

Lincoln Love

Summer 1998

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever, free; and the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to express such persons, or any of them, in any effects they may make for their actual freedom.

That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen therein at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

Now, therefore, I, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit: ARIZONA, TEXAS, LOUISIANA, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemine, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans,) MISSISSIPPI, ALABAMA, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, and VIRGINIA, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth;) and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the consideration of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the eighty-seventh.

By the President:

Abraham Lincoln

William Wilson, Secretary of State

A true copy, with the autograph signature of the President and the Secretary of State.

John W. Foster, Secretary of State

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Lincoln Museum Acquires Signed Emancipation Proclamation



*A*braham Lincoln was aware, as he told onlookers at the signing of the Final Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, that "if my name ever gets into history, it will be for this act."

Among those who shared his judgment of the importance of emancipation were Northern entrepreneurs who sought to cash in on its significance by printing and selling various souvenir copies of the Emancipation Proclamation, some with elaborate decoration.

One printed version of the proclamation, known as the "Leland-Boker Edition," was printed in a limited run of forty-eight copies on June 6, 1864. The copies were then signed by Lincoln, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and presidential secretary John G. Nicolay, and offered for sale at ten dollars each at the Great Central Sanitary Fair in Philadelphia, June 7-29, 1864, to raise money for the care of Union soldiers.

Today, fewer than half of the signed Leland-Boker edition copies are known to exist. Only seven of those were in the hands of museums, until June 16, 1998, when The Lincoln Museum acquired the eighth. The Museum received one of the surviving copies as a gift from the Lincoln National Foundation in honor of Ian M. Rolland, on the occasion of Rolland's retirement as chief executive officer of the Lincoln National Corporation.

As CEO, Ian Rolland occupied the position once held by Arthur Hall, who as president of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in 1928 hired Louis Warren to found the Lincoln Historical Research Foundation, today known as The Lincoln Museum. In his 22-year tenure as CEO, Rolland oversaw his company's continued patronage of The Lincoln Museum, and was instrumental in the decision to build the Museum's current facility, which opened in 1995.

Arthur Hall said at the dedication of the Museum in 1931, "No motive of commercialism or profit entered into our plans to assemble this wealth of Lincolniana — We seek merely to provide the means through which there may continue to flow an ever increasing volume of information concerning Lincoln, especially to the youth of our land, that they may be influenced to think and to live as Lincoln did — 'with malice toward none and charity for all.'"

At the 1995 Museum re-dedication ceremony, Ian Rolland spoke of "the legacy that Abraham Lincoln left us." The Lincoln Museum, he said, "is meant to preserve that legacy in a way that is accessible to both the young and old, the rich and poor, the student and teacher alike. We want all those who visit here to leave with an appreciation of our past and a new sense of hope for our future." Through his efforts on behalf of the Museum, as recognized by the generous gift of the Lincoln National Foundation in his honor, Ian M. Rolland has done a great deal to ensure the preservation of that legacy. — GJP



Ian Rolland and Lincoln Museum Director Joan Flinspach at the unveiling of the Museum's autographed Emancipation Proclamation. The document will be placed in the Museum's permanent exhibit in September.

(On the cover: Leland-Boker edition of the Final Emancipation Proclamation, signed by Abraham Lincoln, William H. Seward, and John G. Nicolay. From the collection of The Lincoln Museum.)

Gerald D. Swick is a journalist in Clarksburg, West Virginia, who has written extensively on historical topics, and is currently working on a manuscript entitled "Unquiet Waters: The Divided Family of Mary Todd Lincoln." Donna D. McCreary is chairperson of the Mary Todd Lincoln committee for the Association of Lincoln Presenters, and has been portraying and researching the life of Mary Todd Lincoln since 1992.

His Own Place In The Sun

by Gerald D. Swick and Donna D. McCreary

ROBERT TODD LINCOLN
1843-1926
BURIED
NATIONAL CEMETERY
ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

Inscription on a plaque at the Lincoln Tomb, Springfield, Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln sleeps surrounded by his family in the 117-foot granite Lincoln Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery at Springfield. His wife Mary and sons Eddie, Willie, and Thomas (Tad) share the place of his eternal rest. Why is the eldest child, Robert, buried hundreds of miles away in Arlington National Cemetery?

Nan Wynn, site manager at Lincoln's Tomb State Historic Site, says that visitors frequently ask this question. Roger Norton, who maintains a Mary Todd Lincoln Research website (<http://members.aol.com/RVSNorton/Lincoln15.html>), is also often asked about this. "People are very curious to know why Robert is not buried with his parents and brothers in Springfield." Ruth Painter Randall wrote of Robert's death in *Lincoln's Sons*, "Strangely, the body remained in the receiving vault nearly two years ... then it was removed, not to the Lincoln tomb at Springfield, but to Arlington National Cemetery at Washington. One does not know the why of this change of plan or whose decision it was." John S. Goff, in *Robert Todd Lincoln: A Man in His Own Right*, says the reason Robert is not buried in Springfield "is not entirely clear ... it is presumed that Mrs. Lincoln preferred instead Arlington National Cemetery."¹

Many other people believe that the decision to inter Robert at Arlington was made by his widow, Mary Harlan Lincoln, but no definitive evidence regarding her motives has ever been published. Recently,

however, the authors of this article discovered several of her letters in a private collection. One of these previously unknown letters resolves all uncertainty about why the Lincolns' eldest son is entombed far from the rest of his family: it was indeed Mary Harlan Lincoln's decision, a decision she made to give her husband the honor she felt he deserved.

