

Lincoln Love

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Saddles and Soldiers

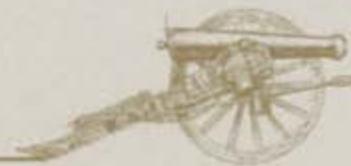


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Lincoln Lore

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Concluding a year that began with the acquisition of President Lincoln's inkwell, The Lincoln Museum recently added to its collections two Civil War-era artifacts that help to illustrate the story of "Abraham Lincoln and the American Experiment." In September, the Museum installed in the "Civil War" gallery an 1859 Grimsley artillery valise saddle, generously donated by George and Beverly Griffith of Ann Arbor, Michigan. In December, as part of the annual Victorian Holiday event, the Museum added to its "Lincoln Family Album" gallery a set of toy soldiers dating from 1865.

The Saddle

Armies in Lincoln's era were propelled primarily by muscle power. Although railroads and steamboats were used behind the lines to carry supplies to the front, for day-to-day movement Civil War armies depended upon draft animals to pull or carry everything that could not walk for itself. The Army of the Potomac, for example, had more than 50,000 horses and mules for its 90,000 men in 1864. Some of these were the mounts of the dashing troopers of Sheridan's cavalry corps, but most were employed in the less glamorous task of pulling things from one place to another.

The Museum's 1859 Grimsley artillery valise saddle illustrates the mundane but vital role of the horse in the Civil War. A single artillery battery of six cannon required as many as ninety horses to haul its guns, limbers, caissons, wagons, and other equipment. Teams of six horses, hitched in three pairs, pulled each cannon. The right-hand horse of each pair often carried a soldier on its back as well, while the left-hand or "off" horses carried valises containing the men's belongings. The Grimsley valise saddle was designed to hold its cargo firmly in place, while the horse wearing it trudged along pulling a 2000-pound artillery piece through the muddy lanes of Virginia or Tennessee. It was an important but thoroughly unromantic piece of equipment.

When the saddle reached the Museum, it was in fair to good condition for a 130-year-old leather artifact. Director of Collections Carolyn Textley hired a conservator to repair existing damage and prevent further deterioration. A pair of stirrups, in poor condition, were repaired and removed from the saddle, to which they had been attached by a prior owner. The stirrups do not appear in the present display, as they were clearly not part of the original valise saddle.

(On the cover: R. E. Leppert, *The Presidents of the United States*, 1933. For identification key, see page three. (TLM #87.65))



Union artillerymen dragging guns through the mountains of Tennessee. (*Harper's Weekly*, November 21, 1863) (TLM #2525)

The saddle now appears in the "Civil War" gallery, next to a Union artilleryist's jacket and officer's sword. The blue jacket, decorated with elaborate red piping, and the sword with its echoes of medieval hand-to-hand combat, reflect the romantic view of warfare that moved so many young men to enlist in 1861. The pack saddle is a reminder of the dreary reality that logistics were more important than heroism in deciding the outcome of the war.

The Soldiers

The Museum's second recent artifact acquisition is a Union army in miniature: a complete boxed set of toy soldiers, manufactured during the Civil War. The figures are 30mm tall, made in the style of the firm of Heinrichsen by a German manufacturer (possibly Heinrichsen itself). Like all toy soldiers of the mid-19th century, they are flat, two-dimensional figures, made of a lead-tin alloy. Although they are flat, they are beautifully detailed and colorfully painted, so that viewed from the front they create the illusion of being fully round, three-dimensional figures.

The set includes over 150 pieces, including infantry, cavalry, cannon, horses, tents, trees, and other camp scenery. The figures are displayed with their original box, featuring a painting of a Union army camp. Two inscriptions on the box and lid reveal that the set was originally given to "Freddie" by his aunt in 1865. Based on the soldiers' pristine condition, "Freddie" apparently was made to take very good care of them, if he got to play with them at all.

The figures are particularly interesting because the German manufacturer designed them in traditional European style. Although the soldiers wear blue uniforms, and some carry American flags, the style of the cap and the cut of the uniform is more German than American. One even carries an imperial standard more suited to a procession down the Potsdammer Platz than Pennsylvania Avenue.

The soldiers and their box are displayed in the "Lincoln Family Album" gallery, sharing a case with other 19th century toys and games typical of those Tad and Willie enjoyed in the White House. Considering how much the Lincoln boys

liked to dress as soldiers, and to play army with their soldier doll "Jack," they probably would have loved this miniature army. Of course, when Tad wanted to play with soldiers, he could always put the president's military escort through their drill for his amusement. Had he owned this set of toys to distract him from that activity, the men might have been as well pleased as Tad.

