



Lincoln Lore

March, 1986

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Number 1765

STEPHEN DOUGLAS AND THE UNION (Continued)

But the plan for a commercial union after secession may help to tell the reader what it was. All nationalism has some specific social content. Love of the nation seems never to be love of the whole nation, pimps, prostitutes, criminals, and all, though one suspects every nation contains such creatures. Love of country seems more to be a love of a national ideal, and when the historian begins to fill in the specifics of Douglas' national ideal, then he begins to see that both Lincoln and Douglas loved the Union, all right, but they loved different Unions.

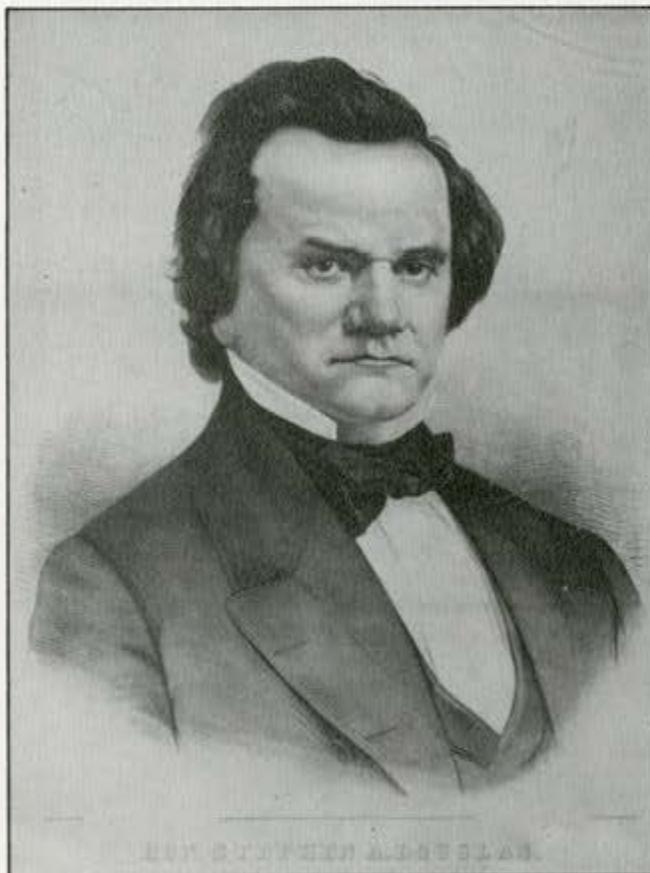
Douglas' admirers and apologists among twentieth-century historians have insisted otherwise. They have stressed the similarities rather than the differences between Douglas and Lincoln. These historians tend to argue that Douglas and Lincoln were a lot more alike in their views than they seemed in their own day. Even Robert Johannsen, Douglas' most recent, most able, and most judicious biographer, supplies an example of this near the end of his distinguished *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973): "His [Douglas'] relations with the Republican President, with whom he had more in common than many thought, would . . . be better than they had been with Buchanan, a member of his own party." Damon Wells provides a rather more careless example: ". . . as soon as the abrasion of debate began to force a clarification and definition of . . . principles, and as the focus of the contest later turned from the niceties of principles *per se* to a study of their application, the chasm separating Lincoln and Douglas began to close. It became apparent that neither really wanted absolute equality in all areas of American life for the Negro, that both agreed to support the Fugitive Slave Law, and that neither man really wanted to admit any more slave states into the Union. Both regarded the Dred Scott decision as an obstacle to their peculiar solution to the problem of slavery in the territories."

Later Wells argued, "Ever since the 1858 campaign Lincoln and Douglas had been drawing closer together in their views on a wide variety of subjects, while the skies began to darken on the national horizon."

Was Douglas, in the light of the customs union plan, growing more like Lincoln or more like Winfield Scott (though Scott favored the Bell-Everett ticket in 1860)? Or was Douglas growing more like R. M. T. Hunter, an avowed secessionist who became Jefferson Davis' Secretary of State? Of course, Douglas was not much like Scott or Hunter. And he was not much like Lincoln either.

