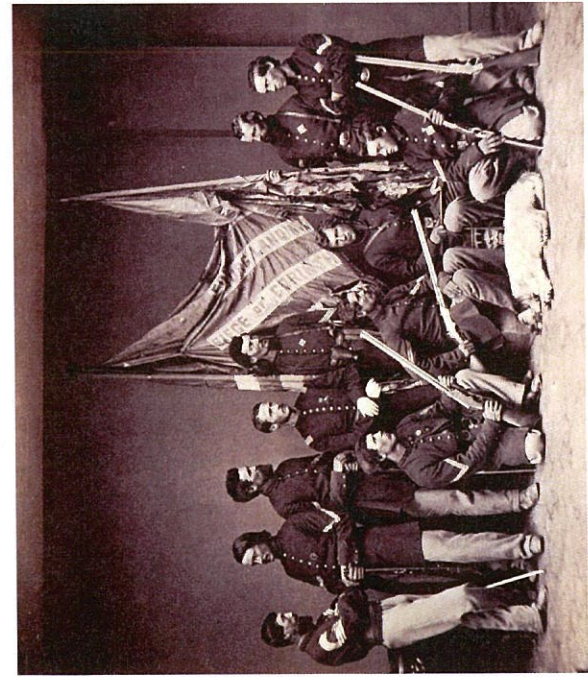


Illinois in the Civil War

Engaging Students in Uncovering Historical Complexity through Primary Documents & Digital History Tools



MURDER!

THE 54th Regiment Illinois Volunteers of-
WARD for ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS RE-
Hair, Sheriff of Coles County J. Eshbury
Hanks, John Frazier, 6ft 10, age 23 dark eyes, 4ft
Hair, B. F. Toland and B. F. Duker, all of
whom were engaged in the brutal murder of
Major York and four soldiers of the 54th Reg-
and the wounded Major York, in Char-
leston, on Monday March 28th, 1864.

DESCRIPTION.

John H. O'Hair, height 5 feet 11 in., age
37, eyes light blue, complexion light,
Shave of the face, 5 ft. 8 in. 35 yrs. old,
dark eyes, light complexion and hair, farmer.
John Frazier, 6ft 10, age 23 dark eyes, 4ft
hair, complexion fair, farmer.
J. W. Frazier 6ft, age 40, dark eyes hair
and complexion; farmer.
Henderson O'Hair, 6ft, age 40 dark eyes,
complexion and hair; farmer.
Jesse O'Hair, 5ft 8, light eyes hair and
complexion; farmer.
Jesse O'Hair, 5ft 8, light eyes hair and
complexion; no occupation.
B. F. Toland, 5ft 10, age 35 black eyes
hair, complexion fair, farmer.
B. F. Duker, 4ft 8, age 33, light eyes hair
and complexion, laborer.

The citizens of Coles County will pay \$200
for the apprehension of J. H. O'Hair, and
\$100 for each of the above named men, and
Alexander H. Hanks, if they are taken with in
the time specified. They are to be cut
out about the face.

Charleston, Ill., April 24, 1864.

**MAIN BUILDING OF
THE GREAT NORTHERN WESTERN SANITARY FAIR
CHICAGO
OPENED MAY 20, 1865**

Photo: The Illinois 7th Infantry, [Mattoon History Center](#); Newspaper Clipping, Charleston Riot, 1864, [Mattoon History Center](#); North Western Sanitary Fair, Chicago, 1865, [Library of Congress](#)

Agenda

01

Key Moments

02

Primary Docs

03

Digital Tools

CIVIL WAR ILLINOIS

Early Statehood

1818-1848

Admission as free state
Murder of Elijah Lovejoy
Jarrott v. Jarrott (1845)

Rise of Republicans - and Lincoln

1856-1860

1st statewide meeting, Bloomington
Lincoln speaks
Then debates Douglas throughout state two years later

1

1848 State Constitution

Slavery explicitly outlawed BUT Black suffrage defeated

2

1853 Colored Convention, Chicago

In response to the Black Exclusion Law (1853), Black Illinoisans hold a statewide convention and proclaim "We are Americans by birth"