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2 Adams	4 Madison	3 Jefferson	5 Monroe	9 W. Harrison	
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20 Garfield	30 Coolidge	31 Hoover	32 E. Roosevelt	28 Wilson	19 Hayes
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How Si Klegg and His Pard Shorty Gave a Hand to The Lincoln Museum

Asked to name the greatest novel to come out of the Civil War, most people would list *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Gone With the Wind*, or perhaps even Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*. Many of the veterans of Lincoln's armies, if asked the same question, would have chosen a book published in 1887 that few people today have read or even heard of, *Corporal Si Klegg and His "Pard"*, by Wilbur F. Hinman. Hinman, a captain in the 65th Ohio during the war and the author of a history of the Sherman Brigade, touched a chord in his readers with his thinly fictionalized history of the adventures of a typical Midwestern soldier. The book's subtitle, *How They Lived and Talked, and What They Did and Suffered, While Fighting for the Flag*, summed up its appeal for the former boys in blue. It told their story, in a simple, amusing narrative.

The central character of the book, Josiah Klegg, initially appeared in a series of sketches of army life in the *National Tribune*, a popular Union veterans' publication, and a number of collections of "Si Klegg and Shorty" stories were published in the aftermath of Hinman's success. Both in Hinman's novel and the short story collections, Si experiences the usual incidents of army life, and grows from raw recruit to hardened veteran without losing his essential innocent goodness. He participates in the Perryville, Stones River, and Chattanooga campaigns (as did Hinman), in the course of which he earns a promotion to corporal, shows heroism under fire, suffers a serious wound, gets captured and escapes, and finally loses his best friend and "pard" in his regiment's last battle.



The most interesting aspect of Hinman's novel is its treatment of the relationship between Klegg, the naive country boy seeing the world for the first time, and Shorty, his more worldly tentmate. Unlike Klegg, who lives on a farm with his family, Shorty has no family or friends and is a stranger to the boys of Klegg's regiment. Having served as a three-month volunteer at the beginning of the war, he is a relatively experienced soldier who becomes Si's "pard" by teaching him the mysteries of putting on an army knapsack. Hinman repeatedly compares the relationship between soldier "pards" to marriage, in which the couples march, cook, eat, and sleep together. Si and Shorty come to depend on one another completely; one cold night, trying to share body heat in a snowstorm, they literally become one when their clothes freeze together. When the regiment goes on veteran furlough near the end of the war, Si brings Shorty home with him, and proposes to do the same when the war is over, but it is clear to the reader (if not to the ingenuous Klegg) that Shorty has no place in Si's domestic world.

Rather than address the painful issue of the dissolution of Si and Shorty's relationship in a civilian world where the class differences between the two would inevitably reassert themselves, Hinman takes the easy way out by having Shorty get killed in a meaningless skirmish just before the end of the war. Postwar American culture romanticized the wartime "pard" relationship, expressed in the popular song "We Have Drunk From the Same Canteen." Hinman enthusiastically shares in the idealization of the warriors' bond; the dying Shorty's last act is to take a drink from Si's canteen. Yet in a book that looks unsparingly at the harsher aspects of the soldier's life, including fear, hunger, lice, bad food, disease, official corruption, incompetent officers, and finally the bumbling bureaucracy that denies Si his veteran's pension, Hinman backs away from acknowledging that the bonds forged between soldiers at war cannot survive in any other environment.

Although *Si Klegg* has lately been made available through a 1985 reprinting, it remains a treasure not nearly as



well known as it deserves among those interested in the lives of Lincoln's soldiers. As a result, those of us who have had the good fortune of finding it rarely get the chance to discuss it with others. You can imagine my reaction when, as I was accompanying a tour group through the Museum, I heard collector and history enthusiast George Griffith mention that he had never met anyone who had read his favorite Civil War book, *Corporal Si Klegg and His "Pard."*

Griffith and I spent the next half hour absorbed in our recollections of the "haps and mishaps" of Si and Shorty. As we prepared to leave the "Civil War" gallery, one of the tour guests asked Museum director Joan Flinspach if there were any specific artifacts the Museum was seeking for that exhibit. "Well, we had designed a space to display a saddle," she answered, "but we haven't found one yet. If you know of anyone with a spare saddle or two lying around ..."

"You're standing three feet from one!" Griffith interrupted. "I've got two." That moment marked the beginning of several months of patient negotiation between Griffith and the Museum, facilitated greatly by *Lincoln Lore* reader Mimi Rolland, without whose gentle but persistent persuasion the donation might never have been completed. It would be an exaggeration to say that because of Si Klegg, the Griffith saddle is now part of The Lincoln Museum, but I like to believe that the camaraderie of a shared interest in an obscure Civil War novel had something to do with setting the process in motion. — GJP



The Ratings Game

By Gerald J. Prokopowicz

In the Fall of 1996, The Lincoln Museum presented "Making Their Marks: Signatures of the Presidents," the first staff-designed temporary exhibit since the Museum's re-opening in its new facility.

