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Lincoln LORE

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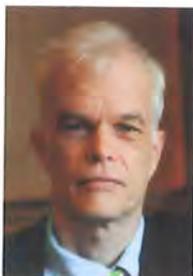
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Upcoming Events



2017 R. GERALD MCMURTRY LECTURE

Presented by Richard Brookhiser, author of
Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln

September 19, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Theater of the Allen County Public Library,
Main Library Theater

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Sponsored by Steel Dynamics, Inc.

For more information, visit www.LincolnCollection.org



6TH ANNUAL ROLLAND LECTURE

Presented by Mitch Daniels, President of
Purdue University and former Governor of
Indiana

October 17, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Theater of the Allen County Public Library,
Main Library Theater

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Sponsored by the Lupke Foundation

For more information, visit www.LincolnCollection.org



LINCOLN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES: FRIENDS, ENEMIES, AND SUCCESSORS

22nd Annual Lincoln Forum Symposium
Presentations and discussions by 19 experts
on Lincoln and His Times

November 16-18, 2017

Wyndham Gettysburg Hotel

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

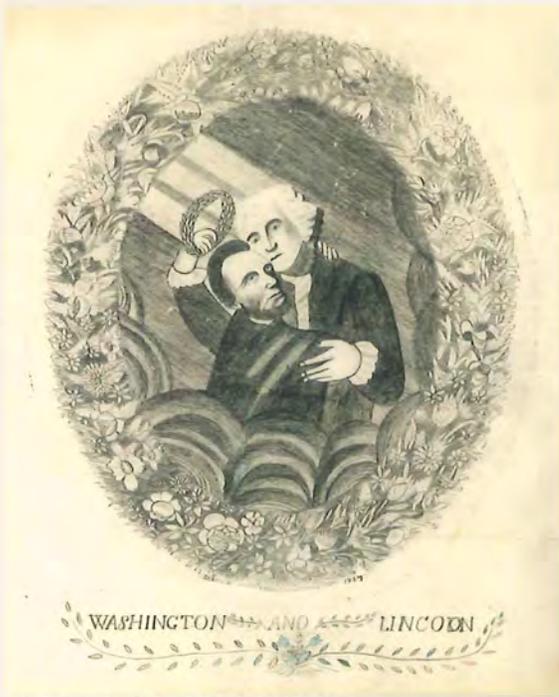
The Lincoln Forum is an organization of people who share a deep interest in the life and times of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War era. Through activities and projects including symposia, tours, student essay competitions, teacher scholarships, its newsletter *The Lincoln Forum Bulletin*, and annual awards to recognize special contributions to the field of Lincoln studies, the Forum endeavors to enhance the understanding and preserve the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

The Lincoln Forum Symposium is held each year in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 16-18, the days preceding the anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg

Address. The event is attended by scholars and Lincoln enthusiasts from all over the nation and abroad, attracting as speakers and panelists some of the most revered historians in the Lincoln and Civil War fields.

For more information on the Forum and the symposium, visit www.thelincolnforum.org.





Washington and Lincoln 71.2009.081.0778



Abraham Lincoln, The Martyr, Victorious
71.2009.081.0452



Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1865, by J. CHILES, in the
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Commemoration of Washington and Lincoln,
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Commemoration of Washington and Lincoln
LN-1118

From the Collection— Lincoln Apotheoses

The cover of this issue of *Lincoln Lore* features D.T. Wiest's apotheosis *In Memory of Abraham Lincoln: The Reward of the Just* (71.2009.081.0168). Wiest portrayed Lincoln being borne to Heaven by Immortality and Father Time as Columbia mourns. The color lithograph was published by William Smith of Philadelphia in 1865. Wiest copied an 1802 engraving titled *The Apotheosis of Washington* and substituted Lincoln's head for Washington's.

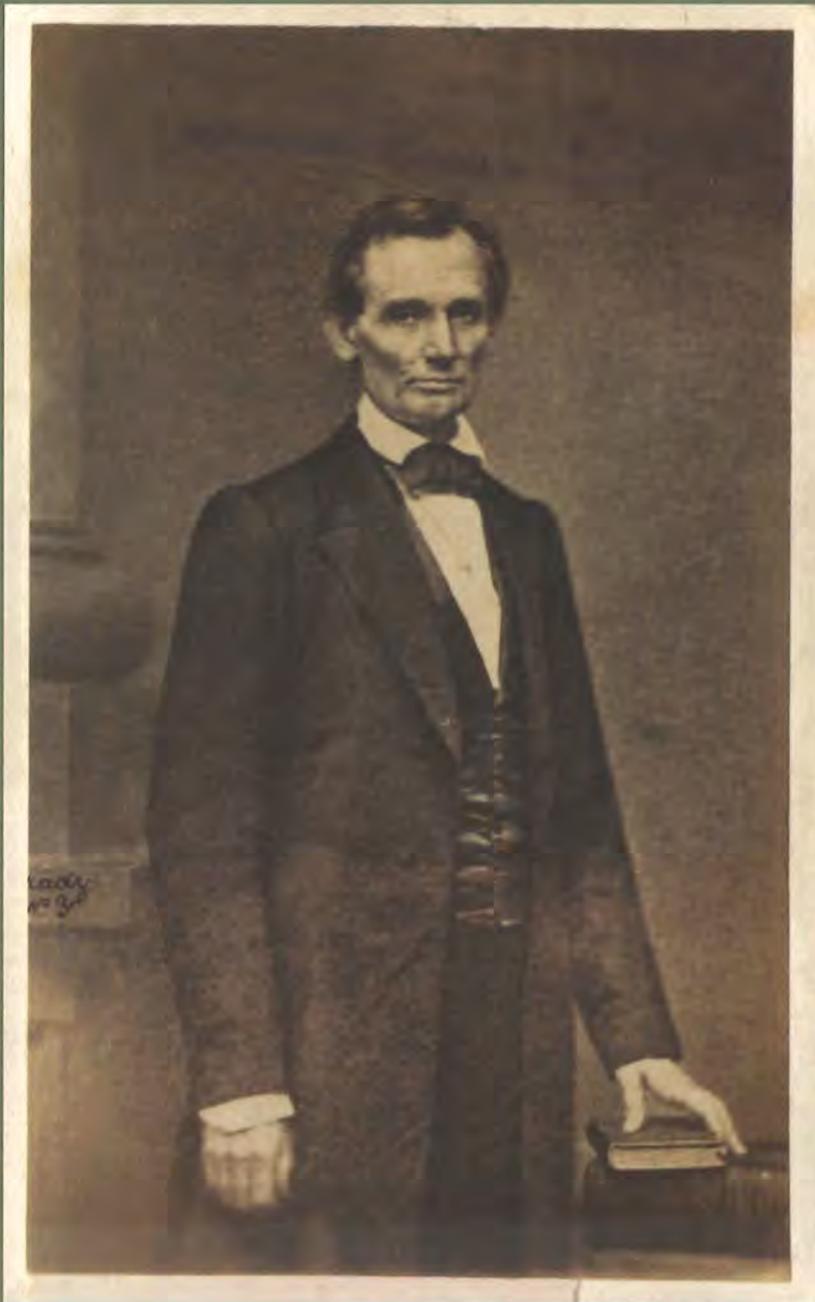
Wiest's artwork is one of several Lincoln apotheoses held by the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection. The images were published after Lincoln's assassination and served to raise the martyred president to semi-divine status—a status he shared with the nation's first president, George Washington.



Washington and Lincoln (Apotheosis) LN-1118



Abraham Lincoln and George Washington LN1127



Abraham Lincoln OC-0007

Lincoln, Science, and Democracy

BY JAMES M. CORNELIUS

Originally delivered to the International Spin Physics meeting at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, Illinois

Good evening, and thank you Dr. Perdekamp for inviting me to address such a distinguished and consequential group. Given this honor, I have attempted to draw together some strands, not to say strings, of thought in the Lincoln field which have really not been addressed directly, much less unified. Analysis of Lincoln's knowledge of science is in its infancy. Yes, he is the second-most-written about person in the English language, after Jesus, but new small bits of evidence come to our attention gradually. There is always work to do. Let me quote Lincoln himself, writing a note for himself in 1848, a year of political revolution, and a new constitution in Illinois:

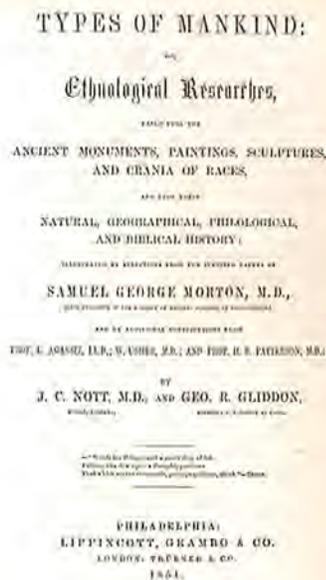
"A philosopher of [one sort] will say Niagara Falls is only the lip of the basin out of which pours all the surplus water which rains down on two or three hundred thousand square miles of the earth's surface. He will estimate with approximate accuracy, that five hundred thousand tons of water, falls with its full weight, a distance of a hundred feet each minute—thus exerting a force equal to the lifting of the same weight, through the same space, in the same time. And then the further reflection comes that this vast amount of water, constantly pouring *down*, is supplied by an equal amount constantly lifted up, by the sun; and still he says, 'If this much is *lifted up*, for this one space of two or three hundred thousand square miles, an equal amount must be lifted for every other equal space,' and he is overwhelmed in the contemplation of the vast power the sun is constantly exerting in quiet, noiseless operation of lifting water *up* to be rained *down* again." [*The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. II:10]

Here we find a man of intense curiosity, or at least reflection, trying to understand co-equal pressures of force from below and force from above. How had he got there?

ter half of writing," to disseminate those thoughts rapidly;

3. "the discovery of America in 1492," to populate a vast and fertile hemisphere with people regularly too short of food;
4. You will not guess this last, though I have already named it: "the first patent laws," including copyright, in order to give an individual a cash or reputational interest in sharing the new ideas. The dates involved here: at least 3,000 years ago; the 1430s in Germany; the year 1492; and the year 1624 in England.

A shocking scientifically rooted case came to Lincoln in 1855, in DeWitt County, 40 miles northeast of Springfield. Two white men, named Spencer and Dungey, were friends; Dungey was married to Spencer's sister. Apparently they had a dispute, and Spencer said that Dungey was "a nigger," that he had partly African descent, and therefore was illegally married to a white woman and illegally owning land illegally living in this state. Dungey said he was part Portuguese, having, all agreed, slightly darker skin than other whites; he sued Spencer for libel and hired Lincoln.



Josiah Nott and George C. Gliddon, eds, *Types of Mankind; or Ethnological Researches* (1854)

Three years ago we learned that Lincoln at this point borrowed a book, as it happens from the man with the largest book collection in the state outside of Chicago and as it happens the attorney for Spencer. The book was called *Types of Mankind*.¹ Published the year before, it consolidated all of the recent research on human skull types and historical languages and artistic styles from caves on up through Persian engravings up through European painting. Neanderthal Man had just turned up—a skull in Germany that was shaped too strangely to have been an ancestor of homo—adding fuel to this argument. Their spokesman was the leading naturalist in the country, Louis Agassiz, born in Switzerland, teaching at Harvard. The main authors were from Philadelphia and Alabama; a third was our former minister in Egypt. Their conclusions shocked people: that the Garden of Eden story in Genesis was wrong, that God could not have created Man in one day because these types of mankind and their languages and art and skulls were too different one from the other. There were in fact three creations: first the white man, then the East Asian and including the American Indians, and then the Negro. Such was the leading science of the 1850s. We do not know how many of the book's 700 pages Lincoln read, but we know that it went through five editions in seventeen years. This new theory made one exception: that somehow the peoples of northern Africa were different, some sort of non-white Africans whose culture was nearly on a par with that of Caucasians. Lincoln tore this logic apart in court. He had the jury laughing by the end, particularly by the wonderful coincidence that everyone in that day knew Shakespeare's play *Othello*, or the Moor, about a North African prince; and that Spencer's attorney, from whom Lincoln borrowed the book, was named Moore. You can

¹ *Types of Mankind; or Ethnological Researches* ... ed. by Josiah Nott and George C. Gliddon (Phila: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854). Volume with Lincoln's writing in it owned by Clinton [Ill.] Public Library.

imagine what Lincoln implied about attorney Moore's abilities, never mind his skin color.

