

“Lincoln Rallies for Change”

Location: 305 W. Main St. (5 of 5 murals to be painted here)

Many of us know Abraham Lincoln as an American statesman and lawyer that categorically imprinted the history books after winning the 16th presidential election where he most notably led the nation through the Civil War and administered the famous Gettysburg Address. President Lincoln met an unfortunate fate as he was assassinated in April of 1865. Undoubtedly, President Lincoln was one of the most influential presidents of all time.

Much was at stake during this 16th presidential election. Lincoln was set on preserving the Union and ending the practice of slavery. Without this change, it was believed that the separation would cause the death of the republic and ultimately betray the generation that established the Union, as well as future Americans.

Lincoln’s opponent was Stephen Douglas. Lincoln and Douglas never debated in Olney, but both candidates found it important to rally in Olney. As it turned out, both candidates rallied in Olney on the same day, September 20, 1856. Lincoln’s rally took place during the afternoon. A historical marker stands on the lawn of the Richland County Courthouse commemorating this event.

An incident of great local historical significance took place on November 12, 1858, when the Olney Times newspaper was the very first newspaper to openly endorse the election of Lincoln. The following article accompanied Lincoln’s name:

“This week we place at the head of our columns the name of ABRAHAM LINCOLN of Illinois as our choice for President in 1860. In doing so, it is in full confidence of his honesty, integrity and ability to administer the Government with due regard to the welfare of this great nation, and that under his administration the Government will be brought back to that purity which characterized it in the days of Jefferson, Madison and Adams.”

As such, Lincoln acknowledged that the Times was the “first paper to advocate his nomination for the Presidency.”

On November 6, 1860, Lincoln won the election in an electoral college landslide (including victory in Illinois) with 180 electoral votes.

In 1955, Illinois designated “Land of Lincoln” as the official state slogan.