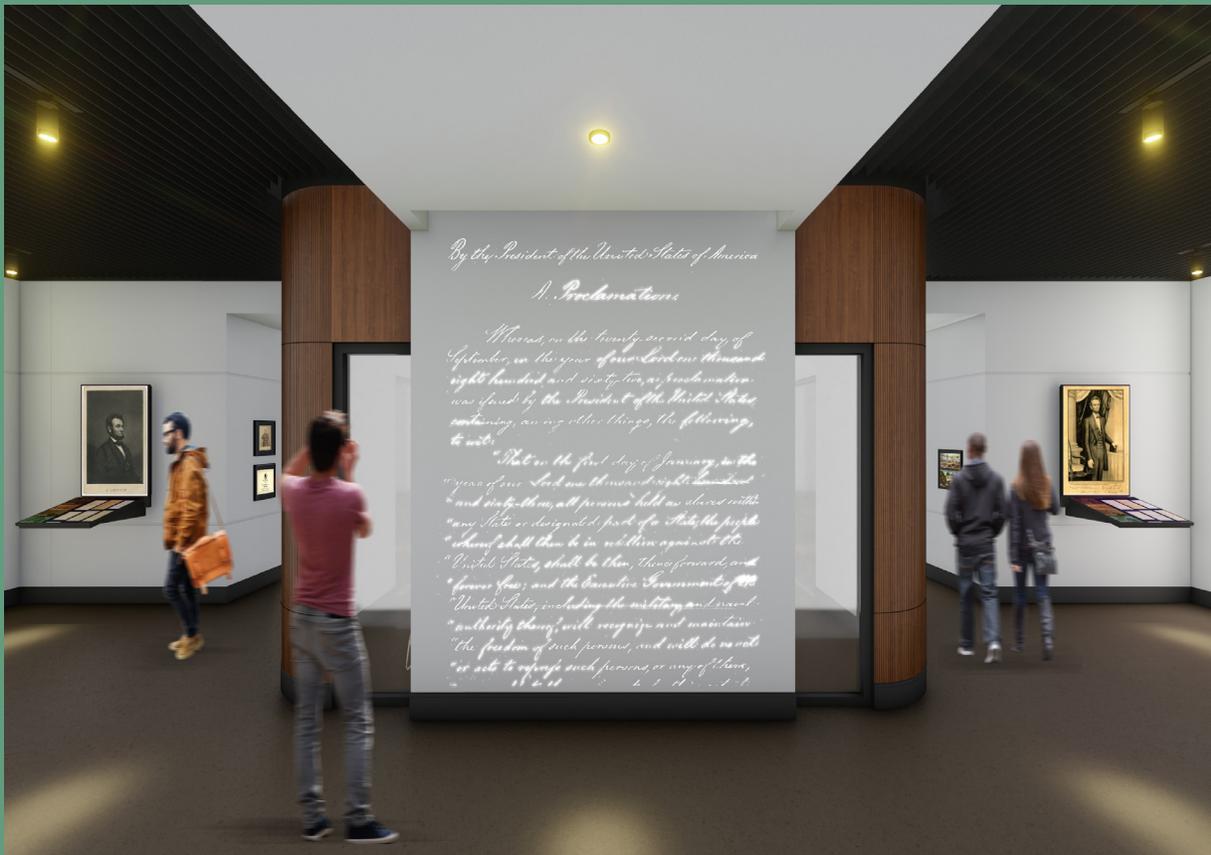


# Lincoln LORE

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## Lincoln Update



### The Rolland Center for Lincoln Research Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana

The Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection has partnered with the Allen County Public Library to create the Rolland Center for Lincoln Research. The Center will highlight the thousands of unique and significant items in the Collection including original photographs of Abraham Lincoln, his family, Cabinet members, and generals; letters and documents to and from Lincoln; diaries of Civil War soldiers; and so much more. Primary sources combine with modern technology to create new opportunities to experience Lincoln and his time.

The Center will incorporate an expert-in-residence program. That position will be open to a wide range of individuals, including scholars and artists, who wish to work with the Collection's materials to further an understanding of Lincoln.

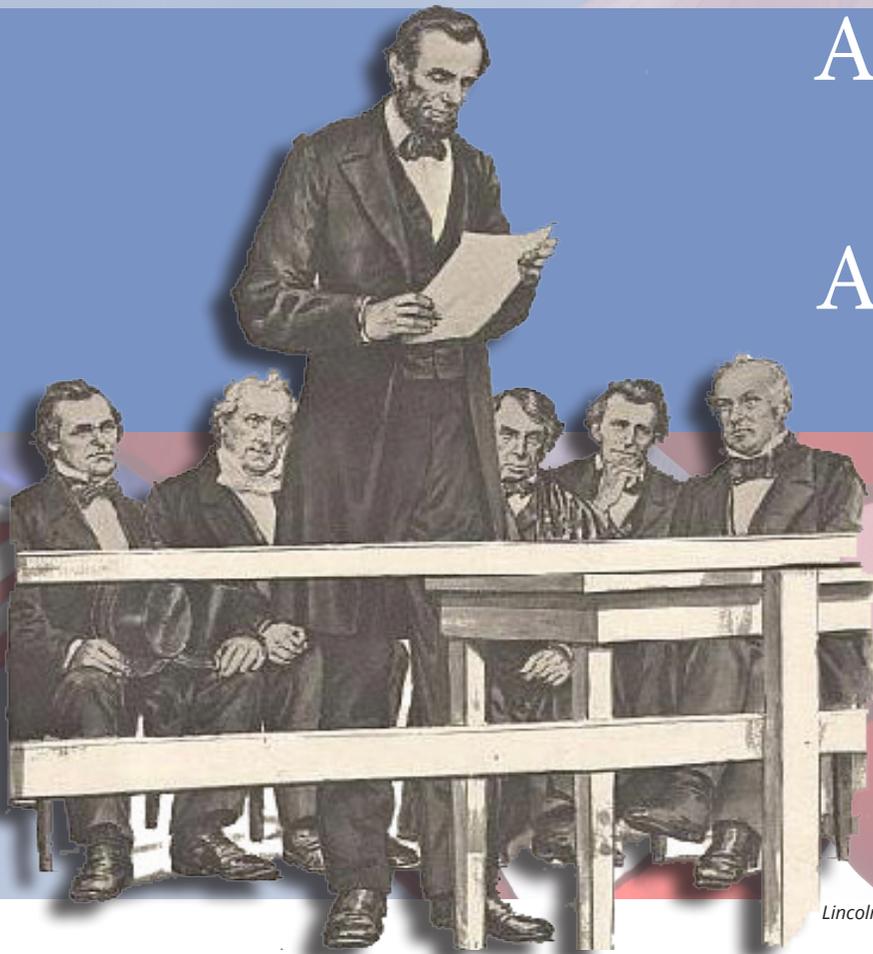
There are four points that serve as the North Star for the Rolland Center, guiding the project team members as they work through the planning and construction process:

