

= William Hayden English =

William Hayden English (August 27 , 1822 ? February 7 , 1896) was an American congressman from Indiana and the Democratic nominee for vice president in 1880 . English entered politics at a young age , becoming a part of Jesse D. Bright 's conservative faction of the Indiana Democratic Party . After a few years in the federal bureaucracy in Washington beginning in 1845 , he returned to Indiana and participated in the state constitutional convention of 1850 . He was elected to the state house of representatives in 1851 and served as its speaker at the age of twenty @-@ nine . After a two @-@ year term in the state house , English represented Indiana in the federal House of Representatives for four terms from 1853 to 1861 , working most notably to achieve a compromise on the admission of Kansas as a state .

English retired from the House in 1861 , but remained involved in party affairs . In the American Civil War he was a War Democrat , supporting the Union war effort . As well as pursuing a political career , he was an author and businessman , owning an opera house , serving as president of a bank , and developing many residential properties . English 's business career was successful , and he became one of the wealthiest men in Indiana . After nearly two decades in the private sector , English returned to political life as the Democratic nominee for vice president in 1880 . English and his presidential running mate , Winfield Scott Hancock , lost narrowly to their Republican opponents , James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur .

= = Family and early career = =

William Hayden English was born August 27 , 1822 , in Lexington , Indiana , the only son of Elisha Gale English and his wife , Mahala (Eastin) English . Both his parents were Kentucky natives from slaveholding families of English and French Huguenot ancestry . They moved to southern Indiana in 1818 . Elisha English quickly became involved in local politics as a Democrat , serving in the state legislature as well as building a prominent business career . William English was educated in the local public schools , later attending Hanover College . He left college after three years and began to read law . In 1840 , English was admitted to the bar at the age of eighteen and soon built a practice in his native Scott County . He started early in politics as well , attending the state Democratic convention that same year and giving speeches on behalf of the Democratic presidential candidate , Martin Van Buren .

By the end of 1842 , English came under the mentorship of Lieutenant Governor Jesse D. Bright , who helped him rise within Bright 's faction of the party . The following year , Indiana House of Representatives selected English as their clerk . In 1844 , he worked the campaign trail , this time in the service of presidential candidate James K. Polk .

= = Politics and marriage = =

As a reward , after Polk took office in 1845 , he granted English a patronage appointment as a clerk in the federal Treasury Department in Washington , D.C. English held this position for four years , during which time he met Emma Mardulia Jackson . They married in November 1847 . They would have two children : William Eastin and Rosalind .

English attended the 1848 Democratic National Convention in Baltimore , where he supported Lewis Cass , the eventual presidential nominee . With the election of the Whig Party 's candidate , Zachary Taylor , to the presidency , a Whig party member replaced English at the Treasury Department . He secured a job as clerk to the United States Senate 's Claims Committee through party connections ; serving until 1850 in Washington , DC .

Later that year , English and his wife returned to Indiana , where he worked as secretary to the Indiana Constitutional Convention . Democrats were in the majority at the convention , and their proposals were included in the new law , including increasing the number of elective offices , guaranteeing a homestead exemption , and restricting voting rights to white men . Free blacks had earlier had formerly had suffrage in the state . The voters approved the new Constitution of 1851 by

a large majority .

In August 1851 , English won his first election to the state house of Representatives . As it was the first meeting of the legislature under the 1851 constitution , English 's knowledge of it contributed to his election , at the age of twenty @-@ nine , as speaker of the House . The House had a Democratic majority and at Bright 's direction , English worked for the election of Graham N. Fitch , a member of Bright 's faction of the party , to the federal Senate . The legislature chose a different Democrat , John Pettit , instead . Holding the office of Speaker increased English 's influence throughout the state ; in 1852 , the Democrats chose him as their nominee for the federal House of Representatives from the newly redistricted 2nd district . The Democrats were victorious in the election that October , sweeping all but one House seat . English defeated his Whig opponent 55 % - 45 % and joined the 33rd Congress when it convened in Washington in 1853 .

