LINCOLN LORE

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War Time Presidents: Lincoln, Wilson, FDR

An interview with Richard Striner, Part One

SG: Please comment on the anti-war sentiment that each president faced.

RS: In Lincoln's case, the anti-war sentiment had several origins. Some of the people who were opposed to the war were the "Peace Democrats" or "Copperheads." Like most Democrats in those days (at least after the Kansas-Nebraska schism and the departure of the Free Soil Democrats), many of them were white supremacists and supporters of slavery, and they blamed the Republicans for fomenting an unnecessary war by pushing the slave states into secession. (The "War Democrats" largely agreed with such views, while believing that secession was treason that had to be stopped, by war if necessary and through negotiations if possible). Another source of opposition to the war that Lincoln had to face were the people in both parties who were so appalled by the casualties, at least by 1863, that they regarded the war as unwinnable. By the summer of 1864, even leading Republicans like Horace Greeley were flirting with this belief.

Abraham lincoln and His Generals/Lincoln Financial Collection OC-1480

In the case of Wilson, a great many Democrats and Socialists were opposed to American involvement in World War One, and some of them continued to be opposed after the declaration of war in April 1917. To a certain extent, left-of-center opposition to war in general during the early twentieth century flowed from the belief that the enemies of the working class—what the Socialists would call "capitalists" and what the liberals would call "big business"—used war as a means of advancing their own economic interests. One form of this belief was the view that corporate profits depended on foreign markets. Since the wealthy elite kept domestic wages down, the domestic market for manufactured goods was weak in purchasing power; consequently, the "surplus" production had to be "dumped" abroad, and imperialism, with war as its spearhead, facilitated this upper-class method. Many (though by no means all) Socialists were pacifistic in principle, blaming war on capitalism itself. Less radical left-of-center leaders were inclined to the view that war was often an unnecessary distraction that business interests would use to short-circuit campaigns for economic democracy at home. Many Democrats and former Populists remembered how the grass-roots economic insurgency of the 1890s largely melted away with the advent of the Spanish-American War in 1898 under President McKinley. William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate in 1896 and in 1900, was Wilson's first secretary of state, and he argued steadily against American involvement in the war and also against military preparedness. Among the Republicans, progressives such as Robert LaFollette felt much the same way. Also, as in the case of the Civil War, people who were understandably sickened by the carnage of World War One believed it morally imperative for the United States to avoid getting involved in what appeared to be a meaningless slaughter. Finally, there was a geographical basis for some opposition to the war. People in the Midwestern states were often more susceptible to a mood of non-interventionism in the case of foreign wars.

Lincoln Lore

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Amid the Din of Arms: The Election of 1864

September 27, 2014
Allen County Public Library
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Speakers:

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Jennifer Weber, University of Kansas

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In the 1930s, under FDR, the aforementioned attitudes from the 1910s continued to be influential. The historian Charles A. Beard had produced a macro-historical theory that purported to prove that American wars in general had been fomented by the wealthy elite to short-circuit domestic reform. Many New Dealers were susceptible to this point of view. They looked back upon America's involvement in the First World War in light of the backlash against "progressivism" that followed in the 1920s, when business interests seemed to rule the roost. Their attitude could be summed up in the old adage, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." In order to support the left-of-center components of the New Deal, such people believed that it was vital to avoid the "red herring" of another war. Their suspicions were bolstered by the hearings of the so-called Nye Committee, which purported to show that American involvement in World War One had been fomented by a scheming cabal of bankers and munitions makers. There was also opposition to war on the right, among conservatives who might have been—or who clearly were—pro-fascist. They did not want to see American military force thrown into the global balance against the Axis. Again, as in World War One, the geography of politics made isolationism stronger in the Midwest than elsewhere. And again, there was a widespread feeling of futility in the face of war's carnage. A significant number of American poets expressed this view, before, during, and after World War Two. An example: Robert Lowell's poem "The Dead In Europe" (1947). There was even a mood of defeatism regarding democracy itself that spanned the ideological spectrum. On the right, people like Anne Morrow Lindbergh viewed totalitarianism as the "wave of the future," and they argued that the people in democracies had to be realistic and adjust. On the left, there were people like George Orwell who said much the same thing, though in a far more defeatist frame of mind. Though Orwell was not a pacifist—he had served in the Spanish Civil War—he wrote in 1940 (in the essay "Inside The Whale") that "the autonomous individual is going to be stamped out of existence . . . . Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you can control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it."

Left: Woodrow Wilson/LC-USZ62-107007
Center: Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR)/LC-DIG-hec-47235
Right: Historian Charles A. Beard/LC-USZ62-36755

In 1940, isolationist opinion was largely orchestrated by the bipartisan America First Committee. Democrats like Burton K. Wheeler and Republicans like Gerald Nye joined forces across party lines to oppose U.S. entry into the war. After Pearl Harbor, isolationism weakened, but there remained an isolationist hard core, some of whose members believed that FDR had provoked the Japanese into attacking the United States.

SG: Were there pro/con divisions within each president's Cabinet?

RS: There were divisions of opinion within Lincoln's cabinet throughout the war. The most stunning example from the early months was the attempt by Secretary of State William Seward to talk Lincoln out of reinforcing Fort Sumter. Seward had been dallying with advocates of negotiation and he suggested that Lincoln pick a fight with one or more European nations to induce the secessionists to join forces with the United States. Lincoln put Seward in his place, politely but firmly. Over time Seward learned to behave himself and he became occasionally valuable as an adviser. Lincoln also had trouble with Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, and an open breach between them developed in 1864. Both Seward and Chase had been rivals of Lincoln's for the 1860 Republican nomination and Chase's jealousy was almost incurable. When it came to the issue of slavery as it figured in the war, both Seward and Chase weighed in. The most obvious example of cabinet divisions in regard to slavery as a war issue was the mixed reaction to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation when he first announced it to the cabinet in July 1862. As to the conduct of the war itself, the members of the cabinet had definite opinions as to strategy and the choice of commanders. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton played the most fundamental role in strategic deliberations and the evaluation of generals such as George McClellan. Stanton was often a shrewd adviser, but he sometimes made mistakes, as when he recommended Henry Halleck as general-in-chief (Halleck proved to be a lackluster strategist).

Wilson had major problems with key members of the cabinet throughout World War One. Both of his secretaries of state—William Jennings Bryan and Robert Lansing—disagreed with his policies in certain ways. Bryan was a staunch advocate of peace and American neutrality, and he dissented from Wilson's decision

Left: R.M.S. Lusitania, hit by torpedos off Kinsale Head, Ireland LC-USZC4-13285

Right: Take up the sword of justice (to avenge the Lusitania) *LC-USZC4-1502*

to countenance travel by American civilians on passenger liners that carried munitions. When Wilson declined to take his advice in the aftermath of the *Lusitania* sinking, he resigned. His successor, Lansing, was unhappy with Wilson throughout his tenure as secretary of state, and Wilson reciprocated Lansing's displeasure. But Wilson could never bring himself to replace Lansing. Instead, he relied almost exclusively upon advice from his friend and confidential diplomatic emissary, Colonel Edward M. House. As Wilson did so, Lansing felt ignored, belittled, and humiliated. Lansing also dissented from Wilson's views on the League of Nations and he undermined Wilson's positions in regard to the postwar settlement. The two men finally had a furious falling-out in the early months of 1920. Wilson had trouble with his first secretary of war, Lindley Garrison, who believed (in many ways rightly) that Wilson was moving too slowly on preparedness measures in 1914 and 1915. Wilson got along much better with Garrison's successor, Newton Baker. And Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels was an ardent admirer of Wilson, so he gave the president no trouble.

Compared to Lincoln and Wilson, FDR had a comparatively easy situation with his cabinet. He got along well with his secretary of state, Cordell Hull—with whom he worked closely on plans for the United Nations—and with Henry Stimson, whom he appointed secretary of war in 1940. Stimson, however, engaged in a heated policy debate with Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., in regard to the latter's proposal to dismember Germany after the war and reduce the German economy to an agricultural base. FDR preliminarily agreed with Morgenthau, but the plan was abandoned by the Truman administration. Morgenthau, who was Jewish, pressed Roosevelt on measures to counteract the Holocaust, especially in light of the State Department's frosty inaction (the department was rife with anti-semitism and Hull had thwarted efforts of Jewish refugees to enter the United States). In 1944, Morgenthau persuaded FDR to create the War Refugees Board.

SG: What role did newspapers play in forming public opinion?

RS: In Lincoln's case, it was a rare Democratic newspaper that was not overtly hostile and at times grossly abusive. Most newspapers in Lincoln's time were candidly politicized in their editorial policies, as they had been since the early days of the republic. Since Democratic Party doctrine since Jackson's time had been white supremacist and also contemptuous of "big government" (except when it came to Indian removal), the Republican policy of using federal power for the benefit of African Americans was anathema to most Democrats—although there were some exceptions to this generalization in the case of Free Soil Democrats who eventually joined the Republican Party due to their opposition to secession. In any case, Democratic editors flayed the Lincoln administration and Lincoln personally at every opportunity, especially in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation. The Democratic *Chicago Times* condemned Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and its argument that the Founders had created a nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. The *Chicago Times* said that Lincoln was desecrating the memory of the men who died at Gettysburg: "How dare he, then, standing on their graves, misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare that

negroes were their equals." In the election year 1864, Democratic editors were unapologetically scabrous. The *Columbus Crisis* in Ohio decried the "negro-loving, negro-hugging worshippers of old Abe," and the New York *Freeman's Journal* had this to say about the president: "Abe Lincoln—passing the question as to his taint of Negro blood . . . is altogether an imbecile . . . . He is filthy. He is obscene . . . . He is an animal."

It was of course a different story with Republican newspaper editors. But even though these editors shared most of Lincoln's objectives, they sometimes criticized administration policy, both in military and non-military matters. Some of these editors were political forces in their own right. Joseph Medill of the *Chicago Tribune* advised Lincoln in the course of the Lincoln-Douglas debates and helped to deliver the Republican nomination to Lincoln in 1860. Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* was a power to be reckoned with in Republican politics and policy-making, and he was a mercurial thinker. In 1862, he urged Lincoln to act boldly on emancipation. In 1864, he urged Lincoln to consider peace negotiations with the Confederates. Greeley had to be handled with kid gloves, and Lincoln recurrently dealt with him either through public actions or behind-the-scenes machinations. Henry Raymond, who edited the *New York Times*, was also the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and he, like Greeley, was a force to be reckoned with, especially in 1864. Like Greeley, he urged Lincoln to consider an offer of peace negotiations, at least as a political ploy for the sake of damage control.