- Connect people to the life and times of Abraham Lincoln.
- Display and bring to life this incomparable collection of Lincoln materials.
- Deliver a 21st century engaging experience.
- Make the Center a destination for people inside and outside of our community.

Learn more about the Rolland Center at [www.friendsofthelincolncollection.org](http://www.friendsofthelincolncollection.org).

**On The Cover:** A rendering of the entrance into the Rolland Center, highlighting the Welcome Wall projection and the technology in the space. Shown above is the outside entrance to the Rolland Center located at the Allen County Public Library.

# An Interview with Harold Holzer, Author of *Lincoln: President-Elect*



Sara Gabbard

*Lincoln's First Inaugural Address*  
71.2009.081.1183

**Sara Gabbard:** As we face a new presidency in the United States, it seems an appropriate time to discuss your 2009 book, which focuses on the time between Abraham Lincoln's election in November 1860 and his inauguration on March 4, 1861. First of all, did he establish some sort of "transition office" in Springfield?

**Harold Holzer:** He not only established a transition office—he had to establish two of them, because the original office had to be abandoned after a few weeks. From the time of his nomination in May 1860, Lincoln and his private secretary, John Nicolay, had occupied the two-room Governor's suite on the second floor of the Illinois State Capitol building in downtown Springfield—just across the square from Lincoln's law office, as it happened. The suite featured a reception room as well as a private office, so Lincoln was able to greet visitors in one space, and focus on correspondence in the other. After the election, Governor John Wood—a fellow Republican who was too ill to

make use of the space himself—invited Lincoln to continue using the suite as his transition space. There, the visitors began to include office-seekers, important politicians auditioning for influence, admirers bearing gifts, artists painting his portrait, and embedded journalists covering the transition. But by the end of the year, you might say, the lease ended.

The State Legislature was scheduled to go back into session on January 7, and a healthy new Illinois Governor, Richard Yates, was to take over a week later, and Yates intended to lay claim to his assigned space. So Lincoln was obliged to vacate the suite and find an office elsewhere. For the rest of the transition, he occupied a hastily re-decorated, 20-foot-square space in the nondescript Johnson Building near the Springfield public square. We seldom hear about that second, less ornate transition office, but Lincoln spent more than five weeks there—a third of the entire transition. After January, we begin to see stories about his calling on his visitors at their hotels, like the Chenery House across the street. He poses for a

sculpture at the nearby St. Nicholas Hotel. He writes his inaugural address in a storeroom above his brother-in-law's nearby store. What are we to make of this? Well, I suspect he wasn't crazy about his second transition office, maybe even a bit embarrassed about it. Aside from reduced splendor, it offered reduced privacy, too.

**SG:** Please describe the process during which Lincoln chose his Cabinet. Did he rely on particular individuals for advice in the matter? Did potential Cabinet officers lobby for positions?

**HH:** His process was both private and public, in this regard, at least, very much like a modern transition: full of feelers, background discussions, lobbying, and calculated leaks to the press. *The New York Herald* reported "a thousand conflicting rumors." For sure, Lincoln had his share of advisors on the subject, but as usual, kept most matters to himself. On the private side, Lincoln corresponded confidentially with Georgia Congressman Alexander H. Stephens, whom he had known years earlier as a fellow Whig serving

in the House of Representatives. From their letters we can infer that for a time, Lincoln considered adding an additional Southerner to his Cabinet as a way of halting the momentum for secession, and even reversing it. Meanwhile, in full view, he welcomed Edward Bates and Salmon Chase to Springfield, both of them Cabinet aspirants, and made sure to be seen in public with them. The press also reported that he met with Republican kingmaker (and William Seward confidant) Thurlow Weed. I was particularly fascinated with the way Lincoln also boldly, if anonymously, used the power of the press to squelch his own idea about increasing the Southern representation in the Cabinet.

After floating the notion himself, and perhaps offering a job to his best friend, Joshua Speed of Kentucky, he wrote an editorial for December publication in the Republican *Illinois State Journal*—unsigned, of course—dismissing the very notion. Now we have Lincoln asking: would a Southern Cabinet officer “surrender to Mr. Lincoln, or Mr. Lincoln to him, on the political difference between them? Or do they enter upon the administration in open opposition to each other?” Talk about puncturing a trial balloon! Above all, Lincoln anguished over his political obligation to Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, who wanted to be Treasury Secretary, but was dogged by rumors of corruption. Lincoln wrote tortured memos to himself about the pros and cons regarding Cameron

before finally offering him the War Department instead. When thinking about how Lincoln ultimately built out his Cabinet, I come to the conclusion he was assembling more than a “team of rivals.” He was building a team of regions, hewing closely to protocols of the day by making sure all areas of the country that had voted for him, especially big states (New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania), were represented. Then he included the Upper South, hoping its slave states would not follow South Carolina and six others into secession: Edward Bates of Missouri and Montgomery Blair of Maryland. Lincoln made sure to include ex-Democrats and ex-Whigs. It’s not how presidents approach Cabinet-building today; now they strive for ethnic and gender diversity.

