

Lincoln LORE

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I WISH I WAS IN
DIXIE'S LAND.
Written & Composed expressly for
Bryant's Minstrels
BY
DAN. D. EMMETT.
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Lincoln LORE

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CONTRIBUTORS

HAROLD HOLZER
FRANK J. WILLIAMS
EDNA GREENE MEDFORD
DOUGLAS L. WILSON
E. PHELPS GAY
SUSANNAH KOERBER
JASON H. SILVERMAN
ED BREEN

ACPL

JANE GASTINEAU
EMILY RAPOZA
LINCOLN@ACPL.INFO

FRIENDS OF THE LINCOLN COLLECTION

SARA GABBARD, EDITOR
POST OFFICE ADDRESS
BOX 11083
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA 46855
SGABBARD@ACPL.INFO
WWW.ACPL.INFO
WWW.LINCOLNCOLLECTION.ORG
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/LINCOLNCOLLECTION

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Springfield, Illinois
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Presented by Thomas D. Macke Jr.

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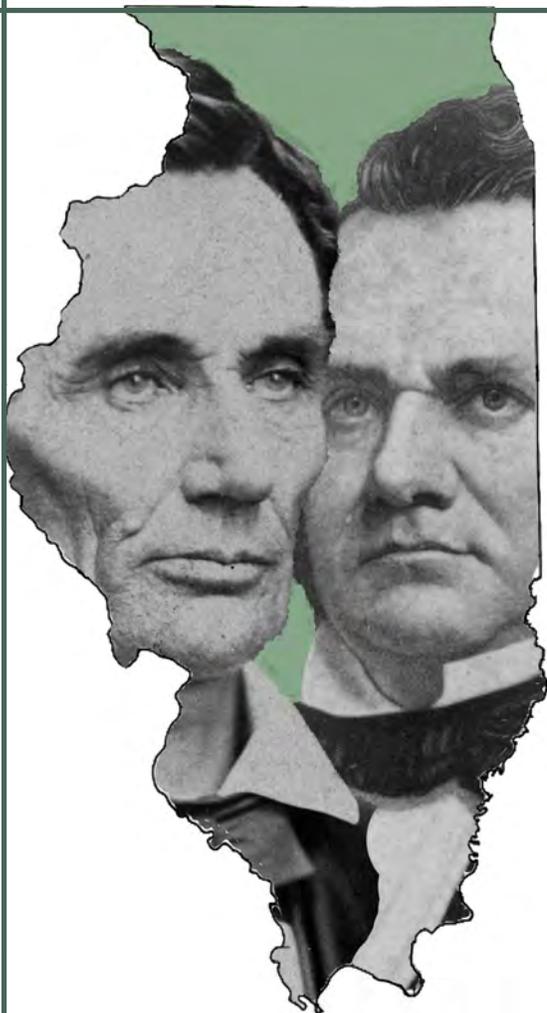
Lincoln Lore News



The Friends of the Lincoln Collection are excited to announce that the Lincoln Lore Archive has been made available online. All 1,919 previous issues of Lore are available to download in PDF format. To see the archive, visit www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org/lore-archive.

On the Cover

Anton Hohenstein, Abraham Lincoln's Last Reception, 1865, lithograph published by John Smith, Philadelphia
Dixie's Land, Score written and composed expressly for Bryant's Minstrels
To see more items in the collection, see the Lincoln Family Objects on pages 17-18.



A public sensation in the seven Illinois towns that hosted them—reprinted in the press at the time, in book form shortly thereafter, and in many editions since—the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates are remembered today, 160 years after they took place, as a political and cultural phenomenon.

But as much as they attracted attention then and since, they now invite a debate of their own: What did these famous meetings really accomplish? What is their legacy? Did they make history, alter history, or truly represent the apogee of 19th-century political discourse? Or, in fact, have they been overrated, both as political theater, historical impact, and rhetorical accomplishment?

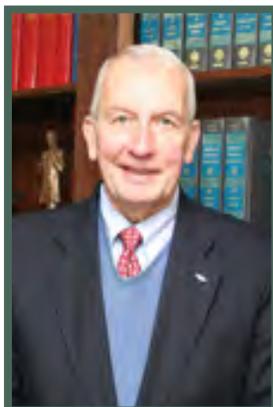
Although I edited a 1993 volume of debate transcripts, I remain on the fence myself—unsure of precisely how much sustained reverence the encounters deserve. To assess the debates in current historiography, I asked three friends, all major historians, to weigh in:

The Debate over the Debates

Debating Those Debates: The Historians Weigh In



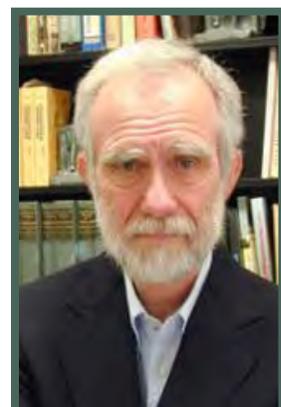
Moderated by Harold Holzer



Frank J. Williams of the Lincoln Forum, author of *Judging Lincoln*



Edna Greene Medford of Howard University, author of *Lincoln and Emancipation*



Douglas L. Wilson, Director of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College (located on the site of the fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate at Galesburg, IL)

Here is how they responded to my questions (and how, in brief, I feel about these issues as well):

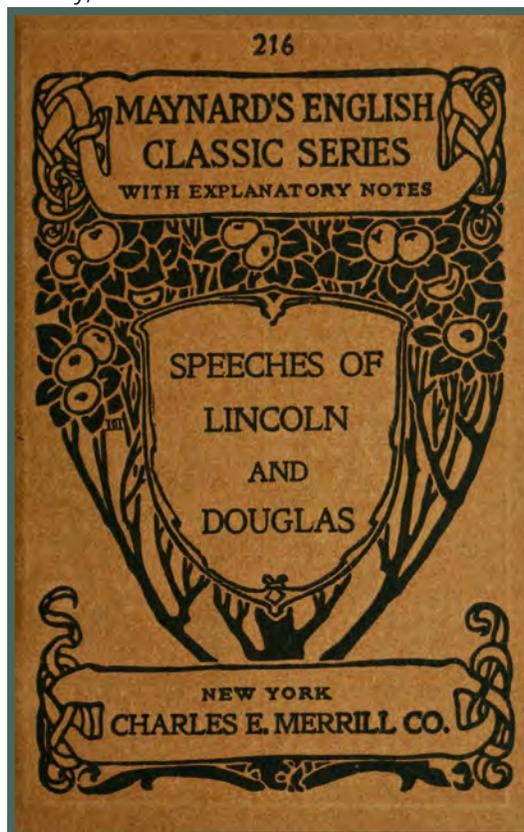
Are the Lincoln-Douglas debates greater in reputation than in text or actual, period political impact? If so, why?

FJW: In a sense they are. The debates became the “grand-sire” of future debates, but it took almost a century before they became the inspiration for future political debates. Beginning as a statewide contest for the U.S. Senate, they became the standard in 1960 in the presidential debates between Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy. In between 1858 and 1960, custom forbade new debates. As with Lincoln-Douglas, the 1960 debates were expected to inspire with the candidates’ words, despite the restrictions of television.

DLW: There is no doubt that the debates are “greater in reputation than in text,” because most modern readers, while honoring their reputations, are all-too-typically put off by reading the debates themselves. And for good reasons. They quickly discover that the issues being discussed are clothed in the dress of arcane 19th-century politics, such as the English bill, the Crittenden-Montgomery bill, the Lecompton Constitution, and the Northwest Ordinance. How are they supposed to fathom why these leading politicians are still arguing about the writing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, let alone the execution and effect of it? How can they judge between Douglas’ and Lincoln’s readings of the Dred Scott decision if they hardly know what Dred Scott was? These are the kinds of questions that cause so many modern readers who approach the debates with real anticipation to retreat with something like buyer’s remorse.

EGM: To some extent, we have romanticized the debates, casting them as the model for political contestations. Despite following the rather common practices of 19th-century debates—charges and counter-charges, accusations and refutations, half-truths and mis-characterizations (practices just as prevalent today)—they continue to

generate interest primarily because of Lincoln’s involvement and doubtless because of the improbable long-term impact they had on the national discourse over slavery. Who could have foreseen in 1858 that, just two years later, the defeated candidate would receive his party’s nomination and eventually be elevated to the presidency, or that this would lead to southern



Speeches of Lincoln and Douglas in the campaign of 1865, 71200908403387

secession, civil war and the abolition of slavery? But beyond this “reputation” for greatness, the debates are deservedly so because of the effort of both debaters to help average Americans make sense of the thorniest issue of their day. It is hard to over-emphasize the significance of those discussions for their time and ours.

HH: All good points—and I suspect even the Hayne-Webster debate of blessed memory would not wear well for modern readers. What the Lincoln-Douglas texts cannot capture is the roiling excitement they generated. As one Eastern newspaper marveled, they set the prairies “on fire.”

What accounts for their high reputation as the apogee of political debating (among later leaders as

diverse as Admiral Stockdale and Mario Cuomo)?

EGM: Admirers of various persuasions consider the debates political dialogue in its purest form. There was no press or moderator asking questions, just the two candidates, each in turn standing before an audience of fellow citizens, delivering their arguments and rebutting charges leveled by their opponent. They did this even in the heat of the summer, outdoors, and without amplification, in front of thousands of spectators over a three-hour period. And somehow they managed to keep the attention of the audiences. They remained poised while enduring unruly crowds and even answered questions that were shouted to them by the unconvinced and impatient. Understandably, politicians ever since have praised the aplomb with which they pressed their agenda under less than ideal circumstances.

FJW: Political leaders like Governor Mario Cuomo, a great orator in our age, personified the eloquence of an era in which leaders inspire with their words.

DLW: There are at least two possible explanations. The first is that such fans belong to the category of committed readers who are willing to take the trouble to understand the kinds of unfamiliar matters cited above, and admire the way Lincoln stood his ground on important issues that were not yet supported by the majority but would eventually prevail. Another possible explanation is that they are simply willing to accept that these by-now murky discussions were important enough at the time to have produced the acknowledged outcome, which was to help lay the groundwork for a prairie politician like Abraham Lincoln to rise to and successfully compete at the national level.

HH: I could never convince Mario Cuomo that the Lincoln-Douglas debates amounted to less than their reputation. The more important idea, he argued, was that each candidate was allowed to speak for 90 minutes. He felt passionately that short-form modern debates cheated debaters and listeners alike, and represent no real

test of knowledge, ideas, or stamina.

Both Lincoln and Douglas said things during the debates that sound racist today—indeed were in many minds racist then. Where did Lincoln and Douglas fit into the spectrum of racial thought (among white voters and leaders) of the era?

FJW: Both Lincoln and Douglas were “racist”—except Lincoln alone sought the end of an institution that violated the promises of equality contained in the Declaration of Independence. Douglas was content to keep the status quo ante. Political to their core, the debates also had a moral dimension on the issue of slavery. Neither candidate discussed other issues of national importance like tariffs, internal improvements, immigration, or homesteading. Both men were fighting for the undecided votes from central Illinois. The majority of the state’s southern voters was sympathetic to slavery and would support Douglas while the anti-slavery men in the northern counties would go for Lincoln. So, the election would depend on the undecideds. But Lincoln did pander to southern voters as he expressed racial sentiments in the fourth joint debate at Charleston in the southern part of the state. Lincoln was on the defensive with Douglas’s charge that the Republican candidate was an abolitionist. To counter that, Lincoln stated that he was not in favor of equal rights for blacks. After Charleston, Lincoln tried to avoid making statements about equal rights, concluding he had gone too far there. Nonetheless, those comments effected his reputation then and now.

EGM: It is interesting that we often treat Douglas’s racialized words as prima facie evidence of his own bigoted beliefs. Indeed, he left enough proof for his critics to tag him with the “racist” badge without fear of seeming overly disparaging. But we are somewhat reticent when it comes to Lincoln’s racial “insensitivities,” choosing instead to soften the sting of his words by citing the bigotry of the audience he faced or the necessity to counter Douglas’s race baiting, especially in places such as Charleston. The truth is that both men were products of their times. Most 19th-century white men and women thought

of black people as innately inferior, and often failed to see the actual and potential abilities of those who had survived the oppression of American slavery and racism. Even abolitionists (with the exception of an enlightened few) shared that view of people of color. Lincoln, however, separated himself from Douglas (and from the majority of white Americans) in his ability to see beyond his racial prejudices when it came to championing the right of all men and women to the freedoms espoused in the Declaration of Independence. That did not mean social or political equality (certainly not in 1858), and did not embrace the freedom to which people of color aspired, but it was a decidedly more enlightened perspective than most.