In the case of Woodrow Wilson, newspapers were extremely important in shaping public debates about American neutrality (before the 1917 war declaration), war mobilization policies, civil liberties in wartime, and the postwar peace settlement, especially the controversy over the ratification of the Versailles Treaty. Though newspapers were still openly political in their editorial policies, the partisan viewpoints of their editorials were less formulaic than was the case in Lincoln's time, since both of the major parties in the 1910s were internally divided between ideological factions: progressives versus conservatives, interventionists versus non-interventionists. Wilson at his best tried to cultivate the press—he instituted regular press conferences in his first term—but over time he became more reclusive in his methods. His private secretary, Joseph Tumulty, often took the initiative in trying to shape public opinion. Tumulty could sometimes influence Wilson to cultivate public opinion more vigorously. After the war declaration, Wilson established the Committee on Public Information, or CPI, under the leadership of journalist George Creel, to coordinate press relations, institute a measure of censorship, and generate war propaganda.

David Lawrence, a former student of Wilson's, was Washington correspondent for the *New York Evening Post*. After Wilson dismissed Tumulty in 1916 due to pressure from his wife and others, Lawrence convinced Wilson to reinstate him. Wilson's relations with Lawrence varied greatly due to changing circumstances and the changing nature of Wilson's moods. Wilson would sometimes use Lawrence as a channel for leaking "tips" to the press, but at other times Wilson would turn on Lawrence as he did in 1917 when he scolded Lawrence and other journalists for inquiring too closely into the dealings of Wilson's confidential adviser, Colonel Edward House. Wilson told Lawrence that "you newspapermen can have no conception of what fire you are playing with . . . . It is perfectly evident to everyone that what Colonel House is attempting to do neither brings peace nearer nor sets it further off, and that it is my stern and serious judgment that the whole matter ought to be let alone."

Another newspaperman who was influential with Wilson was Frank Cobb, who succeeded Joseph Pulitzer as editor of the *New York World*. Cobb was an idealistic liberal to whom Wilson sometimes confided his hopes and fears.

In Wilson's time, the editors of magazines, both political journals and mass-circulation magazines, could be as influential as newspaper editors, and sometimes more so. Walter Lippmann and Herbert Croly of the *New Republic* commanded Wilson's respect, even when they criticized his policies. During

Left to Right: Robert Lansing/LC-DIG-npcc-19714, Col. & Mrs. House/LC-DIG-mpcc-07480, Henry Morgenthau/LC-DIG-npcc-01321, George Creel/LC-DIG-hec-08285, Joseph Tumulty/LC-DIG-hec-02162 and David Lawrence/LC-DIG-hec-18718

the war Lippmann criticized the administration's crack-down on dissent, but he served the administration as an adviser to Secretary of War Newton Baker and also as a member of "The Inquiry"—a select group of advisers on issues of American war aims and postwar principles. Lippmann worked for Wilson in Paris during the peace conference. Another journalist who was influential with Wilson was Ray Stannard Baker, who accompanied Wilson to Paris to help coordinate press coverage. Baker later wrote a biography of Wilson.

In FDR's time, both parties continued to have significant divisions in regard to matters of policy and ideology. By the late 1930s, this was particularly true in regard to foreign policy and the threat of war. Consequently, newspaper coverage and newspaper editorials would vary accordingly.

Like Wilson, FDR had numerous press conferences, and he tried to cultivate the press as much as possible. His early success in charming the Washington press corps gave way to a more confrontational situation with journalistic critics in the years leading up to World War II. One of Roosevelt's harshest critics was Robert Rutherford "Colonel" McCormick, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. An even more virulent editorial enemy was Eleanor "Cissy" Patterson, who was the owner, publisher, and editor of the *Washington Herald-Tribune*. Adamantly isolationist, Republican, and possibly pro-Axis, Cissy Patterson attacked FDR and American interventionists savagely. The McCormicks and the Pattersons were inter-related: Colonel McCormick, who was Joseph Medill's grandson, was Cissy Patterson's cousin. Feelings between FDR and the McCormick-Patterson clan became so strained that when Cissy's more moderate brother Joseph Patterson – another Medill grandson who founded and edited the *New York Daily News*—asked to enlist for military service after Pearl Harbor, FDR berated him in the Oval Office. In 1942, when the *Herald-Tribune*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Daily News* jointly revealed that the United States had broken the Japanese naval code, FDR ordered his attorney-general Francis Biddle to convene a grand jury to consider whether the editors had violated the Espionage Act of 1917. But the charges were later dropped. In 1943, FDR directed the War Department to bar editors from travelling to combat zones.

The newspaper titan William Randolph Hearst was also a fierce isolationist, a fact that was ironic in light of his earlier role in fomenting the Spanish-American War. But Hearst's mercurial personality led to ever-shifting political and ideological positions. Like the McCormicks and Pattersons, he too was accused of being pro-Axis, or at least pro-Nazi.

One of FDR's major journalistic supporters on the issues of foreign policy and war was the Republican William Allen White, who owned and edited the Emporia (Kansas) *Gazette*. A prominent Republican progressive who had supported and befriended Theodore Roosevelt, White helped to found the interventionist Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies in 1940. A liberty ship during World War II was named in his honor. Another Republican interventionist was Henry Luce, the owner and publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines.

Syndicated columnist Walter Winchell was close to FDR on almost all issues: pro-New Deal, anti-Nazi, and anti-isolationist. Winchell steadily attacked both Nazism and American isolationism, alleging that many leading isolationists were anti-Semitic Hitler worshippers.

Another syndicated columnist, Drew Pearson, was sympathetic toward the Soviet Union and he used his "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column to accuse the Roosevelt administration of dragging its heels in opening up a western front in Europe. He alleged that FDR wanted to see "Russia bled white." FDR retaliated by calling Pearson "a chronic liar," and Pearson got even by breaking the story about the 1943 "slapping" incident involving General George Patton. When Pearson accused General Douglas MacArthur of improper behavior, MacArthur sued Pearson for defamation but dropped the suit after Pearson threatened to release some love letters that MacArthur deemed embarrassing.

(Part Two of Professor Striner's Interview will appear in the summer issue of Lincoln Lore.)

Top: Seamen at Kaneohe Naval Air Station decorate the graves of their fellow sailors killed at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941
LC-USZ62-103790

Bottom: Wreckage of USS Arizona, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 7, 1941
LC-USZ62-132048

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Richard Striner teaches at Washington College. He is author of *Lincoln and Race*, *Lincoln's Way: How Six Great Presidents Created American Power*, and *Father Abraham: Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery*.

Lincoln and the West

McMurtry Lecture at the Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on September 10, 2013.

••• James M. McPherson

On the afternoon of April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary took a carriage ride through the streets of Washington. These rides were one of the president's few forms of relaxation during the Civil War. For many months he had been losing weight; the circles around his eyes had been growing darker; and the signs of exhaustion were growing stronger. The crushing pressures of war had visibly aged his appearance well beyond his fifty-six years. Friends noted that he rarely told his trademark humorous stories any more. But during this carriage ride, Mary Lincoln was pleasantly surprised by Abraham's bright spirits. "Good husband, you almost startle me by your great cheerfulness," she said. "And well I may feel so," he responded. "I consider this day the war has come to a close." General Robert E. Lee had surrendered his army to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox five days earlier, and Lincoln expected to hear soon that General Joseph E. Johnston had surrendered the Confederacy's other principal army to General William T. Sherman. He felt the oppressive burdens of war lifting from his shoulders. "Between the war and the loss of our darling Willie"—their 11-year old son who had died of typhoid fever in 1862—"we have both been very miserable," said the president. But "we must both be more cheerful in the future." As the carriage rattled along, they discussed plans for travel during Lincoln's second term or after he left office in 1869. Abraham Lincoln had never been east of New Hampshire or west of Atchinson, Kansas, just across the Missouri River. They would travel to Europe, perhaps to the Holy Land, and certainly to California over the new transcontinental railroad when it was completed. Lincoln had signed the bill for federal land grants and loans to build that railroad, which was already under construction in 1865.

California and the West were on Lincoln's mind that day. In the morning he had met with Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax, who was about to depart for the West coast. Lincoln said that he wished he could go too, and then launched into a discussion of the mineral wealth of California and the Western territories. During the past four years, he remarked, he had been so preoccupied with the war that he had little time to pay attention to the mining frontier of the far West. That would change with the coming of peace, Lincoln told Colfax. The gold and silver of Western mines would help pay the multi-billion dollar war debt. These mines would also provide employment for many demobilized soldiers and, Lincoln said, "we shall prove, in a very few years, that we are, indeed, the treasury of the world." Colfax returned to the White House that evening to say goodbye, as he prepared to leave for California and the Lincolns were getting ready for an evening of more relaxation watching a comedy at Ford's Theatre. Two hours later John Wilkes Booth put an end to Lincoln's plans for travel to Europe, California, or anywhere else.

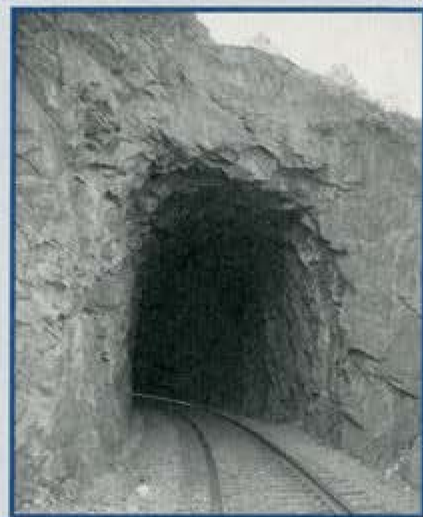
Road through the mountains of Utah, cut by the builders of the Transcontinental Railroad / LC-HS503- 3695

Abraham Lincoln was a product of the American West. Of course those words—the American West—have meant something quite different at various times in our history. During my residence in California during four sabbatical years from the 1970s to the 1990s I learned that anything on this side of Las Vegas was "back east." When Abraham Lincoln's father was born in 1776, anything west of Philadelphia or Richmond was "the West." When Abraham Lincoln was born near Hodgenville, Kentucky, in 1809, his birthplace was almost as far west as you could go and still be within one of the states of the United States. When he departed from Springfield for Washington in 1861 as president elect, Illinois was part of what was still called the Old Northwest, or sometimes simply "the Northwest." During the Civil War the military theaters of operations between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River were informally lumped together as "the Western theater," while the region west of the big river was generally designated the trans-Mississippi. These designations can lead to confusion when one talks about "the West" or gives a

lecture on Lincoln and the West, especially when we note that at any given time in American history "the West" was as much a state of mind as it was a geographical region.

So, how do we define the West for the purpose of this lecture? I would define it as whatever people at the time called, "the West"—including that state of mind. The most important issue during Lincoln's antebellum political career—the issue that brought the country to disunion and war in 1861—was the controversy over the expansion of slavery into the territories, which were the newest part of "the West" as Americans then defined it. And that included not only the territories owned by the United States in the 1850s but also the potential future acquisitions in Mexico and Central America which were targets of the most aggressive slavery expansionists.

