

Lincoln Lore

The Bulletin of THE LINCOLN MUSEUM



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Lincoln Lore

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THE LINCOLN MUSEUM

The mission of The Lincoln Museum is to interpret and preserve the history and legacy of Abraham Lincoln through research, conservation, exhibitry, and education.

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The Life and Legacy of Abraham Lincoln



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Book Review for Frank J. Williams' *Judging Lincoln*

By Joseph R. Fornieri, Assistant Professor of Political Science,
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Judge Frank J. Williams has given us a lucid and edifying new book appropriately entitled, *Judging Lincoln*, a work that combines his notable insights as chief justice of the

Rhode Island Supreme Court and President of the Lincoln Forum. *Judging Lincoln* is a collection of nine of Williams' most outstanding essays written over the past twenty-five years. Though it contains previously published material, the essays have been revised for the occasion and are tightly organized around the common theme of Lincoln's leadership. Williams is "convinced that Lincoln's leadership style is one of the greatest gifts of American democracy to the world." He describes the Sixteenth President as "the central figure of the American experience, past, present, and future." Any understanding of America requires an understanding of its "central figure" who not only saved the Union, but also provided its most compelling justification. Thus, Williams appropriately characterizes Lincoln as "America's Socrates." Just as the Athenian philosopher "used his powerful intellect to put Athens on trial during his own political trial," so Lincoln "used the Civil War to put the United States on trial at the same time that his own leadership was being tested."

Indeed, this highly readable and enriching book explores almost every aspect of Lincoln's leadership. It considers the formation of his moral and intellectual character, including the role of women in his life. It contemplates the influence of his dual career in politics and law, which subsequently prepared him to act in the combined role of commander-in-chief and attorney-in-chief during the Civil War. It examines the president's relationship to his generals and soldiers in the field, thereby revealing the inevitable connection between political and military leadership in a time of war. Through the crucible of Civil War, Lincoln learned that political success often depended upon military success and vice versa.

Honorable Frank J. Williams is Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. He also is founding Chairman of The Lincoln Forum.

The handsome cover and pages of the book are graced with woodcut images, pictures, and memorabilia from the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of

Lincolniana. Since Williams is also an avid collector of things Lincoln, the final chapter of his book contains an essay by Mark E. Neely, Jr. on collecting as a way of preserving and extending the Sixteenth President's legacy. As one would expect from a chief justice, Williams' verdict on Lincoln is judicious, fair, and balanced. He clearly, and very often poignantly, manifests the Sixteenth President's greatness by revealing the heights and limits of his humanity, including his rare ability to learn and grow from his mistakes.

Williams begins his book by tracing the evolving Lincoln image in America's national consciousness: "Each generation makes its own Lincoln, and he may not be the Lincoln known before." After chronicling both the vilification of Lincoln as a sinner and his apotheosis as a saint, he shows how the "Lincoln mantle" has been used and abused by various presidents throughout history. For better or worse, Lincoln's centrality to American public life has become a firmly established tradition. The Sixteenth President thus represents different things to different people: the embodiment of the self-made man, the destroyer of states' rights, an ambitious dictator driven by the will to power, the world-wide spokesperson for democracy, the visionary of the American Dream, the Great Emancipator, the astute Machiavellian, a white supremacist who harbored a racist dream, and the preacher of America's political faith. In particular, Lincoln's legacy "remains varied and ambiguous" among African Americans who have viewed him as the Great Emancipator, a racist oppressor, and an equal with characteristically human flaws and virtues, a man who may have been subject to some of the racial prejudices of his time, but was nonetheless instrumental in ending slavery.

On the cover: D. T. Wiest's image of Lincoln being borne to Heaven by angels was titled *In Memory of Abraham Lincoln: The Reward of the Just*, William Smith, Philadelphia, 1865. It copies an engraving of *The Apotheosis of Washington* made in 1802 by J. J. Barralet. Wiest simply inserted Lincoln's head in place of Washington's. (TLM# 4377)

The first six essays of the book focus on the difficult task of classifying Lincoln as a leader: "Was he autocrat or democrat, conservative or liberal, idealist or Machiavellian?" Recognizing Lincoln's complexity, Williams shows throughout the rest of his book that he "reflected a bit of each." For example, though a highly principled man, Lincoln was not above using Machiavellian tactics to shepherd the Thirteenth Amendment through Democratic opposition in Congress. Eschewing any rigid ideological classification, Williams characterizes Lincoln's leadership style in general terms as "active flexible" meaning that he was "self-actualized through the political arena, deriving [his] greatest satisfaction from working on public policy issues." Lincoln was "flexible" in his ability to adapt to new experiences, to learn from his mistakes, and to consider a variety of viewpoints while reserving final decision-making for himself. In particular, his "active flexible" leadership as commander-in-chief can be seen through his evolving relationship with General Gordon Meade. Williams squarely confronts the historical prejudice against Meade who has been blamed for hesitating in his pursuit of the retreating Confederate army after the battle of Gettysburg. He exonerates Meade, showing that Lincoln's initial criticism of the general was unfair: the President was not fully informed of Meade's perilous military situation in pursuing Lee. Though Lincoln did err in his initial view of Meade, his capacity for critical self-reflection prevented him from making a rash decision that could have alienated a competent general needed by the Union.

