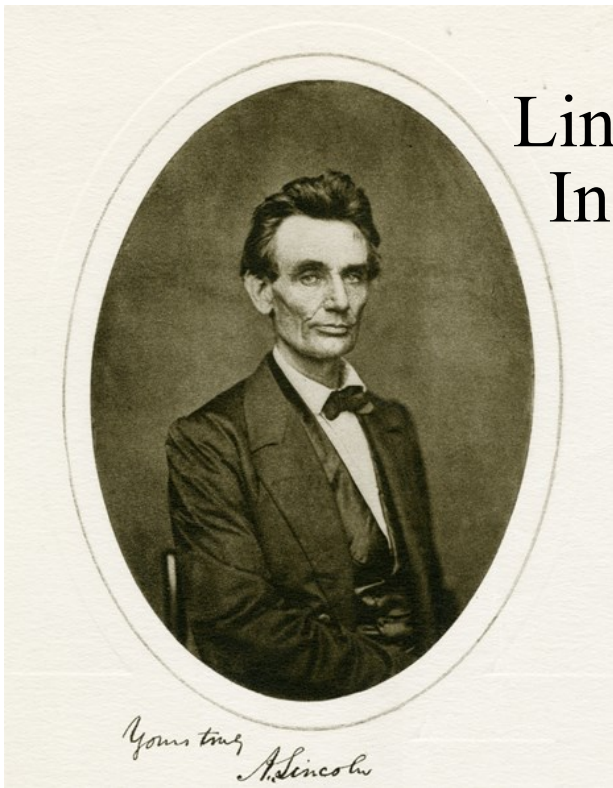


Lincoln's Visit to New Hampshire Included a Famous Introduction

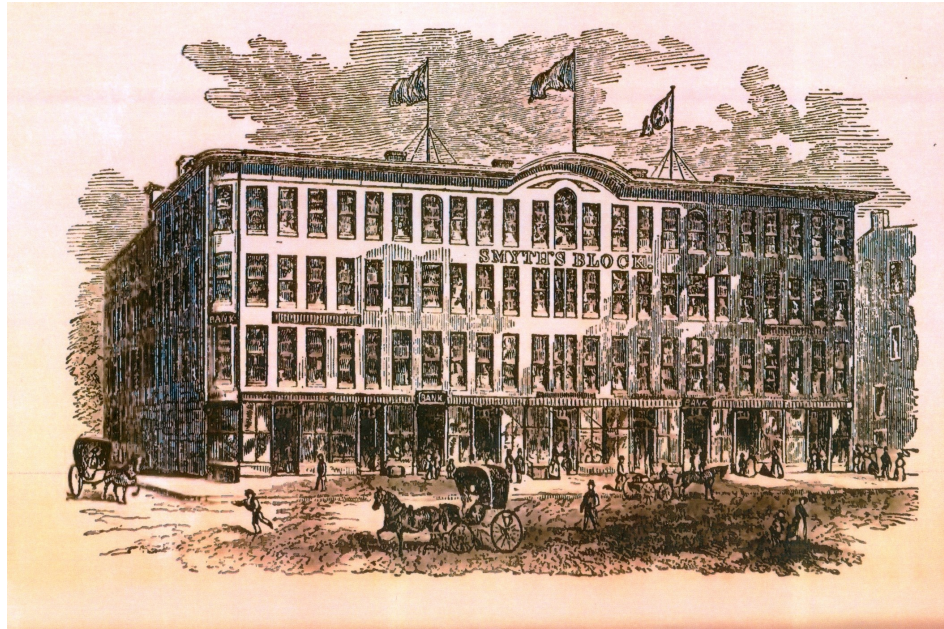
William M. Gardner, Secretary of State

Through the years when in various conversations with people, the topic of New Hampshire's First in the Nation Presidential Primary more often than not comes up. This is understandable because of the publicity this event generates nationally every four years. There are many other "firsts," including New Hampshire being the first state to declare separation from the crown in 1776, and in turn, the first to adopt a written constitution anywhere in the world, resulting in the creation of a free and independent government. New Hampshire also has the distinction of having the first Senator, John P. Hale of Dover, to call for the abolition of slavery on the US senate floor.



One of my favorites, though, is the first time Abraham Lincoln was publicly introduced as the "Next President of the United States" was in Manchester on March 1, 1860.

Lincoln was in the state mainly to visit with his son Robert, a student at Phillip's Exeter Academy, and while here, decided to accept several speaking engagements, the first was in Concord that morning. When he spoke that night in Manchester, Frederick Smyth, chairman of the City Republican Club, former Manchester mayor, city clerk and future governor, made that famous introduction, before over a thousand people gathered at the Smyth's Block auditorium on Elm Street.



Smyth's Block, Elm Street, Manchester, from CE Potter's History of Manchester, 1856

As it happened, the national press was also on hand to witness the event. They were always in New Hampshire this time of year to cover state politics. Because New Hampshire was the first state to hold its elections in the country, each March on Town Meeting day, the Granite State was considered an early bellwether of national political trends. After Lincoln had given his now famous Copper Union speech in New York a few days earlier, he had suddenly become a hot political news item.

After Lincoln's Manchester speech he retired to the City Hotel at the corner of Lowell and Elm Streets where he told Smyth the introduction had "taken him by surprise," and that he had never been introduced like that before. New York Senator William H. Seward would be nominated for president, Lincoln said.

Three months later in May, at the Republican convention in Chicago, Smyth's prediction came true when Lincoln won the nomination as a dark horse candidate on the third ballot, and the presidency that November. Once again one can say a president, Abraham Lincoln, got his start on the road to the White House here in New Hampshire. — *A version of this story appeared in the January/February 2021 edition of New Hampshire Magazine.*