**SG: Was Lincoln inundated with requests from people wishing to receive other federal appointments? Were most of these people known to him in some way? Were intermediaries frequently used?**

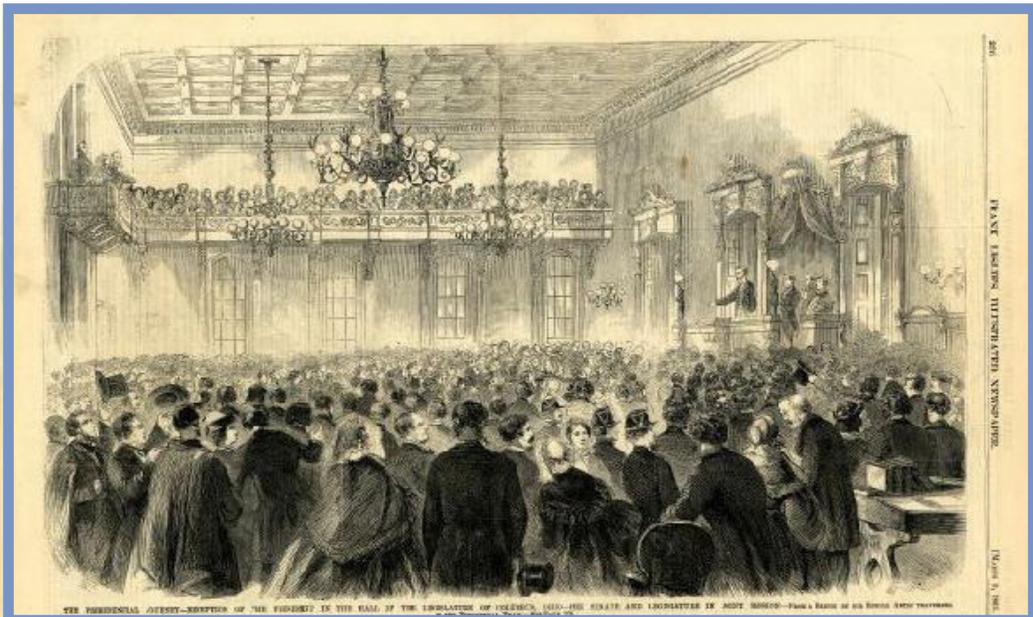
**HH:** For sure, many office-seekers were already well known to Lincoln. These included newspaper supporters who had backed him for years, politicians from neighboring Western states, and German-American leaders. But there were strangers, too, among those who lined up for the spoils, and quite a few got well-

rewarded for their loyalty. I’ve read all the original sources—among them the on-the-scene reports of *New York Herald* correspondent Henry Villard, which attest sympathetically that the overburdened president-elect had to devote far too much of his time and energy to the flood of office-seekers. Well, I have a somewhat different take. Lincoln was slated to become the first-ever Republican president, and an essential part of his job was unmaking the entrenched, Democratic federal bureaucracy and rewarding members of his own party. Howell Cobb of Georgia understood this “threat” from the start—nothing could protect the slaveocracy from “the patronage power of President Lincoln.” So let’s remember it was Lincoln’s obligation—and I suspect, his great pleasure—to practice the long-traditional, and politically essential task of patronage. Time-consuming? Yes. Essential? Absolutely. Of course, some would-be patronage dispensers were far too audacious. An Indiana politician put it rather colorfully when he observed of a visit to Springfield that everyone who “Hurra[h]s strong for Old Abe expects a teat at the crib.”

**SG: What was the role of James Buchanan during this period? Did he offer any help at all? Did he and the President-Elect have any contact?**

**HH:** Lincoln and Buchanan exchanged no meaningful communication during the transition. And while Lincoln hoped his predecessor’s final annual message to Congress in December 1860 would condemn secessionists and stress union-saving, the document disappointed the president-elect. Lincoln was angry that while Buchanan condemned disunion, he claimed that Northern extremists had fomented it, and insisted he had no power to stop it. There was no tradition at the time that obligated outgoing presidents to brief their replacements before they took office. So when he arrived in Washington, Lincoln, accompanied by Seward, simply walked up to the White House, knocked on the door, and asked to be announced to Buchanan.

I will say that Buchanan very generously invited Lincoln to head upstairs to his office, where a Cabinet meeting was in session, and he invited the new chief executive to



Reception of the President, Columbus, Ohio  
71.2009.081.1923

sit in and observe. It was probably a very useful experience; how else would Lincoln have known how to run Cabinet meetings of his own? Mary Lincoln soon made her own way to the mansion, and called on the exiting White House hostess, the unmarried Buchanan's niece, Harriet Lane, who ungenerously recalled that Mary seemed "awfully western, loud & unrefined." On March 4, Buchanan arrived in his carriage to pick Lincoln up at his hotel for the drive to the Capitol for the inaugural. Reportedly, Buchanan said something like, "My dear sir, if you are as happy in entering the White House as I feel in leaving it, you are a happy man indeed." Lincoln replied that he hoped he would "maintain the high standards set by my illustrious predecessors"—plural. Not the friendliest of replies, but considering that a Doughface Democrat was yielding to an anti-slavery Republican, let us praise both men for getting through inauguration day with dignity and honor intact—despite the looming threat of disruption and violence. To his credit, Buchanan never thought of skipping the inauguration.