The exhibit was built around the display of the Museum's complete collection of presidential signatures, which includes at least one original signed document from each of America's first forty-one presidents. To add context and interest to the documents, they were displayed in categories based on how Americans best remembered the various presidents; "War Leaders" in one exhibit case, "The Legends" in another, "The Failures" in still another, and so on. The exhibit also included a time line along the walls that graphically displayed how well the presidents had performed in office, based on the results of several polls of historians taken between 1947 and 1982.

The primary purpose of both the categorization of the presidents and the display of presidential ratings was to bring to life what would otherwise be a nearly random collection of signed documents, ranging from personal letters to officers' commissions to grocery orders. At the same time, the juxtaposition of different ways of remembering the presidents was intended to remind the visitor that there are many ways to view the past. To reinforce this point, the presidential time line did not include ratings for the four most recent presidents, but instead featured miniature portraits that visitors could move up or down at will, thus creating their own exhibit of how history will remember the presidents of the last two decades. By encouraging visitors to express their views of recent Chief Executives, the exhibit challenged them to think critically about the ratings of past presidents as well.

The Ratings

The practice of evaluating the performance of presidents doubtless began the day after George Washington's first inauguration. The technique of the modern public opinion

poll was first applied to the process in 1948, when Harvard history professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr. asked fifty-five "experts," most of them professional historians, to rate each of America's presidents as "Great," "Near Great," "Average," "Below Average," or "Failure." The results were published in *Life* magazine. In 1962, Schlesinger polled a larger sample of seventy-five historians, political scientists, and journalists for their views on the this time publishing the results in *The New York Times Magazine*. Over the next twenty years historians, political scientists, and journalists conducted numerous other polls, the most detailed of which was done in 1982 by historians Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing. Murray and Blessing used computers to compile 970 responses received from a survey of 1,997 professors of American history working in the United States. They published their findings in a 1988 book, revised in 1994.

Not all historians agree that the idea of rating presidents is legitimate. Many have complained that rating polls trivialize both history and the presidency. President Kennedy expressed a similar objection, when he refused to take part in the 1962 Schlesinger poll on the basis that no one was qualified to judge the decisions made by a president without first standing in his shoes and knowing all the alternatives open to him at the time. Kennedy's standard would permanently disqualify just about every historian, political scientist, or media pundit in the country, but fortunately for those who make their livings from judging the actions of public figures, his standard has never been enforced.

Other historians have argued that ratings polls are invalid because of the biases of the respondents. In 1966, Stanford historian Thomas A. Bailey made the case that the participants in the Schlesinger polls were too

liberal, too Democratic, too Northern, too elite, and too connected to Harvard for their opinions to be considered objective. Bailey's own ranking of the presidents, however, turned out to be very close to that of the Schlesinger polls. More recently, the authors of the Murray-Blessing presidential poll asked their respondents numerous questions about their age, sex, regional background, political preferences, and other personal data, to see whether any connections existed between these factors and the respondents' historical views. Murray and Blessing failed to detect any clear systematic bias in their study. Although many historians still reject the idea of presidential rankings as overly simplistic, the practice will likely continue as long as other historians find the idea of being asked for their opinions on the past irresistible.

The results of the three polls displayed in the "Making Their Marks" exhibit (Schlesinger 1947, Schlesinger 1962, and Murray-Blessing 1982) show remarkable consistency. One of the initial ideas behind the use of multiple ratings from different decades was to encourage visitors to think critically about "expert" opinions by showing that they are not written in stone, and that historians have collectively changed their minds over time. When displayed side by side, however, the changes were minor. In spite of the much-discussed "revisionism" supposedly practiced by academic historians, their views of the presidents have altered little in the past forty years.

