

Cassius Marcellus Clay

Born: October 19, 1810

Birthplace: Madison County, Kentucky

Cassius Marcellus Clay was the son of Green Clay, the largest slaveholder in the state, yet he espoused the cause of emancipation from young adulthood. Outspoken and fearless, Clay found a ready welcome with the small group of Kentucky emancipationists that had for so long been intimidated by the powerful slaveholding aristocracy. In spite of his emancipationist views, Clay was almost like a member of the family to Mary Todd. They had known each other well since Clay had come to stay with the Todds following a fire that destroyed the dormitories at Transylvania, where he was enrolled. Several years later, Clay married Mary Jane Warfield, a close friend of the Todd girls, and Elizabeth Todd Edwards was matron of honor at the wedding.

In 1835, 1837 and 1840 he was elected as a Whig to the Kentucky legislature, where he advocated a system of gradual emancipation. In 1841 he was defeated on account of his anti-slavery views.

In 1845 Clay's anti-slavery newspaper, *The True American*, made its debut in Lexington. His office and press were wrecked by a mob, so he moved his office to Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1850 he ran for governor of Kentucky on an anti-slavery ticket, but was defeated.

Clay was one of the founders of the Republican Party in 1854. He was appointed a Major General in the Union army, but refused to fight as long as slavery continued to be protected in Southern states.

In 1860, Clay was a leading candidate for the vice-presidential nomination. He was effective in campaigning for the new Republican Party and urging the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for president. After Lincoln was nominated, Clay wrote Lincoln pledging his unfaltering loyalty. Lincoln answered, thanking him for his support. Clay continued his work supporting Lincoln's campaign for the Presidency. After the election, Lincoln rewarded Clay for his political support by naming him ambassador to Russia. In 1862,

Clay returned to White Hall briefly after being asked by Lincoln to gauge the reaction of Kentuckians to an emancipation proclamation. Clay urged Lincoln to issue the proclamation, saying that it would be received favorably in Kentucky. Clay was wrong. He returned to Russia in 1863 and did not return to this country until 1869, four years after Lincoln's assassination.

Sources:

Kentucky Government