

# Lincoln Lore

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## Lincoln Lore

is the quarterly bulletin of  
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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## *The Eloquent President: A Portrait of Lincoln Through His Words*

by Ronald C. White, Jr.  
Random House, 2005

## *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*

by Stewart Winger  
Northern Illinois University Press, 2003

Reviewed by Myron Marty, History Professor Emeritus, Drake University

Reputations of presidents and judgments about their greatness have traditionally been influenced to a considerable extent by how effectively they used words in pursuing their political purposes. Commanding respect during their presidencies and maintaining favor in subsequent years required them to display evidence, in their speeches and writings, of sound reasoning, vivid imagery, and eloquent phrasing. Manifestation of wisdom in their rhetoric and legacies of quotable lines helped ensure that they would be remembered approvingly as their successors came and went.

Both of these books examine an additional rhetorical characteristic in Abraham Lincoln's speeches and writings: his expressions of religious conviction. The books are strikingly different, however, in their treatment of these expressions and their conclusions about Lincoln's convictions.

*In The Eloquent President*, Ronald White, relying on the printed texts of Lincoln's speeches and other writings, as well as on reports of audience reactions to them, considers them one by one, and in some instances line by line. Systematically and in a straightforward style, he establishes his theses about Lincoln's powers of persuasion. As a professor of intellectual and religious history at San Francisco Theological Seminary, grappling with Lincoln's reliance on Biblical and literary allusions and quotations comes naturally to him.

*Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* is a complex intellectual history. Stewart Winger, an assistant professor of history at Lawrence Technological University, probes Lincoln's speeches and writings to discover the evolution of his thought in the circumstances of his life and the context of his times. The dominant force in Lincoln's life and in that context, Winger contends, was Romanticism.

Both books prompt a question: How did Abraham Lincoln, who described his education simply as "deficient," become the "eloquent president"? What were the sources of his sensitive reasoning, masterly choice of words and phrases, and apt use of Biblical and literary imagery?

White notes that early in life, largely on his own, Lincoln studied William Scott's *Lessons in Elocution* and that what he learned there was "in all probability the beginning of [his] love affair with Shakespeare." He notes further that Lincoln "devoured" Samuel Kirkham's *English Grammar* and that in 1860, when he supplied material for a campaign biography he wrote, in the third person, "He studied English grammar, imperfectly of course, but so as to speak and write as well as he now does." White might also have cited another source

On the Cover: "A Council of War in '60" Engraving by H.B. Hall and G.E. Perine, 1866 (TLM # 2364).

of Lincoln's learning, Thomas Dilworth's *A Guide to the English Tongue*, a book that dealt with such matters as syntax, analogy, comparison, and the effective use of monosyllabic words.

Although Lincoln's image as a railsplitter perhaps helped him early in his political career, White and Winger treat the Lincoln of the 1850s as an intellectual, a man of ideas equipped with deep and profound learning. As Allen Guelzo has shown in *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*, and as these writers would affirm, Lincoln understood the powerful currents of religion, philosophy, and political economy of his day, and he had absorbed and assimilated the ideas of classical liberalism, the Enlightenment, Victorian skepticism, and Calvinist spirituality.

In an apt metaphor, White likens Lincoln's presidential speeches and writings to a string of pearls, each with its own size and coloration. They can be appreciated best, he writes, "when they are seen together in their shimmering beauty." But just as pearls can be examined individually, so can Lincoln's individual speeches. Each chapter in his book is such an examination, and together they tell "a story of Lincoln's responses to challenges and opportunities to state his political vision to a nation in the midst of Civil War."

White looks first at Lincoln's affectionate farewell to his friends at the Springfield railroad station when he left for Washington in 1861: "I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington...." Here White addresses the question anyone studying Lincoln's speeches must ask: Which of the extant texts is most authentic? The answer is almost always elusive, so White draws on the versions he believes merit that description and includes the alternative ones in annotated appendices.

Four of White's recurring themes appear in his treatment of the occasions when Lincoln was called upon to speak during his eleven-day journey to Washington. First, he says, Lincoln was always reluctant to speak extemporaneously. Second, when he was not thoroughly prepared his speeches fell short of his aspirations. Third, he constantly studied his audiences for their reactions as he was speaking. And fourth, he continued to revise his speeches, even as he delivered them and later as he prepared them for publication, as is evident in the texts included in the appendices. Here and throughout the book White calls attention to Lincoln's skillful use of figures of speech and his practice of posing and answering questions. Sometimes, he says, Lincoln spoke as a lawyer, sometimes as a teacher, sometimes as a guide.

Lincoln was his own speechwriter, but he asked confidants whose judgment he respected to critique drafts he circulated among them. Secretary of State Seward, for example, helped Lincoln refine his First Inaugural Address, but Lincoln rejected some of his suggestions. Had he accepted all of them, we would not have Lincoln's beautiful expression of confidence that "the mystic chords of memory [would] yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature." In Lincoln's painstakingly prepared first message to Congress, he was again influenced by advisors, but the words in the final document were his own. Here he defined the American experiment as a constitutional republic, a democracy, and "a

government of the people, by the same people"—a phrase that appeared more eloquently in his Gettysburg address.

Slavery questions were always difficult for Lincoln to address, and, sensitive to his audience's proclivities, he was sometimes evasive. But he stated his position unambiguously in an August 1862 response to a petulant letter from newspaper publisher Horace Greeley: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union." Later that year, he addressed slavery issues indirectly by reminding Congress that "we cannot escape history." In his Gettysburg Address he spoke of "a new birth of freedom" and "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

Lincoln never joined a church, but he was unmistakably a student of the Bible, so much so that in his Second Inaugural Address, White says, "What we hear is not the legal Lincoln of the First Inaugural, but the theological Lincoln." In its 701 words—second in brevity only to Washington's Second Inaugural—he mentions God fourteen times, quotes the Bible four times, and invokes prayer three times. Line after line is quotable, but none more so than the concluding one: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in...to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

Stewart Winger, in *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*, rather than analyzing explicit ingredients in Lincoln's rhetoric, focuses on what he believes to be the influence of mid-century Romanticism and evangelicalism on Lincoln's thinking. In the introduction, he outlines arguments that are amplified later in the book. Some of them, he acknowledges, run counter to positions taken by others who have studied Lincoln. He insists, for example, that Lincoln's religious language was not manipulative and that his expressions were never hypocritical or dishonest, as some have asserted.

More importantly, he advances the thesis that Romantics of Lincoln's era were often "religious seekers who found unorthodox ways to reaffirm surprisingly traditional, Christian descriptions of the human condition." Simply put, he continues, "Lincoln's religious rhetoric reflected the rise of Romantic poetry and Romantic thought in America." Further, he contends that William Herndon's overall portrayal of Lincoln was generally accurate and that the religious scoffing of Lincoln's youth gave way to, or made the way for "a deeper, truer kind of faith." In his judgment, Lincoln "was an 'apostle,' not indeed of traditional Christianity, but of the American Romantic faith in the meaning of America."

Winger spells out his theses, in part, by taking issue with other scholars. Although he credits these scholars with having some things right, he asserts that they have misunderstood or misinterpreted or ignored Lincoln's religion and his Romanticism. Among those challenged (all by page nine) are David Hein, Allen Guelzo, Eric Foner, William Gienapp, Michael Holt, Mark Noll, William Brock, and Richard Carwardine. Indeed, he says, "Lincoln scholars have almost entirely overlooked the impact of Romanticism on American political life that Lincoln's speeches and writings represented." (Had The Eloquent President appeared before

*Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*, Winger might well have included Ronald White among those he faults for having overlooked Romanticism as a force in Lincoln's life.) Winger's purpose is to show that "Lincoln differed with evangelicals in a most important way, but he used Romantic religious language to make sense of the complex world that surrounded him and to change that world."

To establish his case, Winger explores such things as the debate over the meaning of America as reflected in Lincoln's conflict with Stephen A. Douglas on fundamental issues facing America and Lincoln's role in political struggles between the Whig and Democratic parties. While slavery as a moral question was Lincoln's paramount concern in his clashes with Douglas, the two men took opposing positions also on such things as the emergence of modern capitalism, westward expansion, and international trade.

The range of topics treated in Winger's book is impressive: Young America as a religious movement; manifest destiny; historian George Bancroft's "Romantic historical theology"; Romantic Protestantism and Whig rhetoric; Lincoln's interest in technology; Lincoln's "effort to reconcile the demands of morality with the demands of self-interest or political calculus"; and so on. One of Winger's most significant points concerns his challenge to David Donald's characterization of Lincoln, shared by other historians, as "a man who stood aloof from reform movements," that his personality was "essentially passive."

*Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* is the product of thorough and wide-ranging research, and there is nothing timid in Winger's writing. Indeed, he appears to delight in being an iconoclast in Lincoln scholarship. But by identifying Lincoln so closely, almost exclusively, with Romanticism, he defines Lincoln too narrowly. He seems to make him a practitioner of this "ism" to a degree that would probably have made Lincoln squirm. As I mused on this, I recalled an article about another many-faceted American who defied "isms": "Which Jefferson Do You Quote?"<sup>1</sup> The point is that there are more Lincolns than the Romantic one found in Winger's book.

Nonetheless, Winger deserves considerable credit for bringing to readers the Lincoln he has discovered. Those who are already familiar with salient features of Lincoln's life and thought will profit most from his work. Many readers may find, however, as I did, that its parts are more rewarding than the whole. Following his many arguments and holding them all together is a demanding and sometimes frustrating exercise. As for Ronald White, he deserves plaudits for revealing in such an interesting fashion the Lincoln he discovered. Despite their contrasting approaches to Lincoln and their disparate theses, these books complement one another very well.

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *The Reporter*, December 15, 1955, 33–36.

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## ***Abraham Lincoln's American Dream: Clashing Political Perspectives***

Edited by Kenneth L. Deutsch and Joseph R. Fornieri. Potomac Books, 2005.

Reviewed by John F. Marszalek, Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History, Mississippi State University. His most recent book is *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

It has become almost obligatory for scholars speaking or writing about the 16th president of the United States to point out just how many books and articles have been written about him before providing their own interpretation of his legacy.

