



Lincoln Lore

February, 1976

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Number 1656

LINCOLN HISTORIOGRAPHY: NEWS AND NOTES

Editor's Note: Once again enough articles and notes of interest to Lincoln students have accumulated to merit devoting most of this issue to discussing them. The last page of this issue is the "Cumulative Bibliography," and this entire issue, like Number 1647, constitutes a bibliographic tool for the student and collector.

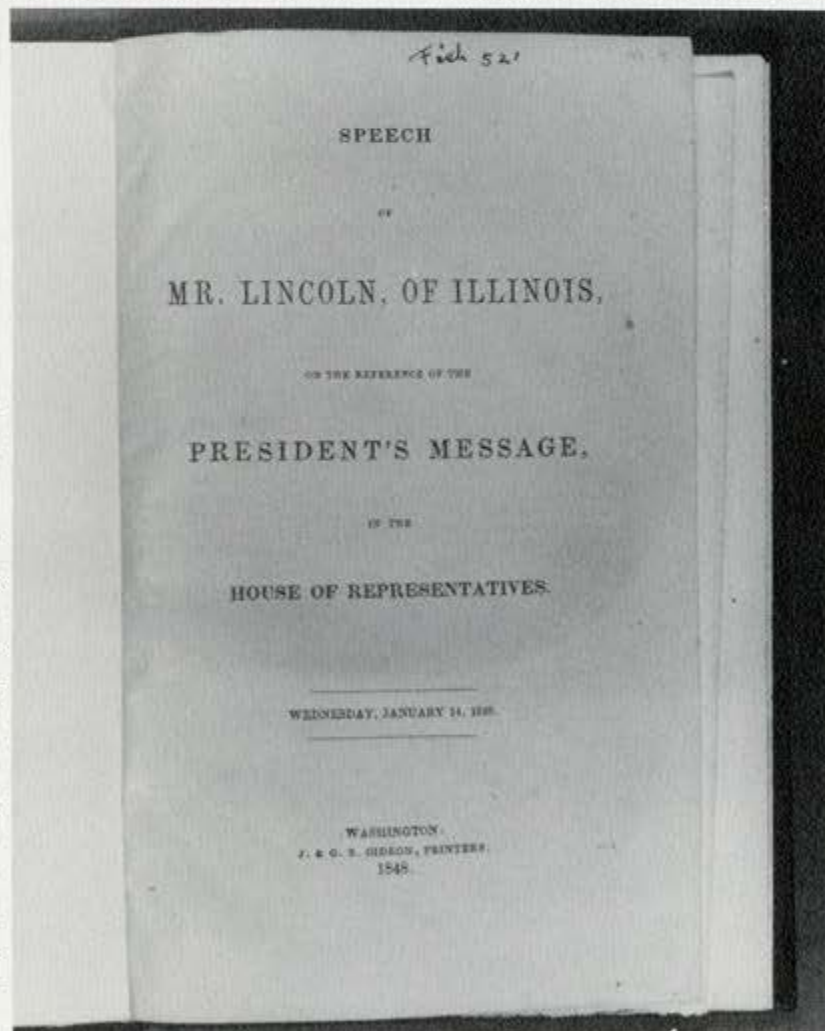
Although pundits have been suggesting for years that the Lincoln theme is exhausted, Lincoln students still produce fresh evidence and treat old problems in refreshing ways. The variety of contributions to the Lincoln field of study lately has been great, and some of them approach Abraham Lincoln from ingenious angles. Articles have recently linked his name to people as different as Mark Twain, one of the Peabody sisters of Salem, and Giuseppe Garibaldi. The old problem of Lincoln's opposition to the Mexican War has received a refreshing treatment, and the same author has attempted to psychoanalyze the sixteenth President. Despite the already vast literature on the subject, new research requires an almost yearly reevaluation of Lincoln. We should be changing our minds about aspects of his career all the time.