His client Dungey was awarded \$300 in damages and remained married. We think Spencer left town. But did Lincoln believe the book? He never again spoke directly about the supposed natural inferiority of some peoples, some races, some cultures, some nations. We know that he thought Mexico was corrupted by land-holding and religious traditions; and we know that he once referred to Russia as a pure despotism; and we know that he used his political muscle to help northern farmers sell their grain and lumber to East Asia by means of a transcontinental railroad through the northern states, delaying the southerners from selling their slave-grown cotton to East Asia by means of a rail line through the southern states. But did Abraham Lincoln's famous curiosity and analysis of conditions around him, like the sight of millions of gallons of water flowing over Niagara Falls, lead him to conclusions about linguistic or anatomical or neurological variations? We do not know. It seems that he was wise enough not to speak about fields of which he was unqualified to speak.

We do know that his creed, what he called when he was twenty-nine years old, the "political religion" of the United States, was obeisance to the Founding Fathers, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, in sum, the American achievement: "Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;—let it be written in ... spelling books ... let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars." [*The Collected Works*

of *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 1:112; on 1.27.1838]

The specific application of this theory, or principle, was still about twenty years away, and I have given you some taste of what transpired in between, in addition to his getting married and having four sons and serving one term in Congress and becoming well known in law and less so in politics.

In 1858 in a debate against Stephen A. Douglas, and then in 1859 repeating these words in Ohio to support a fellow Republican, Lincoln used phrases that echoed certain favored themes, but never stated this plainly:

"I hold that ... there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas, he is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowments. But in the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, *he is my equal and the equal of every living man.*" [*The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. III: 402.

We see here that Lincoln dispenses with the scientific thought of leading men of his day and chooses instead to defend a higher law: that of human equality, vaguely Christian, somewhat transcendental, but rooted in an ideal that formed this nation's beginnings, and which, perhaps most importantly, could be explained to most people.

When pressed, as president, to choose between ending the Civil War and its historic death rate and economic destruction, he heard what many around him considered, what we might call today, a pure binary: either save the Union or end slavery where you can—you cannot and ought not do both. For Lincoln the moment of discovery came gradually

during 1862, when he saw, with some legal assistance from one or two constitutional lawyers, that a president in wartime has more powers than are exactly spelled out in the Constitution: he could seize the "property" of rebels, by acting as Commander in Chief in time of actual war. If those pieces of property were human beings, well, that's what the rebels were agreed upon already. So he rejected the binary nature of the political situation: Lincoln believed that the American Union was not complete while slavery existed within it; and he believed that while slavery existed, this was not the American Union that had been ordained in 1776, with "all men created equal," as Jefferson put it.

He was faced with other binary situations: would the war effort employ only volunteers, or would there be a draft? Would the state-level currency that everyone used continue, and the federal government go hopelessly into debt, unable to pay its soldiers; or would there be a new national paper money to delay the debts? I repeat: Lincoln understood, when almost no one around him understood or had the power to bring it about, that the chemical reaction started in 1776 had to be allowed to complete itself, or its components would collapse.

My title, then, on Science and Democracy, was put in the wrong order: Lincoln put Democracy first, whatever the scientists might find. He always used the phrase that a negro woman, or negro man, "might not" or "maybe was," leaving it open to future scientists, even political scientists, to work out something more definite. Then specifically as president he did what he could to advance science: he attended lectures at the Smithsonian; he visited the U.S. Naval Observatory at least twice, staring at the stars and wondering, just as he did when a boy in Kentucky and Indiana, what could possibly be out there; he raised the Department of Agriculture to Cabinet status, to make all this land that Columbus and others found more productive for more hun-



Stephen A. Douglas LFA-0237

gry people; he signed the law creating the National Academy of Sciences. He gave people even more options, perhaps, than had the invention of movable type because he put land and law on an even plane for all people to reach so that they could grow rich or grow fat or just sit and think, no matter their religious beliefs or condition of birth; that all could learn to write, print, discover, and take out patents and copyright. (We do not suppose that he would have agreed with what the internet has done to copyright law, and we can also say that Lincoln did not know what the power of water, or time, or people would lead to when he looked at Niagara or signed the Emancipation Proclamation; we still do not know where those forces lead.)

We do know that the goal of most societies is to treat everyone, before the law, as equals. Lincoln held together—and pardon this concluding metaphor—all thirty-six stars on the flag, together in the upper corner known as the field, and this 'unified field' of the American sky continues to inspire people throughout the world.

James Cornelius is Curator of the Abraham Lincoln Collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois.



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Lincoln through Interview by SARA GABBARD the Lens of History,

An Interview with Richard Brookhiser
author of *Founder's Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*

Sara Gabbard: I loved the statement in your Introduction that: "Other books on Lincoln have noticed his interest in the founding fathers and how he looked back to them, but here, for the first time, a historian of the founding looks ahead to Lincoln." What is the genesis of your decision to write this book?

Richard Brookhiser: I was interested in Lincoln for a long time—who isn't? Richard Weaver's chapters on "Abraham Lincoln and the Argument from Definition" and "Edmund Burke and the Argument from Circumstance" in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* showed me in my early twenties how important getting first principles right was for Lincoln. Harry Jaffa's *The Crisis of the House Divided* made the same point dramatically. More recently I was deeply moved by Michael Knox Beran's *Forge of Empires*, and amused and deeply moved by Andrew Ferguson's *Land of Lincoln*.

I never thought of writing a book though. There are so many out there that it would be like showing up at the third day of Gettysburg with a shotgun. Then an old friend, Prof. Akhil Amar at Yale Law School, said



Thomas Jefferson OC-1788

he knew what my next book should be: a book on Abraham Lincoln and the founders, called "Founders' Son." I thought about it for about ten seconds and realized that it was brilliant.

I should add that Akhil also thought of my current book, a bio of John Marshall. If he thinks of a third, I will have to give him a percentage.

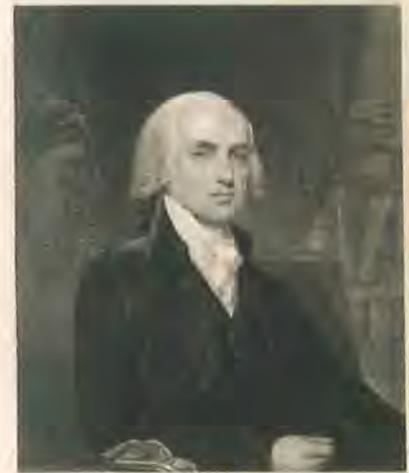
SG: Did Abraham Lincoln ever comment on the founders and slavery or on the "3/5 Clause" of the Constitution?

RB: Lincoln was among other things a good lawyer. He talked about his evidence, not the other side's. What he hammered on, in the Constitution, was Article V, allowing the slave trade to be abolished by 1808, and the fact that the words "slave" and "slavery" never appear (he knew, from James Madison's notes on the Constitutional Convention, that the omission was deliberate).

He wanted to show the Founders agreeing with him, not disagreeing with him, and he argued, I believe correctly, that their agreements were more important.

SG: For some reason, I have always been fascinated by Lincoln's Lyceum speech. I loved your description that it was "well-planned but stiff and a little fancy, like a brand-new suit." Please comment on the Lyceum movement itself. Also, was Lincoln "looking ahead" when he wrote the talk? Was he establishing his reputation for rhetoric?

RB: The first Lyceum was Aristotle's school in Athens. Wasn't it wonderfully pompous and high-flown, in a very American way, to have Lyceums in all these frontier towns—half intellectually ambitious, half P.T. Barnum? You could hear visiting speakers—Emerson was a veteran of the Lyceum circuit—and you could practice speaking yourself. If Herndon was right about Lincoln's ambition—



James Madison

James Madison 71200908510806

and Herndon was right about a lot of things—then Lincoln was always thinking ahead.

SG: In regard to the much-admired Founders, did Lincoln ever mention the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions?

RB: This raises the problem of Thomas Jefferson—so inspiring to Lincoln and other opponents of slavery, and so disappointing. Jefferson loved freedom, but he was also a populist who loved states' rights. Madison's Virginia Resolutions are more circumspect than Jefferson's Kentucky Resolutions. If Madison had lived until 1860 he would not have been a disunionist. Jefferson would have—unless Madison pulled him back.

Lincoln accepted the Federalist and Whig notion that the Constitution had been an act of the American people, not of the states. Therefore the nation was a union, not a league.

SG: Has history been fair in its portrayal of Thomas Lincoln?

RB: Depends on the historian. My sense is that we are more fair these days than we were in mid-century. Thomas and Abraham were differ-



John Quincy Adams OC-1793

ent sorts of people—so different that neither one could acknowledge the ways in which they were similar (for instance, they both told a great story).

Abraham's step-mother understood him better than his own father. We owe a lot to Sarah Bush Lincoln.

SG: Did Lincoln ever comment on the post-presidential career in Congress of John Quincy Adams?

RB: Not that I know of. He was on the House floor when JQA had his fatal stroke.

Lincoln and JQA are two links in my personal chain to the Revolution. When I was in college I heard a talk by Alger Hiss, the communist spy. When Hiss was a young man he clerked for Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. When Holmes was an officer in the Union Army he (allegedly) told President Lincoln to "Get down, you damn fool!" when Lincoln looked over a parapet at Jubal Early's raid on Washington. When Lincoln served his one term in Congress, one of his colleagues was former president John

Quincy Adams. And when Adams was a boy he heard the cannon and saw the smoke of the Battle of Bunker Hill from the Adams house across the bay in Braintree. Only four degrees of separation—not very far.

SG: Did he comment on the writings of Thomas Paine?

RB: When Lincoln wrote his youthful Paine-ite pamphlet on the absurdities of Christianity, Samuel Hill, an older friend, asked to see it, and promptly put it in a stove. You didn't win elections in frontier Illinois by parading Thomas Paine's views on religion. Later in his life, Lincoln's views on religion changed.

SG: While not considered to be a founding father, Henry Clay had an enormous influence on Lincoln. Please comment on that relationship, especially on Clay's proposals for the American System.

RB: Mary Lincoln knew the Clays. Lincoln himself was from Kentucky, as was his best friend Joshua Speed. Clay was the Whig colossus, especially in Lincoln's part of the world.

Clay had an economic theory—a common American market, protected by tariffs, and diversified with manufacturing nationwide—that Lincoln accepted. Clay popularized the phrase "self-made man," to describe the American entrepreneur, which resonated with Lincoln. The rural life that his father pursued struck him as a dead end. Clay was a gaudy, successful man who pushed a more attractive ideal.

Lincoln's admiration was tempered, however. His own rhetorical style was not Clay's—it was much simpler, and cleaner. Clay's political tactics were also a lesson in how not to run for president—Clay was always out-smarting himself with last minute maneuvers that backfired. This is probably one reason Lincoln was so circumspect between his first election and his first inauguration.

Dearest to Lincoln was the wonderful paragraph in Clay's speech on the American Colonization Society, which ends by saying that the desire for freedom is planted in the human heart. That was Clay reaching for first principles—the kind of thing that spoke to Lincoln.

SG: Please comment on your statement: "But the main problem for Lincoln in his dealings with the founding fathers, as he (unwittingly) neared the end of his life, was that they were not quite enough for him."