Robert Todd Lincoln spent most of his life in his father's shadow. He was a student in his final term at the Academy at Exeter in New Hampshire, prior to enter-

ing Harvard, when his father was nominated as the Republican candidate for President on May 16, 1860. Before long Robert found himself dubbed the "Prince of Rails," and publicly assigned his role as the President's eldest child. In December of that same year he wrote to his mother, in a light-hearted vernacular, "Aint you beginning to get a little tired of this constant uproar?" During the war to come, newspapers praised or decried him according to their political leanings, and his public demeanor became increasingly reserved.² By April 1865, after Abraham Lincoln had successfully prosecuted a war that restored the Union and ended the institution of slavery, his son must have anticipated the difficulty of ever establishing an identity separate from that of his father. When assassination then turned Lincoln from one of the most beleaguered men in the country to one of the most revered overnight, Robert's place in the history books was virtually assured: he



The Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, as it appeared in 1883. (TLM #4264)



Robert Todd Lincoln's last public appearance, at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, May 30, 1922, with President Harding (left) and Speaker of the House Joseph Cannon (right). (TLM #4031)

would be no more than a footnote, son of the Martyred President.

Robert sought to avoid this fate. Although the Lincoln name opened doors for him, Robert consistently exercised his own abilities to take advantage of whatever opportunities were presented to him. He amassed a fortune and built an enviable reputation for himself as a lawyer and businessman. He was courted by the Republican party to run for the presidency in 1884 and 1888, which he might well have won, in spite of his decision in 1875 to have his mother's mental competency put before a court. Such a family scandal would have ruled out most politicians from consideration, but not one bearing the name of Lincoln.

Robert never actively campaigned for his own nomination. Like his mother, he seemed both to relish and resent public attention. If the presidency and the chance to prove his own abilities at steering the nation eluded him, Robert still achieved great success in both public and private sectors. He repeatedly accepted positions that kept him in the public eye even as he endeavored to escape the attention of the press. He served as Secretary of War under James Garfield and his successor, Chester A. Arthur, from 1881 to 1885, energetically restructuring the War Department to improve its efficiency and to amplify the Secretary's role, leading one officer to call him "the best secretary of war we have had since Jefferson Davis."³ From 1889 to

1893, he was minister to Great Britain (making him the last minister before the legation in England was upgraded to an embassy), and in 1912 his name again came up in a last-minute attempt to nominate him for the presidency, although by then even Robert felt he was too old to be seriously considered.

His career in business began as a member of a prestigious Chicago law firm. He became a director of the Chicago Edison Company, and was employed by the Pullman Palace Car Company, later called simply the Pullman Company, first as special counsel and eventually as president and chairman of the board, as well as the co-executor of George Pullman's will. The Pullman Company experienced its greatest period of growth during his presidency.⁴

Throughout his varied careers, Robert had a devoted partner in Mary Eunice Harlan, the daughter of Iowa Senator James Harlan and Ann Eliza Peck Harlan. Mary met Robert in Washington where she was attending Madame Smith's exclusive French school, receiving training in the social graces and the French language. She reportedly had a talent for music and "played the harp divinely," according to classmate Julia Taft. Robert escorted her to his father's Second Inaugural Ball on March 4, 1865, and she soon won the approval of both President and Mrs. Lincoln. The young couple was married in a private ceremony on September 24, 1868.⁵

She shared life with him for fifty-eight years in Chicago, Washington, London and Manchester, Vermont, the site of their estate, Hildene. They had two daughters and a son: Mary, Jessie, and Abraham Lincoln II (called Jack). In numerous letters, Mary referred to her husband as "the dear one," and fretted over his health when it began to fail. With her abiding affection for him, she must have also shared the exasperation he reportedly once expressed to a friend, Nicholas Murray Butler. Butler said that Robert complained no one had wanted him for Secretary of War, Minister to England or president of the Pullman Company — "they wanted Abraham Lincoln's son."⁶

Despite living in his father's long shadow, Robert's emotional connection to his family and his intent to be buried with them in Springfield comes through clearly in his letters. On March 8, 1890, his son Jack died in London, where Robert was serving as minister to Great Britain. Robert requested and received permission to bury Jack in the Lincoln Tomb. On September 10, Robert wrote to O. M. Hatch,

upon the death of my son, I foresaw the extinction upon my own death of my father's descendants bearing his name, the desire came upon me that, if it met the views of every member of the (Lincoln) Monument Association, arrangements might be made for the burial in the monument of my son and thereafter of myself and my wife and of my two daughters, unless they should marry — It is the arrangement I would make if the tomb of my father were, as usually would be the case, in my care ...⁷

Robert never disassociated himself from the Springfield burial site. Indeed, according to one source, it was he and Judge David Davis who originally convinced Mary Todd Lincoln to bury President Lincoln there instead of in Chicago.⁸ Robert was with his mother when the burial took place at Oak Ridge Cemetery in December, 1865. He was in charge of his brother Tad's funeral there in 1871, and in 1882, he watched as the Lincoln Guard of Honor carried his mother's coffin into that same vault. When the tomb was rebuilt in 1899, Robert paid \$700 to have his father's remains placed ten feet underground in a

vault of steel and concrete designed to foil future attempts at grave robbery, like the one that had nearly succeeded in 1876. In 1909, he attended the Lincoln Centennial festivities and "was astonished at the splendid way in which Springfield conducted the celebration."⁹

When a suggestion was advanced to move Lincoln's remains to the new Memorial in Washington, D. C., Robert steadfastly opposed it and asked that the request not be made public. He wrote of the money and care Illinois had provided for the Springfield monument, and said of it:

Within it are entombed the bodies of my father and my mother and my only son and it is arranged that my wife and myself shall be entombed there. I should myself oppose any change.¹⁰