Two of the most powerful currents in American life and ideology during Lincoln's lifetime were geographical mobility and social mobility. They were closely linked. Americans often moved from one place to another—usually westward—in order to improve their condition, hoping to move up as well as to move out. "Go West, young man" if you want to get ahead, declared Horace Greeley famously in the 1840s. Americans of that era anticipated Wallace Stegner's famous description of the West as "the geography of hope." But only those who worked hard and practiced the virtues of the so-called Protestant ethic would move up the ladder of success—the virtues of self-discipline, sobriety, education, thrift, deferral of gratification. This ethic also incorporated what has been labeled "the free-labor ideology." Lincoln was one of the foremost exponents of this ideology. "I am not ashamed to confess," he said in 1860, "that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat-boat—just what might happen to any poor man's son." But in the free states an ambitious and hard-working man "can better his condition" because "there is no such thing as a freeman being fatally fixed for life, in the condition of a hired laborer. The man who labored for another last year, this year labors for himself, and next year he will hire others to labor for him."



Central Pacific Transcontinental Railroad, Tunnel No. 3, Milepost 180.65, Cisco, Placer County, CA HAER CAL,31-CISCO,1--1

But when Lincoln and other advocates of the free-labor ideology looked South, they saw millions of laborers who were "fatally fixed" in the condition of slavery for life. They declared that "slavery withers and blights all it touches. It is a curse upon the poor, free, laboring white men. They are depressed, poor, impoverished, degraded in caste, because labor is disgraceful." That is why the Free Soil party and, after its founding in 1854, the Republican Party opposed the expansion of slavery into the territories. These territories represented the future of America—the institutions and social order that took root there would determine the future shape of American society. If slavery went into the territories, wrote one Republican in 1857, "the free labor of all the states will not. If the free labor of the states goes there, the slave labor of the southern states will not, and in a few years the country will teem with an active and energetic population."

In a speech at New Haven, Connecticut, in 1860, Lincoln anticipated the safety-valve thesis of Western expansion associated a generation later with Frederick Jackson Turner. "I desire that if you get too thick here," he said to New England farmers and workers, "and find it hard to better your condition on this soil, you may have a chance to strike [out] and go somewhere else, where you may not be degraded by forced rivalry with negro slaves." In one of his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln added another dimension to the theme of free territories as a safety valve for eastern discontent—in this case for immigrants coming westward across the ocean to "settle upon new soil and better their condition in life. I am in favor of this, not merely for our own people who are born amongst us, but as an outlet for free white people everywhere, the world over—in which Hans, and Baptiste, and Patrick, and all other men from all the world, may find new homes and better their conditions in life."

This emphasis on the West as a land of opportunity for free white men carries connotations of racism. That was certainly a component of the Republican Party's determination to restrict the expansion of slavery. But many Republicans, including Lincoln, were ambivalent on this matter and sometimes spoke more inclusively. In the same speech wherein he told New Englanders that he wanted them to be able to settle where they would not be degraded by competition with slave labor, he declared that "I want every man to have the chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition—when he may look forward and hope to be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself afterward, and finally to hire men to work for him!"

A strong challenge to the Republican program of legislation to exclude slavery from the territories came from those who insisted that the existing territories in the late

1840s, including those acquired from Mexico, were unsuitable for slavery. Thus there was no need to provoke the South by antislavery legislation. An exasperated Southern congressman complained in 1850 that the controversy over slavery in the territories was a quarrel over "an imaginary negro in an impossible place." Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky declared that "the right to carry slaves to New Mexico or California is no great matter, whether granted or denied, the more especially when it seems to be agreed that no sensible man would carry his slaves there if he could." In Daniel Webster's famous, or infamous, Seventh of March speech supporting the Compromise of 1850, he insisted that nature would exclude slavery from the Mexican cession, so why insult Southern honor by passing the Wilmot Proviso to exclude it. "I would not take pains uselessly to reaffirm an act of nature," said Webster, "nor to reenact the will of God."

But would nature keep slavery out of New Mexico or California? Many proslavery Southerners insisted otherwise. Slave labor had proven successful in mining and other industries in the South and in Latin America. The *Charleston Mercury*, one of the South's leading newspapers, proclaimed that "there is no vocation in the world in which slavery can be more useful and profitable, than in mining." The *Southern Quarterly* maintained that "California is by nature peculiarly a slaveholding State."

Although several Southerners migrated to California with their slaves in the 1849 gold rush, and put them to work in the mines, the majority of Forty-Niners disagreed that California should be a slaveholding state. They adopted a constitution that banned slavery and then applied for admission to statehood. In the congressional debate on the Compromise of 1850, which eventually admitted California as a free state, Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi denounced the authors of California's free-state constitution as "a few adventurers uniting with a herd as various in color and nearly as ignorant of our government as Jacob's cattle." Although Davis had never been to California, he insisted that "the European races now engaged in working the mines of California sink under the burning heat and sudden changes of the climate, to which the African race are altogether better adapted." (He seems to have confused California's climate with Mississippi's.)

Despite its constitution, California was a sort of slave state for a few years. In 1852 the legislature enacted a law that permitted slaveholders to "sojourn" in the state indefinitely with their human property. The law was twice renewed before expiring in 1855, and during those years there were scores of slaves in California. Meanwhile, both New Mexico and Utah territories legalized slavery, though few slaves were ever taken there and none were counted in New Mexico in the 1860 census. However, the prospect of a real slave state in the lands acquired from Mexico was not entirely dead. The pro-slavery wing of the California Democratic Party proposed to divide the state in two, with slavery legalized in the southern part, where slaves might grow cotton, rice, and sugar. In 1859 the legislature passed a bill splitting off southern California at approximately the latitude of San Luis Obispo, subject to approval by a two-thirds majority in the affected counties. They did approve, but when the application reached Congress at the end of 1859 it died a quiet death in the House, where Republicans were now the largest party. For better or worse, California remained one state.

Long before these antics came to an end, the dispute over the expansion of slavery shifted to the territories acquired much earlier by the Louisiana Purchase. The issue of slavery there had supposedly been

Bar room in the mines
LC-DIG-ppmsca-32179

settled by the Missouri Compromise in 1820, which had divided these territories at the latitude of 36° 30'. In a way, California also prompted an eruption of a new controversy about the territories because it was the proposal for a transcontinental railroad that put in motion the events that led to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Before the route of the railroad could be surveyed, the territories through which it would run must be organized. Slavery had been banned by the Missouri Compromise in what would become Kansas and Nebraska territories. Southern senators held their organization hostage to a demand for the repeal of the ban on slavery therein.

Senator Stephen A. Douglas, chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, caved in to this demand. Douglas's bill, which narrowly passed Congress, repealed that part of the Missouri Compromise and organized the territories on the basis of what he called "popular sovereignty"—allowing the residents of a territory to choose whether or not to legalize slavery. The question of when they could make this choice, during the territorial state or only when they applied for statehood, was left ambiguous. In any event,

passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act set off a shooting war between proslavery and antislavery settlers in Kansas that became a violent extension of the sectional conflict between North and South. It did more than anything else to bring on disunion and civil war seven years later. It also propelled Abraham Lincoln back into the maelstrom of antislavery politics.

Lincoln had left political life after he finished his single term in Congress in 1849. He had hoped for appointment as Commissioner of the General Land Office by the incoming Zachary Taylor administration in that year, but the job went to another man. Taylor did offer Lincoln the governorship of Oregon Territory. He was tempted to accept, but Mary Lincoln said that she would not go, so her husband turned it down and returned to Springfield to build an increasingly successful law practice. The Kansas-Nebraska Act fell like a thunderclap on Lincoln, and, as he later said, "aroused me as I had never been before." He plunged back into politics and during the next six years delivered as estimated 175 speeches with a "central message" of the necessity to exclude slavery from the territories as a first step toward placing it on the course to ultimate extinction, as he put it in his House Divided speech in 1858.

In 1854 Lincoln stumped for the "anti-Nebraska" candidates and subsequently helped organize the Republican Party in Illinois. He challenged Stephen Douglas's argument that popular sovereignty would keep slavery out of Kansas Territory as effectively and less provocatively than legislative exclusion because the climate of Kansas would prevent the institution from taking root there. This was a "lullaby argument," said Lincoln. The temperature, soil, and rainfall in the eastern part of Kansas were similar to the same conditions in Missouri. In fact, Lincoln pointed out, five slave states, like Kansas, actually lay north of the latitude established by the Missouri Compromise. The only thing that had kept slavery out of Illinois, which was directly across the Mississippi River from Missouri, was the legislate ban in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. And similar legislation was the only thing that would keep it out of Kansas and other territories.

On this platform Lincoln was elected president in 1860. Once the war broke out, the issue was no longer the expansion of slavery but the preservation of the Union and, by the latter half of the war, the abolition of slavery everywhere. Specifically Western issues became subsumed in the larger question of national survival. But these Western issues did not disappear. One of them that remained very much alive even in wartime was the transcontinental railroad. As a Whig and a devotee of Henry Clay in the 1830s and 1840s, Lincoln had been a strong advocate of Clay's American System to promote economic development by means of banks, a protective tariff, and government support for what were then called internal improvements and which today we call infrastructure: roads, canals railroads, improvements of river navigation, and the like. Having grown up on hard-scrabble frontier subsistence farms, Lincoln disliked the farm work his father required of him and fled from it as soon as he could. In politics his advocacy of government support for internal improvements was motivated in part by his desire to bring subsistence farmers into the market economy. In the Illinois legislature he continued to champion such subsidies, even as the state was going bankrupt following the Panic of 1837.

Thus it was natural for Lincoln to support the idea of a railroad from the Old Northwest to California, not only to bind the Pacific Coast to the rest of the Union but also to develop the vast resources of the region for the benefit of American economic growth. Before 1861, sectional conflicts over the route such a railroad should take, plus the violence in Kansas that spilled over into national politics, prevented the launching of this project. Lincoln had his own ideas as to the location of the eastern terminus of such a railroad. In 1859 he visited Council Bluffs, Iowa, across the Missouri River from what became the city of Omaha, Nebraska, to inspect some land he held as collateral for a loan to a friend. While there he met a young civil engineer named Grenville Dodge, who was building a railroad in Iowa and answered Lincoln's questions about the viability of a potential route west from Council Bluffs.

Three years later Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act that provided generous land grants and government loans to companies that undertook to build east from Sacramento and west from somewhere in Iowa or Missouri. The law authorized the president to specify the gauge and select the railroad's eastern terminus. In 1863 Lincoln summoned Dodge to Washington for consultation. By this time the former railroad builder had risen to the rank of brigadier general commanding a division in Grant's Army of the Tennessee, where he proved himself a good combat commander, as well as an engineer officer in charge of constructing and repairing military railroads. After talking with Dodge, Lincoln fixed the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad at Omaha. After the war, Dodge became chief engineer of the Union Pacific as it crept across the plains to meet the Central Pacific Railroad that was pushing eastward across the towering Sierra Nevada Mountains and forbidding Nevada desert.

