



Lincoln Lore

Number 1896
Spring 2011

An Interview with Frank Williams about the Year 1861

by Sara Gabbard

(Editor's note: We will recognize each sesquicentennial year of Lincoln's Presidency and the Civil War with articles on the subject.)

S: The President-elect left his inaugural train in order to enter Washington surreptitiously. In your opinion, was there a viable assassination plot?

F: I do believe there was a plot to assassinate the President-elect in Baltimore as he changed trains and railroad stations. Evidence of such a plot by Baltimore "rowdies" reached Abraham Lincoln or members of his

entourage from several different sources, including private detective Allan Pinkerton, who was working for the railroads, and a separate undercover operation by New York City detectives. Secretary of State designate William Seward received some of the same reports. Baltimore, long a city of unrest, would feature prominently after President Lincoln's call for troops following the surrender of Fort Sumter. Six soldiers of the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment were killed, along with two civilians, when the regiment also changed trains on the way to Washington in April 1861. Lincoln's advisors took the evidence seriously and urged the President-elect to enter Baltimore surreptitiously. Lincoln was reluctant to do so but followed the advice. After successfully slipping through Baltimore in the middle of the night on February 23, 1861, Lincoln arrived in Washington in "disguise." Lincoln's fears of public reaction were realized when many in the press called him a "coward" – especially when no one was charged, tried or convicted of the conspiracy. As a result, Abraham Lincoln would refuse or object to his security during his presidency, ultimately contributing to his assassination at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865. Lawyer Michael J. Kline tells the complete story in *The Baltimore Plot: The First Conspiracy to Assassinate Abraham Lincoln* (Westholme Publishing, 2008). While this is the most recent,

Thomas Craughwell is at work on another book about the Baltimore plot for Harvard University Press.

S: Although other Lincoln speeches have been more admired by historians and the public, I have always been drawn to the First Inaugural. Please describe in detail what Lincoln was attempting to do in that Address.

F: This was President Abraham Lincoln's "carrot and stick" approach to the deteriorating political situation on March 4, 1861, when he took the oath as 16th President of the United States. At that time seven Southern states had seceded, with others threatening to do so. Lincoln, while steadfastly denying the right to leave the compact of states formed in 1774 with the Articles of Association and the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, attempted to mollify



"The New President"
Derogatory cartoon picturing Lincoln sneaking in to Washington.
Lincoln Financial Foundation
Collection #436



Lincoln's First Inauguration
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection
#0-54

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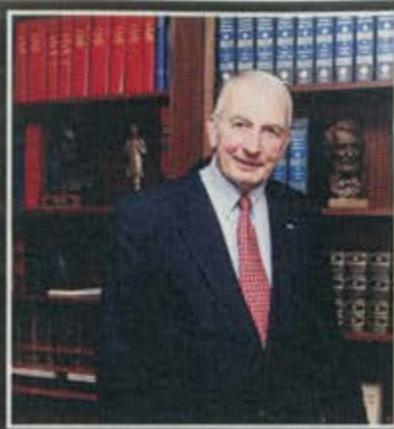
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Lincoln Lore®
 ISSN 0162-8615



Frank J. Williams is the retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island and is one of the country's most renowned experts on Abraham Lincoln. He is the author or editor of over thirteen books, has contributed chapters to several others, and has lectured on the subject throughout the country. At the same time, he has amassed an unsurpassed private library and archive that

ranks among the nation's largest and finest Lincoln collections. In 2000, the Chief Justice was appointed to the United States Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission created by Congress to plan events to commemorate the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln in 2009. Since 1996, Chief Justice Williams has served as founding Chairman of The Lincoln Forum, a national assembly of Lincoln and Civil War devotees. For 9 years, he served as President of the Abraham Lincoln Association and, for 14 years, as President of The Lincoln Group of Boston. He is currently at work on an annotated bibliography of all the Lincoln titles published since 1865. His book of essays, Judging Lincoln, was published by Southern Illinois University Press in 2002. He, with Harold Holzer and Edna Greene Medford, has written The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views, Social, Legal and Pictorial, just published by Louisiana State University Press. He also serves as Literary Editor of the Lincoln Herald where his Lincolniana appears.

On December 30, 2003, the President of the United States, through the Secretary of Defense, invited Chief Justice Williams to be a member of the Court of Military Commission Review for the tribunals to be held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with the rank of Major General. He served as Chief Judge of the re-organized U. S. Court of Military Commission Review until December 23, 2009.



Chief Justice (ret) Frank J. Williams with scouts from Narragansett Council B.S.A. who completed the requirements of the Law Merit Badge at the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

(Frank Williams continued)

the South by re-stating that he had, "no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists." He indicated no objection to the proposed constitutional amendment guaranteeing that the federal government would never so interfere – the first 13th amendment – and he also affirmed the constitutional requirement to return fugitive slaves, even with the draconian Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in effect. But to Lincoln, the union was "unbroken" and secession "lawfully" impossible as he had by oath to "take care . . . that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." Nonetheless, he would not reclaim federal property already seized by seceded states – at Senator Orville Hickman Browning's suggestion - but would suspend the operation of his authority and only "to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government."

Abraham Lincoln's concluding paragraph - suggested and initially drafted by William Seward – underscored the whole point of the speech – an appeal to the concept of Union. It would become the primary goal of the President throughout his tenure.

