

# The Capitalists Who Supported Lincoln's Rise and Demanded His Fall

by Don Thomas

According to the Ford's Theatre Museum in Washington D.C., over 16,000 books have been written about Abraham Lincoln. Despite this immense volume of literature, only one book has ever documented the accomplices who helped John Wilkes Booth assassinate Lincoln: [\*The Reason Lincoln Had to Die\*](#).

Lincoln's assassination was ordered by a coalition of men within the United States government, and not (as everyone in America is taught to believe) by persons associated with the Confederacy. Lincoln was determined to allow Southern representatives to return to Congress after the Civil War ended. To control the majority vote in Congress Lincoln had to be removed from office.

The investigation into the assassination and the conspiracy trial were both conducted by the very people responsible for Lincoln's murder. Three of the four who were convicted and hanged had no involvement in killing Lincoln, but (at worst) had been only would-be kidnappers.

The investigating team under the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and his military judges in the conspiracy trial all knew the double agent working for Stanton ([James Donaldson](#)) who provided Booth the plan to attack Lincoln and Seward. They all worked together with the Secretary of War to hide evidence and execute defenseless victims in order to cover their own assassination plot. The evidence and double agents who have been hidden from the American public for almost 150 years is now revealed with unquestionable, documented proof. However, the reason Lincoln had to die involved more than just those who plotted his assassination, but those who would profit from it. Therefore, I am presenting this basic, condensed back-story about the railroad industrialists behind the rise and fall of Abraham Lincoln.

## **California, 1849: *The Rush Is On!***

Years before the Civil War began, the discovery of gold in California inspired a political revelation. The idea to build an overland route to connect the far western gold fields of California to the eastern bankers triggered a merger between private enterprise and government subsidies. Tycoons from the industrial Northeast competed against large-scale plantation barons in the South over building a transcontinental railroad, either in the North or in the South. But for any region of the Union (industrial or agricultural) to gain the advantage of government assistance they first had to win the Congressional majority vote, and preferably presidential loyalty. After the Kansas-Nebraska Act was signed into law (providing an advantage to agricultural states) the territory of Kansas

would become the center of this “war between the states,” and during the effort to have that *federal law* repealed, the Republican Party was born.

The biggest obstacle in building the railroad through the north was crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the northern industrial capitalists would need federal funding to finance such a mammoth project. In 1859 William T. Sherman wrote his brother:

I now assert my belief that the great railroad will not receive enough net profit to pay interest on its cost. [...] It is a work of giants, and Uncle Sam is the only giant I know who can or should grapple with the subject.<sup>[1]</sup>

These northern capitalists would band together and support Abraham Lincoln's first election, but these same men would later form a coalition to keep him from serving a second term.

Two years before Lincoln was elected president of the United States he could not even win the Senate seat in his own state of Illinois against the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Stephen Douglas. Lincoln's rapid rise as leader of the Republican Party began as a direct result of financial backing from some very wealthy railroad executives.

## The Eastern Railroad Executives

**Thomas C. Durant** began his long, influential career as a Chicago broker for the Rock Island Railroad, while also director of his family's grain exporting company out of New York. Durant was just one of many northeastern capitalists who had political insiders he could call on for government assistance in his many corporate ventures. His early political arsenal included Senator **John A. Dix** from New York and a persuasive defense lawyer from Illinois named **Abraham Lincoln**. In the 1850s, Lincoln was hired by Durant and other railroad executives to defend the railroad companies against lawsuits and charges of tax evasion. Durant would become the driving force behind the Union Pacific Railroad with the express purpose to build the transcontinental railroad, running west from Omaha to join the Central Pacific Railroad running east from Sacramento. The Union Pacific Railroad Company was formed from a merger of the Rock Island, M&M, and Illinois Central railroad companies.



**John A. Dix** also supported Lincoln's first election. Dix rose to prominence as a figurehead president of the M&M Railroad Company, *all the while under the direction of Thomas Durant*. Dix was appointed United States Treasury Secretary after **Howell Cobb** resigned to join the Confederate government in 1861. John Dix quickly stabilized the Treasury after the tariff tax revenues from the Southern states suddenly ended. Dix was appointed Major General for the Union Army and maintained a very active role in New York politics throughout the Civil War.