In a touching chapter entitled, "A Matter of Profound Wonder" (a phrase used by Lincoln to convey his appreciation of the feminine mystique), Williams discusses the important role of women in the development of the Sixteenth President's character and leadership. He notes Lincoln's fairness in dealing with women as consistently exemplified in his personal relationships with them and in his political support for female suffrage. He suggests that the emergent personality of the youthful Lincoln may have been stunted, permanently damaged, or even warped without the nurturing love of his stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston, who helped fill an emotional void after the death of his biological mother. In addition, Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd, may be credited for recognizing that her husband was a "diamond-in-the-rough" and for polishing his frontier manners for polite society. Indeed, what man can honestly deny the civilizing force of women in his life? Applying the psychologist Carol Gilligan's distinction between male and female moral development, Williams explains

that Lincoln's success as a leader can be attributed to his integration of both masculine and feminine traits: "Contrary to the traditional association of leadership to masculinity and detached objectivity, the most haunting images of Lincoln often are unmistakably feminine....His compassionate and nurturing practices, his resistance to quarreling and his freedom from malice, most fully revealed his integrated masculine/feminine nature of leadership." Williams might also have mentioned Lincoln's touching correspondence with Mrs. Eliza Gurney, a Quaker woman who came to the White House to provide spiritual consolation, as yet another poignant example of the Sixteenth President's ability to empathize with women and to exhibit feminine traits. After Mrs. Gurney had concluded a prayer session, Lincoln, profoundly moved by her charity, responded to her in an almost extemporaneous profession of faith. Roughly a year afterward, he once again replied to her in a private letter candidly revealing his spiritual anguish and longings during the war. It was this humble Quaker woman, not a member of his cabinet or his former law partner William Herndon, who was able to elicit such spiritual intimacy from the President, a man who was usually very reticent in sharing his inner life with others.

The highlight of Williams' book, however, deals with an important theme particularly suited for his judgment: "Lincoln and Civil Liberties." Though each chapter offers something unique and thoughtful to the reader, this chapter alone would justify the purchase of the volume. In it, Williams provides a combined historical and legal analysis of wartime measures implemented by Lincoln, including the controversial arrest and banishment of the copperhead dissenter Clement Vallandigham. Williams frames Lincoln's dilemma of trying to balance liberty and security with a sense of urgency for Americans living in the aftermath of 9/11: "When the government of a democratic nation imposes harsh methods to sustain itself, there will be sincere protest and criticism, and there will be slurs upon democracy itself. This criticism will endure if the nation survives. But what if it does not survive? What if it fails because of internal division, dissension, or treason? In such a case, there will be greater criticism, stressing the weakness and inadequacy alleged to be characteristic of a democratic nation in an emergency." During the controversial "Eighty Days" from April 15th to July 4th, Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus, declared a blockade of southern ports, raised troops and approved federal spending without congressional authorization. Though Congress was adjourned during

this interval, he could have summoned a special session. Instead, he delayed the call until July 4th to give himself a free hand in responding to the rebellion without congressional interference. And when Chief Justice Taney ruled against the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, Lincoln simply ignored his decision. Some scholars, most notably, Clinton Rossiter and James G. Randall, have alleged that these actions amounted to the establishment of a "constitutional dictatorship." Contrary to this argument, Williams vindicates Lincoln's "extraconstitutional" measures. His verdict seems to share something of the Sixteenth President's ability to express complex matters in simple terms: "What made Lincoln a successful commander in chief was his constitutional flexibility, which allowed him to bend the Constitution within the framework of its intent without breaking it."

Williams concludes his assessment of Lincoln's leadership with a comparative study of the Sixteenth President, Winston Churchill and FDR. Each of these "political Goliaths of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...led a democratic nation through war, and each articulated for both his constituency and posterity the underlying principles for which his nation fought." In his comparative study, he creatively, but convincingly, applies a typology developed by Guatemalan Mayans to describe three progressive stages of personal development: Warrior, Communitarian, and Echo Leadership. By providing a moral vision that unites the deeds of past ancestors, the challenge of the present, and the hopes of the future, the "Gettysburg Address exemplifies a genuine echo leader." Williams provocatively argues that Churchill's military adventurism, his indifference to the common people during times of peace, "his little enthusiasm for women in politics and ever for women's suffrage," and his nationalistic devotion to the British Empire at the expense of its subjects' freedom are all flaws that place him below Lincoln in the triad of great democratic leaders.

Williams' incisive treatment of the Sixteenth President's leadership is not only indispensable for Lincoln aficionados and scholars alike, it is also a most reliable guide for general readers and students who wish to reflect more deeply on the subject. In clear and cogent prose, he explains how Lincoln's example continues to speak to us through the ages, inspiring public officials and ordinary citizens alike to strive for uncommon greatness. Rumor has it that among his many talents Williams is also a gourmet chef. If so, he certainly has succeeded in serving up to his readers a delectable feast with his appetizing new book, *Judging Lincoln*.

Assassination Aftermath: Eulogies and Poetry

In recognition of the museum's 75th Anniversary (1928–2003), the main articles in #s 1870, 1871 and 1872 focus on the museum's collection.



Columbia's noblest Sons reflects significant events in the lives of Washington and Lincoln. Kimmel & Forster 1865; Copyright Henry and William Vought; Manson Lang, publisher; New York 1865 (TLM # 3452)

One cannot attempt even a cursory study of Lincoln without running headlong into the Gettysburg Address. It set a standard for memorialists that continues to inspire today. He followed a time-honored tradition of articulating grief in order to set the stage for a charge of purpose to his listeners. And while analysis of the Address is ubiquitous in books about the 16th President, little mention is made generally of the memorial addresses in commemoration of his death. Perhaps no event in American history has provoked as much literary response as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. An examination of material from the library of The Lincoln Museum yields a plethora of emotionally charged responses to the tragedy. Some are wrapped in a cloak of Victorian sentimentality, which perhaps does not appeal to audiences in the 21st century. Others, however, continue to resonate and stir the soul today, just as they did in 1865.