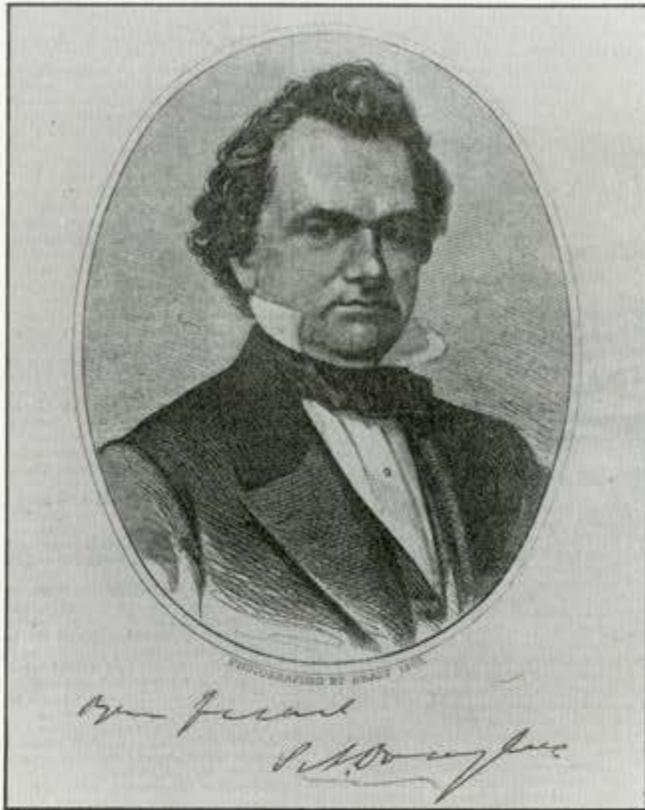
Beyond some superficial and vague similarities, Douglas was unlike Lincoln on most crucial policy issues. To see it otherwise is to turn American history into a past of bland hash pouring slowly down to today. But there was real spice in the differences between Lincoln and Douglas. Even after the fall of Fort Sumter, Douglas said, "So far as any of the partisan questions are concerned, I stand in equal, irreconcilable, and undying opposition both to the Republicans and Secessionists." Douglas thought of his differences from Lincoln as "irreconcilable" and "radical," and they always were. Just after Lincoln's election in 1860, Douglas had assured ninety-six New Orleans citizens, "No man in America regrets the election of Mr. Lincoln more than I do; none made more strenuous exertions to defeat him; none differ with him more radically and irreconcilably upon all the great principles involved in the contest."

Some historians who attempt to draw Lincoln and Douglas closer together tend to assume that Douglas' views — in particular, his policy of popular sovereignty — might have worked in practical effect to the same end that Lincoln's opposition to slavery's expansion did, only without the bloodshed of Civil War. Probably the most modern historian to hold such views is Damon Wells: ". . . slavery might well have been first contained and then eradicated without a nation having



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FIGURE 1. Hon. Stephen A. Douglas, a Currier & Ives lithograph issued for the campaign of 1860, was based on a photograph attributed to Allen and Horton of Aurora, Illinois. In "The Photographic Portraits of Stephen A. Douglas," Lloyd Ostendorf and R. Bruce Duncan date the photograph "before May 1, 1861," but the Currier & Ives lithograph allows more precision: the photograph was taken before 1861 and probably before November 1860.



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FIGURE 2. *Harper's Weekly* noted Douglas' death by running this woodcut portrait, identified by the illustrated newspaper as "the latest authentic one ever taken" and as "that by which he himself wished to be remembered by posterity." "It presents the man," the paper went on, "in his best mood, at the culminating point of his life, before the cares and illness of the last weary months had left their traces upon his noble face." In truth, the photograph on which this woodcut portrait was based was, according to Ostendorf and Duncan, the last taken by Mathew Brady but not the last photograph of Douglas by any means. Moreover, it was taken in 1859 and not in 1860. Douglas thought the Brady photograph "the best yet taken," and indeed it proved to be quite popular, being reproduced widely for the campaign of 1860 and after Douglas' death.