There was not a specific standard railroad gauge at that time. Most railroads used the gauge of four feet-8.5 inches that would soon become the standard gauge, but others had different gauges. The

Top: Butte City/LC-DIG-ppmsca-23044
Bottom: Gold miners, El Dorado, California/LC-DIG-ds-04487

Californians favored a five foot gauge for the transcontinental project. If adopted, this might have become the national standard. A delegation of Californians descended on the White House on January 20, 1863, to persuade Lincoln to choose the five-foot gauge. The president was non-committal, but the next day he did announce in favor of the five-foot gauge. This decision did not stand long, however. Pressured by Eastern railroad interests, Congress in March 1863 overruled Lincoln and enacted the four feet-8.5 inch gauge for the transcontinental, and the president acquiesced.

However, Lincoln did manage to help the Californians on two other important matters. In 1863 he designated the relatively flat land just east of Sacramento as the western base of the Sierra Nevadas so the railroad could obtain the larger government loan for building through mountainous terrain. As the Central Pacific lobbyist joked about this twenty-one mile redefinition of the Sierras: "You see my pertinacity and Abraham's faith moved mountains." Two years later, as the Civil War neared its end, Lincoln overruled Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton's refusal to authorize the Central Pacific's purchase of 5,000 kegs of gunpowder for blasting a grade through the mountains and signed the permit himself.

Of course, it would be a great exaggeration to say that Lincoln played a dominant role in the building of the transcontinental railroad. Many people had a hand in that remarkable achievement. But as commander in chief of the Union army and navy, Lincoln certainly had a dominant role in Union victory. And without that victory, would railroad have been built when and where it was… and completed by 1869? Not likely.

In any event, Lincoln's actions as commander in chief had another bearing on the theme of Lincoln and the West, in this case the Western theater of the war, defined as the Mississippi Valley. The war had gone well for the Union in this theater and adjacent regions drained by the great river's tributaries in the first half of 1862. Northern army and navy task forces had captured Nashville, New Orleans, Memphis, and Corinth, and had gained control of vast stretches of Confederate territory plus the entire Mississippi River, except for the portion between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Louisiana. These successes had important effects on the progress of emancipation because many thousands of slaves in this region came under Union control and thereby took the first steps toward freedom in greater numbers than in any other theater of the war.

At the same time, however, the war had not gone so well in the East, where Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia drove George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac away from Richmond and then launched a counter-offensive that invaded Maryland in September 1862. In East Tennessee the Confederates also regrouped and invaded Kentucky and threatened Louisville and even Cincinnati. These Confederate successes forced Lincoln to devote his attention almost entirely to those theaters, while the effort to capture Vicksburg and open the entire Mississippi River languished. When a judge in St. Louis accused Lincoln of neglecting the Mississippi Valley, he responded that he was strongly committed to opening the river, but he had to focus on the threats to Kentucky as well as to Maryland. "The country will not allow us to send our whole Western force down the Mississippi," Lincoln told him, "while the enemy sacks Louisville and Cincinnati."

In the fall of 1862 the pressure to capture Vicksburg, plus the growing strength of the anti-war Copperhead Democrats in the Old Northwest prompted Lincoln to embark on a military strategy he later regretted. The central figure in this strategy was Major-General John A. McClernand, an Illinois Democrat whom Lincoln had known since they served together in the Illinois legislature in the 1830s. As part of his endeavor to enlist prominent Democrats for the war effort in 1861, Lincoln had commissioned McClernand a brigadier general and was gratified by the general's success in mobilizing his constituency for the Union cause. McClernand demonstrated some aptitude as a military commander, but his superior, General Grant, did not share McClernand's high opinion of himself. McClernand chafed under Grant's authority and sought an independent command. He persuaded eight governors to petition Lincoln to give him command "either of a Department or army, in some active field of

operations, particularly in the Mississippi Valley." McClernand went to Washington in September 1862 and personally lobbied the president to put him in charge of the new three-year regiments being raised in the states of the Old Northwest for a campaign down the Mississippi to capture Vicksburg.

McClernand advanced political as well as military arguments to support this request. Copperheads were talking of forming an independent "Northwest Confederacy" composed of these states to make a separate peace with the Confederacy in order to open the Mississippi River to shipment of their farm products. This conspiracy might muster powerful support, McClernand warned Lincoln, unless Union military forces opened the river. How seriously Lincoln took this supposed plot for a Northwest Confederacy is not clear. But significant Democratic gains in the congressional elections of 1862 were a danger signal. Lincoln decided to give McClernand his independent command and ordered him to organize the new regiments from several states "to clear the Mississippi River and open navigation to New Orleans." The president added that "I feel deep interest in the success of this expedition , and desire it to be pushed forward with all possible despatch."

Grant heard rumors about McClernand's command and sought clarification of his own authority from General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck. Whether Halleck consulted Lincoln on this matter is unclear. In any event, he telegraphed Grant that he had command of all troops sent to his Department, including those that McClernand expected to form his independent army. In January 1863 Grant issued an order constituting those troops as the 13th Army Corps with McClernand as their commander. Finding himself at the head of a mere corps instead of an army, McClernand fired off bitter letters of protest to Lincoln damning Halleck and calling on the president to restore his independent command.

Little Crow, Sioux chief and leader of Indian Massacre of 1862 in Minnesota LC-USZ61-83

Lincoln refused. At this time he was also bedeviled by infighting among generals in the Army of the Potomac following that army's disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg. He was in no mood to countenance McClernand's efforts to promote similar conflict within the Army of the Tennessee. He wrote McClernand a stern letter advising him for his own good to bow to the inevitable and become a loyal subordinate to Grant. "I have too many family controversies (so to speak), already on my hands," Lincoln wrote, "to voluntarily take up another. You are now doing well--well for the country, and well for yourself--much better than you could possibly be, if engaged in open war with General Halleck. Allow me to beg, that for your sake, for my sake, & for the country's sake, you give your whole attention to the better work." McClernand submitted with ill grace and took part in Grant's Vicksburg campaign as commander of the 13th Corps. But he was not around for the capture of Vicksburg in July 1863, for he had sniped at Grant one time too many, and that general finally removed McClernand. Lincoln supported Grant's action.

At the same time that Lincoln was dealing with internecine conflicts within his two principal armies, he faced another thorny problem in the Old Northwest, the fallout from the uprising of Dakota Indians in Minnesota. Most soldiers had been withdrawn from the state to fight Confederates. The drain on the Union treasury to finance the war compounded the usual corruption of Indian agents and delayed annuity payments to the Dakotas who had sold most of their land in Minnesota to the government. Many Indians faced starvation. Some of them began to speak openly of reclaiming ancestral hunting grounds. On August 17, 1862, several Dakotas looking for food killed five white settlers. This event blew the lid off a tense situation. Angry young Indians, anticipating a white backlash, persuaded Chief Little Crow to lead a preemptive strike in south-central Minnesota in which the Indians killed perhaps as many as five hundred white settlers.

Hastily mobilized militia and Union army troops, who were rushed to the state, managed eventually to suppress the uprising. The top-ranking military officer in Minnesota was General John Pope, sent there after his defeat in the second battle of Bull Run. White Minnesotans demanded revenge, and Pope was eager to gratify them. A military court tried the captured warriors and sentenced 303 of them to death by hanging. When news of these trials reached Lincoln, he was appalled. He ordered Pope to carry out no executions without presidential approval and told him to send the trial transcripts to Washington.

Lincoln's personal history might have predisposed him toward harsh retaliation against the Indians. His own grandfather, also named Abraham Lincoln, had been killed by Indians in Kentucky. Young Abraham doubtless heard this story many times from his father Thomas, who had witnessed the murder as a six-year old boy. In 1832 Lincoln had enlisted in the Illinois militia to fight the Sac and Fox Indians who were trying to regain their ancestral homeland under Chief Black Hawk. Elected captain of his company, Lincoln might have expected to share their murderous hostility toward Indians. Lincoln's

company saw no combat in the Black Hawk War. But they did see the mutilated bodies of white women and children as they marched along. One day an old Indian man, unarmed and harmless, wandered into their camp. The men wanted to kill him, but Lincoln ordered them to let the Indian go. They accused their captain of cowardice. Lincoln defied them with the words: "If any man thinks I am a coward, let him test it." The men backed down and let the Indian go.

The leading historian of Lincoln and the Indians, author of a book with that title, is somewhat critical of the administration's overall Indian policy. But he does acknowledge that "Lincoln was clearly more humanitarian toward Indians than most of the main military and political figures of his time." Having famously insisted in his debates with Stephen Douglas that blacks were included in the category "all men" that the Declaration of Independence claimed were "created equal," Lincoln believed that Indians were included as well.

In 1862 Lincoln could have allowed the execution of the 303 Dakotas to go forward. He came under enormous pressure from governors, senators, and many others in Lincoln's own region of the Old Northwest to do just that. General Pope repeatedly warned the president that if he intervened, lynch mobs in Minnesota would take the law into their own hands and kill many other Indians in addition to the condemned 303. But as he had done thirty years earlier in his militia company, Lincoln stood against this pressure. With the help of two lawyers in the Interior Department, he went carefully over the trial transcripts. They discovered that much of the evidence was hearsay and some of it was non-existent. Only thirty-eight of the 303 had unquestionably been guilty of murder or rape. Most of the rest had undoubtedly gone on the warpath. But as Lincoln explained to the Senate, which had called on him for an explanation, he was careful to approve capital sentences for only those "who were proved to have participated in massacres, as distinguished from participation in battles." So in the bleak month of December 1862, the month of humiliating Union military defeats at Fredericksburg and Chickasaw Bayou, the month in which Republican senators tried to force Lincoln to reorganize his cabinet, the president commuted the sentences of 265 of the 303 Indians from hanging to imprisonment. Lincoln paid a political price for this act. Perhaps the smallest part of that price was a reduced majority in Minnesota when he ran for re-election in 1864. One of Minnesota's senators told him, half jokingly, that "if he had hung more Indians, we should have given him his old majority." Lincoln did not find this remark amusing. "I could not afford to hang men for votes," he replied.

Lest we praise Lincoln too much for his courage and commitment to justice in this affair, we might note that he bowed to the demand of Minnesotans that the Dakota Indians—and for good measure the Winnebagoes, who had not participated in the uprising but whose land white Minnesotans coveted—be removed to Dakota territory. The 265 Indians, whose sentences Lincoln commuted, remained for almost four years in prison, where several of them died, until President Andrew Johnson pardoned them in 1866. The president had nothing to do with the notorious Sand Creek massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians by Colorado militia in November 1864, but that did happen on his watch.

