

= William H. Seward =

William Henry Seward ( May 16 , 1801 ? October 10 , 1872 ) was United States Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869 , and earlier served as Governor of New York and United States Senator . A determined opponent of the spread of slavery in the years leading up to the American Civil War , he was a dominant figure in the Republican Party in its formative years . Although regarded as the leading contender for the party 's presidential nomination in 1860 , he was defeated by Abraham Lincoln .

Seward was born in southeastern New York , where his father , a farmer , owned slaves . He became educated as a lawyer , moving to the Central New York town of Auburn . Seward was elected to the New York State Senate in 1830 as an Anti @-@ Mason . Four years later , he became the Whig Party 's gubernatorial nominee . Though he was not successful in that race , Seward was elected governor in 1838 , winning a second two @-@ year term in 1840 . During this period , he signed several laws advancing the rights and opportunities for black residents , as well as guaranteeing fugitive slaves jury trials in the state , protecting abolitionists , and using his position to intervene in cases of free blacks enslaved in the South .

After several years practicing law in Auburn , he was elected by the state legislature to the U.S. Senate in 1849 . Seward 's strong stances and provocative words against slavery brought him hatred in the South . He was re @-@ elected to the Senate in 1855 , and soon joined the nascent Republican Party , becoming one of its leading figures . As the 1860 presidential election cycle approached , he was regarded as the leading candidate for the Republican nomination . Several factors , including attitudes to his vocal opposition to slavery , his support for immigrants and Catholics , and his association with editor and political boss Thurlow Weed , combined to defeat him . Although devastated by his loss , he campaigned for Lincoln , who was elected , and who appointed him Secretary of State .

Seward did his best to stop the southern states from seceding ; once that failed , he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the Union cause . His firm stance against foreign intervention in the Civil War helped deter Britain and France from entering the conflict and possibly gaining the independence of the Confederate States . He was one of the targets of the 1865 assassination plot that killed Lincoln , and was seriously wounded by conspirator Lewis Powell . Seward remained loyally at his post through the presidency of Andrew Johnson , during which he achieved the Alaska purchase . His contemporary Carl Schurz described Seward as " one of those spirits who sometimes will go ahead of public opinion instead of tamely following its footprints . " .

= = Early life = =

Seward was born in the small community of Florida , New York , in Orange County , on May 16 , 1801 , the third son of Samuel Sweezy Seward and his wife Mary ( Jennings ) Seward . Samuel Seward was a wealthy landowner and slaveholder in New York State ; slavery was not fully abolished until 1827 . Florida , located some 60 miles ( 97 km ) from New York City and west of the Hudson River , was a small rural village of perhaps a dozen homes . Young Seward attended school there , and also in the nearby county seat of Goshen . He was a bright student and enjoyed his studies . In later years , one of the former family slaves would relate that instead of running away from school to go home , Seward would run away from home to go to school .

At the age of 15 , Henry ( he was known by his middle name as a boy ) was sent to Union College in Schenectady , New York . Admitted to the sophomore class , Seward became a star student , elected to Phi Beta Kappa . Samuel Seward kept his son short on cash , and in December 1818 , in the middle of Henry 's final year at Union , the two quarreled about money . The younger Seward returned to Schenectady , but soon left school in company with a fellow student , Alvah Wilson . The two took ship from New York to Georgia , where Wilson had been offered a job in rural Putnam County as rector , or principal , of a new academy . En route , Wilson took a job at another school , leaving Seward to continue on to Eatonton in Putnam County . The trustees interviewed the 17 @-@ year @-@ old Seward , and found his qualifications acceptable .

Seward enjoyed his time in Georgia , where he was accepted as an adult for the first time in his life . He was treated hospitably , but also witnessed the ill @-@ treatment of slaves . Seward was persuaded to return to New York by his family , and did so in June 1819 . As it was too late for him to graduate with his class , he studied law at an attorney 's office in Goshen before returning to Union College , securing his degree with highest honors in June 1820 .

= = Lawyer and state senator = =

= = = Early career and involvement in politics = = =

After graduation , Seward spent much of the following two years studying law in Goshen and New York City with attorneys John Duer , John Anthon and Ogden Hoffman . He passed the bar examination in late 1822 . He could have practiced in Goshen , but disliked the town , and sought a practice in growing Western New York . Seward decided upon Auburn in Cayuga County , about 150 miles ( 240 km ) west of Albany , and 200 miles ( 320 km ) northwest of Goshen . He joined the practice of retired judge Elijah Miller , whose daughter Frances Adeline Miller was a classmate of his sister Cornelia at Emma Willard 's Troy Female Seminary . Seward married Frances Miller on October 20 , 1824 .

In 1824 , while Seward was journeying with his wife to Niagara Falls , one of the wheels on his carriage was damaged while they passed through Rochester . Among those who came to their aid was local newspaper publisher Thurlow Weed . Seward and Weed would become closer in the years ahead as they found they shared a belief that government policies should promote infrastructure improvements , such as roads and canals . Weed , deemed by some one of the earliest political bosses , would become a major ally of Seward . Despite the benefits to Seward 's career of such a supporter , perceptions that Seward was too much controlled by Weed became a factor in the former 's defeat for the Republican nomination for president in 1860 .

Almost from the time he settled in Auburn , Seward involved himself in politics . At that time , the political system was in flux as new parties evolved . In New York State , there were generally two factions , which went by varying names , but were characterized by the fact that Martin Van Buren led one element , and the other opposed him . Van Buren , over a quarter century , held a series of senior posts , generally in the federal government . His allies were dubbed the Albany Regency , as they governed for Van Buren while he was away .

Seward originally supported the Regency , but by 1824 had broken from it , concluding it was corrupt . He became part of the Anti @-@ Masonic Party , which became widespread in 1826 after the disappearance and death of William Morgan , a Mason in Upstate New York ; he was most likely killed by fellow Masons for publishing a book revealing the order 's secret rites . Since the leading candidate in opposition to President John Quincy Adams was General Andrew Jackson , a Mason who mocked opponents of the order , Anti @-@ Masonry became closely associated with opposition to Jackson , and to his policies once he was elected president in 1828 .

Governor DeWitt Clinton had nominated Seward as Cayuga County Surrogate in late 1827 or early 1828 , but as Seward was unwilling to support Jackson , he was not confirmed by the state Senate . During the 1828 campaign , Seward made speeches in support of President Adams ' re @-@ election . Seward was nominated for the federal House of Representatives by the Anti @-@ Masons , but withdrew , deeming the fight hopeless . In 1829 , Seward was offered the local nomination for New York State Assembly , but again felt there were no prospects of winning . In 1830 , with Weed 's aid , he gained the Anti @-@ Masonic nomination for state senator for the local district . Seward had appeared in court throughout the district , and had spoken in favor of government support for infrastructure improvements , a position popular there . Weed had moved his operations to Albany , where his newspaper , the Albany Evening Journal , advocated for Seward , who was elected by about 2 @, @ 000 votes .

= = = State senator and gubernatorial candidate = = =

Seward was sworn in as state senator in January 1831 . He left Frances and their children in Auburn , and wrote to her of his experiences . These included meeting former vice president Aaron Burr , who had returned to practicing law in New York following a self @-@ imposed exile in Europe after his duel with Alexander Hamilton and treason trial . The Regency ( or the Democrats , as the national party led by Jackson and supported by Van Buren was becoming known ) controlled the Senate . Seward and his party allied with dissident Democrats and others to pass some legislation , including penal reform measures , for which Seward would become known .

During his term as state senator , Seward traveled extensively , going to visit other anti @-@ Jackson leaders , including former president Adams . He also accompanied his father Samuel Seward on a trip to Europe , where they met the political men of the day . Seward hoped that the Anti @-@ Masons would nominate Supreme Court Justice John McLean for president against Jackson 's re @-@ election bid in 1832 , but the nomination fell to former Attorney General William Wirt . Kentucky Senator Henry Clay , an opponent of Jackson , was a Mason , and thus unacceptable as party standard @-@ bearer . In the aftermath of Jackson 's easy victory , many of those who opposed him believed a united front necessary to defeat the Democrats , and the Whig Party gradually came into being . The Whigs believed in legislative action to develop the country , and opposed Jackson 's unilateral actions as president , which they deemed imperial . Many Anti @-@ Masons , including Seward and Weed , readily joined the new party .