RB: Lincoln reaches the White House, and his presidency is a parade of death—deaths upon deaths upon deaths. And he himself is one of the men most responsible (he could have just let the South go after all). How did he find himself in that spot? How did the country?

There was one Father who could explain it—indeed, Who willed it. The last years of his life—in the midst of the burdens, momentous and be-



HENRY CLAY,
Entered according to Act of Congress, 1873, by
M. P. Simons, Philada.

Henry Clay OC-0496

wildering, of running a war, running a cabinet, dealing with Republicans, dealing with Democrats, dealing with Mary, plotting his re-election, talking to visitors, visiting the injured—was a wrestle with God and His intentions for Abraham Lincoln, and for America.

Making the Universe is a bigger deal than making the country. So in his extremity Lincoln looked to God.

SG: Parson Weems was a most interesting character. As an intellectual and a historian, do you object to the fact that he sometimes made up stories and presented them as history?

RB: I don't believe he believed he was making anything up. He clearly did some leg work and interviewing to write his biography of George Washington. He presents the stories of the cherry tree and throwing a stone across the Rappahannock as authenticated facts. Throwing the stone was certainly possible. When I made

"Rediscovering George Washington," my documentary with Michael Pack for PBS, we took some pitchers from the local high school to the site of Ferry Farm, where Washington lived as a boy, and had them try to throw stones across. Two of them could do it.

Weems also dramatized, but that is a venerable historical technique, going back to Thucydides and Herodotus.

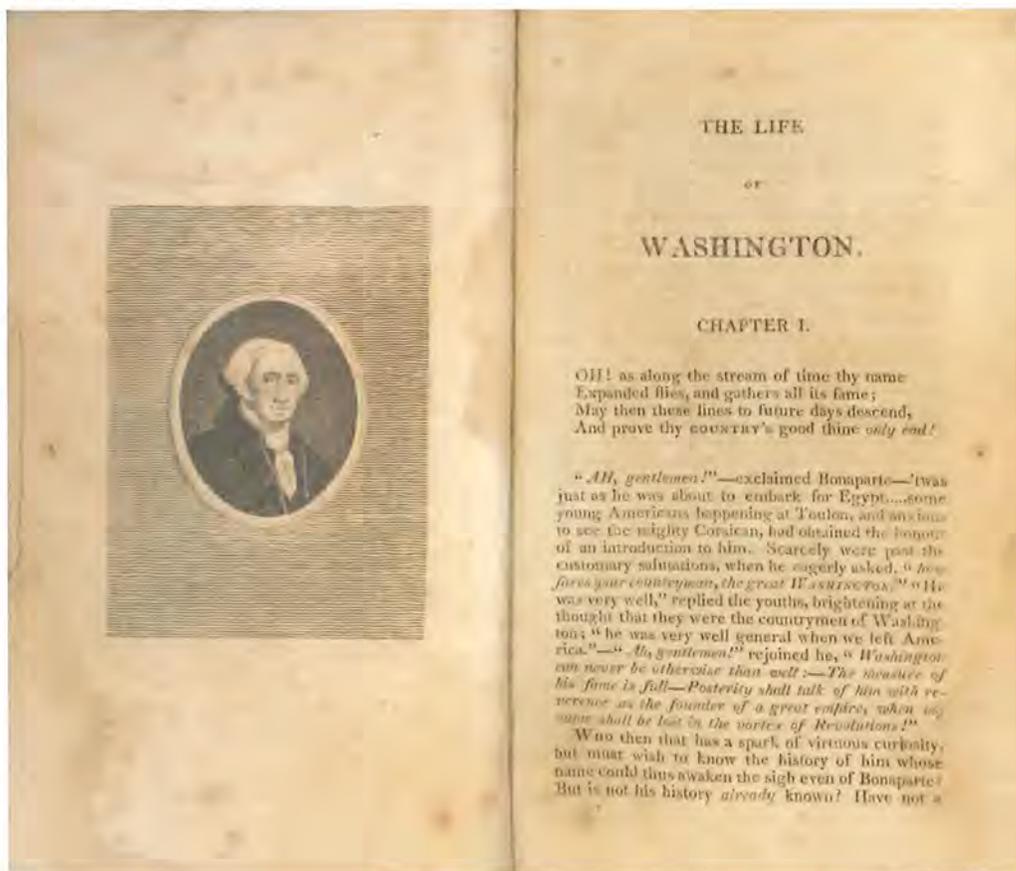
SG: Are historians and the public consistent in their treatment of the founders? Do specific issues make us harken back to their words and actions? Does their popularity wax and wane? If so, can you find a reason?

RB: The Founders are not that distant from us (see my four degrees of separation—from Bunker Hill, above). Their language is broadly similar to ours (a lot closer than Shakespeare). We still inhabit their institutions—Congress, the president, and so on.

We use them as projective screens—looking for issues on which they agree with us, imagining they agreed when they didn't. We do the same things that Lincoln did (he was more careful).

Their reputations fluctuate like stocks. Thomas Jefferson had a great sixty years, from the thirties, when FDR put him on the nickel and dedicated the Jefferson Memorial, to the nineties, when the DNA test confirmed that he had children with his slave Sally Hemmings. Hamilton is now riding high, thanks to Lin-Manuel Miranda. But they are all blue chips; you will never go broke holding them.

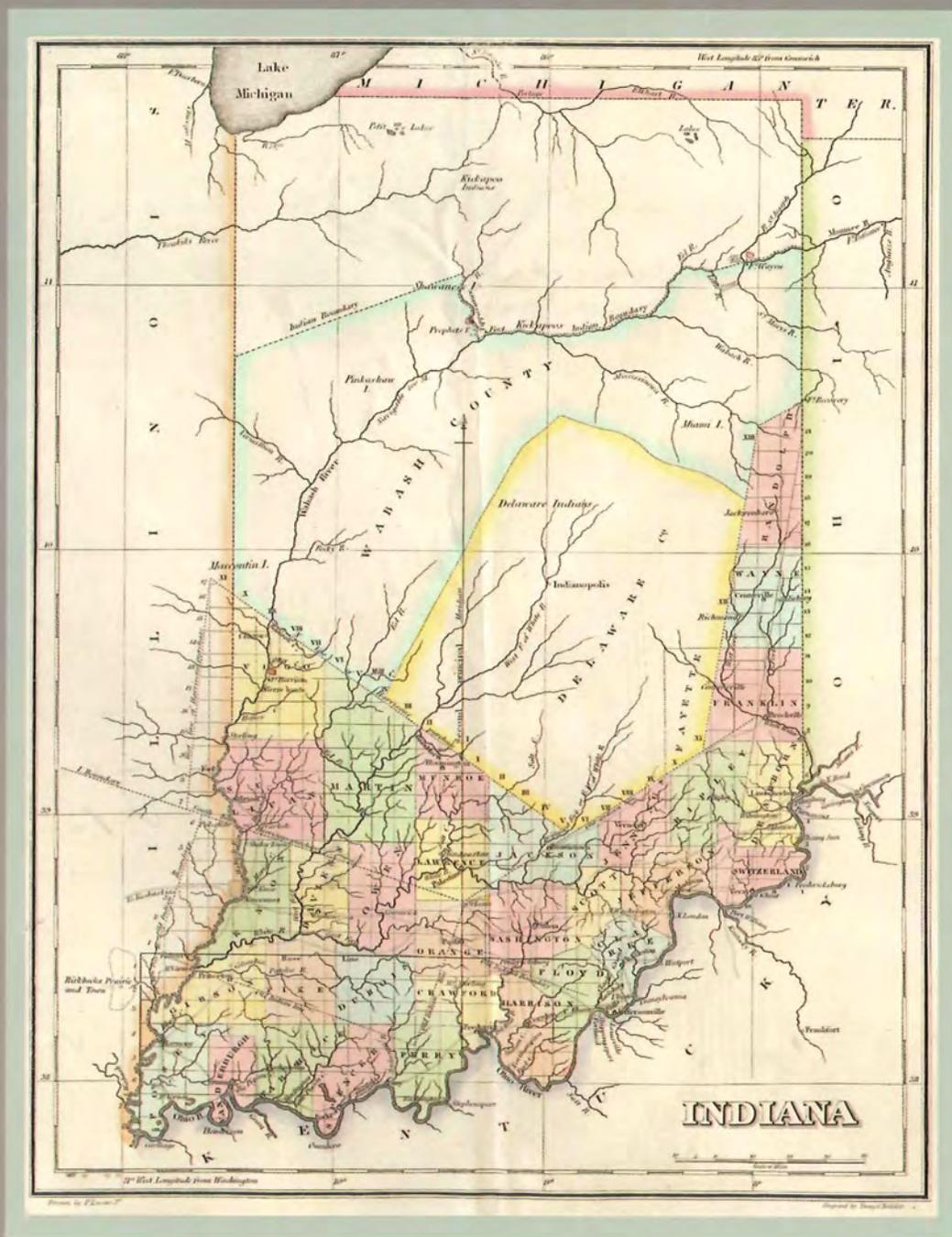
Richard Brookhiser is the Senior Editor of the National Review. Based upon his book, Founders' Son: A Life of Lincoln, he will give the 2017 R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on September 19.



Lincoln through the Lens of History,

Interview by SARA GABBARD

An Interview with Brian Dirck on Lincoln in Indiana



Sara Gabbard: It appears as if the Lincoln family in Virginia was relatively well-off financially. Please speak to the circumstances which drove frontiersmen ever Westward.

Brian Dirck: Of course, reasons would vary from one person to the next, but I suspect that for most Americans, "the West" meant an opportunity for increasing their prosperity and their lot in life, primarily through land acquisition. Most of these people were farmers, after all, and for a farmer in this age, more acreage meant more money, not just for themselves but also for their children.

I certainly think this was Lincoln's grandfather's motive; after all, he wasn't doing too badly at all in Virginia, accumulating a nice collection of acreage and property. But the West meant more, and it meant the American Dream of constantly striving to better one's lot in life.

Moreover, it is worth remembering—and I point this out in my book—that there is so much we don't know about Lincoln's early family history. Lincoln himself once complained that he didn't know much about where his family came from, either. We do know from the barebones available records that financially his grandfather wasn't very badly off at all. But it is certainly possible he moved westwards for all sorts of reasons that we don't know and can never know: restlessness, ambition, perhaps even a sense of adventure.

SG: Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd both experienced the death of their mothers at an early age. Please comment on the relationship that Abraham had with his stepmother, as opposed to Mary's situation.

BD: Their relationships with their stepmothers were as different as night and day; and I wonder if this might actually have something to do with their respective relationships with their fathers. We actually don't know a lot about Abraham's relationship with his mother, but we do know that his relationship with his father Thomas was never very close and became increasingly strained. I suspect that Abraham's stepmother Sarah, who was in some ways quite different from Thomas, provided a kind of welcome respite from the strain between Abraham and Thomas. Sarah was



Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln LFA-0565

kind, seems to have taken a special liking to Abraham, and encouraged his reading, even providing him with books. Where Mary is concerned, the family dynamic was different. She was close to her father, but then he remarried when she was only eight, and her new stepmother seems to have been a distant, somewhat insecure sort. Worse, she came between Mary and her father in a variety of ways, engendering that classic stepmother/intruder dynamic. I admit this is speculative, but it makes sense of their very different reactions to their stepmothers.

This is delving into the psychological realm, which I try to do with a very light touch in my book. More generally, it is so difficult to know exactly what to make of how Abraham and Mary really reacted as children to the early loss of their mothers. Where Abraham is concerned, the historical record is largely silent; whereas we know from eyewitness testimony that he openly wept when his sister later died in childbirth, we have no record of a similar response to the death of his mother. He was considerably younger, and one suspects—given what we know of his later personality—that he probably kept his feelings largely to himself.