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

But nothing could placate the Southern states and their firebrands. To them, after a cultural divide of centuries and a president whom they called a "black Republican" for his stand against the extension of slavery, the President would say in his Second Inaugural Address, ". . . and the war came."

Both inaugural addresses should be read together as bookends to frame the conflagration of civil war.

S: President Lincoln largely ignored recommendations from his Cabinet when he decided to send supplies to Fort Sumter. Some historians claim that this was a decision which was deliberately calculated to force the Confederacy to "fire the first shot." Please comment.

F: In 1937, historian Charles W. Ramsdell opined that President Lincoln deliberately caused the South to fire the first shot in order to get Northern and world opinion on his side. According to Ramsdell, Lincoln knew the Confederates would resist any effort to re-supply Fort Sumter. Ramsdell pointed to an entry in Senator Orville Hickman Browning's diary, who wrote of Sumter, "The plan succeeded. They attacked Sumter – it fell, and thus, did more service than it otherwise would." Yet, this thesis ignores the fact that Confederate President Jefferson Davis was ready to fire the first shot before he learned of any relief expedition. Lincoln's note to South Carolina Governor Pickens about the expedition was written on April 6, 1861, but Davis, on April 3, had written a letter to General Braxton Bragg at Pensacola to seize Fort Pickens if he was prepared. Bragg was unready so the war began only when the guns fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. It is not so much the incident of the first

firing as being the most important issue but the larger cultural and political history and incidents that brought the South and North to impasses and war.

S: Did the president issue the "call for volunteers" in 1861 under what he understood to be within the presidential "war powers" according to the Constitution?

F: While the president could call up troops under the 1792 Militia Act, Lincoln did more when he expanded the size of the army and navy, appropriated money from the Treasury, declared a blockade of the Southern coastline, purchased arms and munitions and authorized the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus – all while Congress was not in session and, initially, without its authorization. These are essentially legislative prerogatives. But while Congress had the power to declare war, putting down a rebellion, as Lincoln would describe it, was an executive responsibility of the President. "War powers" is nowhere defined in the Constitution and Lincoln would be the one to implement what he thought a chief magistrate and commander-in-chief could do. He believed that, having taken the oath to protect and preserve the Constitution and to see that all the laws be obeyed, he could take whatever measures he deemed appropriate in wartime – acts that would not be permitted a president in peacetime. Congress would ratify his acts when they met in special session on July 4, 1861.

S: Was the suspension of habeas corpus a sound legal decision?

F: Doubt about the legality of such suspension is rooted in the ambiguity in Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution which states, "The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when, in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it." Lincoln first suspended the writ on April 27, 1861, "at any point on or in the vicinity of the military line between the City of Philadelphia and the City of Washington." He allowed General Scott to make arrests without specific charges to prevent secession-minded Marylanders from interfering with communication from the nation's capital by destroying bridges and tearing down telegraph wires. Washington was virtually surrounded by the enemy, and Lincoln feared that it would be cut off from the rest of the country. Lincoln, a great lawyer who cherished the writ of habeas corpus, would have preferred, in his orders to Scott, the bombardment of Baltimore than suspension of the writ. The Constitution does not say who has the power to suspend the writ – the President or Congress. At this time, Congress was not in session and while Chief Justice Roger Taney, on circuit, decreed that only Congress had the power, the attorney general Edward Bates opined that the three branches were "co-ordinate and coequal." Thus the president could act. Leading Philadelphia lawyer Horace Binney in his *The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus under the Constitution* defended the President. Congress, in 1862, would authorize the President to suspend the writ anywhere in the United States and Lincoln did so on September 24, 1862, and



"Massachusetts Sixth Attacked When Marching Through Baltimore"

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection #2874

September 15, 1863, when he and his administration feared interference with conscription.

S: Lincoln's message to Congress on July 4, 1861, is frequently given only a cursory glance in biographies. Should it be studied more fully?

F: I absolutely agree that President Abraham Lincoln's message to the Congress on July 4, 1861, should be a primer for understanding leadership generally and Lincoln's great political talent and sense of timing. While Lincoln had made all those decisions reserved for the legislative branch when Congress was not in session, the President astutely explained to the Congress, when they did convene, that a state of war existed and told them exactly what he had done, seeking their accord or refutation. Of course, the Congress, with the exception of the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus – at the time – acquiesced in Lincoln's actions. The President's rationale for his actions set forth in the message, and throughout the war, was whether, "all the laws *but one*, . . . to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated."

S: Did Robert E. Lee give serious consideration to the request that he command Union forces? Did Lincoln really believe that there was a chance that this offer would be accepted?

F: While there is no direct evidence, that old Jacksonian Democrat, Francis Preston Blair, probably at Abraham Lincoln's instigation, offered command of the Union army to Colonel Robert E. Lee. His refusal to accept the command and to choose state over country hurt Lincoln. The President, despite forgiveness at war's end, thought that those U. S. officers, Lee included, who "went South" were traitors to their country and the oath of service they had made to the United States. While Lee was honored at the invitation, he had already made up his mind to stay with the Commonwealth of Virginia if it seceded – even though he was opposed to secession. It is difficult to believe Lee was seriously considering acceptance of the Union command when he, on March 30, 1861, agreed to accept a commission in the Confederate army with the rank of Colonel. The offer for Union command was not made to him until April 18.



Cartoon capturing the Union retreat from Bull Run

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection #4121

S: Should the outcome of the 1861 Battle of Bull Run have been anticipated by Lincoln and the Union forces?

