

"Abraham Lincoln"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Later this week we observe the birth of Abraham Lincoln, a man who garnered little political support from Carroll Countians in the Election of 1860. Several local community historians described in articles originally published in the Taneytown Carroll Record newspaper in 1894. Dr. Jacob J. Weaver, Jr., described the election results in his history of Uniontown:

"PRECEDING THE WAR

During the great political presidential struggle of 1860, when old political theories and organizations were being torn to pieces and destroyed by the advance of the anti-slavery sentiment in the north and west, Uniontown district gave the first evidence, in a marked way, of a prospective change in the sentiment of its people. Of the 59 votes polled for Lincoln, in Carroll county, as a distinctively anti-slavery candidate in 1860, thirty-six of said votes were polled in Uniontown. When the great issue came on in 1861, and the people were forced to take their stand either for or against the Union, the village was nearly unanimous in sentiment in favor of sustaining President Lincoln, and antagonistic to any and all measures which would carry the state of Maryland out of the Union. The result of the riot in Baltimore, on the 19th. of April, was to intensify this sentiment."

Dr. Clotworthy Birnie described how Lincoln fared in Taneytown.

"The breaking out of the war of the rebellion found the same confusion among the political parties as prevailed throughout the country. Most of the Whigs had voted for Bell and Everett; there were very few Douglas Democrats, and I believe only one vote cast for Mr. Lincoln. A very large majority of our people were thoroughly loyal, but did not know which way to turn; living in a slave state they naturally mistrusted the Republican party and very few of them knew anything about Mr. Lincoln. Even his celebrated contest with Stephen A. Douglas, and his Cooper Institute speech were known to comparatively few people here."

A final account of Lincoln and local elections was written by Frank J. Devilbiss of New Windsor:

"For several years prior to 1856 our citizens voted at general elections, in Uniontown. During this year, however, a portion of each the second, seventh and ninth districts was made into a separate district, and called New Windsor district No. 11. In that year, Buchanan and Filmore were candidates for the Presidency. New Windsor district gave 122 votes for the former and 221 for latter, thus plainly showing the political complexion of the new district. At the next Presidential election in 1860, one of the candidates, Abraham Lincoln, received but one single vote in this district. The voter who gallantly cast this ballot, very probably secreted himself a fortnight to get breath. At any rate, his identity should have been preserved and honored, and I regret being unable to do either. The community was in a state of ferment then. The turbulent passions of those times cannot be better instanced, than at a general election, held probably in 1864, Daniel Engel and Jonas Ecker were the judges, and both strong Unionists. The tickets were large that fall, containing candidates for nearly every office in county and state, as well for president.

The day passed quietly away, and the battle of ballots ended, but not the battle of words. After lengthy consultation, and heated debate, it was decided that considering the length of the ticket and the merciless "cutting" of the candidates, the counting would be deferred until the following day. The lights were extinguished, and darkness was supreme, as Jonas Ecker retired from the room with the ballot-box in custody. Soon, he was in his home (now the residence of Mr. Peter Engel) and had lain himself down

on his bed of slumber after the arduous duties of the day. But, very soon, "like a thief in the night" stole "rap" after "rap" at this entrance door. Not heeding, but thinking why, he awaited, but not long. A sea of voices loud and tumultuous, clamoring for the ballot-box explained the message and the messenger. Opposition voters, suspicing the security of the ballot-box, had agreed to demand it from the hands of Mr. Ecker, and place it in the custody of Mr. Joseph A. Stouffer, the cashier of the Bank. Having no alternative, Mr. Ecker finally acquiesced, and accompanied the crowd up town to the residence of Mr. Stouffer. After calling him from his slumber, their purpose was made known. They entreated him to take the ballot-box and secure it in the bank until morning. Mr. Stouffer was not an officer of the election and was a Union man too; Mr. Ecker was an election officer, a Unionist, and a gentleman of honor and respectability. After prolonged entreaty Mr. Stouffer reluctantly stowed away the box in the bank, and when the crowd heard the heavy grating of the lock as the key was turned, peace was restored, and there was a clam and solemn joy. Among the leaders of the procession, which waited upon Mr. Ecker for the ballot-box were William W. Smelser, Geo. W. Fritz and William Steiner."

As these articles indicate, Carroll Countians did not initially support Lincoln, however, by the time of the 1864 election his popularity had grown. In fact, following Lincoln's assassination, local residents recalled that a Westminster newspaper editor had recently written that it might have been better if Lincoln had not survived the war. His words eventually cost him his life. But that's another story.

Photo caption: President Lincoln's portrait was a popular motif on Republican tickets (ballots) for many years after his death. This example was printed for the November 5, 1889 election. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.