One aspect which has remained completely unchanged is the position of Abraham Lincoln as the most highly regarded president. Lincoln remains a unique figure, combining the popularity of a cultural icon whose bearded face and stovepipe hat are familiar to every second-grader with the hard-won regard of a skeptical, muckraking scholarly community. That Lincoln continues to dominate current

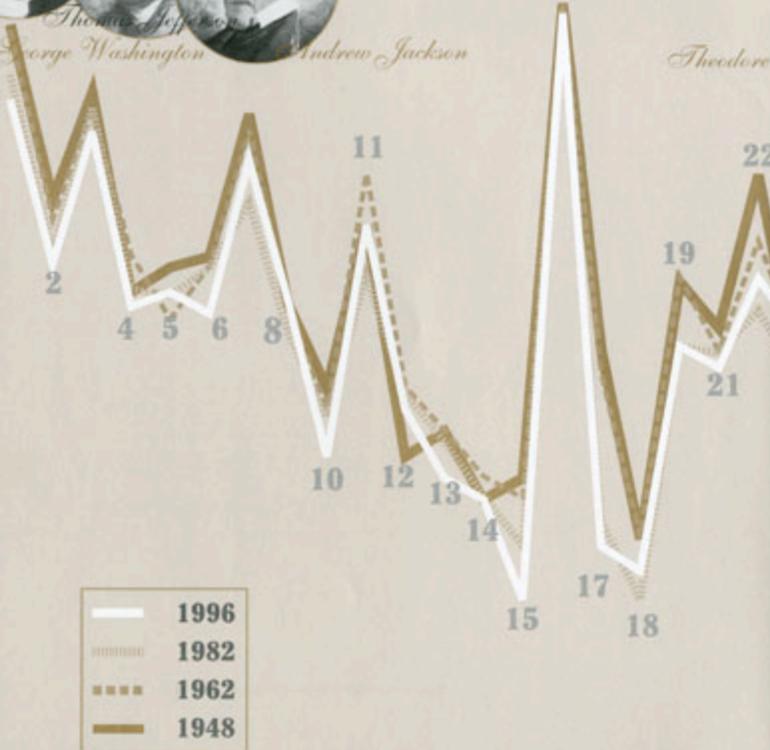


Lincoln

Thomas Jefferson

Andrew Jackson

George Washington



Woodrow Wilson

F.D.R.

Harry S. Truman

Theodore Roosevelt

Ratings of U.S. Presidents

President	Years	Political Party	1982	1962	1948	Schlesinger 1962	Schlesinger 1948
Washington	1789-1797	None	Great	Great	Great	Great	Great
John Adams	1797-1801	Federalist	Average	More Average	Average	Near Great	Near Great
Thomas Jefferson	1801-1809	Dem. Rep.	Near Great	Great	Great	Great	Great
James Madison	1809-1817	Dem. Rep.	Average	More Average	Average	Average	Average
James Monroe	1817-1825	Dem. Rep.	Average	More Average	Average	Average	Average
Andrew Jackson	1825-1829	Dem. Rep.	Average	More Average	Average	Average	Average
Andrew Jackson	1829-1837	Democrat	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Great
John Tyler	1841-1845	Democrat	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
James K. Polk	1845-1849	Whig	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Franklin Pierce	1853-1857	Whig	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
James Buchanan	1857-1861	Democrat	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great
Abraham Lincoln	1861-1865	Democrat	Great	Great	Great	Great	Great
Andrew Johnson	1865-1869	Republican	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
Ulysses S. Grant	1869-1877	Republican	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
Rutherford B. Hayes	1877-1881	Republican	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
James A. Garfield	1881	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Benjamin Harrison	1889-1893	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
William McKinley	1897-1901	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Theodore Roosevelt	1901-1909	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
William Howard Taft	1909-1913	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Woodrow Wilson	1913-1921	Democrat	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great
Warren G. Harding	1921-1923	Republican	Failure	Failure	Failure	Failure	Failure
Calvin Coolidge	1923-1933	Republican	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
Herbert Hoover	1933-1937	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Franklin D. Roosevelt	1933-1945	Democrat	Great	Great	Great	Great	Great
Harry S. Truman	1945-1953	Democrat	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great
Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953-1961	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
John F. Kennedy	1961-1963	Democrat	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Lyndon B. Johnson	1963-1969	Democrat	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great	Near Great
Nixon	1969-1974	Republican	Failure	Failure	Failure	Failure	Failure
Ronald Reagan	1974-1981	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Gerald R. Ford	1974-1977	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Jimmy Carter	1977-1981	Democrat	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Richard Nixon	1969-1974	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
George H.W. Bush	1989-1993	Republican	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Bill Clinton	1993	Democrat	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average

* See rating available - president died shortly after taking office or was in office after date of survey.

surveys among historians as the figure they most admire in American history is particularly remarkable, given the almost complete fragmentation of the modern historical profession. In response to a survey by the Organization of American Historians in 1993 that asked historians to name their three or four most admired works of American history, a thousand respondents named 1,237 different titles; 882 of the books were each named by only one reader. Yet in the same survey, the historians by a large margin agreed that Abraham Lincoln was the figure in American history they most admired.