When Robert died in his sleep during the night of July 25-26, 1926, from a cerebral hemorrhage induced by arteriosclerosis, it seemed clear that he would be buried in Illinois as he had intended. Hours after his death, his widow had a telegram sent to his nephew Ben Hardin Helm stating: "SERVICES HERE ON WEDNESDAY DEFERRING INTERMENT (sic) AT SPRINGFIELD UNTIL AUTUMN."¹¹ Newspapers throughout Vermont proclaimed that Robert would be buried later at Springfield. The *New York Times* also reported that following a simple funeral at Hildene, the body would be placed in a vault at Dellwood Cemetery: "Later, at the convenience of the family, burial will take place at Springfield, Ill., where President Lincoln is buried."¹²

Mourning, Mary appears to have been in a distracted, confused state. "For the past many weeks, I have been moving in a dream, enveloped in an awesome sense of strangeness," she wrote to Robert's niece, Katherine "Kate" Helm, daughter of Mary Todd Lincoln's half-sister Emilie and the late Confederate Brigadier General Benjamin Hardin Helm.¹³ It is not surprising that Mary chose to confide in Kate, as they shared a special bond, referring to each other as "twins," corresponding frequently, and visiting whenever possible.

Mary may have also mulled over President Calvin Coolidge's words of tribute to her husband. Coolidge called him, "a man of remarkable attainments — under tremendous handicap by constant

comparison with his father." Despite of the intent of Coolidge's praise; despite of the *New York Herald Tribune's* statement that "Robert T. Lincoln did not live in the shadow of his father's greatness;" despite her late husband's impressive record of accomplishments, Mary must still have felt most people still saw her "dear one" only as Abraham Lincoln's son.¹⁴

After "much prayerful thought," the grieving widow wrote to her "Dearest Twin," Kate Helm, announcing a decision: Robert, who had lived so long in his father's shadow, was to have "his own place 'in the sun!'"¹⁵ It was solely to free Robert from being forever identified primarily as the son of the President that Mary Harlan Lincoln chose to have him buried away from Springfield. It was not, as some writers have conjectured, a decision made to spite her mother-in-law, as Mary's other letters from this period show no rancor for Mary Todd Lincoln. In one such letter to her "twin," Mary wrote:

I thank you from the bottom of my heart, dearest Twin, for sending me your Aunt Mary's lovely letter! I am deeply moved every time I read it over — So many sweet, and thrilling memories of the long, long ago, have been brought back to me — Was ever a more loving tribute bestowed upon the wife of a beloved son!¹⁶

Mary soon set in motion the plan to give her husband his own burial place. She wrote to Kate that she had selected a spot on "a beautiful wooded knoll," located near the grave of Robert's friend William Howard Taft. The site lies on a direct line between the Lincoln Memorial and Robert E. Lee's home, a fitting location since during his years in public office Robert sought to ease the harsh policies of Reconstruction, following his father's wish to let the South up easy.

Robert was entitled to burial in Arlington as an honorably discharged Union veteran and a former Secretary of War, but Mary still had to meet personally with the Secretary of War to get her chosen site approved. She also had to deal, she wrote to Kate Helm, with the "Assistant Secretary, Quartermaster General, etc., etc.," and added, "I am glad ... that you may possibly be with me before anything is finally decided upon."¹⁷

"A Thought Came to Me By Inspiration"

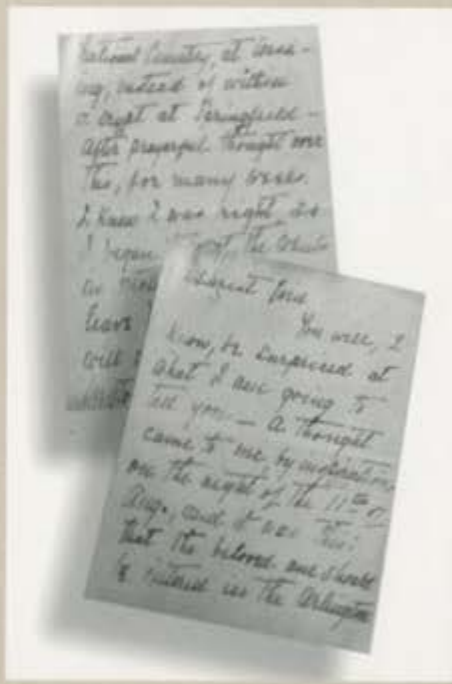
Dearest Twin

You will, I know, be surprised at what I am going to tell you — A thought came to me, by inspiration, [underlined twice] on the night of the 11th of Aug., and it was this: That the beloved one should be interred (sic) in the Arlington National Cemetery at Washing, (sic) instead of within a crypt at Springfield — After prayerful thought over this, for many weeks I knew I was right, so I began to set the wheels in motion — When we leave Manchester we will go directly to Washington, where he will have a temporary resting place, until I have had ["the" is crossed out here] a suitable tomb built for him, final interment to take place next Spring, probably —

We are keeping our plans from the public as much as possible, until our arrival at Washington — Tell the dear family, of course, but let it go no farther —

You know our darling was a personage, made his own history, independently [underlined five times] of his great father, and should have his own place 'in the sun'! Do let me have a line from your dear self before we leave here — I shall probably be at an (sic) hotel for several weeks before going to 3014 N — Not for any sentimental reason however, for I am not at all morbid — God has sustained me wonderfully!

Your loving Twin



The first two pages of the letter from Mary Harlan Lincoln to Katherine Helm describing Mary's decision regarding her husband's burial. Photo courtesy of the authors.



