

---

# Lincoln LORE

---

NUMBER 1924 WINTER 2019



Lincoln Lore is a publication of the Friends of the Lincoln Collection of Indiana



## Accessing Lincoln Lore's Archive

Visit [www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.com/lore-archive](http://www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.com/lore-archive)

Select Years of Publication or Lincoln Lore Issue Number

Click "PDF" next to the specific Lincoln Lore and read, download, save, and share the PDF.

### Want to Search Lincoln Lore?

Type your keywords into the Google Custom Search on the Lore Archive page to find specific topics.

### Have Questions about Accessing Lincoln Lore?

Contact Emily Rapoza, Webmaster and Lincoln Lore Designer, at [Lincoln@acpl.info](mailto:Lincoln@acpl.info) or (260) 421-1379.

### Allen County Public Library

Emily Rapoza  
Jessie Cortesi  
[Lincoln@acpl.info](mailto:Lincoln@acpl.info)

### Friends of the Lincoln Collection

Sara Gabbard, Editor  
P.O. Box 11083  
Fort Wayne, IN 46855  
[SGabbard@acpl.info](mailto:SGabbard@acpl.info)

[www.acpl.info](http://www.acpl.info)  
[www.LincolnCollection.org](http://www.LincolnCollection.org)  
[www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org](http://www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org)

### Lincoln Lore®

ISSN 0162-8615  
Unless otherwise indicated, all images are held by the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection (LFFC).

## Member Discount

Members of the Friends of the Lincoln Collection of Indiana receive a discount for books published by Southern Illinois University Press. To order, contact Chicago Distribution Center at:

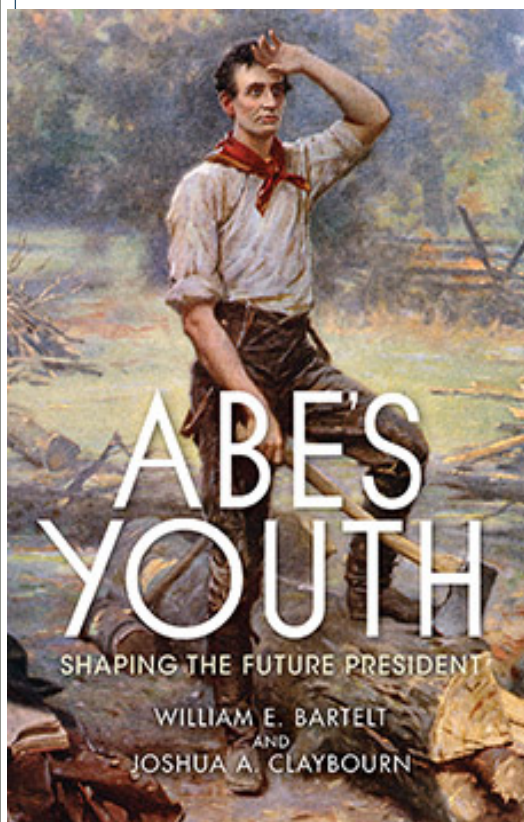
1.800.621.2736 Phone  
1.800.621.8476 Fax  
Order online at [www.SIUPress.com](http://www.SIUPress.com)

Use promotional code FLC25 to receive a 25% discount on your order.

# Table of Contents

Harold Holzer Books: An Interview with Harold Holzer.....page 3  
John Marszalek An Interview with John Marszalek.....page 7  
Ron Keller An Interview with Ron Keller.....page 10  
Mark Pohlads Reconstructing Lincoln's New Salem.....page 14  
Brian Dirck An Interview with Brian Dirck.....page 16  
M. Kelly Tillery A Right Smart Get Out.....page 21  
Jeffery R. Kerr-Ritchie Marx and Lincoln.....page 24

## Book Announcement



### Abe's Youth Shaping the Future President

Since his death, Abraham Lincoln has been celebrated as savior of the Union, proponent for emancipations, president of the United States, and skilled statesman. Although Lincoln's adult life has been well documented and analyzed, most biographers have regarded his early years as inconsequential to his career and accomplishments.

In 1920, a group of historians known as the Lincoln Inquiry were determined to give Lincoln's formative years their due. *Abe's Youth* takes a look into their writings, which focus on Lincoln's life between 7 and 21 years of age. By filling in the gaps of Lincoln's childhood, these authors shed light on how his experiences growing up influenced the man he became. As the first fully annotated edition of the Lincoln Inquiry papers, *Abe's Youth* offers indispensable reading for anyone hoping to learn about Lincoln's early life.

**William "Bill" Bartelt** is a Lincoln historian and the author of *There I Grew Up: Remembering Abraham Lincoln's Indiana Youth* and other books. For many years Bartelt worked as a ranger and historian at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. He is a board member of the Abraham Lincoln Association, the Indiana Historical Society, and The Friends of the Lincoln Collection. He received the Indiana Historical Society's "Hoosier Historian" award in 2003.

**Joshua A. Claybourn** is an attorney and author or editor of several books, including *Our American Story: The Search for a Shared National Narrative*. A widely published commentator on legal, political, and historical topics, Claybourn has also appeared as a guest on CNN, MSNBC, and NHK. He is a board member of the Abraham Lincoln Association.

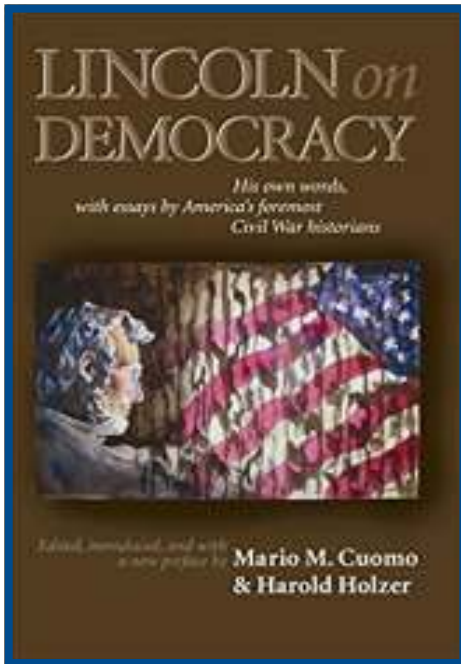
## On the Cover



The postcards shown on the cover are from the Zurow Postcard Collection and feature images of New Salem, Illinois. To see more on New Salem, go to page 14 to read Mark B. Pohlads article "Reconstructing Lincoln's New Salem." (Postcards are ZPC-209, ZPC-145, ZPC-147).







*Lincoln on Democracy*, Mario Cuomo and Harold Holzer, Fordham Press, 2004

to work with some of my favorite colleagues, but also to produce a book that has been used in schools in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, informing democratic movements abroad while reaffirming Lincoln as democracy's greatest champion, exemplar, and spokesman at home. That's a long way 'round what could have been a very brief response to the question about which kind of work I prefer to do: the shorthand answer is "both." And you haven't even asked about co-authored books (it seems I've done more than my share of these) not to mention co-edited ones (rewarding if you get to work with skilled co-editors like Sara Gabbard).

**SG: Your books are so diverse in subject matter. How do you decide upon your "next project?"**

**HH:** Here comes another long answer: in a variety of ways. In the case of *Lincoln on Democracy*, Governor Cuomo asked me to help him prepare what started as a primer on democracy for Solidarity Movement teachers in Poland. While I busied myself lining up essayists and translators, Cuomo's press secretary, the late Gary Fryer, asked: "Aren't you planning an English-language edition? Seems like a no-brainer!" Caught up in the international aspect, I hadn't even thought of it until then! My first book, *The Lincoln Image*, was my idea, but got greenlit by bringing

other scholars into a field in which I had labored in solitary for ten years. Some ideas ignite like the light bulb in a cartoon: *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, for example, and the reverse-transcript book on the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Others come as a result of newsworthy discoveries—like *The Lincoln Family Album*. Some are calendar-driven, like *Lincoln President-Elect*, specifically inspired by the approaching 2008-2009 White House transition; some, like *Lincoln in New York*, *In Lincoln's Hand*, and *The Union Preserved* began with exhibitions that called for catalogues. A few titles feature my collected lectures, one of them (*Emancipating Lincoln*) published by Harvard University Press at the arrangement of my host for the talks, Henry Louis Gates. I thought of *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* (I should have thought of it sooner) because it united my two greatest lifelong interests, the man and the media.

I must admit that some of my favorite projects fell into my lap because others asked me to undertake them: Louise Mirrer, CEO of the New-York Historical Society, invited me to do *The Civil War in 50 Objects* and Donna Hassler, director of Chesterwood, Daniel Chester French's studio in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, commissioned me to write my new *Monument Man* about his life and art. A few projects did devolve from pure, unexpected inspiration, like the moment in 2000 when legendary Simon & Schuster editor Alice Mayhew told me, at a Lincoln Forum dinner, how proud she was to have published so many books on Lincoln speeches, including Garry Wills' *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Ronald White's *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, and Allen Guelzo's forthcoming *Lincoln's Emancipation* (well, not precisely a speech, but...). So I blurted out, "why not 'Lincoln at Cooper Union?'" Alice replied, "Send me a proposal." I did, and the rest, I suppose, is history.

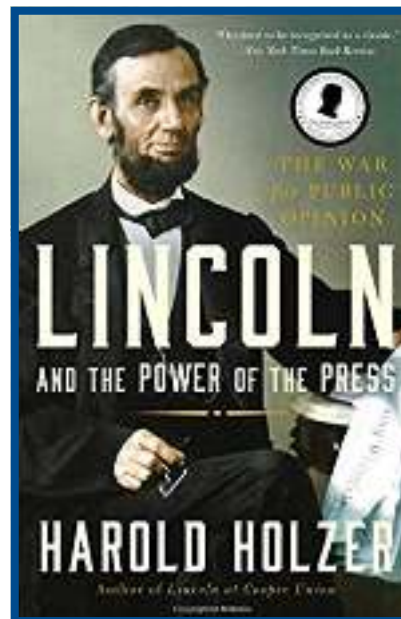
**SG: Which book(s) did you find it easiest to research? Most difficult?**

**HH:** The "image" books (Lincoln, Confederate, Union) were the easiest if only because so much original visual material was already hanging on my walls, or so readily available (and so much fun to study alongside Mark Neely and Gabor Boritt) at repositories around the country. I loved being on the road calling up prints from the Library of Congress, the Maryland Historical Society, and the collections in Fort Wayne. The press book and *Monument Man* I loved researching because my wife, Edith, traveled with me to work at my side. The most difficult, I think, is the next one, not only because it ranges from 1789 to 2019, covers presidents before and after Lincoln (new territory for me) and requires source material from old newspapers to new Tweets. Plus it's taking forever and I'm 70 years old now, with two grandsons to divert my attention. The lure of Charles and Leo alone make it difficult to concentrate.

**SG: In your research, was there anything that led you to totally unexpected conclusions?**

**HH:** I never appreciated the extent of Lincoln's media mastery until I researched *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*; he was in fact as skilled a newspaper puppeteer as he was a political manipulator (in the best sense of the word). Take, for example, his secret ownership of a German-language pro-Republican weekly, or his Administration's mass-crackdown

on opposition newspapers, the extent of which was previously unknown. Nor did I know before 1984 how much (but how subtly) Lincoln conspired to advance his own image and cement his place in history through the fine arts, popular prints, and photography (occasionally in several mediums at once). Many earlier books presented Lincoln pictures; none shed light on



*Lincoln and the Power of the Press*, Harold Holzer, Simon & Schuster, 2014



why he so often posed for them. It wasn't to fill the Lincoln family album I mentioned earlier, but other people's albums, as well as walls and pedestals, nationwide. If I've contributed anything to the field, I hope it has been shining a light on the various advances in publishing—of words and images—that helped get Lincoln elected and enshrined, and which he took such a firm hand in creating.