SG: Has Thomas Lincoln been treated fairly by historians?

BD: I think the early biographies of Lincoln have a tendency to exaggerate his negative qualities—his poverty, lack of education, harsh treatment of Abraham—probably because these early works that were written, say, fifty to seventy-five years or so

after his death, were still in the shadow of the great Lincoln mythos, the impoverished American boy made good. Many of these authors wanted to make Lincoln's rise seem all the greater, even Divinely ordained, by making his origins seem all the more humble. Thus he wasn't just poor, he was absolutely dirt poor; he didn't just lack an education, he had none whatsoever, etc. And his father wasn't just poor and difficult; he was "white trash" who actively hindered his son's development.

Fortunately, the more recent biographies have generally been more balanced and careful. We now understand context so much better, as well; the rise of social history's importance in recent decades has led Lincoln scholars to be more attuned to setting Thomas within the larger milieu of early nineteenth century American life. This is certainly what I tried to do in my book, showing that while Thomas may have been in the lower strata of Indiana farm life, he was not by any means in the lowest possible strata; he was not what they called "white trash" back then. He ran a reasonably successful Indiana farm, his children did not starve, and he was by all accounts a sober, church-going man.

There has also been an ongoing tradition that Thomas was actually physically abusive towards his son. He probably did strike him on occasion, but physical punishment was practically universal among parents of that time. This is not to excuse such an approach, but it does seem a stretch to make of him an abusive parent.

The bottom line is this: I think modern Lincoln scholarship has become much fairer to Thomas, and most modern biographies of Abraham usually try to achieve a careful, balanced assessment of the man.

SG: Was Thomas directly or indirectly responsible, at least in part, for Abraham's views on slavery?

BD: That's a very interesting question. It actually has a couple of layers. One layer is that, according to Abraham himself, his father left Kentucky at least partly on account of slavery, and we do know that the Lincolns attended churches run by antislavery ministers. So, the thinking might go that Thomas was antislavery, and he therefore instilled his antislavery be-

liefs in his son. Perhaps. But we do not know just how antislavery Thomas himself might have been; yes, he left Kentucky partly because of slavery, but also due to defective land titles in that state. And if you look at the totality of Abraham's life, he seems to have been much more likely to reject Thomas's values. Thomas was a farmer, and Abraham didn't like farming. Thomas was a carpenter, and from what we can tell, Abraham wasn't fond of carpentry. Thomas was deeply religious, Abraham not so much. Thomas loved hunting, Abraham did not.

But there is a second layer, which suggests that Thomas' treatment of Abraham echoed slavery, at least in



Thomas Lincoln LN-1475

Abraham's mind. Abraham Lincoln tended to define slavery in economic terms: it was the unjust deprivation of the slave from the fruits of his/her labor. His father insisted on keeping all the money Abraham earned from the various odd jobs he picked up in Indiana as a boy and youth, and we do know this rankled very deeply with Abraham. In fact, during the war he vaguely alluded to this, saying he sort of knew what it felt like to be a "slave," given his father's treatment of him in this manner. So, maybe Thomas contributed to Lincoln's views of slavery in this rather unexpected way.

SG: Please comment on the itinerant teachers who traveled in Southern Indiana at the time of Abraham Lincoln's brief episodes of public schooling. When the opportunity for such education presented itself, did most of the families in Southern Indiana take ad-

vantage of it? Did Thomas Lincoln object?

BD: Context again is so important here. In my book I point out that early Hoosiers did in fact value education for their children. The state was organized under the Northwest Ordinance, which set aside land to help fund public education, and there were sporadic early attempts to create a better and more substantial system for schooling young children in the state. But there was never enough money, and these laudable attempts to educate children were always competing with the need for those same children to help work the family farm and put food on the table. Families wanted their children educated; but they needed to eat, too, and the latter usually beat out the former in terms of priorities.

This meant that any education a child like Abraham received was pretty slapdash, at best. There was no licensing system for teachers; so, as Abraham himself later pointed out, if someone showed up in the area who seemed to be able to read and write and do basic math, well, that person must be a competent teacher, right? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. And those local farming families had to pay these teachers out of their own pockets, in areas with little spending money, so no wonder they didn't last very long.

As far as Thomas' views are concerned: the longstanding myth that he tried to actively hinder Abraham's education is overblown. Abraham's stepmother herself contradicts this, declaring that her husband did not like to interrupt Abraham's studies if he could help it. But sometimes he couldn't help it; Thomas needed Abraham's labor on that farm, and as I suggested earlier, in a choice between reading or eating, eating wins every time.

SG: Please explain the fact that, even though he disliked farming, Lincoln's poem "My Childhood Home I See Again" appears to express a certain affection for the land itself.

BD: That's an interesting poem, in many ways; it possesses multiple meanings. There is first that whiff of nostalgia, as your question suggests. He was visiting Indiana for the first time in quite a while on a political speaking trip when he stopped in Spencer County, visited his old home

and his mother's grave, and wrote that poem. But I actually think there are other, stronger impulses in the poem than nostalgia; in fact, much of that poem has a very sad, mournful quality. Mortality is a strong underlying theme, as well as a reference to a young man named Gentry from the area who went insane. It is always hard to say just what is in someone's head and heart, of course, but that poem can be seen as evidence of how Lincoln's Indiana home evoked some very sad memories. He himself later called the gravesite of his mother "the most unpoetical spot on earth."

SG: Is information from Dennis Hanks reasonably accurate?

BD: Dennis is a worrisome source, no question. His memory and veracity are even questioned by other sources in the Herndon-Weik collection. I also think there are places in his interviews in which he tends to exaggerate or indulge in hyperbole: his description of Nancy Lincoln's death, for example, seems just a bit too sentimental and rather maudlin. But in the broader outlines of his testimony, when his recollections can be checked against other sources, he generally proves to be accurate. And he is very nearly the only source we have on the Lincolns' initial arrival in Indiana. So, after wrestling with this quite a bit, I decided in the end to carefully use him, but to make clear in the text that there are these shortcomings and cautionary features of his testimony.

SG: What became of the Gentry family?

BD: They were major figures in Lincoln's neighborhood; he himself later identified them as such. James Gentry was a local farmer who had been selling various goods from his farm and then eventually used that business as a basis to start a general store, around which the town of Gentryville eventually grew. It was James Gentry's son who had gone insane and was memorialized in Lincoln's poem. Lincoln eventually became good friends with another of James' sons, Allan, with whom he piloted a flatboat of goods to New Orleans and back in 1828—a pretty interesting trip, during which time Abraham and Allan were forced to fend off an attack by thieves bent on stealing their cargo. This also may well be the first time Lincoln actually saw a slave market,

though there is no reliable evidence to that effect.

SG: Was the physical topography of Southern Indiana similar to the land the Lincolns left in Kentucky? Was land in Illinois about the same, or was the soil there of better quality for farming?

BD: Indiana had a well-deserved reputation for being very difficult land to clear for farming, more so than Kentucky. It was heavily wooded with very tangled underbrush, and the soil tended to be more rocky than Kentucky. All of this combined to make for cheaper land prices than south of the Ohio River, and numerous eye-witnesses claimed that Indiana's land wasn't as good as Kentucky. The wildlife in Indiana was more dangerous, as well: bears, boars, and especially panthers. All told, Indiana had a reputation as a wilder, more hazardous place than Kentucky. Thomas was taking a chance moving his family to Indiana.

SG: In your research, did you come across any evidence that would explain Lincoln's eventual brief comment to William Herndon about his mother being descended from a Virginia planter?

BD: That's actually a very interesting little story. I read that story from Herndon, of course; he claimed it was a conversation that took place with Lincoln during a buggy ride. I also knew that there were rumors regarding Nancy's illegitimacy among various neighbors, but none of this was substantiated. I was prepared to write as much in my book, pointing out that there were rumors, but none could be proven. For that matter, we have only Herndon's word that this conversation took place.

But then, literally the day after I submitted the final draft of the manuscript to the press, I was contacted by my editor, who was in turn contacted by a gentleman involved in a project to use modern DNA science and prove, once and for all, Nancy's origins. Their findings were that Nancy Hanks Lincoln was in fact the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and an unknown man.

SG: Please describe Herndon's eventual visit to Indiana for in-



Dennis Hanks #2611

terviews regarding Lincoln's life there. Do you think that (1) the memories of interviewees were accurate and (2) Herndon's methods and subsequent conclusions were reasonable?

BD: This question has long bedeviled Lincoln scholars. The Herndon-Weik collection is both necessary and frustrating. It constitutes the bulk of primary source material on Lincoln's early years; without it, we would have very little with which to work. On the other hand, Herndon was not a professional historian, he carried his fair share of biases and blind spots, and no doubt those biases rubbed off, at least a bit, on the people he interviewed.

So, what do we do about that? Some scholars suggest that we throw out the Herndon-Weik material altogether, but this is hardly practical, and in fact I think that is an abnegation of our professional responsibilities. I also find it interesting that very often scholars who want the Herndon-Weik collection and the other so-called "reminiscences" dismissed do so when they find their contents inconvenient for some argument they wish to pursue.

I think that, at the end of the day, we as Lincoln scholars simply do the job we've been trained to do. Carefully weigh the evidence in front of us. Is it internally consistent? Is it contradicted by other, more reliable evidence (when available)? Is it logical? Does it comport with what we know about life in nineteenth-century Indiana?

We use this evidence with care; but we must use it.

SG: Why was land ownership in Indiana more reliable than in Kentucky?

BD: The Northwest Ordinance. It was passed by Congress in 1787—before the Constitution was ratified, in fact—and it provided a stable grid system for surveying and land sales in the Northwest Territory, of which Indiana was part. Kentucky, on the other hand, lacked such a system; and this meant that survey marks were not uniform, and depended upon the vagaries of topography, etc. Kentucky surveying was subsequently open to all sorts of accidents and abuse—and litigation. An old saying in Lincoln's time was, "He who purchases land in Kentucky will also purchase a lawsuit."

SG: Please assess the impact which Indiana had on Abraham Lincoln's later life.

BD: I think that, at bottom, what Indiana gave Lincoln was, for lack of a better term, grit. In my book I place an emphasis on Indiana's tough, no-nonsense environment of hardship and difficulty. Lincoln learned perseverance in the face of adversity from practically the moment he set foot in Indiana. Lincoln himself associated Indiana with wilderness adversity, and when we add to it the twin tragedies of his mother's and his sister's death, Indiana was a personal trial for him in so many ways. We also see in the Indiana Lincoln early manifestations of some of the key character traits he later displayed as a politician and a president: his ambition, his desire to acquire knowledge and an education for himself, his innate understanding of the common person's problems, and his dislike of overbearing authority, shades of his relationship with his father. A study of Lincoln in Indiana is fundamentally a study of Lincoln as a child, and we can see here so many traits in the child that would later make the man.

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Photo by Ed Green, Vice President, Friends of the Historic Charleston Foundation

Fort Sumter:

BY ROGER COSBEY

A War Won, A Vision Lost

Charleston's front porch, its harbor, has often peered out upon a hostile world. And since water magnifies what it touches, even events, Charlestonians see the harbor as a fine place to make a point or send a message. Pirate hangings on the waterfront, conspicuous mansions, and the spectacular bombardment of Fort Sumter reveal that Charleston has a certain aristocratic pugnaciousness.

It was no happenstance then that on April 14, 1865, the Lincoln Administration—in what was essentially its last official act—chose a pile of rubble in Charleston's harbor to send a message of its own, to herald a new epoch. Everything about the event was to show that after four years God's "Truth," as proclaimed in the chorus of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, had finally arrived at what was sometimes called, "the nursery of treason." (*Harper's Weekly*, March 4, 1865, p. 130).

