

# Lincoln

# LORE

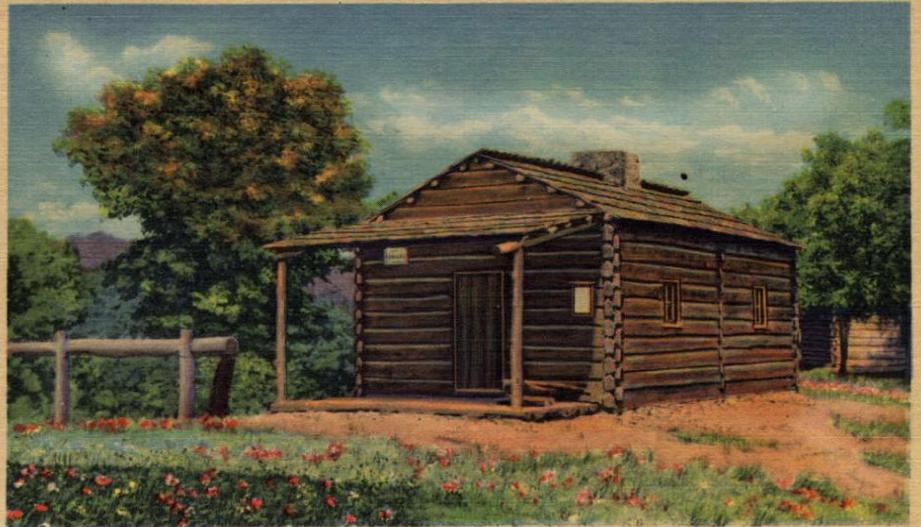
NUMBER 1923 FALL 2019

Looking N. E. on Left—Hill Residence, Hill-McNeil Store, Berry and Lincoln Store



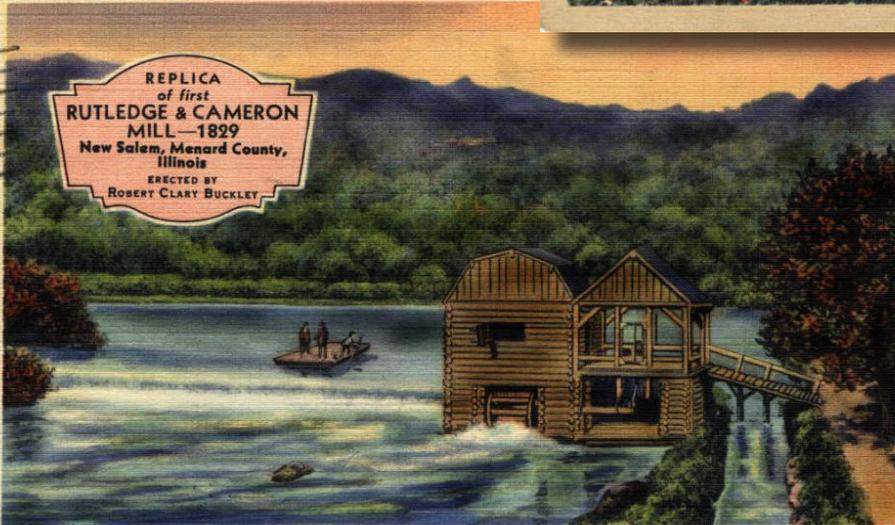
On Right—Alex Ferguson Residence, New Salem State Park

Denton Offut's Store, New Salem State Park, Lincoln's New Salem, Ill.



4A-N1182

REPLICA  
of first  
RUTLEDGE & CAMERON  
MILL—1829  
New Salem, Menard County,  
Illinois  
ERECTED BY  
ROBERT CLARY BUCKLEY



4A-N1114

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### Allen County Public Library

Emily Rapoza  
[Lincoln@acpl.info](mailto:Lincoln@acpl.info)

### Friends of the Lincoln Collection

Sara Gabbard, Editor  
P.O. Box 11083  
Fort Wayne, IN 46855  
[SGabbard@acpl.info](mailto:SGabbard@acpl.info)

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# Upcoming Events



## THIS HALLOWED GROUND: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE BATTLEFIELD DEAD

Presented by Brian Dirck

Sunday, December 8, 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Rooms A-B

Allen County Public Library, Main Library

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Free and Open to the Public



## PANEL DISCUSSION

*Lincoln and America Divided: Then and Now*

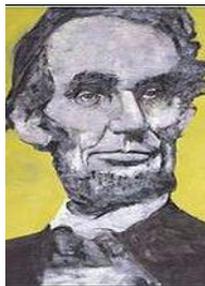
Thursday, November 7, 2019 7:00 pm

Theater

Allen County Public Library, Main Library

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Free and Open to the Public



## 2019 LINCOLN FORUM

Speakers include: Gary Gallagher, Elizabeth Varon, Joan Waugh, and Jonathan White

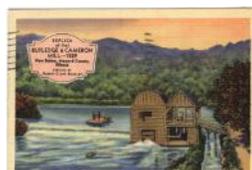
November 16-18, 2019

Gettysburg, PA

For more information, visit

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# On the Cover

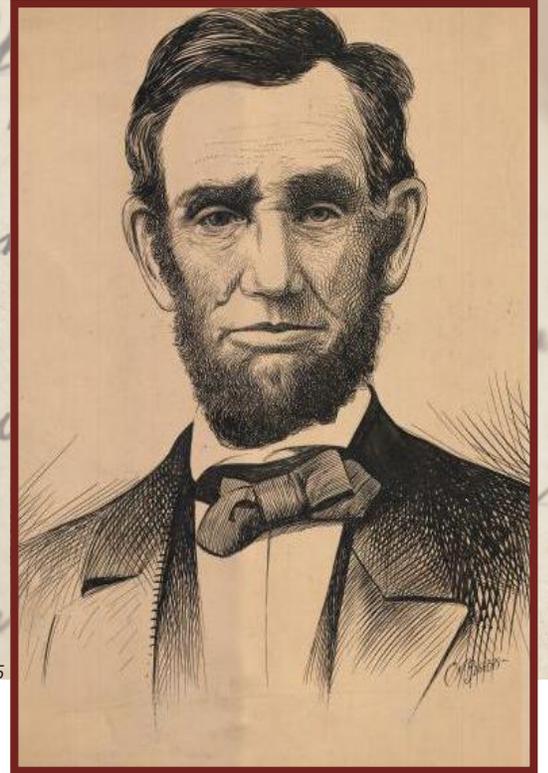


The postcards shown on the cover are from the Zurow Postcard Collection and feature images of New Salem, Illinois. To see more on New Salem, go to page 14 to read Guy Fraker's article "When Lincoln Walked the Streets of New Salem." (Postcards are ZPC-173, ZPC-146, ZPC-162).

# The Intellectual Milieu of Abraham Lincoln

Allen C. Guelzo

Abraham Lincoln by C.M. Biggers 71.2009.081.2265



Abraham Lincoln was not a philosopher, or even what we might today call an intellectual. "Politics were Lincoln's life," William Henry Herndon told Jesse Weik in 1887, "and newspapers were his food." Yet, in almost the same breath, Herndon acknowledged that "we used to discuss philosophy," that Lincoln "knew much of the law of Political Economy & the Social Science," and that above all, Lincoln was "intensely thoughtful—persistent—fearless and tireless in thinking" and "lived in his reason and reasoned in his life." He had intellectual hobbies that only occasionally peeked-out from the wings of his professional and political life, especially "political Economy—the study of it," and Herndon listed a virtual syllabus of 19th-century writers on the subject which Lincoln "digested and assimilated" - John Stuart Mill, Henry Carey, John Ramsey McCullough and Francis Wayland. (He would, in fact, lift an entire section from Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* and write it into one of his more famous speeches, the address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society

in 1859, and re-use Wayland's *if A, on the ground of intellectual superiority, have a right to improve his own means of happiness.... to produce his 1854 syllogism If A. can prove, however conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B)....*

Limited as Lincoln's formal education had been, he had "also studied Natural Philosophy" as well as "Astronomy, Chemistry" from whatever other books he could find "from which he could derive information or knowledge," and in 1855, Herndon remembered that he was so intrigued by the American Associa-

tion for the Advancement of Science's popular serial, *The Annals of Science: Being a Record of Inventions and Improvements*, that "he instantly rose up and said that he must buy the whole set." Herndon told Francis Carpenter that, before leaving for Washington in 1861, Lincoln had sent "to my private residence a box full of his books - mostly political" but including "some valuable literary works—Byron—Goldsmith—

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William Shakespeare LN-2084

Locke—Gibbon &c.” So when the English lawyer George Borrett called on him at the Soldiers’ Home in the summer of 1864, Lincoln not only “launched off into some shrewd remarks about the legal systems of the two countries, and then talked of the landed tenures of England,” but “next turned upon English poetry, the President saying that when we disturbed him he was deep in [Alexander] Pope.” And he would later surprise John Hay with “a little indulged inclination” for “philology” and a deep acquaintance with Shakespeare. “Some of Shakespeare’s plays I have never read,” Lincoln admitted in 1863, but “others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader. Among the latter are Lear, Richard Third, Henry Eighth, Hamlet, and especially Macbeth. I think nothing equals Macbeth. It is wonderful.”

While this will re-inforce Leonard Swett’s warning that “any man who took Lincoln for a simple minded man would very soon wake [up] with his back in a ditch,” it does not go very far toward placing Lincoln on the larger intellectual map of his times. For that, we have to consider a wider milieu, and Lincoln’s place in it. Oddly, for much

of the 20th century, there was very little agreement that Lincoln’s America had much in the way of such a milieu. The great American historian (and Librarian of Congress) Daniel Boorstin described Americans as do-ers rather than thinkers, pragmatists rather than philosophers, who “focused on immediate, changing, and unpredictable needs... They did not pursue the absolute, nor expend their thinking on doctrinal quibbles.” In every aspect of American life, “ideology was dis-

placed by organization. Sharp distinctions of thought and purpose were overshadowed by the need to get together on...common purposes.” Even Lincoln’s fellow-lawyers proceeded “warily and undogmatically from case to case,” Boorstin claimed, and were “rich in the prudence of individual cases but poor in theoretical principles.”

European observers tended to agree, although not in Boorstin’s enthusiastic tones. In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville was dismayed to find that “there is no country in the civilized world where they are less occupied with philosophy than the United States.” And not only philosophy – less occupied with theology, with political theory, with “fewer great artists, illustrious poets, and celebrated writers” than in Europe. This, Tocqueville concluded, was the inevitable result of America’s democratic politics. In democracies

people have only the shallowest of ideas, and tend to be “tightly chained to the general will of the greatest number.”

But both Tocqueville and Boorstin were looking through the wrong end of the telescope, for the most obvious fact about American democracy was, as Lincoln put it, that it was founded on a philosophical proposition, “that all men

are created equal.” This founding was itself a marker of a tremendous intellectual upheaval known as the Enlightenment, in which not only a political order but an entire way of understanding the universe were dramatically re-written. From the Middle Ages, western Europeans had understood the physical world as a hierarchy: from the Earth on up to the highest heavenly realms, all material things stood in an orderly and graded relationship to each other. This ap-

plied to the social and political world as well. Societies and kingdoms existed as social pyramids, with mutually supportive layers of kings, nobility and commoners in strictly top-down fashion. But beginning in the 1600s, a revolution in scientific thinking overturned the fixed hierarchies of the heavens and earth and substituted natural laws as the explanations for movement and order in the physical world; and in the hands of the eighteenth century’s political philosophers – Locke, Montesquieu, Beccaria – the old pyramids were challenged by theories of natural rights which everyone held equally. It was from this Enlightenment that the American Revolution sprang.

Lincoln was born at almost the tail end of the Enlightenment, in 1809. But his entire mental life was wrapped around the Enlightenment principles that had animated the American founding. “All the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated, and were given to the world from this hall in which we stand,” he said at Independence Hall, on his way to his inauguration in 1861. “I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.” Government was rooted, not in the authority of superiors in a hierarchy, but in the consent of all the governed, as equals bearing equal natural rights. “No man,” Lincoln said in his great Peoria speech of October 1854, “is good enough to govern another man, without that other’s consent. I say this is the leading principle -- the sheet-anchor of American republicanism.”

But more than simply embracing the politics of the Enlightenment, Lincoln also espoused the Enlightenment’s rejection of arbitrary intellectual authorities of any kind, starting with religious skepticism. No writers held more charm for the twenty-something Lincoln than the paladins of Enlightenment religious doubt, “Tom Paine & [Constantin] Volney,” leading the young Lincoln to go “further against Christian beliefs -- & doctrines & principles than any man.” For Lincoln, neither religious authority nor religious enthusiasm, but reason was the guiding light to truth. “Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence,”



*Alexis de Tocqueville, LC-USZ62-116351*

he declared in 1838, and he irritated the devout of Springfield in 1842 by describing as a "Happy day, when, all appetites controled, all passions subdued, all matters subjected, mind, all conquering mind, shall live and move the monarch of the world. Glorious consummation! Hail fall of Fury! Reign of Reason, all hail!" This was a skepticism which experience and prudence would teach Lincoln to temper over the years. But it was never wholly effaced, either. He would not even attempt to govern his rambunctious children by authority. "It is my pleasure that my children are free, happy and unrestrained by parental tyranny," he explained. "Love is the chain whereby to bind a child to its parents."