In preparation for the 1834 election , New York 's Whigs met in Utica to determine a gubernatorial candidate . Democratic Governor William Marcy was heavily favored to be re @-@ elected , and few prominent Whigs were anxious to run a campaign which would most likely be lost . Seward 's wife and father wanted him to retire from politics to increase the income from his law practice , and Weed urged him to seek re @-@ election to the state Senate . Nevertheless , the reluctance of others to run caused Seward to emerge as a major candidate . Weed procured Seward 's triumph at the Utica convention . The election turned on national issues , most importantly President Jackson 's policies . These were then popular , and in a strong year for Democrats , Seward was defeated by some 11 @,@ 000 votes ? Weed wrote that the Whigs were overwhelmed by illegally cast ballots .

Defeated for governor and with his term in the state Senate having expired , Seward returned to Auburn and the practice of law at the start of 1835 . That year , Seward and his wife undertook a lengthy trip , going as far south as Virginia . Although they were hospitably received by southerners , the Sewards saw scenes of slavery which confirmed them as its opponents . The following year , Seward accepted a position as agent for the new owners of the Holland Land Company , which owned huge tracts of land in Western New York , upon which many settlers were purchasing real estate on installment . The new owners were viewed as less forgiving landlords than the old , and when there was unrest , they hired Seward , popular in Western New York , in hopes of adjusting the matter . He was successful , and when the Panic of 1837 began , persuaded the owners to avoid foreclosures where possible . He also , in 1838 , arranged the purchase of the company 's holdings by a consortium that included himself .

Van Buren had been elected president in 1836 ; even with his duties , Seward had found time to campaign against him . The economic crisis came soon after the inauguration , and threatened the Regency 's control of New York politics . Seward had not run for governor in 1836 , but with the Democrats unpopular , saw a path to victory in 1838 ( the term was then two years ) . Other prominent Whigs also sought the nomination . Weed persuaded delegates to the convention that Seward had run ahead of other Whig candidates in 1834 ; Seward was nominated on the fourth ballot . Seward 's opponent was again Marcy , and the economy the principal issue . The Whigs argued that the Democrats were responsible for the recession . As it was thought improper for candidates for major office to campaign in person , Seward left most of that to Weed . Seward was elected by a margin of about 10 @,@ 000 votes out of 400 @,@ 000 cast . The victory was the most significant for the Whig Party to that point , and put the Regency permanently out of power in New York State .

= = Governor of New York = =

William Seward was sworn in as New York 's governor on January 1 , 1839 , inaugurated in front of a crowd of jubilant Whigs . In that era , the annual message by the New York governor was published and discussed to an extent that only a president 's would be today . Seward biographer Walter Stahr wrote that his address " brimmed with his youth , energy , ambition , and optimism " . Seward took note of America 's great unexploited resources , and stated that immigration should be encouraged in order to take advantage of them . He urged that citizenship and religious liberty be granted to those who came to New York 's shores . At the time , New York City 's public schools were run by a Protestant group , and used Protestant texts , including the King James Bible . Seward believed the current system was a barrier to literacy for immigrants ' children , and proposed legislation to change it . Education , he stated , " banishes the distinctions , old as time , of rich and poor , master and slave . It banishes ignorance and lays axe to the root of crime " . Seward 's stance was popular among immigrants , but was disliked by nativists ; their opposition would eventually help defeat his bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860 .

Although the Assembly had a Whig majority at the start of Seward 's first term as governor , the party had only 13 legislators out of 32 in the state Senate . The Democrats refused to co -operate with Governor Seward except on the most urgent matters , and he initially found himself unable to advance much of his agenda . Accordingly , the 1839 legislative elections were crucial to Seward 's legislative hopes , and to advancing the nominations of many Whigs to state office whose posts required Senate confirmation . Both Seward and President Van Buren gave several speeches across New York State that summer . Henry Clay , one of the hopefuls for the Whig nomination for president , spent part of the summer in Upstate New York , and the two men met by chance on a ferry . Seward refused to formally visit Clay at his vacation home in Saratoga Springs in the interests of neutrality , beginning a difficult relationship between the two men . After the 1839 election , the Whigs had 19 seats , allowing the party full control of state government .

Following the election , there was unrest near Albany among tenant farmers on the land owned by Dutch @-@ descended patroons of the van Rensselaer family . These tenancies allowed the landlords privileges such as enlisting the unpaid labor of tenants , and any breach could result in termination of tenure without compensation for improvements . When sheriff 's deputies in Albany County were obstructed from serving eviction writs , Seward was asked to call out the militia . After an all @-@ night cabinet meeting , he did so , though quietly assuring the tenants that he would intervene with the legislature . This mollified the settlers , though Seward proved unable to get the legislature to pass reforming laws . This question of tenants ' rights was not settled until after Seward had left office .

In September 1839 , a ship sailing from Norfolk , Virginia to New York City had been discovered to have an escaped slave on board . The slave was returned to his owner pursuant to the Fugitive Slave Clause of the Constitution , but Virginia also demanded that three free black sailors , said to have concealed the fugitive aboard ship , be surrendered to its custody . This Seward would not do , and the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation inhibiting trade with New York . With Seward 's encouragement , the New York legislature passed acts in 1840 protecting the rights of African Americans against Southern slave @-@ catchers . One guaranteed alleged fugitive slaves the right of a jury trial in New York to establish whether they were slaves , and another pledged the aid of the state to recover free blacks kidnapped into slavery ( as happened to Solomon Northup of Saratoga Springs in 1841 , who did not regain freedom until 1853 . )

Both Seward and Van Buren were up for re @-@ election in 1840 . Seward did not attend the December 1839 Whig National Convention in Harrisburg , Pennsylvania , but Weed did on his behalf . They were determined to support General Winfield Scott for president , but when Weed concluded Scott could not win , he threw New York 's support to the eventual winner , General William Henry Harrison . This action outraged supporters of Senator Clay . These grievances would not be quickly forgotten ? one supporter of the Kentuckian wrote in 1847 that he was intent on seeing the " punishment of Seward & Co. for defrauding the country of Mr. Clay in 1840 " .

Seward was renominated for a second term by the Whig convention against Democrat William Brock , a former state legislator . Seward did not campaign in person , but ran affairs with Weed

behind the scenes and made his views known to voters through a Fourth of July speech and lengthy letters , declining invitations to speak , printed in the papers . In one , Seward expounds upon the importance of the log cabin ? a structure evoking the common man and a theme that the Whigs used heavily in the national campaign ? where Seward had always found a far warmer welcome than in the marble palaces of the well @-@ to @-@ do ( evoking the aristocratic Van Buren ) . Both Harrison and Seward were elected . Although Seward would serve another almost thirty years in public life , his name would never again pass before the voters .

In his second term , Seward was involved with the trial of Alexander McLeod , who had boasted of involvement in the 1837 Caroline Affair , in which Canadians came across the Niagara River and sank the Caroline , a steamboat being used to supply William Lyon Mackenzie 's fighters during the Upper Canada Rebellion . McLeod was arrested , but the British Foreign Minister , Lord Palmerston , demanded his release . McLeod , who was part of the Canadian colonial militia , could not be held responsible for actions taken under orders . Although the Van Buren administration had agreed with Seward that McLeod should be tried under state law , its successor did not , and urged that charges against McLeod be dropped . A series of testy letters were exchanged between Governor Seward and Harrison 's Secretary of State Daniel Webster , and also between the governor and the new president John Tyler , who succeeded on Harrison 's death after a month in office . McLeod was tried and acquitted in late 1841 . Stahr pointed out that Seward got his way in having McLeod tried in state court , and the diplomatic experience served him well as Secretary of State .

Seward continued his support of African Americans , signing legislation in 1841 to repeal a " nine @-@ month law " that allowed slaveholders to bring their slaves into the state for a period of nine months before they were considered free . After this , slaves brought to the state were immediately considered freed . Seward also signed legislation to establish public education for all children , leaving it up to local jurisdictions as to how that would be supplied ( some had segregated schools ) .

= = Out of office = =

As governor , Seward incurred considerable personal debt not only because he had to live beyond his salary to maintain the lifestyle expected of the office , but also because he could not pay down his obligation from the land company purchase . At the time he left office , he owed \$ 200 @, @ 000 . Returning to Auburn , he absorbed himself in a profitable law practice . He did not abandon politics , and received former president Adams at the Seward family home in 1843 .

