

GUESS WHO WANTS TO GO TO CONGRESS?

Abraham had served in the Illinois state legislature ever since his first successful election in 1834. But when his fourth term expired, in 1842, he decided not to run again. "That assemblage," he told a friend, "offers no new worlds to conquer."

The problem was, Illinois offered few political opportunities for a Whig. Democrats held a hefty majority in the state; it had never elected a Whig governor or United States senator, and it had never voted for a Whig presidential candidate. Only in the Seventh Congressional District—an area that included Springfield—did the Whigs hold a solid majority, consistently sending one of their own to the House of Representatives. Wondered Lincoln, "Why shouldn't I be one of the chosen?" Taking an active role in Whig politics, he wrote pamphlets, gave speeches, and wooed party leaders. He was not shy about his goal. "Now if you should hear anyone saying that Lincoln don't want to go Congress," he wrote a fellow Whig in 1846, "I wish you would tell him he is mistaken. The truth is, I would very much like to go."

IN THE MIDST OF POLITICS . . . A NEW BABY



The only known photograph of Edward Baker Lincoln, age three

On March 10, 1846, Eddie—as his parents called him—was born. "He is very much such a child as Bob was at his age—rather of the longer order," Lincoln wrote to a friend. By all accounts, little Eddie was a happy baby. But he was also in fragile health, alternating between coughing fits and high fevers. Nowadays many historians believe Eddie suffered from tuberculosis, a deadly lung infection.

THE CAMPAIGN MUST GO ON!

Just two months after Eddie's birth, Lincoln finally got his chance for distinction: the district Whig Party nominated him its candidate for the United States House of Representatives.

It was a tough campaign. Lincoln's Democratic opponent was Peter Cartwright, a Methodist preacher and formidable vote-getter. Cartwright spoke well and had lots of friends in the district.

Knowing he needed to face his opponent head-on, Lincoln walked into one of Cartwright's Bible meetings, where the preacher-politician was giving a hell-raising sermon. When he finished, Cartwright turned to his congregation. "All who desire . . . to give their hearts to God and go to heaven will stand!"

Almost everyone in the room stood.

"All who do not wish to go to hell will stand," cried Cartwright.

The rest of the congregation stood—everyone, that is, except Abraham.

Cartwright looked at him. "May I inquire of you, Mr. Lincoln, where are you going?"

"If it's all the same to you," drawled Abraham, "I am going to Congress."

The congregation burst into laughter.

Cartwright sputtered with anger.

And weeks later, Lincoln was elected by a margin of more than fifteen hundred votes.



Reverend Peter Cartwright, Lincoln's opponent for Congress

FUNDING A CAMPAIGN

Abraham was scrupulously honest when it came to money—especially money collected on behalf of his campaigns. After winning his seat in Congress in 1847, he returned \$199.25 of the \$200 received from his supporters. He gave this explanation:

I made the canvass on my own horse; my entertainment, being at the houses of friends, cost me nothing; and my only outlay was 75 cents for a barrel of cider, which some farmhands insisted I should treat to.