Of the presidents whose ratings changed in the three polls, Andrew Johnson's reputation went down the furthest, propelled by the rejection of the traditional view of Reconstruction. Since 1948, when Johnson was still seen as a bulwark against the excesses of Radical Republicanism, modern historians have lost sympathy for his complicity in the white South's restoration of its political and social supremacy, at the expense of African-Americans whose slavery Lincoln had deplored.

The most noticeable favorable changes have occurred to more recent presidents, with Dwight Eisenhower receiving the largest boost from one poll to the next of any president. Like Truman before him, Eisenhower was generally regarded in his day as an average president at best, but also like Truman's his record has come to appear more substantial with the passage of time. Whether subsequent presidents will similarly benefit from historical hindsight is not certain. Kennedy's relatively modest rating (lower than that of either Eisenhower or Lyndon Johnson in the Murray-Blessing poll) surprised many Museum visitors, whose judgments of the accomplishments of his brief administration were likely influenced by their memories of his charismatic personality and violent death. Nixon's low rating, which has nowhere to go but up, could conceivably rise with the gradual cooling of the passionate emotions that "Tricky Dick" inspired in his enemies and friends alike. The ratings of Ford and Carter also leave room for a potential mellowing of historical opinion.

The Categories

The title of the exhibit, "Making Their Marks" refers both to the metaphorical marks presidents have left on history, and the literal marks they have made on paper in the form of their signatures. The heart of the exhibit consisted of ten display cases filled with examples of signatures from each of the forty-one men, and one woman, who have led the nation from the White House. These cases were labeled to reflect a shorthand view of how those presidents are commonly remembered.

The Caretakers

These leaders were never elected president, but filled in when the incumbent could not serve. Historians have described these and other "caretakers," including Andrew Johnson, Chester Arthur, and Calvin Coolidge as average at best, but other "fill-in" presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Lyndon B. Johnson have received high ratings.

John Tyler	1841-1845
Millard Fillmore	1850-1853
Edith Wilson	1919-1921
Gerald R. Ford	1974-1976

John Tyler is best remembered as the vice-presidential half of the campaign slogan "Tippecanoe, and Tyler Too." When "Old Tippecanoe" (William Henry Harrison) died within a month of his inauguration, Tyler served the rest of his term. The first president to take office without being elected, critics called him "His Accidency."

Millard Fillmore's controversial presidency is today largely forgotten. Fillmore supported the Compromise of 1850, which was intended to resolve tension between the North and South, and introduced the first stove to the White House, but he could not win his Whig Party's nomination for a second term in 1852. In 1856 he ran (and lost) as the candidate of the "Know-Nothing" Party.

Although **Edith Wilson** was never formally inaugurated, she served as unofficial acting president after her husband Woodrow suffered a series of debilitating strokes in 1919. By screening all visitors, Mrs. Wilson and the president's doctor concealed the seriousness of the president's illness from the public.

The resignations of Spiro Agnew as vice-president and Richard Nixon as president brought **Gerald R. Ford** to the nation's highest office. His reputation for honesty helped to restore the image of the presidency in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, but his pardon of former president Nixon damaged his popularity.

The Forgotten Men

Historians consider the presidents who served in the late 19th Century generally to have been average or better, but they served in an era when Congress held the balance of power in the federal government. **Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley** were competent leaders who lacked the personal charisma to overcome the lack of stature accorded to the presidency in their day. Today,

the marks these leaders made on history have been forgotten by most Americans.

Rutherford B. Hayes	1877-1881
James A. Garfield	1881
Chester A. Arthur	1881-1885
Grover Cleveland	1885-1889, 1893-1897
Benjamin Harrison	1889-1893
William McKinley	1897-1901

The Generals

By making the president Commander-in-Chief, the Constitution firmly establishes the supremacy of civil government over the armed forces. But to lead that government, Americans have regularly called on former military leaders. These generals, as well as George Washington, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James A. Garfield, include some of the most (and least) successful of all presidents.

Andrew Jackson	1829-1837
William H. Harrison	1841
Zachary Taylor	1849-1850
Ulysses S. Grant	1869-1877
Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953-1961

Andrew Jackson, hero of the War of 1812, used his forceful personality to make the presidency a more powerful office. He abolished the national bank, removed much of the Native American population from east of the Mississippi, and rebuffed South Carolina's assertion of states' rights. Although still considered a successful president, his historical stock has fallen as historians have come to question the value of a powerful presidency.

William H. Harrison, victor in the battle of Tippecanoe, was promoted as the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" candidate, although he had been born in a mansion. Because he died within a month of taking office, his name does not even appear on most historians' polls of the presidents.