Lincoln's preparation for leading the bloodiest war was deficient. With only three months state service in the Black Hawk War in 1832, Lincoln's experience paled in comparison to Jefferson Davis, a hero of the war with Mexico and a former Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce. Lincoln pressed General Winfield Scott and field commander General Irvin McDowell, who were both opposed, to engage the Confederates at Manassas Junction, resulting in catastrophe and loss to the Northern forces. Scott had little faith in the training of 90 day volunteers but received little sympathy from Lincoln who stated, "You are green it is true, but they are green also." The President's hope for a quick offensive proved disastrous. It was a political decision to hold Northern morale that backfired. If the president had more experience he could have foreseen defeat. But Lincoln was a quick learner, albeit sometimes at great cost. On July 23, 1861, Lincoln wrote "Memoranda of

Military Policy Suggested by the Bull Run Defeat." In it, his ideas now included controlling Manassas in Virginia and keeping the line open from there to Washington but capturing Memphis and East Tennessee in the West. While political considerations would sometimes dictate his actions, he was evolving as a strategist.

S: I have always been fascinated by the four word sentence in Lincoln's Second Inaugural: "And the war came." It almost seems to reflect a feeling of inevitability. Could the war have been avoided?

F: Revisionists have argued that the war was needlessly brought about by the ineptitude of politicians but this has receded and been replaced by current authors who, as Libertarians, have taken up the cry that the war was not inevitable and Abraham Lincoln could have avoided it. Perhaps no other event in United States history has invited more speculation about whether it could have been avoided. What if Lincoln had acquiesced in Southern secession? What if a settlement assuring the perpetuation of slavery through a constitutional amendment had been reached during the 1860-61 winter? What if the Peace Conference at



"Charge of the Black Horse Cavalry upon the Fire Zouaves at the Battle of Bull Run"

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection #2700

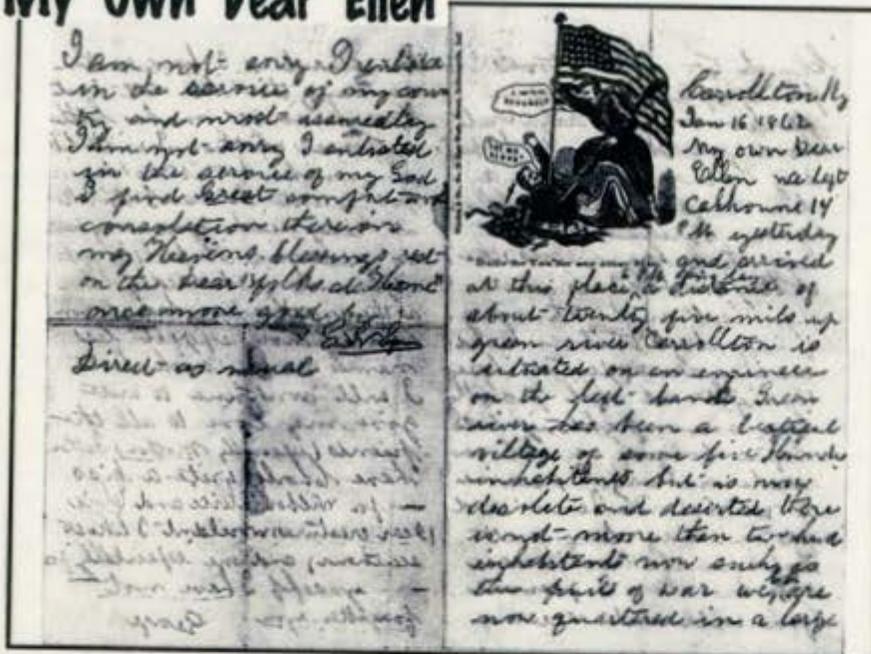
Willard's Hotel had actually mediated the sectional differences? But these "what if" questions tell us nothing about what actually happened. Causation is confounding and problematic. One can no more know with certainty what caused an event than whether it could have been avoided. That is not to say that major factors played a role. Slavery caused the Civil War – but in what ways? Disagreements over sovereignty and constitutional authority caused the Civil War – but how? Northerners and Southerners saw themselves as different – but why did these differences become so fatal? Certainly, Lincoln's election on November 6, 1860, brought on secession, which resulted in war.



"The Battle of Bull Run"

A second cartoon depicts the inept Union forces
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection #4122

"My Own Dear Ellen"



"MY OWN DEAR ELLEN"

(Battle of Murfreesboro/Stones River)
By Sara Gabbard, Editor

(Preserved in the Lincoln Financial Collection at the Allen County Public Library are the letters that George W. Squier, of the 44th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, wrote home to his wife Ellen. Squier was a soldier from the Fort Wayne area, and his letters reflect both actual battle conditions and, perhaps more interesting, his views on the Civil War in general. When last I reported on these letters (Lincoln Lore # 1883), it was December 1862, and Squier was concerned that the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation (subsequently signed by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863) might result in the refusal of some troops to fight because they would be unwilling to "peril their lives" to free the slaves. In this second report, written shortly after the Battle of Murfreesboro/Stones River, which was fought in late December 1862 and early January 1863, he comments on that battle. These first person reports give an entirely different perspective than a textbook's account. For instance, historians might mention that it rained during

a battle. It is an entirely different reading experience to be told by the individual soldier of his unsuccessful attempts to maintain any kind of personal comfort when not engaged in battle, and, thus, his utter sense of exhaustion. Original spelling and punctuation have been reported as in the original letters.)