**SG: During the transition period, did Lincoln make any public statements about policies he planned to pursue?**

**HH:** He tried his best not to do so. He vowed to say nothing that might either coerce or conciliate the secessionists. So he practiced a policy described at the time as "Masterly Inactivity." Even when influential editors called on Lincoln to restate his pledge not to interfere with slavery where it already existed—as he had stated at Cooper Union a year earlier—Lincoln declined. He urged such correspondents to study and rely on what he had previously said and written. To say anything further, he told one journalist, would not only be cowardly, but would encourage further questions.

Reportedly, when visitors to his transition offices asked him for clarification on one policy point or another, Lincoln would present them with copies of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, whose publication in book form he had arranged. Lincoln even held his silence when a bevy of elder statesmen gathered in Washington for a so-called "Peace Convention," determined to forge compromises that would bind Lincoln's hands before he got to the capital. Later, during his trip east to his inauguration, he did begin



*Lincoln and his Cabinet 71.2009.083.0390*

speaking out, but mostly to express his faith in majority rule and Union. When he tried saying, at one stop, that there was no crisis that should worry anyone, he quickly got hammered by the pro-Democratic press. So except for a banal speech on tariffs in Pennsylvania—hardly newsworthy at the time, but reassuring to the Republican base—he steered clear of discussing evolving events.

Meanwhile he was privately advising—maybe warning would be a better word—that his allies in Washington cede nothing on the issue of slavery expansion. "Hold fast," he told one of them, "as with a chain of steel." It must have been hard for such a gifted orator to remain silent for a year. Maybe that's why he gave more than 100 talks and speeches during his inaugural journey, some of them, in Trenton and Philadelphia, quite extraordinarily beautiful.

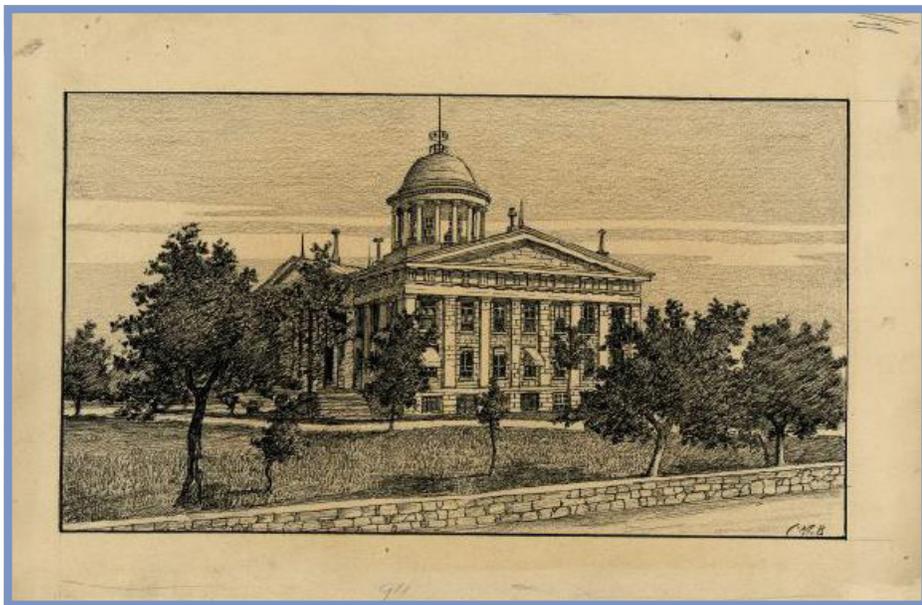
**SG: Did the national press assume a role during the transition period?**

**HH:** I would say the newspapers continued in their longstanding roles as partisan advocates. The press of the day remained strictly aligned with the political parties, so little that Lincoln said or did during the interregnum was cheered by Democratic editors, or criticized by Republican ones. Lincoln was of course accustomed to this disparity in coverage; he had faced it throughout his political career in Illinois. It was the norm. The one new role the Republican press assumed after Lincoln's election was

that of power broker. As mentioned, the editors of the two leading pro-Republican dailies from New York, the *Times* and the *Tribune*, lined up to secure political rewards for their friends. Henry Raymond and Horace Greeley each expected to be the chief patronage dispenser in the Empire State. Greeley showed up in both Springfield and on Lincoln's inaugural journey to press his case. I give some special credit to the anti-Lincoln editor James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald*, himself a disappointed office-seeker during the Jacksonian era. Bennett sent correspondent Henry Villard to spend weeks in Springfield filing stories about the president-elect, and to journey with him toward Washington. Not one of Villard's dispatches was politically biased; in fact, they represent the best account of the transition as it was occurring. For not interfering with these reports, Bennett deserves much praise.

**SG: Please describe the process during which Inauguration Day was eventually changed from March 4 to January 20.**

**HH:** The four-month-long transition had been designed in the infancy of the Republic to accommodate the challenges of travel, not only for the incoming chief executive, but for the Congressmen who had to get to Washington to certify the electoral vote. Lincoln required "only" 13 days to travel from Springfield to Washington, still a long haul, to be sure, but he did make many stops along the way for speeches and receptions. The tradition was long overdue for modernization



Old State House, Springfield, Illinois  
71.2009.081.1789

and reform—if anything, what Henry Adams called “The Great Secession Winter” of 1860-61 lasted too long, and encouraged too much mischief. Yet not until 1932 was the 20th amendment (shifting the date) circulated to the states. It was ratified on January 23, 1933—ironically, just three days *after* Franklin D., Roosevelt would have been sworn in under the new rules (instead he had to wait until March 4, while the Depression worsened and the banking crisis almost ruined us). Not for four more years, in 1937, did FDR get to be the first president inaugurated on January 20. After living through the 2020-2021 transition, which seemed endless yet saw so little cooperation between outgoing and incoming administrations, we may want to consider shortening the interregnum even further. Maybe something closer to the British system, under which a new prime minister is chosen and the old one vacates 10 Downing Street within hours! Well, not really, but I wonder whether we shouldn’t swear in our new presidents right after Congress reconvenes—say the first few days of the year?