And Lincoln remained a strong proponent of the westward expansion of white settlers whose farms, ranches, mines, and railroads continued to make the story of the American West a story of westward contraction for Indians. In his annual message to Congress in December 1864, the president proudly noted the continued growth even in wartime of the white population and of resources extracted in the far Western states and territories, and the progress in surveying and grading the transcontinental railroad. It goes without saying that these proceedings ultimately doomed the independence of Indian nations in that vast region.

Lincoln recognized that the corrupt alliance between Indian agents and traders to exploit Native Americans for their own enrichment lay at the root of much of the injustice that provoked conflict and violence between Indians and whites. Influenced by Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple of Minnesota, a prominent champion of Indian rights, Lincoln advocated "reform" of the system of Indian agencies in each of his annual messages to Congress. What he meant by reform remained vague, however, and little came of these recommendations during the Civil War. Whipple later wrote that in 1862 Lincoln had promised him that "if we get through this war, and I live, this Indian system shall be reformed." Lincoln got through the war. But just as he did not live to travel to California on the railroad he had helped bring into being, or to carry out the reconstruction program he promised soon to announce after what turned out to be his last speech on April 11, 1865, neither did he live to fulfill his promise to Bishop Whipple. The American West and the South were deprived of Lincoln's leadership in the postwar years. Truly John Wilkes Booth had much to answer for.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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James McPherson of Princeton University won the Pulitzer Prize for *Battle Cry of Freedom*. Other books include: *War on the Water; Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief*; and *This Mighty Scourge*.

Abraham Lincoln's Religion

• • • By Myron A. Marty

Mary Lincoln was a member of First Presbyterian Church in Springfield when her husband bought this pew for his family's use, probably in 1852, at an estimated cost of around $50. The pew was number 20 on the left side, seventh row from the front. Mrs. Lincoln was a member of the church, but Mr. Lincoln was not, although he attended with reasonable frequency. In 1871 the church moved from its original location to one on Seventh Street, and the pew was moved from the former sanctuary in 1912. Placed in the narthex, facing the street, it is a tourist attraction. Photo by David Blanchette.

Reading *Lincoln's Battle with God: A President's Struggle with Faith and What It Meant for America*, by Stephen Mansfield (Thomas Nelson, 2012; 242 pages), a treatise on a familiar subject, prompted me to re-read Michael Burkhimer's *Lincoln's Christianity* (Westholme, 2007; 203 pages).

Together, these books led me to consult thirty-some books by Lincoln scholars for further insights into issues Mansfield and Burkhimer address. They confirm that examining Lincoln's evolving faith and action as it related to Christianity is a daunting task. Lincoln was a master of ambiguity in expressing and concealing his beliefs, so writing definitively about them has proven impossible.

In an interview in 1866 with William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for sixteen years, David Davis, a long-time friend and political supporter, suggests why this is so:

"I don't Know anything about Lincoln's Religion -- don't think anybody Knew. The idea that Lincoln talked to a stranger about his religion or religious views—or made such speeches, remarks &c about it as published is absurd to me. I Know the man so well: he was the most reticent – Secretive man I Ever Saw – or expect to see—you ought to know it as a matter of course.[1]

Stephen Mansfield begins *Lincoln's Battle with God* by citing Mary Lincoln's recollection of her husband's final words, purportedly spoken at the Ford's Theatre just before the assassin's "Deringer ball cracked the air": "We will visit the Holy Land and see those places hallowed by the footsteps of the Savior. . . . There is no place I so much desire to see as Jerusalem." (xvii)

Seeking to verify that these were indeed Mrs. Lincoln's words, he cites Don E. and Virginia Fehrenbacher's *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln*, which calls this a "quotation about whose authority there is more than average doubt." The Fehrenbachers also remark, "One may doubt that Lincoln would have expressed such reverent aspirations while watching the comedy, 'Our American Cousin'."

The Fehrenbachers attribute this quotation to Noyes Miner, a Baptist minister in Springfield and former neighbor of the Lincolns in Springfield, about whom they say that "the religiosity" in some of his recollections "may reflect [his] capacity for invention . . . ."[2] When Miner spoke with Mrs. Lincoln in 1882, her health--mental and physical--was precarious, as it had been for years, but that did not keep her from recruiting her friend to assist in lobbying for an increase in her government pension and telling him about her husband's last wishes.[3]

Nonetheless, Mansfield writes that his book "is intended to explore Lincoln's life with Mary's recollection of his final words in mind and with this grand Second Inaugural Address ringing in our ears." (xx)

Although Mansfield is not a historian, he offers an opinion

concerning how historians "who believe in a sovereign God" and those "who do not believe in a divine being" should treat the past as they research and write about it. That he is in the former category is evident throughout the book. Moreover, he asserts that the Lincoln in the story he tells "is one that we are usually not allowed to see in textbooks and the writings of historians." There, he claims, "Lincoln's faith is usually frozen as of his early Springfield years and never allowed to mature." (90) To this ill-informed assertion there is substantial contrary evidence.[4]

After his dubious introduction, Mansfield tells a story about Lincoln's religion, beginning with an account of three legacies from his mother: her intellect, her struggles with recurring depression, and her expressions of her "unique brand of faith" which clearly "lived brightly in his mind." (15) Even as Lincoln turned against the faith of his father, he continues, that did not necessarily mean he rejected faith in God. (26)

As others have done, Mansfield portrays Lincoln's New Salem as his "alma mater." It was there that he mastered skills in grammar, languages, and mathematics and read works by great philosophers and poets that shaped his understanding of the place of faith in the lives of writers he admired. This equipped him to engage in debates about their ideas. Influenced by his reading and debating, he became an infidel, as least as far as Christianity was concerned.

Life was difficult for Lincoln after he moved to Springfield, as he suffered bouts of depression and could not escape embarrassment over his troubled relations with several women, including Mary Todd, whom he married in November 1842. Charges of religious infidelity threatened his candidacy for Congress in 1846, so much so that he issued a handbill replying to charges against him. Noting that many of Lincoln's statements were not true, Mansfield concludes that he "distorted his religious convictions for political gain." (65)

He then turns to another alleged defense by Lincoln against charges of infidelity. This came in a recollection by Aminda Rankin, dictated to her son in 1889--forty-three years after she purportedly conversed with Lincoln.[5] Mansfield acknowledges that many historians discount its verity but he considers it as "likely the truth" and treats it as evidence that while "Lincoln was certainly no Christian," he "does believe in God, does call Jesus Christ the Savior, does hold the Scriptures as being a reliable moral guide, does yearn to be part of a Christlike church, and does hope for a day of greater faith." (69)

In attempting to discern why Lincoln's beliefs did not go farther, Mansfield devotes many pages to Lincoln's engagement with the person and writings of James Smith, "a revivalist Presbyterian [with] a scholarly bent." As Smith's influence on Lincoln was significant, Mansfield wonders why he did not convert Lincoln to Christianity. Possibly reflecting his own years as an evangelical minister, Mansfield writes: "perhaps the language should be *born again* or *saved*." (90)

In the remaining pages, Mansfield offers accounts, too numerous to relate here, of Lincoln's apparent quest for deeper understandings of Christianity and his reliance on the wisdom of the Bible and on prayers. They also include criticism of "professional" and "technical minded" historians, "a tribe renowned for undervaluing the role of religion as a motive force in past events." He singles out Lincoln biographer Richard Carwardine as representing scholars who contend that Lincoln "did not become a Christian in any meaningful sense."[6] (82)

The absence of an index in this book handicaps serious readers. In its place we find six pictures of Mansfield engaged in research and full-page advertisements for two of the sixteen books he has published since 2000.[7] The book's title is puzzling, as a battle typically involves two or more opposing battlers; nowhere in the text does one find God battling with Lincoln. Moreover, discovering what Lincoln's struggle meant for America is left to the reader.

Some readers may find *Lincoln's Battle with God* to be an enlightening book, but not in the ways Mansfield intended.

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Michael Burkhimer's *Lincoln's Christianity* is strikingly different in content and character. To understand Lincoln's Christianity, he writes "one must go back to the beginnings of the faith:" He "was a Bible reader, and an avid student of the Gospels,"[8] as is evident throughout his career.

Burkhimer then follows Lincoln's advice: "People should show their hands." So he acknowledges that he is an unabashed admirer of Lincoln and a liberal Roman Catholic. He keeps the admiration in check, however, and the book reveals no religious bias.

Rather than attempting to offer a full chronological account of Lincoln's religious odyssey, he analyzes it in six chapters. In "Frontier Religion," he establishes the familial and cultural context of religious influences affecting Lincoln in his youth.

In "The Young Skeptic," he calls New Salem, Lincoln's home from 1831 to 1837, his "alma mater," as did Mansfield. There he read works that drew him to infidelity. Burkhimer cites remarks by three men who knew him well, concluding that their testimonies "show a man who would study the Bible, but not accept it as divinely inspired in all cases."

These were years when Lincoln's chronic melancholy led to depression. Burkhimer asserts that Lincoln's depression episodes were in part related to his early lack of religious faith and to his grieving the death of Ann Rutledge, a young woman he seems to have hoped to

marry. Reading and writing poetry gave expression to his woes. His religious views, "though somewhat muddled seemed stable:" He was neither an atheist nor a Christian in the classic sense of both terms. (42)

Perhaps Lincoln's views could be clarified through interactions with Reverend James Smith. He first encountered Smith's books in his father-in-law's library and later debated key points with him. Smith became close to both Abraham and Mary Lincoln when he conducted the funeral of their young son Eddie in 1850. Two years later Mary joined Smith's Presbyterian church, and her husband sometimes accompanied her to worship there. Yet, Smith and others could not convert Lincoln to orthodox Christianity.

In the next chapter Burkhimer explores the influence of "early Christian sources on Lincoln's rhetoric," mainly the New Testament. He devotes too much of it to something called the "Q" hypothesis, which purportedly accounts for the similarity between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, whose writers, hypothetically, drew upon a lost source called "Q". Lincoln most frequently quoted these two Gospels in his speeches. (80-86, 96-105) Many readers are likely to consider the "Q" hypothesis a distraction.

In "War and Death," Burkhimer contends that Lincoln had slowly been brought into the Christian faith before becoming president, and in "his last four years saw a blossoming of religious faith and a deepening spirituality in his life and writings." (107) To support this contention, he cites expressions and actions where this is evident. Despite his cordial relations with preachers, Lincoln did not measure up to the tests of orthodox Christianity.