There are some common threads throughout the literature: some comparisons of Abraham Lincoln to biblical and mythological heroes and many more comparisons of Lincoln and Washington, both in written form and in art; quotations from his speeches and letters; vivid recollections of the suffering endured during the Civil War, both by President Lincoln and by families burdened with loss; the special sadness of former slaves after the assassina-



Washington greets Lincoln in Heaven in *Abraham Lincoln, The Martyr*. Victorious. John Sartain; Designed by W. H. Hermans, Penn Yan, Yates County, New York 1865 (TLM # 3324)

tion; his humble beginnings; speculation as to the high esteem in which Lincoln would be held in the future; images drawn from nature, usually featuring Lincoln as a sturdy tree; and frequent references to the geographical scope of the grief which gripped the nation from coast to coast. Less prevalent, but nevertheless present in some instances, were calls for retribution and revenge.

It becomes apparent when reading eulogies and the "poetry of grief" that Lincoln was now praised for many of the traits that had previously been criticized. The rough-hewn frontiersman, born in poverty and self-educated, now was a positive example for all. The ungainly appearance, once ridiculed, was now a virtue. Being a "Man of the West" was transformed from country bumpkin into a redeeming part of his character.



The Death of President Lincoln: The Nation's Martyr, Currier and Ives (TLM #32)



The Assassination of President Lincoln by an unknown print-maker is featured in the Assassination Gallery of The Lincoln Museum's permanent exhibit. (TLM #2800)

Booth's name was rarely mentioned. He was referred to, among other epithets, as "murderer," "assassin," "the evil one," "fiend" and "destroyer."

There is also, even at these earliest moments, an understanding of the impact which Lincoln will have on future generations. "There are thoughts, there are sentences, there are words in his messages and brief speeches which the world will not let die." (Field) "LINCOLN then lives; his soul commands." (Bird)

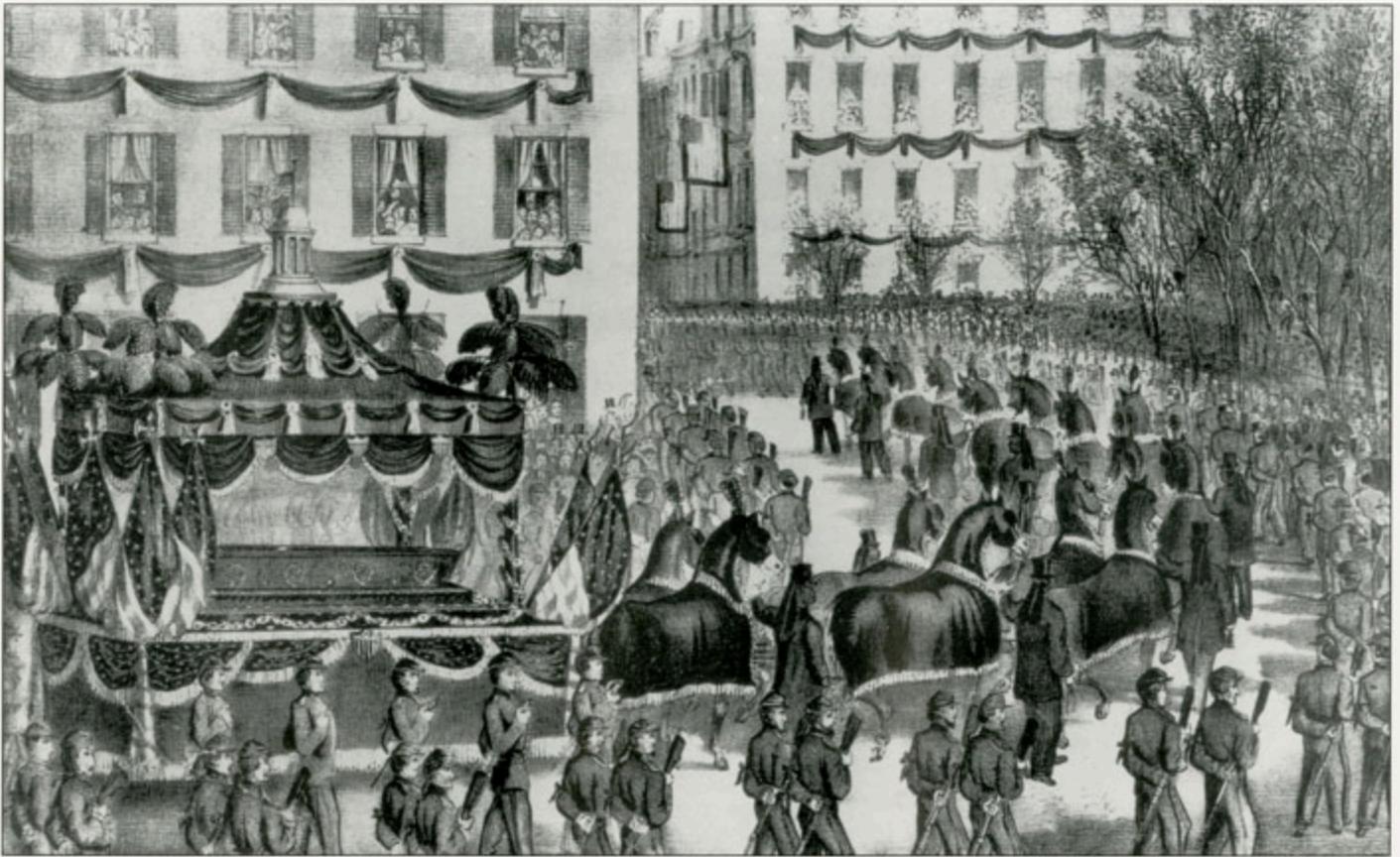
New London, Connecticut April 19, 1865

The commemoration at New London, Connecticut, was typical in many ways. Featured were: a Mayoral Proclamation for a Day of Mourning; solemn processions; flags at half staff; artillery salutes; church services; an address by Rev. G. B. Willcox at the local Episcopal Church; and a more public address as the official city processional halted at City Hall, where the assembled audience heard from Rev. T. P. Field, D. D.