According to his biographer , John M. Taylor , Seward picked a good time to absent himself from electoral politics , as the Whig Party was in turmoil . President Tyler , a former Democrat , and Senator Clay each claimed leadership of the Whig Party and , as the two men differed over such issues as whether to re @-@ establish the Bank of the United States , party support was divided . The abolitionist movement attracted those who did not want to be part of a party led by slavery @-@ supporting southerners . In 1844 , Seward was asked to run for president by members of the Liberty Party ; he declined and reluctantly supported the Whig nominee , Clay . The Kentuckian was defeated by Democrat James K. Polk . The major event of Polk 's administration was the Mexican ? American War ; Seward did not support this , feeling that the price in blood was not worth the increase in territory , especially as southerners were promoting this acquisition to expand territory for slavery .

In 1846 Seward became the center of controversy in Auburn when he defended , in separate cases , two felons accused of murder . Henry Wyatt , a white man , was charged with fatally stabbing a fellow inmate in prison ; William Freeman , an African American , was accused of breaking into a house after his release and stabbing four people to death . In both cases the defendants were likely mentally ill and had been abused while in prison . Seward , having long been an advocate of prison reform and better treatment for the insane , sought to prevent each man from being executed by using the relatively new defense of insanity . Seward gained a hung jury in Wyatt 's first trial , though he was subsequently convicted in a retrial and executed despite Seward 's efforts to secure clemency . Freeman was convicted , though Seward gained a reversal on appeal . There was no

second Freeman trial , as officials were convinced of his insanity . Freeman died in prison in late 1846 . In the Freeman case , invoking mental illness and racial issues , Seward argued , " he is still your brother , and mine , in form and color accepted and approved by his Father , and yours , and mine , and bears equally with us the proudest inheritance of our race ? the image of our Maker . Hold him then to be a Man . "

Although contentious locally , the trials boosted Seward 's image across the North . He gained further publicity in association with Ohioan Salmon P. Chase when handling the unsuccessful appeal in the United States Supreme Court of John Van Zandt , an anti @-@ slavery advocate sued by a slaveowner for assisting African Americans in escaping on the Underground Railroad . Chase was impressed with Seward , writing that the former New York governor " was one of the very first public men in our country . Who but himself would have done what he did for the poor wretch Freeman ? "

The main Whig contenders in 1848 were Clay again , and two war hero generals with little political experience , Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor . Seward supported the nominee , General Taylor . The former governor was less enthusiastic about the vice @-@ presidential candidate , New York Comptroller Millard Fillmore , a rival of his from Buffalo . Nevertheless , he campaigned widely for the Whigs against the Democratic presidential candidate , former Michigan senator Lewis Cass . The two major parties did not make slavery an issue in the campaign . The Free Soil Party , mostly Liberty Party members and some Northern Democrats , nominated former president Van Buren . The Taylor / Fillmore ticket was elected , and the split in the New York Democratic Party allowed the Whigs to capture the legislature .

State legislatures elected U.S. Senators until the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913 . In 1849 one of New York 's seats was up for election , and a Whig would likely be elected to replace John Adams Dix . Seward , with Weed 's counsel , decided to seek the seat . When legislators convened in January 1849 , he was spoken of as the favorite . Some opposed him as too extreme on slavery issues , and intimated that he would not support the slaveholding President @-@ elect Taylor , a Louisianan . Weed and Seward worked to dispel these concerns , and when the vote for the Senate seat took place , the former governor received five times the vote of the nearest other candidate , gaining easy election on the first ballot .

= = U.S. Senator = =

= = = First term = = =

William Seward was sworn in as senator from New York on March 5 , 1849 , during the brief special session called to confirm President Taylor 's cabinet nominees . Seward was seen as having influence over Taylor : taking advantage of an acquaintance with Taylor 's brother . Seward met with the former general several times before Inauguration Day ( March 4 ) , and was friendly with Cabinet officers . Taylor hoped to gain the admission of California to the Union , and Seward worked to advance his agenda in the Senate .

The regular session of Congress that began in December 1849 was dominated by the issue of slavery . Senator Clay advanced a series of resolutions , which became known as the Compromise of 1850 , giving victories to both North and South . Seward opposed the pro @-@ slavery elements of the Compromise , and in a speech on the Senate floor on March 11 , 1850 invoked a " higher law than the Constitution " . The speech was widely reprinted , and made Seward the leading anti @-@ slavery advocate in the Senate . President Taylor took a stance sympathetic to the North , but his death in July 1850 caused the accession of the pro @-@ Compromise Fillmore and ended Seward 's influence over patronage . The Compromise passed , and many Seward adherents in federal office in New York were replaced by Fillmore appointees .

Although Clay had hoped the Compromise would be a final settlement on the matter of slavery that could unite the nation , it divided his Whig Party , especially when the 1852 Whig National Convention endorsed it to the anger of liberal northerners like Seward . The major candidates for the

presidential nomination were President Fillmore , Senator Daniel Webster , and General Scott . Seward supported Scott , who he hoped like Harrison could unite enough voters behind a military hero to win the election . Scott gained the nomination , and Seward campaigned for him . With the Whigs unable to reconcile over slavery , whereas the Democrats could unite behind the Compromise , the Whigs won only four states , and former New Hampshire senator Franklin Pierce was elected president . Other events , such as the 1852 publication of Uncle Tom 's Cabin and Northern anger over the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act ( an element of the Compromise ) , widened the divide between North and South .

Seward 's wife Frances was deeply committed to the abolitionist movement . In the 1850s , the Seward family opened their Auburn home as a safehouse to fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad . Seward 's frequent travel and political work suggest that it was Frances who played the more active role in Auburn abolitionist activities . In the excitement following the rescue and safe transport of fugitive slave William " Jerry " Henry in Syracuse on October 1 , 1851 , Frances wrote to her husband , " two fugitives have gone to Canada ? one of them our acquaintance John . " Another time she wrote , " A man by the name of William Johnson will apply to you for assistance to purchase the freedom of his daughter . You will see that I have given him something by his book . I told him I thought you would give him more . "

In January 1854 , Democratic Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas introduced his Kansas ? Nebraska Bill . This would permit territories to choose whether to join the Union as free or slave states , and effectively repeal the Missouri Compromise forbidding slavery in new states north of 36 ° 30 ' North latitude . Seward was determined to defeat what he called " this infamous Nebraska Bill " , and worked to ensure the final version of the bill would be unpalatable to enough senators , North and South , to defeat it . Seward spoke against the bill both on initial consideration in the Senate and when the bill returned after reconciliation with the House . The bill passed into law , but northerners felt they had found a standard around which they could rally . Those in the South defended the new law , arguing that they should have an equal stake through slavery in the territories their blood and money had helped secure .

= = = Second term = = =

The political turmoil engendered by the North @-@ South divide not only split both major parties , but led to the founding of new ones . The American Party ( better known as the Know Nothings ) contained many nativists , and pursued an anti @-@ immigrant agenda . The Know Nothings did not publicly discuss party deliberations ( thus , they knew nothing ) . They disliked Seward , and an uncertain number of Know Nothings sought the Whig nomination to legislative seats . Some made clear their stance by pledging to vote against Seward 's re @-@ election , but others did not . Although the Whigs won a majority in both houses of the state legislature , the extent of their support for Seward as US senator was unclear . When the election was held by the legislature in February 1855 , Seward won a narrow majority in each house . The opposition was scattered , and a Know Nothing party organ denounced two dozen legislators as " traitors " .

The Republican Party had been founded in 1854 , in reaction to the Kansas @-@ Nebraska Act . Its anti @-@ slavery stance was attractive to Seward , but he needed the Whig structure in New York to get re @-@ elected . In September 1855 , the New York Whig and Republican parties held simultaneous conventions that quickly merged into one . Seward was the most prominent figure to join the new party , and was spoken of as a possible presidential candidate in 1856 . Weed , however , did not feel that the new party was strong enough on a national level to secure the presidency , and advised Seward to wait until 1860 . When Seward 's name was mentioned at the 1856 Republican National Convention , a huge ovation broke out . In the 1856 presidential election , the Democratic candidate , former Pennsylvania senator James Buchanan , defeated the Republican , former California senator John C. Frémont , and the Know Nothing candidate , former president Fillmore .