DLW: To take the debates seriously, it is necessary to come to grips with the racial prejudices and ugly stereotypes that then prevailed. Especially for American readers in the 21st Century, who more and more have come to accept the substance of Lincoln’s belief that the Declaration of Independence’s assertion of equality includes people of color, it is instructive to understand that this was far from the case in Lincoln’s day. That Douglas could scorn Lincoln’s position on racial equality, that he could boldly claim that blacks were inherently inferior to whites, that Lincoln would at the same time strongly deny Douglas’s charge that he was an “abolitionist,” require historical perspective. Douglas took the position he did because it was popular, representing the attitude of the overwhelming majority of voters, whereas Lincoln’s position was only beginning to gain a following. While Lincoln was genuinely anti-slavery, he tried to make it clear that he was not an abolitionist, that is, someone who advocated an immediate end to slavery and full rights for freed people. Racial discrimination was almost universal in Illinois, and no one could possibly be elected to statewide office on such a platform. Douglas, in standard political mode, relentlessly insisted that despite Lincoln’s denials, he was indeed an abolitionist, and that his party’s political aim was to surreptitiously “abolitionize” unsuspecting citizens. The truth was that Lincoln’s recently founded political party was a work in progress and, except for being against slavery,

its members were having trouble finding common ground on other issues.

HH: These are insightful observations. I would add only that the transcripts of the Charleston debate show that when Lincoln launched into his argument that people of color were in fact not entitled to civil rights, he began by alluding to the fact that it had been previously whispered that he favored racial equality. That comment actually elicited laughter from the crowd. Not very nice, to be sure, but an indication that few white voters could believe a mainstream politician might harbor such “radical” views. Had Lincoln been more advanced in his thinking in 1858, he wouldn’t have been a Senate candidate—or debater—in the first place.

Describe, in brief, the position of each candidate on slavery and equality—if not in all things, then in equality of opportunity? Compare the candidates’ positions to the mainstream position among white voters in 1858 Illinois?

DLW: Much of the early opposition to slavery was religious, but in his 1854 Peoria address, Lincoln had offered a secular argument based on the idea of self-government, which he described as “absolutely and eternally right.” As he put it: “When the white man governs himself that is self-government; but when he governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism.” This put the onus directly on the slaveholders and other defenders of slavery, and would help provoke what historian Harry K. Jaffa called the “Crisis in the House Divided.” If democracy consists in following the will of the majority, what measures can be taken when the majority is perceived as morally in the wrong? This was the task that Lincoln and other founders of the Republican Party faced in the period in which the debates occurred.

FJW: By the time of the debates, Illinois voters knew the positions of both candidates. They had been debating contrary views ever since Douglas engineered the Kansas-Nebraska Act reversing the 1820 Missouri Compromise. This opened territories to slavery in areas acquired from the Louisiana Purchase and the war with

Mexico. Douglas advocated “popular sovereignty,” which permitted white citizens in every new state the right to vote slavery up or down, arguing that it was a right of self-government. Lincoln, derisively, labeled this policy “squatter sovereignty,” in which a small number of slaveholders could enter a new territory and, by using a manipulated majority for slavery, establish the institution for a larger number of settlers who would arrive later. Lincoln always contended that slavery was wrong and should not be extended—especially by a few who would bind later generations. Lincoln also thought the Founders had planned for the ultimate extinction of slavery. Both battled over the Declaration of Independence. Lincoln believed that the inalienable rights guaranteed therein were designed for every living person whether white or black—at least insofar as the opportunity to rise. Douglas believed that America “was established on the white basis...for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever.”

EGM: As a proponent of Popular Sovereignty, Douglas embraced the idea that African Americans were inferior and not a part of the body politic. Lincoln believed that the nation’s founders recognized the contradiction in their espousal of freedom for all while tolerating the enslavement of a significant segment of the population. Hence, while they compromised on the issue of slavery in order to win over the proponents of the institution, they had placed it on a path of natural extinction. And while Lincoln did not believe African Americans were equal to whites socially or were capable of responsible participation in government, he famously declared that they had a right to enjoyment of the rewards of their labor, and he championed the idea of equality of opportunity. While this fell far short of a complete equality, it exceeded the desires of the majority of Illinoisans, where discriminatory laws still kept black people subordinate.

Do we know—or can we imagine—what each candidate was like as an orator and debater?

EGM: As the incumbent and a well-known politician, Douglas had the advantage of experience on both the

statewide and national levels. One would expect his delivery to be sophisticated but also tailored to the audiences he sought to persuade. He excelled at both. Although short in stature, his commanding voice and charismatic presence kept the crowds engaged. Lincoln exhibited a different kind of presence. Although taller than Douglas by almost a foot, his gangly frame, plain face, and ill-fitting clothes suggested to some that he was not worthy to be on the same stage with the very polished Douglas. Moreover, his high-pitched voice must have been jarring to the audiences before whom he and Douglas spoke. Yet Lincoln was clever enough to use these seeming disadvantages to his benefit. His unpretentious demeanor, coupled with his passionate defense of his position and his vast understanding of the issues, captivated the audiences and won the respect of those who saw in him a man who shared their concerns about the nation’s future. Of course, both men used humor to entertain and keep the crowds engaged. Both understood the power of levity, and used it to great advantage.

FJW: Lincoln was probably the most eloquent orator of the time if speaking from a prepared text. But he, unlike Douglas, was a failure as an impromptu speaker—despite his talents as an artful storyteller and trial lawyer. Yet a review of the debate transcripts reveals Lincoln could be organized and deliver a smooth, hour-long speech and 90-minute rebuttal or 30-minute rejoinder. Douglas was a bully and displayed his tendency for relentless attacks against Lincoln despite Lincoln’s droll humor. It appears from the record that Douglas, and not Lincoln, was the more cogent and impressive extemporaneous speaker. But it is difficult to judge because one cannot determine a speaker’s skill and spirit from printed transcripts alone.

DLW: The two candidates’ oratorical and debating styles would appear as different as their distinctive physiques. The short and stocky Douglas had an aggressive style and personality, and this gave shape to his character as a debater. He was equally at home with anecdotes and assertions that were true as those that were partly true or even patently false. He

had enormous self-confidence and a slashing style when on the attack. While not given to eloquence, he was a smooth and articulate talker, always ready with a quick comeback or for whatever the occasion required. He seems to have had a deep baritone voice of great authority, which could be heard over large and noisy crowds. Lincoln, as is well known, was a very different physical type from Douglas, and just as different as a speaker, although he, too, had a voice that could be heard by large crowds, though in a much higher register than Douglas’. Lincoln’s gifts as an orator are harder to characterize. He spoke with more deliberation than Douglas, always careful to qualify and refine his assertions, where Douglas was quite willing to go over the top now and then. Where Douglas was openly self-regarding and boastful, Lincoln tended to take the opposite tack, playing down his abilities and spoofing his own position and appearance. Douglas was, at this time, perhaps the most famous and commanding political figure in the country, and Lincoln’s strategy was always to acknowledge him as the larger figure. Of course, he knew how to use this ploy to his own advantage. Especially in these debates, it is Douglas who tries to lay down the terms of the debate, and Lincoln who willingly plays the role of the challenger.

HH: Would either style work today? I doubt it—but I know I speak for my colleagues in wishing there were some way we could go back in time, at least for three hours, to watch them in person. It must have been mesmerizing.

How important was the stenographic recording of the debates and their reprinting in Illinois and some national newspapers? To the outcome? To the future?

DLW: There can be little doubt that the stenographic recording was consequential. At this period, the newspaper reporting of political speeches was still overwhelmingly partisan, so that the readers of a given paper expected to read that the speaker endorsed by newspaper’s party affiliation would get the best of his opponent, whose arguments and conduct would be shown in a very unfavorable light. Newspaper coverage of political speeches on a nearly verbatim basis only became possible with the rise of a skilled brand of short-hand reporting, and such was the importance

and immense interest in the projected debates between Lincoln and Douglas that the leading Chicago newspaper for each party took on the responsibility of reporting the seven debates in their entirety. This made it possible for newspapers all over the country to follow these discussions in such detail as to present a clearer sense of the arguments and their proponents. Lincoln could be said to have gained disproportionately to Douglas, because he was relatively unknown beyond Illinois, whereas Douglas' reputation was well established. Without the near-verbatim reporting of these debates, readers around the country would have had very little opportunity to see that Douglas's little-known challenger could not only hold his own, but was a man to be reckoned with.

EGM: As evidence of the importance of Lincoln's joint discussions with Douglas, two of the state's newspapers hired stenographers to attend the events and record the arguments. Although these recordings were often biased, reflecting the partisanship of that time, they introduced a broad segment of the population to Lincoln, not an unknown quantity, but certainly far less familiar to statewide and national audiences than Douglas. While the better-known candidate won (through election by the legislature, not directly by voters), the newspapers revealed Lincoln as a worthy opponent who had a thorough command of the issue of slavery and its extension into the territories. He had spoken on this issue many times before, but the attention the debates received through press coverage doubtless elevated him much farther and faster than would have been the case otherwise.

FJW: These were the first great political contests recorded through "phonographic" reporting. This marked not only a milestone, along with the telegraph, which spread transcripts of the debates to the entire country, but the basis for the fame of the debates – then and now. The partisan press, namely the *Chicago Press and Tribune* supporting Lincoln and the pro-Douglas *Chicago Times*, contributed to the enduring reputation of the debates, as well as to the ultimate distortion each stenographer manifested in favoring their man. The impact of the printing of the debates is hard to measure but

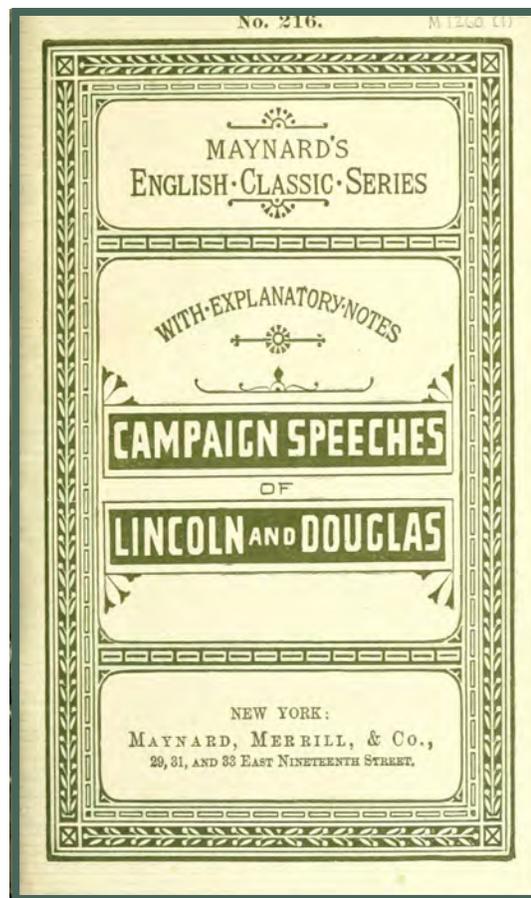
Lincoln carried the popular vote—if not the election.

HH: Lincoln would agree with my friends—Douglas, too, at least at the outset. It was Lincoln who had the foresight to collect the newspaper transcripts and see to their re-publication in book form. Douglas squealed like a stuck pig, furious at Lincoln (and perhaps himself) for losing control of the texts. One of my favorite side-stories of the debates, one about which I've written often, is the debate over whose transcripts were more accurate. In truth, neither was so.

Who won the Lincoln-Douglas debates—in 1858, in history, and in memory?

FJW: If debates are judged from the election results, Douglas. There was no direct election for U.S. Senators until 1913. In 1858, state legislatures chose the winner. It appears that Republicans received 125,000 votes to 121,000 for Democrats. Yet, Douglas prevailed over Lincoln men in the crucial contest for legislative seats: 41 went to Republicans and 46 to Democrats, including holdovers. But, arguably, Lincoln won the debates by engaging his nationally known rival and emerging as a national figure in his own right. He also inhibited the Republican Party's flirtation with Douglas. Employing hindsight, historians and Lincoln students have found Lincoln's views on race more progressive than Douglas's. So, Lincoln won on moral grounds, too.

EGM: Since Douglas retained his Senate seat, one must conclude that he was the immediate winner. But in the long term, Douglas lost. His defense of the idea that territorial residents could decide to embrace or exclude slavery pleased neither the proponents of the institution nor those who wanted to limit it. To the extent that the debates drew even greater national attention to the divisive slavery issue, Lincoln and America won. While the debates represent a step farther along the



Speeches of Lincoln and Douglas in the Campaign 1858, 71200908403388

path toward disunion, it helped to facilitate the climate that soon led to the destruction of the institution and the preservation of the Union under the banner of statutory freedom for all.