Kenneth L. Deutsch and Joseph E. Fornieri, the editors of the detailed anthology under review here, attempt to provide some order to this Lincolniana. Respected political scientists, one from the State University of New York, Geneseo, and the other from the Rochester Institute of Technology, they have investigated this vast literature and the many views contained therein and have selected thirty-two writings to showcase. To these, they have added an insightful introduction, a foreword by Jean Bethke Elshtain of the University of Chicago Divinity School, and an afterword by Allen C. Guelzo, two time Lincoln Prize winner from Gettysburg College. The result is a book that provides serious readers an opportunity to learn what a wide variety of scholars have said about Abraham Lincoln. Deutsch

and Fornieri divide the writings into eight chapters, each one containing two to five essays on a particular part of the Lincoln legacy and each one beginning with a quote from Lincoln himself. The editors also include at the start of every chapter a list of questions, demonstrating that the main audience for the book is the college student. However, serious scholars will also find this volume useful.

The editors express their purpose early in the introduction. They want to find out, they say: "who was the 'real' Lincoln?" They indicate that there is a continuing debate "over whether Lincoln's legacy is salutary or harmful." In fact, those who criticize and those who praise "agree that for better or worse he vastly influenced the egalitarian development of the United States. This volume seeks," the editors conclude, "to represent both critical engagements and appreciations of Lincoln's legacy." (p.4)

Deutsch and Fornieri achieve their purpose. A careful reading of

the book, and it will require that, will provide readers with a wealth of information on Lincoln's thought, his way of thinking, the contemporary reactions to his philosophy and actions, his legacy, and the wide range of modern writings on that legacy. Readers will find themselves often elevated and sometimes appalled by what individuals have said about Lincoln. In general, however, Lincoln's words, actions, and the analysis of them will inspire readers as they have so many other people throughout the world over the years. No matter the criticism that Lincoln receives in some of the essays in this book or that he has received over the years, he continues to tower over his critics intellectually as he towered over his contemporaries physically. It is, in fact, in criticism that a reader will often discover Lincoln's greatness even more than in the reading of the more usual praise.

The titles of the chapters into which the editors organize the essays provide good insight on the book's purpose. These chapters deal with the matter of equality and the Declaration of Independence; whether or not Lincoln was politically ambitious; precisely what his views were on race and slavery and what his actions really meant; what kind of political leader he was: a Whig or a Republican, a pragmatist or a doctrinaire; whether he was a dictator; how he merged religion and politics and whether he was preaching a civil religion; did he use the power of the federal government effectively or did he create the beginnings of a too-powerful central government; and, how can he be a voice to us in this modern age?

Which of these chapters readers will find most meaningful will depend on their own interests and viewpoints. A fact of Lincoln historiography is that, over the years, individuals have used him to support their own particular philosophies and even prejudices. Had the editors included an essay demonstrating this phenomenon, it would have been helpful to the readers.

How Lincoln may be used is particularly obvious in Chapter 8, "Lincoln For Our Time." Here the editors include an essay by Richard Current, a giant among Lincoln scholars. Current argues that, by studying Lincoln, modern day Americans will find arguments against multiculturalism. An even more obvious use of Lincoln for modern purposes is the essay by George McKenna, an emeritus professor at City University of New York. McKenna says that Lincoln's anti-slavery position provides a model for modern opposition to abortion. He argues that the Lincolnian attitude toward slavery ("permit, restrict, discourage") (p.472) provides a middle ground between those supporting and those attacking abortion and is a road map for eventually ridding society of it. McKenna does not comment on the abolitionist opposition to Lincoln's position on slavery, nor does he identify pro-lifers as modern day abolitionists as many of them personally do.

One wonders why the editors presented only these two essays in this chapter, thus tying Lincoln to modern day conservative positions. Is Lincoln the patron saint of 21st century conservative philosophy or does he also provide inspiration for those of a liberal persuasion? Mario Cuomo, with Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer serving as "Historical Consultant," wrote a book entitled *Why Lincoln Matters: Today More Than Ever* (2004) in which he argued that Lincoln's philosophy supported the liberal view of government

and its responsibilities. Including such an essay surely would have provided balanced insight on the use of Lincoln over the years.

In other chapters, the editors are careful to provide both sides of an issue. In chapter 3, for example, either the essays themselves or discussions within the essays provide the numerous sides of the controversy over Lincoln's attitude toward race. A critic might say that Lerone Bennett, Jr., the most famous of the modern proponents of the Lincoln-was-a-racist school, deserves an essay of his own, but the review article by Washington and Lee University's Lucas E. Morel presents Bennett's arguments forthrightly (before demolishing them, it must be said). The other essayists in this chapter (the late Don E. Fehrenbacher of Stanford University, Jason H. Silverman of Winthrop University, and Stephen B. Oates, emeritus professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst) conclude that Lincoln's racial attitudes matured as he grew, although his opposition to slavery was manifested early in his life. The real issue for Lincoln was how to deal with the institution effectively, and these authors praise him for his approach.

Perhaps the chapter that students will find particularly amazing is the first one, in which four scholars debate the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and particularly the meaning of the principle of equality. One could argue that the editors should have left out the article by Willmoore Kendall, a deceased faculty member at the University of Dallas, in which he attacks the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's incorrect, he says, interpretation of equality. As Morel adequately presents Bennett's argument, so Henry V. Jaffa, formerly of Claremont Graduate School, presents Kendall's points, and M.E. Bradford, formerly of the University of Dallas, presents an argument most similar to Kendall's. This chapter would have been more effective in presenting the equality debate with one less essay.

If students think that modern scholars engage in intellectual sparring dispassionately, they will be surprised to read M.E. Bradford's comparison of Abraham Lincoln to Adolf Hitler. Henry V. Jaffa replies that Alexander H. Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy, and the Confederacy itself clearly set the real precedents for Hitler and National Socialism.

An area of repeated interest in Lincoln studies is that of psychohistory. Recently, a book has appeared which insists that Lincoln was gay (C.A. Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (2005), and another argues that Lincoln's depression was the source of his greatness (Joshua Wolf Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness* (2005). Deutsch and Fornieri do not provide a chapter dealing directly with Lincoln and psychology, but in their section on Lincoln's political ambition, they include some older studies from this point of view. In essays by Richard Current, Richard O. Curry of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, M.E. Bradford, and Pennsylvania State University's Mark E. Neely, the ideas of Edmund Wilson regarding Lincoln's famous 1838 Springfield Illinois Lyceum speech are discussed. The debate is whether Lincoln, when he talked about the danger of a future dictator, was or was not actually talking about himself. Edmund Wilson thought so, but, with the exception of Bradford, the other essayists in this chapter disagree. Bradford castigates Lincoln yet again for being a terrible president who did a myriad of awful things.

Three chapters deal directly with Lincoln the politician, his use of executive power, and the American system of federalism. Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank J. Williams and William D. Pederson of Louisiana State University-Shreveport argue persuasively that both modern day liberals and conservatives accept Lincoln, and that he indeed had both liberal and conservative elements in him. In the early 21st century, it is the libertarians, the authors argue, who are Lincoln's harshest critics, seeing him as creator of the modern powerful federal government they dislike. Williams and Pederson argue that Lincoln believed in a positive government, one that worked to meet people's needs and that he was a forerunner of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal.

Essayists in these three chapters debate a variety of other political issues. The late T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University, agreeing with Harvard's David Herbert Donald, argues that Lincoln was a pragmatist. The University of South Alabama's Ethan Fishman disagrees, insisting that Lincoln was a statesman in the Aristotelian sense of Pericles. Stephen B. Oates also takes issue with Donald, insisting that Lincoln was not a Whig in the White House, but was a 19th century Republican and he should be remembered as such. Ralph Lerner of the University of Chicago sees Lincoln as a molder of public opinion, while Colleen Shogan and Robert Rafferty, both of George Mason University, call Lincoln "perhaps the most astute and skilled president to manipulate... [the] apparatus" of the American political system. (p.265)

When it comes to the matter of whether or not Lincoln was a dictator, the historians in chapter 5 indicate their belief that he was no such despot in the truest sense of the word. The late James G. Randall of the University of Illinois said that Lincoln was the mildest of all dictators as he worked "to preserve the nation and to preserve democracy in the world." (p.289) Herman Belz of the University of Maryland agrees. Jeffrey Crouch and Mark J. Rozell of Catholic University and George Mason University respectively, also agree, citing Lincoln as a "constitutional dictator" (p.305) not an "absolute dictator." (p.310) Catholic University's Phillip G. Henderson shows how Lincoln dominated his cabinet, yet, at times, they could convince him to their point of view.

Rogan Kersh of Syracuse University argues that Lincoln used his powers as president to preserve not just the Union but "a more moral union," (p.424) an improved union over that of the founding fathers. He did this by tying equality to it. George Anastaplo of Loyola University of Chicago, analyzes Walt Whitman's "Lilacs," the poem that Whitman wrote at Lincoln's death. He concludes that Whitman's 1879 speech on the 14th anniversary of Lincoln's death, is actually a better poem than "Lilacs." In fact, though, Whitman did not really understand Lincoln's greatness, Anastaplo concludes. He emphasized his saving of the Union, but he did not similarly praise him for the ending of slavery.

Clearly the essay that will most irritate Lincoln scholars and cause students to scratch their heads is the one from the pen of Thomas J. DiLorenzo of Loyola University in Maryland, who elsewhere has called Henry Clay a "National Socialist." The author's arguments fly directly in the face of prevailing historiography. For example, he argues that slavery was not the chief or only cause of war; economics was the dominant issue. By destroying secession, he

says, Lincoln destroyed liberty because he opened the way for the all-powerful centralized government. Lincoln should not even be given much credit for ending slavery, because, DiLorenzo insists, "peaceful, compensated emancipation" (p.422) could have accomplished the same thing without the need for war. "Lincoln should be remembered as the Great Centralizer as much as the Great Emancipator." "[H]e considered the emancipation policy to be only a means to an end, the end being to 'save' the Union, or, more accurately, to establish, once and for all, federal supremacy over the states." (p.421) The entire article is filled with inaccurate statements. Perhaps it was included as an example of the most extreme and inaccurate attacks on the sixteenth president.