**SG:** Please comment on Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address. What was his goal? Did he solicit help when he wrote it? Did he comment on its reception later?

**HH:** I’ve long argued that the First Inaugural deserves to be ranked as one of Lincoln’s all-time greatest speeches, and, along with his own second and John Kennedy’s one and only, as one of

the greatest inaugural addresses ever delivered. Think of the pressure and suspense: Lincoln had said nothing new on policy issues for a full year (ever since Cooper Union). Seven states had now seceded. A new, rogue nation had been organized, and an alternate President sworn in. No president ever faced such a momentous crisis. Lincoln desperately needed to calm extremists on both sides—abolitionists as well as secessionists—to show he represented no real threat to slaveholders while reaffirming his insistence that slavery could not spread; to promise he would not menace the South militarily, but wouldn’t abandon federal installations there, either; that husbands and wives could be divorced, but not states, not within a union that was even older than the Constitution. Talk about threading the needle!

Lincoln drafted the speech entirely on his own, then had his manuscript set in type at the *Illinois Journal*, so he could carry copies with him on his journey to Washington. And once underway, he started showing the draft to others, soliciting advice. I am convinced he even shared it with his lifetime rival, Stephen A. Douglas, once he arrived in Washington. But most memorably, he invited input from Secretary of State-designate William Seward, who made dozens of suggestions in red pen, almost all of them calculated to tone down any hints of bellicosity. Lincoln

made nearly all the alternations Seward suggested, most famously adopting the New Yorker’s proposal for an inspiring finish. Lincoln had planned to end his speech by darkly warning: “With *you*, and not with *me*, is the solemn question of ‘Shall it be peace or a sword?’” Seward suggested something clever but cumbersome about relying instead on “the better angels of the nation.” As we know, Lincoln massaged that suggestion into “the better angels of our nature,” showing he was not only a great writer, but a great editor; not only a master of prose, but of prose so sublime it approached poetry. Predictably, reaction to the speech broke along party lines. Senator Charles Sumner detected “a hand of iron in a velvet glove.”

But a Democratic paper in South Carolina denounced it as an example of “impotence and perversity of thought.” And Frederick Douglass lambasted Lincoln for including a “revolting” vow to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act. No one was completely satisfied, though I suspect Lincoln thought he’d done all he could—we don’t know for sure; he left no self-assessment, as he did for the second inaugural four years later. But the *New York Times* reported that his final passage “broke the watering pot”—made people cry—and I suspect Lincoln was very pleased. That ending is still being quoted today by people on both sides of the party divide. They’re right: we must not be enemies. But I would recommend that partisans of all stripes pay attention as well to one of the greatest, but most neglected, passages in the speech: “Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better, or equal, hope in the world?”

*Harold Holzer is the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College.*

# The Hedgehog and the Fox:

## Lincoln's Lyceum Speech for the Ages



Jason Silverman

The *Sangamo Journal*, on Saturday, January 27, 1838, advertised a lecture for that evening by the local lawyer "A. Lincoln, Esq." Lincoln was little more than two weeks shy of his twenty-ninth birthday. He was single, sharing living quarters with Joshua Speed, practicing law in partnership with John T. Stuart, and establishing his reputation as a Whig politician. He had been admitted to the Illinois bar only sixteen months previously and had lived in Springfield for less than a year, but he had already been twice elected to the state legislature and would be re-elected a third time in August.

As a legislator, he had proven his political acumen by playing a pivotal role in moving the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield, an ongoing process that would be completed in 1839. Merely stating "A. Lincoln, Esq." in the newspaper notice was presumably sufficient and well known enough among the readers of the *Journal* in early 1838 to encourage attendance at his lecture for the notice indicated neither its title nor its topic.

Lincoln's lecture was sponsored by a local voluntary association called the Young Men's Lyceum. And, there is no evidence that Lincoln was a member

of this group. Indeed, the wording of the notice in the *Journal*, which stated that Lincoln would speak "in compliance with the request of the Lyceum," was indicative that he was an invited guest rather than a member.

Lincoln's lecture was entitled "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions." As published, Lincoln's lecture began with a characterization of the inheritance bequeathed to the people of the United States by the recently deceased revolutionary generation. This inheritance comprised a broad and fertile land as well as the unique "blessings" of "a political edifice of liberty and equal rights."

Lincoln asserted that the "duty" of his contemporary Americans was to protect, sustain, and transmit these "blessings" to subsequent generations. Developing his argument through a number of questions he asked and then answered, Lincoln laid out his arguments for his intensely interested audience. Beginning with the simple inquiries, "How, then, shall we perform [this task]? At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it?" he envisioned dangers to the young republic,

dismissing the potential of attack from abroad and instead focusing on insidious domestic threats, especially the murderous violence of "savage mobs."

In Lincoln's view, the particular danger from mob violence and a disregard of the law was that the people eventually would lose faith in the government's ability to offer basic protection. Then, conditions would be ripe for an ambitious and aggressive tyrant to arise. In Lincoln's opinion, this future tyrant could assail the world like a colossus who "thirsts and burns for distinction." Lincoln warned that such a tyrant could destroy the nation. "Distinction will be his paramount object," Lincoln foresaw, "and [with] nothing left to be done in the way of building up, he would set boldly to the task of pulling down."