DLW: By almost any measure, Douglas won the debates, for he was duly elected in early 1859 by the legislature. But there was one thing in the offing that he lost and Lincoln won, and that was the presidential election of 1860. It appears in retrospect that Lincoln had begun angling for the chance to run in 1860 even before the active campaigning for Senator in 1858 had begun. The evidence for this can be found in his carefully calculated nomination speech in June 1858—the "House Divided" address—in which he predicted the federal "government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free." His close political associate Leonard Swett spoke for many Republicans when he said later that "nothing could have been more unfortunate, or inappropriate; it was saying first the wrong thing, yet he saw it was an abstract truth, but standing by the speech would ultimately find him in the right place," that is, with

national visibility as a candidate for president. Most historians of these events would endorse the idea that Lincoln's performance in his debates with Douglas was nonetheless indispensable to eventually being nominated for president. It is, of course, distinctly ironic that the nominal winner of the debates was ultimately the big loser, for not only did he lose out to Lincoln in 1860, but most of his ideas and political programs ended up on the wrong side of history.

HH: Would we be reaching this conclusion had the national Democratic Party remained intact in 1860 with not two but one presidential nominee—Douglas? Had he won the presidency that year, not Lincoln, we might be having an entirely different discussion today, in an entirely different nation. If the Lincoln-Douglas debates, however flawed, contributed to the great “national consummation” to follow, we must be grateful that the challenge was made and accepted—setting a standard for political argumentation, access, spontaneity, and stamina sorely lacking today.

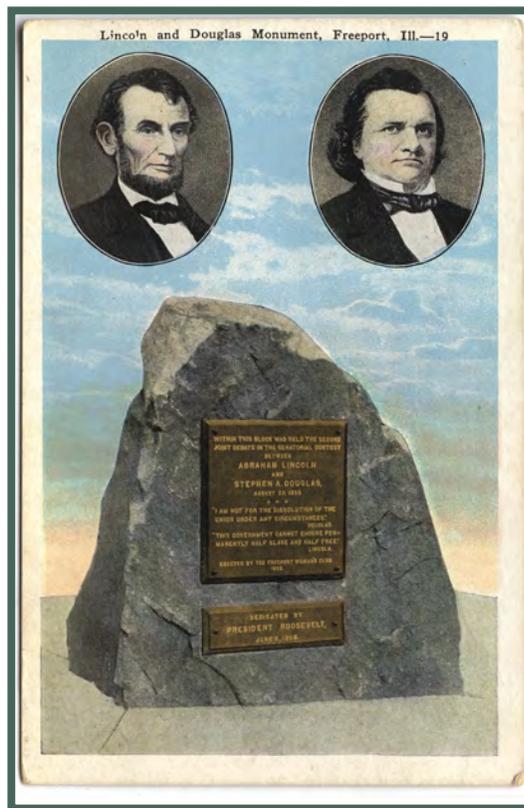
Could you ever envision Lincoln-Douglas-style debates in 21st-century politics—that is, sustained argumentation of 60, 30, and 90 minutes with no restraint on audiences?

FJW: Our attention spans no longer allow for sustained listening. In addition, today's televised candidate debates restrict time and presentations. Thus, the Lincoln-Douglas legacy has been lost.

EGM: Few politicians today would be able to keep audiences engaged for as long as Lincoln and Douglas did. One has only to recall the criticism presidents sustain when their speeches exceed one hour. In the era of the sound bite, we have become accustomed to our politicians delivering their message succinctly and, unfortunately, with a minimum of context. As for presenting such debates before an unrestrained audience, perhaps a 19th-century style of debating would not be so foreign to 21st-century voters. For all of the seriousness of the discussions, the 1858 debates were rife with instances of heckling, booing, fighting and other inappropriate re-

sponses from the audience. And both candidates seized upon the opportunity to ascribe motives and actions to his opponent that were sometimes inaccurate or downright untruthful. We sometimes think of political incivility as a phenomenon unique to our time. In truth, we are simply experiencing its latest iteration.

DLW: The differences between political debating in the 1850s and its counterpart in the 21st Century are perhaps only reflections of the differences in the prevailing cultures.



Lincoln and Douglas Monument, ZPC-294

For example, Douglas didn't want to debate Lincoln and tried to avoid it when directly challenged. But at least two things contributed to his change of mind. One was that he resented Lincoln's following closely in his wake and not only taking advantage of the crowds Douglas drew, but getting a chance to reply to Douglas' speeches without Douglas being able to offer an immediate rejoinder. Another consideration making it hard to turn down Lincoln's challenge was not only the risk of appearing afraid of his opponent, but of giving Lincoln the opportunity to point out in every subsequent speech that Douglas

would not meet him face to face because he was unable to answer his criticisms and questions. These are all circumstances that take very different forms in contemporary campaigning, if they figure at all, mainly for two reasons: rapid transportation and the powerful new medium of television. In fact, where big names and consequential elections are in play, the “media” have a lot to say about how campaigns are managed, for they mediate not only breaking news on a 24-hour cycle, but the massive flow of targeted and sophisticated advertising. There was nothing remotely like this in the era of the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

HH: I learned a valuable lesson when I appeared on C-SPAN's Booknotes 25 years ago to talk about my own, just-published Lincoln Douglas Debates. Host Brian Lamb asked me if I could imagine such lengthy encounters drawing crowds “today”—meaning 1994. No, I lamented, sound bites had replaced sustained discussion in politics. What a faux-pas! C-SPAN is entirely predicated on sustaining viewers' sustained attention! Once the cameras were off, Lamb turned to me and whispered, “I think you're wrong and I'll prove it!” He went on to encourage and broadcast 21 hours of debates re-created on the sites where they had been staged in 1858. Thousands of spectators turned up to watch re-enactors debate afresh. The spectacles were broadcast live on his network and attracted tons of attention. That they did not spur modern politicians to aspire to such intense and protracted discussions saddens me. But that they reminded us of the energy and talent that animated these two giants in 1858 should please us enormously.

Harold Holzer is a Jonathan F. Fanton Director of Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College. His next book is Monument Man, a biography of Lincoln Memorial Sculptor Daniel Chester French.

Lincoln and the South



Birthplace cabin, 7120090811753

E. Phelps Gay

How did Lincoln view the South? What did he know about the South? Had he been to the South? Did he hate the South? Or, instead, did he like Southerners? Did he blame them for the evil institution of slavery? Did he see himself, as many Northerners did at the time (and perhaps as some still do today), as superior to Southerners? Was he “judgmental” about Southerners? Was he, the man who freed the slaves, actually an abolitionist? And, of course, if John Wilkes Booth had not shot Mr. Lincoln in the back of the head at Ford’s Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865, would Lincoln have approached Reconstruction in the South in a different manner from the Radical Republicans in Congress, and would Southern history—and the country’s history—have therefore taken a different turn?

Perhaps one way to answer these questions is to say that Lincoln was a Southerner. He was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin on Sinking Spring farm on Nolin Creek in Hardin County,

Kentucky, near the town of Hodgenville. In 1811, when he was two, his family moved eight miles to the northeast to another one-room cabin located on Knob Creek. This was situated along the Old Cumberland Trail.

Peopled mainly by Virginians, this was a decidedly Southern society, and Kentucky was a slave state. Records show that at that time Hardin County had about 1600 white men and about 1000 slaves. Travelers with slaves in tow often passed by where Lincoln lived along the Old Cumberland Trail. So as a boy it’s fair to say Lincoln saw slavery all around him.

In 1816, when Lincoln was seven, his parents moved from Kentucky across the Ohio River to southwestern Indiana. In a campaign autobiography written in 1860, Lincoln wrote that his family “removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the autumn of 1816 . . . partly on account of slavery; but chiefly on account of difficulty in land titles in

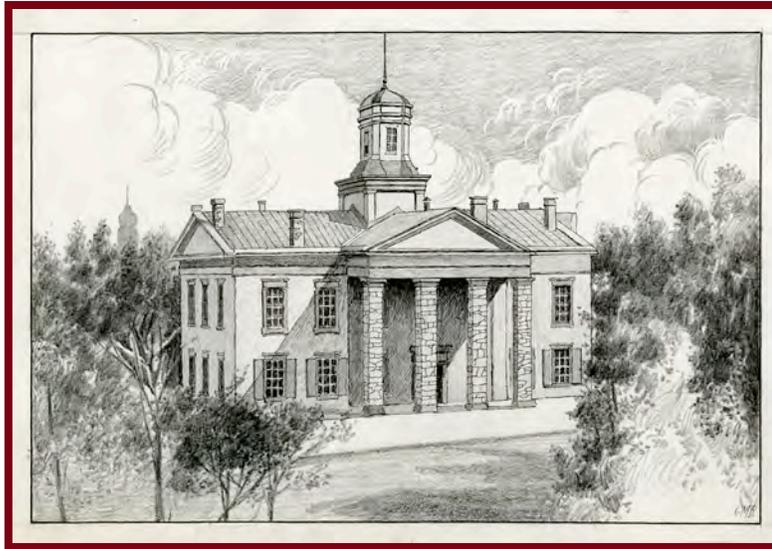
Kentucky.” Land surveying in Kentucky was notoriously unreliable, so that Thomas Lincoln’s ownership of what he thought was his land—both on the Sinking Spring farm and the Knob Creek farm—was challenged, and he found himself on the losing end of litigation over his land titles. As for slavery, even now there seems to be some debate as to whether Lincoln’s parents disliked it primarily on moral grounds or because a small farmer and free laborer like Thomas Lincoln had trouble competing with people wealthy enough to own slaves—perhaps both.

On the whole, my impression is that Lincoln’s so-called “southern” upbringing is somewhat overstated. True, he was born in Kentucky, but he spent fourteen years—between the ages of seven and twenty-one—in the free state of Indiana, and his parents were anti-slavery. In later years he described himself as “naturally anti-slavery.” Still, I think Lincoln’s early experience also vouchsafed to him an understanding of, and even to some

degree a sympathy with, people from the South. He never developed the kind of hatred of Southerners or feelings of moral superiority which characterized many Northern abolitionists. Temperamentally, he was not judgmental or "holier-than-thou." But on the whole I would say Lincoln's upbringing made him, culturally, more of a "westerner" than a "southernner."

We don't have much in the way of first-hand information about Lincoln's two flatboat trips to New Orleans in 1828 and 1831. No primary documents exist such as journal entries by Lincoln or Gentry. We do know Lincoln referred to these trips in his 1860 campaign biography, and, most importantly, we have the wonderful book written by Tulane University geographer, Richard Campanella, called *Lincoln in New Orleans*, published in 2010. Without knowing exactly what young Abe Lincoln and Allen Gentry saw and experienced on their way down the river, Campanella does a meticulous job recreating what the two flatboat trips must have been like and what New Orleans looked like in 1828 and 1831. These two trips constitute Lincoln's only visits to the Deep South.

Regarding the 1828 flatboat trip, Campanella believes Lincoln and Gentry built and launched the flatboat in Rockport, Indiana, and left in April 1828. The two young men poled and floated their way down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, a journey of some 1300 miles. Campanella calculates the flatboat traveled at a speed of five to six miles per hour, and the young men probably rested on the river bank each night. On the first part of their trip along the Ohio River, Lincoln would have seen the free north on his right (Indiana and then Illinois), and the slave south on his left (Kentucky). Once the Ohio gave way to the mighty Mississippi, navigating the flatboat became trickier. As they headed south, Lincoln and Gentry were surrounded by slavery. As Campanella describes it, when the boat got to Louisiana they saw "an increasingly humanized riverfront, with higher population levels,



Vandalia State House (ISM) 71.2009.081.1713

a larger number of slaves, frequent landings, more visible displays of wealth and enterprise, extensive plantation agriculture, and an increasingly subtropical ambience."

Speaking of himself in the third person, Lincoln wrote about this experience in June 1860:

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

Campanella thinks Lincoln and Gentry probably "lingered and traded" along the sugar coast for a week. He also speculates that the encounter with the "seven negroes" occurred about sixty miles north of New Orleans, on the east bank of the river, in St. James Parish, at or near the Convent of the Sacred Heart, founded by one Rose Phillipine Duchesne. Reconstructing the episode from stories gathered by Lincoln's law partner William Herndon after Lincoln's death, Campanella says that in response to this attack Allen Gentry pulled off quite a successful bluff. The story goes that Gentry hollered to Lincoln, "Lincoln, get the guns," whereupon Lincoln went to "get the guns," when the truth was

they didn't have any guns. Supposedly the attackers were fooled and ran away. Campanella believes the attackers were probably fugitive slaves from a nearby plantation.