What reason taught Lincoln in particular was two-fold: that minds were impressed with sensations that corresponded to external realities (which was John Locke's doctrine in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1689) and that minds were effectively passive in receiving and acting on those sensations. "He adopted Locke's notions as his system of mental philosophy," Herndon wrote, and "held that reason drew her inferences as to law, etc., from observation, experience, and reflection on the facts and phenomena of nature." This made him "a pure sensualist" and "a materialist in his philosophy." There was, in Lincoln's understanding, no room for "dualism" – the parallel existence of material and spiritual substance, with free will and free choice located in the spiritual realm.

A disbelief in free will occupied a central place in Lincoln's mental scaffolding. In part, it surely owes something to the radical Calvinism of the Separate Baptists to whom his parents belonged and in whose fellowship Lincoln grew up in Indiana. But Lincoln's mature ideas on the absence of free will have a decidedly naturalized cast which he shared with many of the prominent Enlightenment voices whose names surface in descriptions of Lincoln's reading – Edward Gibbon, whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) he

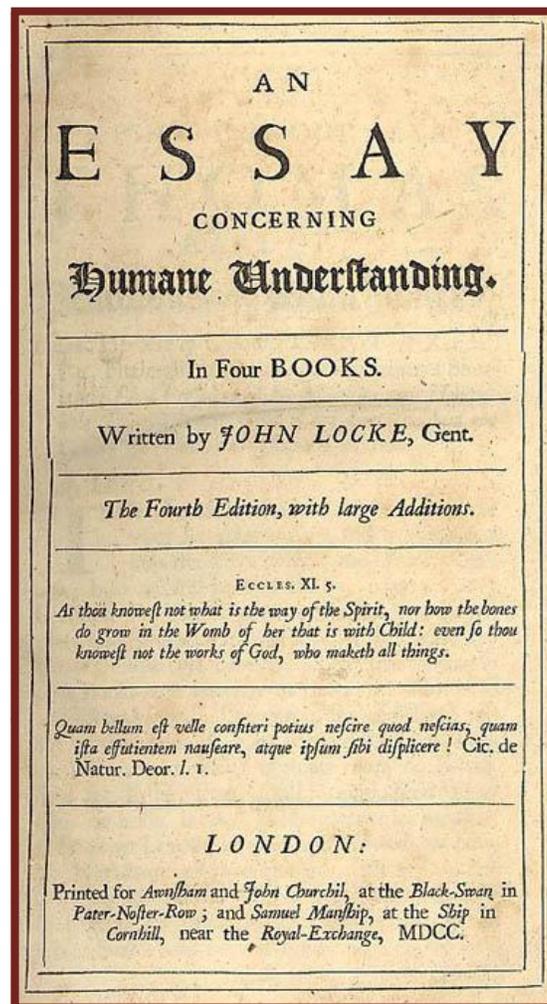
borrowed from William Greene in New Salem, and David Hume, whose *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) was lent to him by Herndon. "There was no freedom of the will," Lincoln informed Herndon. Since all that existed was material substance, and since material substance was governed entirely by natural laws, then there was no room for human wills to upset the causal chains that connected one event to another. What Lincoln called (in terms similar to Hume) the "Doctrine of Necessity" was defined entirely by a kind of Pavlovian response to motives – "that is, that the human mind is impelled to action, or held in rest by some power, over

man to every voluntary act of his life."

What the wise politician did, then, was to appeal, not to authority, but to self-interest in order to stimulate the responses of his constituents. And Lincoln did not hesitate to make this appeal central to his handling of emancipation and the recruitment of black soldiers. In the public letter, defending emancipation, which he wrote for James Cook Conkling in 1863, Lincoln pointedly asked what Northerners wanted. "You desire peace; and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it?" Only by suppressing the Confederate rebellion. And what will achieve that? The application of as much force as possible – including the force lent by recruiting blacks as soldiers. "I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do, in saving the Union." But to motivate that recruitment, isn't it necessary to offer a sufficient motivation? "Negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do any thing for us, if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom."

What reason taught Lincoln about a natural politics, also described for him what a natural economics ought to look like, and the Enlightenment fostered in Lincoln as unfettered a notion of commerce as it did of government. For centuries, economies had been governed by kings, and organized as monopolies to be put into the hands of the nobility as rewards for faithful service. Wealth was thought-of only in terms of land-ownership, and the rents to be collected from peasant tenants; making a living in towns from exchange and production was dismissed as "low employment." "The exercise of merchandise hath been (I confess) accounted base and much derogating from nobility," admitted the poet Henry Peacham, even if he had to concede that "Common-wealths cannot stand without Trade and Commerce, buying and selling."

The Enlightenment tore loose from this completely, glorifying commerce and the merchant classes as the en-

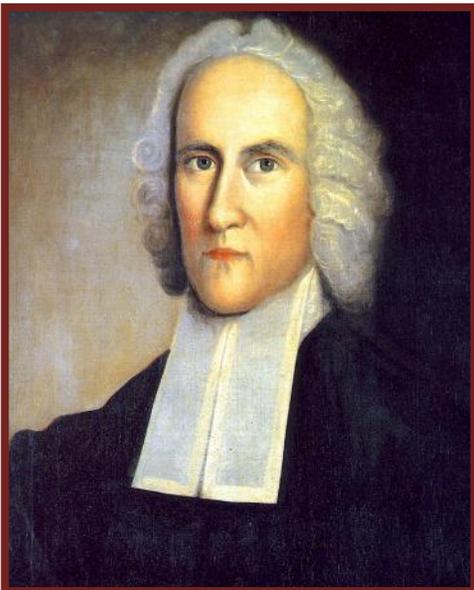


*Essay concerning Human Understanding, John Locke LC-151-L79ESS*

which the mind itself has no control." This did not mean that people were will-less zombies. But it did mean that the operation of the will was a response to motives, which "moved the

gines of real (as opposed to arbitrary) benefit to societies. "Why should not the knowledge, the skill, the expertness, the assiduity, and the spirited hazards of trade and commerce, when crowned with success, be entitled to...those flattering distinctions by which mankind are so universally captivated?" asked Samuel Johnson, the great dictionary-maker, in 1765. "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." It delighted Joseph Addison (of *The Spectator*) in 1711 "to see...a body of men thriving in their own private fortunes, and at the same time promoting the public stock; or...raising estates for their own families, by bringing into the Country whatever is wanting, and carrying out of it whatever is superfluous."

It delighted Lincoln, too. "Twenty-five years ago, I was a hired laborer," he said, in a rare moment of reflection on his poor-boy past. But in America, there were no kings or nobility to hoard the nation's wealth for themselves and their favorites. In a world devoid of hierarchy, "the hired laborer of yesterday, labors on his own account to-day; and will hire others to labor for him to-morrow." This is because "advancement -- improvement in condition -- is the order of things in a society of equals." It was this which drove Lincoln, from his earliest political awakenings, into the Whig Party, since the Whigs and their great fig-



Portrait of Jonathan Edwards by Joseph Badger, Public Domain

urehead, Henry Clay, were preeminently the champions of commercial development and a national marketplace system, supported by government-sponsored banking, infrastructure creation and protective tariffs.

In this way, Lincoln's life paralleled the flowering of Enlightenment economic thought in England and Europe, especially as it was represented by the 18th-century Scots, Adam Smith and John Ramsay McCulloch (whom Herndon remembered that Lincoln had "digested and assimilated"), and by the 19th-century 'Manchester School' of Richard Cobden and John Bright, and by John Stuart Mill, John Elliott Cairns and Goldwin Smith. Cobden, who had met Lincoln in the 1850s while in the United States, saw his task to be "one of the leading executors of that legacy of economic science which the Scottish philosophers of the last century had bequeathed," and to denounce "meddling with any of our commercial arrangements" by government, "which was the creature of monopoly." Cobden "steadfastly opposed" all favors to "political exclusion, to commercial monopoly and restriction, to the preponderance of a territorial aristocracy in the legislature." Bright, whose portrait Lincoln kept on the mantelpiece of his White House office, was hailed as "the undisguised champion of American Institutions, and staunch supporter of Republican principles." Lincoln was conscious enough of this transatlantic connection to fix on slavery as the principal embarrassment the United States suffered as the world's chief exponent of Enlightenment principles, since "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."

The American Republic was the Enlightenment's first offspring as a nation. But Lincoln only arrived on the American scene as the Enlightenment's hold on America was beginning to slip, first to a rival (in the form of evangelical Protestantism) which had almost as good a claim to being America's intellectual parent, and second to an outright challenger in the form of Romanticism, whose antagonism to Enlightenment ideas would

help bring the country to civil war.

The English settlements which grew to become the United States had not been founded by plan. Almost all of them had been originally planted by religious exiles from England - Puritans, Quakers, Catholics - whose interests remained strong enough to be reckoned with in the new republic. The leadership of the American Revolution - Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin -- might have been deeply enamored of the Enlightenment, but much of the rest of the nation retained habits of religious practice which often sat in direct criticism of the Enlightenment. In the 1740s, a major Protestant religious revival known as the Great Awakening blew through American life like a hurricane, reminding its devotees that not reason but faith was the tie that bound people to God, and that the "religious affections" were a better barometer of one's spiritual health than natural law. "True religion is evermore a powerful thing," warned Jonathan Edwards, the most talented analyst of the Awakening, and its power "appears in the inward exercises of it in the heart." And not only religion. "The Author of the human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made 'em very much the spring of men's actions." The power of the Awakening not only led to an explosion in the number of evangelical Protestant congregations between 1780 and 1860, but to the founding of a string of colleges - Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, and even the otherwise secular University of Pennsylvania - which became the centers of American intellectual life in the early republic.

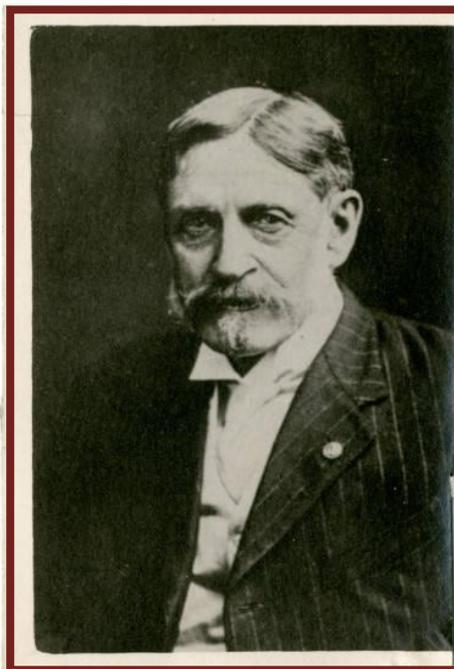
Yet, the colleges and the Awakeners learned to make their peace with the Enlightenment. Reason might guide Americans in the constructing of their new political order, but virtue would be required to preserve its operations, and the leadership of the Awakening and its colleges was happy to suggest that they could provide the substance of a virtue which was at once both reasonable *and* religious. Francis Wayland, whom Lincoln so admired on political economy, offers a perfect example of this. A Baptist minister and president of Brown University, Wayland asked his students to notice that all change in

the universe follows a uniform pattern. When they did, they would discover an analogy: that minds follow those same patterns. Such pervasive regularity logically required the existence of a Law-Giver for both physical and mental behavior – although, happily, the process of discovering that Law-Giver is as reasonable as any Enlightenment philosopher could require. “It is only when...bursting loose from the littleness of our own limited conceptions, we lose ourselves in the vastness of the Creator’s infinity, that we can rise to the height of this great argument and point out the path of discovery to coming generations.”

Morality was thus not an accident, a social convention, or an illusion; it was a conscious law of the mind, and like the laws of physical science, it instructed people in the laws of character development, social relationships, politics, economics, and their spiritual duties to God. This “common sense” morality was the perfect prescription for an Enlightenment republic: it yielded moral laws without compelling people to embrace Protestant theology. But it allowed Protestant Christians like Wayland to slip the fundamentals of Christian morality into public affairs without the hubbub of revivalism, and thus let a kind of low-level evangelism operate on the republican masses. That, in turn, allowed Lincoln (like many of Lincoln’s fellow-Whigs in the 1830s and Republicans in the 1850s) to strike up alliances with evangelical Protestants. Both Lincoln and the evangelicals were, after all, alike in the business of self-transformation, Lincoln economically and the evangelicals spiritually. And so he grew increasingly careful to subdue his free-thinking impulses, and even to suggest that the “Doctrine of Necessity” was the “same opinion...held by several of the Christian denominations.”

But Lincoln would never actually join them. “His nature was not at all enthusiastic,” remembered White House staffer William O. Stoddard, “and his mind was subject to none of the fevers which pass with the weak and shallow for religious fervor, and in this, as in all other things, he was too thoroughly honest to assume that which he did not feel.” The war years, and their terrible toll, would force Lincoln to resort increasingly

to religious explanations – especially for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation – but never made him into an outright believer. At least, said Orville Hickman Browning, Lincoln shed any temptation to be “a scoffer at religion. During our long and intimate acquaintance and intercourse I have no recollection of ever having heard an irreverent word fall from his lips.” And the truce that “analogy” offered between evangelical Protestantism and Enlightenment reason allowed Lincoln to welcome the support of Northern churches, even as he fended-off their requests for more explicit recognition of Christianity in public life (as in the appeal by the National Reform Association in 1864 to have the Constitution amended to insert a



William O. Stoddard LN-1296

reference to God, *humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government*).

