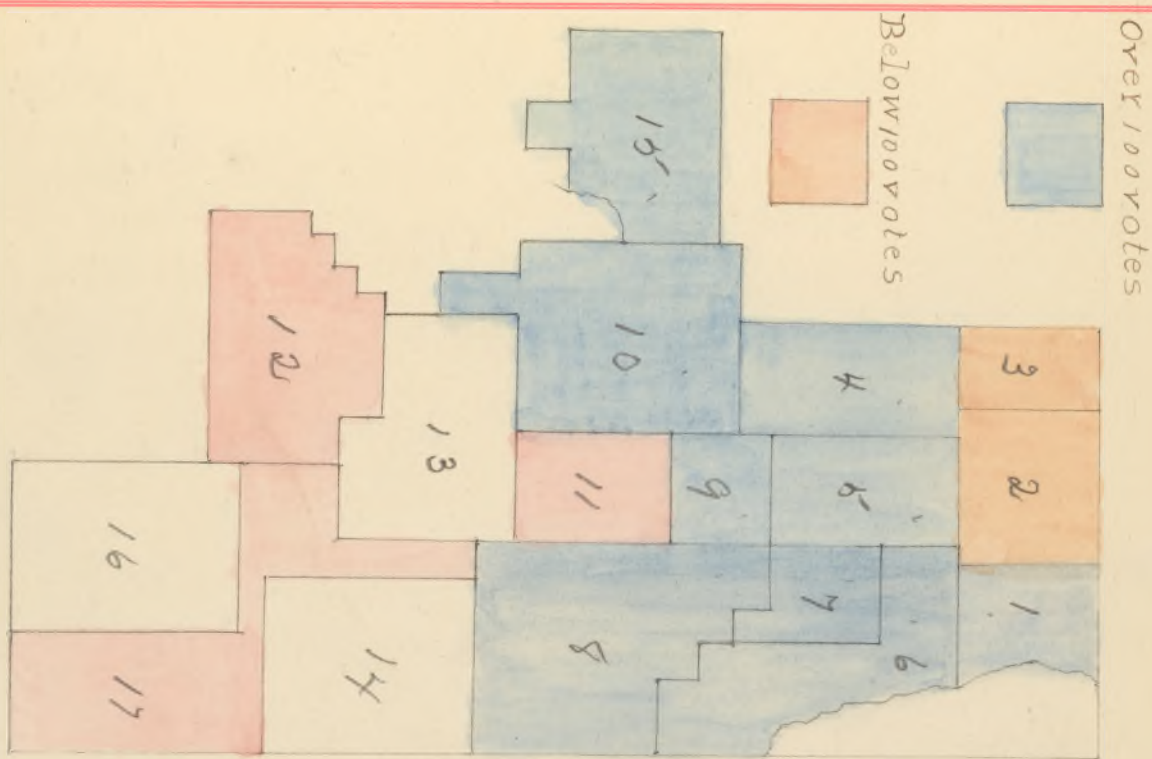
Below 100 votes



Vote for John H. Henderson 1843

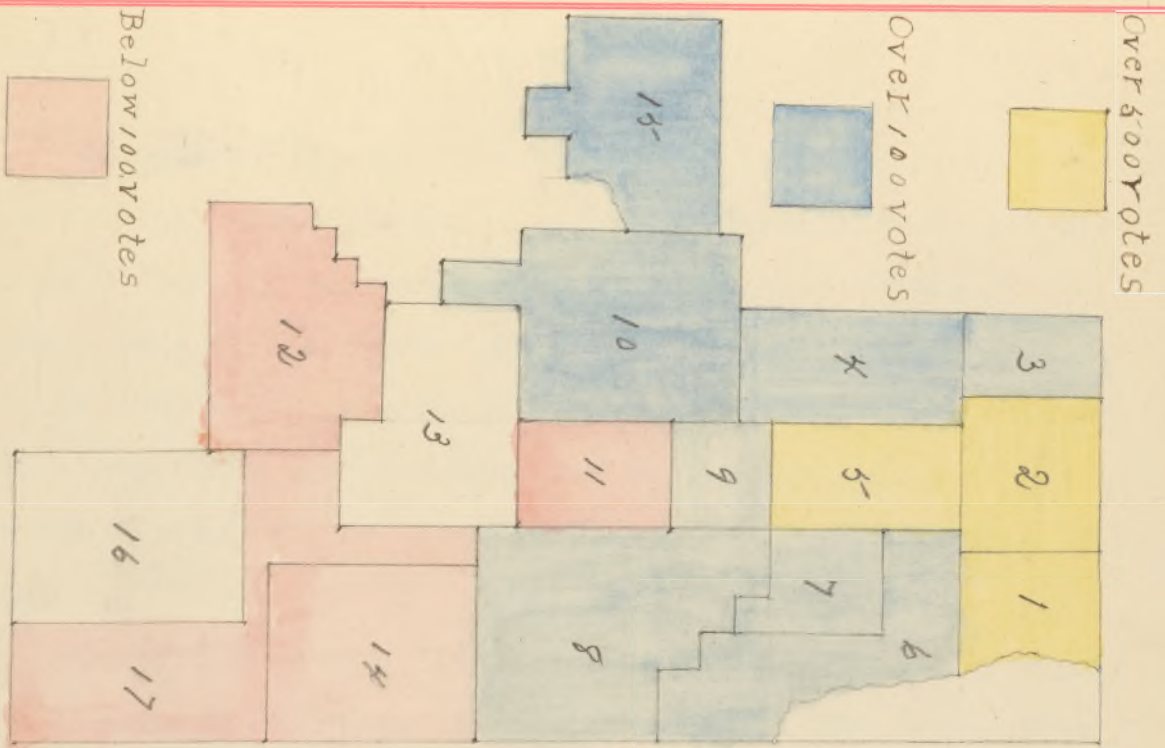
Fourth Congressional District.

1-Lake	77
2-McHenry	50
3-Boone	53
4-DeKalb	74
5-Kane	175
6-Cook	132
7-DuPage	97
8-Will	108
9-Kendall	98
10-LaSalle	130
11-Grundy	3
12-McLean	10
13-Livingston	
14-Iroquois	
15-Bureau	121
16-Champaign	
17-Vermillion	9
Total	<u>1137</u>



Vote for John H. Henderson 1844  
Fourth Congressional District.

1-Lake	135
2-McHenry	58
3-Boone	47
4-DeKalb	151
5-Kane	280
6-Cook	276
7-DuPage	145
8-Will	226
9-Kendall	143
10-LaSalle	187
11-Grundy	6
12-McLean	18
13-Livingston	
14-Iroquois	
15-Bureau	155
16-Champaign	
17-Vermillion	44
Total	<u>1871</u>



Vote for Owen Lovejoy 1846

Fourth Congressional District.

1-Lake	511
2-McHenry	622
3-Boone	346
4-DeKalb	239
5-Kane	533
6-Cook	481
7-DuPage	303
8-Will	285
9-Kendall	260
10-LaSalle	224
11-Grundy	6
12-McLean	40
13-Livingston	2
14-Iroquois	2
15-Bureau	266
16-Champaign	58
17-Vermillion	58
Total	<u>4276</u>

Champaign, Iroquois and Livingston counties cast no votes for abolition, Grundy County gave but 3, Vermillion 9, and McLean 10. Kane cast the largest number 175, and is situated in the northern part of the State. Cook cast 132, also in the north, La Salle 130, north, Bureau 121, Will 108, both in the northern part. These were the only counties in the 4th district that cast over 100 votes. All are located in the north-east portion of the State.

In 1844 this same district cast 1,871 votes for the same cause. Again Kane county is at the head with 280 votes, Cook 276, Will 226, La Salle 187, Bureau 155. Champaign, Iroquois and Livingston casting none, Grundy 6 Vermillion 44, and McLean 18. This shows an increase for abolition in all except the three which cast none.