Surely the chapter which will have particular modern resonance is number 6, the one dealing with politics and religion. The role of religion in 21st century American politics is, of course, a major contemporary issue; and, once again, as is the case in so many other areas, Lincoln has something to say to us. University of Virginia emeritus professor, William Lee Miller, analyzes the Second Inaugural Address to demonstrate how Lincoln was able to display charity toward a vanquished foe when so many people on the Union side were espousing a morally superior position. The University of Notre Dame's Michael P. Zuckert points out the difficulty Lincoln had and those who try to analyze him have in understanding the role of religion in public life. To Lincoln, it had both good and bad effects. Bruce P. Frohnen of the University of South Alabama has no such ambivalence. He argues that Lincoln's political religion, like all political religions, was a detriment to human liberty because it "focuses the people's attention and affections directly on the state and its purposes." (p.367) The Union Theological Seminary's legendary Reinhold Niebuhr, now deceased, praises Lincoln's religious convictions as being superior to those of other political and religious leaders of the day. In his afterword, Allen C. Guelzo demonstrates convincingly that Lincoln came to realize that the existence of Enlightenment Liberalism and Puritan religion was the "fundamental bipolarity of American thinking." In slavery, "the moral demand 'to let the captives free' clashed with the Enlightenment demand to respect the boundary of 'property.'" "In the end, Lincoln could not keep the imperatives of morality from spilling over into the secular sphere of the public." (p.488)

In conclusion, then, this is a meaty book, not one to be read at a single or even several sittings. It provides information and analysis on a variety of aspects of the Lincoln legacy. Some Lincoln scholars will wish the editors had included this or that other article or brought the debate closer to the present by including the most recent writings on Lincoln. In the end, however, the editors' choice of authors and essays allows the reader, from scholar to college student, to gain important insight into the man who continues to intrigue people long after his death. Lincoln always said that his great desire was to have his fellow citizens remember him. As this book demonstrates, Lincoln is not only remembered, but he continues to influence people to the present day. We owe editors Kenneth L. Deutsch and Joseph R. Fornieri a vote of thanks for providing us with such a convenient discussion of that influence. Although the high price will no doubt limit sales, hopefully this book will receive the wide reading it deserves.

# A Time for Killing

by David E. Long, J.D., Ph.D.

**[Editor's note: Professor Long has reached some conclusions on this topic with which others might disagree. *Lincoln Lore* is publishing the article in order to promote debate. Comments to the editor may be sent to the postal or e-mail address on page 2 of this issue. Instructions for contacting Professor Long can be found at the end of the article.]**

On Monday, February 1, 1864, Abraham Lincoln met with probably the youngest colonel in the United States Army, 21 year old Ulric Dahlgren, and as the president was shaved, the two men discussed "political and military matters" according to the only existing record of what took place during that meeting.<sup>1</sup> Thirty days later the same youthful colonel lay dead alongside a rural road in King and Queen County, Virginia, five bullet holes in his slender torso. These two events, separated by thirty days in time and less than a hundred miles in distance, constituted the critical thread in a web of conspiracy and intrigue that has been largely misunderstood for the past hundred years. It is a story that challenges our notions of the compassion and civility of Abraham Lincoln as president, and one which signaled "black flag warfare" that would be waged during the final year of the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

What took place during the month between the White House meeting and the March 2nd ambush of a column of Federal cavalry led by Colonel Ulric Dahlgren was the planning and implementation of a large cavalry raid on Richmond. The raid was reportedly the brainchild of the commander of the Third Division of the United States Cavalry Corps, Brigadier General H. Judson Kilpatrick, even though the president had been considering and encouraging just such a mission since the previous May. He thought it would be useful as a means for distributing his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction among southern civilians who had grown weary of the war, a way of releasing the more than ten thousand Union soldiers and officers imprisoned in Richmond, and would provide an opportunity to destroy warehouses and government buildings being used by the Confederate government and military.<sup>3</sup> The raid did take place beginning on February 28, and by March 2 it had failed, utterly and completely. But the most controversial aspect of the raid did not arise until it was over.

It was late evening on March 2, after most of the raiders had already reached the safety of Major General Benjamin Butler's lines on the peninsula, that an isolated band of cavalrymen, having lost contact with the larger column, rode into an ambush in rural King and Queen County, Virginia. The ambush had been set up by members of Company H of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, men who happened to be home on leave, along with home guard militia from the area including at least one thirteen year old boy named William Littlepage. When the Federal commander of this detachment realized that there were men in the woodline next to the road, he raised his pistol and rode toward the trees shouting "Surrender or I will shoot you!" A volley of shots rang out from the woods and five balls struck the officer almost simultaneously. He was dead before his body hit the ground. What the ambushers did not realize was that they had just killed one of the most prominent



"The Late Colonel Ulric Dahlgren" ("From a Photograph by Brady") (TLM collection of Harper's Weekly, Saturday, March 26, 1864)

heroes of the Union war effort, and started in motion one of the greatest controversies of the war.<sup>4</sup>

Following the initial volley from the woods, the rest of the soldiers in blue quickly sought cover in the field on the other side of the road. Most of them would be taken captive the next morning. During the night, William Littlepage, a thirteen year old boy who was a member of the home guard unit, crawled out from his hiding place and found the body of the officer he had seen unhorsed by the shots. He found the lifeless body of the Union officer and began rifling through his pockets. One of the things he discovered was that the dead cavalryman was wearing an artificial leg. Littlepage's search produced some sheets of paper, a gold cigar case, a small notebook, and other items including a pocket watch. He crawled back to the woodline where his schoolmaster, Edward Halbach, also a member of the home guard, was waiting, tensely gripping his gun and watching for any sign of movement from the other side of the road. When Littlepage offered his schoolmaster a cigar from the case he had just removed from the body of the dead officer, Halbach declined but asked where the youngster had gotten tobacco? When the boy explained, he also said that the dead Yankee had a wooden leg which the boy had tried to remove. Lying near Halbach and Littlepage was Lieutenant Harry Blair, a Confederate officer who had been captured several days earlier by the raiders, and was riding with the column of cavalrymen when it was ambushed. He overheard the conversation between Halbach

and Littlepage and immediately knew that the officer who lay dead in the road was none other than Ulric Dahlgren, celebrated hero in the North and commander of the force that had captured Blair. Having ridden for several days with this force, Blair had come to realize several things about the dead officer. He uttered an ominous warning to Littlepage and Halbach: "You have killed Col. Dahlgren, who was in command of the enemy. His men were devoted to him, and I would advise you all to take care of yourselves now, for if the yankees catch you with anything belonging to him, they will certainly hang us all to the nearest tree." They might have been even more alarmed had they realized that only a month earlier the same young officer had been at the White House privately conferring with the President of the United States about "political and military matters."<sup>5</sup>

Despite Blair's warning to destroy the things that had been found on Dahlgren's body, Halbach chose to keep them and at first light he strained to read the information written on the folded sheets of paper. As he did he felt both anger and fear at the same time, a feeling like nothing he had experienced before. Halbach read the handwritten words on the thin sheets of paper after first noting the letterhead. It was stationery of the "Headquarters, Third Division, United States Cavalry Corps." Written on one sheet were words Dahlgren apparently intended to read to his men at some point during the raid. The ominous words that must have gotten Halbach's attention were: "You have been selected...as a picked command to attempt a desperate undertaking—an undertaking which, if successful, will write your names on the hearts of your countrymen in letters that can never be erased, and which will cause the prayers of our fellow-soldiers now confined in loathsome prisons to follow you and yours wherever you may go. We hope to release the prisoners from Belle Isle first, and having seen them fairly started, we will cross the James River into Richmond, destroying the bridges after us and exhorting the released prisoners to destroy and burn the hateful city; and do not allow the Rebel leader Davis and his traitorous crew to escape. The prisoners must render great assistance...."<sup>6</sup>

The other document on Third Division stationery, written in the same handwriting, was even more ominous. It contained instructions that were to be issued to an officer who would lead a portion of Dahlgren's force that would proceed along the north bank of the James River (after Dahlgren and most of the force crossed the river and marched toward the city on the south side of the James). It contained the following language: "We will try and secure the bridges to the city...The bridges, once secured, and the prisoners loose and over the river, the bridges will be burned and the city destroyed. The men must be kept together and well in hand, and once in the city it must be destroyed **and Jeff. Davis and Cabinet killed** (emphasis added)."<sup>7</sup>

The notebook that was taken off Dahlgren was probably not read by Halbach at the time. By the time he had finished reading the thin sheets of stationery, he was sufficiently exercised to take action without needing to examine the handwritten comments penciled in on the pages of the notebook. If he had noticed anything at all about it, it was probably the handwritten name...in ink...signed on the inside cover of the notebook—Ulric Dahlgren. The writings in the notebook, all of them written with pencil, contained the

detailed information regarding the duties of the column of men with Dahlgren. They would ride to the west of Richmond, crossing the James River northwest of the city, then follow the river and strike the capital from the south. The initial goal would be to free the thousands of Union prisoners on Belle Isle, an island in the middle of the river. The remarkably detailed notes had apparently been composed sometime prior to the raid, because they indicated the raid should have started on Saturday, February 27th. Perhaps at the time he wrote them Dahlgren believed it would start on the 27th. In fact it did start on Sunday, February 28th, a day later than what was indicated in the notebook. The line that fairly leaped off the pages was the very last line of pencil-written notes: "**Jeff. Davis and Cabinet must be killed on the spot**" (emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

Many historians and authors have written about this event. It has been variously referred to as the Kilpatrick Raid, the Kilpatrick/Dahlgren Raid, but most often and most famously simply as the Dahlgren Raid. Of those historians, only James O. Hall has brought attention to the fact that there were **two** writings among the documents taken off Dahlgren's body that made specific reference to the killing of Jefferson Davis and other members of the Confederate Cabinet. Because of some poor timing and lack of judgment by several people, the two writings became separated.<sup>9</sup> The events that followed the discovery of the papers were somewhat convoluted and confused, due to the fact that they changed hands a number of times in a short period, and that almost everybody in the process had other responsibilities to attend to when the notes came into their possession. Not all of these people fully appreciated the significance of the notes the way Halbach did, and therefore some of those in the chain of evidence....notably Beale...probably did not give the care to their preservation intact that would have been optimal. On the morning of March 3, 1864, when Edward Halbach (depending on who the writer was, he has also been referred to as "Halback", and "Hallbach") read these entries, he was well aware of their significance and intended to see that they were made known to the authorities. Thus when Lieutenant James Pollard, commander of Company H of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, approached him that afternoon asking about the papers, the schoolteacher was initially reluctant to surrender them. Pollard assured Halbach that the papers would be delivered to the appropriate authorities in Richmond. Once Pollard had the papers and notebook (along with the wooden leg) he gave them to his courier, Private William Robbins, with instructions to deliver them to the regimental commander Colonel Richard Beale. That same evening Beale returned the papers and the wooden leg to Pollard with instructions that they be delivered to either Major General Wade Hampton or Major General Fitzhugh Lee in Richmond. For unexplained reasons, possibly simple oversight, Beale returned the loose sheets of stationery but retained the notebook for himself. By not forwarding the notebook, with its handwritten entry "Jeff. Davis and Cabinet must be killed on the spot", Beale significantly weakened the claim that the Confederate government would later make regarding the ultimate purpose of the Dahlgren Raid. When that accusation was made several days later, Confederate authorities positing the claim were totally unaware of the existence of a second writing found on Dahlgren's body, a writing that strongly supported their allegation.<sup>10</sup>