The 1856 campaign played out against the backdrop of " Bleeding Kansas " , the violent efforts of pro- and anti @-@ slavery forces to control the government in Kansas Territory and determine

whether it would be admitted as a slave or free state . This violence spilled over into the Senate chamber itself after Republican Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner delivered an incendiary speech against slavery , making personal comments against South Carolina Senator Andrew P. Butler . Sumner had read a draft of the speech to Seward , who had advised him to omit the personal references . Two days after the speech , Butler 's nephew , Congressman Preston Brooks entered the chamber and beat Sumner with a cane , injuring him severely . Although some southerners feared the propaganda value of the incident in the North , most lionized Brooks as a hero . Many northerners were outraged , though some , including Seward , felt that Sumner 's words against Butler had unnecessarily provoked the attack . Some Southern newspapers felt that the Sumner precedent might usefully be applied to Seward ; the Petersburg Intelligencer , a Virginia periodical , suggested that " it will be very well to give Seward a double dose at least every other day " .

In a message to Congress in December 1857 , President Buchanan advocated the admission of Kansas as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution , passed under dubious circumstances . This split the Democrats : the administration wanted Kansas admitted ; Senator Douglas demanded a fair ratification vote . The Senate debated the matter through much of early 1858 , though few Republicans spoke at first , content to watch the Democrats tear their party to shreds over the issue of slavery . The issue was complicated by the Supreme Court 's ruling the previous year in Dred Scott v. Sandford that neither Congress nor a local government could ban slavery in the territories .

In a speech on March 3 in the Senate , Seward " delighted Republican ears and utterly appalled administration Democrats , especially the Southerners " . Discussing Dred Scott , Seward accused Buchanan and Chief Justice Roger B. Taney of conspiring to gain the result , and threatened to reform the courts to eliminate Southern power . Taney later told a friend that if Seward had been elected in 1860 , he would have refused to administer the oath of office . Buchanan reportedly denied the senator access to the White House . Seward predicted slavery was doomed :

The interest of the white races demands the ultimate emancipation of all men . Whether that consummation shall be allowed to take effect , with needful and wise precautions against sudden change and disaster , or be hurried on by violence , is all that remains for you to decide .

Southerners saw this as a threat , by the man deemed the likely Republican nominee in 1860 , to force change on the South whether it liked it or not . Statehood for Kansas failed for the time being , but Seward 's words were repeatedly cited by Southern senators as the secession crisis grew . Nevertheless , Seward remained on excellent personal terms with individual southerners such as Mississippi 's Jefferson Davis . His dinner parties , where those from both sides of the sectional divide mixed and mingled , were a Washington legend .

With an eye to a presidential bid in 1860 , Seward tried to appear a statesman who could be trusted by both North and South . Seward did not believe the federal government could mandate emancipation but that it would develop by action of the slave states as the nation urbanized and slavery became uneconomical , as it had in New York . Southerners still believed that he was threatening the forced end of slavery . While campaigning for Republicans in the 1858 midterm elections , Seward gave a speech at Rochester that proved divisive and quotable , alleging that the U.S. had two " antagonistic system [ that ] are continually coming into closer contact , and collision results . ? It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces , and it means that the United States must and will , sooner or later , become entirely either a slave @-@ holding nation , or entirely a free @-@ labor nation . " White southerners saw the " irrepressible conflict " speech as a declaration of war , and Seward 's vehemence ultimately damaged his chances of gaining the presidential nomination .

= = Election of 1860 = =

= = = Candidate for the nomination = = =

In 1859 , Seward was advised by his political supporters that he would be better off avoiding



additional controversial statements , and left the country for an eight @-@ month tour of Europe and the Middle East . Seward spent two months in London , meeting with the Prime Minister , Lord Palmerston , and was presented at Court to Queen Victoria . Seward returned to Washington in January 1860 to find controversy : that some southerners blamed him for his rhetoric , which they believed had inspired John Brown to try to start a slave insurrection . Brown was captured and executed ; nevertheless , Mississippi representatives Reuben Davis and Otho Singleton each stated that if Seward or another Radical Republican was elected , he would meet with the resistance of a united South . To rebut such allegations , and to set forth his views in the hope of receiving the nomination , Seward made a major speech in the Senate on February 29 , 1860 , which most praised , though white southerners were offended , and some abolitionists also objected because the senator , in his speech , said that Brown was justly punished . The Republican National Committee ordered 250 @,@ 000 copies in pamphlet form , and eventually twice that many were printed .

Weed sometimes expressed certainty that Seward would be nominated ; at other times he expressed gloom at the thought of the convention fight . He had some reason for doubt , as word from Weed 's agents across the country was mixed . Many in the Midwest did not want the issue of slavery to dominate the campaign , and with Seward as nominee , it inevitably would . The Know Nothing Party was still alive in the Northeast , and was hostile to Seward for his pro @-@ immigrant stances , creating doubts as to whether Seward could win Pennsylvania and New Jersey , where there were many nativists , in the general election . These states were crucial to a Republican nominee faced with a Solid South . Conservative factions in the evolving Republican Party opposed Seward .

= = = Convention = = =

There were no primaries in 1860 , no way to be certain how many delegates a candidate might receive . Nevertheless , going into the 1860 Republican National Convention in May in Chicago , Seward was seen as the overwhelming favorite . Others spoken of for the nomination included Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase , former Missouri congressman Edward Bates , and former Illinois congressman Abraham Lincoln .

Seward stayed in Auburn during the convention ; Weed was present on his behalf and worked to shore up Seward 's support . He was amply supplied with money : business owners had eagerly given , expecting Seward to be the next president . Weed 's reputation was not entirely positive ; he was believed corrupt by some , and his association both helped and hurt Seward .

Enemies such as publisher and former Seward ally Horace Greeley cast doubts as to Seward 's electability in the battleground states of Illinois , Indiana , Pennsylvania and New Jersey . Lincoln had worked hard to gain a reputation as a moderate in the party and hoped to be seen as a consensus second choice , who might be successful in those critical states , of which the Republicans had to win three to secure the election . Lincoln 's men , led by his friend David Davis , were active on his behalf . As Lincoln had not been seen as a major candidate , his supporters had been able to influence the decision to hold the convention in his home state , and surrounded the New York delegation , pro @-@ Seward , with Lincoln loyalists . They eventually were successful in gaining the support of the delegations from the other battleground states , boosting delegates ' perceptions of Lincoln 's electability . Although Lincoln and Seward shared many views , Lincoln , out of office since 1849 , had not excited opposition as Seward had in the South and among Know Nothings . Lincoln 's views on nativism , which he opposed , were not public .

On the first ballot , Seward had 173 ½ votes to Lincoln 's 102 , with 233 needed to nominate . Pennsylvania shifted its vote to Lincoln on the second ballot , and Seward 's lead was cut to 184 ½ to 181 . On the third , Lincoln had 231 ½ to Seward 's 180 after the roll call , but Ohio changed four votes from Chase to Lincoln , giving the Illinoian the nomination and starting a small stampede ; the nomination was eventually made unanimous . When word reached Seward by telegraph , by the accounts of witnesses , he calmly remarked that Lincoln had some of the attributes needed to be president , and would certainly be elected .

## = = = Campaigning for Lincoln = = =

Despite his public nonchalance , Seward was devastated by his convention loss , as were many of his supporters . The New Yorker was the best @-@ known and most popular Republican , and his defeat shocked many in the North , who felt that Lincoln had been nominated through chicanery . Although Seward sent a letter stating Weed was not to blame , Seward 's political manager took the defeat hard . Seward was initially inclined to retire from public life , but received many letters from supporters : distrustful of Lincoln , they urged Seward to remain involved in politics . On his way to Washington to return to Senate duties , he stopped in Albany to confer with Weed , who had gone to Lincoln 's home in Springfield , Illinois to meet with the candidate , and had been very impressed at Lincoln 's political understanding . At the Capitol , Seward received sympathy even from sectional foes such as Jefferson Davis .