The restlessness of evangelical Protestantism was a domestic and largely benign feature of America’s intellectual geography, and willing to live in at-least-uneasy yoke with the republic’s Enlightenment political and economic rules. The same could not be said for Romanticism, which was an international and irreconcilably hostile response to the Enlightenment. The fuel of the Romantic revolt lay in the Enlightenment’s over-confidence in ascribing orderliness to the universe,

and reason’s capacity to discern it. To the promoters of the Enlightenment, reason brought clarity, balance and order. Enlightenment art, according to Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Art* (1758) cultivated “noble simplicity and sedate grandeur.” Anything which “partakes of fancy or caprice... is incompatible with that sobriety and gravity which are peculiarly the characteristics of this art,” added Sir Joshua Reynolds in the tenth of his *Discourses*, on sculpture. Not passion, but “the beauty of form alone, without the assistance of any other quality, makes of itself a great work, and justly claims our esteem and admiration.”

The problem was that orderliness and reason could very easily produce blandness, ennui and boredom, too. Like Dickens’ Thomas Gradgrind, the Enlightenment seemed ready “to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to.” Even worse, the Enlightenment’s hope that nature could be reduced to a predictable machinery faltered in the face of unprecedented (and inexplicable) natural disasters like the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. So, when the poet William Blake read Reynolds’ *Discourses*, he erupted, “Passion & Expression is Beauty itself,” and to Reynolds’ condemnation of “fancy,” Blake retorted, “If this is True, it’s a devilish Foolish Thing to be an Artist.” The Romantics sought release from the trammels of reason, turning for relief and adrenalin to the pursuit of the sublime, which Edmund Burke, in his *Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) defined as whatever conveyed feelings of *astonishment, terror, obscurity and power*. Romantic art discarded the balance and symmetry of Reynolds and Winckelmann and turned instead to J.R.W. Turner’s swashes of color and the dark violence of Eugene Delacroix; Romantic music set aside the polite orderliness of Haydn and Mozart in favor of the storm and lightning of Beethoven, Berlioz and Wagner; Romantic literature, like Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, praised the value of medieval chivalry; Romantic history must be a history of races, races and nationalities. Those races and nations most often glorified by Romantic politics were monarchies and empires, while Ro-

romantic economics gushed in praise over social solidarity and organic mutuality and spat in contempt at "trade." In the Romantic imagination, human societies should not be considered as collections of self-interested individuals, but as organisms whose component parts depend on each other's co-operation. The German Romantic historian, Johann Herder, spurned the notion that humanity should be considered as a universal system of individuals, all bearing equal rights, and mourned for the days when

*generations and families, master and servant, king and subject, interacted more strongly and closely with one another; what one is wont to call 'simple*

soever. Romantic literature left him unmoved. "It may seem somewhat strange to say," he admitted to Francis Carpenter, "but I once commenced *Ivanhoe*, but never finished it." He had read Lord Byron, the arch-Romantic of English literature, in his youth, but little of it shows up in Lincoln's later references; his appreciation for American Romantic poets was, according to Noah Brooks, limited to the elder Oliver Wendell Holmes and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Birds of Killingworth* and *A Psalm of Life*.

Neither did Lincoln have much of the Romantic adulation for nature. His solitary recollection of his Kentucky boyhood was an unpromising re-

Niagara Falls?" Lincoln asked himself. "There is no mystery about the thing itself. Every effect is just such as any intelligent man knowing the causes, would anticipate, without [seeing] it."

Herndon thought he was even more prosaic about Niagara in years afterward. When Herndon returned from New York "some time after" by way of the Falls, he "was endeavoring to entertain my partner with an account of the trip, and among other things described the Falls."

*After well-nigh exhausting myself in the effort I turned to Lincoln for his opinion. "What," I inquired, "made the deepest impression on you when you stood in the*

*presence of the great natural wonder?" I shall never forget his answer, because it in a very characteristic way illustrates how he looked at everything. "The thing that struck me most forcibly when I saw the Falls," he responded, "was, where in the world did all that water come from?" He had no eye for the magnificence and grandeur of the scene, for the rapids, the mist, the angry waters, and the roar of the whirlpool, but his mind, working in its accustomed channel, heedless of beauty or awe, followed irresistibly back to the first cause. It was in this light he viewed every question.*



Niagara Falls, LC-2010630806

*country seats' prevented the luxuriant, unhealthy growth of the cities, those slagheaps of human vitality and energy, whilst the lack of trade and sophistication prevented ostentation and the loss of human simplicity in such things as sex and marriage, thrift and diligence, and family life generally.*

His fellow-German poet, Heinrich Heine, had nothing but contempt for American ideas of freedom. America, to Heine, was a "huge prison of freedom," with "neither princes nor nobles" but where "all are equally churls."

For all of Romanticism's complaints, Lincoln had no sympathetic ear what-

membrane of how "sometimes when there came a big rain in the hills, the water would come down through the gorges and spread all over the farm" and "washed ground, corn, pumpkin seeds and all clear off the field." As a state legislator, his greatest use for nature was to force it to yield "good roads" and "navigable streams" for the benefit of trade. Through "internal improvements" of this sort, "the poorest and most thinly populated countries would be greatly benefitted." Nor did anything sublime strike him about Niagara Falls when he first saw it in 1848. "What mysterious power is it that millions and millions, are drawn from all parts of the world, to gaze upon

But Lincoln's most decisive differences from the Romantics lay, not in aesthetics, but in politics and economics. He had no concept of the American nation as a Germanic-style *Volk*. In the eulogy he delivered in Springfield in 1852 for Henry Clay, Lincoln spoke of Clay – and indirectly, for himself – as a man who "belonged to his country" but also "to the world," who "loved his country partly because it was his own country, but mostly because it was a free country; and he burned with a zeal for its advancement, prosperity and glory, because he saw in such, the advancement, prosperity and glory, of human

liberty, human right and human nature." Lincoln persisted in viewing national identities as mere surface phenomena compared to the fundamental commonality everyone enjoyed through the equality of natural rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence. "We have...among us," he said at the outset of 1858 senatorial campaign which would make him nationally famous, "men who have come from Europe -- German, Irish, French and Scandinavian men -- that have come from Europe...and settled here, finding themselves our equals in all things." Show them the history of the Revolution and its battles and its leaders, and they will be unable to "carry themselves back into that glorious epoch and make themselves feel that they are part of us." However, "when they look through that old Declaration of Independence" and "find that those old men say that 'We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal,'" there is an instinctive response, a logical sympathy which effaces mere nationalism and racialism. "And then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are." This did not make Lincoln a modern racial egalitarian -- there were some prejudices that not even the Enlightenment had been very successful in conquering -- but it did make him reject utterly the idea that membership in one race entitled its holders to lord it over others.

Lincoln had no nostalgic yearnings for bygone eras of hierarchy and solidarity, when

*The Greatest owed connection with the least,  
From rank to rank the generous feeling ran  
And linked society as man to man....*

"Free society," he said in 1860, knows no ranks. Anyone can make and remake their condition as they please, since "there is no fixed condition of labor." He had once been a "hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat boat"; he had, by the Romantic reckoning, really "used to be a slave."

But "now I am so free that they let me practice law," which, in America, is "just what might happen to any poor man's son." He wanted "every man to have the chance" to do likewise, and he was willing to step far enough outside the constructing circle of race to add, "and I believe a black man is entitled to it" as well. The passing of monarchy and hierarchy were nothing to be regretted, since monarchy was, in essence, nothing but slavery. "They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle," he said in his final debate with Stephen Douglas in 1858.

*The one is the common right of humanity and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.*

But slavery had its American defenders, the Enlightenment and the Declaration notwithstanding, and not surprisingly, the justifications offered for slavery -- and especially slavery based on race -- were drawn entirely from the Romantic playbook. Slavery's greatest ideologue, John C. Calhoun, praised the South's plantations as idyllic, self-contained villages, "a little community, with the master at its head, who concentrates in himself

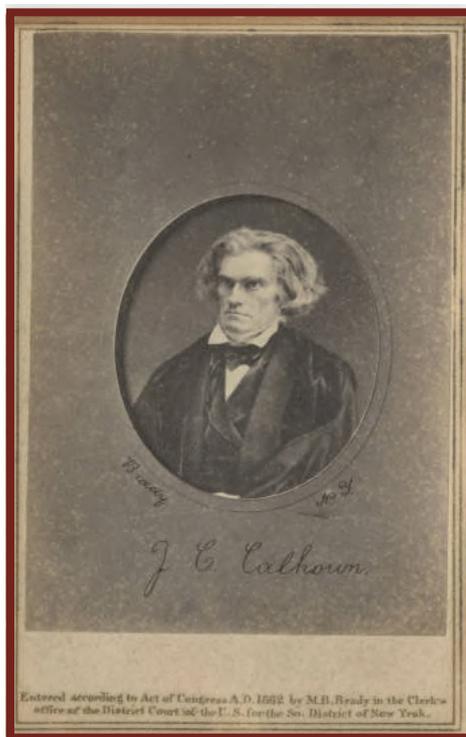
the united interests of capital and labor" and where "capital and labor is equally represented and perfectly harmonized." In Calhoun's Romanticized vision, it was entirely appropriate to enslave black people on the accidents of physical difference and dismiss universal natural right. "Instead...of all men having the same right to liberty and equality," wrote Calhoun, rights are social conventions, to be handed out as "high prizes" to those races "in their most perfect state." And far from this creating contention and oppression, Calhoun insisted that "the existing relations between the races in the slaveholding states" has "been a great blessing to both of the races." No one should be deluded by the false premises of the Declaration of Independence, Calhoun warned.

*If our Union and system of government are doomed to perish, and we are to share the fate of so many great people who have gone before us, the historian ... will trace it to a proposition, which originated in a hypothetical truism, but which as now expressed and now understood is the most false*

*and most dangerous of all political errors. The proposition to which I allude has become an axiom in the minds of a vast majority on both sides of the Atlantic, and is repeated daily from tongue to tongue as an established and incontrovertible truth; it is that 'All men are born free and equal' ...As understood, there is not a word of truth in it....*

"All men are not created equal," Calhoun announced, and with that, hierarchy made its return to the American scene.

And not social hierarchy alone. George Fitzhugh, the Virginian whose *Sociology for the South; or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854) infuriated Lincoln when Herndon bought him a copy, declared that "Nothing can be found in all history more unphilosophical, more presumptuous"



John C. Calhoun LFA-0206

than “the infidel philosophy of the 18th century.” The worst aspect of that philosophy was the pretense of “Political Economy” captured by “in the phrase, ‘Laissez-faire,’ or ‘Let alone,’” which included not only the economic self-propulsion Lincoln preached, but “free competition, human equality, freedom of religion, of speech and of the press, and of universal liberty.” All these, Fitzhugh stigmatized as “a system of unmitigated selfishness,” since “the disparities of shrewdness, of skill and business capacity, between nations and individuals, would, in the commercial and trading war of the wits, rob the weak and simple, and enrich the strong and cunning.”

In the place of “the doctrines of individuality,” Fitzhugh lauded socialism as the newest version of economic solidarity, and, in truth, he added, “socialism is already slavery in all save the master.” (Better still, “we slaveholders say you must recur to domestic slavery” as “the oldest, the best and most common form of Socialism.”) The genius of Southern slavery was that (as James Henry Hammond explained) Southerners understood that slavery was inevitable, and that one class had to be consigned permanently to the performance of what he called the “mud-sill” work of any society. “Fortunately for the South,” said Hammond, “she found a race adapted to that purpose...a race inferior to her own, but eminently qualified in temper, in vigor, in docility, in capacity to stand the climate, to answer all her purposes. We use them for our purpose, and call them slaves.”

Nor was this merely the talk of a handful of aggressive but marginal radicals, driven loony by race. “Society is a pyramid,” explained the editor of the *Nashville Daily Gazette* late in 1860. “We may sympathize with the stones at the bottom of the pyramid of Cheops, but we know that some stones have to be at the bottom, and that they must be permanent in their place.” All across the slave South in the fifty years after the Revolution, hierarchy was stealthily supplanting the Enlightenment in a number of forms, consigning whites as well as blacks to fixed places in a social pyramid. First, slaveholding concentrated more and more economic power in fewer and fewer hands. Compared to the North,

the states which would make up the Confederacy had few of the mechanisms of credit and mercantile services which the “hired laborer” could use for self-improvement. The state of New York alone had more banks than the entire future Confederacy; so did Massachusetts and Rhode Island, taken together. The Confederacy had only one city larger than 45,000 people (New Orleans, with 114,000), while New York City and Philadelphia each had a larger population than the six principal cities of the Confederacy combined. In the Northern states, the average size of farms ranged between 118 and 155 acres; in the slave states, the median farm was *one thousand acres* and larger, which more nearly approximated the landholdings of the British gentry, while in Louisiana, the average cotton plantation swelled to over 2400 acres.