In 1846, Owen Lovejoy was nominated as candidate for Congress by the abolition party in this 4th district. He received 4,276 votes. McHenry county gave the largest number of votes showing 622, a marked increase over that of 1844 when it cast but 58. It cast more votes for Abolition than for the Whigs. Kane came next with 533 votes, passing over the Whigs, Cook 481, Lake 511, - more than the Whigs, La Salle, Bureau and Will with but a slight increase. Champaign and Livingston none, Iroquois and Grundy 6.

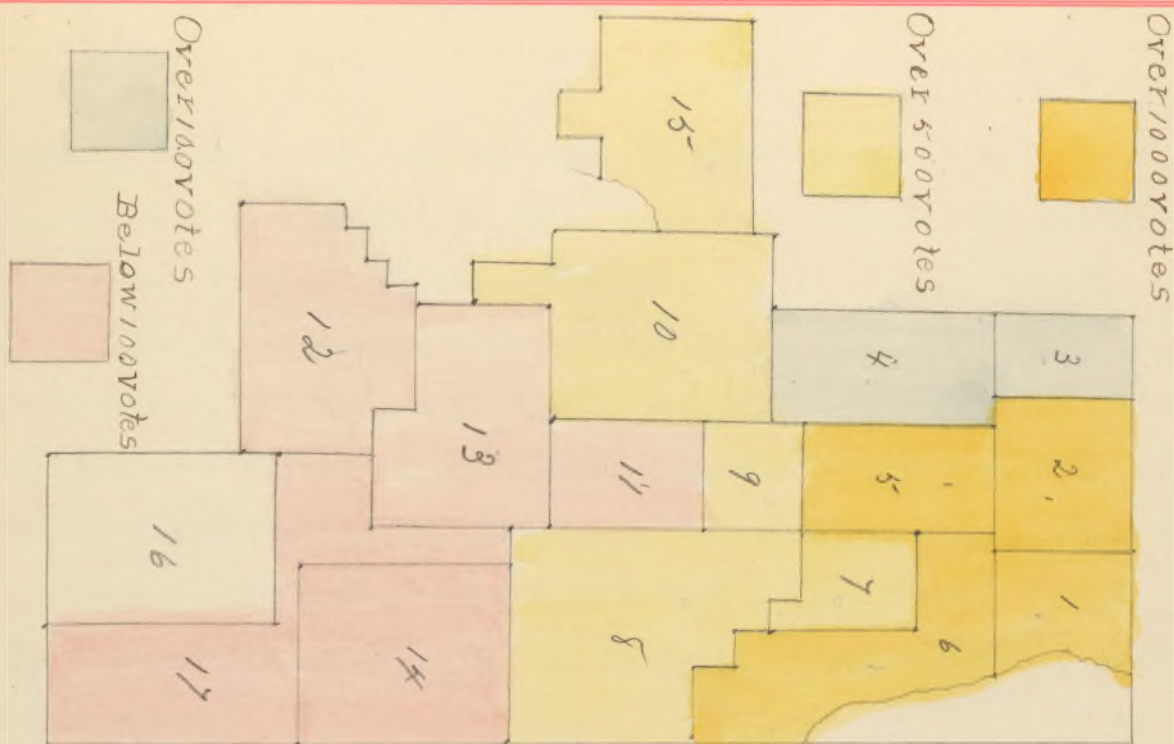
The vote for this district in 1848, for Owen Lovejoy was 3,159, a decrease of 1,117. This is undoubtedly due to the speeches made by Lovejoy during the campaign. Cook county shows the largest number of votes 470, Kane 417, Bureau 337, Will 308.



Vote for Owen Lovejoy 1848

Fourth Congressional District.

1-Lake	249
2-McHenry	196
3-Boone	73
4-DeKalb	255
5-Kane	417
6-Cook	470
7-DuPage	174
8-Will	308
9-Kendall	287
10-LaSalle	237
11-Grundy	37
12-McLean	39
13-Livingston	
14-Iroquois	7
Bureau	337
16-Champaign	
17-Vermillion	73
Total	<u>3159</u>



Vote for Van Buren 1848

Fourth Congressional District.