**Henry Farnam** was a congressional lobbyist, Connecticut railroad merchant, and business partner with Thomas Durant. Together they created the M&M railroad company to run the first leg of the northern railroad line from Davenport, Iowa, to Council Bluffs on the Missouri River. In 1856 the M&M railroad company built the first government bridge that would cross the Mississippi River and link up with the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad line. This bridge was the beginning of the first phase of creating a transcontinental railroad system.

In 1859 Abraham Lincoln and a young railroad surveyor, **Grenville Dodge**, both purchased investment property along the Platte River Valley, speculating that the transcontinental eastern terminus would win government approval at that location. On November 4, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln issued his executive approval to Thomas Durant, allowing the Union Pacific Railroad to begin their eastern terminus at Omaha, through the same location where Lincoln and Dodge had cleverly invested in land five years earlier.

Grenville Dodge was a railroad engineer, surveyor, investor, land speculator, and business associate with Abraham Lincoln. Dodge became a Major General in the Union Army, appointed head of the Western division of the Secret Service, and he advised President Lincoln to call on Thomas Durant to create the Union Pacific Railroad Company to finish the eastern leg of the transcontinental railroad.

**Mason Brayman** was president of the Illinois Central Railroad Company and became the social escort for presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln during his 1860 campaign in New York. Brayman was just one of several railroad executives present when Lincoln gave his Cooper Union campaign speech in New York. Lincoln promised, if elected, he would nullify the Kansas-Nebraska Act, saying:

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end *dare* to do our duty as we understand it.

After that speech the northern transcontinental railroad investors were assured that "President" Lincoln would, without question, force an end to the federal law of the Kansas-Nebraska Act without Congressional approval, and bring Kansas into the Union as a Republican majority, slave-free state.

Before the "bloody" Kansas territory became a state, the Federal government owned nearly every acre of land north of Kansas, between the Missouri River and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. By the end of The War Between the States, the majority of that land,

all its timber and minerals, belonged to the railroad companies, and the federal property that was yet unclaimed would belong to whomever could solicit the most votes. After May, 1861, the Confederate states had no congressional votes over this competition for unclaimed territory.

*Other political backers for Abraham Lincoln's first term:*

**Henry C. Whitney:** attorney for the Illinois Central Railroad Company.

**Norman Judd:** attorney for the Rock Island Railroad Company.

**Moses H. Grinnell:** Railroad investor from New York.

**Hiram Barney** and **Charles C. Nott:** political campaign sponsors and organizers for New York patronage.

## **The Western Railroad Executives**

**Theodore D. Judah** was a lobbyist for congressional railroad legislation and founder of the Central Pacific, but he died a young man in 1863.

**John C. Frémont** began his career as an army explorer assigned to find a railroad route through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Frémont became a Senator from Sacramento, California, where the terminus would begin for the Central Pacific Railroad heading east. He was nominated to be the first Republican presidential candidate, but he lost to the Democrat James Buchanan.

When Frémont became the 1856 Republican nominee, **William T. Sherman** took his place as explorer for the transcontinental railroad route through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Sherman was one of several Major Generals in the Union Army who aggressively destroyed the railroads, bridges, homes, businesses, crops and the overall infrastructure in the Southern states, mostly during the last months of the Civil War.

Frémont was also a Major General in the Union Army, but he criticized Lincoln's administration and challenged Lincoln for the 1864 presidential Republican nomination, as did **Salmon P. Chase**. Fremont's political backers were Congressman **Henry Winter Davis**, Senator **Benjamin Wade** (coauthors of the Wade-Davis Bill that Lincoln vetoed), along with Senator **Zachariah Chandler**, who was also very critical of President Lincoln.

The "Big Four" of the Central Pacific Railroad Company were **Leland Stanford**, governor of California; **Charles Crocker** and **Mark Hopkins**, investors for the transcontinental northern route; and **Collis Porter Huntington**, a wealthy capitalist, appointed president of the Central Pacific. These men were competing against the Union Pacific in the east over the lucrative government subsidies provided in the 1862 and 1864 railroad legislation.