Concentrations of economic power then translated into concentrations of political power. In 1860, less than 2% of the future Confederacy (some 98,000 Southerners) owned three-quarters of all the slaves; yet, they ruled the legislatures of Southern state after Southern state. They, and not the aspiring “hired laborer,” gave direction to the Southern economy, so that railroad development in the South was overwhelmingly underwritten by state government dollars rather than private initiative. “The South, then, is to all intents and purposes an Aristocracy, nay, an Oligarchy,” concluded James Stirling, the heir of a Glaswegian merchant fortune who visited America in 1857, “for in addition to aristocratic feeling, there is also an anti-democratic inequality of fortune.” The South, complained Albion Tourgée, “was a republic in name, but an oligarchy in fact,” and Francis Lieber added, “the most prominent extremists” in the South for states’ rights were, in practice, “strongly inclined toward centralization and consolidation of power within their respective States.”

By the time South Carolina seceded from the Union, Southerners were already beginning to talk about the re-introduction of some form of monarchy. “I am a Virginian, a monarchist,” declared John Esten Cooke, and in 1858, *DeBow’s Review*, the pre-eminent agricultural magazine of the South,

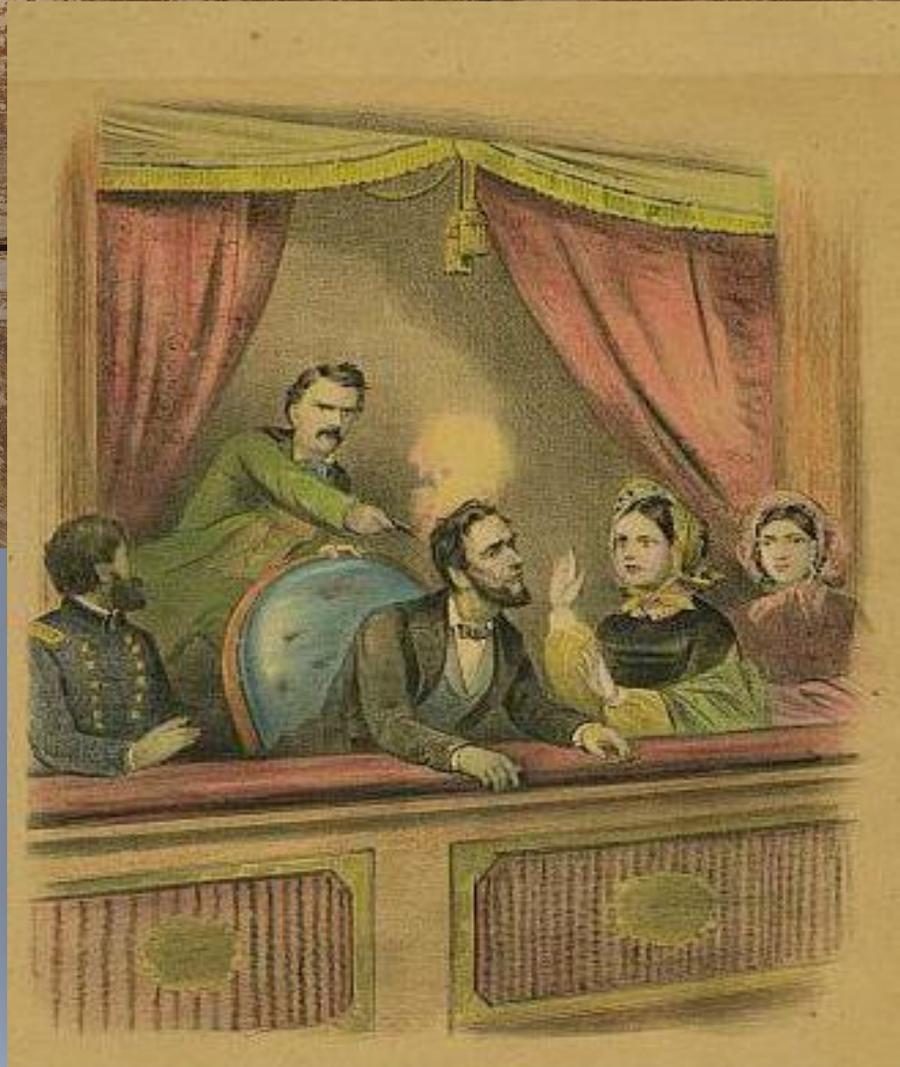
was earnestly wondering whether monarchical government might not be superior to American democracy. “The nature of our Government is such as to render it short-lived,” and thoughtful Americans “would gladly exchange” it for “a wisely adjusted constitutional monarchy.” “From all quarters have come to my ears the echoes of the same voice,” wrote the British journalist William Howard Russell as he toured the South after the outbreak of the Civil War. “It may be feigned,” Russell allowed, but it said, “If we could only get one of the royal race of England to rule over us, we should be content.” Russell had expected nothing of this sort in America, but he had no choice but to believe his own ears. “The admiration for monarchical institutions on the English model, for privileged classes, and for a landed aristocracy and gentry, is undisguised and apparently genuine. ...We, it appears, talked of American citizens when there were no such beings at all.”

We most often look upon the Civil War as a political and military conflict, and occasionally as an economic and a personal one, but only rarely as an intellectual one. And yet, in its most basic sense, the Civil War was a clash of philosophies, with the principles of the Enlightenment, as defended by Lincoln and the free-labor North, set upon by the aggressive assertion of Romanticism in the form of the slave Confederacy and the ineluctable attractions of hierarchy and solidarity. Lincoln and the Union triumphed in that case, and with that came the vindication of the Enlightenment’s original American champions. But Romantic notions of blood and soil would continue to have an unhealthy and corrupting effect on post-war American life, and an even deadlier legacy to visit upon the 20th-century world in the form of national and ideological despotisms. The perimeters of the Enlightenment, for all their faults, continue to protect human flourishing, and the energies and temperament of a Lincoln continue to be called forth in that flourishing’s defense.

*Allen C. Guelzo serves at Princeton University as a Senior Research Scholar in the Humanities at Princeton University.*

[For endnotes, please visit [www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org](http://www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org)]

# An Interview with E. Lawrence Abel on



*The Martyr of Liberty 7120090810600*

# Lincoln's Assassination

**Sara Gabbard:** Your book, *A Finger in Lincoln's Brain*, presented a detailed analysis of the medical measures which were used after John Wilkes Booth shot the 16th President. Today those measures seem almost primitive in nature. Given the status of medical knowledge in 1865, did the doctors do the best they could?

**E. Lawrence Abel:** Yes they did, but even if Lincoln had the slightest chance of surviving, albeit totally incapacitated, they doomed him. Charles Augustus Leale, the first doctor to treat him while he was still at Ford's Theatre, followed the standard method in military textbooks of the day for

stuck their fingers into the wound in his head to see if they could touch the bullet, but it had penetrated far beyond the depth of a finger-tip. Since the bullet has passed beyond the finger, three doctors tried to locate it with a probe, but they too could not make contact with the bullet.

In inserting their fingers or a probe into Lincoln's wound, these medical men were following protocol. The aim was to relieve the pressure inside Lincoln's brain using the only methods available to locate the bullet and extract it, if in deeper than a finger, by trephining—cutting a hole in Lincoln's skull and removing the bullet from his brain. Even had they done so, Lincoln would never have recovered from the physical damage caused by those finger and metal probes, and from the infections from those fingers and probes. This was a time before medicine recognized germ theory, so those doctors should not be faulted on that score.

**SG:** Describe Major Rathbone's attempt to capture the assassin.

**EA:** Lincoln, Mary, and their two guests, Clara Harris and Major Henry Rathbone were sitting with them in the Presidential box at Ford's Theatre when John Wilkes Booth entered the box and shot Lincoln. Major Rathbone was seated on a sofa at the back of the box in such a way that his back was facing the door through which Booth entered. When he heard Booth's gun fire from behind him, he turned and sprang at the assassin. Booth turned to face his attacker and would have stabbed him in the chest, but Rathbone parried the blow and was slashed on his left arm between the elbow and his arm pit. The knife cut through his biceps, just missing his brachial artery.

With Rathbone momentarily stepping back from the pain in his arm, Booth ran to the railing in front of the box. As he was making his jump, one of his spurs caught in the folds of a flag that had been draped over the railing, causing him to fall awkwardly onto the stage, and crack the

fibula bone in his lower leg. As Booth landed on the stage, Rathbone shouted from the railing "Stop that man!" and Clara Harris frantically screamed, "The President has been shot!"

**SG:** Describe the scene at Ford's Theatre when it became obvious that the president had been shot:

**EA:** Despite cracking the bone in his leg, Booth quickly recovered and got to feet. Brandishing his knife in the air, he shouted "Sic Semper Tyrannis!" ("Thus always to tyrants!" Virginia's state motto), and then "The South is Avenged," and limped across the stage and made his getaway.

Henry Hawk, the lone actor on the stage, saw Booth coming toward him and ran for cover. The audience heard the shot and was momentarily struck dumb until shaken out of its daze by Rathbone's and Clara Harris' screams. Sitting in the front row of the orchestra seats at stage level, Joseph Steward was one of the first to react and leapt onto the stage to catch the fleeing assassin, but he was too far behind. Most of the others in the theatre panicked. In the pandemonium that followed, many people desperately raced toward the exits, shouting, smashing seats, and trampling over one another, trying to escape what many believed was a Confederate attack. It was the "hell of hells," said one of the women in the audience that night.

**SG:** Was it simply too risky to seek a better place to move the wounded man than the Petersen house?

**EA:** Moments after Dr. Leale began treating Lincoln, two other doctors, Dr. Albert King and Charles Sabin Taft made their way into the Presidential box. After Lincoln's condition appeared to stabilize, the three physicians discussed moving him to somewhere more commodious. Their first thought was the White House. But that was sev-



Abraham Lincoln's Deathbed LN-1480

treating gunshot wounds to the head. After laying Lincoln on the ground, to avoid "syncope," a sudden loss of blood pressure that would lower blood flow to Lincoln's brain, he examined Lincoln's body for a wound. When he found none, he examined his head and found a round, smooth bullet hole on the left side of Lincoln's head, behind his ear. In accord with the medical standard of care for that time, Leale inserted his little finger into the wound to determine if he could remove the bullet, and thereby relieve the pressure inside Lincoln's brain. Unable to feel it, he drew his finger back out.

After Lincoln's body was removed to the Petersen house across from Ford's Theatre, two other doctors also



Henry Reed Rathbone LN-0948

en blocks away and Lincoln might not survive the jostling trip through Washington's deeply rutted streets. Instead, they decided the best place to move him would be to one of the houses across the street from the theatre. After it was determined that no one in the house directly across from the theatre was home, Lincoln's body was carried a few houses down the street to the Petersen house where he died the next morning.

**SG: You wrote an article "The Shot That Killed Lincoln" in the *Surratt Courier* (September 2015) questioning the common assertion that Booth shot Lincoln at "point blank" range. Please explain your argument.**

**EA:** In nearly every account of the assassination, Booth is said to have fired at "point blank" range, implying that Booth's gun was in contact with the back of Lincoln's head or a few inches or no more than two feet away when Booth pulled the trigger.

When Lincoln was examined after being taken to the Petersen House, the hair on the back of his head was not found to be singed nor were there any powder burns at the back of his head, as there would have been had Booth fired from less than two feet away.

That does not rule out the possibility of a hard contact wound, however. A shot from a gun pressed directly against the head forces the hair around the wound directly into the head and seals the tissues around the entry wound. There is also no soot or powder on the surface because the combustion gasses and powder from the shot are also driven into the wound rather than deposited on the surface. The shot could not have been a hard contact wound because the wound was not sealed, as indicated by the fingers and probes Dr. Leale and the other physicians inserted into it.

Eye witness testimony also indicates that Booth fired from just inside the door of the Presidential box. From inside the door to the chair Lincoln was sitting in is about four to five feet (Laura Anderson, Curator of Ford's Museum, personal communication). Major Rathbone testified that he heard the discharge of a pistol behind him. As previously noted, Rathbone was sit-

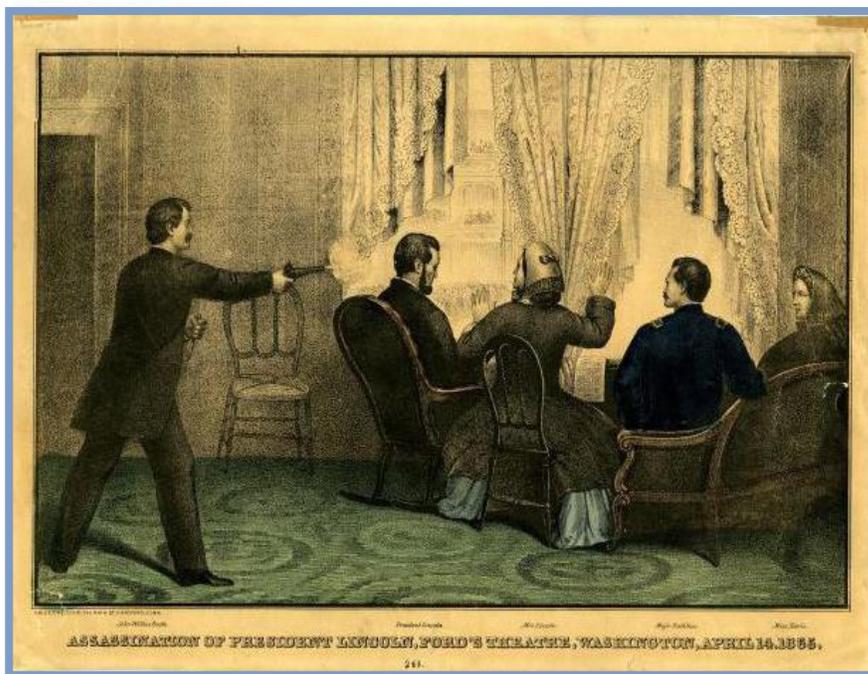
ting at the far end of a sofa close to the door. According to James Ferguson, the only witness to be looking up from the audience at the Presidential box at the moment Lincoln was shot, the flash from Booth's gun in the darkened Presidential box came from the back of the box. Had Booth been holding the gun against Lincoln's head, Ferguson could not have seen the flash.

