

**Volume 2**

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**Democratic Convention of 1860 II**

**Lead: In the Spring of 1860 the national Democratic Party Convention met in Charleston, South Carolina to nominate a candidate for President and Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois was the man to beat.**

**Tag: "A Moment In Time" with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Where Stephen A. Douglas was concerned, few persons held a neutral opinion. He was said to be a passionate man who evoked passion in others, in his friends and in his enemies. His people had set up their headquarters in the Hibernian**

**Hall not far from the Battery, where ancient twisted live oaks dripping with Spanish moss as if from another and more leisurely place and time greeted the frantic visitors from North and West who came seeking compromise in an era of impatience and incivility. Douglas had a majority but his problem was that the Democrats demanded that he secure two-thirds of the votes to carry the nomination.**

**There were those in Charleston that wet and cold late April that would deny him that super-majority, in fact they would do anything to beat him even if it meant a victory by the Republicans and an end to the Union. There was William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama and his fire-eating colleagues**

**who were determined to split the convention and bring into being a Southern Confederacy.**

**There was Senator John Slidell of Louisiana who spoke for President James Buchanan. The incumbent in the White House had not sought the nomination would refuse it if offered but he was determined that Douglas should not get it.**

**Buchanan was a man whose capacity for vacillation was limitless. He could not act decisively. But on Douglas his mind was made up. When a pro-slavery minority seized control of the Territory of Kansas and in its application for statehood in 1858 rammed through a state constitution**

**permitting slavery, Buchanan, under intense pressure from Southern leaders and ignoring the clear evidence that by far the majority of Kansans were opposed to slavery, urged that Kansas be let into the Union as a slave state. Douglas blocked the President in the Senate. Buchanan would have nothing of the Senator from Illinois. Next time: The extremists win and the Party splits.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

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**Halstead, Murat. *Caucuses of 1860: A History of the National Conventions*. Columbus, OH: Follett, Foster, & Co., 1860.**

**Nichols, Roy Franklin. *The Disruption of American Democracy*. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1948.**

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