As Campanella reconstructs it, they docked at a flatboat wharf located in the Warehouse District or Lower Garden District. They would have

sold the rest of their cargo right away. New Orleans was by far the largest city Lincoln had ever seen, consisting of some 50,000 people, including many slaves as well as free blacks. It was the center of the domestic slave trade, with many slave pens and slave auctions. As historian Eric Foner writes, "[i]t would have been almost impossible to spend time in New Orleans and not witness the buying and selling of slaves." Campanella believes that Lincoln probably visited Hewlett's Exchange, located at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis streets, the busiest slave mart in the city. Otherwise, there was gambling and vice aplenty, but Lincoln was notoriously abstinent. Lincoln took a second flatboat trip to New Orleans in 1831, a trip which he took at the request of an Illinois merchant named Denton Offutt. Accompanying Lincoln on this trip were John Hanks (his mother's cousin), John Johnston (his step-brother) and probably Mr. Offutt himself.

When Lincoln was twenty-one, his family moved again, this time to Illinois. In 1818, Illinois was admitted to the Union as a free state, although we should be careful to note that the absence of slavery by no means meant the people of Illinois entertained any idea of equality between the races. In 1819, Illinois adopted what were known as Black Codes, under which black people could not vote, could not testify in court, and had to carry papers certifying their status as free. In general, it may be said that neither Indiana nor Illinois wanted or encouraged free blacks to migrate to their state—indeed, it was considered

a crime to bring slaves into the state with the intent of freeing them—and most people in Illinois harbored a prejudice against African-Americans which existed in the Southern slave states and even in most Northern states. To some degree, it must be acknowledged, this prejudice applied to Lincoln himself.

Shifting to Lincoln's experience in Illinois as a state legislator, particularly his vote on a resolution introduced in the Illinois House of Representatives in January 1837. While the record is clear that Lincoln disliked slavery, he was not an abolitionist. He was not, I would say, radical by temperament or revolutionary in his policy. Eric Foner writes: "Lincoln disliked the intemperate language of evangelical reformers. This is one reason why he never identified himself with abolitionists." In Lincoln's speeches, Foner notes, he would often "denounce slavery but not slave owners."

In January of 1837, the governor of Illinois asked the General Assembly to respond to appeals from the legislatures of Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi to do something to stamp out what they regarded as the "menace" of abolitionism, which had arisen during the 1830s. A joint legislative committee drafted a statement which expressed "a deep regard and affection for our brethren of the South." The committee further resolved that "the purposes of the aboli-

tionists are highly reprehensible, and that their ends, even if peaceably attained, would be productive of the most deleterious consequences for every portion of the Union."

In the Illinois House of Representatives the vote was seventy-seven in favor of this resolution, five opposed. One of the five voting "nay" was twenty-eight-year-old Abraham Lincoln. Six weeks later, on March 3, 1837, Lincoln and fellow state representative Dan Stone set forth their reasons for voting against the resolution. "They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate its evils." They gave two other reasons: they believed Congress had no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states; and while Congress did have the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, they believed that power should not be exercised except at the request of the people of the District.

To better understand Lincoln's relationship to the South, let's turn to another key moment in his life: the day he arrived in Springfield, Illinois. Twenty-eight years old, he had just ridden his horse over from the little town of New Salem, where he had lived from 1831 to 1837. On April 15, 1837, at a general store on the courthouse square, he met a young man

named Joshua Speed, who was to become Lincoln's best, and some say his only, intimate friend. Five years younger than Lincoln, Speed came from a well-to-do Kentucky family that owned a plantation near Louisville called Farmington. Looking at the poorly dressed and virtually broke Abraham Lincoln, Speed took pity on him. He told Lincoln, who was looking for a place to stay, that he had a large double bed in a room above the store, and Lincoln was welcome to share it with him.

In 1841, Lincoln went to visit Speed at his family's plantation, staying for nearly a month in the family's fourteen-room brick house on beautiful grounds. The "luxury and leisure of Southern society," notes historian David Herbert Donald, "were on full display, and a house slave was assigned to take care of Lincoln's every need."

After his sojourn, Lincoln and Speed took a steamboat down the Ohio River from Louisville to St. Louis. From there Lincoln was going to return to Springfield by stagecoach. On board this steamboat were twelve slaves being sold down the river—that is, being separated from their wives and children. Lincoln's letters show how he responded to the sight of these slaves, but they are not, as we will see, exactly consistent.

His letter to Mary Speed, Joshua Speed's half-sister, was written on



UNITED STATES SLAVE TRADE.

1830.

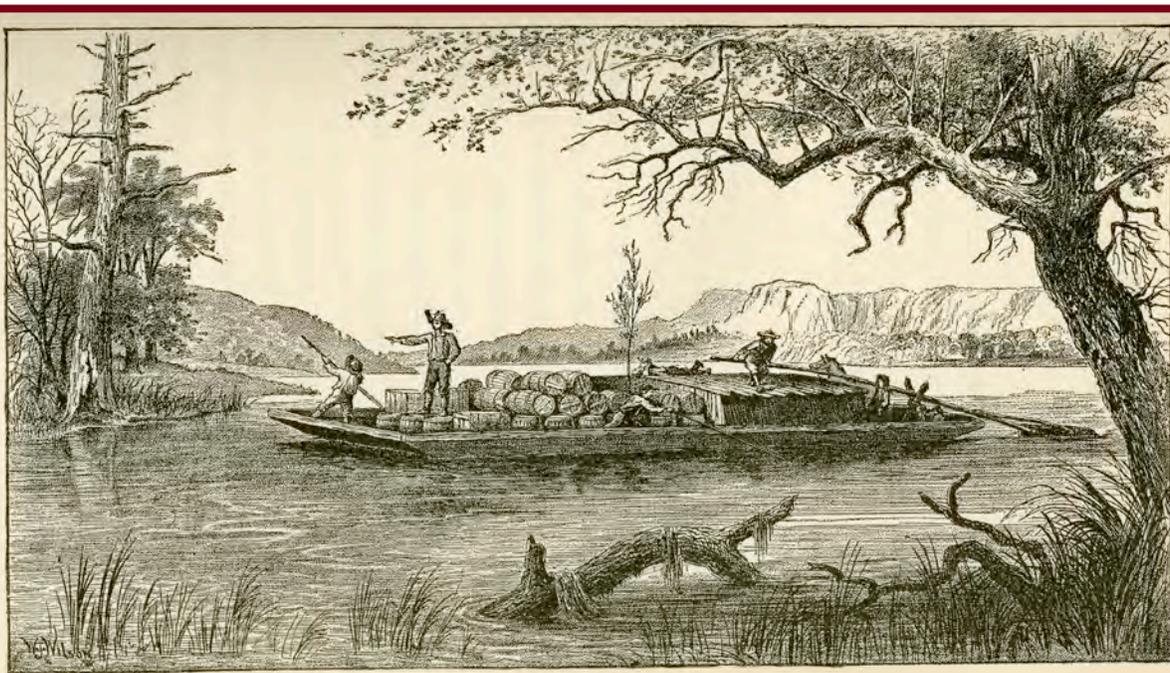
September 27, 1841. Lincoln observed the slaves chained and strung together, he wrote, "like so many fish upon a trot line." In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and many of them, from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery where the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where; and yet amid all these distressing circumstances, as we would think them, they were the

isville to the mouth of the Ohio, there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave border. It is hardly fair for you to assume, that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings, in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union."

great friends of Lincoln's hero, Henry Clay. In fact, so proud and self-important were the Todds that Lincoln once quipped: "One 'd' was good enough for God, but not the Todds."

Lincoln's first law partner was a man named John Todd Stuart. When Lincoln married Stuart's cousin, Mary Todd, he became part of a slaveholding family. And yet Mary's father, Robert S. Todd, a Kentucky state legislator, was, like Henry Clay, one of those Kentucky slaveholders who owned slaves but disliked slavery and hoped

to see it gradually abolished in the state. His daughter Mary seems to have absorbed this view. From what we know, Lincoln was fairly close to his wife's family. He made several visits to Lexington, which was a major slave-trading center, and he spent nearly a month there in 1847 on his way to serve in Congress. When his father-in-law died in 1849, Lincoln handled litigation arising out of his estate.



43

LINCOLN IN CHARGE OF THE FLAT-BOAT.

Abraham Lincoln: A Biography For Young People by Noah Brooks, 71200908401347

most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board."

Historian Eric Foner accurately describes this letter as "oddly dispassionate" about the cruelty of slavery, speculating that perhaps Lincoln was trying not to offend the Speed family, which owned slaves.

Now let's look at the letter Lincoln wrote to Joshua Speed fourteen years later, on August 24, 1855, in which Lincoln recalls the experience a bit differently:

"In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip, on a Steam Boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Lou-

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Lincoln and Speed remained good, if somewhat distant, friends, till the end. After he was elected president in 1860, Lincoln asked Speed to consider a position in his administration. Speed declined, but he became Lincoln's most trusted intermediary in the critical state of Kentucky, which, as we know, never seceded. He persuaded banks in Louisville to help raise money for Union troops, and he recommended to Lincoln many loyal Kentuckians for military and civil appointments.

In 1842, Lincoln married Mary Todd. The Todds of Lexington, Kentucky, were a well-to-do, influential, slave-owning family, and they were

So here we have a man who was naturally anti-slavery but who knew and lived among slaveholders and who did not join with those whose avowed mission in life was to abolish the institution of slavery where it existed. To many abolitionists the U.S. Constitution was a "pact with the devil," in that it recognized and approved the institution of slavery. Decidedly, this was not Lincoln's view.

As noted, his "beau ideal" of a statesman was Henry Clay, one of the founders of the American Colonization Society. Lincoln also supported the idea of gradual emancipation of slaves and "colonizing" them in Africa or Central America. As late as August 1862, Lincoln broached this subject

with certain prominent black leaders at the White House (to which they understandably took great offense), and the idea of colonization is even mentioned in the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued in September 1862, after the Battle of Antietam. The final version of the Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, is thankfully silent on this subject.

The truth is that Lincoln did not publicly embrace opposition to slavery as a cause until Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. This Act effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and opened up the possibility of slavery extending into the federal territories. Lincoln considered slavery a dying institution, and he believed the Founders thought it was (and should be) "in the course of ultimate extinction." He recognized that it was protected by the U.S. Constitution, even if rather sheepishly—as many have noted the words "slavery" and "slave" do not appear in the document, although slavery is unmistakably present in the three-fifths clause and the fugitive slave clause. And so, short of amending the Constitution, Lincoln did not believe he had any power to interfere with the institution of slavery where it existed in the Southern states. In his First Inaugural Address delivered on March 4, 1861, he not only said he had no such power, he explicitly said he had no intention of interfering with slavery in the South.

But, as to the federal territories, in 1854 Lincoln took a stand. The federal government did have the right to prohibit slavery in the federal territories, just as they had prohibited it in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and Lincoln did not want to see slavery expand beyond its current borders. He approved of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, supported by his hero Henry Clay.

In his speech delivered in Peoria, Illinois, on October 16, 1854, Lincoln explained why he opposed the spread of slavery made possible by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He also spoke eloquently about why he hated slavery altogether.

"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—criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting there is no right principle of action but self-interest."

But then—and this is especially significant for our purposes—listen to what Lincoln said next:

Before proceeding, let me say that I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist amongst them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist amongst us, we should not instantly give it up. This I believe of the masses north and south . . .

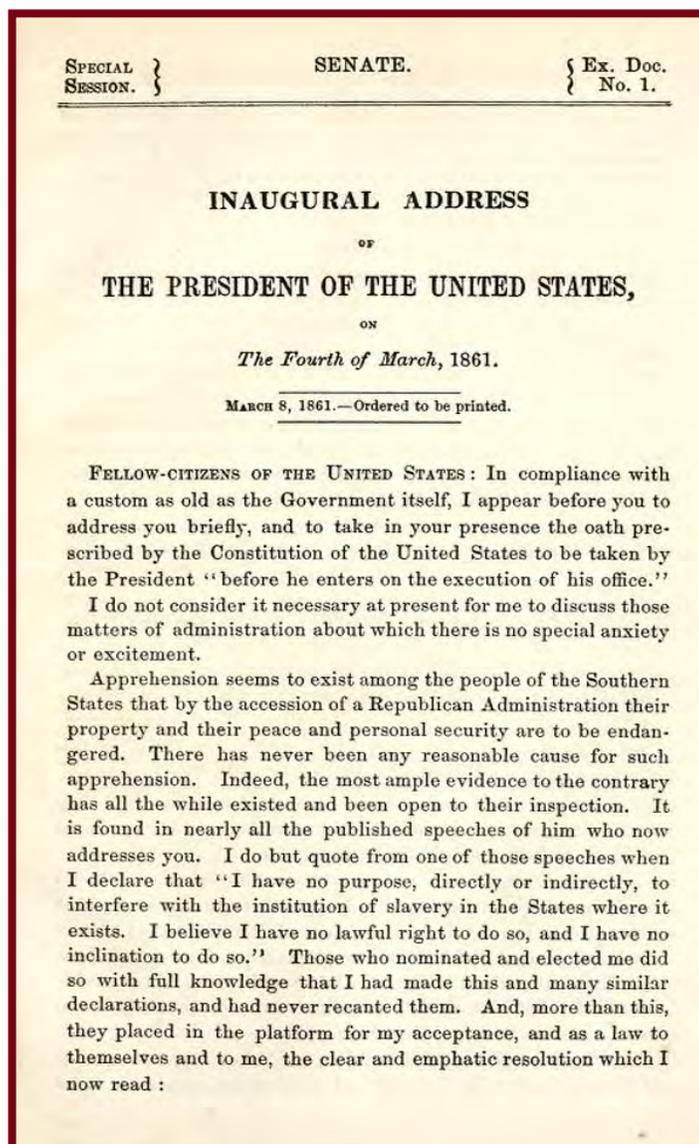
When southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery, than we; I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of it, in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself. If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution.