According to Dr. Leale and another of the physicians who stuck their finger into the wound, the entry was smooth and circular. According to Ferguson, Lincoln was leaning over the railing

**head was a "lucky shot." Please explain your reasoning**

**EA:** Booth's shot to Lincoln's head is usually attributed to often cited accounts of his marksmanship. But those accounts refer to this skill with revolvers. Booth's gun the night of the assassination was a derringer, a "junk gun" with considerable recoil. The only time Booth was seen to fire a derringer, he missed the target from only a few feet away. There is no evidence other than that incident that Booth ever fired a derringer.

Taking into account that Lincoln was



*Assassination of President Lincoln, Ford's Theater, Washington, April 15, 1865*  
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from his high-back chair and looking to his left. If Booth were standing behind Lincoln, the bullet would have entered on an angle, creating a ragged, sharp entry wound. The only possibility for a smooth round entry wound, with Lincoln's head turned to the left, was a perpendicular shot, i.e. if Booth fired from Lincoln's right.

The forensic and eye witness testimony all support the conclusion that Lincoln was not shot at point blank range but rather from the back of the Presidential box.

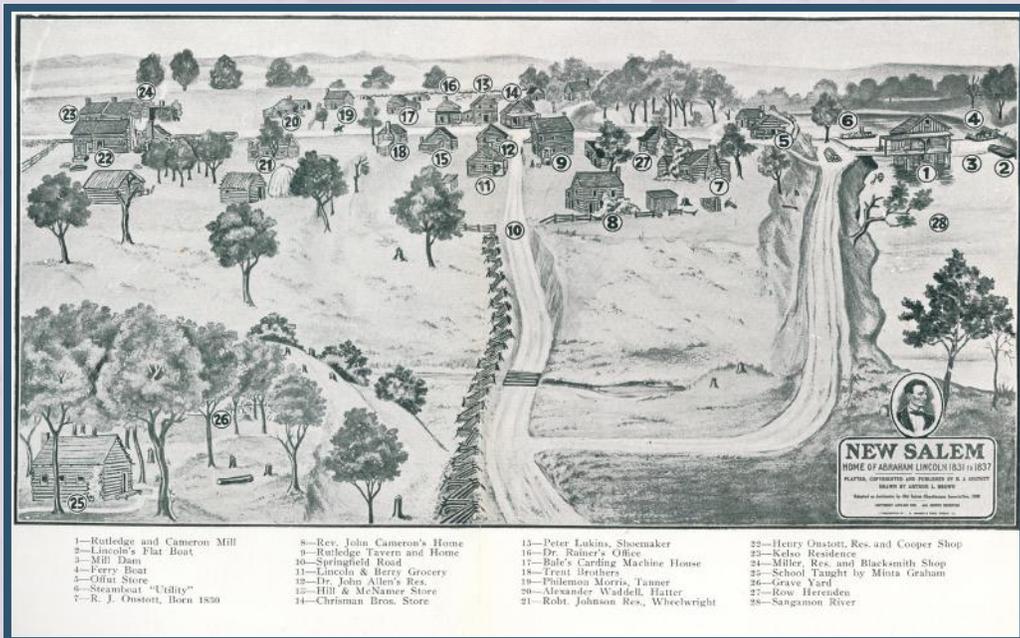
**SG: In that same article you suggested the provocative thesis that Booth's shooting Lincoln in the**

leaning over the railing when he was shot, that Booth fired from about five feet away, that he would have fired in haste, the inherent inaccuracy of his weapon and its considerable recoil, it is not improbable that Booth was aiming not at the smaller target of Lincoln's head, but at the larger target of his back. In other words, when Booth aimed his gun and fired, he missed his target. The bullet that entered Lincoln's head was a "lucky" shot for Booth and an unlucky shot for Lincoln.

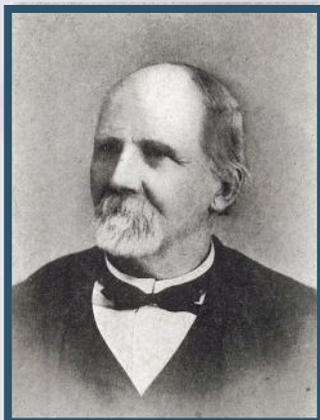
*E. Lawrence Abel, the author of *A Finger in Lincoln's Brain*, is a professor at Wayne State University.*

# When Lincoln Walked the Streets of New Salem

The itinerant Abraham Lincoln arrived in New Salem in 1831, settling there until 1837. During this period, he spent considerable time in the Sand Ridge area to the west, to which a number of New Salem residents had moved. This seminal period in his life's journey transformed him from sometime farmhand, sometime flatboat operator, to the politician/lawyer who would one day save the nation. The people of New Salem played a significant role in this process. The focus of this piece is on Henry Onstot and his descendants. Their major contribution to the New Salem saga is the work of Onstot's descendants in preserving the gospel of the village and its role in Lincoln's life. Onstot came to the area in 1826. He moved to New Salem in 1830, a year after its founding. His first home and barrel shop were on the bluff above the river. Lincoln borrowed an auger from him to bore a hole in the bottom of his flatboat to drain it when it got stuck on the dam at New Salem. Two years later, Onstot moved into the Rutledge Tavern after Rutledge had vacated and moved to Sand Ridge. Onstot had operated the tavern for two years and Lincoln boarded there for much of that time. During these two years, Onstot built the cabin and shop on the west end of the village, which is part of today's village.

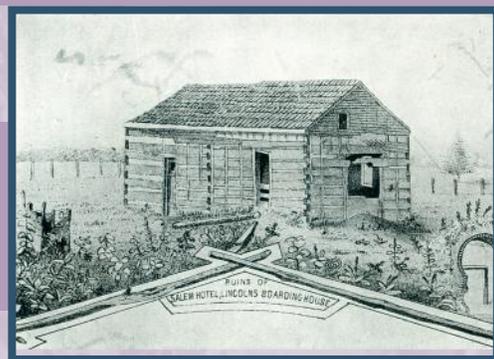


This "map" of New Salem was platted, copyrighted and published in 1909 by R. J. Onstot, second-born son of Henry. R. J. was born in New Salem in 1830. The layout of the reconstructed village conforms to this map, although the current entry road differs. This reproduction is from the seminal work, *Lincoln at Salem* by Thomas P. Reep, published by the Old Salem Lincoln League in 1927, (cited here as Reep). *Lincoln's New Salem*, by Benjamin P. Thomas, published in numerous editions since the 1930s, and still in print, is the more widely distributed primer on the village. Henry had two sons in addition to R.J., Isaac, born in 1829, and T. G. Later Isaac and R. J. went into business together in Havana, opening a small store. Lincoln helped them to obtain the Post Office there, in order to support the store.



The image is the frontispiece of T. G. Onstot's book, "Lincoln and Salem, Pioneers of Mason and Menard Counties." It was self published by him in 1902 in Forest City, Illinois. Henry moved to Forest City for the last 10 years of his life, after his wife's death. This volume contains 83 pages of "Reminiscences of Lincoln about New Salem." The text is intermingled with other Lincoln subjects that are not first hand. It should be noted that Reep refers to, "T.G." as, "T. J."

The drawing, first published in the "Atlas Map of Menard County, Illinois," in 1874 by W. R. Brink and Co., is seen in Reep, p.40. The tavern was occupied into the 1870s. It was the first building built in the village and the last one standing by the end of the 19th century.

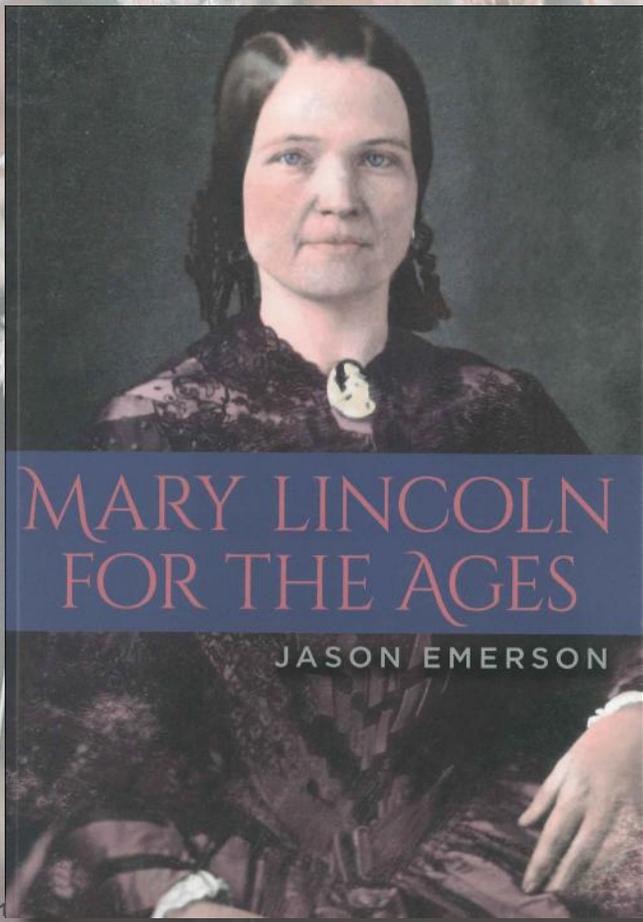


Henry Onstot moved the building to Petersburg in 1840. It was purchased by the New Salem Lincoln League in 1922 and moved back to its original site, pictured here from Reep, p. 108. It had been covered with weather boarding after being moved to Petersburg, which was removed as part of its restoration.



# Interview with Jason Emerson

Regarding his new book,  
*Mary Lincoln for The Ages*



Sara Gabbard

**Sara Gabbard: Your book is defined as “an analytical bibliography.” Please explain how you chose this particular approach.**

**Jason Emerson:** This approach — this entire book, in fact — really just came about organically. While I was preparing for publication an edition of a previously unpublished manuscript about Mary written in 1927 (Myra Helmer Pritchard, *The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln’s Widow as Revealed by Her Own Letters*, published by Southern Illinois University Press in 2011), I wondered where that book, if it had been published at the time, would have fallen in the timeline of works about Mary Lincoln. I started to create a simple bibliography, and the more I dug for resources the more I realized that no extensive bibliography of Mary Lincoln had ever been done. So I decided to do one myself because I thought it would be fun and I thought it would be a great addition to Mary Lincoln scholarship. I decided to make it analytical (originally I called it “annotated” but my editor at SIU Press, Sylvia Frank Rodrigue, suggested that “analytical” was a more accurate description) because, in my experience, people refer to books and articles about Mary all the time without understanding the true value or accuracy of the references. I wanted to offer up descriptions and analyses of the works to help people know what the references truly say and what I, as a Lincoln scholar with more than 20 years of research and experience under my belt and the person who has researched and published more about Mary Lincoln than any other scholar ever, think about them.

After probably a year or two of work in 2008-2009, I created an annotated bibliography of 243 entries of every genre of writing about Mary (non-fiction, fiction, poetry, plays, juvenilia), which was published as an article in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* in summer 2010. I had so much fun with it that I couldn’t help but keep looking for more items to add to the list, and I subsequently published a supplementary annotated bibliography with thirty-four ad-

ditional entries one year later, also in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. After that, I really delved deeply and wanted to discover the more obscure and hard-to-find writings on Mary; I also began adding to my list items I purposefully had omitted from my two articles for various reasons.



Mrs. Lincoln LFA-0070

Finally, I decided to just make the list inclusive of every source I could find and seek to create a definitive analytical bibliography that would enhance Mary Lincoln scholarship by offering a map of sources that future scholars could reference during their work. Now that I think about it, this entire project was a pretty massive undertaking, on which I spent a total of about 10 years.

**SG: Your research is incredible. How did you organize the book’s**

**outline?**

**JE:** I started with the analytical bibliography, which was originally going to be the entire book. The years of reading over 450 works about Mary (over 300 of which were nonfiction), however, ended up giving me new insight and understanding about Mary’s reputation and legacy (both

while she lived and after she died), as well as about how she has been interpreted and perceived for the past 150 years — and which works about her have created and fed those interpretations and perceptions. This led to my writing the first part of the book, “The Common Canon of Mary Lincoln,” where I discuss and deconstruct this subject.

The final component of the book, the multiple indexes, was also a suggestion of my editor, based off David J. Eicher’s 1996 book, *The Civil War in Books: An Analytical Bibliography*. Creating separate indexes for titles, authors, and subjects of the 452 entries in the analytical bibliography was a way to make the book more user friendly and therefore a better resource. So what I thought would be a smallish book comprised of a brief introduction and an analytical bibliography ended up being a much more thorough and valuable work (and it ended up

taking me a lot longer to do!)