1-Lake	1088
2-McHenry	1016
3-Boone	450
4-DeKalb	427
5-Kane	1220
6-Cook	2120
7-DuPage	528
8-Will	540
9-Kendall	547
10-LaSalle	873
11-Grundy	63
12-McLean	94
13-Livingston	4
14-Iroquois	28
15-Bureau	566
16-Champaign	68
17-Vermillion	68
Total	<u>9181</u>

McHenry shows a decided decrease, De Kalb county being the only one to cast more Abolition votes than Whig. Champaign and Livingston none, Iroquois 7, and Grundy 37.

The Presidential vote of this district in 1848, was 28,633. Democrats 9,820, Free-Soil 9,632, Whig 9,181. Six of the counties casting more Free-Soil votes than Whig and 8 more Free-Soil than Democrat. Champaign County cast no Free-Soil votes and Livingston 4. Cook is still at the head with 2,120, more Free-Soil votes than Democratic or Whig, but is followed closely by Kane, Lake and McHenry.

As there was no organized Free-Soil party in the State at this time, it is plainly seen that Van Buren and not the principle received these votes. In this district alone it is demonstrated by the fact that never before had there been more than 4,276 votes cast in an anti-slavery cause. This time the district came forward with 9,632 votes - more than half the number cast in the entire state. Van Buren had long been recognized as a leader in the Democratic party and was a great favorite among the older element. He was the leader of that faction of the Democratic party known as the "Barnburners" who were opposed to any further extension of slavery into the territories. They attended the National Democratic Convention in '48 but withdrew and attended the convention of Free-Soilers at Buffalo. This new party held pretty much the same principles as the "Barnburners" and Martin Van Buren was looked upon as being the man most likely to carry the party safely through. It was a wise choice as Van Buren's old admirers came forward and

cast their votes for him, not letting the principle, for which he was running, interfere. This vote of 1848 was the largest Free-Soil vote ever cast in Illinois.

The Pacification measures of 1850 had so far impressed themselves upon the country as a satisfactory adjustment of Slavery controversies, that at the Presidential election of 1852, the Free-Soil faction was unable to poll half the vote it had in 1848, and the Democratic ticket was overwhelmingly successful.

The Free-Soilers held a convention in Illinois, in 1852, and nominated Dexter A. Knowlton of Stephenson County for Governor and Philo Carpenter of Cook County for Lieutenant Governor. They received but 8, 809 votes.

The abolitionist candidate for Congress in the 2nd Congressional district received but 2,149 votes out of the 16,124 votes cast. Thirty-three out of the 102 counties did not cast a Free-Soil vote and Cook cast the largest of any county, viz. - 793. Hale received 9,966 votes.

Of the 33 counties casting no Free-Soil votes, 15 are located in the Southern part of the State, 7 South-eastern, 4 Central 3 West, 2 Southwest and 2 East. But 6 of the 102 counties cast over 500 votes, all located in the Northern part of the State. In this rough estimate of the distribution of the votes about the State, it is very evident that the Free-Soil element was scattered and that what few there were lived in the Northern portion of the State to a large extent. In 1853 Lake county sent a Free-Soiler to the General Assembly, Henry W. Blodgett. There were 5 Whigs

and 1 Free-Soiler among the many Democrats.

On the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, in 1854, all party lines were obliterated. The Whig party entirely disappeared, the Democratic party unexpectedly found enrolled within its ranks many old and leading Whigs, while it was with equal surprise that they found they had parted with many of their honored and trusted leaders. The Free-Soilers received recruits in large numbers from both old parties. For many of the old Whigs, the choice of party was difficult, they could neither join the Democrats whom they had been fighting so many years, nor the Free-Soilers whose pronounced views on slavery they were not ready to accept.

They, therefore, formed a new party, embracing a popular measure disconnected from the Slavery question, hoping to draw the support of the dissatisfied Democrats, re-unite the Whigs, and be a party which would be certain to achieve success. The principles of this party were found in the statement "Americans must rule America". The American Party was a secret organization and was recognized by others as the "Know-Nothing" party. It attracted large numbers in the free-states, and became both popular and influential in the slave holding communities of the South, some of which it was able politically to control.