Four years before, on April 14, 1861, Fort Sumter's commander, Major Robert Anderson, hauled down its flag in surrender. Anderson kept it, however, and both he and it became symbols of patriotic defiance. Exactly

four years later, at President Lincoln's direction, Anderson, now a retired Major General, would solemnly hoist that same flag over what was left of the post he once commanded.

Fort Sumter's strategic value ended, of course, when the Confederates gave up Charleston. Now, however, the Lincoln administration would recast the former epicenter of the nation's great struggle into a vision of America's destiny. The date, the flag, the famous guests, a provocative speaker, would all have meaning and purpose, but not to trumpet victory.

Just weeks earlier, at his second inaugural, Lincoln had briefly commented upon the "satisfactory and encouraging" progress of the military. Lincoln no longer saw the task expressly in those terms, but rather as one of "bind[ing] up the nation's wounds" and "achiev[ing] a lasting peace." Now weeks later, and if for only a day, Fort Sumter would stand for the proposition that the nation had not only endured but was about to have a "new birth of freedom." Hosting Lincoln's vision of a meaningful and lasting peace was a lofty role for the old fort.

Begun in 1829, Fort Sumter was part of a string of similar installations along the nation's coast. The concept was simple: America had only a small, professional army, but its troops could be moved quickly to one of the nearly vacant coastal forts, like Sumter, and blunt any attack with artillery already in place there. (Detzer, 102).

The pentagon-shaped fort in Charleston's harbor was to sit on an existing shoal with massive amounts of rock and granite added from the North. Positioned within the harbor's throat, Sumter's cannon fire would overlap those in existing fortifications, such as Fort Moultrie, a relic of the Revolutionary War on the other side of the channel. Once the new fort was built, Charleston would be nearly impregnable from the sea.

The fort's construction began slowly, slowed even more because of funding issues, and once stopped completely over a land title dispute. Meanwhile, improvements in the size and power of naval artillery made the original plans obsolete. To keep pace with technology, Fort Sumter's original dimensions grew to house 650 men, its three gun tiers rising to a height of fif-

ty feet on over two acres of land. (*Ibid*, 105; McPherson, 264). Yet even after three decades, except for a caretaker and an occasional work crew, Sumter remained unfinished and unoccupied. (Doubleday, 9; *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* [hereafter, CW], IV:158).

Just as Fort Sumter's foundation began to appear above the harbor's waves, two competing forces likewise emerged and clashed: the Southern intellectualization of slavery as a "positive good" and the noisy harangue of American abolitionism. (Donald, 187; McPherson, 8, 56; Foner, 20-24) As an entire generation of Charlestonians watched Fort Sumter's slow progress three miles away, America engaged in an increasingly strident national debate over slavery, states' rights, and the limits of federalism. As yet, however, no one could imagine that Fort Sumter would serve as the eventual spark for all the dry tinder stored up in Charleston.

Like many places in the South, slavery was deeply woven into Charleston's culture, society and economy; indeed, it gave metronomic regularity to the very rhythm of everyday life. (McPherson, 56; Smith, 11-13). Moreover, Southern legal scholars applied a gloss of legitimacy to slavery by arguing for Constitutional protection, while Southern state legislators hushed dissent by imposing penalties for simply uttering abolitionist doctrines. (Fehrenbacher, 28-36) Similarly, prominent Southern ideologues were heard espousing proslavery "philosophy" and "theology." (Foner, 97). In sum, well before the first brick was laid at Fort Sumter, slavery was an entrenched economic interest. (*ibid*, 14-15).

Charlestonians, like many Southerners, were wary of a federal government often seen as not only grudging in its recognition of slavery's legitimacy but also unduly intrusive into the realms of state sovereignty. Perhaps that perception was more acute in Charleston than elsewhere, however, because the national government was not an incidental, distant presence there. Although the forts were obvious reminders of an omnipresent national government, so too were the U.S. Custom House (with its federal

tariffs), the U.S. Marine Hospital (built and operated by a federal tax on the wages of merchant sailors), and the Charleston Arsenal.

Surprisingly, it was a benign institution, the post office, that actually sparked violence. As Fort Sumter's construction crept along, an unexpected invasion of radical ideas came ashore aided by a new technological advance, the steam-driven printing press. Abolitionists weaponized this new marvel, using it to turn out reams of anti-slavery material. (*Ibid*, 20) The United States postal system became their delivery system, and soon mail bags full of anti-slavery newspapers and pamphlets filled Southern post offices for free distribution.

Outraged that an arm of the federal government would carpet bomb the South with something it saw as dangerously incendiary, a mob stormed Charleston's post office in July 1835, ripping open mail bags and burning abolitionist pamphlets in the public square. (Miller, 94).

In ironic contrast, Charleston's forts were seen as places for civilian relaxation and recreation, more like public parks than military installations. (Detzer, 31-2; Smith, 20). But that attitude swiftly changed with Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 and the perceived rise of a "Black Republican Party." (McPherson, 232-33). To Southerners, anti-slavery forces would now control all the operating levers of the federal government.

(*Ibid.*).

South Carolina's adoption of an Ordinance of Secession on December 20, 1860, months before Lincoln's inauguration, was a watershed. Many South Carolinians now thought of themselves as citizens of an independent republic, and that made Charleston's federal enclaves irritating reminders that the United States government did not recognize its existence.

Meanwhile, Anderson and his eighty-five men, holed up in Fort Moultrie, nervously watched the boiling fervor of secessionism in Charleston across the harbor. Anderson knew that a determined ground attack on his position would likely be successful. General-in-Chief Winfield Scott recognized the danger too, describing the old fort as "practically defenseless." (CW, IV:158). While President James Buchanan dithered, Anderson took it upon himself to abandon Moultrie the day after Christmas 1860, in favor of the more defensible Fort Sumter. (McPherson, 265). The next morning, after quietly moving to their new home the night before, Anderson and his men raised the fort's large garrison flag while their band played "The Star Spangled Banner" and their chaplain, Matthias Harris, offered a prayer. (Detzer, 129).

Charlestonians saw Anderson's move as an outrageous violation of President Buchanan's pledge to maintain the status quo while negotiations



Map of Charleston Harbor, Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War 71200908406574

ensued for the hand-over of federal property. (*Ibid*, 124; McPherson, 265-66). Unwilling to trust such assurances any longer, armed Carolinians swiftly occupied Fort Moultrie and the Charleston Arsenal. (Holzer, 163). Anderson and his men were alone in an awakened and hostile land.

Anderson's relocation to Fort Sumter, while militarily sound, also magnified the evolving drama in Charleston's harbor and complicated an already difficult political situation. To those in the North, Anderson and his men were sentinels on a distant rampart, valiant defenders of the nation's sovereignty. (McPherson, 265-67). South Carolinians saw Fort Sumter as a matter of sovereignty too, and to many in the South it was time to remove this federal thorn. Practically overnight, an obscure little man-made island in Charleston's harbor became the object of a tug-of-war, a chess piece on a very big board. (Detzer, 129).

In March, Abraham Lincoln, the newly-inaugurated president, stepped into the crisis. Although he saw that surrendering the fort was the same as giving up the Union, he also knew that within weeks Anderson's troops would be starved out of Fort Sumter. Lincoln had few options, and time was running out.

Ultimately he decided to resupply Anderson by sea and to inform the Confederates of the peaceful effort. (McPherson, 268). Historians still argue over Lincoln's motives and purposes, but the gambit was shrewd. (*Ibid*, 272, n.78). He now forced Jefferson Davis to quickly decide whether it would be peace or war. Davis, also under pressure to end the stalemate, chose war. (*Ibid*, 273). He instructed the commander of Charleston's defenses to attack the fort before the supply fleet arrived. (*Ibid*.). The cannonade began on April 12, 1861, and Fort Sumter surrendered thirty-four hours later.

As Anderson later telegraphed to the Secretary of War, his troops marched out of the fort on Sunday afternoon, April 14th, "with colors flying and drums beating," their battered flag in a leather satchel. The public reaction was immediately galvanizing; now there would be no turning back. (*Ibid*,



Robert Anderson LFA-0170

273- 74).

Southern forces restored Fort Sumter's traditional military role, and for a brief time it was easy duty. The new occupants had little to do but repair the damage, reinforce the defenses, and enjoy the victory. Even with the Union blockade just offshore, the attitude was so casual that at least once, in 1862, the fort hosted a "grand review," complete with dining, dancing and champagne. (Kelly, 297). Such lightheartedness was not to last.

By late 1863, Fort Sumter was subject to an almost daily pounding from nearby Union batteries on Morris Island, and eventually nearly 50,000 shells were thrown against it. (Detzer, 316). By November, 1863, Fort Sumter was battered, but it still had enough sting to deter any Federal incursion into the harbor.

Confederate forces eventually evacuated Charleston on February 17, 1865, however, when Sherman's army bypassed the city. A brief military dispatch reported the city's fall but was careful to note that a Captain H. M. Bragg was the first Federal soldier to raise the United States flag over Fort Sumter. Later, Major General Quincy A. Gillmore, the Department Commander, and that same Captain Bragg, escorted some ladies to Fort Sumter on a sightseeing trip, an event deemed worthy of a sketch in

Harper's Weekly. (*Harper's Weekly*, March 4, 1865, p. 131; *Harper's Weekly*, March 18, 1865, p. 164).

When the news reached Washington, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered "a national salute fired from every fort, arsenal, and army headquarters of the United States, in honor of the restoration of the flag of the Union upon Fort Sumter." (*War of the Rebellion . . . Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, [hereafter O.R.] Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 2, p. 512). That evening, the news from Charleston as well as the sound of the salute put Lincoln in a "cheerful" mood. (Goodwin, 696).

Soon there was talk, even at the highest levels, that something more should be done to recognize the re-taking of Fort Sumter. Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, a keen but acerbic observer of Lincoln's inner circle, recorded his remembrance of one early instance during a cabinet meeting:

March 27, Monday. Immediately after the capture of Charleston, it was suggested at one of the Cabinet-meetings, by [Postmaster General William] Dennison and [Attorney General James] Speed, that we should go thither on the anniversary of the fall of Sumter and raise again the old flag. I declined to be a party in such a movement, as Sumter was already taken and the flag had been raised on its ruins. (Diary of Gideon Welles [hereafter, DGW], II:267)



Visit to Fort Sumter, Harper's Weekly 71200908408090



Edwin M. Stanton OC-0979

In its March 18th edition, *Harper's Weekly* noted that the fall of Charleston and the recapture of Fort Sumter had a "thrilling dramatic effect." At the same time, however, the magazine observed the fundamental changes the war was producing, something not yet tied to a possible ceremony at Fort Sumter:

"If the war itself was a revolution of citizens against their Government, it has introduced also a revolution quite as profound in the relation hitherto existing between the negro and his master." (Harper's Weekly, March 18, 1865, p. 172).

Whatever the cue, around this time the Lincoln administration conceived a grand ceremony at Fort Sumter that would graphically depict the vast cultural, legal, and social changes coming to America.

Plans were underway by March 23rd, the day Lincoln left for Grant's headquarters at City Point, Virginia. In a telegram, Stanton informed General Anderson that he was to go to Fort Sumter on April 14th to raise the flag in accordance with a War Department order that "will be issued this week." (O.R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 2, p. 979). Most tellingly, however, the telegram then advised that Henry Ward Beecher, the famous anti-slavery preacher, "and perhaps other gentlemen," would deliver an address. The message was clear; this event was going to be big.

On March 25, 1865, as the president intently watched the final days of the siege of Petersburg from Grant's headquarters, Stanton telegraphed him:

"I have invited Henry Ward Beecher to deliver an address on raising the flag upon Fort Sumter and will give directions to Gen[era]l Gilmore to make all suitable military arrangements for the occasion and fire a salute of five hundred [later reduced to one hundred] Guns (sic). The flag will be raised by Gen[era]l Anderson. Please let me know if these arrangements have your approval." (CW, 8: 375; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 18)

The next morning Lincoln wired his approval. (CW, 8:375; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 28). Stanton then composed a draft order (later issued as General Order No. 50) which he sent to Lincoln on March 27th:

Ordered

First. That at the hour of noon on the 14th day of April 1865 Brevet Maj Gen [Robert] Anderson will raise & plant upon the ruins of Fort Sumter...the same United States flag which floated over... that fort during the rebel assault & which was lowered...when the works were evacuated on the 14th day of April 1861.