**SG: I have always been fascinated by changing perceptions of people and events as each new generation of historians focuses on a particular subject. Has “coverage” of Mary Lincoln changed through the years?**

**JE:** Definitely. The way people today perceive Mary Lincoln is far different from the way she was perceived during her life and shortly after her

death. At first, she was nothing more than Abraham Lincoln's wife, a minor side character to his story. She was the loving little woman by his side, described by her physical appearance and her wardrobe, and the fact that she kept the clean and loving home within which a great man dwelled as he rose to prominence.

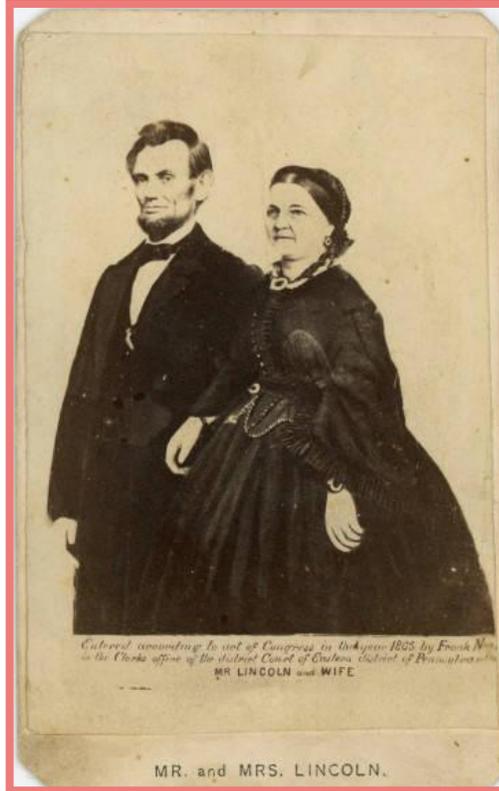
It was not until nearly the turn of the century that Mary Lincoln became seen as a historical figure in her own right. This started with articles and books written by Todd family members seeking to clarify and somewhat rehabilitate Mary's place in history. At that time, Mary was straddling the line between being the practically anonymous side character of "Abraham Lincoln's wife" and having a greater historical identity as "Mrs. Abraham Lincoln," the president's companion and partner who also had her own life.

It was not until 1932 that the first objective books on Mary Lincoln were published by writers who sought to give readers an unalloyed, professionally-approached examination of her unique character and historical life. In the 1940s and 1950s, Mary grew fully into the character of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. True to the social mores of the time, Mary began being seen and interpreted as a June Cleaver-type character of wife, mother, and housekeeper, but also a solid companion for her husband without whom he would not be complete.

By the 1980s, with the rise of feminist revisionism, biographical work on Mary Lincoln went in a new direction, and with it, Mary as "Mrs. Abraham Lincoln" gave way to her being identified and recognized as "Mary TODD Lincoln"—her own woman, a woman ahead of her times, a woman apart from her husband with her own ideas and strengths who was battling against a patriarchal society. (And as a side note: Mary *never* used her maiden name after she was married. Everything she signed was either "Mary Lincoln," "Mrs. Abraham Lincoln," or simply "ML." The addition of the "Todd" to her full name started in the 1980s by historical revisionists as a way to give her own separate identity.)

Since the turn of the millennium

in 2000, Mary has become a feminist icon — her reputation is that she was actually the brains behind the bumpkin Lincoln, she wrote his speeches and advised him on policy and she was really Hillary Clinton 150



Composite photo of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln LN-1770

years too soon (an interpretation with which I strongly disagree, and which I think Mary herself would find ridiculous).

I'd like to think the interpretation of Mary is now swinging back more towards reality — that she was an amazing woman in many ways, but who was still a product of her time (not of the 20th or 21st century), and who had very real flaws and problems that created issues not only for herself but also for her husband. I don't believe it is inappropriate, insulting, or belittling to Mary's legacy to understand and illuminate the negative aspects of her character along with the positive aspects. Mary was not perfect; she was, quite simply, human, and if we want to understand the totality of her, we cannot ignore or evade the painful truths of her shortcomings. And I think people are beginning to realize that.

It's interesting to me that so many

books and articles love to point out Abraham Lincoln's flaws, challenges, and shortcomings (a common one of which is that he had to deal with this "horrible" wife) and use those to then portray him as an even greater man than everyone thinks because he achieved all he did while overcoming those obstacles. And I agree that overcoming life's challenges is an integral part of someone's character. However, when it comes to Mary Lincoln, her flaws are either ignored, or portrayed not as things she dealt with and overcame, but as things that just prove she was an annoying woman not worthy of her husband. We have to destroy this dichotomy and show Mary was the whole person that she was.

**SG:** A note from your publisher states: "Emerson changes the paradigm of Mary Lincoln's Legacy." Was this your original intent or did your research lead you to it?

**JE:** This was not my original intent. As I mentioned above, the research definitely led me to it. After reading all the sources I found, over 300 of which were nonfiction articles and books about Mary, some of which contained items of which I had never even heard, I realized that almost everyone — historians, general writers, book reviewers, journalists, playwrights, etc. — use the same few sources to research and write about her. (Of course, scholars should always go to the original sources in archives, but few of us can do that, and most people find their information in printed materials, which is why I focus on them.)

I find that almost everyone uses the same seven basic sources when they research Mary — that is two percent of all the known writings about her. Two percent. If I were being generous, I might go up to as high as saying there are fifteen sources everyone uses, but really it is the basic seven: The books by William Herndon, Elizabeth Keckley, Katherine Helm, Ruth Painter Randall, Justin and Linda Turner, Jean Baker, and Mark

Neely and R. Gerald McMurtry. As I state in my book, if Mary's life is always written with the same stories, from the same sources, under the same predilections and presuppositions, then it is not her true legacy. Her story over the past many decades has become monochromatic, flat and shallow, with no new facts or insights to revitalize scholarship about her.

To think that Abraham Lincoln is one of the most written-about people in world history, and his wife, whatever you think of her, was an integral part of his life (as anyone's spouse would be, for good or ill), why is research into her life so stagnant? Why do so few people care enough about who she was to try to understand her better than looking into surface stories that may or may not be true? As a historian, I find this unconscionable. So in my book I discuss and dissect those seven works about Mary and how they are — or are not — worthy sources about her life, and then I offer up a catalog of secondary sources people should be using to interpret Mary's life, as well as subjects within her life that need more research and discussion. I'd like to think this book opens up a new roadmap to understanding Mary Lincoln, and will spark much discussion.

**SG: Did you find evidence that perhaps Mary Lincoln was more popular in Washington than we have frequently been led to believe?**

**JE:** No; I think Mary was just as unpopular in Washington as we all have typically come to believe. But I found more evidence as to *why* she was so unpopular, which is, I think, a critical understanding to have when looking at this part of her life.

To begin, I agree with biographer Ruth Painter Randall who said Mary

simply could not win in Washington, no matter what she did. Northerners thought she was a traitor and a spy because she grew up in Kentucky; southerners thought she was a traitor who abandoned her homeland and married an abolitionist northerner; Easterners thought she was an uncouth rube unfit to be First Lady because she was from the west; and political wives and general female society in Washington, DC, disliked her because she was not one of them and had never really been one of them. On top of that, Mary was a strong-willed and intelligent woman who did not genuflect to DC society and listened to her own opinions — not anyone else's — about how best to do her work as First Lady, which the women (and men) in DC society also resented.

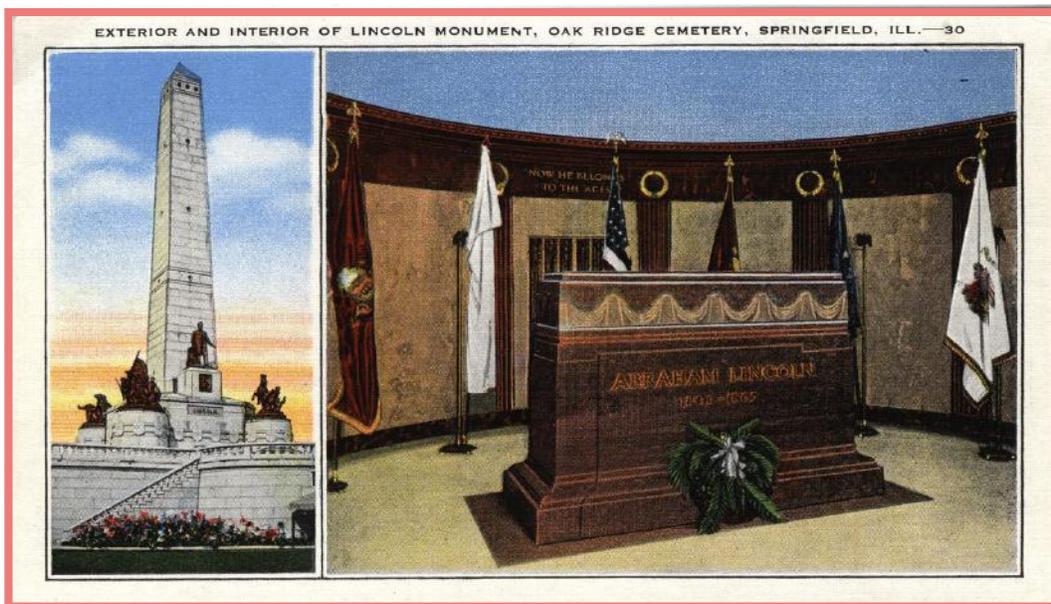
Also Mary's writings and actions — and the writings of her contemporaries — show that she believed herself — especially during the first year of her role as First Lady — to be

result, in part, of the arrogance and traditions of the DC that she moved into, and also Mary's own fault through her own bad behaviors and narcissistic tendencies.

As presidential secretary William O. Stoddard also observed, Mary did not utilize the press to her full advantage to show the positive actions she took as First Lady, which continued her poor reputation, and then when she shut out the press for whatever reason they wrote even more stories portraying her in a negative light.

**SG: Please explain the conflict over Lincoln's burial site between his widow and the Lincoln Monument Association in Springfield.**

**JE:** After the assassination, a burial/memorial committee was formed in Springfield, Illinois, and a burial place purchased in the middle of the city. Construction on a grave began without consulting Mary Lincoln.



Exterior and Interior of Lincoln Monument ZPC272

the queen of America and of capital society, and she expected and demanded that everyone treat her as such. She looked down on many important people in society as beneath her and her husband, and this was not something capital society was accustomed to, or was willing to tolerate.

I think Mary's unpopularity in Washington during the war was a

When she learned this (through the newspapers) she was outraged. She intended — and insisted — her husband be buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, two miles outside the city, where he previously told her he wanted to be buried. When the committee refused, Mary threatened to take her husband's remains away to Chicago, or to the crypt prepared for President George Washington under

the U.S. Capitol building that was never used. The committee, reluctantly and angrily, relented, and the citizens of Springfield, who, according to many at the time never really cared for Lincoln's wife anyway, were incensed that *she* did not bow to *their* wishes about where *her husband* would be buried.

But then a few weeks later, the Lincoln Monument Association decided, again without consulting Mary Lincoln, that the official monument to Lincoln would not go over the tomb (as everyone expected) but rather on the city plot they previously bought. Mary again demanded her wishes be respected and the monument be placed over the grave. The committee argued with her and refused, unwilling to let her win again. They traveled to Chicago to discuss it with her, but she refused to see them. She again said if they ignored her, she would take her husband's body for burial someplace else, probably Chicago. The committee took a vote, and agreed to Mary's demands by only one vote. I have no doubt that if the Springfield committee, who so arrogantly ignored Mary's wishes and grossly underestimated her strength, had voted the other way, Abraham Lincoln's tomb today would be in Chicago and not in Springfield.

**SG: It has been reported that Mary Lincoln and William Herndon were frequently engaged in conflict. Do you believe that to be true? How much of Mary's negative image can be traced to Herndon?**

**JE:** For years I believed (without truly examining) the notion that Mary and Herndon hated each other from the moment they met at a dance and he told her she moved with the ease of a serpent — which in his mind was a compliment but which she found insulting. But I think historian Douglas L. Wilson proved convincingly in his 2001 article "William H. Herndon and Mary Todd Lincoln" that the two were on friendly terms until 1866 — until,

that is, Herndon gave his now-famous lecture stating that Ann Rutledge was the love of Abraham Lincoln's life. After that, Mary certainly hated Herndon, but after reading Wilson's article and examining the evidence myself, he is exactly right that there is no contemporary evidence showing bad blood between them before 1866. Herndon's letters show that even in his later writings, in which he shows Mary in an often negative light, he brought out these painful truths about her because he believed he was helping her. As he said multiple times, yes she was a



Mary Lincoln LFA-0483

"she-devil," but Lincoln really drove her to her behaviors because he never truly loved her, and she had to live with that painful knowledge; and it was better that the public hear this from a family friend who could explain that her character was the result of heartbreak and Mr. Lincoln's rather cold character.

I do believe that much of Mary's negative image can be traced to Herndon

and his writings, especially his biography of Abraham Lincoln. But, as I stated above, Herndon always said he revealed these truths out of a sense of duty and honor and not out of any antipathy for Mary Lincoln. So I like to warn people that Herndon's book is not for the uninitiated. Much of what he states as fact (about both Mary and Abraham Lincoln) should not be outright believed because he was such a peculiar character, he had so much arrogance about the accuracy of his intuitions and insights, that he is not always reliable. You have to understand his character and perceptions, his motivations, and especially his interview subjects and techniques when he sought out information on the Lincolns.

