

A Chronicle of the Coles County (Illinois) Region

compiled by Mark Voss-Hubbard and Newton E. Key

1607-1776—Colonial America

1680s

1682 (or 1717?)—Illinois area becomes a possession of the French crown, a dependency of Canada, and part of Louisiana.

1690s

1700s

1710s

1720s

1730s

1740s

1750s

1760s

1763-1789—The American Revolution and The Creation of the Republic

1765—Great Britain takes over Illinois area (ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Paris, 1763).

1770s

1778—George Rogers Clark (1752-1818) defeats the British at Kaskaskia, securing the Illinois country for Virginia.

1780s

1784—Virginia cedes Northwest Territory, including Illinois area, to the federal government, to be cut into states.

1787—Northwest Ordinance includes Illinois in the Northwest Territory.

1787—Constitutional Convention meets

1788—Convention ratifies Constitution

1789-1846—Early National Period and Jacksonian America

1789—Inauguration of President George Washington in New York City

1790s

1800s

1800—Congress creates Indiana Territory, which includes Illinois.

1803—Kaskaskia Indians cede most of their Illinois lands to the United States.

1809—Congress organizes the Illinois Territory, with Kaskaskia the capital.

1810s

1812-1814—War of 1812

1815 & 1818—Surveyors and Illinois rangers skirmish with Indians in Coles County area (Embarras River basin, now Hutton Township).¹

1818—Illinois becomes a state.

1820s

1824—First settlers of European descent in Coles County area (Embarras River basin, now Hutton Township).²

1826—First settlers in Charleston township.³

1830s

1830—Charles Morton opens first store in county.⁴

1830, Dec. 25—State creates Coles County (named after Edward Coles, second Illinois Governor, elected 1822); and chooses

¹Unattributed basic information assembled from sources such as *A Chronology of Illinois History*, reprinted from Ellen M. Whitney, comp., *Illinois History: An Annotated Bibliography* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1999). The *History of Coles County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1879), 242. The compilers are grateful for the assistance of Anna Pfeifer.

²*The History of Coles County*, 230.

³*The History of Coles County*, 233.

⁴*The History of Coles County*, 251.

hamlet called “Coles Court House” (later Charleston) as county seat.⁵

1831, April 23—First Charleston plat map (recorded June 4); first court house.⁶

1831, May—Thomas Lincoln family, moving back to Indiana from year in Macon County, stops in Coles County and decides to stay (Hannah Radley, sister of Sarah Lincoln, lived here).⁷

1835—Charleston erects second court house.

1836—Charles Morton constructs 821 Monroe St. (now oldest surviving house in Charleston).⁸

1836—Coles County, presidential election returns: William Henry Harrison (Whig), 180; Martin Van Buren (Democrat), 151.⁹

1839, March 2—Incorporation of Charleston as a town.

1840s

1840—Population of Coles County, 9,616; first newspaper in Coles County is Charleston *Courier*.¹⁰

c. 1840—Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln move to their fifth Coles County home, at Goosenest Prairie, now Lincoln Log Cabin State Park.¹¹

1841—Part of Coles County forms Cumberland County.

⁵Charles H. Coleman, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debate at Charleston, Illinois: September 18, 1858* (Eastern Illinois University Bulletin, 220, October 1, 1957): 43. Edward Coles was a slave owner, who brought his slaves with him from Virginia when he moved to Illinois. But he set all his slaves free upon reaching Illinois and gave each 160 acres. *The History of Coles County*, 224.

⁶*The History of Coles County*, 245.

⁷Charles H. Coleman, “Sarah Bush Lincoln, The Mother Who Survived Him,” in *Historical Essays* (Eastern Illinois University Bulletin, special number, May 1962): 22-3.

⁸The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County: 1876-1976* (Dallas, 1976), 17.

⁹W. Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore, 1955), 370-1 (and for all election returns through 1892).

¹⁰*The History of Coles County*, 216, 288.

¹¹Coleman, “Sarah Bush Lincoln,” 23. Note, however, Charles H. Coleman and Paul H. Spence, “The Charleston Riot, March 28, 1864,” in *Coles County in the Civil War, 1861-1865*, ed. Lavern M. Hamand (Eastern Illinois University Bulletin, 257, July 1965): 78 claims that it was in 1837.

1841-1855—Abraham Lincoln practices law in circuit which includes Coles County.

1844—Coles County, presidential election returns: Henry Clay (W), 776; James K. Polk (D), 582.