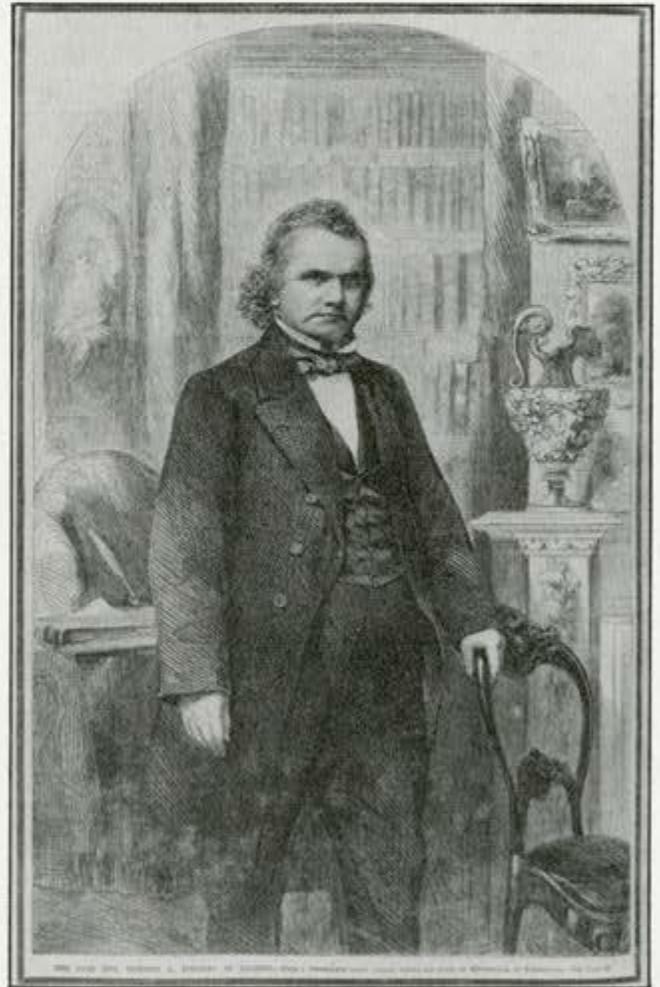
to pay the terrible price of civil war."

Stephen A. Douglas himself never said he would contain slavery and eventually see it eradicated. Nor, from anything he ever wrote or said in a speech, does it seem to be what he intended. Certainly that was not Douglas' policy goal in the late period of his life during which his views were allegedly growing closer to Lincoln's. In the sixth Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858, at Quincy, the Little Giant warned Lincoln against discussing "the morals of the people" of the slave states, for which "they are accountable to god and their posterity and not to us." If Douglas chided his rival, one simply ignored slavery as a moral question and allowed the people of the territories themselves to decide whether to adopt slavery, America could preserve the peace and "this republic can exist forever divided into free and slave States, as our fathers made it." Lincoln immediately recognized the significance of Douglas' statement and seized on it in his rebuttal, saying that Douglas had announced "here to-day, to be put on record, that his system *contemplates that it shall last forever.*"

I was almost as startled when I read this exchange in the debates as Lincoln was. At first, I thought that Douglas' statement about slavery's future was a slip of the tongue, born of a too neat reversal of Lincoln's controversial statement in the House Divided speech that the country could not "endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free.*"