**SG: I always like to ask a scholar: In your research was there new material which surprised you? Was there material which made you think, I never thought of it that way? Was there material which simply confirmed a previously held opinion?**

**JE:** What surprised me was how much original material there was printed on Mary, in books and articles and newspaper stories, that is either unknown or completely ignored; what also surprised me was the realization that, as I stated above, most people use the same few, modern sources about her to try to understand her life. I found so many interviews and reminiscences about Mary from her family members and friends that no scholars have used at all in their works, as well as some very insightful

interpretations about Mary written by multiple scholars. I found what is now one of my favorite quotes about Mary Lincoln: Herbert Mitgang wrote of her that she is "an enigmatic daggerreotype sitting uncomfortably in the shadow of her husband."

I was surprised to find a number of primary source materials that explained Mary Lincoln's life and character that I did not know exist-

ed, even though what was in those articles has been used by multiple writers — those writers all, however, tend to use stories used by previous writers, but none of them ever cite the original source for the information.

I was astonished by the large number of medical studies and writings about Mary that I found that were unknown or unused by scholars, including a study on the effect of the probable concussion Mary suffered in her 1863 carriage accident and a recent look at treating her many ailments using acupuncture. I was also surprised (and disappointed) by the facts about Mary I did not find, mainly the fact that nobody has ever really gone to Europe to search through archives in the countries where Mary lived for nearly a decade.

I think I learned more about Mary's relationship with Herndon through my research, as mentioned above, and the extent to which Mary visited wounded soldiers in Unions hospitals was far more than I ever knew — and did not really start until after her son Willie died in 1862. I also found much information I had never seen about Mary's belief in Spiritualism (and Abraham Lincoln's experiences with it) — in particular I was excited to find two writings by spirit photographer William Mumler about the day he took Mary's picture (the now famous spirit photo of her with Abraham's ghost standing over one shoulder and Tad's ghost standing over the other). Most people have read Mumler's account of this as published in his 1875 memoir many years after the fact (and very embellished), but what excited me was finding an article he wrote only two months after he took the photo in *The Spiritual Magazine* in which he described Mary's visit — and it is a much different story than what he put in his memoir three years later.

Basically, doing this analytical bibliography of Mary gave me a vast education, a slew of new insights, and an altered perception on who Mary was — and on who we think Mary was and based on what sources we think we know this.

**SG: Probably not a fair question, but: In spite of all of the negative comments about Mary Todd Lincoln through the years, would her husband have become the man we so admire without her?**

**JE:** Haha, that's a tough one! Yes and no. Lincoln was already an ambitious and successful political animal when he met Mary, and there is no indication he was intending to give it up. So I do not believe she created his political drive and greatness. Similarly, he was already a lawyer and intent on being the best lawyer he could be, so her presence in his life did not create his legal greatness either.



Mary Todd Lincoln and Abraham Lincoln's Spirit OC-0275

On the other hand, all spouses impact the lives of their significant other, that is undeniable and inarguable. Mary certainly improved Abraham's social skills, and everyone who knew her agrees that she had a certain acumen about reading the character and motivations of other people, and she would share her perceptions with him, which probably helped him navigate certain social, legal, and political situations. There are many who knew Lincoln — Herndon being the major one, but also many other lawyers and politicians — who later said that Mary did push her husband to action many times when he was content to sit still; that she encouraged him to run for high political office and believed in him when he did not believe in himself. If Lincoln had married someone else, someone less ambitious for him (or for herself) he may not have become president; he may instead have become a state senator or governor of Illinois, and kept his political ambitions more local.

Also, Mary was an extremely emotional and, I believe, bipolar woman, who did cause Lincoln incredible amounts of stress and worry over the years, particularly when he was president. Many of Lincoln's contemporaries as well as later scholars have attributed the development of Lincoln's patience and magnanimity as president to dealing with his wife's erratic behaviors for so many years. I think that is not an inconceivable idea.

In short, no: Lincoln would not be the man we know and admire today if Mary Todd had never entered his life — that is human nature and the nature of marriage. Any marriage. The main question to me on this is the degree to which she influenced and impacted his life that helped him change from the prairie lawyer in 1841 to the American president in 1861.

*Jason Emerson is a journalist and historian who has researched and written about the Lincoln family for more than twenty five years.*

# Lost to History:

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## Abraham Lincoln's Act to Encourage Immigration



Jason H. Silverman

Sometimes it's difficult to believe that *anything* Abraham Lincoln did was lost to history. But historians have overlooked one of President Lincoln's signature pieces of legislation, *The Act to Encourage Immigration*, July 4th, 1864, the first, last, and only major law in American history to encourage immigration. Given that the controversy over immigration commands the news today on a daily and global basis, this is, sadly, a significant omission of an act that President Lincoln saw as the bright future of the United States.

Long before he spoke about the evils of slavery, Abraham Lincoln spoke about the need for free labor, and he consistently articulated an economic philosophy that relied heavily upon immigrant labor. From his earliest speeches on, Lincoln saw immigrants as the farmers, merchants, and builders who would contribute mightily to the economic future of the United States.

Lincoln realized that only a concerted effort under the control of the federal government, which could greatly facilitate both voluntary and recruited immigration, could hope to mitigate the labor shortage caused by the Civil War. By so doing, proponents of immigration could unite their forces in a major drive for the Federal government's encouragement of immigrant labor.

Lincoln was not alone in his beliefs. As early as 1819, Congress passed a law designed to improve the condition on the ships for passengers coming to the United States. Additional legislation was passed to regulate the carriage of passengers on vessels in 1847, 1848, 1849, and 1860. By theoretically protecting passengers, such legislation tended to encourage immigration and provide a precedent for Federal encouragement of immigration. The demand for a Federal department of immigration was first voiced in 1854 in a platform issued by the Free Germans at Louisville, Kentucky. But such demands were weak and isolated until the Civil War created an acute need for labor.

Yet, the war did not immediately serve as a catalyst for efforts to encourage immigration. The mobilization and organization of a growing

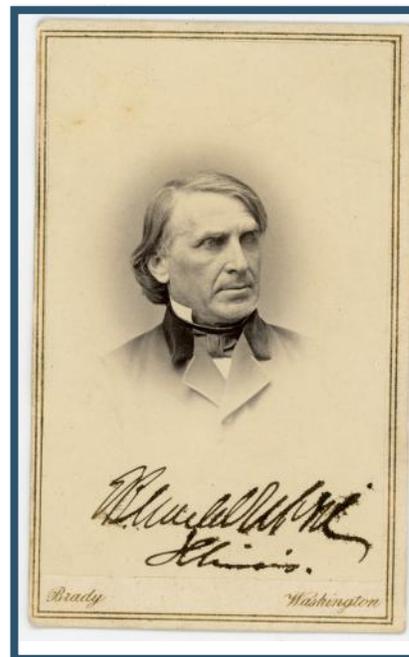
Union Army, the constant demand for war materiel, and the introduction of Greenbacks into circulation all served together to raise prices and stimulate employment. Soon there were few unemployed.

But that did not stop John Williams, editor of the pro-labor *Hardware Reporter* (a source largely overlooked by historians), from launching a vigorous campaign in 1863 for the immigration and recruitment of iron and steel laborers from abroad. Williams advocated a program for immigration, without cost to the immigrant, of all able-bodied workmen and their families. "No investment of the nation's funds," said Williams, "could be half so profitable as this or be made to yield so large an interest." Williams asserted that American labor's "scarcity and consequent high price is the great impediment now to industrial progress in this country."

Williams' appeals fell on deaf ears save for those of President Lincoln. In his annual Message to Congress on December 8, 1863, Lincoln called for government intervention in recruiting immigrant labor. "I again submit to your consideration the expediency of establishing a system for the encouragement of immigration. Although this source of national wealth and strength is again flowing with greater freedom than for several years before the insurrection occurred, there is still a great deficiency of laborers in every field of industry, especially in agriculture, and in our mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals," Lincoln wrote. "While the demand for labor is thus increased here," he continued, "tens of thousands of persons, destitute of remunerative occupation, are thronging our foreign consulates and offering to emigrate to the United States if essential, but very cheap, assistance can be afforded them. It is easy to see that, under the sharp discipline of civil war, the nation is beginning a new life. This noble effort demands the aid, and ought to receive the attention and support of the government."

To his pleasure, Lincoln's words resulted in Congressional activity. Within a week, a bill to encourage and protect foreign immigrants and to make more effective the

Homestead Act, which had become law on May 20, 1862, was presented in the Senate by Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas. That same day on the other side of the Capitol, Representative Elijah Ward, of New York, presented a resolution creating an Immigration Bureau which was passed and referred to the Committee on Agriculture. Little more than a week after Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress, his plans for immigration appeared headed for passage when it was referred to a special committee of five on emigration, chaired by fellow Illinoisan Representative Elihu B. Washburne.



Elihu B. Washburne LN-2257

By February 18, 1864, John Sherman, chairman of the Committee on Agriculture in the Senate, submitted a bill to encourage immigration. Sherman echoed Lincoln's words by emphasizing that the encouragement of immigration was of the highest importance for the Federal government because of the acute need for labor in industry created by war and its accompanying draft.

The committee, however, rejected that portion of the bill which asked for the establishment of a Bureau of Immigration, the appointment of a large number of salaried officers, and an appropriation of \$125,000, because of the great expense in-

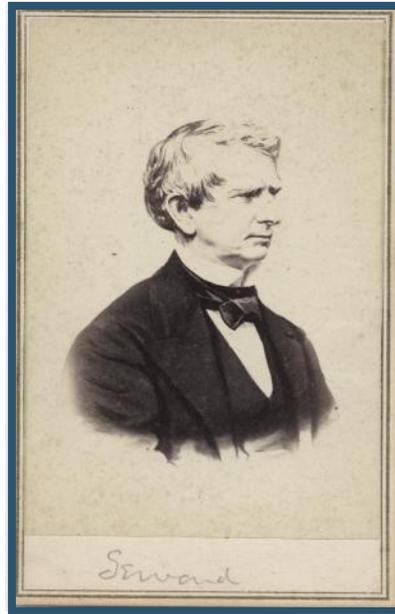
volved. A petition for incorporation from the North American Land and Emigrant Company was rejected as well because of apparent self-interest. Any bounties to the immigrant or the payment of passage money were similarly rejected.

After much political wrangling, Lincoln's immigration bill finally passed the Senate on March 2, 1864. It provided for a Commissioner of Immigration, under the auspices of the State Department, who was to encourage immigration by recruitment. The Commissioner was to correspond with various American consuls, who were expected to collaborate with him in his work. An office was to be established under a Superintendent in New York City whose duty it was to protect immigrants from fraud and to make contracts with railroad companies for the transportation tickets to be paid for by the immigrant. He was also to see that the provisions of the Passenger Act protecting immigrants were enforced. Fifty thousand dollars were to be appropriated for the implementation of this bill.

On the House side, Representative Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota spoke in support of the immigration bill emphasizing that the need for labor was so great that private companies had sought to remedy it by establishing societies in Boston and elsewhere to encourage and facilitate immigration. "Let us stimulate, facilitate and direct that stream of immigration," asserted Donnelly, "[let us] throw wide open the doors to emigration...and in twenty years the results of the labors of the immigrant and their children will add to the wealth of the country a sum sufficient to pay the entire debt created by this war."

In April, Washburne's House committee reported, "The vast number of laboring men, estimated at nearly one million and a quarter, who have left their peaceful pursuits and patriotically gone forth in defence of our government and its institutions, has created a vacuum which has become seriously felt in every portion in the country. Never before in our history," Washburne stated, "has there existed so unprecedented a demand for labor as at the present time. This demand exists everywhere. . . . There

are twenty railroads in process of construction or under new contract in the west alone, which would furnish employment for twenty thousand laborers. The construction and repair of railroads in other sectors of the country will give employment to ten thousand more. It is believed that the demand for laborers on our railroads alone will give employment for the entire immigration of laborers in 1863."



William H. Seward LFA-0475

The committee acknowledged that many suggestions embodied in Lincoln's bill had, in fact, been made by Secretary of State William H. Seward. In a letter to the Special Committee dated March 30, Seward suggested that the facilitation of immigrant transportation was the major problem to be solved. His solution provided for an increase in the number of vessels engaged in the transportation of immigrants and in the adoption of a system which would enable the immigrant to make passage by use of credit under an obligation to repay the cost out of whatever salary was earned after reaching the United States. Seward believed it would be best, therefore, to put a system in place which would provide for the pledging of a portion of the immigrant's wages. The Secretary felt that under the existing Homestead Law a "certificate might be issued which would entitle the immigrant to . . . a party who should advance the means of emigration."

Seward's suggestions were ultimately embodied in a bill which passed the House on April 21, 1864. The Senate, however, apparently disapproved of several elements of the House bill, but with President Lincoln's urging, ceased its delaying tactics and approved it on July 2, 1864. Two days later, Lincoln signed the immigration bill which became law appropriately and fatefully on July 4, 1864.