That notebook was not forwarded on to the Richmond authorities



for several weeks, arriving after the principal round of letters and editorials had already been concluded, and public attention to the matter had lost its initial energy. That second writing, containing a message of similar (if not identical) import, written in the same handwriting as that on Third Division stationery, would have strengthened the Confederate accusation immeasurably. Unfortunately for the historical record, during the year following the end of the war and the capture of the records of the Confederate government, that notebook (and the other relevant writings found on Dahlgren's body) disappeared under circumstances that would suggest it was destroyed by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.<sup>11</sup> Since it had not been among the materials returned to Pollard by Beale on March 4, photographic copies were not made of this entry, and thus the only evidence of its existence in 1864 is the reference to it by witnesses at the time, and the text of it as contained in Richmond newspapers when it finally was forwarded by Beale on March 31. The next day portions of the pencil-written text from the notebook were published in the Richmond newspapers.<sup>12</sup> But timing can be a fickle mistress, and by the beginning of April much of the furor that had been initially spawned by the revelation of the papers, had already died down.

At ten o'clock a.m. on March 4th, Pollard located Fitzhugh Lee who was engaged in a conference with Colonel Heros von Borcke, but took a break to learn what the urgent information was that Pollard had brought to him personally. Lee immediately recognized the importance of the papers, and he took them personally to the Confederate White House where he interrupted a meeting President Jefferson Davis was holding with Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin.

The only person who ever greeted the revelation of these documents with laughter was Jefferson Davis. As he inspected the papers, particularly that portion referring to the killing of himself and his Cabinet, he quipped to his chief diplomatic officer, "This means you, Mr. Benjamin."<sup>13</sup> Benjamin was not the kind to express himself with the machismo of Jefferson Davis, and Davis had a brief moment of levity at his expense. However he did not question the authenticity or the seriousness of the message contained in the documents. And he did order that they be taken to the Adjutant General of the Confederacy, Samuel Cooper.

Thus, within 48 hours of their discovery on the body of Ulric Dahlgren, the papers that led to one of the most heated debates of the Civil War, had made their way to the highest officials of the Confederate government and military. Their revelation set off a tempestuous controversy. Confederate officials went to great lengths to photograph copies of the papers, and given the limited state of photography in the South in 1864, it really did require a significant effort. Fifty sets of the documents were produced, each set containing five pages of photographic reproductions. Those were then distributed to newspapers and diplomats in order to establish that black flag warfare was now being waged against the Confederacy. The effort was made in the forlorn, but never totally forsaken, southern belief that recognition and intervention by Britain and France were still feasible and possible.

But the most spectacular aspect of the controversy...most certainly from the retrospective of the twenty-first century...was the abso-

lute belief in Richmond, that Abraham Lincoln was personally responsible. This was not a belief based on the theoretical agency relationship by which the president is always responsible for the misconduct of those who are under his overall command. It was not built upon a legal theory of *respondet superior* whereby the master is always to be accountable for the actions of the servant. Rather southerners believed Lincoln was "personally" responsible, that he had himself solicited Ulric Dahlgren and Judson Kilpatrick to perform acts of murder and mayhem, and had even specified the targets they were to pursue. That theme rang loud and clear in the Richmond papers, whose editors had on the evening of May 4th been invited to the Confederate White House to view the original set of documents. "Let Lincoln and Kilpatrick remember that they have bidden their subordinates give no quarter to the Confederate chiefs," wrote the editor of the Richmond *Dispatch* on March 5. He went on to make a disparaging remark about Lincoln's disguised and undignified entrance into Washington in 1861, an incident the president had later regretted. "Perhaps even a scotch cap and military cloak will not prevent a just and stern vengeance from overtaking them." The Richmond *Sentinel*, which frequently criticized Jefferson Davis, took this occasion to chastise him for not pursuing a more punitive war policy: "If the Confederate capital has been in the closest danger of massacre and conflagrations; if the President and Cabinet have run the most serious risk of being hanged at their own doors; do we not owe it chiefly to the milk-and-water spirit in which this war has hitherto been conducted?" The *Sentinel* spoke for many Southerners in the aftermath of the raid. "To the Washington authorities we are simply criminals awaiting punishment, who may be hanged or may be pardoned. In their eyes our country is not ours but theirs. The hostilities which they carry on are not properly war, but military execution & coercion.... What then would we practically suggest? First, to put to death all "raiders" caught in the fact; secondly, to insist upon the most scrupulous carrying out of retaliation for murders, robberies, and other outrages, with the most punctual exactitude."<sup>14</sup>

There was absolutely no doubt in the Confederate capital and across the South, that Abraham Lincoln had personally sponsored the attempt to kill Jefferson Davis. Within two weeks of the end of the raid, Cabinet-level officials and military leaders of the Confederacy met in Richmond and devised a plan for covert operations that would include attempts to kidnap and perhaps ultimately kill Abraham Lincoln. The raid had ushered in black flag warfare, and the papers from Dahlgren's body had offered the stark reality of a war of apocalyptic proportion. They were a harbinger of impending destruction, of Southern cities in flames and refugees wandering a wasteland made desolate by "war so terrible."

Just how reasonable was the Confederate assumption that Lincoln was responsible? It was certainly a great deal more reasonable than would be revealed by the historical record. There are several reasons for this. First, the denials of the legitimacy of the "Dahlgren papers" began almost immediately. Lincoln never officially commented on the subject, or if he did there was no record made of it. However members of the United States Army denied the authenticity of the papers, starting with Major General George Meade. But Meade's denial was based on a report from Brigadier General H. Judson Kilpatrick, the putative commander of the raid and the person who supposedly divined the idea that a successful

raid could be conducted. (Kilpatrick has often been credited with conceiving of the raid, because he was the one who was heard bragging around camp that with five thousand good troopers he could ride into Richmond and bring the war to an end. Then he was summoned to the White House to discuss the idea. Of course we know that Lincoln had begun pursuing the idea nine months earlier.)

Kilpatrick did not deny the existence of documents. In fact, he reported that an hour prior to the beginning of the raid, Dahlgren had shown him a copy of an address that he was going to read to his men. According to Kilpatrick the only difference between what he saw and what was in the newspapers, was that the document he saw had "Approved" written on its face in red ink but did not have the words "exhorting prisoners to destroy and burn the hateful city and kill the traitor Davis and his cabinet." It could be expected that the officer commanding the raid would deny the portion of the documents that arguably might be viewed as sanctioning criminal or illegal behavior. But the fact that Kilpatrick acknowledged that there was something in the form of an address or written agenda that Dahlgren was carrying on his person and had shown to the general, is a remarkable admission in and of itself.<sup>15</sup>

It is perhaps significant that Kilpatrick said Dahlgren showed him the papers an hour before the raid began. Would that be an hour before the raid began from Dahlgren's perspective? Or from Kilpatrick's? Dahlgren set out an hour before Kilpatrick. If the plan to kill Jefferson Davis was a secret between Abraham Lincoln and Ulric Dahlgren, and probably Edwin Stanton, then the number of people who would have been told in advance would have been very limited, especially given the sensitive nature of the intelligence, and Judson Kilpatrick would have been the last person in the world they would have shared such information with days or weeks in advance of the raid. But having kept that from him up to the point that the raid was beginning, Dahlgren may have felt it useful to share at the last minute with the officer who was responsible for guarding his flank. Kilpatrick may have learned in the waning moments before launch just what was going to be involved in this raid, though the part about Kilpatrick signing it "Approved" in red ink seems likely to have been the actor in Kilpatrick adding a little color while likewise furthering the notion that he was really the decision-maker in this matter.

In his after action report, Captain John F. B. Mitchell, who was riding with Dahlgren, wrote that during the raid Dahlgren had given him written orders that were similar to those contained in the documents taken from Dahlgren's body. However, Mitchell also denied that Dahlgren ever addressed the officers or men in any fashion, and he denied emphatically that his orders from Dahlgren included any mention of killing Jefferson Davis, though he did acknowledge that if they could have captured Davis they would have. Mitchell's report does not discuss what might have happened if they had been able to capture Davis, but then found him to be an unwilling prisoner, resisting by every means possible including the use of martial force. The very notion of capturing a person presupposes the captor's willingness to kill or otherwise disable that person if he refuses to be taken peacefully or resists his captors by using deadly force. And Mitchell had no document or written order that would contradict what the Confederate government claimed in

their presentation of the Dahlgren Papers. Mitchell had been with the larger wing from Dahlgren's force when the separation had occurred during the retreat from Richmond following the raid's failure. His column had not had an easy time of it, and had conducted a fighting retreat to reach safety. One could well speculate that if he *had* been carrying incriminating orders on his person, he would not have wanted them to fall into Confederate hands.<sup>16</sup>

In the days following the revelation of the raid in newspapers North and South, Lincoln spent a great deal of time with Rear Admiral John Dahlgren who had just returned from Charleston only to learn that his son had been involved in the controversial raid and there had been no word of his fate. Initially the president reassured the admiral that news from General Butler's camp on the peninsula was that, despite rumors to the contrary, Ulric Dahlgren was alive and trying to get back to Union lines. Ultimately, Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton again visited Admiral Dahlgren's home to inform him that apparently the information of his son's ambush and death in King and Queen County was true.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that Ulric Dahlgren had been an extraordinary young man, and that his death bothered Lincoln tremendously. That is revealed by his actions during that first week of March, as word of the raid began filtering back. But might it also be an indication that Lincoln knew Ulric Dahlgren to be on a mission to kill Jefferson Davis? Might he have felt a personal sense of responsibility for dispatching his friend's young son on such a dangerous undertaking?