Mary Harlan Lincoln. (TLM #119)

On March 14, 1928, Robert was laid to his final rest with a monument bearing only his name and the years 1843 and 1926. Mary eschewed Vermont's famous white marble in favor of "the finest and rarest pink granite" from Branford, Connecticut. The commitment service was presided over by Dr. Joseph Sizoo, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, "where President Lincoln worshiped," Mary said. In 1929 Mary donated a Lincoln memorial tower to the church.¹⁸

The bodies of Robert's mother, brothers, and son were scheduled to be moved in 1930 to a mausoleum while reconstruction work was done on the Lincoln Tomb at Springfield. Since Jack's casket was being disinterred for this move, Mary Harlan Lincoln petitioned to have her son reburied at Arlington with his father. Illinois State Attorney General Oscar Carlstrom advised the director of the State Department of Public Works, Harry Cleaveland, to honor the request. Jack was reburied beside Robert.¹⁹

Mary finally joined her cherished husband and son there after her death at the age of 90 on March 31, 1937, at 3014 N Street, NW, the home she and Robert had shared in Washington's prestigious Georgetown suburb. Her estate was probated at \$2,964,000.²⁰

Now, after over 70 years, the question of why Robert Todd Lincoln is not buried in Springfield can be laid to rest as well.

Notes

1. Ruth Painter Randall, *Lincoln's Sons* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), p. 263; John S. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln: A Man in His Own Right*, (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 264.
2. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln*, pp. 33-35, 76-77.
3. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln*, p.131, quoting an unidentified newspaper clipping dated June 1, 1883, Harvard University Archives.
4. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln*, pp. 95-99, 217, 223, 238. For more on the career of Robert T. Lincoln, see "Hon. Robert Todd Lincoln: The First Born Son of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln," *The Lincoln Kinsman*, Number 10 (April, 1939): p. 1-8.
5. Louis A. Haselmeyer, *The Lincoln Tradition at Iowa Wesleyan College* (Mount Pleasant, Iowa: Iowa Wesleyan College, 1977), pp. 16-18. A copy is in the Mary Harlan Lincoln file, The Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
6. Randall, *Lincoln's Sons*, p. 253.
7. Robert T. Lincoln to Hon. O. M. Hatch, London, 10 Sept. 1890, Illinois State Historical Library.
8. Willard L. King, *Lincoln's Manager David Davis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 227.
9. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln*, pp. 81, 95, 221, 236; Randall, *Lincoln's Sons*, pp. 210-11; Illinois State Register, Springfield, Ill, July 20, 1882, Lincoln, Mary Todd: Death File, Sangamon Valley Collection, Springfield Public Library.
10. Robert T. Lincoln to Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Hildene, Manchester, Vt., Nov. 15, 1922, Columbia University, New York.
11. F. N. Towers to B. H. Helm, Manchester, Vt., 4:05 p.m., July 26, 1926; the telegram is in a private collection viewed by the authors.
12. *New York Times*, July 27, 1926.
13. Mary Harlan Lincoln to Katherine Helm, written on mourning stationery, no date or place. The original letter is in a private collection viewed by the authors.
14. *New York Times*, July 28, 1926; *New York Herald Tribune*, July 27, 1926.
15. Mary Harlan Lincoln to "Dearest Twin" [Katherine Helm], no date or place [probably Manchester, Vermont, 1926]; private collection.
16. Mary Harlan Lincoln to Katherine Helm, no date, Washington, DC; private collection.
17. Mary Harlan Lincoln to Katherine Helm, no date, Washington, DC; private collection. It is not clear if this visit took place.
18. Mary Harlan Lincoln to Katherine Helm, no date or place; private collection; *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 1937.
19. *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1929.
20. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln*, p. 264; *New York Times*, Apr. 29, 1937. The Georgetown home, built in 1799, had once belonged to a tobacco merchant who lost a judgeship during the Civil War because of his Confederate sympathies.

The authors have viewed all the documents described as belonging to a "private collection," the owner of which wishes to protect his privacy. The authors are seeking to have photocopies of these documents deposited in the archives of The Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Postmodern literary critics deny the possibility that a text can have any inherent meaning, just as postmodern historians deny that possibility of truly knowing anything about the past, even if experience and common sense suggest otherwise. The following article represents an application of more traditional literary criticism to the field of Lincoln biography, resulting in some original insights. The author is a native of Greene County, Ohio, a graduate of Antioch University, and a lifelong student of the Lincoln era.

Abraham Lincoln and Northrop Frye's Five Modes of Fiction

by Sarah Joan Ankeney

"Beowulf spoke, the corselet on him shone,
the armor cunningly linked by the skill of the smith:
'Hail to thee, Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's kinsman and retainer.
I have in my youth undertaken many deeds of daring.'"¹

Yes, there is a similarity between Lincoln, the low-born common man of relatively recent history, and Beowulf, the high-born champion of ancient tradition. Both lives, although based on historical fact, belong to the general category of romance, or quest, fiction.

Northrop Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, wrote, "The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle ...; and the exaltation of the hero." Frye refers to these stages as "agon, or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict."²

After "minor adventures" such as conquering giants and sea monsters, Beowulf travels to the land of Hrothgar, protector of the Scyldings, to fight the monster, Grendel, who is threatening the existence of the people. Similarly, after such "minor adventures" as wrestling with Jack Armstrong, saving an old Native American from death in the Black Hawk War, and

battling "The Little Giant," Stephen Douglas, in the great debates, Lincoln travels to Washington, D.C., to fight the monsters Secession and Slavery that are threatening the existence of the Union. Beowulf fights Grendel in stage two, and Lincoln guides the Union through the Civil War. In stage three, Beowulf and Lincoln are recognized as heroes, the *anagnorisis* of Lincoln coming after his assassination when he is suddenly catapulted to the level of a god.