Rev. G. B. Willcox, at the Episcopal Church

We assemble to-day not so much to listen to any words in the sanctuary, as to hear the occasion itself speaking in all the grand and mournful pathos of its silence. We have come to a funeral. The remains of him whom we have gathered to honor are just about to be borne forth robed for the sepulcher. And yet no bier stands here before us. No cold face asleep in death lies awaiting our sad farewells. Far away is the silent and majestic dead, whom we mourn with one consent to-day; who though distant is enshrined in the hearts of us all.

In hastily throwing together, during the few hours of preparation allowed me, some thoughts appropriate to the moment, I have been almost instinctively led to the scene of sacred story



The Funeral of President Lincoln, New York, April 25th 1865 (TLM # 3709)

which rises at once to the view of any thoughtful mourner – the scene on the mount where Moses closed his long career.

Reverend Willcox then quotes from Deuteronomy (34:4) the story of the death of Moses during which God points out the Promised Land but denies Moses the opportunity to enter the Land. (“I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.”)

Here came the aged prophet to the close of his eventful life. And at how many points of contact his history seems to blend in resemblance with that of our beloved and lamented Chief!

The Jewish leader had conducted his countrymen through a course of fortunes more amazing and momentous than any people had experienced before. His life had covered events that stand out in history as monumental; events that opened a new act in the drama of the ages.... But the Jewish prophet had attended his countrymen through a great moral transformation. Starting impenitent toward God, like Saul of Tarsus, on their journey, like him they had come to the end of it humbled and reverent. They had learned in those years of bitter suffering, the lessons needed as a fit preparation for entering on their inheritance. But what lessons have we too learned, as a people, under the leadership of our Moses! We entered into the howling wilderness of confusion and war, a nation of oppressors. We oppressed the poor in the South with slavery. We oppressed them in the North with a heathenish prejudice of caste against a skin not colored like our own. God meant

that we should not emerge from our desert till this iniquity had been well disposed of. The Jews had a forty days' journey before them. The Lord turned it into a journey of forty years. We babbled about a three months war, and what have we seen instead! Our honored Secretary of State predicted a struggle of ninety days. And now, when four long years have hardly sufficed, and we, like the Jews, must leave our loved leader in his grave, as we enter the Canaan before us, the Secretary has found the war forcing its grim face and its murderous hand into his own quiet chamber. And this because we modern Jews were slow to learn God's lesson. But even into our dull, indocile souls, the Great Teacher has wrought the lesson at last. The Chief Magistrate with whom we started still wedded to our sin, has died on the summit of Pisgah, to leave us measurably cleansed of our shame and curse....

The old prophet shared the eagerness of his countrymen to enter the promised land. He, too, like them, was hoping to dwell in peace after his wanderings, under his own vine, in the land that flowed with milk and honey. But this could not be.... In thoughtful silence he is suffered to look on the splendid panorama of Canaan, stretching in fertile beauty far away. But farther he must not go. Sadly but submissively he turns him away from the grand and gorgeous vision, seeking the place where the finger of the Lord has pointed him to lie down and die.

Our honored President was spared the pain of disappointed hope. The leaden messenger of death eclipsed with a sudden

unconsciousness his strong and buoyant spirit. But the fact remains as a sad theme for our thought, that, after his years of burdensome care and throbbing anxiety; after having, under God, brought his countrymen just to the verge of the realization of his and their fondest hopes; while he stood with eager eye and raised arm, pointing us forward to the glorious future, he fell bleeding and dying, leaving us to pass by to the promised possession. O, it is well that we weep to-day; for a more touching, mournful tragedy has hardly taken our planet for its theater, since the earth shuddered and the sun veiled his face at Calvary! Thanks be to God that, if that true and noble heart was not spared to beat with ours in the joy of returning peace and a country saved, he has passed before us to enter a better country, that is heavenly!

The Nation has been invited to-day, by the appropriate officer, to attend this funeral. They would have attended it without an invitation. They could not have found heart for either cares or diversion, while the solemn dirge was sounding of such beloved dead.

A nation at a funeral! It is even so; and God from on high is looking down on the scene which Himself had ordained for a great and worthy end. The dead march in the streets of the Capital is heard in every cottage across the land. It silences the loom and the hammer; it stills the rising shout over new victories just announced; and in the awful hush we wait while this endeared, revered sleeper is borne to the tomb. As if some vast cloud-shade, broad as the continent, had fallen upon us, the land is black to-day with the symbols of mourning...

For many reasons he whom we meet to honor was dearer than public men are wont to be to the masses of his countrymen. He was a man of the people; a man, so to speak, of all the people. He represented all. There were elements entering into his make which answered to an immense range and variety of American character. He was, in many features, the truest type of the native born republican that has ever yet risen among us to so high a position. He carried the flavor of the soil in his qualities. You may see in any geological cabinet a fragment of rock in which different strata, such as reach away for leagues beneath the hills and valleys, happen to have met, and lie layer upon layer. It is the deep and wide-spread crust of the planet shown up in miniature. Such a miniature was Abraham Lincoln of American society. The different grades or tiers of our society were all represented in him. He had belonged to them all....