The principal argument that would eventually emerge that summer in derogation of the claim that the Dahlgren papers were real, was the outcry raised in June 1864 by Admiral John Dahlgren when he first viewed a photographic copy of the papers and immediately pronounced them a forgery. Many newspapers and leaders in the North had already raised the likelihood of Confederate malfeasance in the matter. But those claims were simply based on northern hopes of protecting the reputation of a national hero, and on the adversarial posture generated by the continuation of a bloody civil war. They had no actual evidence.

But John Dahlgren's allegation was immediate and, so he claimed, irrefutable. Why did he know them to be a forgery? It was very simple. Looking at his son's alleged signature on one of the onionskin sheets, it appeared that the letters "h" and "l" had been written in reverse order. And such did appear to be the case. Certainly Ulric Dahlgren knew how to spell his own name, and would have no reason to misspell it. A document such as this would be unlikely to have been prepared in a moment of inattention or absent-mindedness. Historians, including Professor Emory Thomas, have relied on this assertion (that the papers were a clever forgery) by John Dahlgren over the years to dismiss the claim that these documents were real. However Virgil Carrington Jones, author of *Eight Hours Before Richmond*, made a discovery when he went to the National Archives to inspect the only remaining photographic copy of the papers. Since the photographic copies had been printed out on individual sheets, the original documents contained writing on both sides of the sheets. Thus each photographic copy represents but one side of a two-sided document. To get a true representation

of what the original document looked like, you had to place the two photos of the one sheet containing the Dahlgren signature, back to back with the photo of the reverse side of that sheet of stationery. Held up to the light, it became clear that the loop from the “y” in the word “destroying” on the front side of the sheet, had bled through and joined itself to the hump of the “h” in Dahlgren’s signature, in such a way as to make it appear that those letters had been juxtaposed in his signature. Using computer technology, when that loop was removed, not only was the spelling correct... the handwriting was, in the opinion of handwriting experts, almost certainly that of Ulric Dahlgren. In light of this evidence, the basis today for claiming the documents to be Confederate forgeries is weak indeed.<sup>18</sup>

If they were not forgeries, and were in fact documents taken from the dead body of Ulric Dahlgren, do they implicate Abraham Lincoln directly in a plot to assassinate Jefferson Davis? That is the question that is ultimately the most important historical issue presented by this raid. One of the reasons it is so difficult to study the relevant documents in attempting to answer this and other questions arising from the raid, is that in November 1865, all the evidence and records relative to the raid that had been kept by the Richmond government (then captured by U.S. authorities), were removed by a principal player in the raid-planning process. Following their capture shortly after the end of the war, all records that were part of the archives of the Confederate government, were turned over to Francis Lieber who began the laborious and detailed work of indexing and storing them for the National Archives. In November, he received a letter from Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, summoning anything from the Confederate records related to the raid. Lieber complied with the request, and the receipt that he prepared listed the sheets of notes on Third Division stationery, the notebook, and other items which were not incriminating. Though all the non-relevant items from the five files were later returned by Stanton, the notes on stationery and the notebook were not. Of course Edwin Stanton had been a principal player in the planning and execution of the raid, having spent four hours with Kilpatrick following the February 13 meeting with Lincoln. And he had also been the official who had given Ulric

Dahlgren his initial commission on May 29, 1862, and then promoted him to colonel following the Gettysburg campaign. His skirts were already soiled due to his participation. And his unexplained actions in November 1865 raise a strong suspicion as well.<sup>19</sup>

The only persons along the chain of command who would have had the authority to order Ulric Dahlgren to kill Jefferson Davis, apart from the commander of the Cavalry Corps or the commander of the Army (both of whom did not approve of the raid), would have been the Secretary of War or the President of the United States. Certainly Stanton had contact with Judson Kilpatrick, for a much longer time on February 13 (a point that Sears considers important in pointing the finger at Stanton) than did Lincoln.<sup>20</sup> But would the man who always submitted to the president for his review, the names of Union soldiers whose executions had been ordered, fail to clear it with his chief when the person to be executed was the foremost person of the rebellion? Stanton may not approve of Lincoln’s tenderheartedness when it came to the execution of soldiers in the U.S. Army and may have felt that the president’s practice of regularly setting aside death sentences was a source of disciplinary problems for the military. But there is not a known instance where Stanton denied Lincoln the last word in the decision whether an individual should or should not be executed by the United States government. It is difficult to conceive that, in the instance of the most important death that would be inflicted by the United States in this war, would be the single instance when Stanton would violate that trust.

Some historians have claimed that Lincoln had bigger fish to fry than this and was simply an uninvolved spectator to this entire event and regarded it as a very small distraction to the everyday performance as president. But the evidence clearly indicates that he was very involved, and since May 1863 had been the principal advocate of just such a raid. Not only did he summon H. Judson Kilpatrick to the White House to learn about the plan this brash cavalryman had been promoting in camp at Brandy Station—Lincoln had actually concluded all the way back in May 1863 that he wanted such a raid after learning how close a column



“Kilpatrick’s raid to Richmond”, Drawing by Edwin Forbes, 1864. Library of Congress cph 3a09695

of Federal cavalry had come to downtown Richmond during the Stoneman Raid. Then he had taken the initiative on May 8<sup>th</sup>, only four days after the conclusion of the Battle of Chancellorsville, to order that Union Brigadier General August Willich, just arrived at Point Lookout, Maryland, after having been exchanged, to be dispatched to the White House. Willich had been in Libby Prison while the Chancellorsville campaign was occurring. A day after Lincoln saw a report indicating how close a Union cavalry column had come to Richmond, he was summoning the first officer he could find who had been in Richmond at the time, to learn what he could about conditions in the Confederate capital. Then he wrote General Hooker informing him of the interview with Willich, "just from Richmond," indicating that the just-released prisoner "says there is not a sound pair of legs in Richmond, and that our men, had they known it, could have safely gone in and burnt everything & brought us Jeff Davis."<sup>21</sup>

It was not lost on the president that the officer who had been commanding that column of cavalry that day, was H. Judson Kilpatrick. Lincoln was clearly and aggressively proposing a cavalry raid on Richmond that would have as its purposes to burn major portions of the city and to capture Jefferson Davis. The president certainly knew there would be a good chance that Davis would not go willingly (surely Lincoln must have pondered how he would have acted had his own kidnapping been attempted), and that an attempt to kidnap him might result in his death. Nevertheless, that possibility did not cause Lincoln such concern that he was unwilling to consider such an undertaking in the spring of 1863.

And in early February of 1864, he fully approved and vouchsafed the Wistar Raid, an attempt by troops and cavalry from Major General Benjamin Butler's command on the peninsula, to conduct a strike on Richmond that would rely on speed and surprise to get into the city before Confederate regular army forces could respond. That raid had almost exactly the same objects as the Dahlgren Raid, including a plan to kidnap Jefferson Davis. In late January Lincoln had met personally with the people who would plan the raid. The raid was attempted and failed at Bottom's Bridge a few miles east of Richmond. Several brigades of Confederate troops awaited the attackers, apparently because an escaped Union prisoner, under sentence of death, had bribed a guard to let him escape. Fleeing directly toward Richmond, he had warned Confederate authorities that a big raid was about to be launched against the eastern side of the capital city. But the important thing about the Wistar Raid is that it serves as unimpeachable proof that Lincoln had wanted a raid of this kind long before February 28th when the Dahlgren Raid began, and even prior to February 13, 1864, when Lincoln met in the White House with Judson Kilpatrick. Abraham Lincoln had been promoting the idea since May 1863, a quick and violent strike on Richmond that would include in its sights the president of the Confederacy.<sup>22</sup>

During the course of the Civil War, one of the things that became increasingly apparent was that Jefferson Davis as president of the Confederacy, was not going to settle for any conditions short of independence for the South. He was not averse to using graphic metaphors to support that commitment: "This war must go on till the last of this generation falls in his tracks and his children seize his musket and fight our battle unless you acknowledge our right

to self government...We are fighting for independence, and that, or extermination, we will have."<sup>23</sup> Lincoln had concluded long before that Davis was simply the worst of that band of wealthy southern planters who were willing to destroy the nation and its resources in order to gain a Pyrrhic victory that would allow them to say they were right. Nobody at the beginning could have imagined that the war would have lasted this long and cost this many lives. But nearly three years after the opening guns in Charleston Harbor, it ground on in a horrendous national bloodletting, and a succession of Union commanders had proven either inept on the battlefield when warring against the army of Robert E. Lee, or had been unable to understand why the battlefield defeat of Lee required swift and aggressive pursuit afterward. By January of 1864, Lincoln had to be wondering if there was anywhere a Union officer who could marshal the tremendous resources of the country to bring the war to an end. Six different Union commanders had failed to bring Lee's army to heel, even though the Army of the Potomac was clearly a magnificent example of the nation's martial capabilities and very likely was the finest army on the planet. If there was some other way to bring the war to an end...or even create an atmosphere where there might be a dialogue about ending the war, Lincoln was prepared to engage in extraordinary action to make it happen. And there was his old friend Alexander Stephens...a man with whom he could talk and reason...only a heartbeat away from the presidency. If something could have been done to end a war that was costing an average of 425 American lives each day it continued, can anyone doubt that Lincoln would have resorted to unorthodox or extreme measures? Would Lincoln have been unwilling to take one life, if by taking that one hundred and thousands of others might be saved?

Abraham Lincoln placed the lion's share of blame for the continuation of the war squarely on the shoulders of Jefferson Davis. Although delivered well after the Dahlgren Raid, Lincoln's Annual Message in December 1864 reflected the thoughts and feelings he had held toward the Confederate leader for a long time.

*On careful consideration of all the evidence accessible it seems to me that no attempt at negotiation with the insurgent leader could result in any good. He would accept nothing short of severance of the Union, precisely what we will not and cannot give. His declarations to this effect are explicit and oft-repeated. He does not attempt to deceive us. He affords us no excuse to deceive ourselves. He cannot voluntarily reaccept the Union; we cannot voluntarily yield it. Between him and us the issue is distinct, simple, inflexible...What is true, however, of him who heads the insurgent cause, is not necessarily of those who follow. **Although he cannot reaccept the Union, they can.** Some of them, we know, already desire peace and reunion.<sup>24</sup> [emphasis added].*

What upset him most about Davis's unyielding position was that Lincoln saw it as viscerally motivated, as something that even though drenched in the life's blood of the nation, Davis continued to pursue without logic or reason or hope. He regarded Davis as the representative of the southern elite that had stirred up the dispute that led to war, and that the blood of the many thousands of dead American heroes stained his hands like none other.