Lincoln faced three major opponents . A split in the Democratic Party had led northerners to nominate Senator Douglas , while southerners chose Vice President John C. Breckenridge . The Constitutional Union Party selected former Tennessee senator John Bell . As Lincoln would not even be on the ballot in ten southern states , he needed to win almost every northern state to take the presidency . Douglas was said to be strong in Illinois and Indiana , and if he took those , the election might be thrown into the House of Representatives . Seward was urged to undertake a campaign tour of the Midwest in support of Lincoln and did so for five weeks in September and October , attracting huge crowds . He journeyed by rail and boat as far north as Saint Paul , Minnesota , into the border state of Missouri at St. Louis , and even to Kansas Territory , though it had no electoral votes to cast in the election . When the train passed through Springfield , Seward and Lincoln were introduced , with Lincoln appearing " embarrassed " and Seward " constrained " . In his oratory , Seward spoke of the U.S. as a " tower of freedom " , a Union that might even include Canada , Latin America , and Russian America .

New York was key to the election ; a Lincoln loss there would deadlock the Electoral College . Soon after his return from his Midwest tour , Seward embarked on another , across New York State , speaking to large crowds . At Weed 's urging he went to New York City and gave a patriotic speech before a large crowd on November 3 , only three days before the election . On Election Day , Lincoln carried most Northern states , while Breckenridge took the Deep South , Bell three border states , and Douglas won Missouri ? the only state Seward campaigned in that Lincoln did not win . Lincoln was elected .

## = = = Secession crisis = = =

Lincoln 's election had been anticipated in Southern states , and South Carolina and other Deep South states began to call conventions for the purpose of secession . In the North , there was dissent over whether to offer concessions to the South to preserve the Union , and if conciliation failed , whether to allow the South to depart in peace . Seward favored compromise . He had hoped to remain at home until the New Year , but with the deepening crisis left for Washington in time for the new session of Congress in early December .

The usual tradition was for the leading figure of the winning party to be offered the position of Secretary of State , the most senior Cabinet post . Seward was that man and around December 12 , the vice president @-@ elect , Maine Senator Hannibal Hamlin , offered Seward the position on Lincoln 's behalf . At Weed 's advice , Seward was slow to formally accept , doing so on December 28 , 1860 , though well before Inauguration Day , March 4 , 1861 . Lincoln remained in Illinois until mid @-@ February , and he and Seward communicated by letter .

As states in the Deep South prepared to secede in late 1860 , Seward met with important figures from both sides of the sectional divide . Seward introduced a proposed constitutional amendment preventing federal interference with slavery . This was done at Lincoln 's private request ; the president @-@ elect hoped that the amendment , and a change to the Fugitive Slave Act to allow those captured a jury trial , would satisfy both sides . Congressmen introduced many such proposals

, and Seward was appointed to a committee of 13 senators to consider them . Lincoln was willing to guarantee the security of slavery in the states that currently had it , but he rejected any proposal that would allow slavery to expand . It was increasingly clear that the deep South was committed to secession ; the Republican hope was to provide compromises to keep the border slave states in the Union . Seward voted against the Crittenden Compromise on December 28 , but quietly continued to seek a compromise that would keep the border states in the Union .

Seward gave a major speech on January 12 , 1861 . By then , he was known to be Lincoln 's choice as Secretary of State , and with Lincoln staying silent , it was widely expected that he would propound the new administration 's plan to save the Union . Accordingly , he spoke to a crowded Senate , where even Jefferson Davis attended despite Mississippi 's secession , and to packed galleries . He urged the preservation of the Union , and supported an amendment such as the one he had introduced , or a constitutional convention , once passions had cooled . He hinted that New Mexico Territory might be a slave state , and urged the construction of two transcontinental railroads , one northern , one southern . He suggested the passage of legislation to bar interstate invasions such as that by John Brown . Although Seward 's speech was widely applauded , it gained a mixed reaction in the border states to which he had tried to appeal . Radical Republicans were not willing to make concessions to the South , and were angered by the speech . Pennsylvania Congressman Thaddeus Stevens , a radical , warned that if Lincoln like Seward ignored the Republican platform and tried to purchase peace through concessions , he would retire , as too old to bear the years of warfare in the Republican Party that would result .

Lincoln applauded Seward 's speech , which he read in Springfield , but refused to approve any compromise that could lead to a further expansion of slavery . Once Lincoln left Springfield on February 11 , he gave speeches , stating in Indianapolis that it would not be coercing a state if the federal government insisted on retaining or retaking property that belonged to it . This came as the United States Army still held Fort Sumter ; the president @-@ elect 's words upset moderate southerners . Virginia Congressman Sherrard Clemens wrote , " Mr. Lincoln , by his speech in the North , has done vast harm . If he will not be guided by Mr. Seward but puts himself in the hands of Mr. Chase and the ultra [ that is , Radical ] Republicans , nothing can save the cause of the Union in the South . "

Lincoln arrived in Washington , without announcement and incognito , early on the morning of February 23 , 1861 . Seward had been advised by General Winfield Scott that there was a plot to assassinate Lincoln in Baltimore when he passed through the city . Senator Seward sent his son Frederick to warn Lincoln in Philadelphia , and the president @-@ elect decided to travel alone but for well @-@ armed bodyguards . Lincoln travelled without incident , and came to regret his decision as he was widely mocked for it . Later that morning , Seward accompanied Lincoln to the White House , where he introduced the Illinoisan to President Buchanan .

Seward and Lincoln differed over two issues in the days before the inauguration : the composition of Lincoln 's cabinet , and his inaugural address . Given a draft of the address , Seward softened it to make it less confrontational toward the South ; Lincoln accepted many of the changes , though he gave it , according to Seward biographer Glyndon G. Van Deusen , " a simplicity and a poetic quality lacking in Seward 's draft " . The differences regarding the Cabinet revolved around the inclusion of Salmon Chase , a radical . Lincoln wanted all elements of the party , as well as representation from outside it ; Seward opposed Chase , as well as Democrats such as Gideon Wells and Montgomery Blair . Seward did not get his way , and gave Lincoln a letter declining the post of Secretary of State . Lincoln felt , as he told his private secretary , John Nicolay , that he could not " afford to let Seward take the first trick " . No reply or acknowledgement was made by Lincoln until after the inaugural ceremonies were over on March 4 , when he asked Seward to remain . Seward did and was both nominated , and confirmed by the Senate , with minimal debate , on March 5 , 1861 .

= = Secretary of State = =

= = = Lincoln administration = = =

=== War breaks out ===

Lincoln faced the question of what to do about Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor , held by the Army against the will of South Carolinians , who had blockaded it . Major Robert Anderson , in command , had sent word that he would run out of supplies . Seward , backed by most of the Cabinet , recommended to Lincoln that an attempt to resupply Sumter would be provocative to the border states , that Lincoln hoped to keep from seceding . Seward hinted to the commissioners that had come to Washington on behalf of the Confederacy that Sumter would be surrendered . Lincoln was loath to give up Sumter , feeling it would only encourage the South in its insurgency .

With the Sumter issue unresolved , Seward sent Lincoln a memorandum on April 1 , proposing various courses of action , including possibly declaring war on France and Spain if certain conditions were not met , and reinforcing the forts along the Gulf of Mexico . In any event , vigorous policies were needed and the president must either establish them himself or allow a Cabinet member to , with Seward making it clear he was willing to do it . Lincoln drafted a reply indicating that whatever policy was adopted , " I must do it " , though he never sent it , but met with Seward instead , and what passed between them is not known . Seward 's biographers make the point that the note was sent to a Lincoln who had not yet proved himself in office .

Lincoln decided on expeditions to try to relieve Sumter and Florida 's Fort Pickens . Meanwhile , Seward was assuring Justice John Archibald Campbell , the intermediary with the Confederate commissioners that had come to Washington in an attempt to secure recognition , that no hostile action would be taken . Lincoln sent a notification to South Carolina 's governor of the expedition , and on April 12 , Charleston 's batteries began firing on Sumter , beginning the Civil War .

=== Diplomacy ===

When the war started Seward turned his attention to making sure that foreign powers did not interfere in the conflict . When in April 1861 , the Confederacy announced that it would authorize privateers , Seward sent word to the American representatives abroad that the U.S. would become party to the Paris Declaration Respecting Maritime Law of 1856 , outlawing such vessels , but Britain required that , if the U.S. were to become a party , the ratification would not require action to be taken against Confederate vessels .

