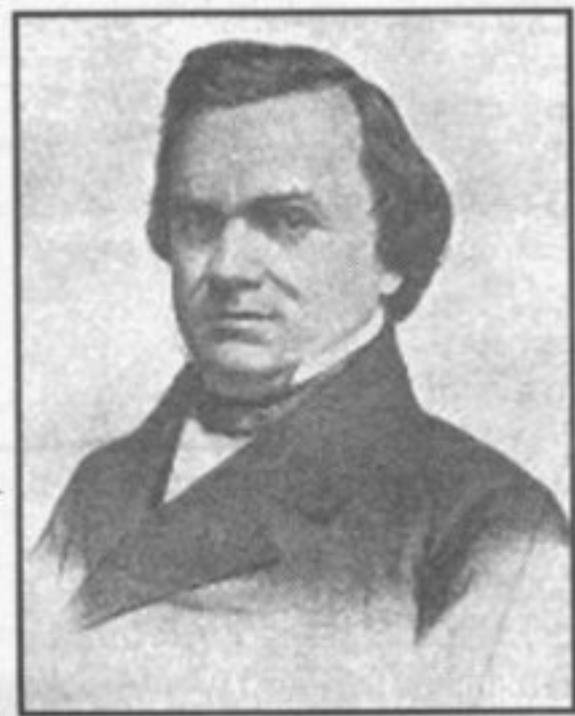


by Guy Rocha, former Nevada State Archivist

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Douglas County has been the most consistently Republican county in Nevada history, only supporting Silver-Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1896 and 1900, Progressive Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, and Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932. In the latter year, the Minden precinct, the most Republican precinct in the county, held out for President Herbert Hoover.

Today, there are almost twice as many registered Republicans as there are Democrats. A Republican holds every elected, partisan office in Douglas County. Only a handful of Democrats have ever been elected to a partisan public office and almost all of them more than forty years ago.

Perhaps as a reward for years of stalwart support for Republican politics, the Douglas High School band performed at George H.W. Bush's presidential inauguration ceremony in 1989 in Washington, D.C., and again performed for George W. Bush during his inauguration ceremonies in 2001 and 2005.

The irony in this story is that when the Nevada territorial legislature created Douglas County in November 1861, it was named for one of the great Democrats of the era, Stephen Arnold Douglas, who had recently died. All the legislators were members of the Union Party, essentially Republicans.

Douglas was admitted to the Illinois bar at age 20 in 1833. His good fortune in politics paralleled the growth of the Democratic party in the state. He sat on the Supreme Court, served in the General Assembly, and briefly held the position of Secretary of State. In 1842, he was elected to Congress from Illinois, and in 1846 he became a U.S. Senator.

Senator Douglas debated Republican challenger Abraham Lincoln in the great Lincoln –Douglas debates in 1858. Lincoln lost the Illinois senatorial race. However, in November 1860, Abe Lincoln defeated Stephen Douglas for the U.S. presidency in a four-way race.

On the brink of the Civil War, Douglas gave the new president his unwavering support and worked doggedly in the Senate to preserve the Union. Douglas contracted typhoid fever while on a speaking tour to rally the nation behind its government, and died in Chicago on June 3, 1861.

Only ten months after President Lincoln was assassinated, the state legislature in February 1866 created a new county in southern Nevada and named it after the fallen president in remembrance of Lincoln's support of statehood. The irony here is that Lincoln County tended to vote Democratic over the years.

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