Many truths long familiar, are struck with a sudden illumination, by the event we deplore. How independent is God showing himself to be of all instruments and agents! We almost thought, some of us, that the very life of the nation was involved in the life of the man we so loved and revered. But as a great artist, bringing out some grand figure from the marble, lays by one implement and takes up another, with his eye chiefly fixed on the work before him, so the Almighty in molding for all ages the lofty and peerless form of American liberty. No instrument yet wielded by His hand, has cut so many a

blemish away, and brought to perfection so many a feature, as the one now laid aside. But still both the Lord and the nation survive, and the work is going on.

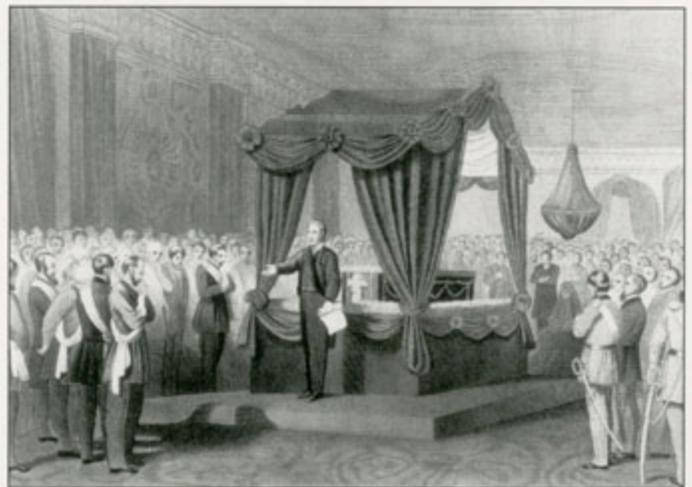
How touching also is the lesson of life's uncertainty...A snap of a pistol, that hardly is noticed at first in the room in which it occurs, startles the nation like a thunder peal rolling from ocean to ocean! Half a million of brave men armed can do nothing to guard the life of the man they delighted to honor. So death comes in, with what calm, stern, resistless step when the time appointed has arrived!

God is preparing the hearts of our countrymen for some rich blessing in time to come. We had lost our noble sons and brothers on the field of blood; and the anguish had chiefly smitten those especially related and endeared to them. We have now a calamity that startles all with impartial shock. The Psalmist sings in praise of the Great Husbandman, 'Thou waterest the earth; Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof.' The same Lord has a field under culture in the hearts of our countrymen. He is making them soft with tearful sorrows. But these melting dews prepare us for a spring-time of beauty, a harvest of plenty and joy. And when the time of our chastening at length shall have passed, and the new era of peace shall have dawned with its splendid promise, no national blessing shall be felt to have exceeded the life – no national grief to have surpassed in the profit of its chastening the death – of the man whom the American people lament with one heart to-day.

Rev. T. P. Field, at City Hall

Fellow Citizens:

I have been requested by the Mayor and the City Council to say a few words to you at this time; and while I diffidently accept their invitation, I dare not trust myself to any merely extemporaneous utterances on so solemn an occasion. Indeed, no words, my friends, can suitably express the feelings of deep grief that are within us now, or embody our sentiments of



Funeral Obsequies at The Presidential Mansion (TLM #1625)



The funeral arch in Chicago as the procession prepares to leave the Chicago lake front for the courthouse. May 1, 1865 (TLM #3713)

eneration and affection for the illustrious dead. The slow tolling of the bells – the solemn sound of the minute gun – the tender strains of music that fall pathetically upon our ears – these badges of mourning that hang in heavy folds around our churches and our homes, and darken our national flags—these all have a language more expressive far than that of any human lips. To-day a tide of sorrow such as has never been known before, has rolled over the Continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. To-day aged parents have mourned as for a stricken son, and sons and daughters as for a father, and little children have poured forth their tears and lamentations, and thousands just out of the house of bondage have bowed as if over the bier of their great deliverer and friend.

...The time of the President's death, just as he was seeing the grand results of his cares and toils – the awful manner of his death – the lofty hopes for the future that were centering in him – the increasing confidence in his wisdom awakened by success – all these things have deepened the sorrow of the nation and made these funeral solemnities no empty pageantry, but the real manifestation of heart-felt grief.

Friends and fellow citizens, a great man has been slain in the high places of the nation. We have said so often that he was a good man, that he was an honest man – we have heard so many of his light and playful sayings that appeared like little bubbles on the deep current of his thoughts – that we have failed fully to see how great a man he was. Future generations will do, I believe, more ample justice to his purely intellectual ability and power than has ever been done yet.

Dr. Field then traces Lincoln's life with a strong focus on the problems faced and overcome as he attempts to educate himself. The steady development of intellectual capacity, the early political experience, and the success in articulating his thoughts were all milestones in this extraordinary life.

In commenting on Lincoln's oratorical skill, Dr. Field said, "There are thoughts, there are sentences, there are words in his messages and brief speeches and his letters which the world will not let die. There is an originality in his way of thinking, and a terse vigor of expression that sent home what he said to the hearts of the people."

...When I consider what were the beginnings of the life of Abraham Lincoln – how limited his means of intellectual growth and culture – when I see how steadily he advanced upward till he reached the highest pinnacle of earthly glory – when I see how well and successfully he did his work in every successive stage of his advancement – when I consider what thought, what good judgment, what mature statesmanship were requisite to guide the ship of State through the perilous storms and tempests of the last four years, I say that the man who has been so successful was a great man, and the wise men and statesmen of future ages will think him greater than we have thought him to be.