1846-1860—The Sectional Crisis: Slavery, Expansion, and the Coming of the Civil War

1847, Oct.—Matson slave case tried in Coles County, after two Coles County abolitionists, Gideon Matthew Ashmore (tavern owner) and Dr. Hiram Rutherford give shelter to black wife and children of one Anthony Bryant, a free Negro and foreman for Robert Matson of Kentucky (who had been bringing his slaves back and forth between his Kentucky and his Illinois farm each year since 1843). Abraham Lincoln one of the attorneys for slave owner Matson.¹²

1848—Coles County, presidential election returns: Zachary Taylor (W), 877; Lewis Cass (D), 633; M. Van Buren (Free Soil), 6.

1850s

1850—Population of Coles County, 9,335, including 36 free African-Americans and 70 foreign-born. Population of Charleston, 2,262; Population of Charleston Town, 849.¹³

1851—Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham, dies.¹⁴

1852—Coles County, presidential election returns: Winfield Scott (W), 997; Franklin Pierce (D), 733; John P. Hale (FS), 2.

1853—Incorporation of Charleston as a village.¹⁵

1855-56—Terre Haute and Alton Railroad completes rail line through area.¹⁶

1856—Coles County, presidential election returns: John C. Fremont (Republican), 783; James Buchanan (D), 1,178; Millard Fillmore (American), 796.

¹²Charles H. Coleman, “The Matson Slave Case,” in *Historical Essays* (Eastern Illinois University Bulletin, special number, May 1962): 31-40.

¹³*The History of Coles County*, 216; J.D. B. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States ...being a Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), 218-23, 346.

¹⁴Coleman, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debate*, 43.

¹⁵*The History of Coles County*, 317.

¹⁶The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County*, 184.

- 1858, Sept. 18,—Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debate in Charleston as part of their campaigns for a United States Senate seat. Crowd estimated at 12-15,000. Lincoln supporters parade through town with “a huge wagon festooned with bunting and flowers [which] carried thirty-two pretty girls, each with a banner inscribed with the name of a state, while thirty-two young horsemen caracoled behind it.”¹⁷
- c. 1858—Beginning of broom corn cultivation in Coles County (county and surrounding area known as “Broom Corn Capital of the World” through much of the rest of the 19th century).¹⁸
- 1859—Creation of Douglas County, which includes part of what was then Coles County.¹⁹

1860s

- 1860—Population of Coles County, 14,203, including 29 African-Americans.²⁰
- 1860, May 9-10—Illinois Republican convention at Decatur chooses Abraham Lincoln as its nominee for the Presidency to be chosen later that year at the national convention in Chicago. Political banners claim Lincoln father as “the First Pioneer of Macon (*sic*) County.”²¹
- 1860—Coles County, presidential election returns: Abraham Lincoln (R):1,495; Stephen Douglas (D), 1,467; John Bell (Constitutional Union), 79.²²

1861-1877—Civil War and Reconstruction

- 1861, Jan. 30-c. Feb. 7—Abraham Lincoln journeys from Springfield to Charleston to make a farewell visit to his stepmother, Sarah Bush Lincoln.²³

¹⁷Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1952, 1968), 184-5.

¹⁸The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County*, 17.

¹⁹Coleman, “The Matson Slave Case,” 31.

²⁰*The History of Coles County*, 216; Charles W. Seaton, *Compendium of the Tenth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1885), 1: 344.

²¹Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 206.

²²Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 78.

²³Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 238; Gail L. Lathrop and Gerald G. Pierson, “Coles County in the Civil War,” in *Coles County in the Civil War, 1861-1865*, ed. Lavern M. Hamand (Eastern Illinois University Bulletin, 257, July 1965): 7-8.