January 4, 1863, was written near Murfreesboro. Squier writes to express his gratitude to "all merciful providence I am still alive." He tells Ellen that he has only a small scrap of paper on which to write, but he fears that the failure to hear from him will cause her anxiety. He also comments on Major General William S. Rosecrans, calling him "the Greatest man in our Government and honoring him because "He never moves on the Lord's day. He will describe his battlefield experience in a longer letter the following day.

January 5, 1863, was also written near Murfreesboro and comments directly on that battle (also called Stones River) and the dreadful toll it took. On the 26th day of December, 1862, at 8: A.M. the call beat to strike tents, load baggage and be ready to march. Rain from 9 until 11 and at 1

we took up our line of march, en route for Murfreesboro. How so many, how very many who started on that day full of life, joyous and happy, now sleep beneath the soil in a strange land, with nothing to mark their resting place save a little mound of Earth, which a few month's time will wholly obliterate?

We marched nearly 7 miles, where we camp without tents, oil cloths, or blankets (as we took nothing but the indispensable) Rain nearly all night. Consequently there was little sleep for the many thousand who were about to offer up their lives for their cou[ntry].



Squier, George W., 44th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, Company D, Mustered in as Corporal, 22 November 1861, First Lieutenant, 31 January 1864, Captain, 29 January 1865. Mustered out 14 September 1865. Resident of Hall's Corners, Allen County, Indiana., merchant, farmer. Born 13 September 1831. Died in 1907 in South Haven, Michigan. (Courtesy of Allen County Fort Wayne Historical Society, Fort Wayne, Indiana.)

Good Saturday morning at length came, when there might have been seen crawling from their holes creatures that put one in mind of so many drowned rats. But it soon stops raining and soon do the boys recover their wonted spirits. In front and to our right we hear the continual booming of cannon and the crackling of musketry, which warn us that the work has already commen[ced]. At noon we are ordered into line. Marched out to the road. In half an hour the rain is coming in and those who have no overcoats are soon wet to the skin. But fortunately for me I have one which will stand six hours of heavy rain.

About 3 P. M. we move on and now begin the unmistakable evidence that our further advance had been disputed. Trees torn asunder, houses destroyed, dead horses, and little mounds of Earth that marke the spot where some brave fellow sleeps the "sleep that knows no waking." How often have I been reminded of the lines "Soldier rest thy warfare o'er. (Editor's note. While Squier was not a highly educated man, he shows evidence in this instance of knowing Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake.")

The soldiers camped that night: "rather primitive, only requiring a rail or a smoothe stone for a pillow." **They were immediately dislodged with orders to go on outpost duty.** Squier was unable to sleep because he was uncomfortable in his wet clothing. Instead, he volunteered to keep the campfires going for those comrades who were "soon lost to all trouble in the kind embrace of sleep."

As in the letter from the previous day, the writer again mentions the fact that, this being Sunday, there was only light action: Pickets exchanged occasional shots, nothing more."



"A Thrilling Scene in East Tennessee-
Colonel Fry and the Union Men
Swearing By the Flag"

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection
#2536

On Monday Squier's unit was on the march again. "Heavy cannonading in front and to the right." They camped within three miles of the town, "almost in sight of the enemy. It is feed time, and having drank a cup of coffee, eaten some crackers (not butter crackers), and so will turn in."

Tuesday comes and with it rain, which every time is disagreeable, but it does not prevent the work of death. The day passes without advantage to either party, except we had succeeded in throwing temporary bridges across Stone river, which will enable to cross that stream and attack the enemy.

Wednesday, Dec. 31st, long to be remembered, comes. [One senses that countless soldiers through the centuries have looked out on a tranquil scene which would soon become a nightmare of noise, smoke, and confusion.] The sun rises, clear after several days of funeral gloom, rupturing mists which hung like silver curtains over the hills and glistening along the serried lines [of bayonets?], which glittered in the morning light like countless jewels, bathing the gay banners which floated along the line with a flood of refulgence and lighting

up the emerald fringes of the beautiful cedars which enclose the field. As far as the eye can reach stand two vast armies, silent and motionless. Standing on an eminence, I could see all the splendid array where it almost seemed that instead of foes drawn up for battle, to be a grand pageantry of display, some holiday perrade.

At 7 o'clock we fell in, march to our left nearly ¼ mile and ordered to halt. While standing we hear a small volley of musketry directly in our rear. In another inst. another and another. All is anxiety. Soon the rattle of musketry is deadened by the roar of artillery. Many anxious faces were there in those ranks then, for it was feared we were attacked in force in our rear. We went running in the direction of the firing...through cedar bushes, up hill and down, over rocks, through mud and water and finally arrive at the scene of the disturbance when we found the cause. Wheeler's Cavalry had made a dash on our train, capturing some 60 or 70 waggons which were all retaken. We rest a few minutes, countermarch, and form line of battle. After a few minutes rest, our line moves slowly to the front through almost impenetrable thickets of cedar briars, weeds, &c&c. Now we emerge into a large open field covered with high weeds. Here skirmishing commences. Steadily we advance across that field which was soon to drink the blood of so many breve men.

It did not take long for panic to take over and carefully planned strategy to be abandoned.