G. S. Boritt demands that we rethink our answer to "A Question of Political Suicide: Lincoln's Opposition to the Mexican War" in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, LXVII (February, 1974), 79-100. Boritt denies that Lincoln suffered a lapse from the "pragmatic" political course he characteristically pursued in his public career. William Herndon was the first to argue that Lincoln made a serious political mistake when, on January 12, 1848, he denounced the Mexican War in his first significant action as a United States Congressman. It

was a major leg of the argument of Herndon's *Abraham Lincoln: The Story of a Great Life*, which insinuated that Herndon steered his law partner from the errors of his political novitiate into the brilliant statesmanship which led to his being nominated for the Presidency twelve years later. Albert Beveridge, not only a Lincoln biographer but also a raving imperialist, made Herndon's case stick in *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858*, published in 1928. He, of course, was not happy to find that Lincoln opposed American expansion.

The evidence for the view that Lincoln thus committed political suicide is limited enough to suggest that the authors' prejudices dictated the bold assertion. Herndon and ever-hostile Democratic newspapers were the principal witnesses against Lincoln. The circumstance that Stephen T. Logan, Lincoln's former law partner and the Whig candidate for Lincoln's seat in 1848, lost the traditionally Whig district in the next election has also counted heavily against the wisdom of Lincoln's course; historians blame his opposition to the war for the Democratic upset that followed.

The many prongs of Boritt's attack on this old saw cannot be fully recounted, but here are some of the more important points: (1) Illinois Whigs in general opposed the war, (2) the only criticism of Lincoln in the press came from Democratic newspapers, (3) the only extant piece of opposition to Lincoln's stand from a member of his district comes from Herndon, (4) Whigs rotated the seat in Lincoln's district (he did not choose not to run again for fear of losing), (5) the Whigs' next candidate, Logan, was a terrible



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
FIGURE 1. Lincoln's Mexican War speech as it was known to his friends and constituents. Only six other congressmen spent more than Lincoln on printing speeches to be sent home as pamphlets, and Lincoln spent the largest part of this sizable sum on reprinting his Mexican War address.

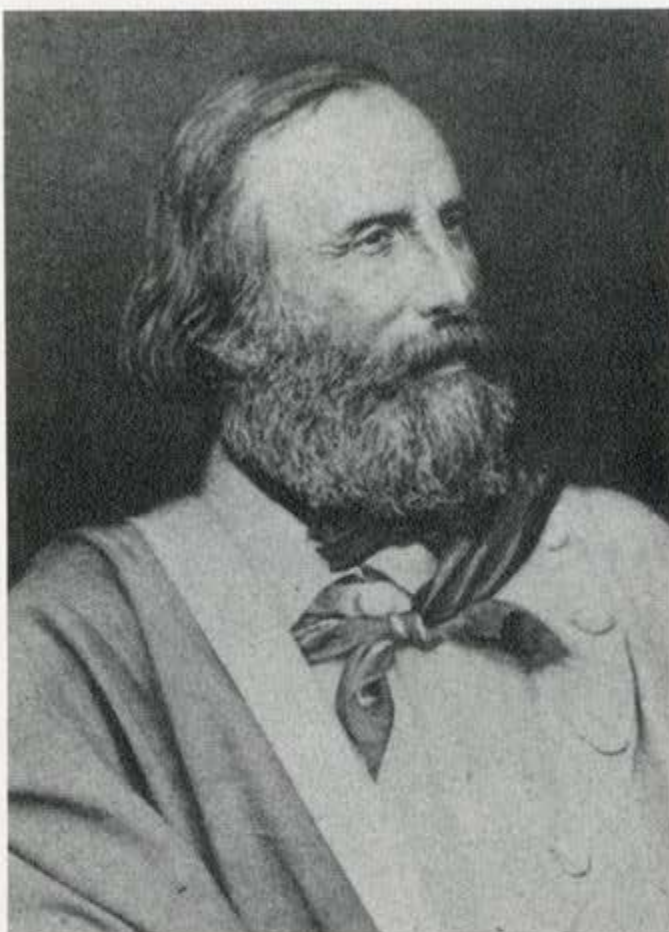
campaigner and guaranteed his own defeat, and (6) Lincoln spent much time campaigning for Zachary Taylor in 1848 out of his home state because of his ambition for national political fame, not because he was afraid to show his face in his own district.