My friends, in this last appalling tragedy that robbed us of the President, we see a symbol of this conflict that has been going on so long. We see in Lincoln the representative of freedom. It was mainly because he was so that he was hunted by the destroyer. We see in the murderous assassin a representative of the slave spirit. Not that I can think that the leaders in the rebellion would have counseled so dastardly a deed, but it was the slave spirit that awakened the hate and nerved the arm for the guilty work. In this we see what the spirit of Slavery would gladly have done in our land. It would have destroyed freedom if it could, and made itself the one controlling power. But in taking the life of the good man, the friend of freedom, it, thanks be to God, did not destroy freedom itself. Is it not one of the lessons of our holy religion – one of the lessons of the cross – this, that though wicked men slay the friend of truth and goodness, truth and goodness will not die, but live a more vigorous life by virtue of that death? We shall hear the name of Lincoln mentioned henceforth as the martyr of Liberty. It will be sung in the songs of freedom, and cause trembling in the palaces of the tyrant and oppressor. In the meantime let nothing of the malice and hate that was in the heart of the destroyer be in ours. We may properly have a keen sense of justice – retributive justice to the evil doer. That is a virtue. That sense of justice needed, it may be, to be deepened among us. This awful calamity was needed, it may be, to effect this object. That severe punishment ought to fall upon those who have brought such terrible evils upon our land, who can doubt? But let not the sense of justice degenerate into malice or revenge. Let the spirit of the good man who has gone from us be, in its essential elements, our spirit still. Thankful are we that there was forgiveness in his heart for his enemies when he died. He may have been too lenient but he never could have been weakly indulgent to the violators of the laws of his country. Had he lived, necessity, and his own love of justice would have made him strong to execute the laws in the emergencies of the present and the future.

As with several of the researched sermons, Dr. Field closed his eulogy with the final paragraph from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.

Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

The Lincoln Museum owns a small book, which features *The Victorious: A Small Poem on the Assassination of President Lincoln*. (M. DeCORDOVA, McDOUGALL & CO., Bookseller, Stationers, and

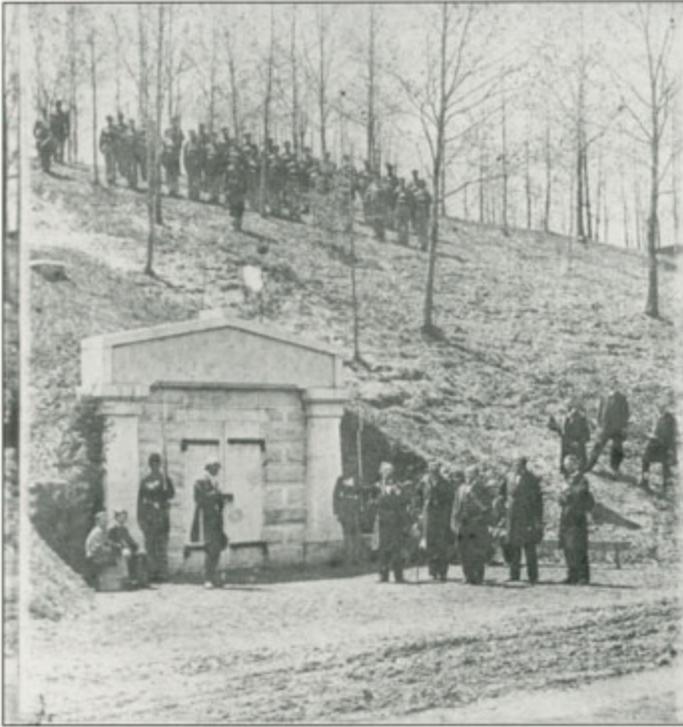
Publishers, Kingston, Jamaica. 1866) The poem was written by M. B. Bird, a Wesleyan Missionary in Haiti. The book is very fragile. An explanation for the fragility is included: "Genuine Copies of this Brochure are Water Stained due to a Shipwreck." The poem is not "small" at all; rather, it is a lengthy 57 pages. It is a great example of the melodramatic movements of the time: flowery speech; Biblical references, some of them now obscure ("continent of Ham"); dark images (many references to fiends and Hell); and marvelous majestic moments ("The mighty LINCOLN rose" and "The sent of God"). The poem begins with a dramatic representation of the evils of slavery and ends with an exhortation to future generations.

Bird first addresses the evils of slavery:

*Ere reason yet my soul had form'd, or my
Young heart the sacred glow of truth had felt,
The horrid outlines of a shapeless thing,
A monster! sunk themselves into my soul.
Thought would oft labor to define this shape,
But all was vain, for it was shapelessness
Itself, incapable of aught, that touch'd
Of truth or right, or savour'd of human'ty;
A frightful concentration of all Hell
On earth; all of damnation possible,
Was in its own foul self pent up, raging,
With burning fury, to o'erwhelm the world,
And drown in fiery grief and deepest woe,
The weaker, and the helpless of our race;
Too base to face the faintest shadow of
Or right or truth, but with low coward heart,
Warring on helplessness, and seizing souls
Unarm'd to feed the hungry maw of pride
And power; of men, thus making, lowest fiends...
But this huge monster,
In whom dwelt, 'of every villany the sum'
From fiends and men, the damning name of slav'ry
Hath receiv'd; a name which ages of deep*



President Lincoln's Funeral – The Catafalque Used in the Procession in New York City. (TLM #1624)



The vault at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois May 22, 1865 (TLM #2011)

*Anguish and unfathom'ble woe, have taught
To mean all that could make up Hell itself
On earth...
And, by sheer ruffian av'rice, trampling out
Of human souls, the image which they bear,
Of Heav'n.*