And then there was the other side of the coin. Of all the Southern political leaders during the war, there was nobody toward whom Lincoln felt greater respect and warmth than Alexander Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President. During Lincoln's only term in Congress, he had come to admire Stephens greatly, and they had become good friends. When Stephens delivered a speech in February 1848 denouncing the Mexican War, Congressman Lincoln had been brought to tears. He wrote to Billy Herndon calling it "the very best speech...I ever heard.... My...eyes are full of tears yet." On November 30, 1860, having been elected president, and upon learning that Stephens had delivered a pro-Union speech at the Georgia secession convention, Lincoln asked his old friend if he could get a copy of it. The two men corresponded back and forth during the entire month of December, discussing the issues that threatened to divide the nation and provoke war, and pledging that the friendship that had once bound them as political allies, should still unite them as men seeking to avoid the imminent danger that threatened their common country.<sup>25</sup> Stephens and Davis felt such antipathy toward one another, that Stephens left the capital early in the war and returned to his home in Georgia. At one point, during the summer of 1863, he did return to Richmond in order to undertake a peace initiative to Washington. But very bad timing scuttled this effort. He traveled to Hampton, Virginia, and sought permission from the White House in Washington to travel there under a safe passage guarantee. But this was done as the bloodiest battle ever fought in the western hemisphere was taking place at Gettysburg. He did not get his safe passage.

At the end of January 1865, Lincoln did meet with Stephens at Hampton Roads. But at that point the Confederacy was collapsing and the end of the war was only two months away. Still, a meeting such as the one that did take place, could never have taken place between Lincoln and Davis. Davis would not consider surrender or peace even when his two principal armies in the field had surrendered. So long as the Confederacy had soldiers and weapons to fight with...and Jefferson Davis at the helm...the war would continue.

Historians have shied away from even considering the prospect that Lincoln might have played a proactive role in the attempt to kill Jefferson Davis. Just the thought of it discomforts many people. That is not a reasonable or historical interpretation of the evidence. To the degree that the community of scholars and writers have considered it, most have been content to accept John Dahlgren's assessment at face value. The physical evidence that still exists, plus the disappearance of the primary sources under the circumstances that attended their disappearance, are enlightening as well. When Lincoln had chosen to change the war by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, he had done much more than publish a government encyclical against slavery. There is at least implicit evidence of a possible link between emancipation and the raid to kill Jefferson Davis. By the terms of the proclamation, black men whose freedom would depend on the outcome of the war, were now going to have the opportunity to help fight that war.

The reaction of the Confederacy to emancipation was harsh and violent. Beginning in May 1863, the Confederate Congress, in response to a call for action from Jefferson Davis, issued a series

of resolutions that authorized or encouraged Confederate troops to engage in the summary execution of black troops on the battlefield, and also of the white officers who led them. On battlefields and at places such as Battery Wagner, South Carolina, reports had made it increasingly clear that there were going to be numerous instances during the war where such a policy would actually be carried out. Lincoln was furious about this, going so far as to write up an "order of retribution" that threatened an eye for an eye policy of executing Confederate prisoners whenever Union soldiers were summarily executed. In addition, the policy would have placed a Confederate prisoner at hard labor for every instance of a Union soldier being sold into slavery (the alternative to summary execution allowed for by Confederate law, was selling captured African-Americans into slavery, without regard to what their status had been before the war). Ultimately, Lincoln's order of retribution was never actually enforced, because the president decided that to do so would "punish the wrong people."<sup>26</sup> That statement in itself, however, suggests that, if the Confederates followed through on their threatened actions, then somebody higher up than the combat soldier must be the "right people" to hold accountable. If the soldiers who were actually doing the executing were "the wrong people" to hold responsible, then the only "right people" must be those who enacted the laws allowing such acts to be performed. When Lincoln withheld the implementation of a policy that would "punish the wrong people," he probably had no such compunctions about carrying it out against "the right people." No person played a bigger part in bringing about the harsh and punitive treatment inflicted on blacks in uniform, than Jefferson Davis.

In deciding whether Lincoln authorized or actually solicited the assassination of Jefferson Davis, or was privy to the knowledge that such would be a goal of Ulric Dahlgren during this raid, there is no smoking gun. It is doubtful there will ever be definitive evidence. However there was a great deal of circumstantial evidence. In a court of law a jury is instructed that it can make a finding of guilt based only on circumstantial evidence if all of that evidence is consistent with a theory of the defendant's guilt, none of it presents a reasonable theory of the defendant's innocence, and the jury is satisfied that it establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. In order to understand fully the significance of the meeting between the president and Ulric Dahlgren on February 1<sup>st</sup>, it must be remembered that Lincoln had long before decided that a raid on Richmond that would include the capture of Jefferson Davis, was not only legitimate...it was highly desirable as a means to shorten the war. Lincoln trusted and thought very highly of young Dahlgren, and was a close personal friend of the young man's father. The president, the Secretary of War, and Captain (soon to become Admiral) John Dahlgren, had listened and been impressed back in May 1862, when the twenty year old Dahlgren, having just returned to Washington from a trip to northern Virginia, responded to Lincoln's queries by describing in great detail Confederate defensive emplacements, the numbers and military strengths of various rebel works in Northern Virginia, and provided intelligence that was both useful and the result of firsthand observation. This was the very kind of information that Major General George McClellan had refused to provide them during the previous nine months, often berating them for even inquiring. Stanton was so impressed that he had awarded Ulric Dahlgren a captain's commission in the army on the spot.<sup>27</sup>

Ulric Dahlgren was a super patriot, a zealous, gifted, charming, intelligent young man who was thoroughly devoted to the nation and to its leaders. In many ways he reflected the best qualities of his father, a man respected around the world for his knowledge of naval ordnance, and the man who had taken on the primary responsibilities for the defense of the capital in the early days of the war when it was so vulnerable. During that time he became very close to Lincoln, and the president came to rely on the staid and serious Dahlgren...so much so that Lincoln would seek him out at times just because he genuinely enjoyed his company. It was the same with the young man who was the favored child of John Dahlgren, who was often there when the president and the admiral met. Thus it would not be uncommon for Ulric Dahlgren to simply go to the White House unannounced and spend time talking with the president. But on February 1, 1864, he obviously had something very important to discuss with the president, because he waited the better part of five hours...and had actually gone there and tried to see the president the day before as well. Whether responding to a summons from the president (which a letter to his father indicated he was), or feeling that he had an important message to deliver to him, Ulric Dahlgren was willing to wait patiently in order to see the man he had seen on many previous occasions, and come to respect with an almost filial affection.

Before coming to Washington and going to the White House on Feb. 1st, Dahlgren had spent several months at sea with his father

who was at that time commanding the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron based near Charleston. Ulric was recuperating from a wound that had required the amputation of his right leg. He had been wounded while leading a charge against a part of Lee's army while it was in retreat from Gettysburg. Following the amputation Dahlgren had slipped into a coma for several days and lingered between life and death. The surgeons who attended him doubted he would survive. The near death experience seems to have affected Dahlgren profoundly, causing him to experience a sort of epiphany about life and its purpose. During his recovery he was visited by a veritable Who's Who of American politics in 1863, including the president, several Cabinet members, senators and congressmen. His courage displayed at Gettysburg and on other fields, and the tremendous attributes he possessed, won him promotion to the rank of colonel at only twenty-one years of age...probably making him the youngest colonel in the United States Army.<sup>28</sup>

If Lincoln were to propose or even sanction a mission to kill Jefferson Davis, he would want the very best man possible, and one he could entrust with the biggest secret of the war. There were a number of young officers who were heroic and highly qualified, but there was no young officer in the army he knew better and confided in more readily than Ulric Dahlgren. He trusted the son just as he did the father, and there was nobody in the military establishment he trusted more than John Dahlgren.



"Ambuscade and Death of Colonel Dahlgren" (TLM collection of Harper's Weekly, March 26, 1864)

After meeting with Lincoln on February 1<sup>st</sup>, Dahlgren seemed to disappear for several weeks. Many things were taking place in the days leading up to this raid that are unknown to history. What, for example, was Ulric Dahlgren doing between the time he met with President Lincoln and the time he showed up at Kilpatrick's headquarters later on that month? We do not know whether there may have been further meetings between Lincoln and Dahlgren. What is known, is that from the time he showed up in Kilpatrick's camp, and despite being only the lowest ranking colonel on a raid that included at least two brigadier generals, Dahlgren had virtual *carte blanche* to plan and orchestrate the raid in whatever fashion he chose. And from the plan that he worked out, it would be his column that would have the primary responsibility for entering Richmond, freeing the prisoners, burning the bridges...and killing Jefferson Davis? Judson Kilpatrick, at the head of almost thirty-five hundred Union cavalymen, was reduced to a diversion...a sideshow...a person of secondary importance. And of course that is exactly what Kilpatrick became. The glory, the attention, the infamy, the historical impression...all these went not to the vain-glorious brigadier. Rather, they went to the patriotic young officer who lay dead on the Mantapike Road, his body bearing the weight of some of the most incendiary papers in American history.

There are several other issues regarding this raid and Lincoln's role in it that should be considered. Of those who have written about the matter, the one who has come closest to grasping all of the issues involved and understanding what was actually taking place is Stephen Sears. Sears made a very compelling case for the credulity of the Dahlgren Papers, an argument presented so strongly that it cannot be reasonably refuted. But having overcome this huge obstacle in his drive to find ultimate truth, Sears stumbles with the last great remaining issue—did Lincoln know, and if he did, what was his role? Having approached the threshold of the White House with boldness and reasoned argument, Sears balks and loses his nerve at the penultimate moment. Knowing that the blame had to fall on either the shoulders of the president or the secretary of war (certainly nobody would argue that Ulric Dahlgren conjured this whole plan up of his own initiative and was acting as a rogue agent), Sears departs from the common sense he had employed so majestically up to that moment. Like so many Americans whose sensitivities regarding the beloved sixteenth president simply will not allow them to believe he could have been a part of such a sordid scheme, Sears dismisses Lincoln essentially by concluding that he just wouldn't have done it ("It certainly cannot be imagined that Lincoln the president countenanced political assassination and black flag warfare against civilians").<sup>29</sup> This sentence is an interesting dismissal of blame as applied to Lincoln. It indicates clearly where Sears was heading ("only Stanton could have filled such an approving role"). He concludes that the stolid, serious, strident war secretary was a malevolent individual who felt no punishment was too great or too painful for traitors. Sears joins so many others throughout history who have painted a huge bulls-eye on the middle of Edwin Stanton's back and accused him of everything from deceit and double-dealing to conspiracy to assassinate Abraham Lincoln. Yes, it must have been Stanton ("Both circumstance and logic point to Secretary of War Stanton as authorizer of the dark premise of the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid"<sup>30</sup>), and the devious plan must have been worked out between the secretary and Judson Kilpatrick during their lengthy meeting

on February 13 following Lincoln's audience with the general. It is an accusation that falls short on two counts—it fails to take into account the character of Judson Kilpatrick, and, it fails to take into account the character of Edwin Stanton.