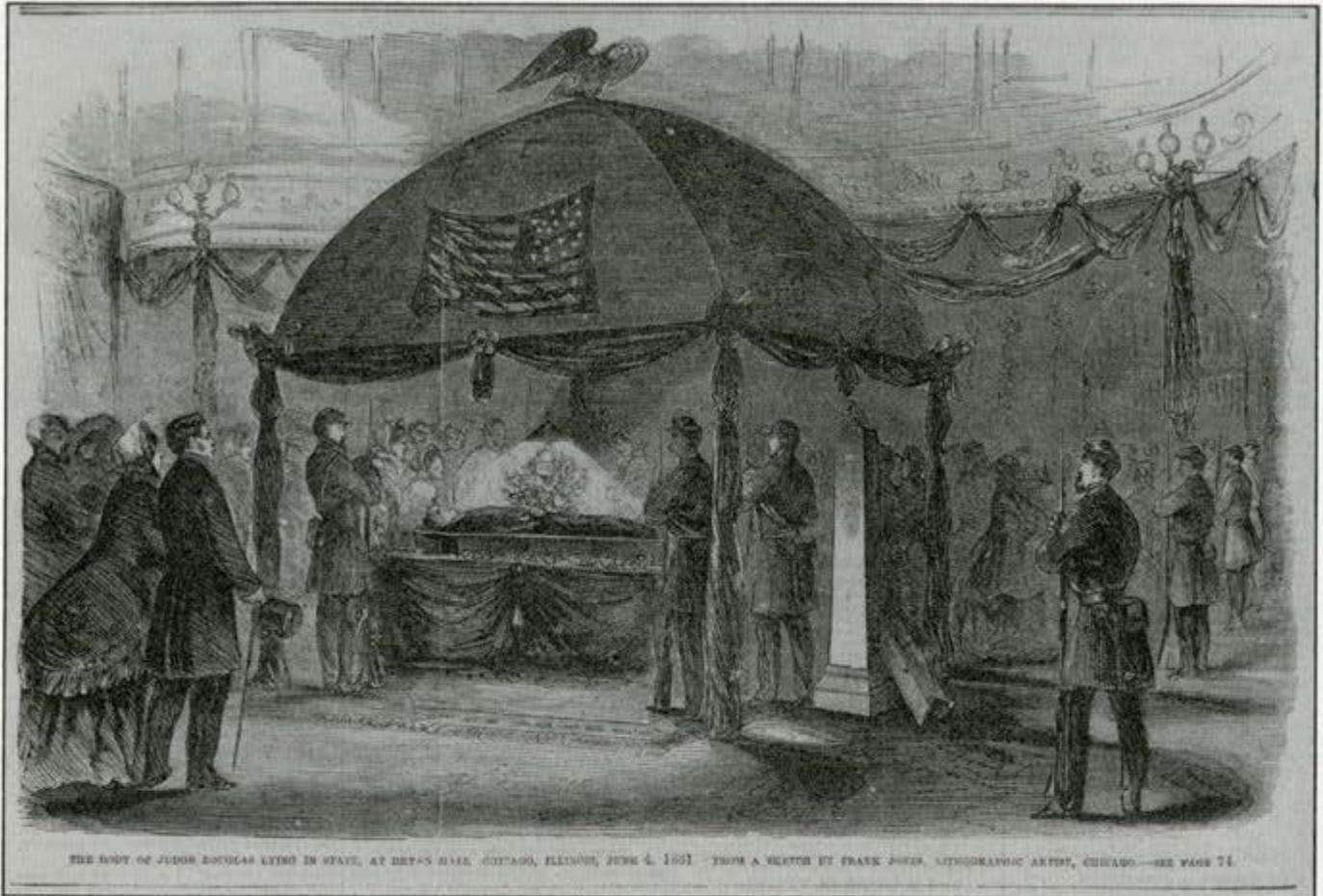
But Douglas' remark was no slip of the tongue. On February 10, 1859, he responded to a man's request for an autographed sentiment with these words: "I take pleasure in complying with your request to furnish you my autograph, with the sentiment that this Union can exist forever divided into free and slave states, as our fathers made it, if the Constitution be preserved inviolate." Autographed sentiments were a charming nineteenth-century custom whereby an autograph collector solicited for his collection something more than a mere signature. The answering statesman customarily supplied some catchphrase for the utterance of which he wanted to be remembered in history. It was an invitation to eloquence and abstract principle, and Douglas' answer in this instance could by no means be construed as an unfortunate phrase born of the heat of momentary debate or as a statement with a practical or temporary political purpose at odds with his systematic ideology. This was Douglas' ideology, as systematically stated as he was ever going to make it.

Douglas' reaction to secession, if viewed closely, also helps portray the specific social content of his nationalism. Just after South Carolina's secession, Douglas wrote his close Springfield political associate Charles Lanphier: "The



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FIGURE 3. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* devoted more space than their rivals at *Harper's* to coverage of the death of Stephen A. Douglas. *Leslie's* ran this full-page woodcut of Douglas, identifying it as based on a recent photograph by the Jesse Whitehurst Gallery of Washington. In fact, the woodcut appears to have been based on two portraits of Douglas taken in the Whitehurst studio. *Leslie's* artists took the body from one photograph, borrowed the head from another bust portrait, and fabricated the background entirely from their imaginations. The photographs were taken early in 1860.



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FIGURE 4. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* also published the only known picture of the funeral of Stephen A. Douglas. His body lay in state in Bryan Hall in Chicago prior to its burial on June 7, 1861.

prospects are gloomy, but I do not yet despair of the Union. *We can never acknowledge the right of a State to secede and cut us off from the Ocean and the world, without our consent.*" His nationalism, as even Damon Wells is willing to admit, was essentially materialistic and rather provincial. When he heard the news from South Carolina, Douglas did not speak of the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence or our republican mission for the rest of the world; he thought, rather, in terms of the economic interests of the states of the Old Northwest. To the national chairman of the Democratic party, a New Yorker, Douglas wrote in much the same vein as he had written to his Illinois friend: "I . . . can never recognize or acquiesce in the Doctrine that any State can secede & separate from us without our consent to be cut off from the Ocean & the world by such a doctrine."