- 1861, April 25–7th Illinois Infantry Regiment musters at Camp Yates, Illinois (Company B of the 7th recruited from Mattoon and vicinity); 8th Illinois Infantry Regiment musters at Springfield (Company C of the 8th recruited in Charleston and vicinity). Regiments mustered out July 9, 1865 and May 4, 1866 respectively.²⁴
- 1862, Feb.—First Confederate prisoners to enter Coles County pass through Mattoon on way to Chicago prison camp.²⁵
- 1863, June—More than one hundred Copperheads meet in Seven Hickory Township (northeastern Coles County) to engage in drill and discuss plans for resisting the draft, perhaps members of the Knights of the Golden Circle.²⁶
- 1863, July 30 or Aug. 1—Copperhead or Peace Democrat parade through Mattoon, with attendance of 3,000.²⁷
- 1864, Jan. 30—Charles Shoalmax, of the 17th Illinois Cavalry, shoots Edward Stevens, a Copperhead, on a Mattoon street.²⁸
- 1864, Feb. 16–22—Violence between soldiers and Copperheads in Paris, Illinois, leaves at least two civilians killed and two soldiers wounded.²⁹
- 1864, March 28—The Charleston Riot (6 soldiers killed and 4 wounded; 3 civilians killed [two Copperheads] and 8 wounded [5 Copperheads]).³⁰
- 1864—Coles County, presidential election returns: Lincoln (R), 2,210; George B. McClellan (D), 1,555.³¹
- 1865—Incorporation of Charleston as a city.³²
- 1868—Coles County, presidential election returns: Ulysses S. Grant (R), 2,658; Horatio Seymour (D), 2,270.

²⁴Lathrop and Pierson, “Coles County in the Civil War,” 24-6.

²⁵Lathrop and Pierson, “Coles County in the Civil War,” 15.

²⁶Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 81.

²⁷Lathrop and Pierson, “Coles County in the Civil War,” 18; Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 82-3.

²⁸Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 83.

²⁹Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 84.

³⁰Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 78-112.

³¹Coleman and Spence, “The Charleston Riot,” 79.

³²*The History of Coles County*, 317.

1869, April 10,—Sarah Bush Lincoln dies at Goosenest Prairie, Coles County, now Lincoln Log Cabin State Park (81 years old, had lived at that house for 29 years).³³

1870s

1870—Population of Coles County, 23,235, including 220 African-American and 1,053 foreign-born. Population of Charleston, 4,472; Population of Charleston City, 2,849.³⁴

1872—Coles County, presidential election returns: U. S. Grant (R), 2,647; Horace Greeley (D), 2,411; "Regular Democratic," 13.

1876, Nov. 7—Coles County, presidential election returns: Rutherford B. Hayes (R), 2,958 (2,957?); Samuel J. Tilden (D), 2,822; Peter Cooper (Greenback & Prohibition), 107 (102?).³⁵

1877-1900—Gilded Age

1878—Old Settlers' Association established.

1880s

1880—Coles County population, 26,765, including 276 African-Americans and 1,149 foreign-born. Population of Charleston, 4,295; Population of Charleston City, 2,867.³⁶

1880—Coles County, presidential election returns: James A. Garfield (R), 2,991; Winfield S. Hancock (D), 2,905; Greenback-Labor & Prohibition, 141.

1884—Coles County, presidential election returns: James G. Blaine (R), 3,193; Grover Cleveland (D), 3,234; Greenback-Labor & Prohibition, 132.

1888—Coles County, presidential election returns: Benjamin Harrison (R), 3,424; G. Cleveland (D), 3,286; Union Labor & Prohibition, 173.

1890s

³³Coleman, "Sarah Bush Lincoln," 28.

³⁴*The History of Coles County*, 216; Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census of the United States: 1870* (Washington, 1872), 152, 407, 726, 818.

³⁵*The History of Coles County*, 206.

³⁶Seaton, *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 1: 99, 344, 499.

1892—Coles County, presidential election returns: B. Harrison (R), 3,693; G. Cleveland (D), 3,611; James B. Weaver (People's), 203; John Bidwell (Prohibition), 97.

1893—Original cabin constructed by Thomas Lincoln south of Charleston bought and disassembled to ship to Chicago Exposition of 1893. Mysteriously, it never arrives there and is never recovered.³⁷

1895—Charleston chosen as site for Eastern Illinois Normal School.

1896—Coles County, presidential election returns: William McKinley (R), 4,534; William Jennings Bryan (D & People's), 3,963; Prohibition, 105.³⁸

1898—New (third) County Courthouse.

1900s

1900-1929—Age of Reform and Progressivism

1900, Feb.—Drs. John T. Montgomery and Robert Craig operate Charleston Sanatorium, 637 Division St., Charleston, later rebuilt (1909) as Montgomery Sanatorium (and, today, Hour House).³⁹

1900—Coles County, presidential election returns: McKinley (R), 4,706; Bryan (D), 3,921; Prohibition & Socialist, 128

1904—Coles County, presidential election returns: Theodore Roosevelt (R), 4,901; Alton B. Parker (D), 3,435; Prohibition & Socialist, 492.

1904-1931—Interurban rail service operates between Charleston and Mattoon.