This carefully researched and well-written book is an excellent contribution to Lincoln studies, reflecting the author's familiarity with Lincoln literature. That is no surprise, as he is the author of *100 Essential Lincoln Books.*[9]

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There is abundant evidence that the issues addressed in these books are of long-standing interest.[10]

In 1866 Josiah Holland published *A Life of Abraham Lincoln,* an admiring work with a number of sections on Lincoln's religious beliefs. Early in the book we read: "He recognized an immediate relation between God and himself, in all the actions and passions of his life. He was not professedly a Christian that is, he subscribed to no creed, joined no organization of Christian disciples." And near the end: "He always remained shy in the exposure of his religious experiences, but those around him caught golden glimpses of a beautiful Christian character."[11]

William E. Barton, in *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (1920), traces the treatment of religion in biographies of Lincoln. He credits Holland's as the best in telling the story of the life of Lincoln, but also claims that Holland began the controversy concerning Lincoln's religion. Barton, a clergyman, combed Lincoln's references to God and assembled an impressive array of documents revealing disputes as to what kind of Christian Lincoln was. To wrap things up he compiled statements on religion and used them to create "The Creed of Abraham Lincoln in His Own Words." It is an impressive document but only in format does it resemble Creeds professed by Christians.[12]

William Wolf's *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (1959) also brings together a range of comments on the nature of Lincoln's Christianity. One senses that he would be pleased to affirm that Lincoln was an orthodox Christian, but he settles for a comment by David Mearns, who called him a "Christian without a Creed." Wolf chose to call him "a Biblical Christian," or more precisely, "a 'Biblical prophet' who saw himself as 'an instrument of God' and his country as God's 'almost chosen people' called to world responsibility."[13]

In *Lincoln the President: Last Full Measure* (1955), J. G. Randall and Richard N. Current wrote: "Surely among successful American politicians, Lincoln is unique in the way he breathed the spirit of Christ while disregarding the letter of Christian doctrine. . . . Whatever the source of Lincoln's religious feeling, it became a vibrant force in his thought and action as President."[14]

Wayne C. Temple, a student of Randall decades ago, traces Lincoln's connections with religion in its many forms—from his ancestry in England, through his boyhood and New Salem years, continuing through his years as a lawyer, politician and president. As to Lincoln's beliefs, Temple concludes in *Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet*, that "Abraham Lincoln was indeed a most religious man and expressed his reverence for God in an unadulterated manner and very openly."[15]

Ronald C. White, Jr.'s *A Lincoln: A Biography,* includes many references to Lincoln's use of Biblical passages in his speeches and writings, leaving no doubt that religion played a major part in his life. Others sensed his mature Bible-based beliefs, as is reflected in the remark by Frederick Douglass after his Second Inaugural Address: "Mr. Lincoln, that was a sacred effort."[16] In *The Eloquent President,* White, a former seminary professor and dean, cites a testament by Reinhold Niebuhr, a renowned theologian: "Lincoln's religious convictions were superior in depth and purity to those held by the religious as well as by political leaders of his day."[17]

Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power, by Richard Carwardine is a provocative analysis and interpretation of Lincoln's "movement toward the evangelical mainstream." Carwardine contends, however, that his "hesitance over equating the Union cause with God's

will or with Christian holiness set him apart from it." Mainstream preachers in many denominations pressed him insistently but without success to abandon that hesitancy. Yet, one of them, a Lincoln admirer, remarked, "if Mr. Lincoln was not a Christian he was acting like one," The author, a professor at Oxford University, notes that Lincoln spoke in orthodox language, and more significant, as he was attempting to discern God's plan for him "he began to use the possessive pronoun—"responsibility to my God," "promise to my maker"—in ways that suggested a belief in a more personal God." As is true of both of White's books, this is a rich, readable, well-balanced resource for anyone yearning to understand Lincoln's purpose and power.[18]

Allen Guelzo's *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (1999) is a sweeping critique of the evolution of Lincoln's religious convictions. Noting Lincoln's peculiar following among Christian preachers, even after his death, he finds it curious "that none of the preachers and devout layfolk who wanted so badly to Christianize Lincoln… ever penetrated to the real heart of Lincoln's personal anguish, the deep sense of helplessness before a distant and implacable Judge… if only the Judge had given him the grace to do the loving."[19]

In a C-Span interview on April 16, 2000, Guelzo remarked that many Christian believers were disappointed that in his book he did not call Lincoln a Christian. "Well the truth of the matter is that he was not… in fact, he really had only the most minimal religious profile in his own day." After his death there was no shortage of people who wanted to claim Lincoln as being one of their own. [20]

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Are there any convincing conclusions to be drawn about Lincoln's Christianity? To members of many denominations—Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, for example--being a Christian in a meaningful sense involves, along with commitments to the teachings of the Bible and prayer, profession of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, belief in the Trinity, and the central place in their lives of Baptism and Holy Communion. In that sense, Lincoln was not a Christian.

In the end, Mrs. Lincoln had it right: "Mr. Lincoln had no hope and no faith in the usual acceptation of those words. He never joined a Church; but still, as I believe, he was a religious man by nature. He first seemed to think about the subject when our boy Willie died, and then more than ever about the time he went to Gettysburg; but it was a kind of poetry in his nature, and he was never a technical Christian."[21]

(Endnotes)

1 Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998)), 348.

2 Don E. and Virginia Fehrenbacher, *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), liii, 297. Another reason to suspect the authenticity of Mrs. Lincoln's recollection is found in her letter to Francis Bicknell Carpenter dated November 15, 1865. Here she refers to some of the events included in the questionable quotation, but there is no mention of "the footsteps of the Savior" and wanting to go to Jerusalem. It does, though, include this line: "Every word, then uttered, is deeply engraven upon my poor broken heart." Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 285. There is no mention of these words in *A. Lincoln: His Last 24 Hours*, by W. Emerson Reck (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), and *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, by Jim Bishop (New York: Grammercy Books: 1955, 1983).

3 Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 367.

4 See below for implicit refutations by distinguished scholars, especially, Ronald C. White, Jr., Richard Carwardine, and Allen C. Guelzo.

5 The Fehrenbachers call this another "quotation about whose authority there is more than average doubt." 374.

6 Had he grasped the substance of Carwardine's career and award-winning publications, he would have looked for a different example.

7 The list includes *The Faith of Barack Obama*, *The Faith of George W. Bush*, *The Faith of American Soldiers*, and *The Faith of Sarah Palin* (coauthored); also books on Booker T. Washington, George Washington, Pope Benedict XVI, Mormons, Winston Churchill, and Paul Harvey (coauthored), and Oprah Winfrey.

8 The index cites Lincoln's use of 65 Biblical passages, 46 of them in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Joseph R. Fornieri, in *Abraham Lincoln's Political Faith* (Northern Illinois Press, 2003), cites about the same number, a dozen of them from the Old Testament. 129-130.

9 (Yardley, PA: Cumberland House, 2003). All the books identified as essential are accompanied by reviews of about 700 words.

10 For a good summary of "Lincoln and Religion among Historians," see Lucas E. Morel, *Lincoln's Sacred Effort* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 13-21.

11 (Springfield, MA: Gordon Bull)), 61, 469. This book may be accessed online at: http://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/oca/Books200707/lifeofabrahamlin00holl/lifeofabrahamlin00holl.pdf

12 (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000; original edition 1955), 300.

13 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), 193-94.

14 (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1955, 1983), 376.

15 (Mahomet, Illinois: Mayhaven Publishing, 1995), 428.

16 (New York: Random House, 2009), 667.

17 (New York: Random House, 2005), 165.

18 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 227-228.

19 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 446.

20 Brian Lamb and Susan Swain, *Abraham Lincoln: Great American Historians on our Sixteenth President* (Public Affairs, 2008), 189.

21 Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., *Herndon's Lincoln* (2006), 269.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Myron Marty

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An Interview with Frank Williams regarding 1864

Part One

SG: What was the mood of the nation as 1864 began?

FW: Weary of war but the troops - North and South - remained committed. The North hoped for victory with peace when President Lincoln appointed Ulysses S. Grant as general in chief at the beginning of 1864. With General William Tecumseh Sherman set to reach Atlanta and Grant to take Richmond and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, the country expected much. It was not to be. Despite *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley's prediction of the end of war by July 4, 1864, the Union armies were bogged down in front of Atlanta and Richmond. Grant's overland campaign in the spring led to 90,000 casualties. The number between May 5 to July 4 was three-fifths of the total in the last three years.

On July 12, the *New York World*, a Democratic paper, called the stalemate, *"a national humiliation."*

Lincoln, usually politically astute, called for 500,000 more volunteers on July 18. Those states not meeting their quota with volunteers would be required to draft the difference. The North was distressed at this.

SG: Describe the relationship between Cabinet members and the President at the time.

FW: I think most of the president-cabinet activity in 1864 had to do with the national election that November as well as internecine warfare with Congress over respective powers of the executive and legislative branches as it played out over Reconstruction policy.

John C. Frémont, the 1856 Republican candidate, and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase were eager to run. Lincoln, who still controlled the party machinery, dominated the convention in Baltimore when it met in June. Chase's chances had diminished greatly after his involvement with the "Pomeroy Circular" in which radical Republicans criticized the president unmercifully. Lincoln received all the votes at the convention but for 22 from Missouri. These supported Montgomery Blair–the conservative Postmaster General from Missouri and Maryland - who was despised by the radical Republicans. Another Missourian, Attorney General Edward Bates, wrote in his diary that the Missouri delegates were all instructed to vote for Mr. Lincoln, " ... but many of them hated to do it . ."

When Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy published his "strictly private" circular in February 1864 praising Chase and criticizing Lincoln, it started the first major change in the cabinet since Simon Cameron was replaced by Edwin M. Stanton as Secretary of War in 1862. Chase's involvement with Pomeroy's circular placed him in the role of double crossing the president he served. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles viewed Stanton and Secretary of State William H. Seward conferring and enjoying Chase's humiliation at being caught doing this. In typical Lincoln style, he kept Chase at Treasury, despite their strained relationship, to avoid criticism that would ensue if he fired him. The President would wait for another Chase mishap before accepting prior proffered resignations from his treasury secretary who could not overcome the presidential bug. Lincoln would tell colleagues that he still admired Chase's skills as treasury secretary and considered him for Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court when Lincoln's nemesis, the aging Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, was gone. Lincoln did not have to wait long as Chase refused to honor the President's

Dead of Ewell's Corps, Spotsylvania, May 1864/ LC-DIG-ppmsca-32934

wishes over the appointment of the assistant treasurer in New York City. Lincoln then accepted Chase's resignation. On October 12, Taney died and President Lincoln appointed Chase as his successor. Two of his rivals were Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and former Postmaster General Montgomery Blair who was looking for work since his removal from the cabinet to end the threat of Frémont's independent bid for the presidency. Former Attorney General Edward Bates, who resigned on November 24, was also interested in the post.

On July 1, Lincoln nominated Senator William P. Fessenden, head of the Senate Committee on Finance, to be his next Secretary of the Treasury. Lincoln did not consult Fessenden before the nomination and his quick senate confirmation. Fessenden penned a letter of declination asking the President to withdraw his name. Lincoln refused and persuaded him to serve.