In his stirring address in Springfield on April 25, 1861, Douglas admitted that in the past he may have gone too far toward placating the South, but he stated that even now he would not sanction any warfare upon the constitutional rights or domestic institutions of the Southern people. Along with most other Americans, Douglas failed to foresee the nature of the coming war: "The innocent must not suffer," he warned, "nor women and children be the victims."

If one wishes to speculate on Douglas' course had he survived to lead the Democratic party during the Civil War, the statements and positions described in this article provide suggestive clues. Unlike the Civil War Democratic party without his leadership, Douglas would probably not have protested Lincoln's suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus or the so-called arbitrary arrests which resulted from it. After all, Douglas had allegedly been among the first to warn about the dangers of secession in Maryland, and

arbitrary arrests were employed at first mainly to keep Maryland from seceding. Indeed, the Democratic party, still somewhat under Douglas' spell in 1861, offered little protest against the arrests of members of the Maryland legislature and some prominent Baltimore officials. Only later did the Democrats begin to complain bitterly about the writ of habeas corpus. Like the Civil War Democrats, Douglas would probably have been implacably opposed to the Emancipation Proclamation and other policies which helped to end slavery.

Moreover, Douglas would likely have captured the Democratic presidential nomination in 1864 and run against Lincoln. As Professor Johannsen suggests, Douglas' campaigning in 1860 in New England states he could never hope to carry was likely as much a campaign for 1864 nominating convention delegates as anything else. An abler politician by far than George B. McClellan, Douglas would have been a formidable foe.

He would still have campaigned for a platform radically and irreconcilably opposed to Lincoln's, for their political differences had always been fundamental. Lincoln and Douglas held different visions of America's future. Lincoln foresaw a slaveless republic and Douglas foresaw a country in which slavery would forever exist. Douglas, while he lived, supported a war against secession, but he said he would never support a war against Southern institutions. At times, he seemed to envision essentially a war for political control of the mouth of the Mississippi River. The Union would be a far different place now had Douglas' principles prevailed instead of Lincoln's. To those who say their principles were similar, one could best respond with Lincoln's own words at the Quincy debate: any such argument "is but a specious and fantastical arrangement of words by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse."

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1984-1985

by Ruth E. Cook

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[LINCOLN, ABRAHAM]

1984-33

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Paperback, 6 3/4" x 4 1/8", 51 (19) pp., illus., price, \$1.95 post-paid. Requests should be directed to Academic Industries, Inc., 237 Saw Mill Road, Box 509, West Haven, Conn. 06516. Juvenile literature.

LOUIS A. WARREN LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

1984-34

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Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 4 pp., illus. Number 1751, Lincoln's Deathbed, January, 1984; Number 1752, Wilkes Booth The Second, February, 1984; Number 1753, The Confederacy and the Election of 1864, March, 1984; Number 1754, Lincoln and the Blockade: An Overview, April, 1984; Number 1755, Lincoln and the Blockade: An Overview (Continued), May, 1984; Number 1756, Hostages in the Civil War, June, 1984.

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Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 4 pp., illus. Number 1757, Hostages in the Civil War (Continued), July, 1984; Number 1758, Grant's Image a Hundred Years Later, August, 1984; Number 1759, The Emancipation Proclamation as an Act of Foreign Policy: A Myth Dispelled, September, 1984; Number 1760, Some Contours of European Sympathy for Lincoln, October, 1984; Number 1761, Andrew C. McLaughlin on Lincoln and the Constitution, November, 1984; Number 1762, Index for 1984, December 1984.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1984-36

The Gettysburg Address Exhibit/Gettysburg National Military Park/[1984]

Folder, paper, 9" x 4", one sheet folded once with printing on all sides, illus.

1985

ELIOT, ALEXANDER

1985-1

Abraham Lincoln/An Illustrated Biography/Alexander Eliot/(Device)/Bison Books/[Copyright 1985 Bison Books Ltd.]

Book, cloth, 12 1/4" x 9 3/8", fr., 159 (65) pp., illus.

HATFIELD, MARK O.

1985-2

The Honorable Mark O. Hatfield./U.S. Senator from Oregon/The Oregon Connection of/Abraham Lincoln/Speech delivered at the Annual Banquet of the/Abraham Lincoln Association, February 12, 1984./Published by the Abraham

Lincoln Association, 1985./

Pamphlet, paper, 9" x 6", fr., 8 (1) pp., illus. Requests for information should be directed to the Abraham Lincoln Association, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois 62706.

HOLZER, HAROLD, GABOR S. BORITT AND MARK E. NEELY, JR.