**SG: I keep your *Lincoln Anthology* close at hand for research purposes. What an enormous project. Please describe how you became involved. How did you determine which sources to use?**

**HH:** Thank you for that! I'd been (still am) a big fan of the Library of America and its single-minded commitment to publishing the great writing of great writers, political and literary alike. Of course, Don Fehrenbacher had already produced two sterling volumes of Lincoln, but, to be honest, I really wanted into the series. So I approached LOA editor Max Rudin with what I thought was a compelling idea: a supplementary volume on major writers who'd written *about* Lincoln—a list that included Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, Karl Marx, even Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*, all the way to Allen Ginsberg, Gore Vidal, and E. L. Doctorow. I had been collecting so much of the early source material for so long that I had many transcripts already on file. The rest was just fun to track down, and read and re-read, because down deep I'd always suspected that all the greatest poets and prose writers had at one point dealt with Lincoln. One text I knew we needed to feature was the unexpurgated manuscript of Robert Russa Moton's dedication day speech at the Lincoln Memorial in 1922. I remembered its most important paragraphs—an impassioned, impatient demand for freedom and equality now for his fellow African Americans—had been censored. He never read them aloud. I'm so proud we published it in full... and even prouder that the Library of America now sells *The Lincoln Anthology* and the Fehrenbacher *Lincoln* together in a boxed set. I hope Don would have approved.

**SG: In the Introduction for your**

**Anthology, you commented that "Generational change began to reshape Lincoln's legacy at the turn of the century." Please elaborate on that statement.**

**HH:** Frederick Douglass famously said in 1876 that Lincoln had been quintessentially the white man's president, not the black man's—that African Americans were but his stepchildren. I think those remarks inspired a kind of "freedom moment" for white writers, too, long solely tethered to Lincoln's reputation as an emancipator and martyr. New generations saw Lincoln also as a nationalist, a spokesman for democracy and majority rule, a writer (as Edmund Wilson observed, gifted enough to rank as a great craftsman in his own right); and an enduring, usable symbol of what Gabor Boritt memorably called "the



Woodrow Wilson LN-1397

right to rise" in an open society. This meant interpreting him not only as a liberator but as a spokesman for the American Dream, and arguably its greatest exemplar. Inescapably, revisionist journalism and literature, like revisionist history, sometimes seeks the lowest point of gravity, and new generations also searched for and unearthed Lincoln's flaws and shortcomings—some to humanize him, some to topple him from his pedestal, others to offer new

appraisals of his views on race. In an age in which monuments get routinely toppled, I think he has stood the test of time pretty well.

**SG: In that same Introduction, you stated: "The passage of time also affected Lincoln's role in contemporary politics." Please give examples.**

**HH:** Well, until 1912, Lincoln remained the talismanic symbol solely of the Republicans, even when it morphed from a party advocating freedom and equality to one committed to enshrining "income inequality"—a/k/a the Gilded Age. It took a Southern-born Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, to claim a share of Lincoln for the opposition party, in Wilson's case to justify American involvement in a world war. Boy, was he vilified by the Republican press for daring to do so.

Theodore Roosevelt (who had watched Lincoln's New York funeral as a small boy) tried to seize Lincoln as the inspiration for his brand of progressivism, but it was his cousin Franklin who moved African Americans into the Democratic fold for the first time by agreeing that Lincoln's work had never been finished and arguing that he was the one to finish it. He began peppering his speeches with Lincoln references and even hired Robert E. Sherwood, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright (*Abe Lincoln in Illinois*) to help keep Lincoln a part of his argument for preparing for war against the Axis. Ever since, both parties have battled to identify with Lincoln—and several American Presidents, Republicans and Democrats alike, from both

Presidents Bush to Bill Clinton to Barack Obama—have made manifest their appreciation for him, some of which I've been honored to hear from their own lips. It's been a fascinating turn of the wheel, and it's a good thing indeed that Lincoln remains an ideal for leaders across the spectrum. But I do think it's fair to say that Lincoln would be pretty shocked if he came back today and found his old political party the more conservative of the two, and the one that attracts the majority of white votes in the

once solidly Democratic South.

**SG: Where do Lincoln studies stand today? Which areas especially need new research and**

American culture, and above all, new, expanded, and definitive editions—whether in print or online (providing I can learn how to access them)—of the *Collected Works* and *Lincoln Day by Day*.

far—I’m finishing a new book for a new publisher, E. P. Dutton, called *The Presidents and the Press* (or *The Presidents vs. the Press*, I haven’t quite decided) for spring 2020. It aims to cover the subject from Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, all the way to the age of Twitter and Trump, with Jackson, Lincoln, the Roosevelts, JFK, LBJ, Nixon and our recent presidents in between. I’ve also proudly signed on as a consultant to a forthcoming CNN documentary about Lincoln. I’m collaborating as well with the consummate collector Benjamin Shapell on an illustrated Lincoln biography grounded in his own archive and focused on how Lincoln’s generous spirit animated his creative



Franklin D. Roosevelt, Anne Clark Roosevelt, and Eleanor Roosevelt LN-0958

**interpretation?**

**HH:** Every time I think we’ve hit a plateau or, scarier, a lull in the recent efflorescence in Lincoln and Civil War scholarship, a scintillating new work appears that takes my breath away. The next few months alone will welcome Matthew Pinsker’s long-awaited appraisal of Lincoln as a politician; Ron White’s new interpretation of Lincoln’s writings; the concluding volumes of Sidney Blumenthal’s compelling study of Lincoln’s life and times; a new book about the inaugural journey by Ted Widmer; a new short biography by Richard Striner, and a new collection on Lincoln and civil liberties edited by Jonathan White. And these are just the works in progress I know about. We will continue to need updated inquiries into Lincoln on race, war, religion, and nationhood, and every new generation of scholars reliably produces them. I doubt whether there are earth-shattering revelations yet to come about this exhaustively studied character, but there are plenty of things well worth reinterpreting. If I were suggesting fresh areas of study (those I don’t want to keep in my pocket for myself) I’d propose Lincoln in modern

**SG: Can you share your upcoming projects with our readers?**

**HH:** Happily. From an organizational standpoint, I’ve become chairman of the Lincoln Forum ([www.thelincolnforum.org](http://www.thelincolnforum.org)) with Frank Williams’ retirement, and I want to work to sustain that organization, further build the quality of its annual November symposia at Gettysburg, revive its publishing program, and build its interactive online presence. I not only love the Forum and its members, I regard its future success as a test case for the survival of Civil War Round Tables and Lincoln Groups nationwide. Their membership decline, my gut tells me, is much more attributable to the young generation’s preference for solitary web surfing (over group experiences) than to loss of interest in the field.

As far as writing—and it’s never very



Lincoln Roosevelt Pin 71.2009.082.0680

output. I’m also editing—yes, back to editing—a volume about Hunter College (where I’ve been privileged to run the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute

these past four years), to mark its 150th anniversary and celebrate its powerful impact on New York City and the education of women and the children of immigrants. After that, does anyone have any ideas or assignments?

*Harold Holzer is the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College.*





# An Interview with John Marszalek

Executive Director

of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at  
Mississippi State University

Sara Gabbard

*Tour of the Grant Library at the annual USGA meeting in 2018, photo: J. Marszalek*

**Sara Gabbard: Please trace the provenance of the Grant Papers before they arrived at Mississippi State University.**

**John Marszalek:** One of the great days in the history of Mississippi State University took place in December 2008. It was just before the university closed for the Christmas break that two full sized moving vans arrived on Hardy Road, and the vast Ulysses S. Grant Collection was off-loaded into an empty room in the Mitchell Memorial Library. The provenance of these papers and artifacts goes back to the Grant family preservation of the general's/president's letters from his time at the United States Military Academy at West Point. When Grant arrived at the school in 1839 and then graduated in

1843, he had written numerous letters, and his family and the Academy had begun to preserve those manuscripts. For the rest of his life, Grant's letters were preserved. This took place: while he was an officer in the Mexican War; when he married Julia Dent of St. Louis, Missouri; during his service in the U. S. Army; after the birth and growth of his children; and when his business career failed. The greatest preservation took place: when he rose to overall army command in the Civil War; when he was elected to the United States presidency (1869-1877); during his world tour; when he was fleeced by a so-called "Wizard of Wall Street;" and when he was suffering from throat cancer and wrote America's greatest piece of non-fiction, his memoirs. Throughout his life, Grant grew to be, next to Abraham Lincoln, the greatest American

historical figure of the 19th century.

At first, Grant's manuscripts and artifacts remained mostly in the hands of his descendants. Some of the artifacts he had accrued over the years also went to the Smithsonian Institution. In the 20th century much material went to the Library of Congress, by gift of his grandson, Ulysses S. Grant III.

In the middle of the Civil War Centennial, a number of his descendants, some of the leading historians of that era (Bruce Catton, Allan Nevins, John Hope Franklin, Ralph Newman) along with the Civil War Commissions of states where Grant had lived (Illinois, Ohio, and New York) formed the Ulysses S. Grant Association. (USGA) Their aim was to honor Grant in a special way by collecting and publishing his writings.

The USGA established itself at the Ohio Historical Society, on the campus of Ohio State University. The driving force was a young Harvard graduate student, John Y. Simon, aided by his talented wife Harriet Furst Simon. Simon taught while he completed his doctorate and gathered Grant material from all over the nation. In 1964, Southern Illinois University became the new home of the USGA, and Simon joined the History faculty there. In 1967, Volume 1 of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, published by Southern Illinois University Press, appeared. From that year to 2009, the USGA published 31 volumes, and John Y. Simon became famous as one of the nation's leading documentary editors.

Unfortunately, Professor Simon died in the summer of 2008, at a time when the Grant Association had already begun action to move its collection somewhere else. Under the leadership of Rhode Island Chief Justice and USGA president Frank J. Williams, the Dean of the Mississippi State University Libraries, Frances Coleman, interim presidents Vance Watson and Roy Ruby and MSU President Mark E. Keenum, the Grant papers were moved to MSU. The appointment to be Executive Director of long-time History professor John F. Marszalek, and the continuation of the many years of financial support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the National

Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) created the conditions for the move to Mississippi. Under Marszalek, the USGA board of directors and its officers, the MSU administration and an outstanding staff (Aaron Crawford, Robert Karachuk, Amanda Carlock, Elizabeth Coggins, Meg Henderson, Rebecca Houston, David Nolen, Louie Gallo, Ryan Semmes, Rebecca Houston, and Eddie Rangel), Volume 32 was published. Also an award-winning complete annotated edition of the Grant memoirs came out, and a short edition of Grant's life entitled *Hold on with a Bulldog Grip* was published.

In 2012, the USGA created the Grant Presidential Library, and in 2017, thanks to President Mark Keenum and the Mississippi legislature, a bond issue was passed and a 21,000 square foot facility was established atop the MSU Mitchell Memorial Library for the Grant material and that of the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Abraham Lincoln Collection.

Vicksburg, Mississippi, made him into a household name, is today housed in that state and has become a venue for recent outstanding studies.