"Glory in the fight was granted to Beowulf; Grendel, sick to death, had to flee thence among the fen-fastnesses — seek out his joyless swelling ..."³ So it could be paraphrased, "Glory in the Civil War was granted to Lincoln; Secession and Slavery, sick to death had to flee ...". Both heroes had been destined to achieve a noble victory for mankind. Their earlier lives, in retrospect, had been quests; they had been engaged in seeking out evil (which they readily recognized, because the romantic hero has absolute moral values.) Eventually both win as representatives of the good, and are rewarded, although Beowulf makes out better than Lincoln. "To him the cup was borne ... and twisted gold graciously presented: two armlets, a mantle and rings, and the finest of torques that I

have ever known of in this world."⁴ As for Lincoln, he gets a serenade, of the likes of which he has been heard to say, "Now I'll take the music."

Both have become national epic heroes. The bard who composed *Beowulf* created a long, narrative poem in which the hero conquers an evil force that is threatening the existence of the Danish peoples. In a similar manner, Carl Sandburg created a national epic prose-poem in his Lincoln series, *The Prairie Years* and *The War Years*, in which Lincoln saves the Union from the evil forces of secession and slavery that threaten to deprive mankind of freedom forever and extinguish "the last best hope of earth." A comparison of the ancient and modern epics shows that both are based on historical fact, although the facts in *Beowulf* are to us greatly obscured by the passage of time, and we are inclined to look upon it all as myth or legend. We are more familiar with the facts of Lincoln's life and time and are more inclined to accept the whole of any "biography" of Lincoln as history.

But, oh, there is more! There are so many more types, or "modes," of fiction that have been borrowed by historians of the past, for the historian of today to confront on his own romantic quest for the truth about Lincoln. As Stephen Oates has observed, "the thing about Lincoln is that he keeps growing and changing" in a "galaxy of Lincoln myth and counter-myth, a celestial world I find fascinating."⁵

All the more fascinating when we realize that we are dealing not only with myth but also with four other modes of fictive literature, all of which have been employed to describe the "historical" Lincoln in the 133 or so brief years since his death. J. Bard McNulty says, "A theory of modes is ... a theory of history In Western literature this power of action has undergone a steady decline from the medieval period to present, from the romantic mode to the ironic."⁶ As Lincoln has changed, so have the modes in which he has been described. They started with myth, and have evolved to romance and mimetic, finally to arrive at the contemporary ironic.

Northrop Frye has classified fiction by the hero's power of action, "which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same. Thus:

1) If superior in *kind* both to other men and the environment of other men, the



The Mythic Hero: Lincoln visits his wife from beyond the grave in a photograph doctored by a 19th century spiritualist. (TLM #109)

hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a *myth* ...

2) If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being. [He] moves in a world in which ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended ... Here we have moved from myth ... into legend ...

3) If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the *high mimetic mode* ...

4) If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity ... This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic mode* ...

5) If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic mode*.⁷

All those modes and Lincoln has been served up in every one of them!

A case can be made, also for a tragedy of Abraham Lincoln (a mode usually found within the high mimetic mode.) In tragic style Lincoln is a humble, pious, courageous man. He honors the gods, but hubris prevents his taking heed of the augurs who

say repeatedly that he will be assassinated. He orders no extra White House security and passes off a bullet or two through his hat as mere bagatelles. His courage is his tragic flaw. He fails to see that he is vulnerable. On April 14, 1865, he writes to James H. Van Alen that he will "use due precaution," but he is on the same date shot by Booth, the vow having come too late. Moral: if a man as humble and god-fearing as Lincoln can fall victim to pride, then let the average man beware, for his power to keep his pride in check must be less than that of the superior tragic hero. But fraught with tragic irony as the thought is, I will forsake it and return to Frye.

In regard to the first mode, that of *myth*, it takes no more than a glance at William Mumler's photograph of Mrs. Lincoln with the shadowy figure of the dead president sheltering her to see that Lincoln very swiftly passed from a mortal to one, as Frye says, "superior in kind both to other men and the environment of other men." He soon became the hero as "divine being." Lloyd Lewis, in *Myths After Lincoln*, shows how Christian ministers like Rev. C.B. Crane deified Lincoln by comparing him to Christ:

Oh, friends, on the evening of Good Friday, the memorial day of the crucifixion of our Lord, our good, true-hearted, magnanimous, supremely loyal, great President was smitten down by the hand of an assassin; and yester morn, at twenty-two minutes past seven of the clock, his noble and holy soul sent up from its shattered and desecrated tabernacle to its God ... It is no blasphemy against the Son of God and the Savior of men that we declare the fitness of the slaying of the second Father of our Republic on the anniversary of the day on which He was slain. Jesus Christ died for the world, Abraham Lincoln dies for his country.⁸

The Rev. Dr. John Chase Lord proclaimed, "perhaps not since the day of the murder on Calvary, when the heavens darkened, and the earth staggered" had such a crime been committed as Lincoln's assassination. "Abraham Lincoln's death by murder canonizes his life," the Rev. Dr. continues. "His words, his messages, his proclamations are now the American Evangel." The modifier "perhaps" at the beginning of the quote barely keeps Lincoln, as Frye would say,



The Romantic Hero: During the Black Hawk war, the young Lincoln saves an innocent man, one of the minor adventures that presage his life's quest. (TLM #2004)

within the power to act of a mere human being. Lincoln had become "the savior of his country," only lacking the capital S in "savior" to be identified as Christ.⁹

Now Lincoln's origins were earthly and the origins of gods are not, but it is to be recalled that gods have a penchant for walking among mortals and impregnating them. (That mysterious Virginia aristocrat who may have impregnated Lucy Hanks — who was he?) It is also to be noted that the "myth" of Lincoln is usually found in the oral tradition, rather than in written biography. The Lincoln "myths" in the titles of books by Lewis and Oates are really references to the legends about him, stories that belong in the romance mode.