1985-3

Changing/The Lincoln Image/By/Harold Holzer/Gabor S. Boritt/Mark E. Neely, Jr./Louis A. Warren/Lincoln Library and Museum/Fort Wayne, Indiana/1985/

Pamphlet, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 73 (13) pp., illus.

KLEMENT, FRANK L.

1985-4

Seven Who Witnessed/Lincoln's Gettysburg Address/By Frank L. Klement/Milwaukee, Wisconsin/(Portrait)/Bulletin of the 41st Annual Meeting/of/The Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin/held at Madison, Wisconsin/April 15, 1984/Historical Bulletin No. 40/1985/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10" x 7 1/2", 32 pp., illus., price, \$3.00. Send to the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, 2791 Lyman Lane, Madison, Wisconsin 53711.

[LINCOLN, ABRAHAM]

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The Emancipation Proclamation/(Photograph)/New York State Museum/Albany, N.Y./February 1-28-1985/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, paper, 8 3/8" x 5 1/2", (6) pp. Requests for information should be directed to the New York State Museum, Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12230.

LINCOLN CALENDAR

1985-6

(Portrait)/The/Lincoln/Calendar/1986/(Cover title)/[1985]

Pamphlet, paper, 8 1/2" x 11", (30) pp., illus., price, \$5.95 plus \$1.00 for handling. Every month carries an illustration related to Lincoln and has information on each day of the year concerning Lincoln's life. Send requests to Beidel Printing House, Inc., 63 West Burd Street, P.O. Box 152, Shippensburg, PA 17257.

LINCOLN COLLEGE

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Lincoln/Newsletter/(Device) Volume V, Number 3 Lincoln, Ill. Winter, 1985/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", (8) pp., illus.

LINCOLN IMAGE

1985-8

The/Lincoln/Image/Abraham Lincoln and the Popular Print/(Picture)/Indiana Library and Historical Department/Occasional Publications, Number 2/Indianapolis/February 1985/

Pamphlet, paper, 8 1/2" x 5 1/4", 19 (3) pp., illus. Send requests along with 42 cents in postage stamps to the Indiana Historical Bureau, Room 408, 140 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

MCPHERSON, JAMES M.

1985-9

How/Lincoln Won The War/With/Metaphors/James M. McPherson/Edwards Professor of American History/Princeton University/Louis A. Warren/Lincoln Library and Museum/Fort Wayne, Indiana/1985/

Pamphlet, paper, 9" x 6", 28 (5) pp., illus.

TEMPLE, WAYNE C.

1985-10

Lincoln and the Burner/at New Salem/By Wayne C. Temple/Reprinted from Summer Issue, 1964 Lincoln Herald/Revised 1985/

Pamphlet, paper, 10" x 7", 13 pp., illus. Copy autographed by author. Requests for copies should be directed to Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Str., Ct., Springfield, IL 62701.



Dr. Frank E. Vandiver to Present Ninth R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture

Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, president of Texas A&M University and famed historian of the Confederacy and of World War I, will present the ninth annual R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture in Fort Wayne on May 1, 1986, at 8:00 p.m. The title of his lecture will be "The Long Loom of Lincoln."

Although Dr. Vandiver is not the first Southerner to present the annual Lincoln lecture, he is the first historian to do so whose previous work dealt mainly with the Confederacy and with military history. The author or editor of twenty books to date, Dr. Vandiver has also written over a hundred articles and reviews.

Students of the Civil War perhaps know Dr. Vandiver best for *Ploughshares into Swords: Josiah Gorgas and Confederate Ordnance* (University of Texas Press, 1952); *Rebel Brass: The Confederate Command System* (Louisiana State University Press, 1956); *Mighty Stonewall* (McGraw-Hill, 1957), winner of the Carr P. Collins Prize of the Texas Institute of Letters; and *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (Harper's Magazine Press, 1970), winner of the Jefferson Davis Award of the Confederate Memorial Literary Society and of the Fletcher Pratt Award of the Civil War Round Table of New York.

In recent years Dr. Vandiver's interests have turned toward World War I. *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (Texas A&M University Press, 1977) was a finalist in the National Book Awards. He is at work on a biography of Douglas Haig and a history of the Western Front.

Before becoming president of Texas A&M in 1981, Dr. Vandiver had been president of North Texas State University and provost and vice president of Rice University. He holds a Ph. D. degree from Tulane University and an M. A. degree from the University of Texas.