**SG: What were the steps taken to prepare for the Library? How long did it take? When was the site opened to the public?**

**JM:** The move from Southern Illinois University required legal action to make sure that all was done properly. The administration of SIU was helpful, and the issue was finalized when MSU President Mark Keenum and the USGA signed a legal agreement. The Executive Director, Library staff members from both institutions, two attorneys representing both MSU and SIU, worked together to make the move possible.

Meanwhile, the Mitchell Memorial Library at MSU prepared an area on the first floor of the building which served as a temporary location for the Grant material. This roughly 1200 square foot space served USGA until the opening of the newly constructed 4th floor facility in October, 2017.

Four years before the grand opening, librarians and staff members worked together to plan the new facility. An architect was hired and so were professional museum planners, an interactive television company, makers of four life size Grant statues, and a company that put finishing

touches on the project. The result is a state-of-the-art museum, with a cold storage area, a preparation room for additional collections, staff offices, a reading room for research visitors, a gallery on Grant and another one on Lincoln, an orientation room with a ten minute film, and a welcoming area

where volunteer docents greet visitors.

**SG: Are some of your materials available to researchers online? If so, please give contact information.**

**JM:** One of the important things that the newly arrived USGA did, with the aid of the Mitchell Memorial Library, was to digitize the 32 volumes of the Grant Papers. It also digitized the old and new USGA newsletters. Significantly, USGA utilized talented undergraduates and graduate students to make available Grant material which had not been placed in the 32 volumes. The address to access this material is: [www.usgrantlibrary.org](http://www.usgrantlibrary.org)

**SG: Do you present public lectures, events, etc. Please elaborate.**

**JM:** Yes, we do present public lectures and events. One of the tragedies we have encountered in our time at MSU was the sudden death of one of our editors and an outstanding Civil War historian, Dr. Michael B. Ballard. His widow Jan generously asked mourners to establish a speaker's fund in Mike's honor. We had over 100 people attend our first lecture by Dr. Curt Fields, one of the nation's leading Grant reenactors. (He and George Buss, a Lincoln reenactor attended our grand Library opening in 2017). Frank J. and Virginia Williams sponsor an annual fall lecture, bringing to campus leading Lincoln scholars. We also have been fortunate to receive financial support from the local Golden Triangle Civil War Roundtable. We have also established a corps of volunteer docents to help us with our many school, university, and public tours. In these years, visitors from forty-eight of the fifty states have visited our facility, and we have had people from all over the world come for research and viewing. In our first year in the new museum, we had approximately 10,000 visitors.

**SG: I am fascinated by the publication of *Hold on with a Bulldog Grip*. Please tell our readers how this book is being used.**

**JM:** The book *Hold on With a Bulldog Grip, A Short Study of Ulysses S. Grant* was published in April 2019 by the University Press of Mississippi. It is



The ribbon cutting for the opening of the Grant Presidential Library and Lincoln Collection, (L to R) : Gregg Harper, now retired, then congressman from this Mississippi district; Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress; Frances Coleman, Dean of Libraries, MSU; MSU President Mark Keenum; Frank J. Williams chief justice of R.I. Supreme Court; Phil Bryant, governor of the state of Mississippi; Virginia Williams, photo: J. Marszalek

The cooperation between MSU and the USGA has resulted in a presidential library which contains the greatest collection of Grant material in the world. It has helped stimulate a fresh look at US Grant by historians such as Ron Chernow, Ron White, Joan Waugh, and Charles Calhoun. The legacy of U.S. Grant, whose victory at





*Dr. George Rable, left, retired endowed professor at the University of Alabama. He gave the 2nd annual Williams Lecture on A. Lincoln in November 2018, photo: J. Marszalek*

the 2019-2020 Maroon Edition, which means that it is given gratis to every incoming freshman and transfer student. (Last year John Grisham was the author of the Maroon Edition book.)

The idea for this year's Maroon Edition came from MSU President Mark Keenum. He is a Civil War enthusiast and found, through his research, that the family of the first president of MSU, Confederate General Stephen D. Lee, and the family of Ulysses S. Grant knew and liked each other. As he put it, making this short book on Grant the Maroon Edition for the year will encourage students to realize the connection between MSU and US Grant. Hopefully students will read this 120 page book and then visit the Grant Presidential Library to learn more.

Each student receives a gratis book during orientation and then at the semester's first convocation there begins the year-long process of interacting with other students and faculty about this book, staging contests, and other academic events related to the book. During the academic year, 2019-2020, MSU will incorporate the book into classes, bring in speakers related to the book, and conduct discussions about the book. The Office of the President will plan most of these events.

This publication is available to anyone at a reasonable price at most local book stores and from amazon.com.

**SG: I noticed that the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Ulysses S. Grant Association was held at West Point.**

**Please describe the agenda. Also, please give our readers contact information for your Association.**

**JM:** Yes, the USGA had its annual meeting this year, at West Point, to see where Grant was a cadet and, primarily, to attend the unveiling of his new statue on the West Point Plain. The meeting proved exciting.

Our agenda included: numerous dinners at the Thayer Hotel and

the Bear Mountain Inn, as well as tours of the West Point campus. We heard from our vice president, Jim Bultema, a leading expert on Grant photography. Elizabeth Samet of the West Point English Department and the editor of a literary edition of the Grant memoirs lectured on her book, and there was an excellent tour of the house and grounds of the Grant Cottage, led by the marvelous Grant Friends organization. The annual John Y. Simon Award was presented to Grant descendant Claire Ruestow Telecki. Finally, our group attended the birthday celebration for Grant at Grant's Tomb in Manhattan.

The 75 attendees had a wonderful time and got to see things they never would have otherwise.

We are always happy to have new members join our organization. At this time we have over 300 members. Famous Grant scholars like Ron Chernow, Ron White, Joan Waugh, and Charles Calhoun regularly come to our meetings and all, at other times, have spoken to us. Four descendants are members of our Board of Directors and others are regular members.

One does not have to be a scholar or a descendant to belong, however. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning more about U.S. Grant. USGA is a friendly group, and we share the excitement of learning.

Anyone who is interested in joining has only to express that interest to the Executive Director or his assistant, Ed-

die Rangel at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, Mississippi State, MS 39762, 662-325-4552. Lifetime membership is \$500; yearly membership is \$100 and after five straight years of membership, one becomes a lifetime member. Student membership is \$25 a year. Membership includes a special rate for registration at the annual meeting and a quarterly gratis newsletter. Our staff here at "headquarters" is always ready to help any of our members in any way we can.

One can also join USGA on-line. Go to [www.USGrantLibrary.org](http://www.USGrantLibrary.org).

And do click on that website for all kinds of other information on USGA and the U.S. Grant Presidential Library.

**SG: We previously carried an article about the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection at your institution. How are students and scholars using this valuable information?**

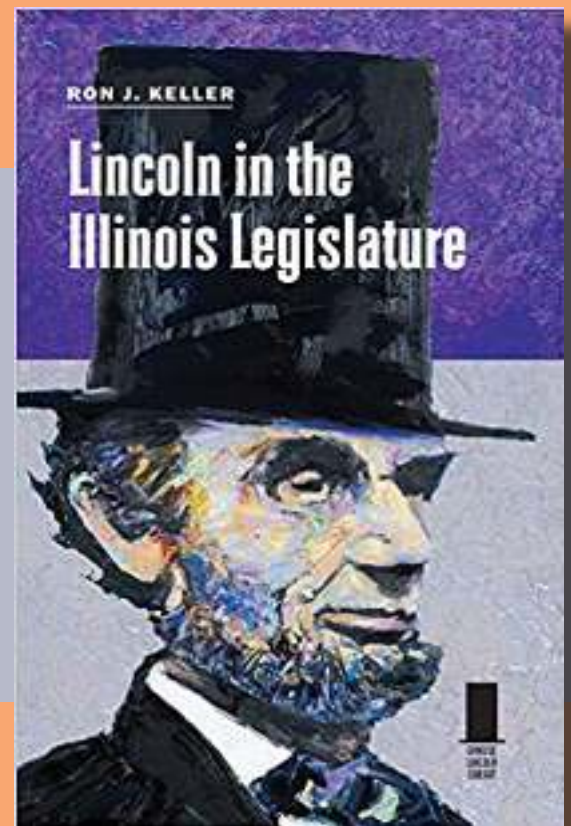
**JM:** As mentioned earlier, Frank J. Williams and his wife Virginia have donated their marvelous Lincolniana Collection to Mississippi State University. It is housed in the Lincoln Gallery, and is part of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. When visitors or scholars or the general public visit our Library, they tour both Grant and Lincoln. The thrill on their faces when they see the desk that was once in an Illinois county courthouse and used by Lincoln or the opportunity to view original Grant material or an interactive Grant television program, cannot be overemphasized. The Williams collection also includes one of the best collections of journals and books on the Civil War, so any visitor can not only see marvelous Grant and Lincoln artifacts, but he/she can also get an insight into both men not available in most places.

We like to say, and we believe that we are accurate, that no one can truly understand these two men or write books or articles about them unless they come to Mississippi State University and consult our marvelous material. Please do visit us and experience our treasures.

*John Marszalek serves as Executive Director of the U.S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University.*

# An Interview with Ron Keller

Author of *Lincoln in the  
Illinois Legislature*



Sara Gabbard

**Sara Gabbard:** I know that this book is a product of the Concise Lincoln Library, a series from Southern Illinois University Press. What led you to this specific topic?

**Ron Keller:** Having served for many years as director of the Lincoln Heritage Museum and teaching at the only institution of higher learning named for Lincoln in his lifetime, Abraham Lincoln has assumed a rather prominent role in my life. My background is American political history, so naturally Abraham Lincoln's political life has always struck my interest. For the specific topic of *Lincoln as Illinois Legislator*, I was actually first contacted by Sylvia Rodrigue of Southern Illinois University Press, who asked if I would be interested in writing for their Concise Lincoln Library series. I had mentioned to Sylvia prior to her invitation that I had considered writing on some aspect of Lincoln's political career, but had thought the topic of Lincoln was nearly exhausted. She relayed that Lincoln as an Illinois state representative had not been the subject singularly of a one-volume book since Senator Paul Simon released his biography in 1965. She convinced me that the topic deserved a re-examination. Despite initially resisting the temptation to add to the mountain of scholarship already published on Lincoln since his death, I decided to do so. Upon re-reading Simon's biogra-

phy, it was clear that perhaps a fresh perspective was in order.

**SG:** When did Abraham Lincoln first decide to run for the Illinois legislature?

**RK:** Lincoln's first attempt for the legislature was in 1832, though in that first run he met defeat due to being called away from the campaign trail for several months to serve as a captain in the Black Hawk War. By the time he returned to New Salem, the election was only a month away. Even in his loss, Lincoln felt good enough about his 1832 electoral showing to believe he had a very good chance of winning the next time around. He then ran again in 1834 and was successful. The moment when Lincoln actually decided in his own mind to run for the legislature may have come in 1831, shortly after arriving in New Salem. Despite not knowing many residents when he first stepped foot in the community, he took an immediate and ready interest in politics in his new town, helping out in a local election, and greeting as many local residents as he could. Was he just being friendly, or did he have his eyes on the legislature even then? I think the latter.

**SG:** Did he seek advice from others? Did he have

specific mentors?