The Palmerston government considered recognizing the Confederacy as an independent nation . Seward was willing to wage war against Britain if it did , and drafted a strong letter for the American Minister in London , Charles Francis Adams , to read to the Foreign Secretary , Lord Russell . Seward submitted it to Lincoln , who , realizing that the Union was in no position to battle both the South and Britain , toned it down considerably , and made it merely a memorandum for Adams 's guidance .

In May 1861 , Britain and France declared the South to be belligerents by international law , and their ships were entitled to the same rights as U.S.-flagged vessels to remain 24 hours in neutral ports . Nevertheless , Seward was pleased that both nations would not meet with Confederate commissioners or recognize the South as a nation . Britain did not challenge the Union blockade of Confederate ports , and Seward wrote that if Britain continued to avoid interfering in the war , he would not be overly sensitive to what wording they used to describe their policies .

In November 1861 , the USS San Jacinto , commanded by Union Captain Charles Wilkes , intercepted the British mail ship RMS Trent and removed two Confederate diplomats , James Mason and John Slidell . They were held in Boston amid jubilation in the North and outrage in Britain . The British minister in Washington , Lord Lyons demanded their release , as the U.S. had no right to stop a British @-@ flagged ship traveling between neutral ports . The British drew up war plans to attack New York and sent reinforcements to Canada . Seward worked to defuse the situation . He persuaded Lyons to postpone delivering an ultimatum , and told Lincoln that the prisoners would have to be released . Lincoln did let them go , reluctantly , on technical grounds . Relations between

the U.S. and Britain soon improved ; in April 1862 , Seward and Lyons signed a treaty they had negotiated allowing each nation to inspect the other 's ships for contraband slaves . In November 1862 , with America 's image in Britain improved by the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation , the British cabinet decided against recognition of the Confederacy as a nation .

Confederate agents in Britain had arranged for the construction of Confederate ships , most notably the CSS Alabama , which ravaged Union shipping after her construction in 1862 . With two more such vessels under construction the following year , supposedly for French interests , Seward pressed Palmerston not to allow them to leave port , and , nearly complete , they were seized by British officials in October 1863 .

= = = = Involvement in wartime detentions = = = =

From the start of the war until early 1862 , when responsibility was passed to the War Department , Seward was in charge of determining who should be detained without charges or trial . Approximately 800 men and a few women , believed to be Southern sympathizers or spies , were detained , usually at the initiation of local officials . Once Seward was informed , he would often order that the prisoner be transferred to federal authorities . Seward was reported to have boasted to Lord Lyons that " I can touch a bell on my right hand , and order the arrest of a citizen ... and no power on earth , except that of the President , can release them . Can the Queen of England do so much ? "

In September 1861 , Maryland legislators planned to vote to leave the Union . Seward took action against them : his son Frederick , the United States Assistant Secretary of State , reported to his father that the Union men had gone unmolested and the disloyal legislators were in prison . On evidence provided by detective Allen Pinkerton , Seward in 1862 ordered the arrest of Rose Greenhow , a Washington socialite with Confederate sympathies . Greenhow had sent a stream of reports south , and continued even after being placed on house arrest . From Washington 's Old Capitol Prison , the " Rebel Rose " provided newspaper interviews until she was allowed to cross into Confederate territory .

When Seward received allegations that former president Pierce was involved in a plot against the Union , he asked Pierce for an explanation . Pierce indignantly denied it . The matter proved to be a hoax , and the administration was embarrassed . On February 14 , 1862 , Lincoln ordered that responsibility for detentions be transferred to the War Department , ending Seward 's part in them .

= = = = Relationship with Lincoln = = = =

Seward had mixed feelings about the man who had blocked him from the presidency . One story is that when Seward was told that to deny Carl Schurz an office would disappoint him , Seward angrily stated , " Disappointment ! You speak of me of disappointment ! To me , who was justly entitled to the Republican nomination for the presidency , and who had to stand aside and see it given to a little Illinois lawyer ! " Despite his initial reservations about Lincoln 's abilities , he came to admire Lincoln as the president grew more confident in his job . Seward wrote to his wife in June 1861 , " Executive skill and vigor are rare qualities . The President is the best of us , but he needs constant and assiduous cooperation . " According to Goodwin , " Seward would become his most faithful ally in the cabinet ... Seward 's mortification at not having received his party 's nomination never fully abated , but he no longer felt compelled to belittle Lincoln to ease his pain . " Lincoln , a one @-@ term congressman , was inexperienced in Washington ways , and relied on Seward 's advice on protocol and social etiquette .

The two men built a close personal and professional relationship . Lincoln fell into the habit of entrusting Seward with tasks not within the remit of the State Department , for example asking him to examine a treaty with the Delaware Indians . Lincoln would come to Seward 's house and the two lawyers would relax before the fire , chatting . Seward began to feature in the president 's humorous stories . For example , Lincoln would tell of Seward remonstrating with the president , whom he found polishing his boots , " In Washington , we do not blacken our own boots " , with Lincoln 's

response , " Indeed , then whose boots do you blacken , Mr. Secretary ? "

Other cabinet members became resentful of Seward , who seemed to be always present when they discussed their departments ' concerns with Lincoln , yet they were never allowed to be there when the two men discussed foreign affairs . Seward announced when cabinet meetings would be ; his colleagues eventually persuaded Lincoln to set a regular date and time for those sessions . Seward 's position on the Emancipation Proclamation when Lincoln read it to his cabinet in July 1862 is uncertain ; Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wrote at the time that Seward opposed it in principle , feeling the slaves should simply be freed as Union armies advanced . Two later accounts indicate that Seward felt the time was not yet to issue it , and Lincoln did wait until after the bloody stalemate at Antietam that ended Confederate General Robert E. Lee 's incursion into the North to issue it . In the interim , Seward cautiously investigated how foreign powers might react to such a proclamation , and learned it would make them less likely to interfere in the conflict .

Seward was not close to Lincoln 's wife Mary , who by some accounts had opposed his appointment as Secretary of State . Mary Lincoln developed such a dislike for Seward that she instructed her coachman to avoid passing by the Seward residence . The Secretary of State enjoyed the company of the younger Lincoln boys , Willie and Tad , presenting them with two cats from his assortment of pets .

Seward accompanied Lincoln to Gettysburg , Pennsylvania in November 1863 , where Lincoln was to deliver a short speech , that would become famous as the Gettysburg Address . The night before the speech , Lincoln met with Seward . There is no surviving evidence that Seward authored any changes : he stated after the address , when asked if had had any hand in it , that only Lincoln could have made that speech . Seward also proposed to Lincoln that he proclaim a day of national thanksgiving , and drafted a proclamation to that effect . Although post @-@ harvest thanksgiving celebrations had long been held , this first formalized Thanksgiving Day as a national observance .

= = = 1864 election ; Hampton Roads Conference = = =

It was far from certain that Lincoln would even be nominated in 1864 , let alone re @-@ elected , as the tide of war , though generally favoring the North , washed back and forth . Lincoln sought nomination by the National Union Party , composed of Republicans and War Democrats . No one proved willing to oppose Lincoln , who was nominated . Seward was by then unpopular among many Republicans and opponents sought to prompt his replacement by making Lincoln 's running mate former New York Democratic senator Daniel S. Dickinson ; under the political customs of the time , one state could not hold two positions as prestigious as vice president and Secretary of State . Administration forces turned back Dickinson 's bid , nominating instead Military Governor of Tennessee Andrew Johnson , with whom Seward had served in the Senate . Lincoln was re @-@ elected in November ; Seward sat with Lincoln and the assistant presidential secretary , John Hay , as the returns came in .