The enemy is distinctly seen. We had fired but three rounds when a great blunder was discovered. We were flanked on our right and in five minutes we would have been prisoners. The order was given to retreat. There is no set of men who can endure a flank fire. The 44th for the first time panic stricken and perfectly unmanageable.

Away they run, officers vainly trying to rally at the fence where lay the 13th Ohio as our reserve. Col. Williams sees that he no longer commands the 44th, and in his agony he cries "O! Heavens! Can it be?" So I was left behind, using all my endeavors to stop the men of our Co. but to no effect. I rushed in front of the line, drew the bayonet, and commanded them to halt. They paused slightly. Said I, "can you desert these collors," pointing to our flag some distance in the rear. Two men stopped and with myself returned. We took our position by our old tattered torn but not less dear old flag. The rest of the boys I did not see for hours.

The horror of battle becomes immediately apparent.

Now the enemy opens fire in earnest. Volley after volley pour down upon us, a perfect storm of bullets, more than mortal man could endure. The gallant 13th broke, and when I looked for our collors, no flag was to be seen. Then commenced a perfect stampede—men running for dear life, disengaging haversacks, cartridge boxes, canteens, overcoats, guns, everything that could impede their progress.

I was soon out of range of the enemy's fire when I stopped to rest. Looking over the field, you might see men running with all their might suddenly disappear among the weeds, having been overtaken by the death dealing grape and canister. In making my way to the rear, there may be seen hundreds of poore fellows awfully mutilated—shot in every conceivable way—one from our own co. less one finger, another with his left hand carried away by a canister shot, another the ball passes in at the mouth, tearing the lips frightfully, performing rather sever dental operations and passes out just in front of the left ear.

The sight of his comrades retreating was frightening to Squier, and he was afraid that the battle was over.

When first I saw our lines giving away, I felt sick, desperate, thinking that perhaps the day was lost.

However, as frequently happens on the battlefield, the tide began to turn.

But as I fall back I see line after line stretched as far as the eye could reach, all laying close to the ground to prevent the enemy from seeing their position.

Union artillery pieces had been drawn up under cover of the hill, ready at the proper moment to run to the summit and do its duty. Once again Squier relates a hilltop view of the battlefield as Confederate troops come forward. On comes the enemy. Nothing opposes his progress until within about 400 yards, when the pieces of artillery thundered forth and away went the Iron balls rolling through the ranks of the enemy, mowing them down by hundreds. They falter, but their ranks were immediately closed, and another and another and another volley belches forth from those Iron monsters.

It is more than even the stubborn rebels can not long withstand. Again they falter They fix bayonets, and then I knew there was to be Bloody work. Confederate troops charged the artillery placements. On they rush, with yells which was heard above the din of battl. The Confederates continued to charge forward, confident that they would soon be able to man the death dealing instruments. They did not expect, when they were 80 yards from the guns, to see a line of men raise as out of the earth with bristling bayonets. In an instant the guns are leveled, and away went a shower of lead. This was more than mortal man

could withstand. The Confederates began to retreat with Union soldiers chasing them.

Squier does not gloat. He says that The victory at this point at least is ours. He has difficulty in reconnecting with his regiment and finally found what was left of it: 6 men and one officer. It is now nearly night and I am sorry that I cam out all right. (A counselor today would see this statement as an indication of "survivor's guilt.") My health is not very good, perhaps owing to exposure and some fatigue. However, he still thinks of his wife and family: I received yours of the 24th yesterday and was delighted to find you getting along so well. Give my love to all, especially to Mothers (I mean both of them). Since he is writing after the battle's end, he adds: Yesterdy I sent to Nashville a very fine oil painting to be expressed to Fort Wayne to you. When once unrolled do not roll it up again as the paint will crack—warm it well before unrolling. Write often and remember ever your affectionate and loving George.

[The letters of George Squier are held at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The letters were published under the title This Wilderness of War: The Civil War Letters of George W. Squier, Hoosier Volunteer, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1998]



"The War in East Tennessee—Drawing Artillery through the Mountains"
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection
#2525

Abraham Lincoln: Hoosier Youth, 1816-1830

All images are from the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection.

Cindy VanHorn and Jane Gastineau, of the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, have designed an ambitious program which will mount and circulate to all branch libraries the chronological story of the life of Abraham Lincoln.

New presentations will be assembled every six months. The first installment contains information about Lincoln's early life in Southern Indiana. A sample of material from this traveling exhibit is included in this issue of Lincoln Lore.

Birthplace Cabin

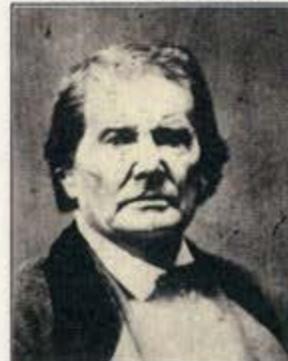


I was born Feb. 12, 1890, in Hardin County, Kentucky.

From Lincoln's autobiography written for Jesse W. Fell, December 20, 1859.

Abraham Lincoln lived in this cabin with his mother Nancy, his father Thomas, and his older sister Sarah for the first two years of his life.

Thomas Lincoln



Thought to be a photograph taken in later years of Thomas Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's father.

Nancy Lincoln



Artist Lloyd Ostendorf imagined Nancy Hanks Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's mother, to look something like this.

Kentucky Schoolhouse



Before leaving Kentucky he [Abraham] and his sister were sent for short periods, to A.B.C. Schools.