The second mode of fiction is that of the *romance* which I have already mentioned. The idea of the quest easily suits the story of Lincoln. William Herndon says, "... alternately reciting the latest effusion of the bar-room or mimicking the clownish antics of the negro minstrel, he who was destined to be an immortal emancipator, was steadily and unconsciously nearing the great trial of his life."¹⁰ Here Herndon has described almost perfectly the romance, or the quest, mode of fiction by declaring Lincoln to have been "destined" to do a great deed and by declaring that Lincoln "was

steadily ... nearing" (this, the journey) "the great trial of his life" (this, the pathos or death-struggle of romance fiction.)

The romantic quest is relied upon amply by Lincoln biographers. But do we have anywhere in our Lincoln literature the romance element of the laws of nature suspended on the hero's behalf? The question seems silly at first glance, but consider that the little village of New Salem came into being shortly before Lincoln needed it, as it were, and vanished shortly after Lincoln left it. And there is the matter of Lincoln's holding an axe straight out by the handle's end. Was this simply a marvelous feat of the hero, or an alteration of the laws of nature on the part of the axe? Similarly, Herndon says, "He could not only lift from the ground enormous weight, but could throw a cannon-ball or a maul farther than anyone else in New Salem." Again, was this only Lincoln's doing, or an alteration of the laws of nature on the part of the cannon-ball? Lincoln attributed his power to the length of his arms.¹¹

Mode the third, the *high mimetic* mode, has the hero as leader subject to social criticism, as Frye says, and subject to the laws of nature. Here, of course, we find Lincoln a great deal of the time. Alonzo Rothschild, in *Lincoln: Master of Men* (1906), places Lincoln, as Frye says, "superior in degree to other men." Rothschild describes the power of the high mimetic leader in this way: "Lincoln was not beyond

the pale of human harm. In less than six months from the day of that triumph [the 1864 election], the man before whom leaders, great and small, had gone down in unbroken succession, went down himself before the only thing that ever wholly mastered him — an assassin's bullet." Rothschild's Lincoln is superior to a *very great* degree: he is "a Samson of the Backwoods," and "leaders, great and small" had "gone down before" him. But if Lincoln's greatness is exaggerated, he is still no more than human, and vulnerable to the laws of nature via the hand of Booth.¹²

Lord Charnwood's *Lincoln* can be said to be high mimetic, but Charnwood's careful description of Lincoln as a leader owes more to the historical record than to any mode of fiction. He writes, "We may regard ... the liberation of the slaves ... as a part of a larger work [not the end of a quest], the restoration of his country to its earliest and noblest tradition, which alone gave permanence or worth to its existence as a nation." Charnwood is leery of the Lincoln legend. For example, he quotes what Lincoln was supposed to have said about slavery when he encountered it in New Orleans: "By God, boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." He then debunks the legend without insulting Lincoln: "the youth, who probably did not express his indignation in these prophetic words, was in fact chosen to deal 'that thing' a blow"



The High Mimetic Hero: Lincoln using "authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours" at Gettysburg, 1863, in a 1905 lithograph. (TLM #3254)

Lord Charnwood's healthy, historical sense strips away the romance mode and here we see the high mimetic mode of fiction actually becoming true history.¹³

Isaac Arnold states at the beginning of his biography that "the great epic of [Lincoln's] life has yet to be written," obviously feeling that one should be written. His own mode, like Charnwood's, is the high mimetic which becomes true history. Although time has proved Arnold wrong in some respects, his Lincoln is a careful effort: "we are probably too near him [Lincoln] in point of time fully to comprehend and appreciate his greatness, and the influence he is to exert upon his country and the world."¹⁴

In contrast to the romance mode, in which the conventions of the story often take precedence over historical fact (as in Herndon's exaggeration of the goodness of Ann Rutledge and the evils of Mary Todd), the high mimetic mode, as illustrated above, often facilitates the presentation of history, and it often is an actual reflection of the truth.

Mode four is the *low mimetic*, in which "the hero is one of us." This mode, like the high mimetic, can portray history accurately. When Ward Hill Lamon writes "this was the last time I ever saw my friend," in his *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, the low mimetic mode enhances Lamon's presentation.¹⁵

The image of Lincoln as the simple, well-meaning (but bungling) story-telling neighbor, who through circumstances becomes the ordinary man who saves his country for other ordinary men, is another example of the low mimetic mode. This Lincoln could not have been suspected of having sent a message with a double meaning in regard to Ft. Sumter to the governor of South Carolina. This Lincoln did not understand the psychology of the politician, and had to rely solely on Mrs. Lincoln to separate his friends from his enemies ... and even then ignored the information. This Lincoln stood fair of being a victim of those around him, just as the historical Lincoln when portrayed in this way becomes a victim, definitely wronged by the low mimetic mode.

And that brings us to mode five which is the *ironic* mode. The hero's power is less than ours, says Frye. Not including certain hate literature, can we say there have ever



The Low Mimetic Hero: Lincoln the storyteller is "one of us," in this drawing by Jay Hambidge. (TLM #162)

been written any biographies of Lincoln that make him inferior to the average person in power and intelligence? Well, yes, if we look upon "intelligence" as information. The ironic mode is the mode of modern times, and ironically, one of the biographers who employs it is a great champion and profound admirer of Lincoln. Stephen Oates writes with great compassion about Lincoln, but he is also the master of the ironic mode, chipper-away of myths that he is.