It is almost inconceivable that the glory-seeking Kilpatrick, a man who did everything with an eye on the ultimate prize for himself, would have chosen to turn all of his command responsibilities over to a 21 year old colonel at the very moment of the war when he had the opportunity to perform the most heroic service that would ever fall into his lap. Everything about this raid was based upon the assumption that the column led by Dahlgren would ultimately be the principal strike force to enter Richmond, free the prisoners, burn the strategic facilities, and kill Jefferson Davis. Dahlgren conceived all the details of the operation and would have all the opportunities for glory that would result. Kilpatrick, leading a force more than seven times the size of the smaller contingent, would approach the city from the most direct route for the obvious purpose of drawing all the attention he could to his column, thereby freeing Dahlgren to enter the city unopposed. Sears is perplexed as to why Dahlgren has such authority, and surprised that Kilpatrick had granted him such license. Sears and most other historians have not considered the obvious explanation as to why Kilpatrick would behave so uncharacteristically, and why a very junior colonel would have such command authority. It was because Dahlgren had special dispensation from the White House and Secretary of War to take operational control of a major cavalry operation and to get it done. Kilpatrick was the dupe who was set up to get the attention, and his reward was to be known as the putative commander of a raid that had tremendous potential for changing the war. He knew Dahlgren's standing with the president and the army high command, and he was aware of the tremendous successes the young hero had already achieved. Given the potential benefits that might come his way, Kilpatrick was more than happy to do what he did best...give a performance of being somebody he wasn't. He was an actor. He gave such a compelling performance that one hundred forty years later, people still believe that Kilpatrick was actually calling the shots.

Kilpatrick did not choose the hand-picked troopers from the different commands who would ride with Dahlgren. Given the degree of secrecy and special attention that went into preparing the "Dahlgren 500" for this mission, they were assigned to this operation based on their performances up to that time. These were the best of the best. They weren't delivered into the clutches of a man who was filled a great deal more with bluster than he was concern or sensitivity about the most explosive secret mission of the war. Kilpatrick's actions would be consistent with an assignment to act as though he was in charge of a "secret" mission that he "accidentally" reveals to half the officers of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. The preparations for the large column Kilpatrick would be leading were attended by much clumsiness and lack of attention to detail. The difference between the two groups, and the difference they would make on this mission, is as stark as that difference could be. And the fact that there even *was* a separate column and a *different* time of departure between the two columns, has escaped most of those who have studied this topic most assiduously. Sears wrote, "Beyond Spotsylvania Court House the expedition was to divide. Dahlgren, leading a 460 man-detachment,

was to loop off to the west.... With the main body, Kilpatrick would approach the capital from the north."<sup>31</sup> In fact Dahlgren's column left Stevensburg a full hour ahead of Kilpatrick. They would never come into contact with one another again during the raid.

There had been much whispered in the way of rumors about a big cavalry raid on Richmond all during the month of February. Colonel Theodore Lyman of Meade's staff described it in his diary:

*A secret expedition with us is got up like a picnic, with everybody blabbing and yelping.... Kilpatrick is sent for by the President; oh, ah! everybody knows it at once: he is a cavalry officer, it must be a raid. All Willard's chatters of it. Everybody devotes his entire energies to pumping the President and Kill-cavalry! Some confidential friend finds out a part, tells another confidential friend, swearing him to secrecy, etc., etc."*<sup>32</sup>

A plan to assassinate Jefferson Davis would hardly have been conducted with those kinds of security shortfalls, and would hardly have been entrusted to Judson Kilpatrick. Of course the prospect of cavalry raids on Richmond remained throughout that winter the best known secret in both capitals. It would be silly and futile to pretend that no such plans were in the works. The idea was not to act as though there was no raid, but rather to "leak" the information in the form of "disinformation," that would throw everybody in the military establishment, both north and south, off the scent of the real "intruder" and have everybody looking in the wrong direction. There could be no better person to perform such service, than Judson Kilpatrick.

Sears also underestimates the degree of Stanton's loyalty to Lincoln. It is not surprising since most historians have failed to appreciate the dynamics of this unlikely relationship. Prominent Lincoln historian Otto Eisenschiml once wrote that Stanton was part of an insider plot that resulted in the assassination of the president. They may have been as different as any two people you could imagine. And it was several of the most lovable qualities of Lincoln that seemed to infuriate Stanton the most...his constant joketelling even in the most serious moments, and his tenderheartedness regarding the punishment of erring soldiers. Stanton would become furious and fly into fits of rage at Lincoln time and time again. Thus many fail to consider the friendship of these two men...they were simply two professional politicians who tolerated one another in order to achieve a common goal. It seriously underestimates the respect and affection they actually felt toward one another.

Their common devotion to the cause of the Union, and their relentless determination to preserve it, created a bond that did not take the form of backslapping humor and thigh-pounding stories amidst relaxed banter that Lincoln shared with William H. Seward. But their hours and days spent together at the Soldiers' Home, the relationship of their children, the tears that flowed from the eyes of the stolid Stanton when Lincoln took his last breath...these were much more revealing of the true nature of their shared concerns than the obvious and superficial manifestations the president demonstrated with others. Lincoln had enormous respect for Stanton and his abilities, in spite of the rather shabby treatment the secretary had accorded him when they co-counseled a case

years earlier. And Stanton never deviated from his absolute devotion toward and recognition of the post Lincoln occupied, and his commitment to respect that position in every instance, whether he disagreed or not. It is simply inconceivable that he would have deviated from that commitment on something as important as the assassination of Jefferson Davis.

The other significant contribution Sears made to the scholarship regarding the Dahlgren Raid, was to pinpoint the role of the Bureau of Military Information. Perhaps the most credible first person account of the credibility of the Dahlgren Papers, was that provided by Captain John McEntee, the second in command of the BMI. The BMI was the "highly capable intelligence unit" that "had been founded by Colonel George H. Sharpe a year earlier, and by 1864 its expert staff was working in close harness with the Army of the Potomac." A team of BMI operatives rode with Dahlgren, including Captain McEntee. It would seem obvious that these troopers were with that column because of the special intelligence the BMI had regarding the location of various objectives in Richmond, and what kinds of problems they might encounter in attempting to carry out the most important operations that were part of the raid. It would appear that Dahlgren must have trusted McEntee more than he did any other officers on the raid, because of what that officer revealed on March 12th following the raid. McEntee was interviewed by Provost General of the Army of the Potomac Marsena Patrick, and told him that "he thinks the papers are correct that were found upon Dahlgren as they correspond with what D. had told him."<sup>33</sup> Of all the other officers in Dahlgren's contingent, it could be fairly assumed that the one who would most likely be entrusted with such sensitive information, would be the BMI officer. It is very possible that, due to their training and experience, the contingent of BMI troopers on the raid with McEntee might have been the very people Dahlgren intended to accompany him when he went in hunt of leaders to assassinate.

Sears also pointed out that the BMI was involved in another capacity as well. The BMI liaison officer at the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac, was Captain John Babcock, who assisted in the planning of the raid. Babcock's most significant role, and the one which created one of the biggest controversies about the raid, was the provider of an essential guide to the raiders. He wrote, a mere matter of days before the raid began, "I have found the man you want" who would be able to lead the column to the place on the James River where they would be able to cross without any problem. He was a former slave from Goochland County named Martin Robinson who "...was well acquainted with the James River from Richmond up....Question him five minutes and you will find him the very man you want."<sup>34</sup>

Martin Robinson became the centerpiece of one of the great controversies regarding the raid. When Dahlgren's column reached the James River, at the point where Robinson had sworn there would be no problem for cavalymen to cross, the waters of the river were deep and swirling. Crossing was out of the question. Nobody had anticipated the weather inversion that had occurred, and Ulric Dahlgren realized as he stared at the James River that he had lost the great opportunity of his life to make a difference in the war and the course of history. He immediately sensed betrayal and ordered Martin Robinson hanged on the spot. It was undoubt-



edly sobering to the men of Dahlgren's command to witness what they were seeing, but it must have also indicated much about the seriousness of the raid they were on. From that moment on, the men of Dahlgren's column were part of a raid that was being conducted without script, a desperate charge toward the capital in the vain attempt of salvaging something from a plan going awry. That desperate ride ended at the Mantapike Crossroads in King and Queen County.

Did the Dahlgren Papers constitute a bill of indictment against Abraham Lincoln for war crimes? Was Judson Kilpatrick merely a dupe enlisted for the purpose of distracting Richmond's defenders thereby allowing Ulric Dahlgren to get into a position from which he could perform his mission? Did Dahlgren's assignment to the Headquarters of the Third Division of the Cavalry Corps come with instructions that he was to be accommodated in every possible way and that it was the responsibility of all officers and men to assist him in whatever he deemed necessary for the performance of this raid? We can only judge based on the record that has been left us. But we do know that just before setting off on the raid, Ulric Dahlgren did pen one last letter to his father, stating that he was off on a raid that "if successful" would be the "grandest thing on record"...something that would change the course of the war and American history. Do we really believe that he had in mind a mission to pass out pamphlets or free prisoners?

The secular sainthood that has been accorded Abraham Lincoln as a result of his assassination on Good Friday just after the war ended, should not blind us to the fact that this was a man who was relentless in his determination to save the nation. Lincoln's relentless faith in the survival of the American republic was the steel cable that held the nation together during its greatest ordeal. He was a fierce warrior for union and emancipation. If it was his judgment that by purposely bringing about the death of one individual he could shorten the war, end the killing, and save the nation, should we allow it to tarnish our image of the greatest American president? The South had it right in 1864...the evidence suggesting Lincoln's complicity was very strong. But even if the historical record is altered to suggest that it is even a possibility, it should not change the way we regard this president.