= = Congress = =

= = = Kansas ? Nebraska Act = = =

The House of Representatives convened for the 33rd Congress in December 1853 . At that time , the simmering disagreement between the free and slave states heated up with the introduction of the Kansas ? Nebraska Act , proposed by Illinois Democrat Stephen A. Douglas , which would open the Kansas and Nebraska territories to slavery , an implicit repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 . Intended to quiet national agitation over slavery by shifting the decision to local settlers , Douglas 's proposal instead inflamed anti @-@ slavery sentiment in the North by allowing the possibility of slavery 's expansion to territories held as free soil for three decades . English , a member of the Committee on Territories , thought the bill was unnecessary and disagreed with its timing ; when the committee approved the bill , English wrote a minority report to that effect . He was not altogether opposed to the principle of popular sovereignty , however , believing that " each organized community ought to be allowed to decide for itself " . Northern Democrats divided almost evenly on the bill , but English , despite his stated reservations , was among those who voted for it . In doing so , he said that Congress was bound to respect the decision of the territories ' residents and pledged to uphold their decisions . President Franklin Pierce signed the bill into law on May 30 , 1854 .

The Kansas ? Nebraska Act was grossly unpopular across the North . The reaction ultimately killed the Whig Party , weakened northern Democrats , and brought about a new party , the Republicans . Only 3 of 42 free @-@ state representatives were reelected after voting for it ; English was one of them . English was a conservative Democrat , and his southern Indiana district , while not pro @-@ slavery , also had little sympathy for abolitionism . He was reelected again in 1856 , when the Democrats regained the House majority in the 35th Congress . The Speaker , James Lawrence Orr , assigned English to the Post Office and Post Roads Committee , but the issue of Kansas claimed more of his time .

= = = English Bill = = =

In December 1857 , in an election boycotted by free @-@ state partisans , Kansas adopted the pro @-@ slavery Lecompton Constitution and petitioned Congress to be admitted as a slave state . President James Buchanan , a Democrat , urged that Congress take up the matter , and the Senate approved a bill to admit Kansas . The bill was defeated in the House , 112 ? 120 . English found the process by which the pro @-@ slavery Kansans forced through their constitution inadequate , and voted against admission . Congress continued to debate the matter for months without resolution . English and Georgia Democrat Alexander H. Stephens came up with a compromise measure , later called the English Bill . The English Bill offered Kansas admission as a slave state , but only if they endorsed that choice in a referendum . The Bill also required Kansans to renounce the unusually large grant of federal lands they had requested in the Lecompton Constitution . The Kansas voters

could , thus , reject Lecompton by the face @-@ saving measure of turning down the smaller land grant . Congress passed the English Bill , and Kansans duly rejected their pro @-@ slavery constitution by a ratio of six to one . Some of English 's political allies , including Bright (now a senator) , would have preferred Kansas be admitted as a slave state , but the decision was popular enough in his district to allow English to be reelected in 1858 with a majority of 56 % to 44 % .

= = Business career = =

English declined to run for reelection in 1860 , but did give several speeches advocating compromise and moderation in the growing North @-@ South divide . After Abraham Lincoln 's election that year , English urged Southerners not to secede . When the Southern states did secede and the Civil War began , Governor Oliver P. Morton offered English command of a regiment , but he declined it , having no military knowledge or interests . He did , however , support Morton 's (and Lincoln 's) war policies and considered himself a War Democrat . English loaned money to the state government to cover the expenses of outfitting the troops and served as provost marshal for the 2nd congressional district .

After retiring from Congress , English spent a year at his home in Scott County before relocating to Indianapolis , the state capital . English and ten associates (including James Lanier) organized the First National Bank of Indianapolis in 1863 , the first bank in that city chartered under the new National Bank Act . He remained president of that bank until 1877 , including the difficult period during the Panic of 1873 , when many other banks folded . English 's business interests included other industries as well . He became the controlling shareholder of the Indianapolis Street Railway Company , remaining in charge of that company until 1876 , when he sold his shares . Having also sold his shares of the bank by 1877 , English turned most of his investment capital to real estate . By 1875 , he had already ordered construction of seventy @-@ five houses along what is now English Avenue . His wife , Emma , died two years later , in 1877 . English survived her by nineteen years . By the time he died in 1896 , he owned 448 pieces of property , most of them in Indianapolis .

In 1880 , English constructed English 's Opera House , which , according to the 1994 Encyclopedia of Indianapolis , quickly became known as the city 's finest . The building was modeled after the Grand Opera House in New York and seated 2000 people . It opened on September 27 , 1880 , with a performance of Hamlet starring Lawrence Barrett . By that time , English was involved in politics once more . He turned over management of the Opera House to his son , William Eastin English , who was interested in the theater (and had just married an actress , Annie Fox) . English senior later added a hotel to the Opera House , and both operated until 1948 .