Another party called "Anti-Nebraska" which consisted of the northern Whigs who were opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, appeared about this time, and was finally fused into the Republican party. In 1855 this party had a majority in the House.

With the hope of arresting the aggressive steps of the slave power in the National government, the anti-Slavery Democrats, anti-Slavery Whigs, anti-Slavery Americans, anti-Nebraska, Abolitionists and Free-Soilers united to form a new party.

One of the first meetings which took place in this State, was held in Jacksonville, in 1853, at which there were only seven persons present. A resolution was adopted pledging those present to use all honorable means to prevent the further extension of slavery. In 1854, similar meetings were held in various counties of central and northern Illinois and a State convention met at Springfield in October. They nominated, under the party name of Anti-Nebraska men, a candidate for State Treasurer, but he failed of election.

The anti-Slavery men were at a loss to know what to call their new party. The first suggestion of the word "Republican", was made by Jesse Lynch at a convention held in Bloomington, in 1854. They were called "Wooly-headed Republicans", "Copperheads" and "Black Republicans". The latter name was given the new party by Stephen A. Douglas who compared it with the Republicans of France, who were given the name "Red Republicans" because they guillotined so many. He said, "Why not call this new party "Black Republicans" because their interests are centered in the Blacks"?

On February 22, 1856, a meeting of the anti-Nebraska editors was held at Decatur for the purpose of outlining a political policy. A resolution was adopted recommending that a State convention be called to meet at Bloomington, May 29. A committee of one from

each congressional district and two from the State at large was selected for that purpose. Many of the counties were unrepresented at the State convention, when it met in Bloomington, but this did not deter those present from organizing. John W. Palmer was chosen permanent President, with 12 others as Vice Presidents and 5 Secretaries.

The words of Lincoln can best explain the cause of this convention. In his debate at Freeport, August 27, 1858 Lincoln said "At the introduction of the Nebraska Policy, we believed there was a new era being introduced in the history of the Republic, which tended to the spread and perpetuation of slavery. But our opposition to that measure arose because we did not agree with one another in everything. The people in the north end of the State were for stronger measures of opposition than we of the central and southern portions of the State, but we were all opposed to the Nebraska doctrine. You at the north end met in your conventions and passed your resolutions. We in the middle of the State and further south did not hold such conventions, although we had a common view and common sentiments. These meetings and resolutions were local and did not spread all over the State. We at last met together in 1856, from all parts of the State and agreed upon a common platform and were all bound as a party to that platform."

I have had access to the "Urbana Union" a paper edited by Judge J. O. Cunningham. This paper was until 1856 an independent paper, but at that time became a Republican paper. The "Union" of May 16, 1856, calls a meeting of the citizens to choose candi-

dates to attend the Bloomington Convention.

"The citizens of Champaign County without regard to past political differences or divisions, who are opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; to the policy of the present administration; to the extension of slavery over territory now free; in favor of the admission of free Kansas and of restoring the government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson, are requested to meet in Convention at the Court House in Urbana on Thursday the 15th of May to deliberate upon the great political issues that now agitate the public mind and to appoint a delegate to the State anti-Nebraska convention."

May 22, 1856. "Urbana Union". "A large number of citizens attended the meeting at the court house. A committee of three was appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the views of the Convention upon the political issues of the day; The resolutions introduced follow -

Resolved, "That while we are not opposed to any interference with the institutions of Slavery where it now exists, we are opposed to any further extension of this "peculiar institution".

2nd. That we believe Congress has the constitutional right to prohibit the introduction of Slavery into the territories and ought to exercise that right.

3rd. That Kansas ought to be admitted into the Union at once with their free constitution.

4th. That the power of Congress over the territories is universal and exclusive and we repudiate the doctrine of Calhoun to

the contrary, lately revived upon this subject.

5th. That Wm. Bissel be and is the choice of this convention as a candidate for Governor at the approaching gubernatorial contest.

6th. That we invite all to co-operate with us who are opposed to slavery extension and who love the free institutions of our country, without regard to birthplace or religion, party or politics."

Judge Harkness and James D. Jaquith were appointed to attend the convention at Bloomington on the 29th of May.