In his Preface to *With Malice Toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1977) Oates characterizes his own narrative voice as "empathetic," and describes his work as "an attempt to understand frailty and failings in another, not hide from them To be properly empathetic, the biographer must be prepared to walk many a lonely mile in his subject's footsteps."¹⁶

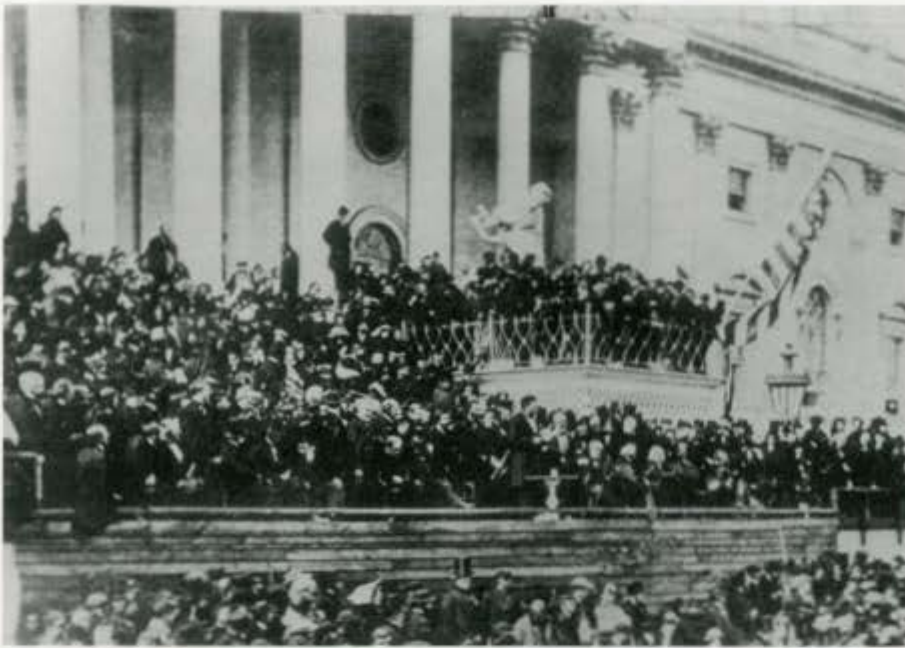
But knowing what it is like to be Lincoln puts the reader in the curious position of knowing what Lincoln does not know. The reader may never before have thought about the fact that Lincoln did not have an omniscient view of his world. Oates' book causes the reader to realize that he knows more about certain things than Lincoln might have known at any one point in the history. The reader is more "intelligent" than this Lincoln, toward whom he is "empathetic." If the reader, with his perspective, were placed in

Lincoln's shoes, he would have more power than Lincoln did. Lincoln has actually been placed in an inferior position!

For example, consider Oates' description of the day of Lincoln's re-election, a masterful piece of ironic drama accomplished in less than two pages. In this account, Lincoln feels that "Mary [seems] more nervous about the election than he [is]." Then the reader is told what Lincoln never knows, that Mary has racked up a \$27,000 debt on her New York "shopping forays." The reader is told that her nervousness stems from the fact that if Lincoln loses the election, "all her bills [will] be sent in and 'he [will] know all.'" Lincoln obviously thinks that Mary is only concerned about his political career and the consequent state of the Union. Later on, Lincoln has word sent to Mary that the returns are favorable, saying "she is more anxious than I."¹⁷

Here the ironic mode is used with great success to enhance the presentation of history. How powerful does the reader feel as he sees how helpless Lincoln is in regard to certain behavior of his wife! Here we can say, with Frye, that we are "looking down on a scene of . . . absurdity." We empathize with Lincoln, Oates having put us in his shoes, but still we have intelligence that Lincoln does not have. And knowing what Lincoln does not know, we feel that he, although never a victim, is considerably weaker than we have ever known him to be before. The whole episode is written with dramatic power as we are led to see how powerless Lincoln can be and how little "intelligence" (information) he may have in any given situation. In short — it's ironic.

There are many similar situations. Lincoln never knows that Ward Hill Lamon spends the entire night outside his door in the fear that the re-elected President might be assassinated. We, however, know the good news about Lamon just as we know the bad news about Mary. We are left with a genuine fear for Lincoln and his vulnerability. Why, he was only a man! He had no way of knowing all these things that we know now. Ours is the power of hindsight and of historical reflection. It makes us, in a sense, more intelligent and thus, in a way, more powerful than Lincoln was in any given situation.



The Ironic Hero: Lincoln is unaware of what the modern viewer knows — that as he reads his Second Inaugural Address, his assassin is listening from the balcony above. (TLM #O-108)

So those are Northrop Frye's five modes with suggestions as to how they have been "borrowed" by historians. Of course, the mode business is not exact. McNulty cautions that using "a modal approach to literature ... runs a risk: that of making the vast resources of literature seem narrow and impoverished by reducing all to a tidy scheme."¹⁸ Often writers use several of the stated modes in one work. Among Lincoln biographers, for example, Herndon has borrowed, no doubt uncon-

sciously, the romance mode, the high mimetic, and the low mimetic modes. The romance mode is shown in the concept of Lincoln's destiny as an emancipator. The romance mode also emerges in the legends surrounding Lincoln's early life and his feats of strength, and the Ann Rutledge and Mary Todd exaggerations. The low mimetic is the Lincoln that Herndon describes as the "real" Lincoln in his effort to debunk the first idealized portraits. This is Lincoln the non-religious, Lincoln the not-so-well-read,

Lincoln in the law office, and in general, Lincoln the friend and associate. The ironic mode is shown in Lincoln's troubled home life, his failures in business, and descriptions of low birth, for example, but there is also the high mimetic Lincoln as the older and more experienced lawyer, the leader Herndon admires.¹⁹

We have seen that Lincoln scholars and biographers, as well as the many people of all walks who have contributed to oral history, have resorted (probably unconsciously) to the five modes of fiction as outlined by Frye, in presenting the historical Lincoln to us. Sometimes the mode itself has taken over and has clouded the truth. And sometimes the mode has facilitated the recording of it.