The Act in its final form consisted of eight sections and authorized President Lincoln, with the consent of the Senate, to appoint a Commissioner of Immigration for a term of four years at \$2,500 per annum, a figure considerably more than the average annual income in the United States at that time (only 3% of the population earned more than \$800 a year). Notable aspects included the second section which provided in part "That all contracts that shall be made by emigrants to the United States in foreign countries, in conformity to regulations that may be established by the said commissioner, whereby emigrants shall pledge the wages of their labor for a term not exceeding twelve months, to repay the expenses of their emigration . . ." The third section significantly exempted all immigrants arriving after the passage of the act for compulsory military service unless the immigrant voluntarily renounced under oath his allegiances to the country of his birth and declared his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States. The fourth section provided for the establishment of a United States Immigrant Office in New York City, under a Superintendent of Immigration with an annual salary of \$2,000. And the concluding section appropriated \$25,000 or any part of it, to be used at the discretion of President Lincoln.

Lincoln's major supporter in his endeavor, the *Hardware Reporter*, welcomed his law enthusiastically. "Future historians," predicted an editorial, "will assign a most important place in history" to his effort. "Surely no more profitable use of the people's money could be made in expending a moderate sum in facilitating emigration of a large number of laborers, especially skilled workers, to this country. We hope, "the editori-

al continued, "Congress will promptly do its duty but meantime let not the employers of labor remain idle, but rather by combined and systematic effort seek to influence at once an increased volume of emigration from Europe."

Lincoln's message seems to have quickly motivated at least one consular agent, William Thomas, Jr., stationed at Gothenburg, Sweden, who wrote to the Assistant Secretary of State, Frederick W. Seward, that he was encouraging Scandinavian emigration by widely distributing information. He reported that the inability to pay for a passage to America was the one great obstacle on the part of those who would otherwise seek a new life in America. "I am well aware," wrote Thomas, "that as consul I can have nothing to do with enlisting soldiers, but no international law can prevent me from paying a soldier's passage from here to Hamburg out of my own pocket."

Through the Secretary of State, the New York Chamber of Commerce received the suggestions contained in Thomas's letter, which was read at a meeting of the Union League of New York on May 12, 1864. "The subject of emigration," the League reported "...has become in consequence of the Rebellion, a Natural Question of vast magnitude, and has engaged the serious attention of the Government... [which] looking upon the matter simply in a pecuniary point of view, could make no better nor surer investment, than in importing emigrants at the National cost, whose labor would directly or indirectly restore the advance fourfold."

Soon thereafter, John Williams addressed an open letter to New York industrialist Peter Cooper, with the purpose of generating support for the new immigration law. Williams strongly maintained that the obligation rests with the government to provide the financial means to support the immigration of labor. "It is a matter of national interest," wrote Williams, "and should be provided for at national expense...." There was considerable self-interest evident in this letter as Williams had already sent agents to Ireland and Germany to recruit labor.

So strong had the movement for the

federal financing of immigration become that, at Lincoln's urging, the 1864 National Union Convention, or the Republican Party, in its convention at Baltimore wrote into their platform a plank stating: "That foreign immigration, which in the past has added so much to the wealth, development of resources and increase of power to this nation, the asylum of the oppressed of all nations, should be fostered and encouraged by a liberal and just policy."

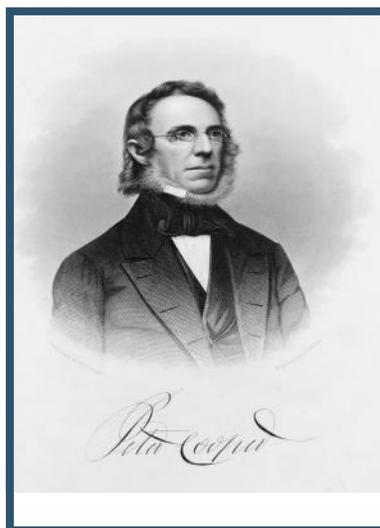
While *The Act to Encourage Immigration* of July 4, 1864, did not provide for the establishment of a Bureau, the State Department under William Seward used its own discretion and created the Bureau of Immigration. By August, the Bureau was already extremely active. During its short lifetime of three years, it had four Commissioners of Immigration assigned to Washington, and one superintendent, John P. Cumming in New York City, subordinate to the Commissioner.

The letter books and the annual reports of the Immigration Bureau show that its work included almost every type of activity to increase immigration. Notably, it published and widely circulated a pamphlet in English, German and French. Secretary of State Seward oversaw all Bureau activities through his department and its vast consular network.

The Immigration Bureau, however, was not opposed to outsourcing labor recruitment, and, in several instances, the Bureau asked private firms, especially the American

Emigrant Company in New York City, to bring immigrants to America under contract. For example, replying to requests from Scotch handloom weavers, French workers, and Austrian laborers who petitioned President Lincoln for free transportation to the United States, the Immigration Bureau replied that it had no authority to pay for their passage, but that they would contact private agencies on their behalf.

The Federal Bureau of Immigration did not keep in close contact with the various state and private immigrant agencies, but it did work very closely with the American Emigrant Company. Perhaps too closely in fact, as this relationship contributed significantly to the Bureau's ultimate demise. When *The Act to Encourage Immigration* was passed, the privately funded American Emigrant Company established an office in New York City at No. 3 Bowling Green. "This company will be the handmaid of the new Bureau of Immigration," said an editorial in the *Hardware Reporter*, "applying private enterprise just at the point where official interference becomes impracticable." This observation most assuredly was an accurate one. For, when the Federal Bureau of Immigration established its office in New York City it chose the exact same location as the American Emigrant Company. In an attack upon the Bureau of Immigration made on the floor of the Senate, Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont railed that, "...All on earth that this Bureau of Immigration has done since 1864 is to act in harmony and in such subordination to that emigration aid society. . . . The Commissioner or Superintendent of Immigration has held his office in their office. He has cooperated with them. . . . They have made the contracts for foreign labor and sent out for foreign immigrants and he has satisfied those contracts...He, then, paid by the Government of the United States, has done nothing else, . . . but cooperate with the immigrant company in New York to render that company efficient and enable them through the power of the General Government, to enforce the contracts which they make in foreign countries for the importation of labor. I submit that that is not a very dignified business for the Government of the United States



Peter Cooper LOC-3c12198



*Emigrant Landing in New York LOC3 -c06751u*

anyway."

The Letter Books of the Bureau show that Morrill was indeed correct about collusion between the two agencies. The records clearly indicate that there was regular communication of questionable ethics between them. This unholy alliance became so flagrant that one of the Federal Immigration Bureau Commissioners, E. Peshine Smith, became a special contributor to the *Iron Age*, the official publication of the American Emigrant Company.

However, it is unfair to say that the work of the Federal Bureau of Immigration during the Civil War was without merit. It effectively directed immigrants to that section of the country where there was a shortage of labor and where their work could receive the highest wages. To accomplish this, the Bureau sent letters to more than one thousand agricultural societies requesting a statement of wages paid to the mechanics, artisans, and common laborers. From these replies the Bureau prepared a recruitment statement of the average wages paid in the states to each branch of industry. Through its superintendent in New York and in other port cities as well, each arriving im-

migrant was given this information.

When these statistics became outdated at the close of the war, the Bureau changed strategies under the direction of Horace Newton Congar, a New Jersey attorney, journalist, and diplomat (Lincoln had appointed him Consul to Hong Kong, China in 1861). The Bureau circulated a recruitment pamphlet in Europe and initiated a policy of active cooperation with all states and territories to encourage immigration. Toward this end, the Bureau strongly encouraged the states and territories, including southern states after April 1865, to establish immigration bureaus; to put the leadership of these recruiting activities into the hands of the Federal Bureau; and to offer all the services of the Bureau through the office of the Superintendent of Immigration and the consular network of the United States Government. In South Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, and Nebraska territory, the Bureau was an important presence in the establishment of their agencies to encourage immigration. In Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Oregon, the Governors replied that legisla-

tion was pending or would be submitted to the legislature.

To consolidate its control over immigration, the Bureau, under the leadership of Commissioner Congar, prepared a pamphlet containing pertinent documents, facts, and figures. Thirty thousand copies of this pamphlet were prepared and sent abroad under the direction of the Secretary of State to the American Consuls. The Consuls were strongly advised that "in all your proceedings you will studiously take care not to contravene the laws, policy or sentiments of the government to which you are accredited, or to excite any unkindly feelings on the part of the government or the people of that country."

Trouble developed almost immediately. Within a month, the American Minister at Paris, John Bigelow, received a note from M. Drouyn de Lhuys, the French Foreign Minister, who objected to the "inconveniences" in authorizing the distribution of documents which "present the character of fair appeal in favor of emigration. . . . The French administration had always been opposed," said de Lhuys, "to [recruiting] among the native-born operatives; besides . . . it

would create a precedent of which emigration agencies belonging to other nationalities might avail themselves . . . .” The French refused to cooperate under their law of July 18, 1860, which prohibited any efforts to promote emigration without permission from the minister of Agriculture, Commerce, and Public Works. To avert an international incident, Secretary of State Seward immediately notified Bigelow to direct consuls to refrain from any actions objected to by the French government and laws of France. The Bureau of Immigration in Washington soon thereafter curtailed its overseas recruitment of immigrants.

Obviously, Lincoln’s signature immigration law encountered some rough patches during its first few months. For example, the Immigration Bureau could not effectively enforce the passenger laws; private companies were dissatisfied with the contract provisions of the law; and the many frauds perpetrated upon immigrants resulted in strenuous efforts to amend *The Act to Encourage Immigration*. In the last Annual Message to Congress that he would send, on December 6, 1864, President Lincoln himself observed, “The act passed at the last session for the encouragement of immigration has, so far as was possible, been put in operation. It seems to need amendment which will enable the officers of the government to prevent the practice of frauds against the immigrants while on their way and on their arrival in the ports, so as to secure them here a free choice of avocations and places of settlement.” A successful immigration process was of paramount importance to Lincoln who continued in his message to Congress, “A liberal disposition towards this great national policy is manifested by most of the European States, and ought to be reciprocated on our part by giving immigrants effective national protection. I regard our emigrants as one of the principal replenishing streams which are appointed by Providence to repair the ravages of internal war, and its wastes of national strength and health.”

In the Senate on January 23, 1865, a bill to amend *The Act to Encourage Immigration* and amend the *Passenger Act of 1855* was referred

to the Committee on Commerce. The Senate as a whole took no action on that bill or on a similar bill proposed the next month by Representative Elihu B. Washburne which had passed the House of Representatives.

Lincoln did not live to see the activity in the next session of Congress where both houses acted. An act introduced by Representative William Augustus Darling of New York on April 9, 1866 “to amend the act to establish a Bureau of Immigration,” substantially the same bill that had been introduced into the previous Congress, again passed the House. Both Secretary of State Seward and Immigration Commissioner Smith approved of this bill.

The Senate considered the House Bill on July 23, 1865. But to the shock and dismay of all of its supporters, the Senate Committee on Commerce unexpectedly added an amendment to strike out the entire bill after the enacting clause and to insert the following: “That the Act entitled *An Act to Encourage Immigration*, approved July 4, 1864, be and is hereby, repealed.” Senator Morrill, speaking for the committee, sharply condemned the Act of 1864 and soundly criticized the passage of a bill which, he said, put the Government in the business of importing men. “This is closely allied to coolie business,” said Morrill, “it encourages a species of slavery, so much so that the Committee was astonished that the Senate ever gave it a moment’s consideration. The Bureau, continued Morrill, “did nothing more than act in harmony with and subordinate to the private [American Emigrant Company] in New York.”

This action in the Senate marked the end to President Lincoln’s dream to see America encourage immigration. The visceral criticism of his law during the Senate debate sounded the death knell on the only act the Federal government ever passed to encourage immigration.

Opposition came from organized labor as well. At the Congress of the National Labor Union in 1867, a delegate attacked the American Emigrant Company as “a perfect pack of swindlers. . . The sooner that system of swindling is abolished, the better.”

Indeed, the same Congress that ended Lincoln’s hope for a hospitable welcome to newcomers “brought out a number of facts relative to the activities of the American Emigrant Company in providing strike breakers for employers, as well as the part which the American Consuls aboard were playing in it.” Obviously, then, the Senate succumbed to the pressure exerted by organized labor when they suddenly killed *The Act to Encourage Immigration*.

Lincoln’s law was finally and officially repealed by a section of the Diplomatic and Consular Bill in 1868. No other action was ever taken by any Congress to encourage immigration, although two bills were introduced in 1868 purporting to establish immigrant societies abroad under government direction and several states later petitioned Congress for laws to encourage immigration.

Lincoln never saw at least the temporary and sporadic fulfillment of his dream that America would welcome immigrants to its shores as a natural resource and a valuable element in the nation’s economic success. Yet he nevertheless deserves the credit for initiating a plan that personified Emma Lazarus’ words long before they were memorialized on the Statue of Liberty. By so doing, the Great Emancipator became also the Great Egalitarian who believed firmly that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution applied to all, regardless of their ethnicity or country of origin. What set Lincoln apart from most of his countrymen was his ability to look past what his society told him a foreign person or group must be like and to trust his own assessments instead. This is precisely what most Americans of Lincoln’s generation could not do then, and many Americans cannot do now. And perhaps therein resides the former rail-splitter’s greatest attempt to mitigate America’s relentless and acrimonious controversy over immigration.

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

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