These delegates, together with many other citizens of Urbana attended the convention at Bloomington on the 29th of May, 1856. John M. Palmer was made permanent chairman of the convention, and the first nominees on the Republican ticket in the State of Illinois were as follows:- Wm. H. Bissel, of St. Clair, was nominated for Governor; Francis A. Hoffman, for Lieutenant Governor; O. M. Hatch, of Pike, Secretary of State; Jesse K. Dubois, of Lawrence for Auditor; James Miller of McLean for Treasurer and W. H. Powell, of Peoria, for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Abraham Lincoln, O. H. Browning, Richard Yates, John M. Palmer, Owen Lovejoy, Lyman Trumbull, and John Wentworth, were the minds which directed the destiny of this new party. Of this number four were formally Whigs, two Democrats and one Abolition. The platform was so framed as to have no uncertain sound regarding the further extension of slavery, nor was there any want of devotion to

the States.

The resolutions which were drawn up at this convention were as follows -

"Resolved - That we hold, in accordance with the opinions and practices of all the great statesmen of all parties for the past sixty years of the administration of the Government, that under the constitution Congress possesses power to prohibit slavery in the territories; and that whilst we will maintain all constitutional rights of the south, we also hold that justice, humanity, the principles of freedom, as expressed in our Declaration of Independence, and our National Constitution, and the purity and perpetuity of our government, require that that power should be exerted to prevent the extension of slavery into territories now free."

"Resolved - That the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was unwise, unjust, and injurious; an open and aggravated violation of the plighted faith of the States, and that the attempt of the present administration to force slavery into Kansas against the known wishes of the legal voters of that territory is an arbitrary and tyrannous violation of the rights of the people to govern themselves, and that we will strive by all constitutional means to secure to Kansas and Nebraska the legal guaranty against Slavery of which they were deprived at the cost of the violation of the plighted faith of the nation."

"Resolved - That we are devoted to the Union, and will, to the last extremity, defend it against the efforts now being made by the disunionists of this administration to compass its dissolu-

tion, and that we will support the institution of the United States in all its provisions, regarding it as the sacred bond of the union and the only safeguard for the preservation of the rights of ourselves and posterity. Lusk, page 56.

This platform contained the fundamental principles of the new party. James Buchanan was the Democratic candidate for President, Millard Fillmore the Native American; June 17th, the Anti-Slavery Democrats and Whigs of the north met at Philadelphia and organized the National Republican party, thus adopting the name which had been given the new party in Illinois, and nominated John C. Fremont for President.

Illinois went Republican for the State ticket, electing Bissel by 4,697 majority. This was a great surprise both to the Republicans and Democrats. Some of the most prominent men in the State had been holding back, afraid to unite their interests with those of the new party. Conspicuous among these were Oglesby and Cullom, men who afterwards became Governors of the State chosen by this same party.

With the organization of the National Republican party we must stop. A thorough study of the Free-Soil party in Illinois shows it to be one of the numerous anti-Slavery movements which finally culminated in the organization of the Republican party. Its history in this state is disconnected. Its influence never, at any time, was even strong enough to be seriously felt by the Slavery and Democratic elements.

It was not until the union and fusion of the Free-Soil, Abolition, American, Anti-Nebraska and all kindred anti-Slavery elements into the one great Republican party that any serious opposition was felt by the Democrats.

The Free-Soilers, like the other kindred parties, seemed to be a providential method of getting together in one party, upon one platform, all those opposed to Slavery but differing in minor details. As soon as the reformers came to see that they must unite under the one great cause of opposition to the extension of Slavery and discard all petty difference, just so soon did they become a power in this State and Nation.

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## Appendix.

Following are letters from Col. J. S. Wolfe of Champaign, Illinois and Judge J. O. Cunningham of Urbana, Illinois. These gentlemen were both in active politics in the Fourth Congressional District of Illinois during the time treated of in this thesis, and they have kindly written letters giving facts bearing on those stirring times.