Second. That the flag when raised be saluted by one hundred guns from [Fort Sumter & by a National salute from every fort & rebel battery that fired upon [Fort Sumter.

Third. That suitable ceremonies be had upon the occasion under the direction of Maj. Gen[eral] Wm. T. Sherman...or in his absence under the charge of Maj Gen Q. A. Gillmore ... [.] Among the ceremonies will be the delivery of a public address by the Rev. H. W. Beecher.

Fourth. That the naval forces at Charleston & their commander...be invited to participate in the ceremonies (CW, 8:375-76; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, pp. 31, 34).

Later that afternoon, Lincoln responded:

Yours inclosing Fort-Sumpter (sic) order received. I think of but one suggestion. I feel quite confident that Sumpter (sic) fell on the thirteenth (13th.) and not on the fourteenth (14th.) of April as you have it. It fell on Saturday the 13th.--the first call for troops on our part was got up on Sunday the 14th, and given date, and issued on Monday the 15th. Look up the old Almanac & other data and see if I am not right. A. LINCOLN (CW, 8:375-76; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 31).

By six that evening, Stanton wired back an answer. Although Stanton had also thought the surrender was on April 13th, his proposed order relied on Anderson's report, which said the surrender occurred on the 14th, the day the fort was evacuated. Stanton then asked Lincoln: "Please let me know which you deem most proper the 13th or 14th." (CW, 8: 376; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 31).

The next day, March 28, Lincoln responded, "[a]fter your explanation, I think it is little or no difference whether the Fort-Sumpter (sic) ceremony takes place on the 13th or 14th." (CW, 8:376; O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 41). And with that shrug-of-the-shoulders, Lincoln turned to the rapidly developing events around Petersburg.

When informed of the ceremony, Gideon Welles, skeptical from the start, smelled a boondoggle, writing in his diary on March 27 that "Stanton with a party is to go to Charleston." Welles then speculated that Secretary of State Seward would also "work into the party. He likes fuss and parade; is already preparing his speech." (DGW, II:267).

Where Welles saw only "fuss," Lincoln likely saw an opportunity to shape public opinion. Lincoln knew the value of public opinion and had commented on it before, most notably a decade before while debating Stephen Douglas:

"[P]ublic sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment, is greater than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions." (Holzer, The Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 75).

Although Lincoln quibbled about the proposed date of the event, he had no hesitancy about the speaker. The Beecher clan was famous in nineteenth-century America—Harriett Beecher Stowe, one of Henry's sisters, had written *"Uncle Tom's Cabin"*—but by 1865, Henry, a Congregationalist preacher at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, was probably its leading light. At fifty-one, he was at the crest of his career and fame.

Beecher was already transforming Christian preaching in America with his theological views and a dramatic, energetic style in the pulpit. (Applegate, 13-15). But it was his staunch opposition to slavery that brought him national fame, and in some quarters, hatred. (*Ibid.*, 5-7). That loathing did not come exclusively from his writings and speeches, although they were sometimes incendiary, but also sprang from conducting mock slave auctions or shipping boxes of rifles to abolitionist settlers in "Bloody Kansas" labeled "Bibles" (and thus, "Beecher's Bibles"). (*Ibid.*, 5-7; 281-2).

Like most Americans, Lincoln knew Beecher's anti-slavery reputation; William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, was an admirer. (*Ibid.*, 322). Naturally then, while in New York to deliver his Cooper Union address in February 1860, Lincoln wanted to hear a sermon at Beecher's enormous church, and it was there that the two were introduced. (Holzer, 74-79; Applegate, 322). Lincoln, who quickly grew to admire Beecher's mind and talents, would stop by once more for another Beecher sermon before returning to Springfield. (Holzer, 202; Applegate 324).

During the war, however, Beecher was at times an enthusiastic proponent of Lincoln's policies and sometimes, much to the president's displeasure, a sharp critic. (Applegate, 338-41). Even so, Beecher was politically influential and was kept informed of military developments. (*Ibid.*, 349). That attention was rewarded in the latter part of 1863 when there was still concern that Great Britain might give diplomatic recognition to the Confederacy. Asked, while visiting England and Scotland, to provide the Northern view of the war, Beecher gave five speeches that at the time were cred-

ited with blunting any English notion of intervention. (*Ibid.*, 346-48). By the election of 1864, Beecher was firmly in Lincoln's corner. (*Ibid.*, 351).

The Beecher family, as well as a prominent Beecher biographer, claim that Lincoln invited Beecher by saying, "We had better send Beecher down to deliver the address on the occasion of the raising of the flag because if it had not been for Beecher there would have been no flag to raise." (*Ibid.*, 6, 348). If that account is accurate, Lincoln was certainly overstating Beecher's contributions. Still, Lincoln knew Beecher was nearly unequaled as a speaker and must have approved the invitation before leaving for City Point on March 23rd.

Lincoln also knew, however, that if the government sent the famous anti-slavery orator to Fort Sumter it would emphasize the war's moral purpose. (*Ibid.*, 5). Just weeks before, Lincoln had condemned slavery in scriptural terms as a great wrong, a shared national sin, but then ended his second inaugural speech with a call for eventual national healing. Lincoln probably hoped that Beecher would offer something similar, a call for a spiritual rebirth, of a national commitment to universal freedom after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. With the whole nation watching, this was a chance to mold public opinion, to braid the country back together,

Beecher, of course, instinctively saw the event's significance, wiring Stanton on March 30th:

"There is a profound feeling about Charleston celebration. It grows daily. It is a grand national event. Many eminent men desire to see this great occurrence of their lives. Could not a passenger steamer under direction of Collector [of Customs at New York, Simeon] Draper be allowed to go?" (O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 59).

Later that day, Stanton responded that the government had arranged for Beecher, General Anderson, and others, to sail aboard the Steamer *Arago* on April 7, and (surprise!) he expected to meet them "at Fortress Monroe if it be possible to leave here." (*Ibid.*). As it



Henry Ward Beecher LFA-0184

turned out, events at Petersburg, then Richmond, and finally Appomattox, quickly changed those plans.

Meanwhile, also on March 30th, separate arrangements were underway in New York to charter another steamer, the *Oceanus*; eventually the ship was booked with mostly Beecher's parishioners. (Applegate, 2). Apparently, however, no one had thought to get authorization for the ships to leave New York for Charleston, and once again Beecher telegraphed Stanton asking for clearance, claiming: "It is an event which happens but once in an age." (O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 74). Authorization quickly followed. (*Ibid.*).

Word of the event spread quickly. On April 5th, General Sherman paused at his North Carolina headquarters to telegraph Anderson. The two officers knew each other from their service together in Charleston in 1846. Sherman's message offered in part:

"I see in the papers that an order has been made by the War Department that on the 14th instant you are to raise the same flag over Sumter which you were compelled to lower four years ago, and that I am supposed to be present. I will be there in thought but not in person, and I am glad that it falls to the lot of one so pure and noble to represent our country in a drama so solemn, so majestic, and so just.

It looks as a retribution decreed by Heaven itself." (Ibid, 107).

On that same date, Stanton wired Beecher and Anderson:

"I have directed the sailing of the Arago to be postponed until Saturday, the 8th, at noon, so that, if possible to leave here, I may join you at Fortress Monroe. The absence of the President [in Richmond and City Point] and Attorney-General and Assistant Secretary of War, and the severe injuries disabling Mr. Seward [sustained that day in a carriage accident], absolutely prevent my leaving here to-morrow." (Ibid, 109).

As it turned out, events required Stanton's presence in the capitol, and the *Arago* sailed without him. The *Oceanus*, however, left as scheduled on April 10, and arrived in Charleston on Thursday evening, April 13, carrying with it Charleston's first news of Lee's surrender on the 9th. (French, 28). Although it sailed into a darkened city, it was still easy to see once magnificent mansions pockmarked by shells, burned out ruins, and crumbling warehouses. (French, 28, 34, 38-9; Spicer, 27-8).

Anxious to see the city, the passengers roamed into deserted public buildings where they helped themselves to "mementoes and relics" (something that still rankles Charlestonians) and deserted gardens where they gathered "floral trophies." (French, 35, 42; Spicer, 34). The fragrance of flowers was probably welcome as a Union army medical officer had just reported that Charleston's streets and yards were filthy. (*O. R. Ser. I, Vol. 47, pt 3, p. 126*).

The passenger's explorations were met with silence from the few remaining white residents, generally seen peering sullenly from windows, in contrast to the joyful "[n]egroes of every shade [who] thronged the streets" (French, 39; Spicer, 29).

Meanwhile, the *Arago* with Anderson, Beecher, and others sailed on, arriving outside Charleston's harbor at dawn on Friday the 14th. (Applegate, 8). But for some of the passengers on board, such as the uncompromising abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and his English counterpart



William Lloyd Garrison OC-0603

George Thompson, this was no mere sight-seeing trip. They were there because of who they were and what they represented.

The April 14th edition of Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, happily revealed that the two were on their way to Fort Sumter at President Lincoln's express invitation. Outside the abolitionist sphere, it probably seemed unduly provocative to send two radical abolitionists to Charleston. Garrison, after all, had once burned the United States Constitution to protest its toleration of slavery, and together they had advocated egalitarian citizenship, something later guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (Foner, 21). But *The Liberator* saw the significance of Garrison's presence, and the motivation behind Lincoln's invitation, as "tell[ing] of a regenerated public sentiment, of a new moral purpose and life in the nation." (*The Liberator*, April 7, 1865; April 14, 1865). Such sentiment was, at least, Lincoln's hope.

But Lincoln also knew that molding public opinion into a "new moral purpose," required eradicating any legal vestige of slavery. That obituary was serially being written as state after state ratified the Thirteenth Amendment. The Fort Sumter pageant would represent the funeral of

an institution whose expansive social, political, and economic roots were ten generations old. And it would show something of the future, because under the force of Union arms, emancipation had come to stay.

When a smaller ship arrived alongside the *Arago* to take its passengers to Fort Sumter, they learned for the first time of Lee's surrender five days before. (Applegate, 8). Beecher, an electrifying orator, usually spoke from brief notes, but this time he had composed an entire speech word for word. (*Ibid.*). Now there was no time to change it.

John Nicolay, the President's private secretary and his representative on this occasion, captured the scene: "[a] brilliant gathering of boats, ships, and steamers of every sort . . . around the battered ruin of the fort." (Goodrich, 18). A cacophony of cheers, whistles, music, bells and booming cannon filled the harbor. (French, 44; Spicer, 39). Every vessel was draped with flags, pennants, and streamers, a stiff breeze snapping them in unison. Only Fort Sumter's flagstaff was barren.

As each ship dropped off passengers at the fort's entrance, they passed between two columns of soldiers, "on the left, white, on the right, black, rivalling (sic) each other in soldierly bearing." (French, 45; Spicer, 40). Inside the fort, three thousand people or more were arrayed around a slightly elevated speaker's platform and a flagstaff nearly 150 feet high. (Detzer, 318). A photographer was present to capture the historic event.

The crowd hushed as Chaplain Matthias Harris slowly stepped forward to offer the introductory prayer. Harris had given the prayer when Anderson first raised Fort Sumter's flag after leaving Fort Moultrie, and now, seemingly much older, he would perform that function again.