= = Vice @-@ presidential candidate = =

After leaving the House of Representatives , English had remained in touch with local politics , even serving as chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party . His son had been elected to the state house in 1879 , and the elder English was still consulted on political matters . Although he had not sought elected office since 1858 , he had raised his national profile in 1879 through several interviews and letters to friendly newspapers . English attended the 1880 Democratic National Convention in Cincinnati as a member of the Indiana delegation , where he favored presidential candidate Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware , whom he admired for his support of the gold standard . The first ballot was inconclusive , with Bayard in second place . Major General Winfield Scott Hancock of Pennsylvania led the voting , and on the second ballot was nominated for President .

The Indiana delegation held back their votes from Hancock until the crucial moment , and as a reward , the delegates selected English for the vice @-@ presidential nomination . The nomination was unanimous . He was not expected to add much to the ticket outside of Indiana , but the party leaders thought his popularity in that swing state would help Hancock against James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur , the Republican nominees . The Republicans believed that the real reason for English 's nomination was his willingness to use his personal fortune to finance the campaign , as

Democratic campaign coffers were low . English gave a brief speech accepting the nomination , then replied more formally in a letter a month later . In that letter , English called the disputes of the Civil War settled , and promised a " sound currency , of honest money " , the restriction of Chinese immigration , and a " rigid economy in public expenditure " . He characterized the election as one between

the people endeavoring to regain the political power which rightfully belongs to them , and to restore the pure , simple , economical , constitutional government of our fathers on the one side , and a hundred thousand federal office @-@ holders and their backers , pampered with place and power , and determined to retain them at all hazards , on the other .

Hancock and the Democrats expected to carry the Solid South , which , with the disenfranchisement of black Southerners following the end of Reconstruction , was dominated electorally by white Democrats . In addition to the South , the ticket needed to add a few of the Midwestern states to their total to win the election ; national elections in that era were largely decided by closely divided states there . The practical differences between the parties were few , and the Republicans were reluctant to attack Hancock personally because of his heroic reputation . The one policy difference the Republicans were able to exploit was a statement in the Democratic platform endorsing " a tariff for revenue only " . Garfield 's campaign used this statement to paint the Democrats as unsympathetic to the plight of industrial laborers , who benefited from the high protective tariff then in place . The tariff issue cut Democratic support in industrialized Northern states , which were essential in establishing a Democratic majority .

The October state elections in Ohio and Indiana resulted in Republican victories there , discouraging Democrats about the federal election to come the following month . There was even some talk among party leaders of dropping English from the ticket , but English convinced them that the October losses owed more to local issues , and that the Democratic ticket could still carry Indiana , if not Ohio , in November . In the end , English was proven wrong : the Democrats and Hancock failed to carry any of the Midwestern states they had targeted , including Indiana . Hancock and English lost the popular vote by just 7 @,@ 018 . The electoral vote , however , had a much larger spread : 214 for Garfield and Arthur , compared to 155 for Hancock and English .

= = Post @-@ election career and legacy = =

English resumed his business career after the election . He also became more interested in local history , joining a reunion of the survivors of the 1850 state constitutional convention , which met at his opera house in 1885 . He became the president of the Indiana Historical Society and wrote two volumes , which were published at his death : Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio , 1778 ? 1783 ; and Life of General George Rogers Clark . He served on the Indianapolis Monument Commission in 1893 , and helped to plan and finance the Soldiers ' and Sailors ' Monument there .

He died at his home in Indianapolis on February 7 , 1896 . English was interred in Crown Hill Cemetery with his wife , who had died in 1877 . Although many of the buildings he constructed have been demolished , English , Indiana , the county seat of Crawford County , is named after him , as is English Street in Indianapolis . Identical statues of English stand in front of the Scott County Courthouse in Scottsburg , Indiana , and at the Crawford County Fairgrounds in English . His son William served in Congress from 1884 to 1885 . His grandson , William English Walling , the son of his daughter Rosalind , was a co @-@ founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People . An extensive collection of English 's personal and family papers is housed at the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis , where it is open for research .