"Champaign Ills Feby 7th 1896

Miss Kiler

Complying with your request of the 3rd Instant I will attempt to sketch the movement of the free-soil sentiment as it seemed to have developed in this state up to 1860; its history is that of all movements having their beginning in the moral sense of the people, and marked by the slow processes by which individual sentiment develops into public opinion.

As a distinctive organization, there was never a "Free-soil" party in this state; there were men of prominence and strength, who called themselves free-soilers-free-soil whigs, and free-soil democrats. These were usually men who were at heart Abolitionists, but who took refuge under the name of free-soiler, as a means of escaping the odium of being call by a right name.

At this distance of time, it is impossible to appreciate the odium attached to the term abolitionist; it meant ostracism, in all departments of life, and was menace to the liberty and safety of the person, in many localities in this state.

As an evidence of this fact which was universally felt, James G. Birney, always more a philanthropist than politician, being a candidate for the Presidency, named by the abolitionists of the country received in this state in 1844 one-hundred and forty-nine votes in the entire state; he was a man of great character and fitness for places of trust and no objection could have been urged against him of a personal nature.

The free-soil element in this state up to 1856, was in the estimation of the people, allied with abolitionism, and was therefore obscure and odious, for it is a discreditable fact in the history of our people that very few of them had the moral courage to denounce the wickedness and wrong of slavery, while they had before them the fate of Lovejoy who in 1837 was murdered at the city of Alton because of his anti-slavery speech and press. Thus occurred in the state which subsequently exalted the dominion of personal liberty, by rejecting all compromises with slavery and by offering to the country for the Presidency the greatest of men, Abraham Lincoln.

The various grades and shades of anti-slavery sentiment in this state were known as abolitionism, free-soil, and Anti-Nebraska-whig or democrat, as it might happen, that the man was a whig or democrat by antecedent.

No party organization embodied, or represented these various shades of opinion until the organization of the Republican Party in 1856. This organization gathered to itself, all forms of belief hostile to slavery, wherever it existed, or might attempt to extend

itself. To furnish a party or Organic home for all these, was necessary and therefore a name for the new party was matter of consequence. After deliberation it was resolved to call it the Republican Party: under these conditions all anti-slavery sentiment in the state was compacted, and launched into the turbulent politics of the time; men who were made to feel uncomfortable when called abolitionists felt at home in their new quarters, and cordially took refuge from an odious appellation, in the new party and under the new designation. In localities there was a pronounced abolition sentiment; this sentiment in most localities, suffered a modification of necessity; the general abolition of slavery was impracticable, in those states where it existed from the foundation of the government, and those who opposed it were confined to opposing its introduction into new states and territories which were about to apply for admission into the union, as states or presenting territorial forms of government for recognition by the federal government, under whose specific control all territorial legislation, was liable to supervision.

In this condition of affairs they became or were called free-soilers, in opposition to those who claimed the right to take slavery into new states or ingraft it upon territorial organization. This phase of the controversy began in 1850 and led to the repeal of the famous "Missouri Compromise" which had regulated this matter since 1820.

Men who were in favor of abolishing slavery were of course favorable to its destruction every-where; these were abolitionists;

Men who would consent that slavery might remain where it had obtained recognition of law but would not consent that it might be extended, were "Free-soilers"; both classes of men regarded slavery from the same standpoint, and differed only in its treatment.

On the formation of the Republican party, all of these elements entered heartily into it, and constituted its most aggressive and ceaseless supporters, and this was the only organized body or party which represented the free-soil element in this state as I understand the history of that period.

J. S. Wolfe."

"Urbana, Feb. 15, 1896.

My Dear Miss Kiler:-

You ask me for my personal recollections of the "Free Soil Party in Illinois," and, hoping the same may realize to you all that you hope, I most gladly comply with your request.

The free soil movement in Illinois, was but another name for the anti-slavery movement, then taking form all over the North, but much confined to localities to which New England people had migrated. Those who embraced the anti-slavery sentiment were first known as "Abolitionists," and being few in number and opposed by the friends of slavery, the thoughtless and the self-seeking politicians and often by the church, the name in time became so odious as to deter men from being openly known as the opponents of slavery. How odious and offensive the term became, can not easily be understood by those who have come upon the stage of action since those days.