Although the Whig Party opposed the Mexican War, they capitalized on its popularity by nominating victorious General **Zachary Taylor** in 1848. Called "Old Rough and Ready," Taylor's blunt and informal style made him a better general than president.

Historians almost universally regard **Ulysses S. Grant** as one of the greatest generals of the Civil War, and one of the country's least successful presidents. He remained so popular for his military triumphs that he was elected to a second term in spite of the scandals and inefficiency of his first administration.

As one of the leading generals of World War II, **Dwight D. Eisenhower** remained so aloof from domestic politics that both parties hoped to nominate him after his military

career ended. Once considered a "do nothing" president, his historical reputation has continued to climb over the past forty years.

The Legends

Historians have consistently regarded Abraham Lincoln as the greatest of presidents, with George Washington not far behind. Thomas Jefferson and Franklin D. Roosevelt are also widely considered to have been among the most successful of Chief Executives.

George Washington	1789-1797
Abraham Lincoln	1861-1865
John F. Kennedy	1961-1963

As the first president, **George Washington** played perfectly the role of "Father of His Country." Although he was neither a great political thinker nor a brilliant military strategist, he understood the art of leadership. His statesmanlike behavior established the presidency as an office of both symbolic and real power.

Unlike Washington, **Abraham Lincoln** was not universally admired in his lifetime. After his assassination, however, Americans recognized that Lincoln's eloquent leadership had been critical to the restoration of national unity and the end of slavery.

John F. Kennedy's accomplishments were not comparable to those of Washington or Lincoln, but his youth, his charisma, and his tragic death helped create the "Camelot" legend that surrounds his memory and resists objective historical evaluation.

The Intellectuals

Only a handful of presidents have made their reputations as thinkers as well as doers.

Thomas Jefferson	1801-1809
James Madison	1809-1817
John Quincy Adams	1825-1829
Woodrow Wilson	1913-1921

As president, **Thomas Jefferson** nearly doubled the size of the United States by completing the Louisiana Purchase. Widely regarded as one of the greatest presidents, he preferred that his epitaph describe him as the author of the Declaration of Independence and founder of the University of Virginia.

The Constitution reflects much of the political thinking of **James Madison**. More successful as a theorist than a president, he had to flee Washington when it was burned by the British during the War of 1812.

The only president to hold a Ph.D. was historian and political scientist **Woodrow Wilson**, who served as president of Princeton University before becoming Chief Executive.

His fellow historians have regarded him highly, although his reputation has fallen somewhat in recent years.

John Quincy Adams was a visionary in the White House. Modern historians have praised his proposals for federally funded roads, canals, observatories, scientific expeditions, and a university, as well as his opposition to slavery, but his ideas proved to be ahead of their time. Adams enjoyed little support in Congress, and was not re-elected.

What Will History Say?

In the year 2525, how will historians look back at the presidencies of **Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton**? Lincoln Museum visitors freely offered their predictions of the long-range reputation of the presidents of the late 20th century by setting the movable portraits of these leaders higher or lower. The exhibit included two pictures of each recent president, to accommodate the sometimes sharp disagreements that emerged among groups of visitors.

Jimmy Carter	1977-1981
Ronald Reagan	1981-1989
George Bush	1989-1993
Bill Clinton	1993-

War Leaders

The reputations of these presidents were defined by their wartime leadership. Other presidents who led the nation in time of war include James Madison (War of 1812), Abraham Lincoln (Civil War), William McKinley (Spanish-American War), Woodrow Wilson (World War One), Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower (Korean War), Richard M. Nixon (Vietnam War), and George Bush (Persian Gulf War).

James K. Polk	1845-1849
Theodore Roosevelt	1901-1909
Franklin D. Roosevelt	1933-1945
Lyndon B. Johnson	1963-1969

Under **James K. Polk**, the United States acquired Oregon from Britain, secured the annexation of Texas, and seized California and New Mexico as part of the settlement of the Mexican War. Polk's historical reputation, built on these aggressive actions, has fluctuated widely.

Theodore Roosevelt was the "War Leader" without a war. Although the nation was formally at peace during his presidency, his reputation as a soldier in the Spanish-American War, love of big-game hunting, aggressive foreign policy, and bellicose personal style gave him a more warlike image than most presidents.

Franklin D. Roosevelt led the country through the Depression years and the Second World War. Long considered one of the greatest of presidents, recent historians' polls have placed him above George Washington and second only to Abraham Lincoln.