1904-1932—Coles County Chautauqua operates at the old Tabernacle, Coles County Fairgrounds.⁴⁰

³⁷The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County*, 41.

³⁸Edgar Eugene Robinson, *The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1934), 178 (and for all election returns through 1932).

³⁹The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County*, 110.

⁴⁰The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County*, 68.

1908–Coles County, presidential election returns: William H. Taft (R), 4,288; William J. Bryan (D), 3,957; Prohibition & Socialist, 287.

1910s

1912–Coles County, presidential election returns: Taft (R), 2,263; Woodrow Wilson (D), 3,453; Progressive, Socialist, Prohibition, 2,710.

1914-1918–World War I

1916–Coles County, presidential election returns: Charles E. Hughes (R), 8,314; Wilson (D), 7,772; Socialist & Prohibition, 265.

1920s

1920–Coles County, presidential election returns: Warren G. Harding (R), 8,563; James M. Cox (D), 5,811; Socialist & Farmer-Labor, 200.

June 3, 1921–Four-year program created and Eastern Normal School becomes Eastern Illinois State Teachers College.

1924–Coles County, presidential election returns: Calvin Coolidge (R), 8,342; John W. Davis (D), 5,544; Progressive & Socialist, 1,308.

1928–Coles County, presidential election returns: Herbert Hoover (R), 11,479; Alfred E. Smith (D), 5,071; Socialist & Communist, 57.

1929-1945–The Great Depression & New Deal America

1930s

1932–Coles County, presidential election returns: Hoover (R):7,313; Franklin Delano Roosevelt (D), 11,081; Socialist & Communist, 165.

1936–Coles County, presidential election returns: Alfred Landon (R), 8,800; FDR (D), 11,931; Socialist & Communist, 137.⁴¹

1939-1945–World War II

1940s

⁴¹Richard M. Scammon, ed., *America at the Polls: A Handbook of American Presidential Election Statistics, 1920-1964* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965), 128-34 (and for all election returns through 1964).

1940–Coles County, presidential election returns: Wendell Wilkie (R), 10,528; FDR (D), 11,409; Socialist & Prohibition, 77.

1944–Coles County, presidential election returns: Thomas Dewey (R), 9,473; FDR (D), 8,936; Socialist & Prohibition, 54.

1945-1975–The Age of Abundance

1947, July 21,–Eastern Illinois State Teachers College becomes Eastern Illinois State College.

1948–Coles County, presidential election returns: Thomas Dewey (R), 8,638; Harry S. Truman (D), 8,393; Socialist & Prohibition, 53.

1950s

1952–Coles County, presidential election returns: Dwight D. Eisenhower (R), 12,660; Adlai S. Stevenson (D), 7,876; Socialist Labor, 20.

1954-1975–Vietnam War

1956–Coles County, presidential election returns: Eisenhower (R):, 12,436; Stevenson (D), 7,569; Socialist Labor, 10.

1957–Eastern Illinois State College becomes Eastern Illinois University.

1960s

1960–Coles County, presidential election returns: Richard Milhouse Nixon (R), 12,166; John F. Kennedy (D), 8,629; Socialist Labor, 19.

1964–Coles County, presidential election returns: Barry Goldwater (R):, 8,878; Lyndon Baines Johnson (D), 11,377.

1968–Coles County, presidential election returns: R. M. Nixon (R), 10,449; Hubert Humphrey (D), 7,337; George Wallace (American Independent), 1,973; Socialist-Labor, 7.⁴²

1970s

1972–Coles County, presidential election returns: Nixon (R), 13,681; George S. McGovern (D), 7,988; Socialist Labor & Communist, 82.

⁴²Richard M. Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray, eds., *America at the Polls 2: A Handbook of American Presidential Election Statistics, 1968-1984* (Washington: Election Research Center, 1988), 156-66 (and for all election returns through 1984).

1975-2000—Contemporary America

1976—Coles County, presidential election returns: Gerald Ford (R), 11,021; Jimmy Carter (D), 8,639; Independent, Socialist, Communist & Libertarian, 502.

1980s

1980—Coles County, presidential election returns: Ronald Reagan (R), 11,994; Jimmy Carter (D), 6,743; Independent, Socialist, Citizens, Communist, Workers World & Libertarian, 1,934.

1984—Coles County, presidential election returns: Ronald Reagan (R), 14,044; Walter Mondale (D), 7,156; Independent, Socialist Workers, Libertarian, & Communist, 95.

1990s

2000s