**RK:** Even in his youth, Lincoln was drawn to politicians on the stump, mesmerized by their ability to captivate a crowd with words and wit. As a potential political aspirant himself, Lincoln felt self-conscious about his lack of education and meager upbringing. However, he seemed confident in his abilities and built upon them, and fellow townspeople helped cultivate those skills. For being a frontier town, New Salem surprisingly contained some very educated people. Lincoln sharpened his oratory skills when resident James Rutledge organized the local debate society, and loaned books to Lincoln. Jack Kelso introduced him to enlightenment thinkers, which undoubtedly opened up for Lincoln a new way to think about the world. The village schoolmaster Mentor Graham tutored Lincoln in math, and in reading and writing, all



*Goin' Flshin' Abraham Lincoln and Jack Kelso*  
by Reynolds Jones, 71.2009.081.2739



necessary skills to be taken seriously as a politician. Justice of the peace Bowling Green, whose court proceedings intrigued Lincoln, was perhaps the first person to buy into the twenty-two year-old as a serious candidate for office. Lincoln's most influential mentor in those years was John Stuart from Springfield, whom Lincoln met and befriended during their stint together in the Black Hawk War. It was Stuart who counseled and molded Lincoln to become a successful politician and legislator during the 1834-1835 session when Lincoln became Stuart's protégé in the Illinois General Assembly.

**SG: How important was party affiliation at the time?**

**RK:** In 1832 there was not yet a hardened and organized political party structure in place, but one of the fascinating national developments during Lincoln's tenure in the legislature was the rapid ascent and solidification of party politics and party allegiance. In just a few short years, really even by 1836, political candidates were expected to identify themselves by party identification: Democrat or Whig. Andrew Jackson in 1832 won a second term to the presidency but his killing of the national bank and other measures expanded his presidential authority to the point that many opponents in Congress called him "King Andrew." They formulated themselves into a political movement called the Whigs, the same name as the British political party whose members believed more power rested with Parliament. Thus the two-party system was born. Though much of Illinois gravitated to Jackson's Democrats, Lincoln aligned himself with Kentucky Senator Henry Clay's Whigs. Party politics became so important that, whereas local political issues took highest priority before 1836, after that, the topics that demanded the attention of legislators were defined by a political party's stance on national issues. One of the most important issues which preoccupied much of the legislature's attention during Lincoln's

terms was the state bank debate—all a result of the killing of the national bank, which had ripple effects on the states, and which drew the line in the sand between Whigs and Democrats.

**SG: Please explain the circumstances of each of his elections.**

**RK:** A politician in the 1830s once observed that the key to electoral success lay in the ability to maintain popularity with the voters by whatever means necessary. Perhaps that hasn't changed. For better or worse, popularity was key, and Lincoln did what he needed to do to win the favor of the voters. In 1834, Lincoln went on a grassroots hand-shaking campaign to secure his victory. He worked hard, going from farm to farm and village to village, in order to hear what was on voters' minds. However, voters in his hometown of New Salem wanted something in particular from their legislator: county division. They wanted Lincoln to push through a law to separate from Sangamon County and form a new county in their area. Lincoln did eventually achieve that by 1839, but it took several terms, and some of his constituents reminded him during the process that he still had not achieved what they desired. By 1836, he had proven himself, so voters promptly rewarded him for his rising leadership and attention to their requests, such as road petitions and other constituent care. His advocacy for improved



Henry Clay OC-0497

transportation and internal improvements won him support in 1836. In that election, he was joined by the other members of the Sangamon delegation who would take the name of the "Long Nine." The political power they wielded resulted in the removal of the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield, as well as a massive internal improvements project. The laurels Lincoln and his colleagues gar-

nered from that paved the way for his 1838 re-election. However, after 1838 the country experienced the shockwaves of an economic depression, which plunged Illinois with its colossal internal improvements projects into a heart-stopping debt. Lincoln refused to retreat from the projects against the wishes of his constituents, and that worried him about the prospects for his future. Lincoln doubted whether he would win re-election again in 1840, but did so because he had become a state Whig party leader. His less than impressive showing in 1840 may have contributed to his decision not to seek another term.

**SG: How would you rate Lincoln's legislative record? Greatest success? Greatest failure? Please elaborate on the concept of "internal improvements" for the state.**

**RK:** How to rate Lincoln's record is really a debatable and subjective question depending upon how you look at it. If we judge his record purely on the number of bills and resolutions he sponsored or introduced, there were only about thirty total. The one issue he most ardently championed and shepherded through the legislature—the internal improvements system—left the state swooning in debt for more than a generation. Those examples don't exactly scream success. However, he exhibited strong enough leadership that his Whig colleagues voted him floor leader for multiple terms, and he would likely have been elected House speaker if his party had been the majority party in the legislature. His greatest legislative success may have been his famous 1837 protest against slavery that he and fellow representative Dan Stone entered into the House Record. I say that it may have been because it is the only legislative act which Lincoln mentions in his autobiographies, so he must have deemed it significant. However, it should be noted that he wrote those autobiographies when he was a candidate for president for the Republican Party, and when slavery was a major issue.

As to internal improvements, one cannot speak on the history of the state, or even America, in the 1830s without acknowledging the importance of internal improvements. The country had begun to embark on a building spree, recognizing that, in

order to have a flourishing economy, roads and bridges and canals had to be constructed. Especially in a nation where the majority of the people were engaged in farming, it was necessary to have an avenue to get products to market in the eastern United States and beyond. River transportation was the best prospect at first, even to Lincoln, and the famed Erie Canal in New York provided the prototype. However, by the mid-1830s the railroad boom proved too tempting to resist, even if the costs were “heart-appalling” as Lincoln termed it. States such as Illinois went on a construction frenzy assembling a patchwork of railroads from one city to another crisscrossing the state, and commencing on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Much of that construction was on the “faith and credit of the state,” meaning that taxpayers more than private industry provided the promised revenue. When the previously mentioned Panic of 1837 hit, it stopped cold many of the projects which had already begun.

**SG:** Is there a “sameness” in his performance in the legislature, or did certain terms stand out?

**RK:** Especially by 1836, Lincoln positioned himself prominently above many of his fellow representatives. He took the lead on internal improvements, on capital relocation, and on the bank debate. He was elevated to Whig floor leader. His colleagues observed that Lincoln was a rising political star in the state. To avoid oversentimentality, let’s face it, had Lincoln not become president in 1860, would we have heard about him, and would I have written about him? Probably not. In fact, one of the reasons I undertook this topic was because Lincoln’s legislative career doesn’t get the attention it deserves. That isn’t to say that his career as state representative isn’t worth examining, and there was not a “sameness” in his performance across the board. In particular, the 1836-1837 session—the session of internal improvements and capital removal—is certainly worthy of examination even if one puts Lincoln aside

as the central player. The role and the extent to which the Long Nine executed political influence is impressive for anyone interested in the study of political power. It impressed Thomas Ford, future Illinois governor, enough that he devoted great attention to it in his biography of the era—though it should be pointed out he was critical of the Long Nine’s tactics. Those were his peak years as a legislator.



*Lincoln's Toast at the Long Nine Banquet 71.2009.083.1305*

**SG:** What was Lincoln’s involvement in changing the location of the state capital? Was the move a good decision for (1) his future political career and (2) for the state itself?

**RK:** Without the crucial role of Abraham Lincoln as “chief of the Long Nine,” as he was termed, it is conceivable that the removal of the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield would not have transpired, or at least not as quickly or in the manner that it did. Lincoln himself directed the Long Nine to curry favor with legislators, to sell the benefits of removal, and to make deals with respect to internal improvements in their respective localities in exchange for capital removal support. He indeed had to court legislators in the southern reaches of the state, who lived closer to Vandalia, and whose constituents feared the diminishment of political power from the southern half of the state. Those familiar with

the tactics of the Long Nine confirmed that Lincoln was chief of the tribe. After the session ended, Lincoln was lauded across his county with several communities hosting celebrations to him and to the Long Nine.

Whether the move of the state capital to Springfield was a good move for Lincoln’s political career, the answer is an absolute yes. Lincoln and the Long Nine were Sangamon County residents, and even Lincoln himself was assuredly contemplating in his own mind a personal move of his home from New Salem to Springfield. While serving in the legislature, he was taking the necessary steps to earn a law license. A successful attorney would have little hope of a burgeoning career in New Salem. The opportunities for him with the capital in his hometown were endless. Was the move good

for the state itself? Again, the answer would have to be yes. Even those who were opposed to a move of the state’s government to Springfield, recognized the northward shift of the population center. People migrating into Illinois were now settling in central and northern Illinois. Chicago was a growing city and became incorporated during Lincoln’s legislative years. Illinois would have been hampered as a state in which population growth was in the opposite end of the state from its capital.

**SG:** What was his relationship with



*Statehouse, Vandalia, Illinois 71.2009.083.1330*



*State Capitol Building, Springfield 71.2009.083.1684*



**other legislators? Were some beneficial in his future political life? Any lifelong foes made during this time?**

**RK:** One of the points that I emphasize in my book is that the connections which Lincoln made in the legislature are with the same individuals who would be present in his story throughout the rest of his life. In many ways, many of these men were very similar to Lincoln: Many were young, had been born in Kentucky, had served in the Black Hawk War, and were eager to rise politically. Lincoln early on learned the necessity of winning friends and confidants. Among those friends, he certainly allied himself more with fellow Whigs, but did not shirk at working across the party line to advance the cause of the state. Many recognized Lincoln's leadership abilities and enjoyed his company. The names of his early friends and colleagues are familiar to anyone who knows the Lincoln story: Orville Browning, Edward Baker, John Stuart, Ninian Edwards, Robert Baker, Jesse Dubois and others. All are individuals who would remain personally and politically close to Lincoln for the rest of his life. Some of these men campaigned with and for Lincoln for the U.S Senate in 1858 and for the presidency in 1860. Some visited him in the White House.

To be fair, anyone in politics is bound to draw the ire of critics and foes. Lincoln was not immune to that. Democrat Stephen Douglas entered the legislature in 1836 and served only one term. However, it did not take long for Douglas and Lincoln to find themselves on opposite sides of many issues. When John Stuart exited the state legislature to run for Congress, he tapped Lincoln to help stump speak for him against his opponent, Stephen Douglas. Usher Linder, another Democrat, proved to be a great nemesis to Lincoln throughout much of his tenure, and the two often exchanged barbs on the House floor in their speeches. Interestingly, however, Linder became a Whig, and after doing so, Lincoln came to his side, literally, helping protect Linder when he was threatened physically after a speech. Another well-known antagonist in the state legislature was the Democratic state auditor James Shields, who was subjected to ridicule



*The Sangamo Journal 71.2009.085.01001*

by Lincoln. That relationship nearly landed Lincoln in a duel shortly after departing from the legislature.

**SG: What sources proved most valuable in your research?**

**RK:** The Illinois House of Representatives journals from the 1830s and 1840s were invaluable, as they record all of the proceedings, speeches, and votes, and are now available online as a searchable database. They were extremely helpful. *The Sangamo Journal* and the *Illinois State Register* were the two primary Sangamon County newspapers of the era and were quite helpful, even with the partisan slant that newspapers often carried back then. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* is always a requisite source. Sources such as *Herndon's Informants*, while they carry some obvious bias, were crucial in providing personal accounts from Lincoln's New Salem contemporaries. Other sources such as the Lincoln Heritage Museum, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, and the Fayette County Museum provided so much information. Of course, any historian will often look to those who came before, so great past biographies of Lincoln's legislative years were handy, including that of Benjamin Thomas.