From Lincoln's autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, June 1860

Abraham and his older sister Sarah walked two miles to this schoolhouse during the "short periods" of time he attended school in Kentucky.

Dilworth's Spelling-Book



This spelling book was used for all grade levels in pioneer schools. The speller and the family Bible are two books known to have been owned by the Lincoln family in Kentucky.



Friends of the Lincolns remembered that Nancy Lincoln often read from the Bible to young Sarah and Abraham



An artist's illustration of Nancy Lincoln reading to young Sarah and Abraham.



Illustration by John Rowbotham of the Lincoln family leaving Kentucky in 1816 for a new start in Indiana.

In his tenth year he was kicked by a horse, and apparently killed for a time.



Illustration by Lloyd Ostendorf

From Lincoln's autobiography written for John L. Scripps, June 1860

According to Lincoln's law partner, Abraham "considered this one of the remarkable incidents of his life." The incident happened on a day in which young Abraham took a bag of corn to Gordon's Mill on an old gray mare. The mare wasn't happy to be hitched to the arm of the mill, and when Abe used the whip to urge the horse on, she kicked him in the head. He lay unconscious, so Miller Gordon sent for his father. Once home, Abraham apparently did not regain consciousness until the next morning.

Iconic view of Lincoln.



While here [in Indiana] Abraham went to A.B.C. Schools by litters...and now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. What he has in the way of education, he has picked up...He regrets his want of education, and does what he can to supply the want.



I was raised to farm work which I continued till I was twenty two.

From Lincoln's autobiography written for Jesse W. Fell, December 20, 1859

His stepmother remembered in 1865 that Abraham "did not like physical labor," although he did what was asked of him.

Young Lincoln indulging in his favorite pastime.



As an adult, when asked about his education, Lincoln described it as "defective," saying that "there was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education" as he was growing up in Indiana. However, according to his stepmother, "Abe read all the books he could lay his hands on—and when he came across a passage that struck him he would write it down... look at it...repeat it."

Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln



...A year afterwards his father married Mrs. Sally Johnston...a widow with 3 children. She proved a good and kind mother.

From Lincoln's autobiography written for John L. Scripps, June 1860.

When his stepmother was interviewed by William Herndon after Lincoln's death, she said, "Abe was a good boy... [he] was diligent for knowledge."



Illustration by Lloyd Ostendorf

Lincoln developing his oratorical skills.

Abraham's stepmother, stepsister, and his cousin Dennis Hanks all recalled that Abe would come home from church, gather the kids together to be his congregation, and repeat the sermon he had heard almost word for word complete with gestures. According to Dennis Hanks, "He would sometimes mount a stump—chair or box and make speeches...with stories— anecdotes & such like thing." And on September 8, 1865, Hanks wrote the following: "Lincoln would frequently make political and other speeches to the boys—he was calm—logical & clear always" Artist Lloyd Ostendorf imagined the scene this way.

Pate House



Lincoln argued his first "case" before Justice of the Peace Samuel Pate in this house near Lewisport, Kentucky. Lincoln sometimes crossed the river from Indiana to attend "law days" here. Pate encouraged him to study law and loaned Lincoln books from his own library.

The Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial



The Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is located in southern Indiana just outside of Lincoln City, Indiana. This park preserves the most tangible link to Lincoln's childhood and youth, the place where he worked side by side with his father, mourned the loss of his mother, read the books that opened his mind, and grew from a boy to a man.

Visitors may view exhibits and a brief film at the Memorial Visitor Center before heading out to visit the Pioneer Cemetery where Nancy Hanks Lincoln is buried, the Cabin Site Memorial where the hearthstones denote where the Lincoln's cabin stood, the Living Historical Farm, and the Lincoln Spring, which was the main source of fresh water for the Lincoln family.

These are just a few of the books that Lincoln is known to have read while living in Indiana.

Aesop's Fables



The Life of George Washington



Pike's Arithmetic



Manship's Hoosier Youth Statue

This statue by sculptor Paul Manship represents Lincoln at the age of twenty-one and memorializes his life in Indiana. In his right hand, Lincoln is holding an axe, "that most useful instrument" in his words, along with a book which represents his love of reading and learning. The dog at his left side, typical for a boy living in pioneer Indiana, also symbolizes Abraham's love of animals.

The four medallions on the base of the statue represent some of the major qualities the sculptor believed Lincoln possessed: charity, fortitude, justice, and patriotism.



Charity



Fortitude



Justice



Patriotism

Map of Downtown Fort Wayne



For many years this Lincoln statue has been the site of the annual area Boy Scout pilgrimage each February. The Hoosier Youth statue is located at the front entrance to the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company Home Office building on Harrison Street between Douglas and Brackenridge streets in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Knob Creek Cabin



Due to many problems with land surveys and deeds in Kentucky, families had to find a new place to live when the deed to their property was challenged. When Abraham was two years old, his family moved a few miles east to this cabin near Knob Creek. This photograph was taken many years after the Lincolns moved away.

Lincoln studying by the fire.



Abraham's stepmother remembered that he "ciphered on boards when he had no paper or no slate and when the board would get too black he would shave it off with a drawing knife and go on again."

Ferrying passengers across the Ohio resulted in his first court case.