. . . It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted; but for their tardiness in this, I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the south.

Indeed, Lincoln's attitude toward the South may be best described as non-judgmental. He did not abuse the Southern slaveholder as a wicked person.

North and South, he believed, must share the blame. Certainly much of the American North shared in profits from the so-called peculiar institution.

Some scholars, such as Robert Johannsen, believe there was an element of political opportunism in Lincoln's sudden anti-slavery stance in 1854, as expressed in his speech at Peoria. After all, critics note, Lincoln had been fairly quiet on the subject up until then. And we should keep in mind something not always easy to do when talking about a person about whom thousands of books have been written—and that is that Lincoln was a relatively obscure person in 1854. He had served in the Illinois legislature as a young man, and he had served one undistinguished term in Congress from 1847 to 1849. After that he re-



First Inaugural Address 71200908403282

turned to Springfield and practiced law, riding around the counties of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in central Illinois. His political career seemed to be over.

But the Kansas-Nebraska Act lit a fire, and from the Peoria Speech on his political star began to rise. Both his moral indignation and his restless ambition—William Herndon characterized Lincoln's ambition as "a little engine that knew no rest"—were ignited, and Lincoln was thereafter almost never out of the public eye. He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1855, and he ran again in 1858, starting off with the House Divided Speech, and then engaging in seven great debates around the state with the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Senator Stephen A. Douglas. In February of 1860, he delivered his famous Cooper Union address in New York City, and in May of 1860 he won the Republican Party's nomination for president.

In his excellent book, *Lincoln's Virtues, an Ethical Biography*, William Lee Miller writes: "From the speech at the state fair in Springfield on October 4, 1854, [this was just before the Peoria speech] until his Second Inaugural on March 4, 1865, he treated the monstrous injustice of slavery . . . as the responsibility of the entire nation." In Lincoln's view the war was caused by slavery, a condition in which not just the South but the whole nation was implicated.

In his First Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1861, Lincoln tried mightily to extend an olive branch to the South. "I have no purpose," he said, "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." He even said—and this was quite remarkable—he did not object to a proposed constitutional amendment (known as the Corwin Amendment) which would permanently bar any federal interference with slavery. He pleaded for southerners to "think calmly and well." "Nothing valuable," he said, "can be lost by taking time. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without yourselves being the aggressors."

And, of course, at the end, in a famous peroration, he said:

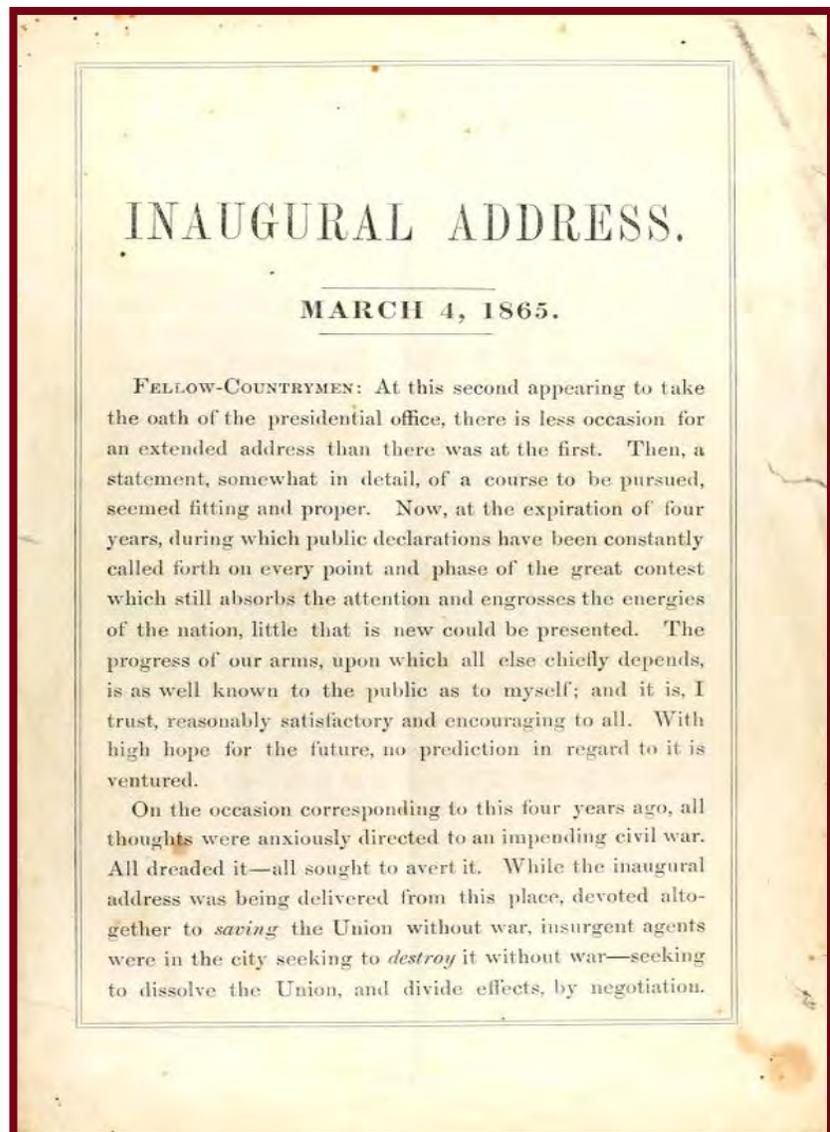
"I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land,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

Shortly after the First Inaugural, in a speech delivered in Hartford, Connecticut, Lincoln said: "In this we do not assume that we are better than the people of the South—neither do we admit that they are better than we. We are not better, barring circum-

stances, than they."

To the end, Lincoln declined to demonize or vilify his fellow countrymen. One night in July 1862, at the Soldiers' Home outside of Washington, D.C., according to a clergyman named Elbert S. Porter, Lincoln said this about slavery:

"It is part of our national life. It is not of yesterday. It began in colonial times. In one way or another it has shaped nearly everything that enters into what we call government. It is as much northern as it is southern. It is not merely a local or a geographical institution. It belongs to our politics, our industries, to our commerce, and to our religion. Every portion of our territory in some form or another has contributed to the growth and the increase of slavery. It has been nearly two hundred years coming up to its



present proportions. It is wrong, a great evil indeed, but the South is no more responsible for the wrong done to the African race than is the North."

The Second Inaugural captures the essence of my message, which is that Lincoln had a deep affection for all of his countrymen, North and South, and he possessed an unusually profound wisdom about what the country had endured. After describing the events leading up to the war, he said this about the North and the South:

"Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged." And, of course, he concluded by saying "with malice toward none, with charity for all, let us bind up the nation's wounds and do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace." Historian Lewis Lehrman accurately notes that this speech, given at a time when the war was almost over and the outcome not in doubt, reveals a remarkable "absence of triumphalism."

One final counterfactual subject—what would Reconstruction in the South have looked like had Lincoln not been assassinated? I think it is likely that, had Lincoln lived, it would have taken a different form. According to James Randall, the Radical Republicans in Congress "desired not only the liberation of black slaves; they desired vengeance upon the South and yearned for a regime of party domination." Lincoln's attitude toward the South was never vindictive. At Appomattox, we know that Grant offered Lee generous terms of surrender—Confederate soldiers would be paroled; officers could keep their sidearms and their horses; and rations were provided for Lee's starving men. There would be no imprisonment, trials, or executions. The defeated soldiers would simply go home.

In his last speech, on the night of April 11, 1865, three days before he was shot, Lincoln spoke from the north portico of the White House. The crowd was in a celebratory mood, but instead of basking in the glory of Union

victory, Lincoln chose to address what some thought was a fairly boring subject: namely, reconstruction in Louisiana. Ever since the Union Navy, led by Flag Officer David Farragut, had fought its way past Forts Jackson and St. Phillip and taken over New Orleans in April 1862, Lincoln had expressed keen interest in helping Louisiana return to the Union it had left. He wanted to—and did—move past the appointment of military governors to support passage of a new state constitution which prohibited slavery and allowed for the possibility of suffrage for African-Americans. Indeed, in his Annual Message to Congress in December, 1863, he proposed a Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, under which states in rebellion would be restored to the nation if one-tenth of the number of eligible voters who had participated in the election of 1860 established a loyal government and adopted a state constitution abolishing slavery.

But many in Congress considered Lincoln much too lenient toward the conquered Confederates and opposed his plan for reconstruction in Louisiana. Despite the fact that 12,000 voters in Louisiana had sworn allegiance to the Union, held elections, adopted a constitution abolishing slavery, and provided for public schooling of African-Americans, as of April 11, 1865, Louisiana had not yet been readmitted to the Union. In his speech that night, Lincoln for the first time suggested that certain African-Americans—the so-called "very intelligent" and those who had fought for the Union cause—should be allowed to vote. He was moving, some maintain, toward universal suffrage. But, of course, a certain actor in the crowd became incensed at these words and vowed this would be the last speech President Lincoln would ever make. And it was.

As historian Louis Masur notes in his thoughtful book, Lincoln's Last Speech, it can never be known whether Reconstruction would have turned out differently had Lincoln lived. "All that can be said with certainty concerns character, not policy, and Lincoln's character did not allow politics to become personal." Masur adds: "There is every reason to believe that after the war he would have moved

the nation toward a political reconstruction that did not forsake Southern loyalists and a social reconstruction that may not have provided the freedmen with all that the radicals envisioned but would have afforded more by way of government support and protection than Southern blacks ended up receiving."

But, as Masur acknowledges, we cannot know this for sure, and it is probably a little too easy to glorify the martyred president by saying all would have been well had he lived. Sometimes, as has been said, making peace is harder than making war. What matters is that from 1861 to 1865, during our country's greatest conflagration, we were led by a humble man, originally from a border slave state, whose level of wisdom and eloquence we still marvel at today and whose most fervent wish was for his countrymen, including his friends in the South, to come back together, with a new birth of freedom, with malice toward none and charity for all.

Editor's note: E. Phelps Gay practices law in New Orleans, LA. This text was previously presented to the Louisiana Historical Society in New Orleans on October 13, 2015.

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Rosewood chair with mother-of-pearl inlay



Dessert plate from the Lincoln Presidential china, 1861-1865



Inkwell used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation



Abraham Lincoln's shawl, given to John Nicolay

From this remove, it is difficult to imagine what life was like for the Lincolns. The Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection contains objects that belonged to the family that give us a glimpse of them at work, in their private lives, and in their entertainments.

The earliest evidence of Abraham Lincoln's work in the collection is a rough mallet, marked with his initials and the date 1829. It descended in the Spencer County, Indiana family that acquired it from him when the family moved to Illinois in 1830. Objects from his legal career include a desk set from the Lincoln-Herndon law office, and his leather document portfolio, signed inside the flap. From his tenure in the White House, the object with perhaps the greatest resonance is the inkwell he used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. His son Tad requested it as a gift to his tutor.

Entertaining eminent guests and the public at the White House were important duties. Mary Todd Lincoln took her responsibilities very seriously. Setting a precedent, the First Lady alone chose the design of the Presidential china, with its hand-painted eagle at the center and fashionable purple border. Whether due to her excellent taste or Abraham Lincoln's mythic stature, subsequent administrations up to Grover Cleveland reordered the same pattern. It was also popular with souvenir hunters, who spirited off many of the pieces while Lincoln was still in office. The Lincolns' great-grandson, Robert Beckwith, donated a cordial set and a delicate rosewood chair that were used in the White House and then handed down through the family.