**Oakes Ames** was a Massachusetts business tycoon, and he loaned C. P. Huntington \$200,000 to start the Central Pacific Railroad Company. Ames was elected to Congress and served on the House committee to amend the 1862 Pacific Railroad Bill (land grants, timber and mining subsidies doubled in his 1864 amendment). Regarding this legislation, **C. P. Huntington** wrote:

[T]he 150 mile limit ought not to have gone into the bill, but I said to Mr. Union Pacific, when I saw it, I would take that out as soon as I wanted it out.[2]

Two years later Huntington, through his congressional influence, did just that.

## **Lincoln Honors His Obligation (to a point)**

Lincoln's payback to the railroad men who supported his first election was to ensure that the transcontinental railroad line would run from Sacramento to Chicago. Lincoln honored his obligation to his political supporters who helped him win the election, however he refused to be their puppet president.[3] His first-term policy was to restore the Union he himself had broken by unconstitutionally nullifying the Kansas-Nebraska Act. This act had been approved by both houses of Congress and signed into law by Democrat President Franklin Pierce, and there were not enough votes to have it legally repealed.

In Lincoln's view, the sole purpose for breaking the Constitution was to stop the escalation of slavery into the Western territories of the United States. However, he would not agree to strip the slave states of their Congressional representation like he was warned he should do by the architects of his assassination (see [\*The Reason Lincoln Had to Die\*](#), chapters 4, 5 and 8).

Lincoln's policy toward abolishing slavery in the United States was to use constitutional means, while calling for government subsidies to share the cost. President Lincoln argued throughout his entire tenure for compensation to cover the tremendous financial deficit emancipation would leave in the economies of the Union slave states as well as the Southern states. But the northeastern capitalists who put him in office would have no part of sharing any expense or responsibility for the social and economic burdens immediate abolition would create in the former slave states.

**Ulysses S. Grant** also had a close association with the northern railroad capitalists. He became a Major General in the Union Army and was later promoted to Lieutenant General. Grant, too, advocated a scorched earth policy to destroy the infrastructure in the Southern states. His motive for causing such devastation in the South had nothing to do with passing emancipation. During the entire Civil War, there were no Confederate Representatives in the U.S. Congress to block an amendment making slavery unconstitutional throughout North America. On December 6, 1864, President Lincoln complained, during his *last* State of the Union Address to Congress, that the House of Representatives still did not have enough votes to even *propose* a 13th Amendment. Slavery remained legal in the United States until the Constitution was amended eight

months after Lincoln had been assassinated. The true reason (by the northeast capitalists) for the Civil War had always been to win congressional votes on government subsidies, not total emancipation. Well before the day Lincoln was assassinated slavery was defunct.[4]

The Northeastern industrialists feared that if the Civil War were to end while Lincoln was still President, he would do as he promised to do—allow the Southern states back into Congress and return all Southern confiscated property to their legal owners.[5] With Lincoln as President, the agricultural South would rejoin the Northwestern corn and wheat belt states in the pre-Civil War competition with the Northeast industrialists over government subsidies.

Less than three months before he was assassinated, Lincoln switched sides and appointed Oakes Ames to replace Thomas Durant as the new director to finish the westward transcontinental line, linking Chicago to Sacramento. Lincoln told Ames:

If the subsidies provided are not enough to build a road, ask double and you shall have it.[6]

Durant was so mad at Lincoln he could kill him.

In order for the industrial north to dominate legislation on taxes and spending, Lincoln had to be removed from office to keep the agricultural South (which would vote with the Democrat Northwest) out of Congress.

## **The Architects of Lincoln's Assassination**

*([The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#) details the involvement of the men listed below)*

**Salmon P. Chase**, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, later U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice

**Charles Sumner**, U.S. Senator, Massachusetts

**Thaddeus Stevens**, U.S. Representative, Pennsylvania

**Edwin Stanton**, U.S. Secretary of War

*Agents for Stanton's Secret Spy Division*

**Joseph Holt**, U.S. Army Judge Advocate General, War Department Chief Investigator, Chief Prosecutor and Judicial Advisor to the Lincoln Assassination Conspirators' Trial