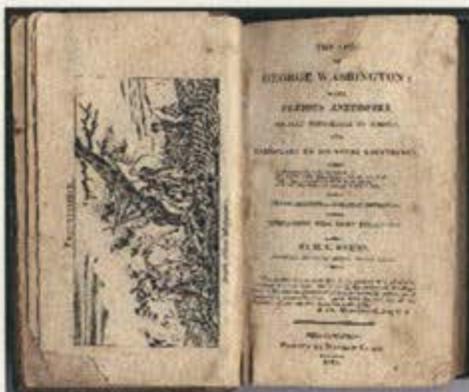


Lincoln was about eighteen years old when he earned his first dollar by taking two men and their trunks halfway across the Ohio River so they could board a passing steamer. Lincoln related this incident to his Secretary of State William Seward and noted it to be "a most important incident in my life."

The enterprise that earned Lincoln his first dollar in 1827 also earned him his first day in court. Kentucky brothers John and Len Dill had been granted the right to operate a "public ferry" across the Ohio River between Kentucky and the Anderson River in Indiana. The Dills believed that by ferrying passengers from the Indiana side of the Ohio to steamers passing in midstream, Lincoln was encroaching on that right and operating a ferry without a license. He should, they asserted, be fined according to Kentucky law a significant fine that would be paid to the Dills. They took young Lincoln to court.

Lincoln appeared before Kentucky Justice of the Peace Samuel Pate. Abraham acknowledged that under Kentucky law, only the Dills' ferry could carry people across the Ohio at the Anderson River. But, he argued, he only carried passengers from the Indiana side of the river to steamers in midstream. He did not ferry anyone across the river. The court agreed, and the charge was dropped.

Weem's Life of Washington



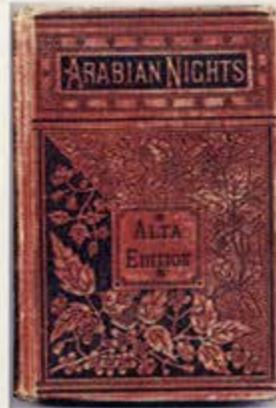
A well-known story of Lincoln borrowing a biography of George Washington from neighbor Josiah Crawford was confirmed by Crawford's wife in an interview after Lincoln's assassination. "The second work he [Abraham] did for us was work done for the injured book—Weem's Life of Washington. Lincoln in 1829 borrowed this book and by accident got it wet. I came & told honestly & exactly how it was done the story of which is often told. My husband said, 'Abe as long as it is you, you may finish the book and keep it.' Abe pulled fodder a day or two for it." *From an interview with Mrs. Crawford, September 16, 1865.*

Pigeon Creek Baptist Church

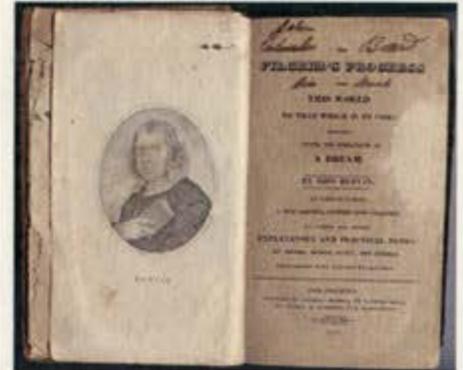


The minute book of the Little Pigeon Baptist Church, where Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln were members, provides a good record of the activities of the pioneer community. Abraham was not a church member. Young people did not join the church until they were ready to marry. Lincoln's sister Sarah Lincoln Grigsby and her infant son were buried near this church after both died during childbirth on January 20, 1828.

The Thousand and One Nights or, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments

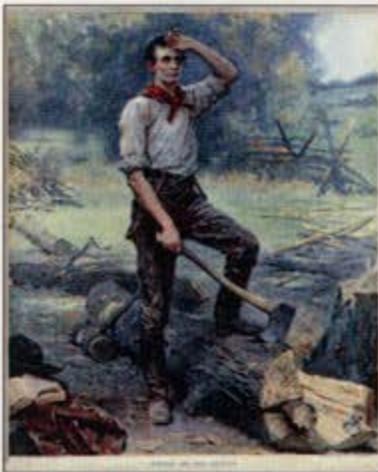


The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan



Two more Lincoln favorites.

Lincoln the Rail Splitter
by J.G. Ferris

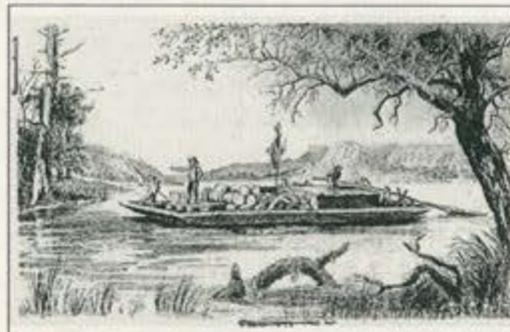


Artist's illustration of young Lincoln reading while resting. Dennis Hanks, the cousin who lived with the Lincoln family in Indiana, described Lincoln as "hungry for book[s], reading everything he could lay his hands on...He was a constant and I may say stubborn reader."

Nathaniel Grigsby, Lincoln's schoolmate and friend, said in an 1865 interview, "When he [Lincoln] went out to work any where [he] would carry his books with and would always read whilst resting."

Adventures on a Floatboat

When he [Abraham] was nineteen, still residing in Indiana, he made his first trip upon a flat-boat to New-Orleans. He was a hired hand merely; and he and a son of the owner, without assistance, made the trip. The nature of part of the cargo-load, as it was called—made it necessary for them to linger and trade along the Sugar coast—and one night they were attacked by seven negroes with intent to kill and rob them. They were hurt some in the melee, but succeeded in driving the negroes from the boat, and then "cut cable," "weighed anchor" and left.