**SG: What were the most useful traits which Abraham Lincoln developed in the Illinois Legislature?**

**Were there some lessons which he failed to learn?**

**RK:** One of the most universally appreciated aspects about Abraham Lincoln is his character. We are familiar with those qualities so associated with him, so in researching his career as a state legislator, I indeed set out to determine if Abraham Lincoln exhibited the same character entering his career as he did when president. If so, then it becomes even more necessary to understand those legislative years as perhaps the most formative in his life. I did not come away disappointed. But first to answer what lessons he did not yet appear to learn, in his ambitious pursuit to climb the political ladder and win the support of his party colleagues: Lincoln exercised to a fault the practice of anonymous newspaper assaults against his political opponents. He seemed to take great pleasure in verbally attacking his adversaries, particularly if he saw his own stock rise as a result. While Lincoln often apologized if he realized that his words carried personal insult and hurt, that habit never really ceased until after he departed from the state legislature.

However, history records many more positive traits resulting from his legislative experiences. Most of the accounts from his fellow legislators give praise to Lincoln as an astute learner of policy, as a savvy orator, as a politician gifted in political persuasion, as a staunch and principled proponent of the causes he lent support to, but above all, as a man of his word and the humble servant of the people. His willingness to protest against the institution of slavery in a state which was, at best, apathetic about the fate of slaves showed great courage. His ability to overcome his deep depression after temporarily severing romantic ties with Mary Todd in 1841 demonstrated his perseverance. These are Lincolnesque qualities with which we are all familiar. My contention is, indeed, that the admirable character of Abraham Lincoln was developed not as president, or congressman, or attorney, but years before as a state representative.

*Ron Keller teaches at Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois.*

# Reconstructing Lincoln's New Salem

By 1840, three years after Lincoln left for Springfield, New Salem was nearly deserted. Many of the inhabitants had moved their homes to the new town of Petersburg two miles north, which Lincoln had helped survey. By the time of Lincoln's assassination, New Salem had become a pasture with only a couple of buildings left standing, people regularly pillaging the old cellars and foundations for stone. Even so, impassioned pilgrims visited the site steadily. In the 1890s the popular, local Chautauqua traded on its proximity to the ghost town. Ferry boats took participants across the river to visit "Old Salem," as it was now called. The young millionaire Senator William Randolph Hearst bought and donated the site in 1906, saving it from development and ensuring its status as a free heritage site. The Old Salem Lincoln League built the first reconstruction in 1918—five buildings including a handsome "Stone Museum" (today's Village Museum Shop). Local volunteers, including former New Salem residents and their relatives, helped in the effort.

A long-planned major reconstruction was begun in the early 1920s but only carried out in the early 1930s. It's the New Salem State Park we experience today: thirty-seven buildings in a beautiful wooded setting. This mammoth undertaking was the work of two governors (Emmerson and Horner), a state architect, the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and those who collected regional antiques and furnished the buildings' interiors. The Lincoln League has long been the steward of many aspects of the management and operations on the site, including the interpreters and theatre productions.

Today, Lincoln's New Salem is under threat because of its age and uncertainty over funding to maintain it. Several organizations, dedicated individuals, and state officials are desperately searching for monies to repair and preserve this unique memorial.



Entrance to New Salem. Photo: New Salem State Historic Site



The young men of the Illinois Civilian Conservation Corps planted trees, constructed paths, and built some of the structures for the present re-creation of New Salem. A Roosevelt-sponsored relief program, workers were paid monthly and were required to send a portion home to their families. This image shows the front gate of Camp New Salem in 1931-2 when the CCC transformed New Salem into a state park. One of their first tasks was the construction of their own barracks to replace their earlier tents. Life was almost military in nature but included welcome trips to Springfield for restaurant meals and movies. Photo: New Salem State Historic Site.



Many don't realize there was a completely different reconstruction of New Salem before the 1933 version we experience today. The Old Salem Lincoln League, the first such organization committed to recreating Lincoln's pioneer town, held a building-raising in July, 1918. Men were recruited from Petersburg and the region, many of whom were relatives of original New Salem residents; two had lived there in Lincoln's time. The 1918 buildings were eventually razed to make way for the recreation of the 1930s. The photo shows, from left to right, the Hill-McNamar store, the Berry-Lincoln store, and Dr. Allen's house under construction. Photo: New Salem State Historic Site.



# By Mark B. Pohlada, A Director of the Abraham Lincoln Association

Costumed interpreters and authentic period objects have always been crucially important to the visitor experience at New Salem. During the 1918 reconstruction there was a call for original items to furnish the buildings' interiors. Many Petersburg residents—some from former New Salem families—donated objects from the pioneer era. Another group of objects was gathered during the rebuilding in the 1930s. The result was a massive collection of American pioneer material culture. The historian and New Salem spokesperson Fern Nance Pond—herself related to Parthena Nance, wife of Sam Hill—wrote a popular catalogue about the objects and their provenance. Photo: Robert Lawson, 2006.



The construction of a grist-and-saw mill was key to the founding of New Salem. James Rutledge and John Camron built it in 1829, then laid out plots on the eighty-acre plane above. Here on the river newcomer Abraham Lincoln famously freed his flatboat from becoming stuck on the dam. The original mill was replaced by another in 1853; that one burned in 1883. As part of the final phase of the reconstruction of New Salem, a third mill was completed in 1947 and stands at the site of the originals today. It's a reminder of New Salem's original relationship to the Sangamon River. Photo: New Salem State Historic Site.

North Entrance to New Salem park with sign. Photo: "Lincoln and New Salem" by Thomas Reep.

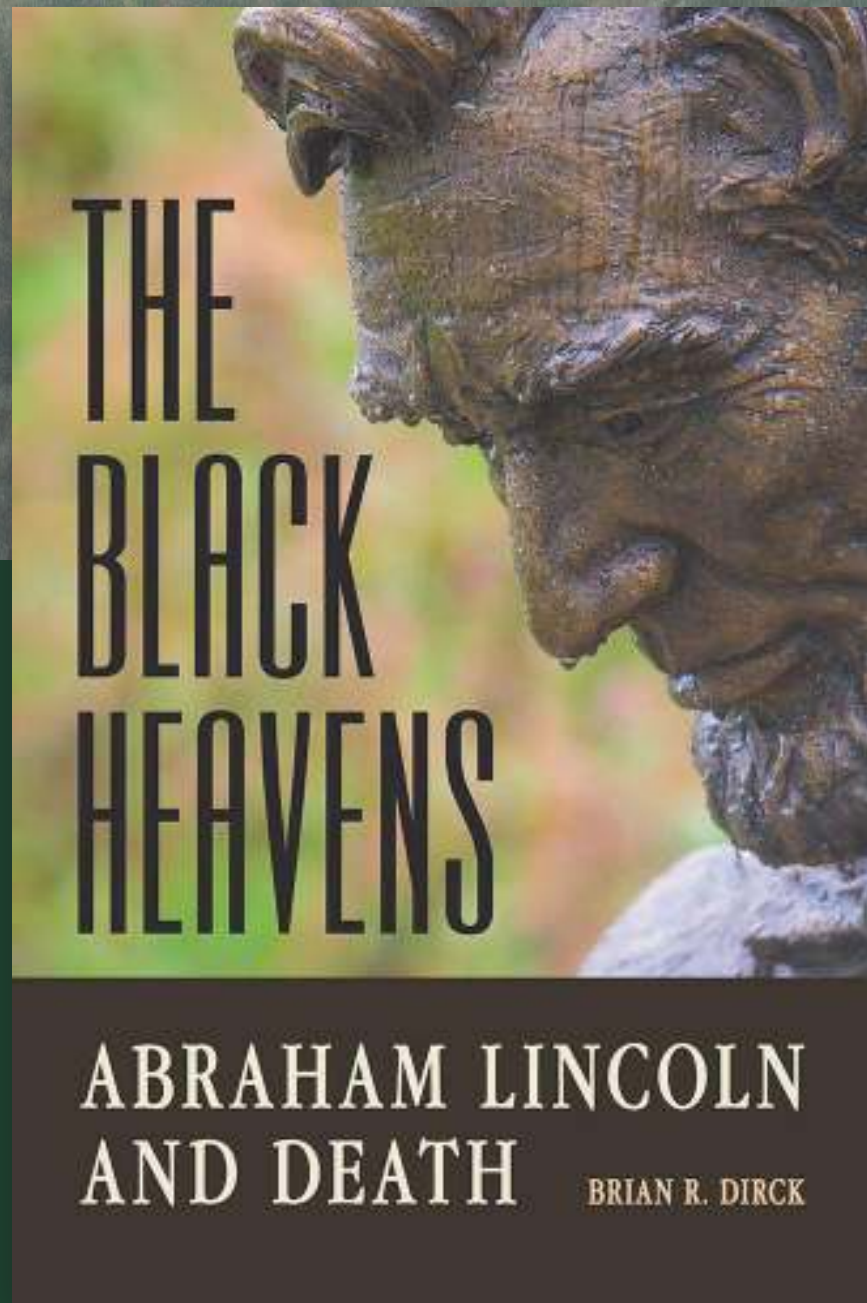


Interior of Dr. Regnier's residence in New Salem. Photo: Ohio Memory AV83\_B01F04\_031.

For further information about restoration and preservation efforts at New Salem, call the Abraham Lincoln Association at 217-546-2656. To see the both New Salem Articles and additional information, visit <https://www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org/Lincoln-Lore/NewSalem/>.



# An Interview with Brian Dirck



About his new book,  
*The Black Heavens:  
Abraham Lincoln and Death*



**Sara Gabbard: You undertook a monumental task in writing on this subject. What led you to accept the challenge?**

**Brian Dirck:** Well, “The Black Heavens” could almost be a case study in how books sometimes evolve beyond their original purpose, and how asking questions leads in turn to asking other questions, and then still other questions, until the result is a very different book.

The project was originally titled “Lincoln’s Hardest Summer,” and was to be a case study of Lincoln’s leadership during that last, brutal summer of 1864, when the president had to guide the Union through the trauma of the Wilderness and Georgia campaigns, the problems of emancipation and political revolts within his own party, all while facing re-election. I was interested in the interplay between democracy, presidential leadership and war.

As I delved more deeply, it became clear that the real question was, how did Lincoln get the country to accept such astronomically high casualty rates and still maintain the war effort—not to mention re-elect him and guarantee more war? This led naturally to the next question: so what then did Lincoln think of all those battle deaths, a question that then led to, “well, what exactly did he think about death generally?”

It was an intriguing question; but when I began looking at the literature on Lincoln, I was surprised at how little has actually been written about what seems like such a basic question. Various authors here and there discuss Lincoln’s reactions to the deaths of soldiers, his loved ones, etc., but hardly anyone (other than Robert V. Bruce) has done much by way of just focusing on his

understanding of death, carrying that thread of his reaction to death and mourning from his early life through his presidency.

Almost as surprising is the fact that the growing literature on death and the Civil War tends to ignore Lincoln. I’m thinking here of course of Drew Gilpin Faust’s seminal work on death during the Civil War, *This Republic of Suffering*, which has in turn inspired a host of books and articles on the subject, not to mention a quite well-developed literature on how nineteenth-century Americans viewed death overall. But none of it spends very much time on Lincoln.