The reading of four carefully selected Psalms was next. The first, Psalm 126, describes the joy that comes from the end of captivity, a reminder of the war's noble cause. The last, Psalm 20, read by the crowd (with highlighted language in the program) underscored the day's purpose: "We

will rejoice in thy salvation, and *in the name of our God, WE WILL SET UP OUR BANNERS!*" (French, 48-9).

Then, precisely at noon, General Anderson stepped to the stage, and after a few words, hoisted the old flag amidst a mighty hurrah. Almost immediately the six guns on Sumter's parapet began a deafening salute, joined quickly by the surrounding batteries and nearby naval vessels. (French, 53). It was a magnificent sight until cannon smoke, like a fog, enveloped everyone. (*Ibid.*, 53-4).

After thirty minutes the cannonade ended, and as the smoke drifted away, everyone looked to the speaker's platform. It was now Henry Ward Beecher's moment. As he rose from his chair, the wind grabbed at his notes. (*Ibid.*, Applegate, 10). Standing amidst the cheers, surrounded by other abolitionist luminaries, Beecher could see the evidence of Lincoln's handiwork before him.

In the crowd was Robert Vesey, son of Denmark Vesey, a free black man lynched in Charleston in 1822 for allegedly conspiring to start a slave revolt. Nearby was the black abolitionist, Martin R. Delany, who Lincoln had just made the first black major in the Union army. Prominent too was Robert Smalls, a former slave who commandeered a Confederate vessel at a Charleston wharf in 1862, and sailed it past Fort Sumter to Union vessels beyond. And then there were black soldiers, a regiment under the command of Beecher's brother, James, each providing mute testimony that the war had wrought astonishing changes. (Applegate, 9)

Their presence added to the weight Beecher felt as "the voice . . . of all the nation." (French, 55). Surprisingly, Beecher read his speech, leading an observer to suggest it was because he was speaking "semi-officially" and believed his remarks "would pass . . . into history." (*Ibid.*). Whatever his thinking, Beecher's usual "peculiar magnetism" was dulled by a leaden delivery, and the effort was "received tamely." (*Ibid.*; *The Liberator*, May 5, 1865). Not that the delivery really mattered, however, because the newspapers would send Beecher's remarks far beyond Fort Sumter's walls.

Today, however, Beecher's bloated remarks are rarely mentioned. In contrast to Lincoln's carefully crafted (and much shorter) efforts, Beecher's speech gives the impression that he hurriedly dashed it off, which apparently he did. (Applegate, 8) Unlike Lincoln, whose remarks at his second inaugural suggested that the entire nation bore responsibility for the sin of slavery, and must therefore endure a civil war as God's punishment, Beecher placed "the whole guilt" of the war upon "the political leaders of the South." (French, 67). In his telling, the South's aristocratic ruling class had misled "the common people" and thus they alone were responsible for the resulting "ocean of blood." (*Ibid.*). Beecher urged, however, with the hold of the aristocracy now broken, that Southerners accept the idea of one nation, one government, and the end of slavery. (*Ibid.*, 58). And to echo some of Lincoln's recent thinking, and perhaps with a nod to the other abolitionists present, Beecher advocated educating the "black man" and making him a citizen. (*Ibid.*, 75). At long last, he closed with a benediction, thanking God for sustaining the life of the president. (*Ibid.*).

The ceremony over, the spectators slowly filed out to the awaiting ships, although some held back to explore or hunt for souvenirs. Eventually they all would join the joyful celebrations in Charleston, a night of banquets, dancing, and toasts to President Lincoln. But many left early, feeling, as they later reported, some strange "foreshadowings of evil." (*Ibid.*, 87; Applegate, 16).

What they did not know was that many miles to the north, John Wilkes Booth had just entered the presidential box at Ford's Theatre. In a flash, the promise, the hope, and the dream of what was glimpsed at Fort Sumter simply vanished.

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- OR U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols.; Washington, D.C., 1880-1901).

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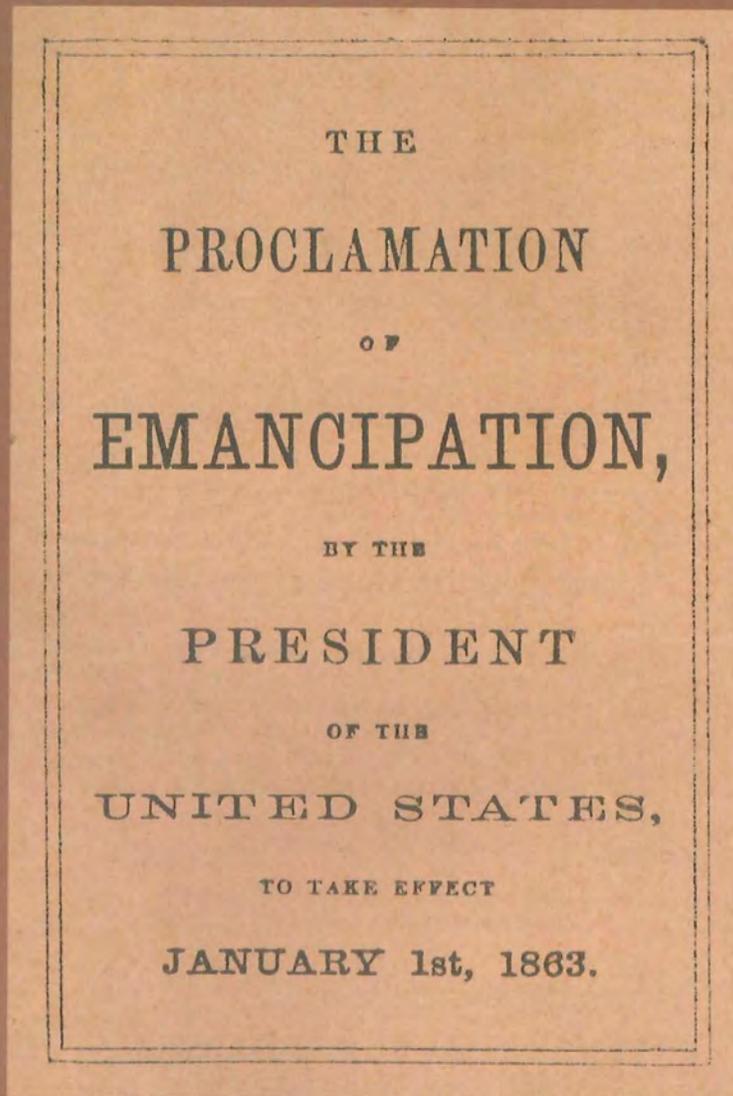
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Great minds have purposes, others
have wishes.—*Washington Irving*

Whoever sows on hard ground, needs good
wishes and luck —*Sicilian Proverb*



The Proclamation of Emancipation by the President of the United States
71200908403284

Lincoln's BY JOSEPH R. FORNIERI
Three Wishes
That All Men Could Be Free

Do wishes matter in politics, or are they convenient excuses for irresolution? Washington Irving (above) certainly speaks for the realists amongst us. He tartly distinguishes the firm purposes of great minds from the fleeting wishes of feeble ones. While it is obvious that wishes do not always come true, is it not yet also true that great purposes are born and nurtured by them? Such was the case with Abraham Lincoln's "oft expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free," repeated in almost identical language on three different occasions in close succession before and after the Emancipation Proclamation.¹ As will be seen, the consistency of Lincoln's political rhetoric points to a loftier intent to uphold the principle of universal freedom notwithstanding momentary political accommodations. More than just a platitude to provide political cover for his hesitation in proclaiming freedom to the slaves, Lincoln's three wishes supplied direction to his prudent policy of preserving a Union dedicated to liberty and equality. When studied in context, they provide a fuller picture of the sixteenth president's statesmanlike determination to translate the Declaration's guiding principle of equality into action and to sustain black freedom as a matter of policy in the forthcoming election of 1864.

Lincoln's first wish that "all men everywhere could be free" was made on July 12, 1862, in his Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation (hereafter referred to as July 12 Appeal). Proposed and endorsed by the president, this federal plan would compensate slaveholders in exchange for their guarantee of future freedom for their slaves. It was directed at the border slave states who tenuously remained within the Union orbit. While Lincoln steadfastly defended the right to restrict slavery in the territories, as an antislavery moderate, he consistently maintained that the Constitution prohibited federal interference with the "existing institution." To the chagrin of some abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, he reiterated this policy of federal non-interference in his *First Inaugural*: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."²

It bears repeating that the border states were crucial to the Union's strategic success. In an effort to maintain their support at the beginning of



John C. Frémont LN-0571

the war, the Thirty-Seventh Congress enacted the Crittenden-Johnson Resolution in July 1861, which narrowly defined the Union war aims of preserving the Union without interfering with slavery.³ A month later, Lincoln revoked General John C. Frémont's emancipation order in the border state of Missouri as both unconstitutional and inexpedient. In particular, he worried that it might drive the border states into the embrace of the Confederacy. With this concern in mind, he explained: "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol."⁴

The policy of non-interference with the existing institution of slavery, however, did not prohibit the president from using other tools in his box to end slavery in the same border states. He thus proposed the aforementioned federal plan to compensate loyal slave holders for their "property," which required the consent of participating states. Lincoln appealed to the border states on at least four occasions. Notably, he was rebuffed each time.

Unfortunately, the sixteenth president's repeated, yet failed, attempt to end slavery through constitutional means in the border states is too often neglected or eclipsed by attention given to the more successful effort of the Emancipation Proclamation. Nonetheless, these repeated attempts

testify to his statesmanlike devotion to both the rule of law and the principle of equality, to both "an apple of gold" and "the picture of silver," a metaphor borrowed from the Book of Proverbs to convey the dual covenants of the Declaration and Constitution as bulwarks of the Union.⁵

In his July 12 Appeal, Lincoln mentions in passing his revocation of General David Hunter's emancipation order earlier that spring. This important detail provides the context of his first wish. As with Frémont's earlier emancipation order, Lincoln believed that Hunter's decree was both unconstitutional and inexpedient. Wartime policies involving the slaves were warranted only by military necessity and therefore had to be decided by the commander-in-chief himself, not by the ad hoc decisions of generals in the field. However, in the same breath, Lincoln added a more personal judgment about Hunter's action: "I valued him none the less [sic] for his agreeing with me in the general wish that all men everywhere, could be free."⁶ Why include this personal judgment about the underlying principle behind the action? The tone of the speech evokes more praise for Hunter than blame, as if the president was forced, rather reluctantly, to slap Hunter on the hand for the sake of constitutional formality. As Allen C. Guelzo has correctly observed in his indispensable work on the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln was suggesting to those who could read between the lines that Hunter had "done the right thing in the wrong way."⁷



David Hunter LN-0742

Further analysis of Lincoln's language in the Appeal of July 12 confirms that the president's "wish that all men everywhere, could be free" was being seriously contemplated as an actual policy, not merely a theoretical possibility. In the same speech, he warned that slavery would become a casualty of war. Thus, he urged the border states to accept his offer before it was too late. "If the war continue long, as it must, if the object be not sooner attained," he explained, "the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere accidents of war."⁸ Appealing to the higher motives of patriotism and statesmanship among the border state men, Lincoln defined the struggle in broader terms as a vindication of self-government to the world. "Our common country is in great peril demanding the loftiest views, and bold-est action to bring it speedy relief," he intoned. "Once relieved, it's [sic] form of government is saved to the world; it's [sic] beloved history, and cherished memories, are vindicated; and its happy future fully assured, and rendered inconceivably grand."⁹

Eight years earlier at Peoria on Oct. 16, 1854, Lincoln had similarly denounced slavery for undermining America's "ancient faith" in the Declaration and its moral credibility in the eyes of the world. Notwithstanding his respect for the Constitution and the difficulty of dealing with the "existing institution" at the time, Lincoln professed his hatred of the institution:

I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.¹⁰

Indeed, Lincoln's speeches between 1854 and 1863 display a remarkable consistency in their common denunciation of slavery as utterly incompatible with America's mission as a "city upon a hill"—that is, a beacon of democracy to the world. His uncharacteristic use of the strong language of hate at Peoria in 1854, more characteristic of Garrisonian rhetoric, left no doubt in the mind of his audience what he thought about the institution

in principle.