The first party organization which united the men of these opinions, was known as the "Liberty party;" and under this name a few voters in some of the Northern states rallied until the years 1848, when the schisms in the Whig and Democratic parties, caused by the growth of anti-slavery sentiments, together with the "Barnburner" movement in the state of New York, promised large additions to the party opposed to slavery. Then it was, and to escape the odium attached to the epithet, "abolition," and to make the change from the old line parties the more easy, that the name of "Free Soil" was adopted, in recognition of the spirit of the proviso proposed

by Mr. Wilmot, of Pennsylvania, to be attached to a bill then before congress concerning the territory then about to be acquired from Mexico.

The presidential campaign of 1848, of all those willing to be enrolled as opposed to the aggressiveness of slavery, was made under the name of the "Free Soil Party", and had followers in all of the northern states. At the same time there were those extreme opponents of slavery, like Mr. Wendell Phillips, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison and many others who either refused to vote at all, or voted with the "Free Soilers" under protest, for the reason that the aim of the party, the restriction of slavery, did not reach far enough. But the movement grew until precipitated by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, under the leadership of Senator Douglas.

In Illinois we may refer the genesis of anti-slavery agitation, (after the memorable contest of 1825,) to the Alton riots, which resulted in the death of Lovejoy, in 1837. The blood of this martyr was the seed of the abolition church, not only in Illinois, but in the country over. The death of Mr. Lovejoy was the text of many an abolition sermon. It was sounded from the pulpit and the press and taught even in the almanacs of the people. What Wurtenburg was to the reformation in the middle ages, was Alton, in Illinois, to the anti-slavery movement all over the North. What the names of Huss and Wycliff were to Christianity, was that of Lovejoy to the cause of the slave.

Thus, the acts of wicked fanatics, in Illinois, gave the greatest impetus to the growth of anti-slavery sentiment in the free states.

Its growth in Illinois kept step with that in other northern states, but was largely confined to the northern counties. Here and there in other parts of the state, where were found settlements of Quakers or immigrants from New England, might be found what was termed "nests of abolitionism."

Thus, under different names, the leaven of conscientious opposition to slavery, grew in Illinois, without any considerable number of votes appearing in its behalf in the returns of elections until the vote of 1848 when the Van Buren ticket carried in several of the northern counties.

Sentiment in both Whig and Democratic parties in Illinois was ripening rapidly for the coming event which was to precipitate the fall of the pro-slavery sentiment from a position of intolerant dominion to that of cringing subserviency. That event was the passage of the measure repealing the compromise of 1820, through the influence of Illinois' then famous senator.

Like a peal of thunder from a clear sky--like the booming of a signal alarm gun, this event in the interest of human slavery, roused from a lethargic sleep to a life of intense action, thousands of men in both parties who had before then been indifferent. The people of Illinois at once returned a general assembly adverse to the party of Mr. Douglas for the first within the history of the state. Lyman Trumbull, a leader in the movement against Senator Douglas and his favorite measure, was elected to the United States Senate in place of one of Mr. Douglas' friends; and the latent anti slavery sentiment thoroughly aroused, became bold and

was cemented throughout the state.

Following this triumph, and as a result of it, on May 20th, 1856, at Bloomington, those opposed to slavery, much awakened and fired by the acts of lawless ruffians in Kansas, which condition it was believed had been brought about by Mr. Douglas' agency, met as the first "Republican" state convention. In this convention were Lincoln, Browning, Williams and many others of the old Whig party;

Wentworth, Judd, Palmer, Cook, Arnold and many others of the old Democratic party and Lovejoy, Coddington and many others of the old Abolition party. Oneness of sentiment on the great question of the hour, made a most harmonious fusion of all of the elements. A candidate for governor and candidates for other state offices were nominated and after a most intense and, in many cases, a bitter campaign, all were elected.

Thus terminated a struggle of many years of the opponents of slavery in the humiliation of its friends in Illinois, as well as secured the firm fusion of all of the elements of opposition to slavery in an invincible and conquering party, with Abraham Lincoln at its head.

J. C. Cunningham."