## About the Author

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ulric Dahlgren to John A. Dahlgren, February 1, 1864, cited in John A. Dahlgren Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> "Black Flag Warfare" is a term that derives originally from the usage by eighteenth century pirates of the black flag, often accompanied by a skull and crossbones symbol. Because pirates were notorious for taking no mercy on their victims, the symbol of the black flag came to denote war or warlike acts that were conducted without any rules or limitation. Civilized societies of the day would have regarded martial acts conducted in such manner as being savage and barbaric, the product of people who were without any moral compass or compassion. Twentieth century usage, with the modern "total war" concept, has made the term almost archaic.

<sup>3</sup> S. Williams to A. Pleasonton, Feb. 11, 1864, United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter referred

to as *OR*), ser. I, vol.33, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), 552; Lincoln to Joseph Hooker, May 8, 1863, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (hereafter referred to as *CWL*), ed Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953–55), vol. 6, 202–3; Judson Kilpatrick to E.B. Parsons, Feb. 16, 1864 *OR*, ser. I, vol. 33, 172–3.

<sup>4</sup> The entire collection of correspondence/ reports of all the officers involved in The Dahlgren Raid, both Union and Confederate, is contained at *OR* series 1, vol. 33, 168–224.

<sup>5</sup> Statement of Edward Halbach quoted in Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (Reprint, Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, NY: 1970, original edition published 1866), 505.

<sup>6</sup> *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 33, 178–9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>8</sup> *Richmond Examiner*, April 1, 1864.

<sup>9</sup> James O. Hall, "The Dahlgren Papers: A Yankee Plot to Kill President Davis," *Civil War Times Illustrated* (hereafter referred to simply as *CWTI*), November 22, 1983, pp. 30–39.

<sup>10</sup> Fitz. Lee to Adjutant and Inspector General S. Cooper, March 31, 1864, reported in *OR*, series 1, vol. 33, 224.

<sup>11</sup> James O. Hall, "Fact or Fabrication: The Dahlgren Papers," *CWTI*, November 22, 1983, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> *Richmond Sentinel*, April 1, 1864.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Richmond Dispatch*, May 5, 1864; *Richmond Sentinel*, May 5, 1864.

<sup>15</sup> Kilpatrick to S. Williams, April 16, 1864, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 33, p. 180.

<sup>16</sup> Report of Capt. John F. B. Mitchell, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 33, pp194–197.

<sup>17</sup> On March 4, Admiral John Dahlgren visits White House to inquire what

- Lincoln might know regarding the fate of his son. Shortly after midnight on March 7, he telegraphs Major General Benjamin Butler. Lincoln wants to know when Kilpatrick's "informant" last saw Dahlgren, and finally had to visit John Dahlgren again that day to inform him that apparently his son was dead. On March 17 Lincoln wired Gen. Butler, asking that he contact the White House immediately if he was able to obtain the remains of Colonel Dahlgren, *CWL*, VII, 225–251.
- <sup>18</sup> John A. Dahlgren, *Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren* (Philadelphia, PA: 1872), p. 233; Emory M. Thomas, "The Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid," Part I, *CWTI*, vol. 16, February 1978, pp. 4–9, 46–48; *ibid.*, Part II, *CWTI*, vol. 17, April 1978, pp. 26–33; Virgil Carrington Jones, *Eight Hours Before Richmond* (New York, 1957).
- <sup>19</sup> Hall, "The Dahlgren Papers" p. 39.
- <sup>20</sup> Stephen W. Sears, "The Dahlgren Papers Revisited" in *Columbiad for America's Civil War*, February, 2006, as reproduced on [www.thehistorynet.com/acw/bldahlgrenpapersrevisited/index4.html](http://www.thehistorynet.com/acw/bldahlgrenpapersrevisited/index4.html).
- <sup>21</sup> Lincoln to Joseph Hooker, May 8, 1863, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1953–55), vol. 6, 202–203.
- <sup>22</sup> Butler to I.J. Wistar, Feb. 4, 1864, in Benjamin Butler, *Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler* ((Norwood, Mass.: Plimpton Press, 1917), vol. 3, 373–74. The raid itself is detailed in Joseph George, Jr., "Black Flag Warfare: Lincoln and the Raids Against Richmond and Jefferson Davis," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* July 1991), 291–318.
- <sup>23</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, July 22, 1864.
- <sup>24</sup> *CWL*, VIII, 136–152.
- <sup>25</sup> William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf: 2002), 428–29.
- <sup>26</sup> *CWL*, VI, 357.
- <sup>27</sup> Dahlgren, *Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren*, 63.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 174–81.
- <sup>29</sup> Stephen W. Sears, "The Dahlgren Papers Revisited," *Columbiad for America's Civil War*, (spring 1999).
- <sup>30</sup> Stephen W. Sears, "Raid on Richmond," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* II, no. 1 (Autumn 1998), 88–96; Stephen W. Sears, *Commanders and Controversies: Dispatches from the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 225–51.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Headquarters, 1863–1865: Letters of Colonel Theodore Lyman from the Wilderness to Appomattox*, ed. George Agassiz (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), 77.
- <sup>33</sup> David S. Sparks, *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: 1964), 347–48.
- <sup>34</sup> John C. Babcock to Ulric Dahlgren, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 33, p. 221.

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# Upcoming Events

Beginning with this issue, Hon. Frank J. Williams, *Lincolniana* Editor, and Sara Gabbard, *Lincoln Lore* Editor, will provide information for planned events about Abraham Lincoln to be published in *Lincoln Lore*. Readers are invited to inform Ms. Gabbard or Judge Williams of any future program, exhibit, or event, and these items will be published, depending upon space availability. Sara Gabbard's e-mail is SGabbard@LNC.com and Judge Williams can be reached at alincoln@courts.ri.gov. (*Lincoln Lore* is mailed the first week of each quarter. In order to be published, material must be submitted 2 months prior to that date: February 1 for spring issue; May 1 for summer issue; August 1 for fall issue; and November 1 for winter issue.) The editors thank the US Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission for its schedule of events.

- *The Lincoln Legacy: Chautauqua County's Connections to the Great Emancipator* is a permanent exhibit exploring themes that were important to the region in the mid-1800s including abolition, women's suffrage, and the Civil War. The exhibit spotlights the lives of former county residents with unique connections to the 16th president. www.mcclurgmuseum.org/
- *Here I Have Lived* is a 33 interpretive exhibit permanently displayed in downtown Springfield, IL.
- **The Indiana Historical Society** has opened *The Faces of Lincoln*—a permanent exhibit. www.indianahistory.org/exhibits.html#lincoln
- *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War* is an exhibit produced by the **National Constitution Center** in association with **The Lincoln Museum** of Fort Wayne, IN. It is a 2,500 square foot traveling exhibition showing how Lincoln's leadership and constitutional vision steered the nation through its most turbulent years and into a future that forever changed America. The exhibit will be open in Fort Wayne from February 12 to June 15, 2006. www.thelincolnmuseum.org **The Connecticut Historical Society** will sponsor this exhibit beginning July 4, 2006. www.chs.org/
- **The Surratt Society** of Clinton, MD will present the conference, *Crime of the Century: Part II*, March 31–April 20, 2006. Presenters will include **William L. Richter** ("Out of the Sahara of the Bozart: The Political Thought of John Wilkes Booth"); **Steven G. Miller** ("Boston Corbett, A Reevaluation"); **Steven Lee Carson** ("Mary and Robert Lincoln – Assassinations Aftermath"); **James L. Swanson** ("Women of the Assassination"); **Thomas and Debra Goodrich** ("Hemp & Hell – America's Reaction to Lincoln's Assassination"); **Edward Steers, Jr.** ("I Have the Honor to Report: The Lincoln Conspirators' Jailer"); and **Emily Lapisardi** performing as Rose O'Neal Greenhow.
- The exhibit *Blood on the Moon* will be on display from April to October 2006 at the **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum** in Springfield, IL. The exhibit takes an in-depth look at Lincoln's assassination. www.alplmorg/home.html
- On May 20, 2006 the **Chambersburg Civil War Seminars** (www.chambersburg.org) will conduct its annual Lincoln Symposium with Ed Steers, William Blair and others.
- On June 3, 2006, **Brian Knight** will lecture on "Robert Todd Lincoln: Protecting the Lincoln Legacy" at the **Hildene Visitor Center**, Manchester, VT. www.hildene.org
- The **Third Annual Lincoln Institute for Teachers** will be held on June 15–16, 2006 at the **University of Southern Indiana** in Evansville. www.usi.edu/hsi
- **James Oliver Horton** will present the Annual **R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture** at **The Lincoln Museum**, Fort Wayne, IN on September 16, 2006.
- **The Abraham Lincoln Library & Museum** and **Lincoln Memorial University**, Harrogate, TN will host a symposium, *Now He Belongs to the Ages: Lincoln's America* on October 20–21, 2006, in conjunction with **121st Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States Congress**.
- **The International Lincoln Center at Louisiana State University in Shreveport** will be sponsoring a conference, *James Madison and Abraham Lincoln* October 19–21, 2006. Director **William D. Pederson** has issued a call for papers, One University Place, Shreveport, LA 71115-2301; Fax (318) 795-4203; Phone (318) 797-5138; e-mail wpederson@lsus.edu.
- **The Eleventh Annual Lincoln Forum** will be held in Gettysburg, PA with the theme, "The Genius of Abraham Lincoln." To date speakers will include **Joshua Wolf Shenk**, **Craig Symonds**, and **John Marszalek**. www.thelincolnforum.org
- *Looking for Lincoln* is an on-going tour of several sites in the nine-county tourism program; the program allows visitors to seek out the many different marks Abraham Lincoln left in central Illinois. www.lookingforlincoln.com/
- **The Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project**—created by the **Northern Illinois University** and funded by the **Illinois State Library**—offers historical materials from Abraham Lincoln's years in Illinois (1831–1860). lincoln.lib.niu.edu/
- *Forever Free* is an on-going traveling panel exhibit that reexamines President Lincoln's efforts toward the abolition of slavery during the Civil War. Libraries selected for the tour will host the exhibition for a six-week period. Thanks to funding from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** and the **ALBC**, two additional copies of the exhibit will travel to a total of 60 libraries from September 2006 through May 2010.
- The **William J. Clinton Presidential Library**, Little Rock, AK will display the original Emancipation Proclamation from September 22–25, 2007.