The poet next offers a powerful lamentation on the damage done to Africa and its inhabitants by the slave trade and its greedy perpetrators:

*And, as at last the torch of history
I held, I saw the horrid monster stretch
Himself o'er all the Continent of Ham...
I saw the fiendish monster spring his swarming
Fangs, and by one single effort, thousands
Wrench'd and tore away, from Fathers, Mothers,
Wives, all that on earth, to them was dear. Shrieks
Rose to Heav'n, till a whole continent, with
Howling rang, and floated in a mingl'd
Sea of tears and blood. Swords, chains, and lashings,
In wild fury clash'd; all by infernal
Power whirl'd and driven on, so fierce the burning
Lust of bloody gain; so strong that love of
Power, which rather would, o'er living chattels
Reign, than not at all...
Low is the trade which turns the writhing ag'nies
Of helpless millions, into wealth.
All here of grief and woe, up to
Its highest climax rose, till dark despair,
Extinguish'd ev'ry cheering ray of hope,
And left them on the wretched level of*

*Mere things for sale, with all of thought and reason,
Dwindl'd to a vacant stare.*

The soul of the slave trader must also suffer.

*Nor less
The ruling despot, than the rul'd, here sinks.
His iron sceptre crushes his own soul,
Makes him a princely fiend, o'er man unsoul'd.
His greatest horror is true liberty;
He would be free himself, and thinks he is,
But Hell has put a lie into his mouth,
Which darkens all his sense. Unconsciously
He bows himself to chains, and is a slave.
His Heav'n is Hell; his bliss is woe, his right
Is wrong; his truth a lie.*

Bird now introduces Abraham Lincoln (the name always mentioned in capital letters), even commenting on the name Abraham and adding a comparison as "our modern Moses":

*Hence, onward comes the mighty spir't
Of the age; he nears, and now the monster's
Final rage; arm'd with unbounded courage.
Through a heaving sea of woe, he wades.
A giant soul, of lofty bearing, and
Strung up with truth, majestically simple
In his air, he thinks, as in the presence
Of his God, his conscience rein'd; thrice worthy
The blest name he bore of him, whom all the
Faithful, Father call. Faith in the Infinite
He had, and watch'd the eye that guides. Truth was
To him a Sun, which lighted all his soul,
Shap'd out his course, and led him to those heights,
To which his elder Washington had rose;
From whence, with Sun-bright clearness all within
Him saw, that foul idolatry of wrong
Must cease; yea, that a nation's eye, at once
Must be pluckt out, and all the reas'ning of
Past ages must now be struck mute. To pause,
Or hesitate when Heav'n speaks, is crime;
Nor time is now for pause, the nation bleeds.
Truth her own throne must seize;
Whoever dares her Heav'n-born power, must sink...
Hence to the height of his great task,
The mighty LINCOLN rose, and broke the fetters
Of our modern days. His soul, now rob'd in
All the majesty of truth and right, arm'd
With the nation's will; he to the un'verse
Proclaim'd that liberty, long-fettered, now
Was free! Angelic hosts, as well as men,
With rapturous applause, renewed the song,
Which charm'd the ancient shepherds of the plain,
When they the tidings of great joy on earth
Proclaim'd, which e'en yet all nations fire
With ardent hope.
But oh! When Hell these raptures
Heard, the fi'ry Legions of the reeling
God, like thunder from the lowering clouds*

Broke forth, o'erwhelming and confounding all,
 Till earth itself, beneath their ravings shook;
 All men look'd on aghast, while this volcano,
 From its flaming crater hurl'd the burning
 Bolts, of pride, hate, bloody tyr'nny, and death,
 As though the deepest curse of Hell, or dark
 Annihilation, were revenge too small,
 For souls that dar'd to speak of truth or liberty.
 But the great soul which held
 The nation's helm, amidst the rage and roar
 Of bloody strife, stood firm, unmov'd, and to
 His righteous purpose fix'd, he saw, and read
 In crimson characters the will of Heav'n,
 And in the nation's woes, he heard the voice
 Of God, a voice heard by his heart, and to
 His soul well known. He listen'd, not with ears
 Alone, when Heav'n spoke, but all within
 Him saw, and heard, and felt, the will divine.
 Henceforth he rose to heights beyond himself,
 And with him, bore the nation's swelling soul,
 From whence the grand, the universal shout
 Of liberty went forth, which rung through ev'ry
 Region of the earth, out-roaring far the
 Flaming monsters of the battle field, where,
 In mortal conflict, right and wrong, each
 Other face...
 Immortal LINCOLN! The whole Earth at thy
 Great name already thrills, the voice of Heav'n
 In thee is heard, nor dost thou even thy
 Own will perform. A higher will than thine,
 Thy reason rules, yet nought in thee suspends.
 Ages beyond us, shall with joy upon
 Thy front, read with delight
 "The sent of God!"...

Once again, a comparison is made to Moses.

Thus was our modern Moses taught, and train'd
 By Heav'n for his great work...
 Unfathomable myst'ries in the ways
 Of God he own'd...
 Yea, well he knew the Pharaohs of the age must
 Sink, engulf'd in their own crimes, by their own
 Madness overwhelm'd.