So, we have this extensive literature on death and the war which hardly addresses Lincoln; and we have

attempt to make him seem like an unusually tragic hero. But in fact Americans in Lincoln’s day routinely encountered the deaths of children and loved ones. Any parent could reasonably expect to lose at least one child, given the prevalence of so much illness and disease back then.

And yes also in the sense that Lincoln by and large followed established customs and rituals for mourning and funerals during his day. Americans followed intricate rules concerning how funerals should be conducted, what the parents of deceased children should wear, etc. Lincoln seems to have, for the most part, observed the same basic mourning rituals of his neighbors

But I’d say no in the sense that



View in Field on Right Wing, at Battle of Gettysburg LN-0037

this enormous literature on Lincoln which doesn’t address death and mourning. My book tries to bring these two subject areas together.

**SG: Was Lincoln’s view of death generally in line with mid-19th Century beliefs and traditions?**

**BD:** Yes and no. Yes in the sense that Lincoln probably did not encounter death much more frequently than most other Americans of his era. I have run across commentary to the effect that Lincoln was steeped in death and suffering because of the deaths of his mother, sister, two children, etc. in an understandable

Lincoln was not given to an inordinate fascination with questions about death and the afterlife. His was a time during which Americans were often obsessive about questions of whether there was a heaven or a hell, what those might look like, whether people could commune with the spirits of the dead, and so on. Lincoln vaguely believed in an afterlife, but otherwise the subject did not interest him in much detail. Whenever Lincoln’s law partner Billy Herndon tried to engage him in conversations about these things, Lincoln quickly grew bored. So, he was somewhat unique among

Americans of his time in that he did not dwell much upon these issues.

**SG: We don't hear as much about son Eddy's death as we do about Willie. Had Lincoln's thoughts changed between these two personal tragedies?**

**BD:** You're right, and I suspect that this is so because Willie's death is much better documented. Willie died in the White House, surrounded by people who later penned eyewitness accounts of what they saw: Mary's African American seamstress Elizabeth Keckly, for example, who wrote quite a bit about Willie's illness and passing, and his parents' reactions. But we have no comparable sources on Eddy's death, because when Eddy died in 1850, he did so in a private home in Springfield, when Lincoln was not such a public figure. There are a far fewer reliable primary sources on Eddy's passing.

As to whether his thoughts changed between the two children's deaths, it is almost impossible to say. Lincoln was not much given to writing down his thoughts about death and dying as a general thing, and I think that he tended to internalize and suppress his grief. I will say this: the evidence seems to suggest that Lincoln was more emotionally distraught over Willie's death than Eddy's, but then this again may simply be a matter of sources, because we have so little information on Eddy's death and how that was perceived by those around him.

There were also differing circumstances regarding the two children. Eddy's death, probably from tuberculosis, was a slow, steady decline, lasting for nearly two months; Lincoln had to know what was coming as he watched Eddy deteriorate, and he had time to prepare himself emotionally. Willie, on the other hand, suffered from typhoid, a notoriously

unpredictable disease. Willy's health waxed and waned, to the point that there were times when Lincoln might have reasonably entertained the hope for his recovery; so, his death



Willie Lincoln LFA-0080

may have been more of a shock.

**SG: In the death of both sons, were Abraham and Mary Lincoln able to console each other, or did they mourn separately.**

**BD:** Great question, and one that's hard to answer. As a rule, Lincoln was not very comfortable around women who were openly displaying intense emotion. Weeping widows and mothers who during the war tried to elicit his sympathy more often found that such displays unnerved or even agitated him. And particularly in the case of Willie, Mary's anguish was profound and painful to behold.

I suspect, then, that Lincoln probably kept Mary at some distance, as each underwent a private torment regarding the deaths of their children. I want to stress that this is just an educated guess; much might well have

occurred behind closed doors, including Lincoln providing close emotional support for Mary (and vice versa) when they were out of sight from the witnesses who might have later recorded what they saw. But on the whole, Lincoln was inclined, as I said earlier, to internalize his own grieving.

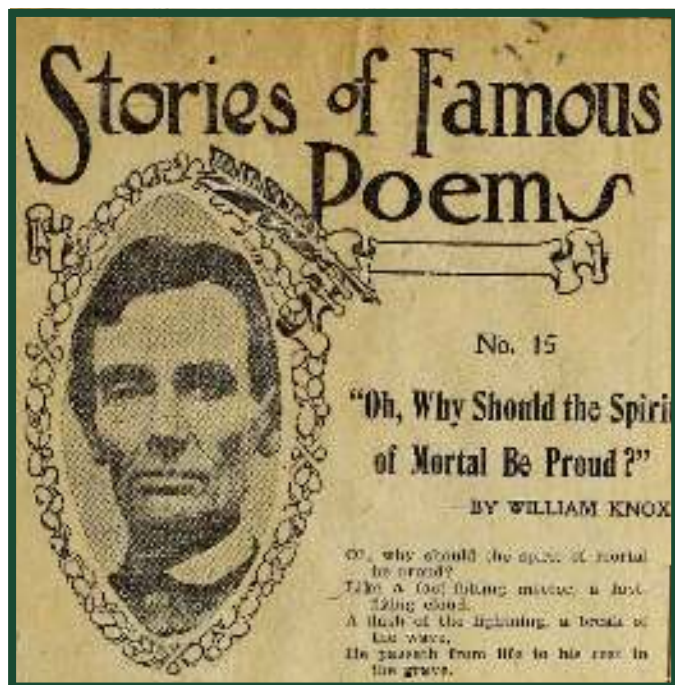
And there is circumstantial evidence suggesting that Abraham and Mary grieved separately. When Mary's sister visited soon after Willie's death, Abraham asked her to stay a while to help nurse Mary through her grief. And there is the well-known incident, described by Keckly, in which Lincoln threatened Mary with commitment to a mental institution if she could not control her grief at Willie's death. These suggest a man putting his wife's grieving at some arm's length.

**SG: Please comment on the effect that the death of Elmer Ellsworth had on the president.**

**BD:** It really shocked him, for two reasons. First, Lincoln was genuinely fond of Ellsworth, who was a charismatic young man, and a law student who studied for the bar in Lincoln's law office before the war. Not only did Lincoln like him personally, but Ellsworth was also a favorite of his boys, and Mary. So, losing Ellsworth was much like losing a member of the family.

Second, it shocked Lincoln for the same reasons it shocked the nation. When Ellsworth died, he put a real and public face on war deaths. We must remember the naiveté that pretty much everyone from Lincoln on down harbored about war in May 1861. Hardly anyone had died in the Civil War at that point; people didn't know that the horrific bloodletting of an Antietam or a Shiloh or hundreds of other battles were just over the horizon. And unlike today, Americans of that time did not have access to realistic books or artwork that might educate people on just how horrible battlefield deaths could be. There was no equivalent of *Saving Private Ryan*, or *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or any of the graphic and often disillusioned depictions of combat as a grisly bloodbath we see in our time. Everyone knew that soldiers died in battle, of course; but until Ellsworth





William Knox "Mortality" 1913

died, and in such a bloody and violent fashion—having a hole blown in his chest from a shotgun blast by an angry old man—it hadn't really been driven home to Lincoln, or anyone else, just how bad this new civil war was going to be. Lots of handsome young men were going to die; Ellsworth was just the first.

**SG: Lincoln's fascination with the poem *Mortality* by William Knox certainly suggests melancholy today. Was the poem a fairly typical manifestation of 19th Century thought?**

**BD:** Yes; or at least, one strain of nineteenth century thought, the strain that filtered death and dying through the lens of a morose Calvinistic fatalism. Insofar as Lincoln thought much about death before the war at all, he tended to filter it through his Hardshell Baptist upbringing, with its Calvinist emphasis on the inscrutability of God's plan. We all die, but no one knows why we die, what purpose it serves, or what comes next; and this sort of acceptance of death's mystery was integral to Lincoln's understanding of death. Likewise, Knox's poetry has that same sense of profound and unknowable tragedy; we die, no one knows why, and we must simply accept the sadness and mystery of that fact.

**SG: Was President Lincoln's response to the death toll of the**

**Civil War similar to that of other wartime presidents?**

**BD:** That's another great question, and I'd have to say that, on the whole, yes. As I argue in my book, Lincoln had to eventually learn during the war to put some emotional distance between himself and the war's awful human cost; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to do his job, or protect his very sanity. The other comparisons with presidents are (to a greater or lesser extent) FDR and Truman during World

War II, and LBJ and Nixon during Vietnam. And I think that, in each case, presidents must develop what amounts to an emotionally callous attitude regarding the war's dead; they must, in order to do their jobs, insulate themselves from thinking too long on war's miseries. One thinks of Truman's decision, for example, to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. Whether one agrees with that decision or not, one sees in Truman a willingness to make a rather cold calculus: kill some people, the Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to save many others.

Lincoln had to develop a similar capacity, and in my book I suggest he did so. Now, this is not at all to say that he became a callous, unfeeling man—quite the contrary. But he seems to have learned to accept the war dead as part of a larger process over which he actually had little control, a process tied to an unknowable Divine plan which he did not truly understand. This admittance that he did not really control the war's events, and especially the numbers of dead soldiers, in the end gave him a certain amount of acceptance, perhaps even a bit of inner peace.

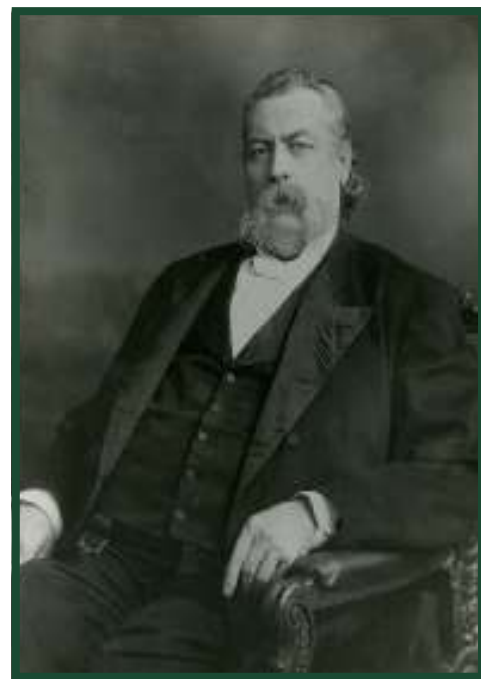
**SG: Please tell our readers of your conclusions regarding Lincoln's eulogy for Henry Clay.**

**BD:** I saw in Lincoln's eulogy what I termed the politics of death. When Lincoln delivered that eulogy in

1852 (one of only three eulogies he ever composed), he was beginning to slowly emerge from the semi-retirement from politics he undertook after he returned from Congress; and he was beginning to turn his energies towards the slavery question, something about which he had said relatively little prior to that point.

So, in 1852 he is beginning to find his way back into politics, and antislavery themes; and at that point, Clay dies, and he is asked to write a eulogy. And he turns that eulogy into what amounts to a political document, a re-introduction of himself back onto the public political stage. He offers a long overview of Clay's career that is also a window into Lincoln's own ideas about politics, and especially the slavery issue, as Lincoln points out Clay's antislavery principles and his leading role in the American colonization movement, which Lincoln at the time also supported. In effect, Lincoln uses the eulogy as a sort of political speech.

I call it in the book a "political" use of Clay's death, but in doing so I don't mean to imply anything negative or cynical at all about Lincoln. Rather, he was doing what many Americans of his day did when they composed eulogies: combining veneration for the dead with statements regarding the values and principles of the living.