While this was playing out, a radical movement by Senator Benjamin Wade and Representative Henry Winter Davis threatened Lincoln's relationships with the radicals in Congress. The Wade-Davis bill would have altered a previous act of Congress passed on July 17, 1862, allowing the president to, "at any time by proclamation, extend pardon and amnesty to persons participating in the rebellion... as he may deem expedient for the public welfare." Davis, who never forgave Lincoln for not giving him a cabinet post, became an outspoken critic of the President and insisted the 1862 act be revised. Lincoln, in his annual message to Congress on December 8, 1863, appended a proclamation offering amnesty to almost all in the Confederacy as well as his 10 percent plan for reestablishing state governments. While not exceeding his presidential powers, Lincoln's actions, nonetheless, provoked wide condemnation by the radicals. The Wade-Davis bill would repudiate Lincoln's reconstruction plan even though it was underway in Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee. On July 2, it passed and was sent to the President. Lincoln believed that Congress had overstepped its bounds as, "Congress has no constitutional power over slavery in the States." Pocketing the bill after Congress adjourned was the death knell for the legislation. While Lincoln wrote a veto message, "... being fully satisfied with the system for restoration contained in the Bill," he did not want to be "inflexibly committed to any single plan ..." Radicals were not appeased. Davis and Wade sought ways to unseat Lincoln as the Republican nominee for president, in part, by issuing what became known as the Wade-Davis Manifesto alleging the President had usurped Congress's prerogatives. Secretary Welles recognized it for what it was – an effort to "pull down the President." Stanton remained on good terms with both Wade and Davis, giving the impression that he agreed with them. While Stanton continued to support the president's more generous plan of reconstruction, a year after Lincoln's assassination, Stanton made clear that he believed Reconstruction belonged to Congress.

Peace became an overriding issue during the summer and abortive peace missions and efforts caused great consternation for Lincoln, his cabinet and the Northern and Southern public. The pressure on the President to remove emancipation as a pre-condition for peace caused him to draft a letter on August 17 to a Wisconsin newspaper editor stating, "To me, it seems plain that saying re-union and abandonment of slavery would be considered, if offered, is not saying that nothing *else* or *less* would be considered," concluding, "If Jefferson Davis wishes ... to know what I would do if he were to offer peace and re-union, saying nothing about slavery, let him try me." Yet, Lincoln, in the same letter and in an interview with two Wisconsin Republicans, forcefully explained why abandonment of slavery was a precondition for peace. "No human power can subdue this rebellion without using the Emancipation lever as I have done..." He pointed out that 100,000 black soldiers and sailors were fighting for the Union. "If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive -- even the promise of freedom. And, the promise being made, must be kept." Lincoln at once realized the contradiction of these comments with his "Let Jefferson Davis try me" challenge. Lincoln never sent the letter. He, his cabinet, and almost everyone else now thought he would be defeated for re-election. He told a visitor, "I am going to be beaten and unless some great change takes place, *badly* beaten." On August 23, he received a letter from *New York Times* owner and national Republican Party chairman, Henry Raymond, who wrote, "The tide is setting strongly against us" because of the lack of military success and requiring the end of slavery as a condition for peace. Lincoln then wrote his "blind memorandum" and asked all of his cabinet members to endorse it sight unseen by signing the back of the sealed envelope. "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President – elect, as to save the Union between election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards."

All of the cabinet members worked hard for Lincoln's re-election, including Chase who gave a number of speeches in support of Lincoln and the administration –after all, an appointment as Chief Justice was in the offing. On November 11, after his victory at the polls (2,200,000 for him and 1,800,000 for George B. McClellan), Lincoln opened the envelope and asked the cabinet if

they remembered signing, without knowing the contents. Lincoln explained how he would approach President-elect McClellan indicating that he (McClellan) had more support from the people than he. So, let us try and save the country by you raising as many troops as you can for military victory and I will devote all of my energies to ending the war. Secretary Seward said, "And the General would answer you '*Yes, Yes*' & so on forever and would have done nothing at all."

When Bates resigned in November, Lincoln thought of appointing Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt but Holt demurred and suggested fellow Kentuckian, fifty-two year old James Speed for the post. Speed, while superbly qualified, was also the brother of Lincoln's very close friend from Springfield, Illinois days, Joshua Speed.

As 1864 closed, things looked better. Sherman had captured Savannah after his March to the Sea and General George Thomas had virtually annihilated General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee outside Nashville. The Confederacy had been contracted on every front. The President, his cabinet and Northerners entered 1865 with renewed hope.

SG: What was the Red River Campaign?

FW: This 1864 campaign along the Red River, in Louisiana, was the last large river assault in the war by Union military leaders. They believed, as did President Lincoln who urged this operation, that pressing up the Red River would give control of the area to the Federals and act as a gateway into Texas. There were also economic and political objectives too. Opening a new supply of cotton would assist the Northern textile mills as their supply was greatly diminished by the war. Louis Napoleon III had violated the non-incursion policy of the Monroe Doctrine by invading and occupying Mexico, as well as installing Austrian Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian as emperor there. The Union was concerned that Napoleon not attempt any incursion into the trans-Mississippi states.

Admiral David Dixon Porter would move up the Red River as well as provide transport for Union ground forces commanded by General Nathaniel P. Banks. At the same time, General Frederick Steele's army would move southwest from Little Rock, Arkansas, to form a pincer movement at Shreveport. Despite the combined forces of Porter and Banks, the operation turned into a fiasco.

Beginning on March 12, Porter's command moved ahead of the slower army transports with 10,000 troops under Brigadier General A. J. Smith and ran into trouble eight miles below Fort DeRussy with obstacles preventing the approach. Porter was to use an alternate route to get behind the fort, and Smith would march his men overland. On March 15, the small gunboat force under Lieutenant Seth Ledyard Phelps fired at the fort, which promptly surrendered. This was soon followed by the surrender of Alexandria after the arrival of gunboats and a small detachment of marines and sailors. It was two weeks later when Banks and his force reached Alexandria. Now defeat followed.

While Porter pushed toward Alexandria, Banks marched his troops on the west side of the river – about twenty miles away from any fire support that could have been given him by the navy gunboats. On April 8, the wily Confederate Major General Richard Taylor (son of the former President Zachary Taylor) trapped Banks at Mansfield, Louisiana – also called Sabine Crossroads. Trounced, Banks retreated south to Pleasant Hill. In conference with his other commanders, Banks decided to pull his troops back to New Orleans. This forced Porter to descend the river. The Union navy's long trip was encumbered by Confederate artillery and sniper fire all along the river. To add to their misery, the river level fell. Porter asked for help from the army and Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Bailey, with 3,000 sailors and soldiers, made dams below the rapids at Alexandria so that Porter's gunboats could run the rapids. This ignominiously ended the campaign.

SG: The story of the 1864 actions by US Colonel Kit Carson and his treatment of the Navajos isn't always covered. Please comment.

FW: Christopher Houston ("Kit") Carson had already made a name for himself by the beginning of the Civil War. In 1842, Carson met John C. Frémont and served as a guide and scout for Frémont's western expeditions. Frémont lavished praise on the young Carson as the archetypical American frontiersman. During the war with Mexico, Carson guided General Stephen Kearny's expedition from New Mexico Territory to California where he helped Kearny successfully prevail over a challenge to United States authority in the region.

Prior to the Civil War, Carson served as Indian agent for New Mexico Territory and when the war broke out, he resigned his commission as Indian agent to organize the 1st New Mexico Volunteer Infantry. He was appointed Lieutenant Colonel and his unit saw action at the Battle of Val Verde, New Mexico, and also at Glorieta Pass in 1862, thus preventing the Confederate occupation of New Mexico Territory.

Most of his efforts during the Civil War, however, were dealing with Indians in the territory, including the Kiowas and Mescaleros. But most of his conflicts were with the Navajo. Notwithstanding his reputation as a mediator and moderate when he served as Indian agent before the war, his actions against the Navajo in New Mexico Territory were draconian. When the Navajo tribe refused to enter government reservations in 1863, Carson waged an economic war against them. This included pillaging and

burning villages and slaughtering livestock. Without the resources necessary to survive, the Navajo fell prey to the other tribes in the region including Utes, Puebloes, and Hopis. Finally, in 1864, the majority of Navajo surrendered to Carson who forced 8,000 of them, including women and children, to march 300 miles from present-day Arizona to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. This forced march became known as "the long walk."

While brevetted Brigadier General in 1865 for his successful efforts against the Navajo, he was reduced in rank when his unit was disbanded. In 1867, he was mustered out and resumed ranching, moving his family to Colorado where he died on May 23, 1868.

Top: Battle of the Wilderness--Desperate fight on the Orange C.H. Plank Road, near Todd's Tavern, May 6th, 1864/ LC-USZC4-1748

Bottom Left: Battle of Spottsylvania [sic]/ LC-USZC4-1626

Bottom right: Grant's Great Campaign--Stevens's Battery at Cold Harbor LC-DIG-ppmsca-21334

SG: What was the reaction in the Northern press over Fort Pillow and the treatment of African Americans by Nathan Bedford Forrest?

FW: With outrage and a cry for vengeance and retaliation. Confederates attacked Fort Pillow on April 12, 1864. Constructed by Confederate General Gideon Pillow in 1861, it overlooked the Mississippi River 40 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee.

The Confederates seized the small town south of the fort, the ravine north of it, and surrounded the garrison on three sides. The fort consisted only of a dirt parapet approximately six to eight feet high and forming a 125-foot semicircle. Demanding the garrison's surrender in late afternoon, General Forrest told the Federals that they would be treated as prisoners of war, but if they refused, they would not be shown any mercy. When the Union troops refused to surrender, General Nathan Bedford Forrest attacked and overwhelmed the Union forces. The defending troops were thrown into confusion, with some panicking and some jumping into the Mississippi River hoping to swim to the Union gunboat *New Era*. Many tried to surrender after laying down their weapons, but Confederate troops did not acknowledge surrender and poured fire into the garrison. Many Union soldiers were killed after they had thrown down their weapons, with African-American soldiers becoming the primary target of the Confederates. There were cries from the Confederates of "No quarter" and "Kill the damned niggers." There were many accounts told of black soldiers gunned down or bayoneted. The Confederate government refused to recognize the United States Colored Troops and the individual Confederate soldier felt threatened by the sight of former slaves wearing Union blue.

The fort had been held by 580 Union soldiers with 285 from the 13th Tennessee Cavalry and 292 African-American soldiers who were part of the 6th U.S. Heavy Artillery and 6th U.S. Colored Light Artillery.

When Forrest finally gained control, he ordered his troops to cease firing but close to 50% of the Federal troops had perished with the death rate among black troops significantly higher than for white soldiers—64% compared with 31%.

In addition to the high list of casualties, stories of atrocities quickly spread throughout the North by the press. These included such acts as live burials, killing of women and children who were in the town south of the fort, and wounded soldiers set on fire.

President Lincoln, in a public speech shortly after the massacre, threatened retaliation if the allegations proved to be true. In fact, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War and Congress were directed to investigate the Fort Pillow massacre. After interviewing many witnesses, the committee published its report in May charging the Confederates with committing the atrocities.