In a more speculative and slightly less careful piece of work, Professor Boritt discusses "The Voyage to the Colony of Linconia: The Sixteenth President, Black Colonization, and the Defense Mechanism of Avoidance" in *The Historian*, XXXVII (August, 1975), 619-632. Here Boritt questions the depth of Lincoln's commitment to the policy of colonization by saying that Lincoln's interest in colonization was a psychological shield against facing painful external realities. Lincoln's public statements on colonization are a mass of contradictions. He occasionally ridiculed arguments that there was not room for both races on this vast continent. He spent only a small amount of the money Congress appropriated to further experiments in colonizing freedmen.

His thought on the question was uncharacteristically sloppy and ignored the sort of simple mathematical evidence from population figures and finance that he customarily loved to manipulate. These are signs of wishful thinking or unconscious avoidance of the realities of this great social question. A careless faith in colonization allowed him to devote his attention and energies to the task of freeing the slaves without worrying about future problems and without running roughshod over popular opinion among whites. It must be said that Boritt's article avoids what he so aptly calls "psychodogmatism," the clumsy assertion of borrowed psychological jargon that so mars Michael P. Rogin's recent psychobiography of Andrew Jackson (*Fathers and Children*) as to make it almost unreadable.

Boritt's article provides a sharp contrast to the program presented by Professor George M. Fredrickson to the Chicago Civil War Round Table in November, 1975. Fredrickson's published views were discussed in *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1647, and they have not changed significantly. But it is interesting to note that he sees colonization as "the perfect answer" in Lincoln's mind to the dilemmas of a man who inherited Henry Clay's views on the race question. Clay (and Lincoln), says Fredrickson, believed that racial differences were not innate but environmentally determined. Clay (and Lincoln) also believed that white prejudice was incorrigible, and racial equality was impossible as a matter of political and social fact (not as a dictate of nature's laws). Colonization was the only answer. Two more diametrically opposed views than Boritt's and Fredrickson's would be hard to imagine.

Allison R. Ensor's "The House United: Mark Twain and Henry Watterson Celebrate Lincoln's Birthday, 1901" in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXXIV (Spring, 1975), 259-268, describes a notable occasion on which two former Confederate soldiers (Twain and Watterson) celebrated Lincoln's birth-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
FIGURE 2. Giuseppe Garibaldi from an 1864 photograph.

day. The audience included J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie; the affair was meant to raise money for Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. President McKinley, of whom Twain was a bitter critic because of American policy in the Philippines, had been invited but did not attend. Twain, who was often critical of the South, here identified himself as a Southerner, recounting his war effort in mock-heroic style:

I had laid my plans with wisdom and foresight and if Colonel Watterson had obeyed my orders I should have succeeded in my giant undertaking. It was my intention to drive General Grant into the Pacific — if I could get transportation — and I told Colonel Watterson to surround the Eastern armies and wait till I come. But he was insubordinate . . . he refused to take orders from a second lieutenant — and the Union was saved.

Identifying with the South (note the use of *we* in the following), he nevertheless celebrated Northern victory: "To-day we no longer regret the re-

sult, to-day we are glad that it came out as it did, but we are not ashamed that we did our endeavor . . ." And he celebrated the North's leader, Lincoln, as "the greatest citizen, and the noblest and best, after Washington, that this land or any other has yet produced."

"Lincoln, Stevenson And Yours Truly," by Mort R. Lewis in *Manuscripts*, XXVII (Fall, 1975), 280-284, relates an incident in which Mr. Lewis suggested to Adlai Stevenson that he and Dwight D. Eisenhower should have a series of televised debates like the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Eisenhower ignored the suggestion after it was aired on Drew Pearson's radio show. Nevertheless, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Stevenson thereafter had some correspondence. Lewis chided Stevenson's overly intellectual speech-making by quoting Lincoln's advice to Herndon, "Billy, don't shoot high — aim lower and the common people will understand you. They are the ones you want to reach . . ." Thereafter, several letters revealed Stevenson's warm curiosity about the sixteenth President (especially his humorous anecdotes) and the ways of separating the valid quotations from the apocrypha.