Lincoln dismissed the threat of "some transatlantic military giant" and argued that "the approach of danger to be expected . . . if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad." He feared that "if destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher."

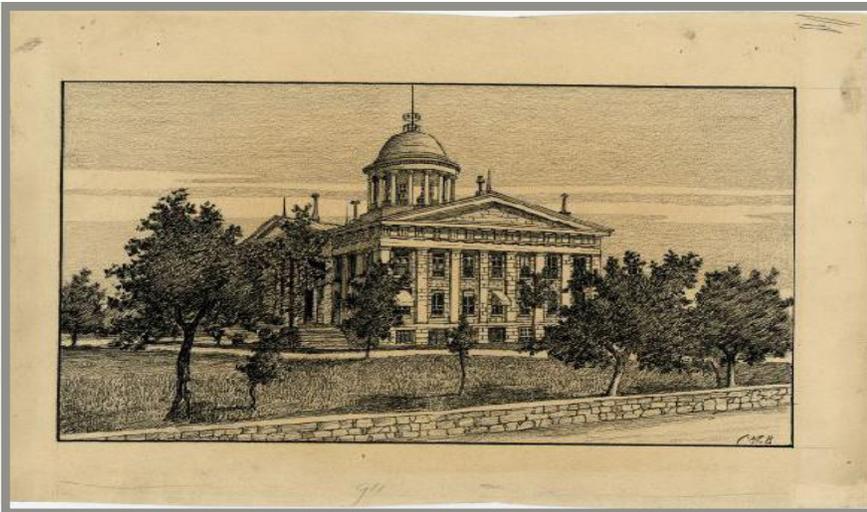
Lincoln fretted about what "an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon" might do to this country. "It is to deny, what

the history of the world tells us is true," Lincoln said, "to suppose that men of ambition and talents will not continue to spring up among us. And, when they do, they will naturally seek the gratification of their ruling passion, as others have done so before them."

The solution to the problem of domestic destruction, Lincoln said, lay in increasing the people's "attachment" to the government, through personal fealty to uphold the law, through efforts to emulate the nation's founders, and through explicit education in American history and values. "Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap," encouraged Lincoln, "let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;--let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars."

The connection of the people to the government would secure and protect "national freedom." This bond between government and its people "shall universally, or even, very generally prevail throughout the nation, [then] vain will be every effort, and fruitless every attempt, to subvert our national freedom." At the conclusion of his lecture, he returned to the memory of the founding generation, using familial and natural imagery to speak of the "living history" now departed,

*"They were a forest of giant oaks; but the all-resistless hurricane has swept over them, and left only, here and there, a lonely trunk, despoiled of its verdure, shorn of its foliage; unshading and unshaded, to murmur in a few gentle breezes, and to combat with its mutilated limbs, a few more ruder storms, then to sink, and be no more. They*



Old State House, Springfield, Illinois 71.2009.081.1789

*were the pillars of the temple of liberty and now they have crumbled away, that temple must fall, unless we, their descendants, supply their places with other pillars, hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason. Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence.--Let those materials be moulded into general intelligence, sound morality, and in particular, a reverence for the constitution and laws: and, that we improved to the last; that we remained free to the last; that we revered his name to the last; that, during his long sleep, we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or desecrate his resting place; shall be that which to learn the last trump shall awaken our WASHINGTON."*

Offering a paradoxically passionate defense of "unimpassioned reason," Lincoln then concluded his version of political religion with a quotation that implicitly compared the nation to the universal Christian church: "Upon these let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"

After printing Lincoln's lecture, the *Journal* fell silent about it, publishing no commentary on the speech in subsequent weeks. Apparently, this was a consistent practice and the usual treatment of lyceum lectures in nineteenth-century newspapers. Ordinarily a local occasion such as this came and went with apparently

little fanfare. However owing to the fame that Lincoln eventually attained, Americans have returned to this event time and again, marking the Lyceum Address as Lincoln's "first speech of distinction" and examining every word in it for its revelations and prophecies.

Readers of Lincoln have exploited quotations from the Lyceum Address to justify myriad situations. The law-and-order passages have had a particularly long shelf life.

For instance, in 1915, *Outlook* quoted Lincoln's warnings about mob rule to condemn the lynching of a Jewish manager in Atlanta. Then in 1948, Lincoln's "reverence for the laws" passages were used quite differently and ironically when famed liberal United States Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon advised labor leader A. Phillip Randolph, not to take up civil disobedience in response to segregation. Similarly, in 1966, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley quoted Lincoln on "reverence for the laws" in an effort to quell civil rights protesters.

Other passages have also supplied ammunition for a multitude of causes. In a televised broadcast in 1953, Senator Joseph McCarthy quoted Lincoln's commentary about domestic threats as authoritative evidence for his anti-Communist witch hunts. McCarthy's quotation inspired published responses about Lincoln's words. The *Washington Post* provided a lengthier quotation to temper McCarthy's, and in the *New York Times*, journalist James Reston offered an alternative interpretation, writing that "Lincoln, however, was not arguing in this speech that good ends justify the adoption of any means in America."

A half century later, presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin commented in the *Times* in the wake of September 11, 2001. She emphasized Lincoln's discussion in the Lyceum Address about the relationship between previous generations and the current one, and she expressed hope that "those who lead us, will, like Lincoln, be inspired by the noble ambition to accomplish reputa-

ble deeds worthy of remembrance.”

Whether quoted to support or to suppress civil rights, to incite alarm or to inspire courage, to remember the past or fear for the future, the language of the Lyceum Address has been recreated and resurrected, but rarely ignored. Years of public argument using this speech have well established the lecture's significance as Lincoln's emergence as a political philosopher.