March 1st. 1830—A. having just completed his 21st. year, his father and family, with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law, of his step-mother, left the old homestead in Indiana, and came to Illinois. Their mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams... A. drove one of the teams.

From Lincoln's autobiography written for John Scripps, June 1860

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Timeline 1861

JANUARY

- Mississippi (9th), Florida (10th), Alabama (11th), Georgia (19th), and Louisiana (26th) follow South Carolina's lead (December 1860) and secede from the Union.
- Jefferson Davis resigns from the United States Senate (21st).

FEBRUARY

- Texas secedes from the Union (1st).
- Delegates from six seceded states meet in Montgomery, Alabama, and form the Confederate States of America (Conference begins February 4th).
- Jefferson Davis is elected Provisional President of the CSA (9th) and is inaugurated on the 18th.
- President-elect leaves for his inauguration (11th) and gives his "Farewell Address" at the Springfield train depot ("I bid you an affectionate farewell."). He will speak at many stops along the way to Washington and will be criticized for leaving his train and transferring to another due to rumors of an assassination attempt in Baltimore.

MARCH

- Abraham Lincoln is inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States (4th). While strongly worded at some points, his Inaugural Address seeks reconciliation. ("We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.")

APRIL

- Confederates fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor (12th). Major Robert Anderson is forced to surrender after 34 hours of bombardment.
- Virginia secedes (17th).
- Robert E. Lee resigns his commission in the United States Army.
- Suspension of the *writ of habeas corpus* (27th) goes into effect in a corridor from Washington to Philadelphia. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney questions Lincoln's authority to take this action. The case *Ex parte Merryman* will present a legal challenge to the president's assumption of extended actions under his interpretation of the Constitutional designation as Commander-in-Chief.

MAY

- Arkansas (6th), Tennessee (7th), North Carolina (20th) secede.
- Richmond, Virginia, is chosen as the capital of the Confederate States of America.
- President Lincoln is deeply saddened when he learns of the death of his young friend, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, who was killed when he attempted to remove a Confederate flag which could be seen flying from the roof of a hotel in Alexandria.
- President and Mrs. Lincoln entertain at a levee (28th).
- Throughout the month, military regiments from the Northern states arrive in Washington.
- Lincoln reviews (30th) the arguments put forth by Chief Justice Taney regarding the Merryman case and asks Attorney General Bates for his legal opinion regarding suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.

Timeline 1861

JUNE

- President and family assemble on the White House balcony to listen to music by the Marine band. The sound of gunfire on the Virginia side of the Potomac interrupts the program (1st).
- Lincoln's former political foe from Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas dies in Chicago (3rd). The President orders government offices to close on the day of the funeral (7th), and he directs that the Executive Mansion should be draped in black for 30 days.
- Reported from the New York Tribune on June 10th: "In Christ Church, at Alexandria, today the Reverend Dr. Cornelius B. Walker, a Disunionist, preached a strong Secession sermon, significantly omitting the prayer for the President of the United States from the regular service."
- Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward visit military camps in the vicinity of Washington (16th). The President shakes hands with each member of the Cayuga New York Regiment: "He goes [at] it with both hands, and hand over hand...gives good honest hearty shake, as if he meant it."
- Military leaders met with the President and Cabinet (29th). General Irwin McDowell outlines his plans for attacking Confederate forces at Manassas (Bull Run).

JULY

- President Lincoln's Message to Congress (4th) basically reports his actions when Congress was not in session. He closes with what appears to be genuine emotion: "And having thus chosen our course, without guile, and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear, and with manly hearts."
- The First Battle of Bull Run (21st) results in a rude awakening for Union troops as they are soundly beaten and subsequently flee in disorder back to Washington.

AUGUST

- Presidential Proclamation: "...last Thursday in September next [shall be] a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting for all the people of the nation (12th). (The concept of days of fasting had been present since colonial days.)

SEPTEMBER

- Lincoln asserts presidential authority by ordering General Frémont (2nd): "It is therefore my order that you allow no man to be shot...without first having my approbation or consent."

OCTOBER

- Confederates win Battle of Ball's Bluff (21st) and Colonel Edward Baker, close friend of the Lincolns, is killed.

Timeline 1861

NOVEMBER

- Lincoln appoints George McClellan to succeed the elderly Winfield Scott as commander of the Union Army (1st)

DECEMBER

- Closing of President's Message to Congress (3rd): "With a reliance on Providence, all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us."

CULTURAL MILESTONES of 1861:

- Literature: *Great Expectations* (Dickens); *Silas Marner* (Eliot)
- Music: Abide with Me; Eternal Father, Strong to Save; Go Down Moses; Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty; John Brown's Body
- Sources: *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (Neely); *Lincoln Day by Day* (Miers); *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Basler); *Encyclopedia of American History* (Morris); *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Heidler & Heidler)

Two New Acquisitions for the Lincoln Collection of Indiana

Reported by Dale Ogden, curator at the Indiana State Museum



Gold pocket watch carried by Mary Harlan Lincoln, wife of Robert Todd Lincoln, and engraved with the name of her son, Abraham "Jack" Lincoln II.



Hand-carved toy soldiers that belonged to Abraham and Mary Lincoln's son, Thomas "Tad" Lincoln.