Herbert Mitgang's "Garibaldi and Lincoln" in *American Heritage*, XXVI (October, 1975), 34-39, 98-101, discusses an offer to make the Italian revolutionary hero, General Giuseppe Garibaldi, a major general of Union forces in the Civil War. An ambitious Buchanan appointee, James W. Quiggle, who was the American consul in Antwerp, made the initial contact and offer (quite without any authority from anyone to do so). Secretary of State William Seward swept Quiggle aside but sent diplomats George Perkins Marsh and Henry Shelton Sanford to negotiate with the retired veteran of wars of liberation on two continents (this time, apparently, with the President's authority). The crafty Garibaldi tried to use the invitation as leverage on King Victor Emmanuel to launch a campaign against the Papal States to unify Italy; the King replied that he would be content to see Garibaldi go to America.

Then Garibaldi demanded that he be made commander-in-chief with the authority to abolish slavery; needless to say, he was turned down.

A very interesting letter describing Elizabeth Peabody's visits with President Lincoln in February, 1865, is reprinted with careful editorial notes by Arlin Turner in *The New England Quarterly*, XLVIII (March, 1975), 116-124. Miss Peabody wrote the letter to her nephew, Horace Mann, Jr. Lincoln had served in Congress with Mann's father, about whom Lincoln reminisced to Miss Peabody:

"Yes — he was very much interested in antislavery — He went into Congress because he feared the Extension of Slavery. I remember . . . —he never spoke of any other subject in Congress — and he was *reasonable*. He was not so extreme as *some* — As Wendell Phillips for instance — (and he looked up with the sweetest smile as if he did not *hate* W.P. for being *extreme* on this subject) . . ."

Then Lincoln told Miss Peabody a most interesting piece of political history. Congressman James M. Ashley wanted as large a victory as possible for the proposed Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. As Ashley fought for his amendment in the House in January, 1865, Lincoln was involved in the delicate negotiations with Confederate peace commissioners which would lead to the Hampton Roads Peace Conference in February.

"Twice — while the talk in Congress was going on that morning — & I was writing to Seward — notes came from the House asking me *if there were any Commissioners of Peace in Washington — or whether I thought they would come* — Those converts of Ashley's (to support of the Amendment) would have gone off in a tangent at the last moment had they smelt Peace. I left off writing each time — & took sheets of paper — & elaborately wrote that *as far as I knew* there were no Commissioners of peace in Washington — *nor did I think they would come*." Here he laughed — & repeated again the same words & with the same emphasis '*as far as I knew &c*' . . . [.]

Miss Peabody saw Lincoln later at a White House reception and again discussed Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison. The letter is rich in descriptions of Lincoln's mannerisms and contains too many anecdotes to retell here. Suffice it to say that it is a document well worth reading and completely understandable because of the excellent footnotes. It is a job up to the customary high standards of this distinguished historical journal.

Two noteworthy discussions of Abraham Lincoln can be found in recent books. Major L. Wilson's *Space, Time, and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict, 1815-1861* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974) carefully describes the differences in free soil doctrine as enunciated by Lincoln, Seward, and Salmon P. Chase. Free soilers characteristically saw themselves as purifying a corrupted, but once perfect national Eden. Seward was such an optimist that he had trouble perceiving that the corruption was serious; therefore, he was tempted by Douglas's popular sovereignty doctrine and confident even in the midst of secession that the nation would survive and progress. Lincoln, by contrast, was more a pessimist who knew that even this nation could go wrong were something not done soon about slavery. He dated the national decline from the early 1850's. Chase saw the decline as beginning as early as 1790 and was the profoundest pessimist of the three.