When he became president, **Lyndon B. Johnson** focused his efforts on creating a "Great Society" through an extensive system of social programs. His presidency was defined, however, by the divisive and unpopular

The Latest Poll

As this issue of *Lincoln Lore* was going to press, a new presidential ratings poll appeared in the December 15, 1996 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. The poll, conducted by the magazine and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., followed the format of the polls taken by the senior Schlesinger in 1948 and 1962. The most notable aspect of this latest poll, the results of which are included in the chart on pages 6-7, is that it shows the continuing strength of the historical consensus that emerged from the earlier polls. Abraham Lincoln remains firmly at the top, with a unanimous "Great" rating, and Warren G. Harding is still dead last.

In between, there are a few changes. While George Washington and Franklin Roosevelt tied for second place as "Great" presidents, Thomas Jefferson slipped into the ranks of the "Near Great." Eisenhower's reputation continued to climb, as did Truman's, while James Buchanan and Andrew Johnson fell.

Presidents who served within the lifetimes of the voters proved the most difficult to evaluate: Lyndon Johnson appears among the "Near Great," even though he also received two "Failure" ratings, and Nixon is graded a "Failure" in spite of receiving two "Near Great" votes. Carter, Reagan, and Clinton also received individual ratings ranging from "Near Great" to "Failure." The historical consensus that surrounds the distant past apparently does not apply to the present, nor are historians immune to political partisanship in their analysis of recent administrations.

Statistical note: The chart on pages 6-7 gives the modal results for each president in each poll, not the average results; in other words, presidents appear in the categories where they were placed by the largest number of respondents. The results thus differ in some cases from the published results, which were determined by other means. For example, Franklin Pierce, who received fifteen "Below Average" and twelve "Failure" ratings in the 1996 poll, has a modal rating of "Below Average" in the chart, while he appears as a "Failure" in The New York Times Magazine's presentation of the same poll.

Vietnam War, which caused him to leave office after serving only one full term.

The Failures

James Buchanan	1857-1861
Andrew Johnson	1865-1869
Warren G. Harding	1921-1923
Richard M. Nixon	1969-1974

James Buchanan watched helplessly as tensions between North and South grew to the point that war could not be avoided. To Abraham Lincoln, who followed him in office, he wrote that he hoped "you may be more happy in your exalted station than was your immediate predecessor."

Andrew Johnson, the only president to be impeached by Congress, presided over the reconstruction of the South after the Civil War. Historians once praised him for resisting "Radical Reconstruction"; more recent scholars have condemned his opposition to civil rights for former slaves.

Warren G. Harding is generally considered the least successful president of all. He accomplished little, and appointed his corrupt friends to high offices, where they exploited their powers for personal gain. Harding's scandal-ridden administration was cut short by his death two years into his term.

Richard M. Nixon was one of the most controversial of all presidents. He enjoyed many foreign policy triumphs, including his visit to China, detente with the Soviet Union, and the gradual end of the Vietnam War. These were overshadowed, however, by his coverup of the Watergate scandal, which forced him to resign rather than face impeachment.

In Giants' Footsteps

When great presidents leave office, their vice presidents are often elected to try to carry on their work. Other former vice presidents who have been overshadowed by their predecessors include James Madison (who

followed Jefferson), Andrew Johnson (Lincoln), Lyndon B. Johnson (Kennedy), and George Bush (Reagan).

John Adams	1797-1801
Martin Van Buren	1837-1841
Harry S. Truman	1945-1953

John Adams followed George Washington as the country's second president. Like Washington, he helped to establish the presidency as an office of dignity and authority. He was, however, more partisan and less majestic than his predecessor, and was not re-elected after his first term.

Martin Van Buren was vice president during Andrew Jackson's second term. He rode Jackson's popularity into office, but voters then (and historians now) considered him far less able.

Harry S. Truman succeeded Franklin Roosevelt in 1945, and won re-election in 1948. His administration saw the beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union; with the successful end of that war in the 1990s, historians will likely begin to re-evaluate the effects of Truman's presidency.

Don't Rock the Boat

Some presidents have held office during periods of relative tranquility. Although their records include few extraordinary achievements or failures, they sometimes sowed the seeds for future disasters.

James Monroe	1817-1825
Franklin Pierce	1853-1857
William H. Taft	1909-1913
Calvin Coolidge	1923-1929
Herbert Hoover	1929-1933

Political harmony was so great during the first four years of **James Monroe's** presidency that he ran unopposed for a second term. His time in office became known as the "era of good feelings." He is remembered primarily for the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European nations to stay out of the Western Hemisphere.

The Compromise of 1850 seemed to resolve the issue of slavery to the satisfaction of North and South, until **Franklin Pierce** signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The Act caused increasing sectional tensions; four years after Pierce left office, the Civil War began.