Mallet belonging to Abraham Lincoln, 1829



Crystal goblet made by Dorflinger Glass Works, used for formal White House events, 1861-1865



Abraham Lincoln's pen-knife found inside his portfolio, 1855



Abraham Lincoln's leather portfolio, 1835-1860

Desk set from the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office, Springfield, Illinois, c. 1850



Lincoln Family Objects

Selected by: Susannah Koerber, Chief Curator and
Research Officer at The Indiana State Museum



Gilt and mother-of-pearl opera glasses belonging to Mary Todd Lincoln, 1860-1870



Milton Bradley, Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion, 1865-1870



Hand-carved wooden toy soldiers belonging to Tad Lincoln, c. 1864



Cordial set belonging to Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, 1862



Abraham Lincoln's presentation cane from J.A. McClelland, 1857



The Lincolns enjoyed the theater, opera and music, frequently attending performances. Tad Lincoln went further, creating his own. As the president's youngest son, Tad's desires were indulged in ways not available to most boys. In the collection is a note from his father saying, "Let Master Tad have a Navy sword." Even so, Tad enjoyed many of the popular toys of the day. He reenacted Civil War battles, charging staff to see his productions. These could have featured the hand-painted wooden soldiers he bought on trips to Joseph Stuntz's toy shop with his father. Milton Bradley's Myriopticon, a theater box with a rolling strip of war scenes and the accessories needed for a show, would have appealed to him on multiple fronts.

Personal items that belonged to the Lincolns were treasured. Lincoln's walking stick was presented to him by Fellow Illinois legislator J.A. McClelland in 1857. Subsequent owners added engraved metal bands documenting its passage. Secretary John Nicolay had his initials stitched into the corners of the large checked shawl Lincoln gave him. One of the more poignant personal items is a fashionable ostrich feather fan, with an inscription that Mary Todd Lincoln used it during her stay at Bellevue Place in Batavia, Illinois, where she was confined after her 1875 insanity trial.



Ostrich-plume fan belonging to Mary Todd Lincoln, 1860-1875

Fabric used for draperies in the Lincoln White House, 1861-1865



“One War at a Time”: Abraham Lincoln and the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America



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Mexico, 71200908501056

Jason H. Silverman

The darkening clouds of Civil War were not all the portentous developments that newly elected Abraham Lincoln faced when he arrived in Washington, DC. With the United States seemingly weakened by deep internal divisions, the European empires made one last attempt to regain their hold over North America and to reintroduce the “monarchic principle” into that “dangerous hotbed of republicanism.” Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria had an additional personal interest in the outcome of the American Civil War. On it hinged the existence of a new Hapsburg reign and the very life of his younger brother Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. But, Maximilian would never have ascended to the Mexican throne had it not been for yet another emperor, Napoleon III of France.



Napoleon III, LFA-0470

Ever since Napoleon’s famous uncle sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803, France had no major stake in the Western hemisphere. With the advent of America’s Civil War, the French monarch sensed an opportunity to change that, with Maximilian as his puppet. Standing in the way of their plans was President Abraham Lincoln; while their natural allies became the newly created Confederate States of America.

Napoleon, Franz Joseph, and Maximilian, like most other crowned

heads of their time, saw Lincoln as the personification of the republican ideas that had stoked the anti-monarchist revolutions in Europe. They naturally feared and hated Lincoln and hoped that the Civil War would provide them with an opportunity to exploit the American schism and re-establish monarchical regimes in America’s backyard.

The struggle in its international aspects was reminiscent of the great struggle between revolutionary France and the ancien régime of Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. The American Civil War as well as the French Revolution precipitated an international coalition which lined up its forces against emerging Republics. In the case of the United States, the Republic was now split in two, and wisdom dictated a policy of intelligently and cautiously enforcing the Monroe Doctrine, first articulated in President Monroe’s Message to Congress on December 2, 1823, to protect hemispheric security from European encroachment, in the face of this new European challenge. This policy found its personification in Abraham Lincoln.

A slow but profound thinker, one who deliberated each and every action, a champion of tolerance who had immense respect for human life, Lincoln was anything but a born leader of armies. If not a pacifist at heart, Lincoln may aptly be described as “an unmalicious warrior,” as one biographer described him.

Those around him, however, were not as cautious as the President. Although an intelligent and shrewd politician, William Seward, Lincoln’s Secretary of State, advocated an aggressive approach toward the European nations to stave off any thoughts they might have about violating the Monroe Doctrine. “I would demand explanations from Great Britain and Russia,” he told Lincoln, “and send agents into Canada, Mexico, and Central America, to raise a vigorous spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention, and, if satisfactory explanations are not received from

France and Spain, would convene Congress and declare war against them.”

Lincoln’s view of the international situation, though, was uninfluenced by war psychosis or wishful thinking. He quietly shelved Seward’s foreign policy and substituted his own based on the simple and prudent maxim of “one war at a time.” While Lincoln stood firm in his defense of the Monroe Doctrine, he preferred a policy of common sense and reason to that of challenge and aggression.

Lincoln’s Latin American crisis, like his domestic one, grew out of sharp ideological differences. Lincoln’s commitment to the Monroe Doctrine precluded Napoleon’s attempt to establish on the southern frontier of the United States a strong monarchy as a barrier to further American expansion. It was Napoleon’s plan as well to convert the other Spanish American republics into monarchies similar to the Second Empire of France. The violation of both the Monroe Doctrine and the sovereignty of the Republic of Mexico initiated his “Grand Design for the Americas.” Consumed with his own war at home,



“Keep off! Monroe Doctrine” by Thomas Powers, LC-USZ62-85448



Maximilian, LN-0861

Lincoln would have none of it. Creating a new Latin American policy, Lincoln and other New World statesmen attempted to unify the Americas against European monarchs and to a considerable degree succeeded.

Lincoln drastically changed the U.S. policy toward Latin America by exercising rigid discrimination in sending there as ministers and other diplomats only those who could convince the Latin Americans that the United States no longer condoned slavery; had abandoned the ambition to expand its territory; and henceforth would extend the utmost respect and courtesies to the Latin Americans, especially in the settlement of claims. In Guatemala, adjoining Mexico on the South, Lincoln appointed Elisha O. Crosby of California who undertook to solve the problems created by Napoleon's puppet Maximilian. In the extremely difficult post of minister to reactionary and pro-monarchical Ecuador was Austrian-born Friedrich Hassaurek who possessed such a crusading spirit for the expansion of human freedom that in his earlier career in Ohio he had become known as “the beer hall Demosthenes.” But Lincoln's most immediate problem upon assuming office was Mexico and for that post he needed someone near perfect.

“Mexican affairs have suddenly come to be very interesting to the Black [Lincoln's] Administration,” the confidential dispatch John Forsyth, former U.S. minister to Mexico, expressed

to his Confederate colleagues from the Washington Peace Conference in late March of 1861. Earlier that month President Lincoln, while considering diplomatic appointments for England, France, Mexico, and Spain, had written, “We need to have these points guarded as strongly and quickly as possible.” Indeed, Mexico might become the most important foreign post, editorialized the *New York Tribune*, since it would counteract “the filibustering projects of the Southern Confederacy.” For the significant Mexican appointment Lincoln chose brilliant lawyer and noted orator, Thomas Corwin, a radical anti-expansionist. Lincoln's choice was made after Secretary of State William Seward asserted that the post was “perhaps the most interesting and important one within the whole circle of our international relations.” With that appointment, the new president launched his foreign policy toward Latin America.

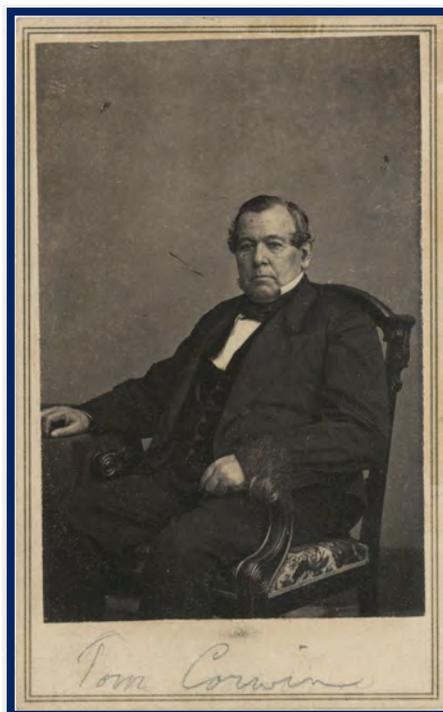
The Mexican diplomatic assignment was the crowning achievement to Corwin's long, distinguished career. Formerly a member of Congress, governor of Ohio, United States senator and, secretary of the treasury in Millard Fillmore's cabinet, Corwin's oratory was so influential that it often shaped public opinion. So powerful was his opposition to the United States war against Mexico that he declared on the floor of the U.S. Senate his hope that the Mexicans would receive the invading armies “with bloody hands and hospitable graves.” For this statement he was widely hanged in effigy, even by members of his own party.

Lincoln instructed Corwin to do all that he could to combat both the Confederate and French influence in Mexico. He was to assure Mexico's duly elected president and Maximilian's adversary, Benito Juárez, that the American Civ-

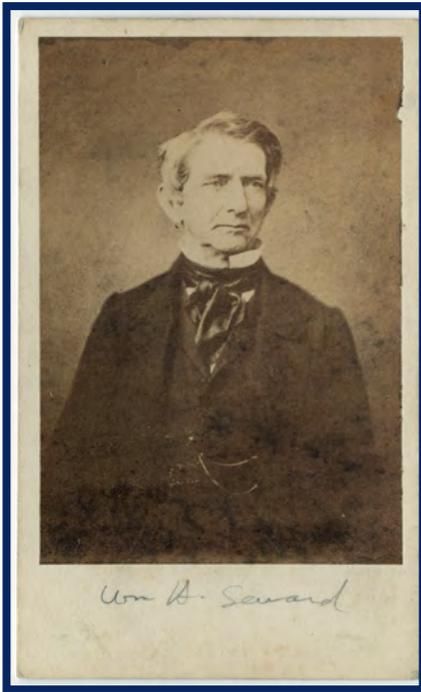
il War was inimical to the welfare of all republican governments in the Western hemisphere. Corwin was to oppose at all costs Confederate attempts to seek diplomatic recognition from Mexico, warning against any aggressive plans of the Confederacy, especially attacks from California and Texas. This he accomplished within a few months and with little difficulty.

Corwin's second assignment was to initiate Lincoln's new Latin American policy which was intended primarily to mitigate the previous administrations' overzealous demands in regard to the American acquisition of Mexican land and the claims of loss of lives and property of United States citizens. In view of the threatened intervention of European monarchies, Corwin was to assure President Juárez that the United States desired Mexico to “retain its complete integrity and independence,” and wished it reinstate its form of republican government seemingly in exile. In the Mexican capital Corwin readily made friends with Mexican officials for whose problems he had both empathy and sympathy. “In the last forty years Mexico has passed through thirty-six different forms of government, has had . . . seventy-three Presidents.” Corwin wrote Seward. “Still I do not despair of the final triumph of free government. . . . The signs of regeneration, though few, are still visible. Had the present

liberal party enough money at its command to pay an army of 10,000 men, I am satisfied it could suppress the present opposition, restore order and preserve internal peace...I am persuaded the pecuniary resources to effect these objects at this time must come from abroad. This coun-



Thomas Corwin, OC-0508



William H. Seward, OC-0929

try is exhausted...by forty years of almost uninterrupted civil war."

By July 1861, Corwin received "positive assurance...that...the [Juarez government] will not entertain any proposition" leading to recognition of the Confederacy. Furthermore, Corwin wrote back to Seward that "well-informed Mexicans in and out of the Government seem to be well aware that the independence of a Southern Confederacy would be a signal for a war of conquest with a view to establishing slavery in each of the twenty-two states of the Republic [of Mexico]." Rumors rapidly spread that the Confederates were already referring to the Gulf of Mexico as "Confederate Lake." Corwin had been at his post for little more than a month when John T. Pickett, the Confederacy's diplomatic agent, landed at Veracruz with the assignment of neutralizing Corwin's diplomatic headway.

Pickett's mission had originated in March of 1861 while he was serving as secretary to the Confederate Peace Commissioners at the last ditch Washington Peace Conference. One of the commissioners, John Forsyth, recommended Pickett as one possessing a "thorough knowledge of Mexican character," who knew the leaders and was "eminently suitable for a position so delicate and important." This endorsement, however, was premature and misplaced. Indeed, Pickett

was tactless and far from exemplary in his conduct, alternating between threatening language and unauthorized hints of bestowing patronage.

Pickett soon reported to the Confederate government that, in his opinion, there would be no stability in the Mexican government as long as the country was governed by Mexicans; only foreign intervention would bring about peace. The Confederacy demanded that Mexico observe the strictest neutrality in the American Civil War, and Pickett was instructed to use all means at his disposal "to match the proceedings of...and to counteract" the Lincoln administration.

Pickett informed his superiors that Mexico supported the Confederacy because slavery was similar to Mexican peonage, and the South was sincere in comparison with Northern hypocrisy. Such was the sympathy between Southerners and Mexicans that, if secession did not result in the independence of the South, "hundreds of thousands" of her sons would emigrate "with their goods and chattels (as did the children of Israel) to some convenient and attractive [Mexican] Promised Land." With Lincoln's blessing, Corwin took a wait and see approach to the aggressive Pickett. But the situation changed dramatically when Pickett learned that the Juárez government had given the Union permission to march troops from Guaymas, on the Gulf of California, to Arizona, in order to protect Arizona from a suspected Confederate advance. In a bold move to undercut the Lincoln administration, Pickett promised the Mexican government "proposals for the retrocession to Mexico of a large portion of the territory hitherto acquired from her by the United States" (i.e. Texas, California, New Mexico territory, Arizona territory, and all other land obtained in the Mexican American War).