Despite the threat of retaliation and vengeance and discussing various options in cabinet meetings, nothing came of such threats. Abraham Lincoln and his administration

realized that Richmond authorities would never recognize U.S. colored soldiers as legitimate and to avenge Fort Pillow would result in a cycle of reprisals despite General Order 233 which President Lincoln had issued a year earlier threatening reprisal on Confederate prisoners of war for any mistreatment of black troops by the Confederate military.

Despite some exaggeration among the accounts of live burials and the killing of women and children, many believed that, indeed, African-Americans were needlessly butchered. While there was no official surrender of the garrison, it is clear that many soldiers who tried to surrender were killed after they had thrown down their weapons. While there is no evidence that Forrest ordered the massacre, he understood what the results would be of such an attack. It is understood in the military that a "commander is responsible for what his unit does or fails to do." Under this strict liability standard, Forrest was responsible. As it turned out, African-American soldiers used Fort Pillow as a rallying cry, shouting "Fort Pillow" as they went into battle. Instead of intimidating black soldiers, as the Confederates intended, the massacre at Fort Pillow had the opposite result.

SG: Please discuss the May and June battles at Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor.

FW: The Overland campaign against Richmond between May and June 1864 was the most sustained and ferocious fighting during the entire Civil War. Between the fighting in the Wilderness on May 5 and 6 through Spotsylvania, the North Anna, Bethesda Church, Cold Harbor and the beginning of the siege of Petersburg in mid-June, the Army of Northern Virginia sustained about 33,500 casualties, with losses in the Army of the Potomac approaching 55,000.

While both North and South were aghast at this butcher's bill, Lee's ability to fight a war of maneuver ended and it forced his Army of Northern Virginia into defensive lines around Richmond and Petersburg. Under siege, they would collapse in the spring of 1865.

Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant was appointed in March 1864, and he planned many offenses for the spring of that year, including the advance of General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac against Richmond and Lee's army and William T. Sherman's offensive in North Georgia. General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James was to advance against Richmond from the south, and General Franz Sigel's troops in western Virginia were to clear the Shenandoah Valley, with General Nathaniel Banks conducting an offensive against Mobile. Grant would accompany Meade and the Army of the Potomac.

At the beginning of the campaign, Union forces approximated 118,000, with Grant receiving 64,000 additional troops during the course of the fighting. Offsetting this, however, was the loss of 20,000 men whose enlistments would expire. Lee faced the attacks with fewer resources when the Overland campaign began. His Army of Northern Virginia numbered about 66,000, and he would receive some 30,000 reinforcements during the fighting.

At the beginning of May, Grant ordered the Army of the Potomac to leave camp and move toward the Rapidan River, planning to cross the river to the east of Lee's army and move through the tangled region west of Fredericksburg known as the Wilderness. Before the Confederates could react, Grant hoped to face Lee in open country beyond the Wilderness where his superior numbers could make a difference against the Confederates. After crossing on May 4, leading elements of the Union army encamped in the Wilderness and waited for their supplies. On May 5, there was confused fighting on the Orange Turnpike and the Plank Road. The Confederates were able to hold their lines until darkness. On the next day, Grant had General Winfield Scott Hancock renew his attack on the Confederate right while General Ambrose Burnside's IX Corps was sent into the gap between Hill and Ewell. Hill's troops were driven back but Burnside was slow and General James Longstreet's Corps arrived at a critical moment to stop the Union advance. Longstreet counterattacked, driving Hancock's Corps some distance. A larger assault was ordered against Hancock but was repulsed while Ewell mounted an attack on the Union right. The Union forces lost about 17,500 men with Confederate casualties at about 11,125.

Lee had stopped Grant from moving through the Wilderness. After similar defeats in previous campaigns, the Federals would retreat back across the Rapidan. But Grant was willful in pressing his outnumbered enemy. During the Wilderness battle, General Grant had telegraphed President Lincoln that "Whatever happens, there will be no turning back." To the cheers of his Union troops, Grant, on May 7, moved around Lee's right toward Spotsylvania court house. Longstreet, who had been wounded, was succeeded by General Richard Anderson. His I Corps was able to reach Spotsylvania in time to reinforce a small Confederate force to prevent the Union troops from occupying the crossroads. Fighting took place here for about two weeks with Confederates establishing strong defensive positions which Grant's men repeatedly assaulted unsuccessfully. On May 10, Grant attacked the Confederate left but was repulsed. Colonel Emory Upton led an attack on the "Ewell Shoe" salient in the center of Lee's lines. Even though Upton's troops penetrated the Confederate lines, he was eventually forced to withdraw.

Unfortunately, on May 12, General Hancock launched a large assault with some 20,000 men

Battle of Mobile Bay/LC-USZC4-781

against the "Ewell Shoe." While the Union troops broke through the rebel lines with several thousand men captured as prisoners of war from Ewell's Corps and a threat to break Lee's entire line, Lee established a new defense at the base of the salient and further assaults by Burnside and Horatio Wright's Corps were repulsed. The salient turned into hand-to-hand fighting and became known as the "Bloody Angle." It was among the worst of the entire war. While there were skirmishes that followed, the worst of the fighting was over with Lee losing almost 12,500 at Spotsylvania. Among the dead was J.E.B. Stuart who was mortally wounded on May 11 at Yellow Tavern. Grant's losses were much higher.

Once again, Grant moved along Lee's right, forcing the Confederates to abandon their defensive positions. Combat occurred along the North Anna River from May 20 to 26. Grant then crossed the Pamunkey River to Totopotomoy Creek. General Philip Sheridan's cavalry fought heavy skirmishes in this area and he repulsed a Confederate attack at Bethesda Church. Grant received reinforcements from the XVIII and a portion of X Corps.

General Sheridan was ordered by Grant to occupy the crossroads at Cold Harbor on May 31. Lee attempted to recapture the strategic position on June 1 but was repulsed. Attacks against Lee's lines by Wright's VI Corps and William Smith's XVIII Corps were repulsed and Grant then waited for the arrival of Hancock's II Corps. Heat and fatigue slowed Hancock's troops and a planned attack for June 2 was postponed, giving Lee a chance to create a strong line of defense. On June 3, Grant's II, VI, and XVIII Corps attacked the rebel lines and were repulsed with heavy losses. Union losses were about 7,000 and Confederates suffered only 1,500.

Remaining in the vicinity of Cold Harbor until mid-June, Grant executed what some consider a brilliant tactical maneuver by shifting his operations south of the James River with Petersburg the objective. Possession of this rail juncture would force the Confederates to flee the capital of Richmond. Capture of Petersburg was thwarted by lack of communication and the lack of initiative by subordinates to enter Petersburg while there were few defenders and before Lee had a chance to reinforce. In any event, by the end of June, Petersburg was under siege and Lee's army had been forced into defensive lines that would become longer and thinner over the next 10 months. The Overland campaign, which produced over 90,000 Union and Confederate casualties, was over.

SG: Why was the Battle of Mobile Bay significant?

FW: The Battle of Mobile Bay in the summer of 1864 was significant in several respects. First, politically, this was an important Union triumph boosting Northern morale

and assisting Lincoln's chances for re-election that November. Second, while the surrender of the city of Mobile would not occur until sometime after Admiral Farragut's victory in Mobile Bay with the capture of Forts Morgan, Gaines, and Powell, it prevented the city of Mobile and its bay from being used by blockade runners. By this time in the war, there were only two major ports still unoccupied by the Union—Mobile Bay, Alabama, and Wilmington, North Carolina. Mobile was also the leading port on the Gulf of Mexico, especially after New Orleans fell in April 1862.

By the summer of 1864, Admiral David G. Farragut had assembled 17 vessels to break through Forts Gaines and Morgan at the entrance to Mobile Bay. The forts were defended by a smaller Confederate squadron commanded by Admiral Franklin Buchanan. With a four to one advantage in fire power, on August 3, Union General Gordon Granger, with 1,500 troops, landed on the west side of Dauphin Island which consisted of Fort Gaines on the eastern side. The Confederate garrison retreated in an effort to obtain reinforcements from Mobile to Fort Gaines. While the fort was distracted, Admiral Farragut prepared to run his fleet through the entrance of Mobile Bay. With four ironclad monitors in the lead to protect his wooden-hulled frigates from the 180 mines placed in the bay by Confederates, Farragut's fleet began its entry early on August 5.

Fort Morgan's howitzers and cannon opened up on the fleet. The lead *USS Tecumseh* hit a mine and sank. The Union fleet stalled, only to be exhorted by Farragut's, "Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead." The Union fleet passed both Forts Gaines and Morgan to a location in the bay out of range of the guns.

Admiral Buchanan, in the ironclad *Tennessee,* left Fort Morgan to engage the Union. Escorted by three smaller gunboats that were soon made ineffective by the rifle

Great naval victory in Mobile Bay, Aug. 5th 1864/LC-DIG-ds-04025

cannon from the Union frigates, Buchanan attacked the enemy alone. Fire damaged the *Tennessee's* steering and Buchanan was forced to disengage and go north of Fort Gaines' guns where he surrendered.

Fort Powell's defenders abandoned the fortification on the night of August 6 after it came under intense fire. From August 6 to 8, Fort Gaines was under siege from both land and sea with about 3,000 Federal infantry and artillery entrenched west of the fort. Devastating cannonade from Farragut's monitors, at point blank range, pounded the fort. The armor from Fort Gaines bounced off the thick armor of the monitors. When offered a flag of truce by Farragut on August 7, Colonel Anderson, in command of Fort Gaines, surrendered on August 8.

On August 9, General Granger's infantry, with newly arrived reinforcements from New Orleans, landed near Fort Morgan and moved towards the fort, making it to within a few hundred yards. Fort Morgan, having withstood a two-week siege from land batteries and naval gunfire, attempted to resist, but Union gunboats kept up firing and Union troops maintained a steady fire from artillery and sharpshooters. By August 21, 16 mortars, 25 cannon, and the entire Union fleet were bombarding Fort Morgan. General Richard L. Paige, commander of the fort, ordered his powder bunker destroyed, believing that a direct hit would blow up the fort. On August 23, Paige surrendered Fort Morgan.

Farragut's victory can be explained, in part, by the Confederacy's weak coastal defenses around Mobile. Proposed attacks against Mobile were made months earlier by Admiral Farragut and General Grant to no avail, as Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells and President Lincoln thought that the Red River campaign and the re-capture of Fort Sumter, with the surrender of Charleston, was more important. Both efforts ended in Union disaster.

Union Victory in Mobile Bay ended the blockade running in and out of Mobile. The city of Mobile would remain in Confederate hands until April 1865.

(Part Two of this article will appear in the summer issue of Lincoln Lore.)

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Frank Williams recently retired as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. He co-founded The Lincoln Forum and is author of *Lincoln As Hero* and *Judging Lincoln.* He co-edited (with Michael Burkhimer) *The Mary Lincoln Enigma.*