In a thin volume entitled *Crucial American Elections* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), Don E. Fehrenbacher shrewdly discusses the election of 1860. He questions what a "crucial" election is. This one was "crucial" in the sense that the most cataclysmic events in American history ensued directly as a result of the election. Lincoln turned 39 percent of the popular vote into 59 percent of the electoral vote, but there was common agreement from midsummer on that he was a shoo-in. The election contest itself was not excit-

ing for the voters or candidates. Even candidate Stephen Douglas acknowledged defeat a month before the election was held. Ironically, this gave the South time to prepare for secession; a closer contest — or, rather, a contest perceived by the voters as promising to be close — might have prevented secession, at least for a time.

There is a long discussion of the Gettysburg Address in *The New Yorker* magazine for September 8, 1975, written by Mortimer J. Adler and William Gorman.

Despite the vogue of archival scholarship, most archivists know that it is more praised than practiced. Last year, however, seven students from Indianapolis Baptist High School, accompanied by their capable teacher, Miss Thekla Joiner, made the 250-mile round trip from Indianapolis to Fort Wayne in order to do research in the Lincoln Library and Museum for an essay contest sponsored by the Eisenhower Scholarship Foundation, P. O. Box 1324, Bloomington, Indiana. Two Indianapolis Baptist students, Jim Lockwood and Kim Montgomery, were among the six Indiana students awarded \$8,000 scholarships for their education at smaller, privately endowed Indiana colleges. These students are to be congratulated, their school commended for its serious approach to study, and the Eisenhower Foundation acknowledged for its contribution to education.

On May 11, 1975, Paul M. Angle died at the age of 74. In 1925, he became executive secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield. In 1932, he became Illinois State Historian and executive director of the Illinois State Historical Society, positions he held until 1945. For twenty years after that, Angle was director of the Chicago Historical Society. He edited many books and publications and is well known as the author of *A Shelf of Lincoln Books* and "*Here I Have Lived*": *A History of Lincoln's Springfield*.



Courtesy of Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
 FIGURE 3. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804-1894) from an oil portrait painted in 1878 by Charles Burleigh.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1975

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, Belmont Arms, 51 Belmont St., Apt. C-2, South Easton, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E. B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1975

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1975-5

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Spring, 1975/Vol. 77, No. 1/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", 68 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1975-6

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Summer, 1975/Vol. 77, No. 2/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", 69-136 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$2.50.

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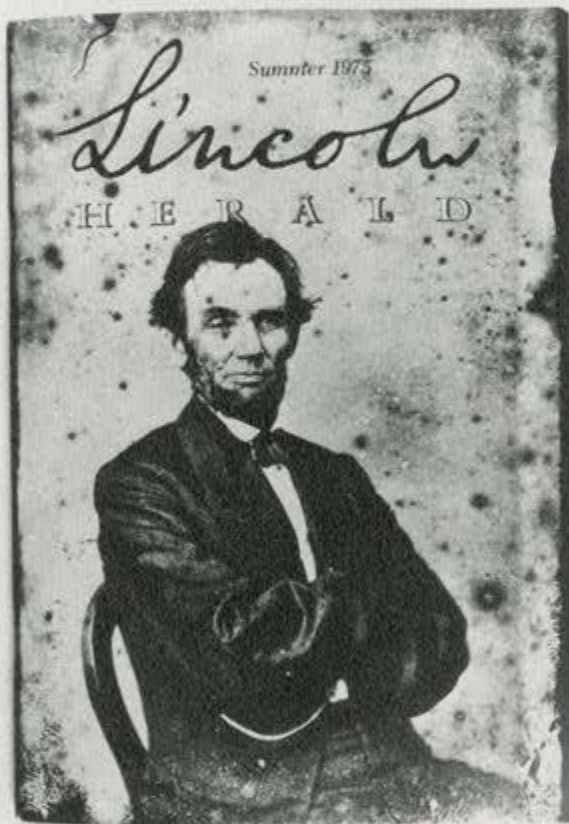
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