Nevertheless, by the ear-

ly Fall of 1861, Mexico regarded the Confederacy with unmitigated suspicion. Pickett blamed Corwin and the Lincoln administration for creating this distrust. President Lincoln knew that Mexico's immediate dangers were not necessarily from the Confederacy; rather, it was Mexico's empty treasury, its continued internal unrest thanks to Napoleon and Maximilian, and the demands made by the European powers. Money was the lifeline of the Juárez government, and Lincoln was Mexico's only prospect of getting it. As a Confederate emissary in Mexico wrote to the government in Richmond, the Mexicans believed that men, money, and arms would be "lavishly supplied" by the United States in support of the national integrity of Mexico and of the Monroe Doctrine.

It was not long before Pickett reluctantly conceded that, unlike the Lincoln administration, the Confederacy had "few or no friends" in Mexico. Pickett had been arrested for disorderly conduct in a bar and his "confidential" reports to Rich-



"The Monroe Doctrine—Let Sam Do It" Puck Magazine, Library of Congress, AP101.P7 1911

mond with many unflattering remarks about Mexico had been intercepted in New Orleans and shared with the Juárez government. His mission to

federate States was a certainty.

As danger from the Confederacy subsided, the Lincoln administration turned its attention to the larger problem of European intervention in Mexico. Lincoln could not spare any military assistance to Mexico as his own war clouds were getting darker and more ominous. Thus the only recourse for Lincoln to assist Mexico was money from loans, which would be effective only if England, France, and Spain agreed to settle peacefully their claims on Mexico.

With this in mind Corwin recommended to Lincoln that the United States loan Mexico an amount not exceeding \$10,000,000 to \$12,000,000, payable in installments. In return the United States might receive Baja California, thought to be in danger of seizure by the Confederates, or, alternatively, a tariff reduction on imports.

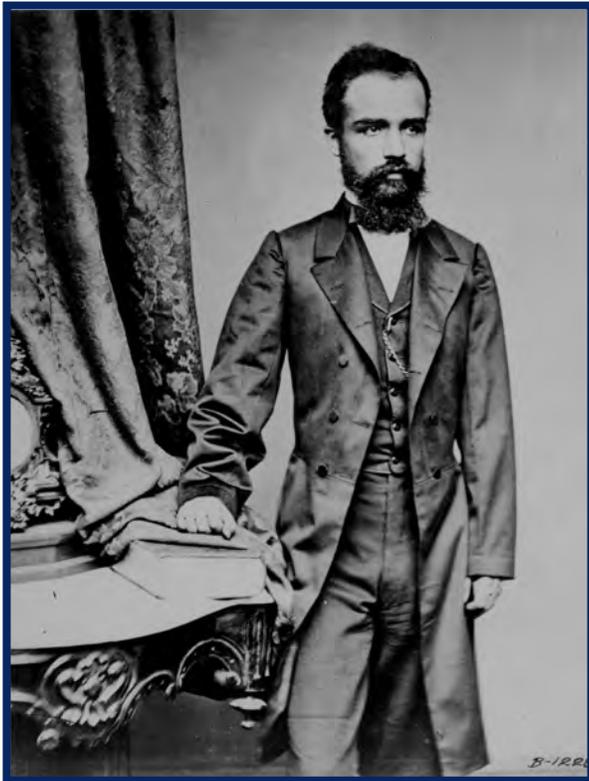
Such an arrangement would doubtless be unpopular in both countries, Lincoln realized, remembering vividly his own opposition to the acquisition of Mexican territory during his one term in Congress.

Corwin then made a second suggestion to Lincoln. Corwin anticipated that England and France intended to intimidate Mexico or, worse yet, intervene militarily. “Europe is quite willing to see us humbled,” Corwin wrote, “and will not fail to take advantage of our embarrassment to execute purposes of which she would not have dreamed had we remained at peace.” Corwin concluded that President Juárez and his republican government, if given financial aid, could withstand any foreign intervention in their country. Only from the United States could such aid come. At the same time that Lincoln was seeking to assist Mexico, the Mexican Congress inopportunistly suspended interest payments on debts and claims owed England, France, and Spain. Corwin quickly proposed that the United States pay Mexico’s suspended interest obligations, taking as security the mining rights of the northern states of Mexico. The American loan, then, would be specifically designed to assist the Mexican debt settlement. For the United States to pay debts other than its own was an unprecedented move and it was highly unlikely that England and France would permit the United States to pay Mexican debts and thereby gain further influence in that country.

To Lincoln, and to his own Mexican

Mexico was relegated to utter failure.

When the Juárez government rejected the Confederacy’s overtures, it became expendable to the government in Richmond. The Confederacy, in an effort to win diplomatic recognition in Mexico from France, accepted Maximilian and hoped for an alliance with his government. Indeed, Confederate agents argued in Paris that success of the French Mexican government depended upon a Confederate victory in the United States. When Pickett left Mexico in December 1861, he was absolutely convinced that French intervention on behalf of the Con-



Matias Romero, Public Domain



“His Foresight” Puck Magazine, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-25571

countrymen, the youthful Mexican diplomat, Matías Romero argued in behalf of a general loan to his country. But Mexican Foreign Minister, Manuel María Eutimio de Zamacoña refused to consider the price: "It is inconceivable," he declared, "that this government would make agreement about the sale of territory . . . or mortgage the wealth of undeveloped lands . . . which would foreshadow any danger to our nationality." Both Lincoln and Seward convinced Romero that, the Monroe Doctrine notwithstanding, a loan to Mexico would never be approved by either the Department of State or the Senate if the money was used to make war on other powers, especially in the midst of an American Civil War. This would risk an international crisis and Lincoln resorted once again to his "one war at a time" philosophy.

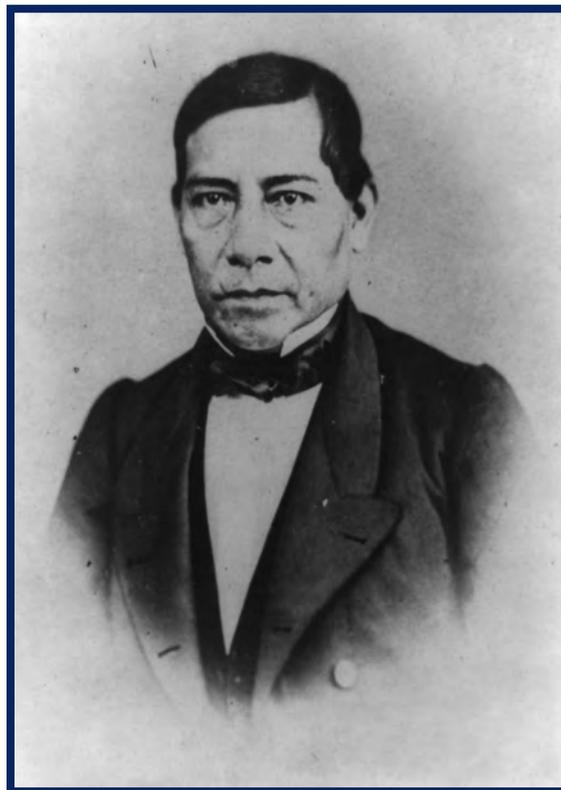
If a general loan to Mexico was not feasible, then perhaps one earmarked to meet the interest payments on the Mexican debts might work, Lincoln was advised by Seward. Thus on August 24, 1861, Lincoln and Seward gave Corwin permission to pursue such negotiations. Corwin was authorized to frame a treaty by which the United States would pay, "over a period of five years, the interest of 3 percent on Mexico's funded foreign debt. Repayment would bear 6 percent interest and the loan would be secured by public lands and mineral rights in the northern states of Mexico." The treaty was not to be signed until and unless Britain, France, and Spain agreed not to make reprisals. By the following month, the proposed American treaty with Mexico became well known in London and Paris. Charles Francis Adams, U.S. minister to London brought the question to the attention of British Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell and informed Russell that the United States was disturbed by rumors of interference in Mexico and the possibility of the creation of a new Mexican government

by foreign intervention. Adams insisted that it would be much better if the threatened use of force by the European powers were prevented by an agreement whereby the United States guaranteed, for a specified period, interest payments on Mexican debts.

Despite their initial reluctance, Lincoln and Seward recognized the validity in the proposal to pay Mexico's interest payments. It was a calculated risk to be sure, Lincoln thought. But, much to Lincoln's chagrin, when the resolution endorsing the project of a loan was brought to the floor of the U.S. Senate, it was decisively rejected, and instead an opposing resolution was adopted declaring that it was not advisable to negotiate a treaty that would require the United States to assume any portion of the principal or interest of the debt of Mexico, or that would require the concurrence

less threatening than the rebellion at home. An aggressive Britain, France, and Spain might start a war which could result in the complete subjugation of Mexico. If that took place and the Confederacy prevailed, the outcome could once again be a return "of the American continent under European domination." As 1861 faded, Abraham Lincoln watched with grim uncertainty the unfolding situation in Mexico.

Mexico was rapidly becoming one of the most compelling elements of the Lincoln Latin American foreign policy. The foreign policy toward Latin American established in Mexico by Lincoln, continued by his successor, President Andrew Johnson, and administered throughout both administrations by Secretary of State Seward, was gradually applied to the other Latin American republics.



Benito Juárez, LC-USZ62-7875

of foreign powers. Despite Lincoln's lobbying, the Senate would not approve any loan that would drain money from Civil War expenditures.

Lincoln regarded European intervention in Mexico as only slightly

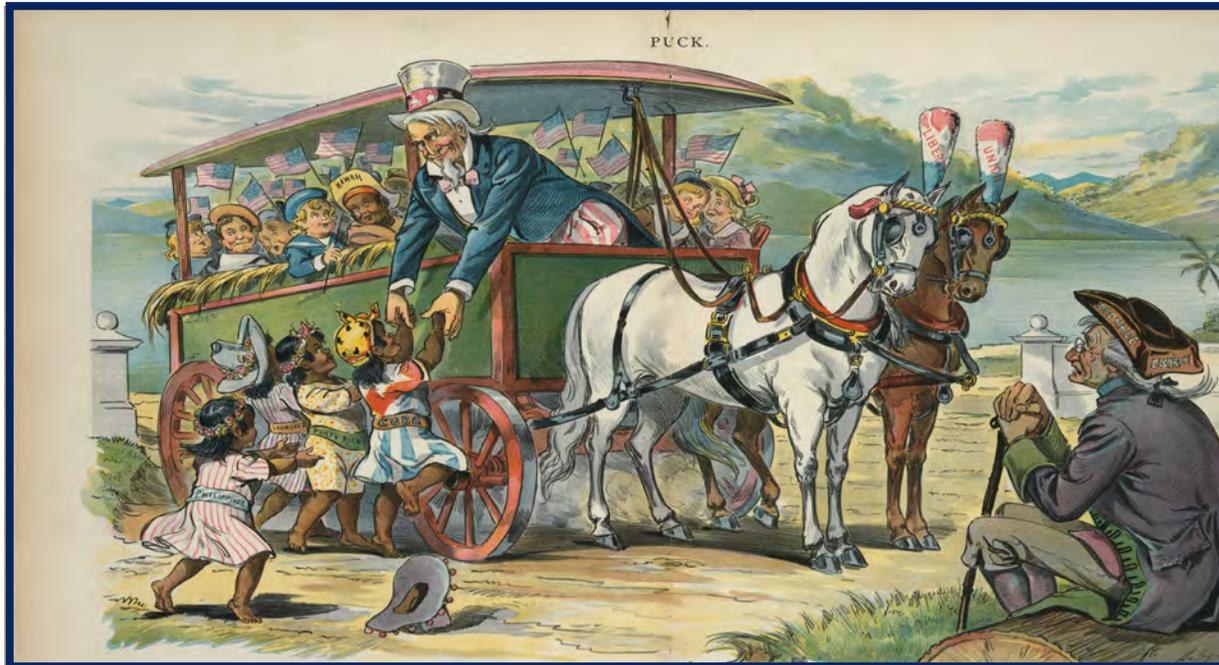
As was the situation in Mexico, advocates of monarchy in most of the Latin American countries were from conservative and clerical groups. These groups came from deeply rooted positions of power and wealth which had "suffered disastrously . . . under the republican form of government." In dire terms, Friedrich Hassaurek, American minister to Ecuador, reported such to President Lincoln. "We must either...be swallowed up in the end by the Anglo-Saxon race or follow the example of the French in Mexico...Bad...as foreign intervention may be, it is our last and our only hope." Prior to the Lincoln administration, the American State Department had so relentlessly persisted in pro-annexationist claims as to alienate and anger the Latin American nations. As Manifest Destiny spawned aggressive expansionists who professed that Anglo-American dominance was a heaven-sent process ordained by God, Latin American resentment, fear, and hatred were intensified.