These modes of fiction represent the ways in which human beings look on life and the ways in which they respond to others. That these modes have been employed by Lincoln biographers shows to what extent these biographers have responded to Lincoln, obviously not satisfied with a cold, chronological outline of his life and accomplishments. Each mode has its own color and intensity and, used in Lincoln biography, shows a unique way of caring about its subject. The range of caring is broad, and if the mode clouds the truth, it shows, at least, that the real Lincoln had (and still has) the power to trigger an enormously varied response. He was, and still is, as Alonzo Rothschild said, "A master of men."

Notes

1. Translation of *Beowulf*, lines 405-08, from J. Bard McNulty, *Modes of Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p.195 (all *Beowulf* quotations are from this version).
2. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.187.
3. *Beowulf*, lines 818-821.
4. *Beowulf*, lines 1020-1025.
5. Stephen Oates, *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths* (New York: Harper, 1984), pp. xi, xii.
6. McNulty, *Modes of Literature*, p.174.
7. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 33-4.
8. Lloyd Lewis, *Myths After Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929), p. 95.
9. Lewis, *Myths After Lincoln*, pp. 96, 98.
10. William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Life of Lincoln* (1889; reprinted New York: Da Capo, 1983), p. 251. Alonzo Rothschild's

Lincoln: Master of Men, although not generally written in the romance mode, does characterize the young Lincoln's search for education as a quest: "How honestly Abraham at this time pursued the search, and with what success, may be learned from the early companions upon whom his strenuous efforts to learn 'by littles' ... left a lasting impression." Alonzo Rothschild, *Lincoln: Master of Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 3.

11. Herndon, p. 70. In the autobiography he wrote for John L. Scripps in 1860, Lincoln himself noted that "In his tenth year he was kicked by a horse, and apparently [sic] killed for a time," a tongue-in-cheek implication that he had been the beneficiary of a Lazarus-like suspension of the laws of nature.

12. Rothschild, *Lincoln: Master of Men*, p. 425.

13. Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln* (Garden City, N. Y., 1917), pp. 14, 15.

14. Isaac Arnold, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1884; reprinted Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p. 13.

15. Ward Hill Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (1895; reprinted Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

16. Stephen Oates, *With Malice Toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper, 1977), p. xv. In more recent works Oates has gone farther and written books using his "empathy" as a source for the recreation of otherwise unrecorded thoughts and conversations of Lincoln and other historical figures.

17. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, pp. 400-01.

18. McNulty, *Modes of Literature*, p.13.

19. James Olney says in his introduction that Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes* (reprint ed. New York: Oxford, 1988) "is a fascinating example of that kind of personal narrative that occupies a mixed middle ground between history and fiction ... a mixed production of historical narration that displays many of the conventions of sentimental fiction" (p. xxvii.) So still another mode of fiction has been borrowed in the writing of history.



At The Lincoln Museum

Temporary Exhibit:

Coast to Coast on the Lincoln Highway

June 28, 1998 — January 31, 1999

Built as a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, the Lincoln Highway was America's first transcontinental automobile highway. From its conception as a modern, high-speed, hard-surfaced road that would bind the nation together as never before, to its early years as a scattered collection of privately-funded "seedling miles," through its growth and transformation into U.S. 30 and its eventual replacement by I-80 of the Interstate highway System, the Lincoln Highway represents the history of cross-country automobile travel in America.

Special Lincoln Highway Events:

The Great Race

Sunday, October 4 — 1:30 p.m.

See the Oscar-winning 1965 movie with Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, and Natalie Wood. Film length 160 minutes. Free with general Museum admission.

Home for the Holidays: Reminiscences

of Old Time Road Travel
Sunday, December 13 — 2 p.m.

Free with general Museum admission.

Ralph Newman, Lincoln Scholar

Ralph Geoffrey Newman, historian, author, and book and manuscript dealer, died at the age of 86, on July 24, 1998 at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. He was well-known through the Lincoln community for his many contributions to the field: founder and long-time owner of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop; co-founder of the Civil War Round Table discussion group movement; author of *Lincoln for the Ages* (1959), *The American Iliad* (1947), and many other books; manuscript appraiser and dealer; and board president of the Chicago Public Library. In 1983, Ralph Newman gave the Sixth R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture at The Lincoln Museum, "Preserving Lincoln for the Ages: Collectors, Collections, and Our Sixteenth President." He is survived by his wife, Patricia; two daughters, Carol Parry and Maxine Brandenburg; a stepson, Scott Simon; two grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Special Events:



Grandparents' Day at the Museum

Sunday, September 13 — 1-5 p.m.

In recognition of National Grandparents' Day, all grandchildren visiting the Museum with a grandparent will be admitted free.

The Nineteenth R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture

Saturday, September 19 — 7:30 p.m.



Douglas L. Wilson will present "Herndon's Dilemma: Abraham Lincoln and the Privacy Issue" as the Nineteenth R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture. Professor Wilson is Saunders Director of the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Abraham Lincoln, including *Lincoln before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years*, and *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*, and is the co-editor (with Rodney O. Davis) of *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln*.

Admission to the evening lecture and reception is \$15 (\$10 for Museum members). Please call (219) 455-1832 for reservations.



Fall Auction Gala

Saturday, October 24 — 7:30 p.m.

Support The Lincoln Museum at this bi-annual fundraising extravaganza. Reservations are required; please call (219) 455-1832.

Annual Lincoln Colloquium



The Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois
— Saturday, September 26, 1998

Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Springfield, Illinois — October, 1999

The Lincoln Museum, Ft. Wayne, Indiana — Saturday, September 23, 2000

Abraham Lincoln: A Portrait in the Heartland

Friday, July 24 — Saturday, July 30, 1999

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Join Lincoln Museum historian Dr. Gerald Prokopowicz on a luxury bus tour to visit the places where Lincoln lived and work. Contact HistoryAmerica Tours (800) 628-8542 for more information.