3

4

Election of 1860

Lincoln wins the

War for Union

1861-1863

"Illinois can whip the South by herself."
Chicago Tribune, Spring 1861
IL sends 259,092 men to the Union Army
Camp Douglas
Cairo
IL soldiers fight at Shiloh
Women's War Effort

War for Emancipation 1863-1865

Emancipation Proclamation
Illinois soldiers write home in support
Illinois soldiers fight at Vicksburg and see the fall of Atlanta

War's End

1865 ... & BEYOND

Lincoln wins the presidential election - getting 50.7% of the popular vote in his home state of Illinois

Homefront Dissent & Discontent

Midterm elections
Enrollment Act, Spring 1863
Lincoln's Letter to Conkling, August 1863
Charleston Riot, March 28, 1864
Conspiracy Rumors

The 1864 Election

Despite his summer fears that he would lose, Lincoln is re-elected in the wake of Union advances

Lincoln's Death

Less than a week after Lee's surrender, John Wilkes Booth murders Lincoln, whose body arrives in Chicago on May 1st

Your Primary Document Packet

Full packet will be distributed in print at the session
(due to copyright)

Sample Documents are [HERE](#)

Document Packet

1

Skim & annotate.
Then, talk with
each other!

2

What are the key
themes?
Takeaways?
Questions?

3

What are the
challenges students
will have with
these documents?

01

The Rise of the
Republicans (in
Illinois)

02

Soldier Experience
(in the Western
Theater)