**Thomas Eckert**, War Department Chief Telegraph Officer

**James McPhail**, Provost Marshal of Baltimore

**Lafayette Baker**, Chief Detective of the Union Intelligence Service

*A Few Known Spies and Informers*

**James Hall, Charles Yates, James Donaldson, Margaret Coleman, Kate Warne [Brown/Thompson], Louis J. Weichmann, Daniel Thomas, William A. Evans, Samuel Thomas, Thomas Harbin, Samuel Cox, Thomas Jones, and John Parker.**

## **Events Following Lincoln's Removal**

After Lincoln's death Durant and Ames fought each other over the Credit Mobilier railroad stock that was being traded for votes on lucrative corporate contracts and government subsidies. In 1866, **Oliver Ames Jr.**, the brother of Oakes, was appointed the new president of the same Union Pacific Railroad Company that Durant had created. All this corruption over the stock and stock recipients led to a criminal investigation by Congress, and both men, Thomas Durant and Oakes Ames fought lawsuits right up until the day they died.

The Civil War and Lincoln's murder were not about freeing the slaves, but about congressional votes over the distribution of federal property. Abolishing “slave power” was to reverse the political advantage previously enjoyed by the agricultural states. The liberty and welfare of the slave population was in truth just a pretense exploited by Lincoln's assassins to achieve political supremacy. Two days before Lincoln was shot to death, he was given his last warning to keep the South out of Congress and to mandate voting rights to former slaves in the South, which he refused to do.[7]

The battle over congressional votes has never ended, and understanding the reason Lincoln had to die is as relevant today as it was the day they killed him.

After Andrew Johnson's term ended in political disaster, Grant was elected the next United States president. Grant's two-term administrations are most remembered for introducing a new era of runaway corporate greed driving government corruption.

*Below is a list of Northeastern Republican Congressmen who exchanged legislative votes for Credit Mobilier stock offered by corporate lobbyists over the public interest:*

- **Samuel Hooper**, Massachusetts Congressman
- **John B. Ally**, Massachusetts Congressman
- **James Wilson Grimes**, Iowa Congressman
- **Benjamin M. Boyer**, Pennsylvania Congressman
- **Schuyler Colfax**, Vice President and Speaker of the House
- **Henry Wilson**, Vice President from Massachusetts
- **James Garfield**, Ohio Congressman. Garfield was the second United States President to be assassinated (shot in a railroad station). The assassin pleaded insanity, but was convicted and hanged.

- **James W. Patterson**, New Hampshire Congressman
- **Henry Laurens Dawes**, Massachusetts Congressman
- **John A. Bingham**, Ohio Congressman (and a judge advocate in the Lincoln conspiracy trial)
- **John A. Logan**, Illinois Congressman (Lincoln's former law partner)
- **William B. Allison**, Iowa Congressman
- **James F. Wilson**, Iowa Congressman
- **William D. Kelly**, Pennsylvania Congressman
- **G. W. Schofield**, Pennsylvania Congressman

One lone Democrat, **James Brooks** from New York, bought stocks in his son's name. He was the only one punished by Congress.

Corporate lobbyists are still some of the highest paid, and most influential people in Washington today.

The powerful men behind the infamous act of John Wilkes Booth can finally be known. As of the posting of this article, I have not yet been made aware of a single person in the former Confederate government who was involved in Lincoln's murder.

### *Footnotes*

[1] Rhodes, Lynne and Kenneth E. Vose Mayer. *Makin' tracks: The Story of the Transcontinental Railroad in the Pictures and Words of the Men Who Were There*. Westport: Praeger, 1975, p. 12.

[2] Rhodes and Vose Mayer, p. 19.

[3] [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#), p. 38 [[RLHD: Large Print Edition](#), p. 38].

[4] Basler, Roy P., editor. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume VIII*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953, pp. 386-87; also see [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#), p. 36 [[LPE](#), p. 36].

[5] Such were the contents of Lincoln's "Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction" (a.k.a. the "Ten Percent Plan"), December, 1863, principles which he reiterated on the day of his assassination during his final Cabinet meeting (Welles, Gideon. "Lincoln and Johnson." *The Galaxy Magazine*, April, 1872. p. 526); also see [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#), chapter 8.

[6] Ambrose, Stephen E. *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 132.

[7] Letter from Salmon P. Chase to President Lincoln, April 12, 1865 (Basler, pp. 399-401); also see [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#), chapter 5.