As one of Lincoln's earliest public texts, the Lyceum Address often serves as a benchmark against which his subsequent words are measured. Not surprisingly, the Lyceum Address has been the subject of numerous studies. Viewed primarily from the perspective of later events such as increasing the sectional controversy and the Civil War, these studies attribute to the young Lincoln almost prophetic powers of one sort or another. Some even argue that his ambition could be identified with the Caesarian figure he predicted would arise. Other studies see Lincoln as the prophet of “political religion.” During the controversy over the expansion of slavery in the 1850s he accordingly held up the principle of equality to persuade a divided nation; after war began he invoked divine providence on behalf of a new birth of freedom.

When scholars examine Lincoln's Lyceum Address for its political tones, they typically focus on what Lincoln did not say. They note Lincoln's tangential allusion to the death by mob violence of abolitionist newspaper editor and Minister Elijah P. Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois, less than three months before Lincoln's speech and they explore Lincoln's dramatic evocation of the unnamed tyrant who posed a threat to democracy.

Although some scholars claim that the Lovejoy murder was a motivating force behind Lincoln's Lyceum Address, others question that interpretation. Lincoln's audience could hardly have missed the oblique reference to Lovejoy in his gener-

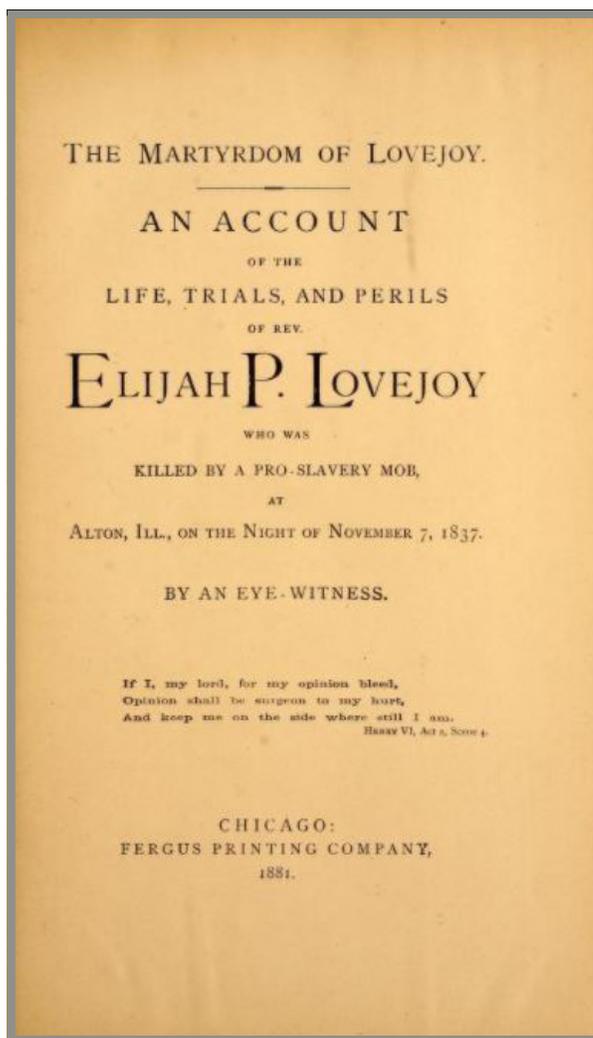
alized example of a mob that might “throw printing presses into rivers” and “shoot editors,” but Lincoln did not mention Lovejoy by name. Why? A plausible explanation would be the existence of strong anti-abolitionism in central Illinois, while some scholars describe the absence of open condemnation in Lincoln's text as political acumen, political pandering, or both.

The moral tone of Lincoln's words fell far short of supporting abolitionism, an extreme political position to many in the 1830s. In the Lyceum Address, Lincoln's discussion of the potential tyrant placed emancipation and enslavement in terms of extremism. “Towering genius distdains a beaten path,” he said. “It seeks regions hitherto unexplored.--It sees no distinction in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in

the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen.”

In considering the figure of the tyrant, scholars have expended much energy in their efforts to identify particular individuals to whom Lincoln may have been referring. Some note that the language of tyranny was common in Whig denunciations of former Democratic President Andrew Jackson or Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren. Some looking more locally, have argued that the imagined tyrant was Lincoln's thirty-year nemesis, Illinois Democrat Stephen A. Douglas, who was then contending with Lincoln's law partner, John T. Stuart, for a seat in Congress. Perhaps some answer could be found in the nature of the speech itself. The expectations of a Lyceum speech suggest that the lecture was intended to provide a well-thought, reflective commentary of broad philosophical themes for common public interest. A good lecture was to spark thought rather than to proselytize specific political actions. As whiggish in their faith in progress as lyceums were, speaking at the Young Men's Lyceum was not equivalent to speaking at a Whig political meeting. Lyceums were considered to be non-partisan and members often came from different political parties and maintained different ideological commitments. This was as true in Springfield as it was elsewhere. The young men of the lyceum would not have invited Lincoln to speak so that he might defend his actions in the state legislature or make a case for his own forthcoming candidacy for reelection or for Stuart's candidacy for a congressional seat.

At the same time, the young men knew Lincoln to be a Whig politician, and he did not cease being one when he entered the Baptist Church on that cold winter night in 1838, any more than he ceased being a lawyer. He was subtle in speaking of abolitionism, careful not to align himself with such an extremist political position even while criticizing the murder of one of its adherents, and he did not specifically identify anyone who might become a “tyrant.” Al-



*The Martyrdom of Lovejoy* 71.2009.084.07202

though efforts to name the tyrant have long occupied scholars, the fact that the tyrant is unnamed and unidentified is itself a choice worthy of note.