In January 1865 , Francis Preston Blair , father of former Lincoln Postmaster General Montgomery Blair , went , with Lincoln 's knowledge , to the Confederate capital of Richmond to propose to Davis that North and South unite to expel the French from their domination of Mexico . Davis appointed commissioners ( Vice President Alexander Stephens , former U.S. Supreme Court justice Campbell , and former Confederate Secretary of State Robert M.T. Hunter ) to negotiate . They met with Lincoln and Seward at the Hampton Roads Conference the following month . Lincoln would settle for nothing short of a cession of resistance to the federal government and an end to slavery ; the Confederates would not even concede that they and the Union were one nation . There was much friendly talk , as most of them had served together in Washington , but no agreement . After the conference broke up , Seward sent a bucket of champagne to the Confederates , conveyed by a black oarsman in a rowboat , and called to the southerners , " keep the champagne , but return the Negro . "

= = = Assassination attempt = = =

John Wilkes Booth had originally planned to kidnap Lincoln , and recruited conspirators , including Lewis Powell . Having found no opportunity to abduct the president , on April 14 , 1865 , Booth assigned Powell to assassinate Seward , with George Atzerodt to kill Vice President Johnson and himself to kill Lincoln , which would slay the three senior members of the Executive Branch . Accordingly , another member of the conspiracy , David Herold , led Powell to the Seward home on horseback and was responsible for holding Powell 's horse while he committed the attack . Seward had been hurt in an accident some days before , and Powell gained entry to the home on the excuse he was delivering medicine to the injured man , but was stopped at the top of the stairs by Frederick Seward , who insisted Powell give him the medicine . Powell instead attempted to fire on Frederick , and beat him over the head with the barrel of his gun when it misfired . Powell burst through the door , threw Fanny Seward ( the secretary 's daughter ) to one side , and jumped on the bed , and stabbed William Seward in the face and neck five times . A soldier assigned to guard and nurse the secretary , Private George F. Robinson , jumped on Powell , forcing him from the bed . Powell fled , stabbing a messenger , Emerick Hansell , as he went , to find that Herold , panicked by the screams from the house , had left with both horses . Seward was at first thought dead , but revived enough to instruct Robinson to send for the police and lock the house until they arrived .

Almost simultaneously with the attack on Seward , Booth had mortally wounded Lincoln at Ford 's Theatre . Atzerodt , however , decided not to go through with the attack on Johnson . When Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Navy Secretary Gideon Welles hurried to Seward 's home to find out what had happened , they found blood everywhere .

All five men injured that night at the Seward home survived . Powell was captured the next day at the boarding house of Mary Surratt , and was executed on July 7 , 1865 , along with Herold , Atzerodt , and Mrs. Surratt , convicted as conspirators in the Lincoln assassination . They died only weeks after Seward 's wife Frances , who never recovered from the shock of the assassination attempt .

= = = Johnson administration = = =

= = = Reconstruction and impeachment = = =

In the first months of the new Johnson administration , Seward did not work much with the president . Seward was at first recovering from his injuries , and Johnson was ill for a time in the summer of 1865 . Seward was likely in accord with Johnson 's relatively gentle terms for the South 's re @-@ entry to the Union , and with his pardon of all Confederates but those of high rank . Radical Republicans such as Stanton and Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens proposed that the freed slaves be given the vote , but Seward was content to leave that to the states ( few Northern states gave African @-@ Americans the ballot ) , believing the priority should be reconciling the power @-@ holding white populations of the North and South to each other .

Unlike Lincoln , who had a close rapport with Seward , Johnson kept his own counsel , and generally did not take advantage of Seward 's political advice as Congress prepared to meet in December 1865 . Johnson had issued proclamations allowing for the southern states to reform their state governments and hold elections ; they mostly elected men who had served as prewar or wartime leaders . Seward advised Johnson to state , in his first annual message to Congress , that southern states meet three conditions for readmission to the Union : repeal of secession , repudiation of the war debt incurred by the rebel governments , and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment . Johnson , hoping to appeal to both Republicans and Democrats , did not take the suggestion . Congress did not seat southerners , but appointed a joint committee of both houses to make recommendations on the issue . Johnson opposed the committee ; Seward was prepared to wait and see .

In early 1866 , Congress and president battled over the extension of the authorization of the Freedmen 's Bureau . Both sides agreed that the bureau should end after the states were re @-@ admitted , the question was whether that would be soon . With Seward 's support , Johnson vetoed

the bill . Republicans in Congress were angry with both men , and tried but failed to override Johnson 's veto . Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill , which was to grant citizenship to the freedmen . Seward advised a conciliatory veto message ; Johnson ignored him , telling Congress it had no right to pass bills affecting the South until it seated the region 's congressmen . This time Congress overrode his veto , gaining the necessary two @-@ thirds majority of each house , the first time this had been done on a major piece of legislation in American history .

Johnson hoped the public would elect congressmen who agreed with him in the 1866 midterm elections , and embarked on a trip , dubbed the Swing Around the Circle that summer , giving speeches in a number of cities . Seward was among the officials who went with him . The trip was a disaster for Johnson ; he made a number of ill @-@ considered statements about his opponents that were criticized in the press . The Radical Republicans were strengthened by the results of the elections . The Republican anger against Johnson extended to his Secretary of State ? Maine Senator William P. Fessenden said of Johnson , " he began by meaning well , but I fear that Seward 's evil counsels have carried him beyond the reach of salvation . "

In February 1867 , both houses of Congress passed the Tenure of Office Bill , purporting to restrict Johnson in the removal of presidential appointees . When Stanton refused , Seward drafted a veto message for Johnson , questioning the measure 's constitutionality . It was to no avail , Congress promptly overrode the veto . Johnson suspended , then fired Stanton , over Reconstruction policy differences , leading to the president 's impeachment for allegedly violating the Tenure of Office Act . Seward recommended that Johnson hire the renowned attorney , William M. Evarts , and , with Weed , raised funds for the president 's successful defense .

= = = = Mexico = = = =

Mexico was strife @-@ torn in the early 1860s , as it often had been in the fifty years since independence . France , Spain , and Great Britain joined together to intervene in 1861 on the pretext of protecting their nationals , and to secure repayment of debt . Spain and the British soon withdrew , but France remained . Distracted by civil war , Seward could do little to enforce the Monroe Doctrine , and in 1864 , French emperor Napoleon III set his cousin , Archduke Maximilian of Austria on the Mexican throne , with French military support . When this became an issue in the U.S. , Seward used strident language publicly , but was privately conciliatory toward the French .

The Confederates had been supportive of France 's actions . Upon returning to work after the assassination attempt , Seward warned France that the U.S. still wanted the French gone from Mexico . Napoleon feared that the large , battle @-@ tested American army would be used against his troops . Seward remained conciliatory , and in January 1866 , Napoleon agreed to withdraw his troops after a twelve- to eighteen @-@ month period , during which time Maximilian could consolidate his position against the insurgency led by Benito Juárez .

In late 1866 , Napoleon tried to postpone the French departure , but the Americans had large numbers of troops on the north bank of the Rio Grande and Seward held firm . Napoleon suggested a new Mexican government that would exclude both Maximilian and Juárez ; the Americans had recognized Juárez as the legitimate president and were not willing to consider this . In the meantime , Juárez , with the help of American military aid , was advancing through northeast Mexico . The French withdrew in early 1867 , leaving Maximilian , who was soon captured by Juárez 's troops . Although both the U.S. and France urged Juárez against it , the deposed emperor was executed by firing squad on June 19 , 1867 .

= = = = Territorial expansion and Alaska = = = =

Although in speeches Seward had predicted all of North America joining the Union , he had , as a senator , opposed the Gadsden Purchase obtaining land from Mexico , and Buchanan 's attempts to purchase Cuba from Spain . Those stands were likely because the land to be secured might become slave territory . After the Civil War , this was no longer an issue , and Seward became an ardent expansionist . The Union Navy had been hampered due to the lack of overseas bases during



the war , and Seward also believed that American trade would be helped by the purchase of overseas territory .

Believing , along with Lincoln , that the U.S. needed a naval base in the Caribbean , in January 1865 , Seward offered to purchase the Danish West Indies ( today the United States Virgin Islands ) . Late that year , Seward sailed for the Caribbean on a naval vessel . Among the ports of call was St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies , where Seward admired the large , easily defended harbor . Another stop was in the Dominican Republic , where he opened talks to obtain Samaná Bay . When Congress reconvened in December 1866 , Seward caused a sensation by entering the chamber of the House of Representatives and sitting down with the administration 's enemy , Congressman Stevens , persuading him to support an appropriation for more money to expedite the purchase of Samaná , and sent his son Frederick to the Dominican Republic to negotiate a treaty . Both attempts fell through ; the Senate , in the dying days of the Johnson administration , failed to ratify a treaty for the purchase of the Danish possessions , while negotiations with the Dominican Republic were not successful .