Four years later, on October 15, 1858, in his seventh and last debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Alton, Lincoln candidly expressed his wish that the further spread of slavery would someday be abolished:

I have said, and I repeat, my wish is that the further spread of it may be arrested, and that it may be placed where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction. I have expressed that as my wish. I entertain the opinion upon evidence sufficient to my mind, that the fathers of this Government placed that institution where the public mind did rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction.¹¹

Though he studiously avoided the term "abolition" to avoid the stigma of radicalism in Illinois, his antislavery commitments were firmly established. Would he act upon this same wish as president? As will be seen, Lincoln's initial wish to restrict the spread of slavery in 1858 blossomed into the more encompassing wish "that all men everywhere can be free" during the time of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. By the time of the letter to James Conkling in 1863, Lincoln's embryonic wish had become a nascent reality to be sustained by the president as part of the Republican Party's policy in the election of 1864.

The second of Lincoln's three wishes made around the time of his Emancipation Proclamation was mentioned in the president's famous reply to Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, on August 22, 1862. Greeley had sharply criticized the president for delaying emancipation in an editorial entitled, "The Prayer of Twenty Millions" on August 19, 1862. In particular, he chided Lincoln for his preoccupation with the border states: "We think you are unduly influenced by the counsels, the representations, the menaces, of certain fossil politicians hailing from the Border Slave States." The title of Greeley's editorial referred to the population of the North and its ardent hope for emancipation. It also revealed the editor's bombastic presumption. Contrary to Greeley's claim, many in the North, particularly in the border states, did not pray for emancipation. They believed that the war should be waged for the more narrow purpose of ending the rebellion with slavery intact. In the words of Lincoln's Copperhead critics, they sought to preserve "the Union as it was."



Horace Greeley OC-0669

Lincoln replied to Greeley three days later in a competing newspaper. As Harold Holzer has well demonstrated, the letter to Greeley was part of a masterful public relations campaign by the president to prepare the country for the coming thunderbolt of the Emancipation Proclamation.¹² In an era before mass media, Lincoln used such letters as a kind of bully pulpit to communicate directly with the public. In retrospect, we now know that he had already revealed a draft of the Proclamation a month earlier in mid-July to his cabinet. This deed indicates that Lincoln's delay on emancipation was primarily a matter of timing and circumstance, including the need for a Union victory on the battlefield.

In what would be neither the first nor the last battle between the president and the press, Lincoln laid bare Greeley's hubris in a manner that was incisive yet disarming. After acknowledging receipt of the letter, the president noted: "If there be perceptible [sic] in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right." Addressing the issue of emancipation, Lincoln emphasized that his "paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery." He then presented three scenarios related to this overriding objective:

If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the



Abraham Lincoln LN-0256

*slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.*¹³

Lincoln's realism was followed by what Harold Holzer aptly describes as an ameliorating coda: "I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free."¹⁴

This "ameliorating coda" provides the context for Lincoln's second wish. In language quite similar to that of the July 12 Appeal, Lincoln sharply distinguished between his personal wish and his official duty. His relegation of black freedom to the "paramount object" of preserving the Union has led many to question his sincerity on black freedom, including Lerone Bennett, Jr., who ridicules Lincoln's wish as "the Super Bowl of bad faith"¹⁵

Was Lincoln's second wish in the letter to Greeley a begrudging afterthought that rings hollow in comparison to the Machiavellian pragmatism in the rest of the letter? Should it be treated as obiter dicta that is incidental to the president's actual purpose? On the contrary, this essay provides an alternative to this more cynical interpretation, one that takes Lincoln's three wishes much more seriously.

In his outstanding analysis of the letter to Greeley, Douglas L. Wilson approv-

ingly quotes the great historian Don E. Fehrenbacher, who cautioned readers that the letter "will be misunderstood if it is read as a straightforward statement of Lincoln's political and ethical priorities, with the union counting for everything and slavery, nothing. Lincoln's ostensible neutralism about slavery was misleading—and intentionally so."¹⁶ Holzer likewise cautions careful readers to look beyond the surface of the letter to Greeley. Lincoln's equivocation about war aims was, in fact, a deliberate and brilliant part of his public relations campaign. Guelzo provides a final note about the deeper reading of the letter to Greeley by explaining that it implicitly included the unprecedented claim that the president had authority to free the slaves.¹⁷

In sum, Lincoln's seemingly neutral approach allowed him to build a broad consensus for the coming emancipation by providing a pro-Union rationale that could be more easily accepted by Democrats who were hostile to black freedom. Pulitzer Prize winner David Donald concurs with the more careful assessment of the scholars above by reminding us of Lincoln's penchant as a lawyer to choose words carefully.¹⁸ For example, the word "paramount" in the letter to Greeley means foremost or prior, which conveyed to Democrats the necessity of preserving the Union at all costs. However, a strict construction of the word does not exclude the possibility of the related or ancillary goal of ending slavery in the long turn. Indeed, by late 1862, the goals of preserving the Union and ending slavery were inseparably linked.

As I have shown elsewhere, a crucial

element of Lincoln's philosophical statesmanship rested on his consistent belief that preserving the Union meant preserving the principles for which it stood.¹⁹ His remarks at Independence Hall on February 22, 1861, en route to his First Inauguration provide a clear example. Contemplating the meaning of the American Revolution in the very citadel of freedom, Lincoln affirmed the "great principle" of equality in the Declaration to be the moral foundation of the Union. He bravely, if not ironically, concluded by proclaiming that "if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle—I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it." If there are any remaining doubts about the seriousness of Lincoln's wish in the letter to Greeley, they are answered by his third wish in the letter to Conkling where the president resolutely defended black freedom.

Lincoln's letter to Conkling on August 26, 1863, was part of his re-election campaign for the following year. Conkling was a Republican Party leader and a hometown friend. The Republicans were planning a rally in Springfield, Illinois, in support of the administration and were hoping that the president could return to his home for the occasion. The rally was, in part, a response to mass protests against the Emancipation Proclamation, including one in Springfield on July 17, 1863.²⁰ Contrary to Greeley's claim about the twenty million who prayed for emancipation, draft riots in New York City the same month led to the lynching of blacks and the burning down of a black orphanage.

Lincoln declined Conkling's invitation,



The Riots in New York 71200908500455

but carefully prepared his now famous remarks, which cogently articulated his war policies. In them, Lincoln provided a forthright defense of emancipation and praise for the valor and sacrifice of the freedmen who were serving in the Union army. In his marvelous analysis of the speech in *The Eloquent President*, Ronald C. White, Jr., notes that Lincoln instructed Conkling to read the speech "very slowly."²¹ The president wanted to ensure that his intention would be clear. Indeed, Lincoln's candor in the letter to Conkling in 1863 helps place in context his artful equivocation about the Union's war aims in the letter to Greeley written a year earlier in 1862.

Instead of avoiding the contentious issue of black freedom, Lincoln brought it to the fore, forthrightly addressing his critics.²² "But, to be plain," he wrote, "you are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject."²³ Here Lincoln's third wish is mentioned in language that is almost identical to the two prior instances: "I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not." Notwithstanding the similarity in language between the letters to Greeley and to Conkling, there is a notable difference. As Ronald White points out, in the former, Lincoln "differentiated between his personal wish and his duty under the Constitution. A year later, this division between personal and public views was not present in the letter to Conkling."²⁴ The circumstances of war now made possible the convergence between Lincoln's personal wish and his official duty. Black freedom could be justified as "a fit and necessary war measure" to suppress the rebellion under the president's constitutional authority as a commander-in-chief.

As mentioned, the letter to Conkling sheds much needed light on Lincoln's equivocation about war aims in the letter to Greeley. Was the war about ending slavery or preserving the Union? In the Conkling letter, the sixteenth president makes clear that both goals are compatible with his administration. Seeking to build a consensus that will prosecute the war to victory, he explains: "Yet I have neither adopted, nor proposed any measure, which is not consistent with even your view, provided you are for the Union." In a brilliant rhetorical reversal, Lincoln then shifts the burden of proof upon his critics. He pricks their conscience by reminding

them of the sacrifice of black soldiers for the Union cause: "You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but, no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time, then, for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes." Lincoln urges those who oppose his emancipation policy to break with the administration after the military necessity has passed and the Union's preservation is secured.

Nonetheless, he resolutely defends his administration's policy of upholding the Emancipation Proclamation so long as he is in office. Remarkably, the president concludes his letter by contrasting the noble sacrifice of the black soldier to the malicious hearts of ungrateful whites:

Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that, among free men, there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet; and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost. And then, there will be some black men who can remember that, with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation; while, I fear, there will be some white ones, unable to forget that, with malignant heart, and deceitful speech, they have strove to hinder it.²⁵

Consistent with what we have seen above, Lincoln defines the Civil War as a test of the viability of self-government. Using an alliterative metaphor, he will not permit a "successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet." Such an appeal would undermine the very principle of majority rule that governs democracy and violate his oath to preserve the Constitution and laws. He reiterates that the fate of slavery and self-government are ultimately connected. Now, with his three wishes nearly granted, Lincoln applauds and embraces the redemptive role of African Americans in helping "mankind on to this great consummation." Contrary to Washington Irving, those embittered "whites" with "malignant heart" and "deceitful speech" had only themselves to blame for failing to take seriously another adage that might have helped them to understand bet-

ter the president's statesmanship: "be careful of what you wish for."

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Notes

- 1 Lincoln, "Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation," July 12, 1862; "To Horace Greeley," August 22, 1862; "To James C. Conkling," August 26, 1863 in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 vols., ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 4: 263; 5: 389; 6: 407.
- 2 Lincoln, "Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation," July 12, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 4, 263.
- 3 The Resolution would be overturned four months later.
- 4 Lincoln, "To Orville H. Browning," Sept 22d 1861, in *Collected Works*, 4, 532
- 5 Lincoln, "Fragment on the Constitution and the Union," circa January, 1861, in *Collected Works*, 4: 169.
- 6 Lincoln, "Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation," July 12, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 5, 318.
- 7 Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 80, 108.
- 8 Lincoln, "Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation," July 12, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 5, 318. CW 5, 318
- 9 Lincoln, "Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation," July 12, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 5, 319.
- 10 Lincoln, "Speech at Peoria, Illinois," October 16, 1854, in *Collected Works*, 2: 255.
- 11 Lincoln, "Seventh and Last Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Alton, Illinois, October 15, 1858, in *Collected Works*, 3: 306.
- 12 Harold Holzer, *Emancipating Lincoln: The Proclamation in Text, Context, and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 66-71, 81, 104 and Lincoln and the Power of the Press (New York: Simon and Schuster), 400.
- 13 Lincoln, "To Horace Greeley," August 22, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 5: 388.
- 14 Lincoln, "To Horace Greeley," August 22, 1862, in *Collected Works*: 5, 389.
- 15 Lerone Bennett Jr., *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson, 2000), 480.
- 16 Wilson, Douglas L. *Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 157-158,
- 17 See Guelzo above.
- 18 Donald, David. *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 368.
- 19 Fornieri, Joseph R. *Abraham Lincoln Philosopher Statesman*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 14-17, 52-54, 58.
- 20 White, Ronald C. *The Eloquent President*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 197.
- 21 White, 190-222.
- 22 White, 201.
- 23 Lincoln, "To James C. Conkling," August 26, 1863 in *Collected Works*, 6: 407.
- 24 White, 203.
- 25 Lincoln, "To James C. Conkling," August 26, 1863 in *Collected Works*, 6: 410.