03

Illinois Contributes to
the War Effort

04

Citizens and Soldiers
– and Emancipation

05

Contention and
Dissent – and
Violence

Key Themes

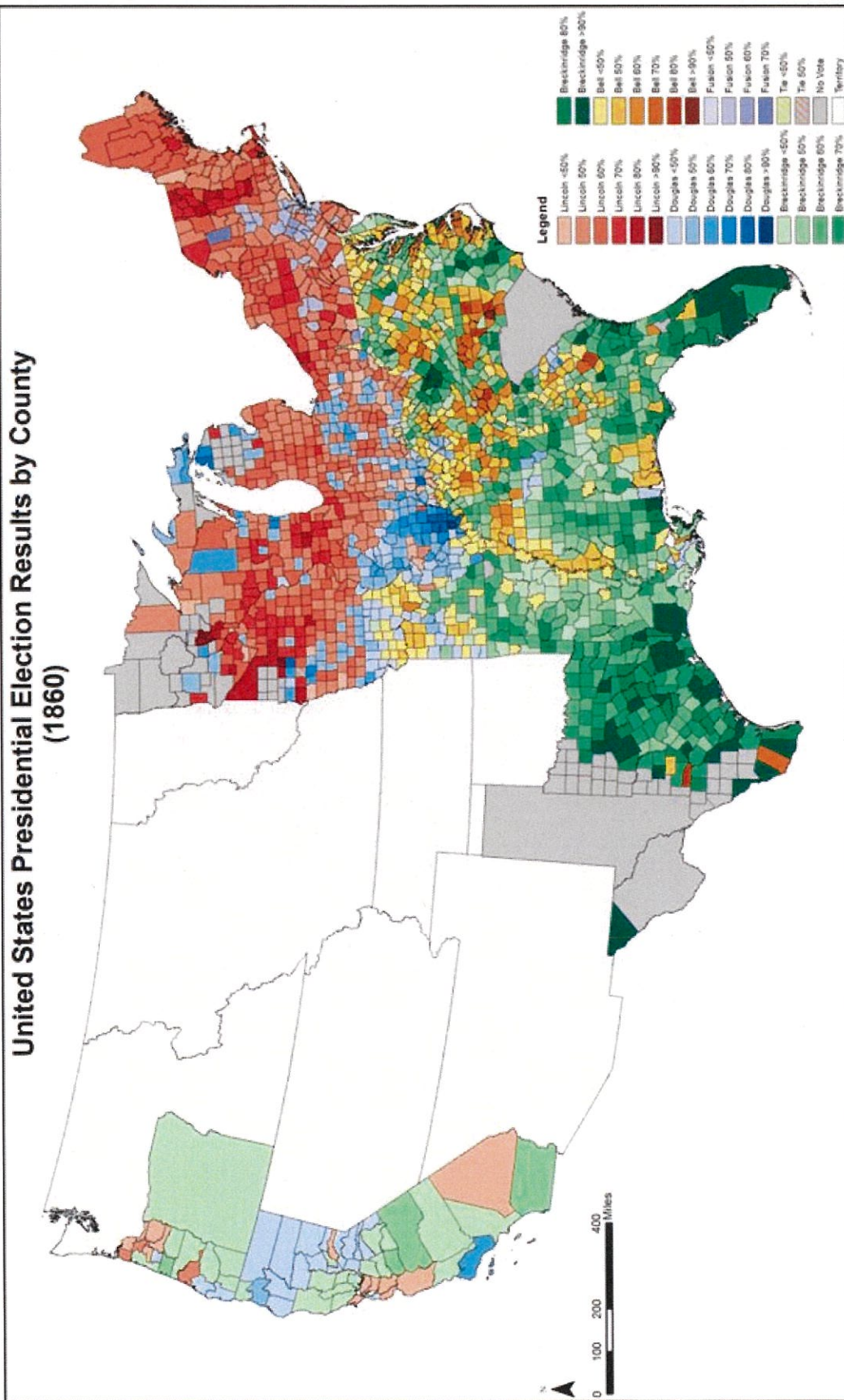
Contingency

“Throughout the period, it was possible to imagine altogether different outcomes in the story of Illinois’s war.”

Mark Hubbard, *Illinois’s War*, p. xvi

Complexity

United States Presidential Election Results by County (1860)



Complexity

What does the most local of local
history let us see (and show)?

Contingency

Making Digital Timelines

Why use a digital timeline tool?

Historical Thinking Skills

- chronology
- complexity
- writing – succinctly and clearly
- use of visual evidence & linkage to argument

Knightlab Timeline Creator - Northwestern University

Sample - Made with Students, Spring 5390

LINCOLN MOVES FROM WHIG TO REPUBLICAN POLITICIAN

In August of 1855, Abraham Lincoln penned a personal letter to his friend, Kentucky enslaver Joshua Speed, in which he confessed his personal dislike to slavery. He described the "continued torment" he felt about once seeing enslaved people shackled while on a river trip with Speed. Lincoln also reflected on the political upheaval of the time, rejecting Know-Nothing politics and foreshadowing the collapse of the Whigs ("I think I am a whig, but others say there are no whigs," he writes). Lincoln soon emerged as a Republican union coalition party formed, as Matthew Karp writes, as part of the "mass democratic struggle" that led to the creation of a new and powerful coalition party in the North in the mid-1850s. Lincoln's place in this transition was solidified when he ran as a Republican in 1858 for the Senate and defeated

CONKLING READS LINCOLN'S LETTER TO UNION LEAGUE

Lincoln's letter was his polite declination to James C. Coaling's invitation to speak at a Union League meeting in Springfield, Illinois on September 3, 1865. Coaling would then read the president's remarks in his place. The content of the letter are sharply aimed at critics of Lincoln, both Republican detractors as well as Democrats. The president argues that there are only three ways to ensure peace is brought to the country: force of arms, give up the Union, or compromise. Using blunt language and some dirt, with humor, Lincoln's words take aim at his opponents to refute their criticisms in his efforts to restore the Union. Lincoln's most poignant argument within the letter addresses the activation of African Americans within the Union ranks. The president lauds the contributions of African Americans to the war effort.

Sources

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- Mark Flotow, ed., *In Their Letters, In Their Words: Illinois Civil War Soldiers Write Home* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2019)
- Victoria Harrison, "We are Here Assembled: Illinois Colored Conventions, 1853-1873," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 108, no. 3-4 (2015): 322-346
- Mark Hubbard, ed., *Illinois's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Ohio University Press, 2013)
- Kate Masur, ed., *Black Organizing in Pre-Civil War Illinois: Creating Community, Demanding Justice*, The Colored Conventions Project, 2023.
- Megan Van Gorder, *A Mother's Work: Mary Bickerdyke, Civil War-Era Nurse* (University of North Carolina Press, 2026)