William H. Taft worked to fight monopolies and extend U.S. influence in Latin America, but his presidential administration was so low key that he is remembered more for the enormous bathtub he had installed in the White House, and for his later role as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The prosperity of the Roaring Twenties allowed **Calvin Coolidge** the luxury of governing passively. By refusing to impose reforms on the financial industry, "Silent Cal" helped to fuel a booming economy. Months after he left office, however, the stock market crash of 1929 marked the beginning of the Great Depression.

Herbert Hoover tried to practice the policy of not "rocking the boat," but to many Americans it seemed he was captain of a sinking ship. Historians have noted that he was not to blame for the onset of the Great Depression, which began early in his presidential term, but the public soundly rejected his policy of limited action by electing Franklin Roosevelt in 1932.

Bibliography

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The New Mount Rushmore

Who should be on Mount Rushmore? When Gutzon Borglum began the grand monument to America's presidents in South Dakota's Black Hills, few people argued with his choice of Washington, Jefferson, or Lincoln. Not everyone agreed, however, with his choice of Theodore Roosevelt (whom Borglum admired) for the fourth face.

Museum visitors were invited to vote whether to replace Roosevelt, or any of the others, perhaps with one of the twelve men who have occupied the White House since Borglum began the project in 1924. Here's what they decided:

Lincoln	564
Washington	562
Jefferson	231
Kennedy	178
Bush	170
F. Roosevelt	154
T. Roosevelt	130
Reagan	112
Clinton	105

(No other presidents received more than fifty votes.)

The 1996 presidential election campaign apparently inspired many Museum visitors to

cast one of their four votes either for Bill Clinton or for George Bush (as surrogate for Bob Dole, who also received a few votes). Their partisan fury spent, visitors used their remaining votes to re-elect Lincoln and Washington almost unanimously, with Jefferson a comfortable third. The visitors disagreed with the polls' "average" rating for John F. Kennedy by elevating him into the fourth spot past Theodore Roosevelt, who fell to seventh below FDR. Reagan, like Bush and Clinton, probably benefited from the voters' preference for recent presidents (as did Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon, each of whom received more votes than either Harry Truman or Woodrow Wilson). The stable, long-term reputations of the latest presidents clearly have yet to emerge.

Letters to Lincoln, 1996

By Jan Shupert-Arick

In the April, 1971 issue of Lincoln Lore, R. Gerald McMurtry printed a selection of letters written by children to Abraham Lincoln, after they had visited the Museum. Twenty-five years later, the children still write.

"Dear Mr. Lincoln" is a favorite section of the permanent exhibit gallery at The Lincoln Museum. Designed as an interactive exhibit for children, it serves to inspire visitors, volunteers and staff alike. Children take a seat at the table, pick up a pencil and paper, and contemplate what they would like to say to the 16th President. The eagerness with which they (and sometimes their parents!) take advantage of this opportunity reveals the continuing importance of Lincoln's message to today's world.

Dear Mr. Lincoln,
 It must have been hard being president. Although I know you did all you could to stop slavery from continuing, slavery continues on, not the owning other people part, but the unequal, rights, and discrimination. We are all human. We should all be treated that way, the world has changed so much. I wish this country could have had more honest, intelligent, ambitious people like you.
 Thank you, Claire

Dear Mr. Lincoln — 7-2-96
 I have more pennies than 5 dollar bills.
 My son who was a reluctant reader until he read a story about you in the 2nd Grade. He also wanted a chocolate big cream birthday cake.
 Thank you —
 I live in a better place because of you
 M. Heft



Dear Mr. Lincoln
 I agree with you to free slavery.
~~Stop~~ Stop wars
 I wish I could see you.
 I wish I could shake hands.
 Yours truly
 Sean Rolland 10/01/96
 born IN

Dear Lincoln,
 I have visited New Salem and Springfield.
 I Love Learning about you, Thank you for all you've done for our country.
 What was it like to live in a one room cabin? I'm Proud to go to Lincoln School.
 Lauren

Dear Mr. Lincoln
 When you were growing up you had a dream of becoming a lawyer, politician, and to become the President of the United States. I know you also had a dream of educating yourself.
 My dream is to become the first female President of the United States. If I can't do that I want to either become a lawyer or a teacher.
 Sincerely, Jessica



Dear Mr. Lincoln,
 I really admire you and you brilliant actions during a time of almost chaos. To take the criticism is a great feat. You were a great influence on me and all other students, even older ones. Thanks a lot for all of your effort to keep our country together.
 Sincerely,
 Alex

Dear Mr. Lincoln —
 After 10 years, today is my last in first grade. Tomorrow, I leave for college in NY C, but I am so grateful that I was able to come to this wonderful place first. It is a truly awe inspiring memorial to an equally awesome - incredible man. Thank you, Tara G.