Ward Hill Lamon LN-0783

**SG: Your bibliography for *The Black Heavens* is impressive. What research: (1) taught you things that you hadn't known before; (2) caused you to look at certain aspects of this story in a different light; and (3) confirmed previously held convictions?**

**BD:** This book took me to places in my research I had not entirely expected. There is a vast literature regarding funerals in Lincoln's time, for example, part of the social and cultural history of that age. I learned a great deal about the intricate rules surrounding mourning customs and dress, processions, coffins, etc.

I think the incident that most surprised me as I dug into the research was the scandal surrounding Lincoln's visit to Antietam in 1862, something of which I had vaguely heard about but I had not given much attention. He was accused of disrespecting the war dead by having Ward Hill Lamon sing what the press claimed were "ribald Negro songs" while they literally trod on the graves of the dead men. This was untrue, but it was amazing how quickly

I was also somewhat surprised at how the sources regarding Lincoln's dabbling with Spiritualism fell apart upon closer examination. I've long been familiar with the tradition that Lincoln attended seances, believed in ghosts and the like, and (along I'm sure with many others) sort of half-way believed them, especially given Mary's well-documented Spiritualist tendencies after the war. I thought there must have been something to this, even if the stories were exaggerated. But once I drilled down to the bottom of the primary sources, I discovered they are of highly dubious quality. I now believe that Lincoln probably never attended a séance (though Mary did so), was not really a Spiritualist in any meaningful sense, and was embarrassed by the rumors that he was one of their own.

While we are on the subject of Mary, I also found that my re-



Mary Todd Lincoln with Abraham Lincoln's "Spirit" OC-0275



Abraham Lincoln's Funeral Car, Washington D.C. OC-1452

this story gained traction, how widely it was disseminated, especially in the opposition press, and how worried Lincoln was about it, especially when the story resurfaced during the 1864 elections. Until I wrote this book, I was unaware of just how big this scandal was.

search tempered my views of her reaction to the deaths around her. Like many others, I had always believed she reacted in a highly unstable and visible fashion to the deaths of her children Eddy and Willie, and that in doing so she was a continual source

of embarrassment for her husband. But in fact my research shows she seems to have handled Eddy's death relatively well, following the established rules of her time for mothers in mourning; and even her highly distraught reaction to Willie's death was largely a secret from the public. Yes, she was having serious emotional problems regarding Willie, and there is hard evidence she involved herself in some Spiritualist rituals, trying to contact Willie in the afterlife, but she did these things actually rather quietly.

The bottom line is that the book was quite an education for me as I wrote it.

*Brian Dirck is Professor of History at Anderson University in Indiana.*





# A Right Smart Get Out

*Logan Circle Philadelphia 71.2009.083.2382*



M. Kelly Tillery



It is difficult to imagine, much less fully appreciate, that in June of 1864 the democratic republic as a form of government was extremely rare and under siege. This nation was the only large democracy, other than

in 1861, to provide comfort and relief to the troops. The Philadelphia Branch, in conjunction with the New Jersey and Delaware Branches and with support from The Union League, sponsored a Great Central

to Lincoln, "... if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours as you did in two minutes."

Although in the midst of a campaign



*Building of the Great Central Fair LCpga04061*

Britain, though that nation restricted the vote to less than 5% of its citizenry and had a monarch and one hereditary house of its legislature. The tiny Swiss Republic, the Republic of San Marino, Liberia and the Boer Republics in South Africa were the only other democracies in a world otherwise governed by dictators, dynasties, warlords, and a wide variety of so-called "royals."

This nation and its special form of government, "of the people, by the people and for the people" was still an experiment, and, sadly, one then in serious danger of failing.

Come with me now, for a moment back in time to June 16, 1864, Logan Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

President Lincoln had approved the U.S. Sanitary Commission as an official, though voluntary, organization

Fair on June 7-28, 1864 in Philadelphia on Logan Square, a fundraising event that raised over \$1,000,000 the equivalent of almost \$15,000,000 today.

Although invited to attend the opening ceremonies on June 7th, Lincoln declined, but then agreed to attend on the 16th.

The greatest orator of the day, Edward Everett, was also set to speak. Lincoln had shared the podium with Everett, seven months before at Gettysburg. There, on November 19, 1863, Everett spoke first, for two hours; Lincoln spoke next, for two minutes.

The Fair organizers thought it best that the President speak first – and he did. Everett knew it best, too. The day after the Gettysburg ceremony, Everett humbly had written

for re-election, and one that he then fully expected to lose, Lincoln, the politician/statesman, consciously chose not to use this visit to make political speeches. At a banquet in the Main Assembly Hall, laid out across Logan Square, at about 7 P.M., Lincoln gave a brief speech commending the fine work of this private, volunteer organization in giving comfort and relief to Union soldiers.

Impressed with Philadelphia's effort on his behalf, the President was overheard to whisper, in his inimitable folksy way, that this was "a right smart get out."

As he spoke, however, the war dragged on. While General Meade had driven Lee from Pennsylvania the summer before, over 100,000 men under Grant were then engaged in a fierce battle outside of



Petersburg, Virginia, 270 miles away just south of Richmond. The Army of the Potomac was attacking the Army of Northern Virginia in a bloody battle that would start the ten-month Siege of Petersburg.

The war was far from over and Union victory was not yet certain. Less than a month later, Confederate troops under General Jubal Early came to within five miles of the Executive Mansion, the closest hostile troops had come since the British burned it in 1814.

In 1864 Philadelphia, the host city, had a population of 600,000. It was the second largest city in the United States and fourth largest in the Western world.

Temple University's Dr. Anthony Waskie called Philadelphia, in his wonderful book of the same name, the "Arsenal of The Union." It had over 6,300 manufactories, two major arsenals, a navy yard, and scores of armories.

Philadelphia was also the largest center for medical care in the nation, if not the world at the time – 24 military hospitals and scores of branches. Over 157,000 Union soldiers received medical treatment in the City during the war, most of whom were aided in some way by the Commission.

A review of the Final Report of the U.S. Sanitary Commission Philadelphia Chapter reveals that the ladies of the Commission provided, as one might expect, substantial food and medical supplies. They also provided "comfort" to the troops, which included supplying a considerable amount of alcohol and tobacco. And, inexplicably, an inordinate amount of combs and handkerchiefs. Apparently, even back then, looking good was as important as feeling good.

Professor Waskie has observed that the Commission "was probably the greatest purely civic act of voluntary benevolence ever attempted in Philadelphia." That is, I suppose, until LIVE AID, 121 years later.

President Lincoln had approved, by Executive Order, the Commission almost precisely three years before on June 9, 1861. He did so reluctantly, however, concerned that, as he said, "it might become a fifth wheel to the coach." His Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton detested the Commission as being meddling in military affairs. But, as part

of Lincoln's genius was his ability to learn from experience and accordingly adapt his views and policies, he came to appreciate the substantial value of the Commission to the Union cause. He knew that five men died of disease for every two killed by wounds and thus more sanitary conditions amongst the Union's forces might ensure its survival.

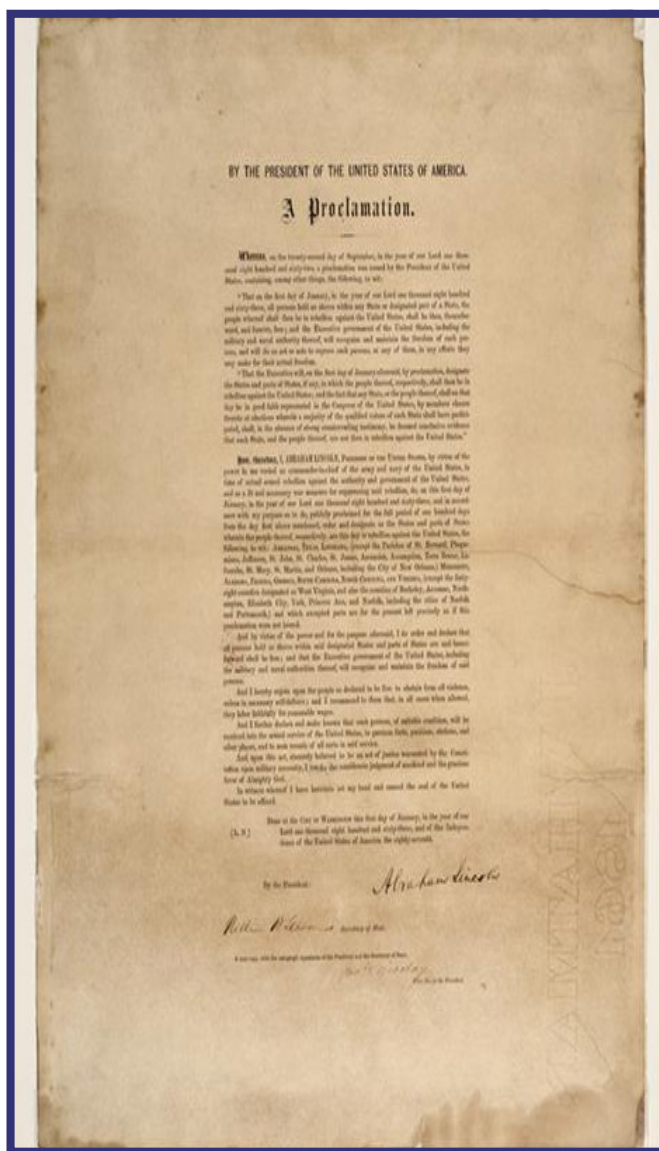
While we remember the Sanitary Commission for the incredible work of the thousands of women volunteers who did the hard day to day work of aid and comfort to the Union soldiers, it is well to note that (and perhaps this was a sign of the times) every one of the Commission members, officers, executives and committee members was a man.

The male Commission members actually frowned upon these local fairs thinking they supported local branches at the expense of the national organization. But when the Commission men tried to hold their own fair in New York, City, it was a failure by comparison to others.

Though claiming, somewhat in jest, not to understand them, Lincoln had always supported and appreciated the women of America. He had supported giving them the vote as early as 1836, 84 years before they got it.

Not three months before at a similar fair in Washington, he had concluded his remarks, praising the role of women in alleviating soldiers' suffering, saying, "God Bless the women of America!"