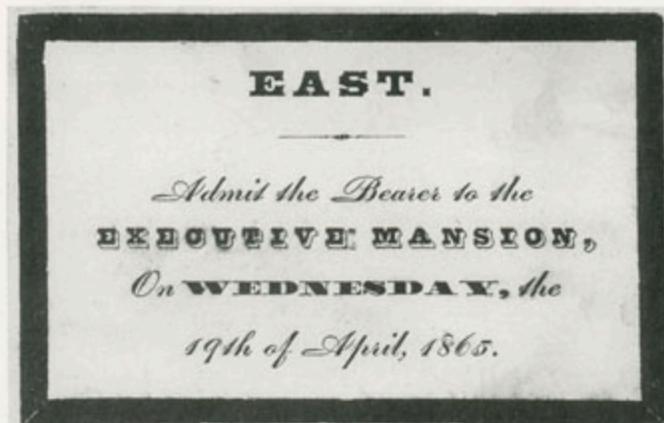
Bird expresses a belief that Lincoln's principles will stand:

Thus fell victoriously the sent of God,
 A soul of loftiest, firmest, brightest truth!
 Well might the earth now sigh. Mankind has lost
 A friend; but truth is never slain. She only
 Mocks the sword – her right is vict'ry; nor ever
 Doth, nor ever can she yield to mortals.
 She oft seems to fall; O no! she cannot
 Die. She from eternity descends, nor ever
 Could be reach'd by fire or sword.
 The servant
 Of the living God has sunk; but not one

Solitary ray of his own hopes is
 Quench'd; he falls triumphantly – hearts break;
 But yet the shout of victory is heard.
 His blood pour'd out, renews the fiat of
 The skies. Throughout the earth the voice of Heav'n
 Now in louder thunder speaks, and tyrants
 Quail; while by the blood of LINCOLN, Heav'n bids
 The earth be free!...
 The Master but recall'd his servant to Himself...
 LINCOLN then lives; his soul
 Commands. He fell, but not the fabric which
 He built; yea, he went home to God, but left
 A host of mighty spirits, that fill well
 His place, that caught his spirit, and his plans
 Approv'd. Th' ennobling tear of friendship, on
 Him fell; All hearts yearn'd over him, and felt
 The blow that brought him down; but grief is not
 Despair, the millions whom he freed, weeping.
 Rejoice, and their poster'ty, with burning
 Gratitude, shall bless his name!

The poem ends with a charge to future generations:

And you,
 Ye sons, on whom your father's mantle falls;
 Ye souls now pledg'd, by blood, to liberty;
 Your Heav'n-sent commission, is before you,
 Written with ink, drawn from the nation's veins.
 Read it, and let it sink into your souls.
 High is the charge which Heav'n confides to you;
 Sublime the work, he calls you to perform;
 Nought is too high, when Heav'n leads the way;
 Nor aught too great, for those who lean on God.
 A nation high, in honest liberty,
 Is high in honest pow'r; and rising, lifts
 The world. Despising arms, she seeks, and finds
 A higher power.
 Hear, then! For he, though dead
 Yet speaketh still. Listen, ye mighty spirits
 Whom he left...
 Your recompense
 Shall be,
 The Earth's applause, the smile of God!"



Ticket for the funeral service at the White House.

The Beecher Bible and Rifle Church



These watercolors of the Wabaunsee, Kansas, *Beecher Bible and Rifle Church* were painted by Tom L. Kiene (1906 – 1988), a journalist from Topeka, Kansas. Included is a carefully typed report, affixed to the back of the paintings in an envelope, of the artist's research into the history of the church at the Farrell Library of Kansas State University. Pictures and text are privately held by the artist's daughter, Llewellyn Kiene Bartholow, and are used with her permission.

[All material below is quoted from the artist's comments...and he lists sources.]

Since the Beecher Bible and Rifle, as it is now called, was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, many have come to this little village whose only claim to fame is the presence of this church.

Why do they come to inspect an old stone building?

Perhaps it is because new generations find inspiration in the story of New Haven men and women who left comfortable homes and pleasant lives behind them to undergo the hardships and privations here in order to make Kansas the "homestead of the free."

—Anonymous

In a small park in Wabaunsee, Kansas, stands a monument on which are carved these words:

"In Memory of the Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony Which Settled This Area in 1856 and Helped Make Kansas a Free State. May Future Generations Forever Pay Them Tribute."

...Laid out in 1856 to be a great city, the "New Haven of the West," with a steamboat landing, parks and tracts for a university site, there were hopes that it might be the capital city of Kansas. It never became more than a small town...

The town...is... 100 miles west of Kansas City, on the high, south bank of the Kansas River...

In April 1856...60 men and four women were building a tent city here.

In the spring of 1857...out in the country settlers were organized in the Underground Railroad, helping slaves escape to the north...

The ideals of freedom and education which the Beecher Colony brought from New England were strongly held in the community. The people accepted the Negroes when many Kansas towns refused to do so...

In June of 1857 the First Church of Christ in Wabaunsee organized...the stone church

was built in the summer of 1859. The stone was hauled from quarries on sledges drawn by oxen...

—"New Branches From Old Trees, a New History of Wabaunsee County", 1976.

At Wabaunsee we found the New England colony, commonly known as the Beecher Bible and Rifle Company, composed mostly of young men, the best blood of New England. The "Prairie Guards," a military company of the colony, had just returned from Lawrence, where they had been summoned by General Lane to help defend the free-state men from the border ruffians of Missouri...(1856)

—"Pioneering in Wabaunsee County," Kansas State Historical Society Collection 1909-1910

... and 79 "rifle Christians" set out from New Haven, Connecticut. "Like our fathers," said their leader, C.B. Lines, "we go with the character of our company, and a weapon to teach those who may be disposed to molest us, if any such there be, we will not submit tamely to that which is wrong."

The weapons were donated by Henry Ward Beecher, Brooklyn preacher, whose collections to equip free-soil volunteers with Sharps rifles had given them the nickname of Beecher's Bibles.

—"Bleeding Kansas" Nichols, 1954

(N.B.: Wabaunsee, from the Indians, means "dawn of the day.")