Despite being consumed by his own war, Lincoln realized that the American relationship with Latin America must be repaired and improved. That attitude was shared by the Mexican diplomat Matías Romero. "Before the [U.S.] Civil War commenced," Romero wrote, "it appeared that... [the United States] was the only ene-

my ...because [its] usurping policy had deprived us of half our territory and [was] a constant menace...Nothing, therefore, was more natural than to see with pleasure...a division which... would render [America] almost impotent against us . . . [However] We [now] find ourselves [facing] the hard alternative of sacrificing our territory and our nationality at the hands of...

successful and compelling trial lawyer, Lincoln also indicted Confederate policies by linking them closely with the aggressive foreign policies of French and Spanish imperialism directed toward the Latin American nations. This vastly departed from Lincoln's predecessors, and, along with Secretary of State Seward, he assured the Spanish American republics that the

tration, quietly ignored the unofficial assistance that the United States Army occasionally provided Mexico in the form of war materiel. “We have obtained our victory,” an exuberant, if not slightly mistaken, Romero wrote, “by our own efforts without the aid of any foreign nation—in spite of the moral influences of all Europe and the material force of France and the



“Uncle Sam's Picnic” Puck Magazine, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-28634

[the United States] or our liberty and our independence before the despotic thrones of Europe. The second danger is immediate and more imminent...”

Lincoln's plans were intended to rectify the mistakes of the past and to eschew the traditional American expansionist pressure on Latin America and create a new foundation of mutual understanding and self-respect. Toward that end, Lincoln's instructions to American diplomats in Spanish America constituted “an emotionally earnest crusade for the survival of free institutions.” This included the condemnation of slavery, long abolished in free Spanish America, and the vigorous defense of human and natural rights. The antithesis of this Lincoln believed was the Confederacy which he described as composed of filibusterers and expansionists, intent on the spread of slavery into Latin America with its ultimate intention of overthrowing legally constituted governments. Ever the

“United States was the one powerful defender of republicanism against monarchy and Old World interference and, therefore, the protector of all sovereignty in the Western Hemisphere.”

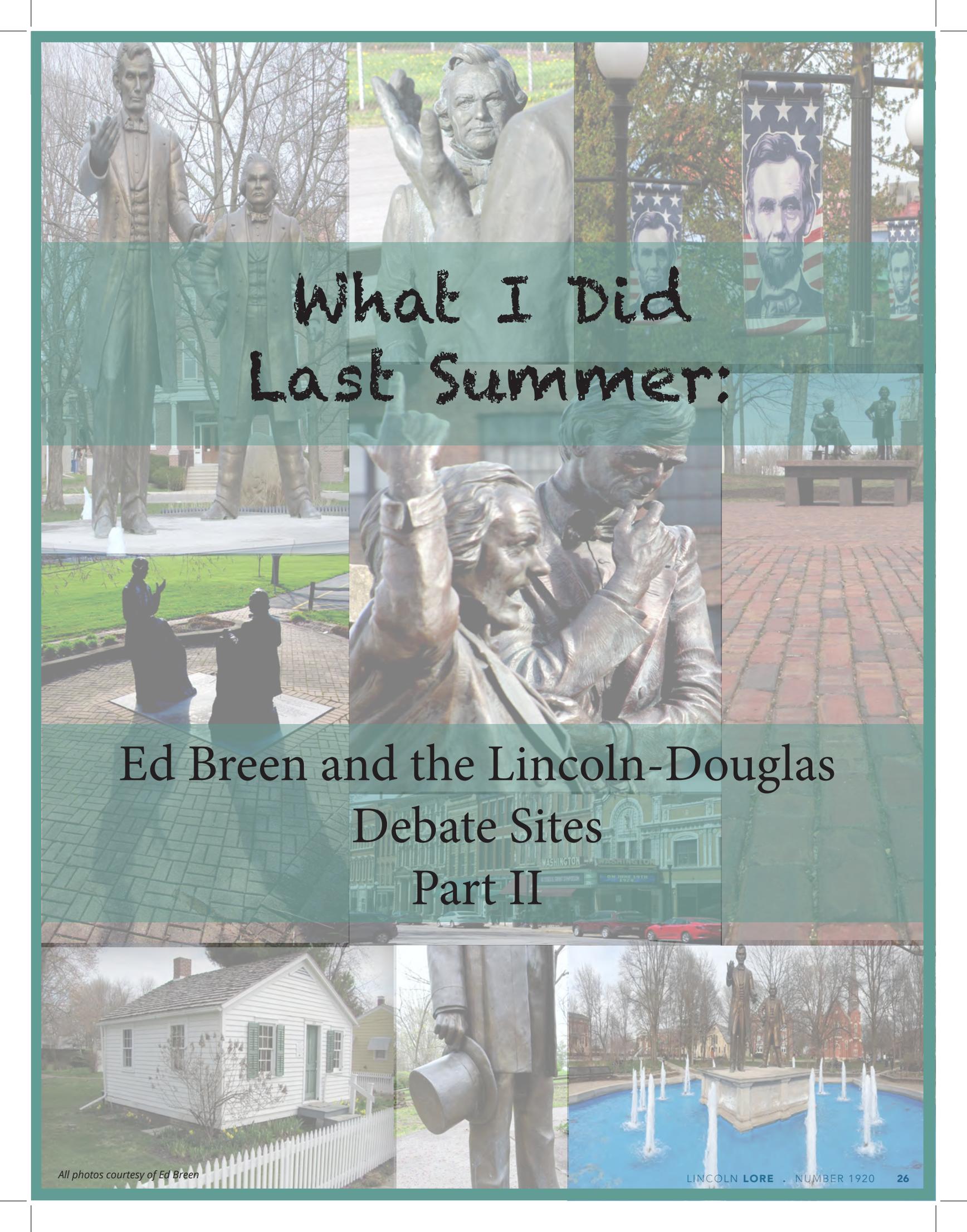
Although overshadowed by the myriad of his domestic woes and his concerns that European nations would interfere in the American Civil War, Lincoln was a quiet, yet staunch, defender of the Monroe Doctrine. And, while his foreign policy initiatives were obviously designed to preserve the Union, Lincoln never took his eye off European encroachment elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere and sought to stop it wherever it existed.

Two years after Lincoln's assassination, Napoleon's Grand Design failed of its own weakness. Although Lincoln's attempt to loan Mexico funds was thwarted on the floor of the Senate he had, during his adminis-

tration, quietly ignored the unofficial assistance that the United States Army occasionally provided Mexico in the form of war materiel. “We have obtained our victory,” an exuberant, if not slightly mistaken, Romero wrote, “by our own efforts without the aid of any foreign nation—in spite of the moral influences of all Europe and the material force of France and the

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Jason Silverman is Ellison Capers Palmer, Jr. Professor of History Emeritus at Winthrop University.



What I Did Last Summer:

Ed Breen and the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Sites Part II



Down the road, 220 miles southwest of Ottawa, is the Mississippi River town of Alton, a town of 27,000 that is really a far northern suburban St. Louis, but it seems not to have benefitted from location. Its shrine at the October 15 debate site is within sight of the river, a presence which drives so much of all Mississippi River towns, past and present. The downtown site is expansive and elegant, with statuary created by artist Jerry McKenna. He was selected by a committee of the Rotary club and produced a Lincoln and a Douglas who are both life-sized and life-like with animation and expression that seem to befit what we know of that day.



Francis Grierson, a local historian, was there: "This final debate resembled a duel between two men-of-war, the pick of a great fleet, all but these two sunk or abandoned in other waters, facing each other in the open, the Little Giant hurling at his opponent, from his flagship of slavery, the deadliest missiles, Lincoln calmly waiting to sink

his antagonist by one simple broadside."

"Alton had seen nothing so exciting since the assassination of Elijah Lovejoy, the fearless Abolitionist, many years before (in 1837)"

Alton seems to have wrapped itself around the era unlike any other place. Just down the road, still hugging the bank of the great river is the home of Lyman Trumbull, United States Senator from Illinois, who, as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, helped to draft the language of the Thirteenth Amendment, the final and uncompromising language that brought an end to the debate and the bloodletting, the prohibition of slavery in the United States of America.

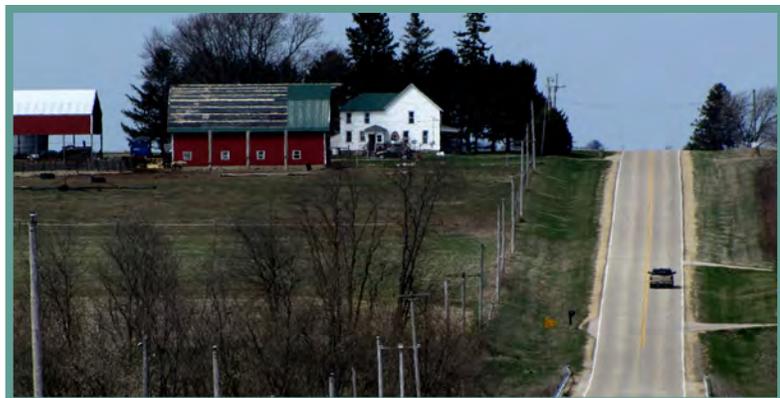
A half century earlier, the 1,000 inhabitants of the river town had gathered on its bank to watch the passing parade of the Corps of Discovery - the Lewis and Clark Expedition - as it ascended the river toward the unknown of the far west. And the great debate came and went and the war came and went. And not at all incidentally, Alton is the birth and nurturing place of one of the most iconic of American musicians. Jazz trumpeter player Miles Davis was born in 1926 in Alton into an affluent African-American family. His mother was a teacher and violinist; his father, a dentist. And so it is, up and down the breadth and depth of these Illinois communities. Historic people and historic events came and went over 200 years, bookends to a few weeks and a few events which gave shape and form to who and what we are today. This is no better demonstrated than 310 miles to the north in Freeport, another

Midwestern town struggling to preserve its past and develop its future.

At the corner of State and Douglas streets is Debate Square. It is a couple of blocks east of the most dominant structure on the Freeport skyline: The 83-foot limestone obelisk, the Soldiers' Monument, erected in 1871 as a tribute to the Stephenson County men who served and died in the Civil War. Slightly more than an acre, Debate Square was the site of the second of the seven debates and seems to be the place where Douglas framed his "Freeport Doctrine," a delicate balance between popular sovereignty and judicial deter-



mination on the future of slavery. The Freeport statues give life to the scene, display tablets describe what happened there, including newspaper accounts of the day. Probably only coincidental, but in most of the sculptural interpretations, including Freeport, the chosen moment depicts an animated



Douglas and contemplative Lincoln.

But it is next door, at the Union Dairy ice cream shop at 126 E. Douglas Street, that all of this – the speeches, the memorials, the statues, the memoirs and the transcripts – seems encapsulated in the life and times of Ron Allen, a middle-aged African-American.



Allen was born and reared in Chicago, in “the projects,” he says with no rancor and some pride. The Ida B. Wells House between 37th and 39th streets on the South Side of the

He was educated in Chicago and came to Freeport at his mother’s insistence.

“God bless my Mama,” he said, adjusting his cap and walking from his apartment in the Union Dairy building the 100 feet to the park. “I’m here because she didn’t want me killed in Chicago.” He and his wife Amy, who is white, live in the modest apartment beside the ice cream shop. “Been here a long time,” he said. “Oh yes, we watch the people come to the park. Usually they come here first and get an ice cream cone, then they go over to the park and look at all the statues, then they read the stuff on the signs and then go on.”

Does he identify with what happened here? Evaluate its importance in the national life and, more



He laughed, repositioned his cap and returned to be bench and sat down with his wife in front of their apartment to simply watch and wait and get into these kinds of conversations.

The legacy of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 160 years ago? It persists in these Illinois towns. It is partly preserved in the bronze statues. And it partly – and more importantly – resides in the lives of those living at 130 E. Douglas Street in Freeport, and at 303 Lincoln Avenue in Charleston, Illinois.

All Mr. Breen’s photos and captions, as well as the first part of his article, are available online at www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.com



city. An early attempt at public housing built just prior to World War II. His mother, he said, came to the city from the South, from Mississippi, part of the post-war African-American migration from rural to urban America. There is no mention of his father.

importantly in his life? No, not really. “What happened here?” he said. “Why back in those days in Freeport there was so much goin’ on and so many women over there,” he said pointing to the southeast, “that mostly they didn’t know there was a debate here at all.”