*Kelly Tillery practices law at Pepper Hamilton in Philadelphia.*



Emancipation Proclamation 71.2009.083.0001

*The Leland-Boker Authorized Edition of the Emancipation Proclamation was printed in June 1864 with three original signatories: Abraham Lincoln, William Seward, and John Nicolay. These signed copies were sold at the Great Central Sanitary Fair to raise funds to help the war efforts. One of these original documents is in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection.*

# Marx and Lincoln



*Karl Marx, Public Domain*



*Abraham Lincoln LFA-0007*

Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie

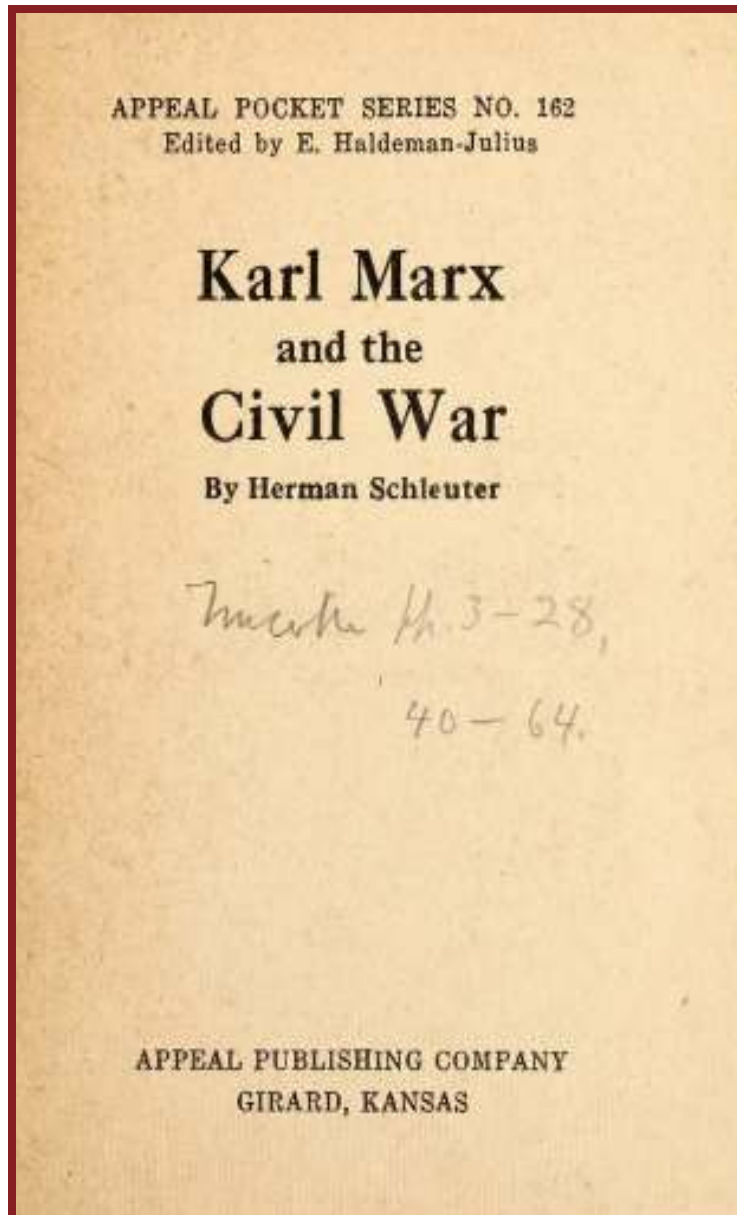


In November 1864, Abraham Lincoln was re-elected president of the United States. Numerous bodies outside America welcomed his re-election. One such was the International Working Men's Association (IWMA).

The IWMA was officially founded on September 28, 1864, at St. Martin's Hall in central London. Its members were mostly European radicals, socialists, communists, anarchists, trade unionists, artisans, and working people. Its central objective was to organize the working-class internationally in a struggle against industrial capitalism and for the establishment of socialist societies. One expanding group consisted of immigrant laborers who had settled in the United States over the previous several decades. They worked the fields, factories, towns, and ships of the massive new republic and required inclusion in this global crusade.

On November 29, 1864, the Central Council of the IWMA drafted an Address to President Lincoln. The organization's Corresponding Secretary for Germany wrote it in English. This man, Karl Marx, was forty-six years old at the time (compared to the fifty-five year old Lincoln) and living as an exile in central London. He had been *persona non grata* since the publication of the explosive call for international working class solidarity expressed in *The Communist Manifesto* published during the early months of the 1848 European Revolutions.

The 1864 Address made four key points. First, it offered congratulations to the president for his consistent opposition toward slavery. In the first presidential election in 1860, Lincoln's watchword had been "resistance to the Slave Power." In his second election of 1864, it was the "Death of Slavery."



*Karl Marx and the Civil War* by Herman Schleuter  
71.2009.084.09396

Both met with the approbation of his supporters. What is striking about this opening point is that even contemporary outsiders recognized that the American Civil War was primarily about slavery.

Second, the working class of Europe had a vested interest in this "titanic American strife." It boiled down to one simple proposition: was the "virgin soil of immense tracts" to be available to the "emigrant" or was it to be "prostituted by the tramp of the slavedriver?" Again, this was a powerful statement on the role of differences concerning slavery's expansion in the

new republic as being foundational to civil war causation.

Third, this was a global struggle between capital and labor. On the one side, a slaveholders' rebellion representing a "holy crusade of property against labor." Opposed were "men of labor" with future hopes and aspirations. Their opposition was firmly expressed in bearing hardships during the cotton famine in which factories stood idle and working people starved because of the absence of the southern staple crop. These workers had also opposed intervention by respective European governments to support

proslavery interests. And immigrants were joining Union armies and contributing their "quota of blood" to the good cause.

This third point is based upon some questionable assumptions. Not all factory operatives in the textile districts of Lancashire in northern England supported the Union. It is not at all clear how working people were interested in stopping their respective governments from recognizing the Confederacy. Also, immigrants who fought for the United States often did so under compulsion rather than as part of a holy cru-



*The Communist Manifesto (Dutch Translation), Public Domain*

sade under the banner of international solidarity. One powerful representation is the movie scene of Irish immigrants getting off ships in New York City harbor and being immediately drafted into the Union army in Martin Scorsese’s 2002 film *Gangs of New York*.

The fourth point of the 1864 Address was that the Civil War was historically progressive. Before it, northern labor was unable to attain “true freedom” because slavery “defile[d] their own republic,” and they were forced to sell their labor to the highest bidder. Moreover, American workers were unable to support their European brethren while being subservient to capital. Now this was over.

The IWMA Address to Lincoln concluded that this War was a historical watershed in terms of ushering

in history’s progressive class. If the Revolutionary War brought in the rule of the “middle class,” so the “American Antislavery War” would usher in the ascendancy of the working class. It was only appropriate that Lincoln, “the single-minded son of the working class,” should lead this epochal struggle. Again, historical accuracy was sacrificed for sweeping rhetoric. As we know, Lincoln’s famous log cabin image should not be confused with his more comfortable and

Fifty eight members of the Central Council of the IWMA signed the Address. These included some interesting signatories. Bavarian-born Louis Wolff served as secretary to exiled Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini during the 1860s. English artisan and trade unionist George Howell moved up (or down depending on your view) from radical circles to service as a Member of Parliament from 1885 to 1895. Johann Eccarius was a Thuringian-born tailor and activist who served as the corresponding secretary with American supporters during the 1870s. The Address was then sent to Ambassador Charles Francis Adams at the American Legation. He penned a response dated January 28, 1865.

The U.S. ambassador and prominent scion of the presidential family informed the IWMA secretary William Cremer that the Address had been transmitted and received by Lincoln. The president willingly accepted the “sentiments” from “his fellow citizens” (Lincoln never forgot his political obligations even in a private letter!) as well as “friends of humanity and progress” globally. Moreover, the government of the



*José Martí LC-DIG-highsm-06416*



United States insisted on refraining from “propagandism and unlawful intervention” in pursuit of “equal and exact justice to all states and to all men.” President Lincoln had his eye on the presidential reconstruction of the post-bellum Union. Finally, this present conflict was of universal significance.

The nation’s conflict with “slavery-maintaining insurgents” represented the cause of human nature. As such, the nation was emboldened by the fact that the “workingmen of Europe” supported the “national attitude.” The Address was first published in the *London Daily News* on December 23, 1864. (Both documents can be accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1864/lincoln-letter.htm>)

Perhaps the most striking feature of this correspondence was its emphasis on different forms of progress. President Lincoln saw the death of slavery as the opening of a new chapter in United States history. This was equal and exact justice “to all men.” One can trace this egalitarian creed back to the 1863 Gettysburg Address as well as the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Its future lay in greater happiness for Americans. Alternatively, the IWMA believed that the American War on Slavery would result in the emergence of working class rule globally. One could argue that the following decades did indeed see a remarkable historical emergence of organized labor globally. Its international solidarity was to perish bru-



Charles Francis Adams LC-USZ62-37755

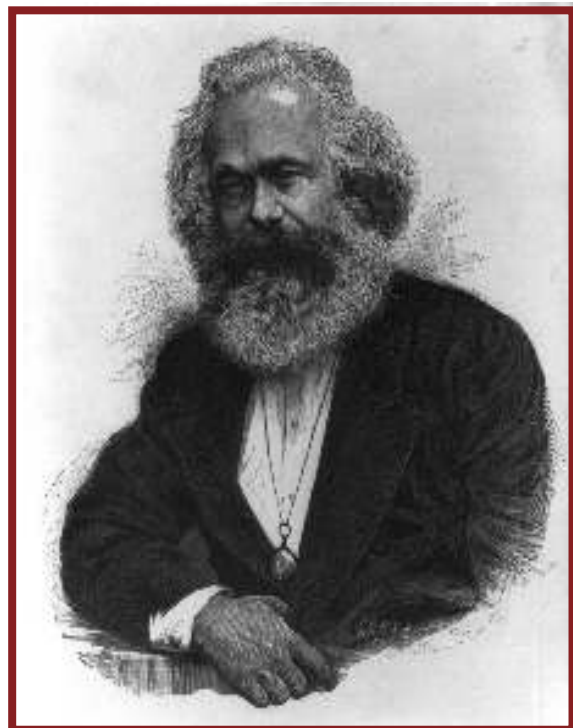
tally on the killing fields of the First World War. Why should we care about this brief transatlantic encounter during the mid 1860s? Most immediately, one is struck by the contrast between the civility of the exchange and its extreme unlikelihood in today’s political climate. More substantially, there are three reasons why these documents are significant. First, the correspondence reminds us of the tremendous importance of London as a refuge for exiled intellectuals and dissenters. It served as a magnet for all of those exiled revolutionaries, dreamers, and internationalists. This role would be taken up by New York City from the late nineteenth century onwards. Just think of Cuban nationalist José Martí during the 1880s, Marxist Leon Trotsky in the early twentieth century, and Black internationalist Marcus Garvey in post World War I. Second, the Address and Adams’s reply with their emphasis on slavery as being central to the conflict makes one wonder what exactly professional historians have been debating concerning Civil War causation over the past 150 years?

tally on the killing fields of the First World War.

Why should we care about this brief transatlantic encounter during the mid 1860s? Most immediately, one is struck by the contrast between the civility of the exchange and its extreme unlikelihood in today’s political climate.

Are we just keeping ourselves employed or is there a more insidious reason why generations of American historians have offered every other explanation—states’ rights, bumbling politicians, ambitious politicians, industry versus agriculture, and so forth—except the one that was pretty evident to contemporaries? The denial of freedom simply does not comport with a nationalist narrative of natural rights and liberty for all. Third, and most importantly, these two documents illustrate the international dimensions of the American Civil War. Most Americans—together with interested outsiders—see this fascinating era primarily in nationalist terms. It was a war that pitted Americans against each other. In contrast, the IWMA saw the conflict as a historical watershed with global ramifications while the U.S. administration recognized the cause of humankind. Indeed, in contrast to Lincoln’s famous expression in his 1863 Address, the world very much took note of what was done at this time.

*Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie teaches at Howard University.*



Karl Marx LC-USZ62-16530

*Lincoln* LORE

[ACPL.INFO](http://ACPL.INFO)

[LINCOLNCOLLECTION.ORG](http://LINCOLNCOLLECTION.ORG)

[FRIENDSOFTHELINCOLNCOLLECTION.ORG](http://FRIENDSOFTHELINCOLNCOLLECTION.ORG)