Seward had been interested in whaling as a senator ; his interest in Russian America was a byproduct of this . In his speech prior to the 1860 convention , he predicted the territory would become part of the U.S. , and when he learned in 1864 that it might be for sale , he pressed the Russians ( then a U.S. ally ) for negotiations . The Russian minister , Baron Eduard de Stoeckl , returned home on leave in 1866 . Fearing that the territory might be overrun by American settlers and lost , he urged his government to sell it . He was given the authority to make the sale and when he returned in March 1867 , negotiated with the Secretary of State . Seward initially offered \$ 5 million ; the two men settled on \$ 7 million and on March 15 , Seward presented a draft treaty to the Cabinet . Stoeckl 's superiors raised several concerns ; to induce him to waive them , the final purchase price was increased to \$ 7 @. @ 2 million . The treaty was signed in the early morning of March 30 , 1867 , and ratified by the Senate on April 10 . Stevens sent the secretary a note of congratulations , predicting that the Alaska purchase would be seen as one of Seward 's greatest accomplishments .

= = 1868 election and retirement = =

Seward hoped that Johnson would be nominated at the 1868 Democratic National Convention , but the delegates chose New York Governor Horatio Seymour . The Republicans chose General Ulysses S. Grant , who had a hostile relationship with Johnson . Seward gave a major speech on the eve of the election , endorsing Grant , who was easily elected . Seward met twice with Grant after the election , leading to speculation that he was seeking to remain as secretary for a third presidential term . The president @-@ elect had no interest in retaining Seward , and the secretary resigned himself to retirement . Grant refused to have anything to do with Johnson , even declining to ride to his inauguration in the same carriage as the outgoing president , as was customary . Despite Seward 's attempts to persuade him to attend Grant 's swearing @-@ in , Johnson and his Cabinet spent the morning of March 4 , 1869 at the White House dealing with last @-@ minute business , then left once the time for Grant to be sworn in had passed . Seward returned to Auburn .

Restless in Auburn , Seward embarked on a trip across North America by the new transcontinental railroad . In Salt Lake City , Utah Territory , he met with Mormon leader Brigham Young , who had worked as a carpenter on Seward 's house ( then belonging to Judge Miller ) as a young man . On reaching the Pacific Coast , the Seward party took a steamer north to visit Sitka , Department of Alaska , part of the vast wilderness Seward had acquired for the U.S. After spending time in Oregon and California , the party went to Mexico , where he was given a hero 's welcome . After a visit to Cuba , he returned to the U.S. , concluding in March 1870 his trip of nine months .

In August 1870 , Seward embarked on another trip , this time westbound around the world . With him was Olive Risley , daughter of a Treasury Department official , to whom he became close in his final year in Washington . They visited Japan , then China , where they walked on the Great Wall . During the trip , they decided that Seward would adopt Olive , and he did so , thus putting an end to

gossip and the fears of his sons that Seward would remarry late in life . They spent three months in India , then journeyed through the Middle East and Europe , not returning to Auburn until October 1871 .

= = Death and family matters = =

Back in Auburn , Seward began his memoirs , but only reached his thirties before putting it aside to write of his travels . In these months he was steadily growing weaker . On October 10 , 1872 , he worked at his desk in the morning as usual , then complained of trouble breathing . Seward grew worse during the day , as his family gathered around him . Asked if he had any final words , he said , " Love one another . " Seward died that afternoon . His funeral a few days later was preceded by the people of Auburn and nearby filing past his open casket for four hours . Thurlow Weed was there for the burial of his friend , and Harriet Tubman , a former slave whom the Swards had aided , sent flowers . President Grant sent his regrets he could not be there .

William Seward rests with his wife Frances and daughter Fanny ( 1844 @-@ 1866 ) , in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn . They had three surviving sons , Augustus Henry Seward ( 1826 @-@ 1876 ) , William H. Seward , Jr . ( 1839 @-@ 1920 ) ( both of whom had served as Union officers before successful business careers ) and Frederick William Seward ( 1830 @-@ 1915 ) ( who served under his father in the State Department ) and one daughter , Cornelia or Frances Seward ( 1836 - 1837 ) .

= = Legacy and historical view = =

Seward 's reputation , controversial in life , remained so in death , dividing his contemporaries . Former Navy Secretary Gideon Welles argued that not only did Seward lack principles , Gideon was unable to understand how Seward had fooled Lincoln into thinking that he did , gaining entry to the Cabinet thereby . Charles Francis Adams , minister in London during Seward 's tenure as secretary , deemed him " more of a politician than a statesman " , but Charles Dana , former Assistant Secretary of State , disagreed , writing that Seward had " the most cultivated and comprehensive intellect in the administration " and " what is very rare in a lawyer , a politician , or a statesman ? imagination " .

Scholars of history have generally praised Seward for his work as Secretary of State ; in 1973 , Ernest N. Paolino deemed him , " the one outstanding Secretary of State after John Quincy Adams " . Seward has been given high marks by historians both for his achievements in office , and for his foresight in anticipating the future needs of the U.S. According to his biographer Van Deusen , " his foreign policy built for the future . He wished to prepare America for the great era which lay ahead . So he sought bases , naval stations and , peacefully , additional territory . "

Seward 's biographers suggested that there are two faces to Seward . One , " John Quincy Adams Seward " , dreamed big dreams and tried to convey them in speeches , working to achieve education for all , a fair deal for immigrants , an end to slavery , and an expanded America . The other , " Thurlow Weed Seward " , cut backroom deals over cigars and a bottle , and was a pragmatist who often settled for half a loaf when the whole was not achievable . Daniel S. Crofts , in Seward 's entry in American National Biography argued , " Each Seward was , of course , a caricature , and both tendencies , at once symbiotic and contradictory , existed in tandem . "

The praise Seward has received extends to his work during the Civil War . Stahr wrote that Seward " skillfully managed the nation 's foreign affairs , avoiding the foreign intervention that would have ensured that the Confederacy would become a separate nation " . Nevertheless , historians , focusing on the battlefields of the Civil War , have given him relatively little attention . Seward has a dozen biographers , while thousands of books focus on Lincoln . According to Crofts , " Seward and Lincoln were the two most important leaders spawned by the intersection of antebellum idealism and partisan politics . Lincoln , of course , will always overshadow Seward . Before 1860 , however , Seward eclipsed Lincoln . "

Lincoln 's assassination helped to seal his greatness , and according to Seward biographer John M.

Taylor , to relegate " his associates ... to the status of bit players " . Dozens of biographies extolling Lincoln as the quintessential American were written in the decades after the president 's death , placing Lincoln on a pedestal of public esteem Seward could not climb . Seward realized this even in life ; by one account , when asked to show his scars from the attempt on his life , Seward regretted he had not been martyred along with Lincoln , " I think I deserved the reward of dying there " .

Despite his being an ardent supporter of American expansionism during his time in the Cabinet , only Alaska was added to U.S. territory during Seward 's service as Secretary of State . ( It should be remembered that the purchase of Alaska was not inevitable ; the land had the same latitude as Siberia and was very difficult to farm , while neither gold nor oil nor any other important mineral was discovered there until years after Seward 's death . ) Nevertheless , his influence extended to later American acquisitions . One of his friends , Hamilton Fish , in 1875 signed the trade reciprocity treaty with the Kingdom of Hawaii that eventually led to American annexation of the islands . William Everts , another Seward friend , in 1877 signed a treaty of friendship with the Samoan Islands , laying the groundwork for another American acquisition . A young friend and protege of Seward , Lincoln 's assistant private secretary , John Hay , served as a successor of Seward from 1898 to 1905 , during which time the U.S. acquired Puerto Rico , Guam , American Samoa , the Philippines , and the Panama Canal Zone .

Stahr believes that Seward 's influence is still felt today :

Seward believed not only in territorial expansion but in a commercial and diplomatic empire . He encouraged immigration to the United States , always seeing immigration as a source of strength ; he ... was prepared to back up words with arms ; and he believed that Washington was the natural center for inter @-@ American and international discussion . If he were alive today , he would not be surprised to learn ... that many of the most famous Americans are first- or second @-@ generation immigrants , or that New York City is the world 's financial center , or that the headquarters of the World Bank and the Organization of American States are both in Washington . Seward would not be surprised by these developments : he would be pleased .