Speaking of abolitionism at all, even far short of any kind of endorsement, pressed the limits of what would be suitable for an ostensibly apolitical speech, and the allusions to Lovejoy, and the more explicit references to McIntosh, ("Turn, then, to that horror-striking scene at St. Louis. A single victim was only sacrificed there. His story is very short; and is, perhaps, the most highly tragic, if anything of its length, that has ever been witnessed in real life. A mulatto man, by

death; and all within a single hour from the time he had been a freeman, attending to his own business, and at peace with the world.") whose murder had been reported by Lovejoy, established a moral argument that attentive listeners might discover for themselves.

The Lincoln of the Lyceum Address was certainly not an abolitionist, and he assuredly spoke from his perspective as a white man, but he was prepared to go on record as one who did not hold abolitionists responsible for the violence visited upon them. In its own time and place, this was not an especially popular view.

In many ways, Lincoln's Lyceum Address was practice: practice in public speaking, practice in identifying and responding to contemporary events, and practice in experimenting with the rhetorical traditions of the time. The lyceum was a good place to deliver a formal speech before Springfield's professional class, the lawyers and merchants, the doctors and skilled laborers, the up-and-coming young men of ambition constituting the next generation of community leaders, and perhaps even some female spectators.

In Lincoln's Lyceum Address, the practice of the law received almost religious veneration, with nary a flicker of doubt for him. Nineteen years later, after the Dred Scott decision, the question of "bad laws" for him would become more immediate. In his Lyceum Address, his current generation was meant simply to "transmit" the legacy of the founders, manifest in a "proposition" that they had already articulated. On a cold winter's day in Gettysburg in the middle of a dark war, his "task" would become an emotional effort to realize the founders' hope, promise,

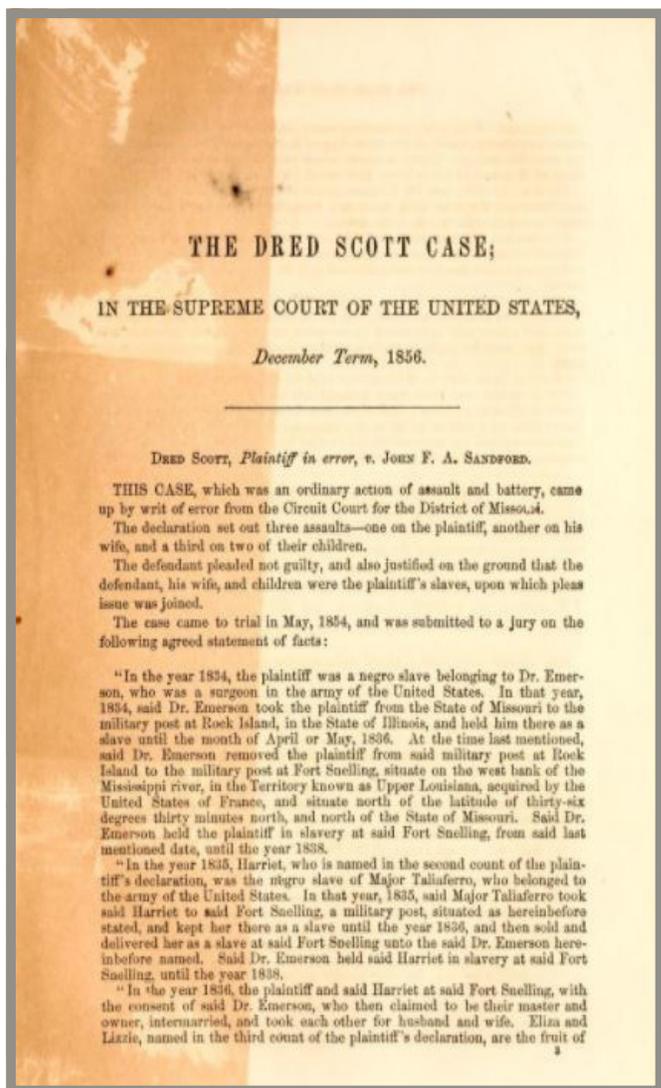
and an as yet unproven "proposition that all men are created equal." In his Lyceum Address, "emancipating slaves" and "enslaving freemen" alike were represented as the potential actions of an ambitious tyrant. Through time and experience Lincoln would slowly find a moral distinction between them.

Now, 183 years after a 28-year-old lawyer trudged through the muddy streets of Springfield to speak in the Baptist Church, everything has long been replaced by the "silent artillery of time . . . ; the leveling of its walls. They are gone.-- They were a forest of giant oaks; but the all-resistless hurricane has swept over them, and left only, here and there, a lonely trunk, despoiled of its verdure, shorn of its foliage; unshading and unshaded, to murmur in a few gentle breezes, and to combat with its mutilated limbs, a few more ruder storms, then to sink, and be no more." Generation after generation have used and abused Lincoln, interpreting him for their own time and purpose while finding in his words what they consider to be the best and the worst of the nation.

Anyone who has ever studied Lincoln knows he is not easy to figure out. Two hundred and twelve years after his birth on his parents' farm in Kentucky, how we remember Lincoln is largely a selfish endeavor. Indeed, there are many Lincolns to remember: the precocious child, the laborer, the surveyor, the storyteller, the lawyer, the politician, the husband and father, the wordsmith, the president, and the martyr. However, in seeking a fuller, more polished account of Lincoln and his life and times, on one January night in 1838, he was a lyceum lecturer.

Emerging from his own anxieties, insecurities, and ambitions and responding to the expectations of Springfield's anxious, ambitious residents, he appeared before his neighbors and constituents invoking their passions and their prejudices, testing and trying his ideas, weighing words adopted from the language of the day, and exhibiting the skills of formal public speaking. At an ordinary event, a young lawyer sought to be extraordinary by explaining the state of the nation and offering bromides for its ills. But also at that moment, he exercised a voice that ever so faintly glimmered with moral purpose and promise.

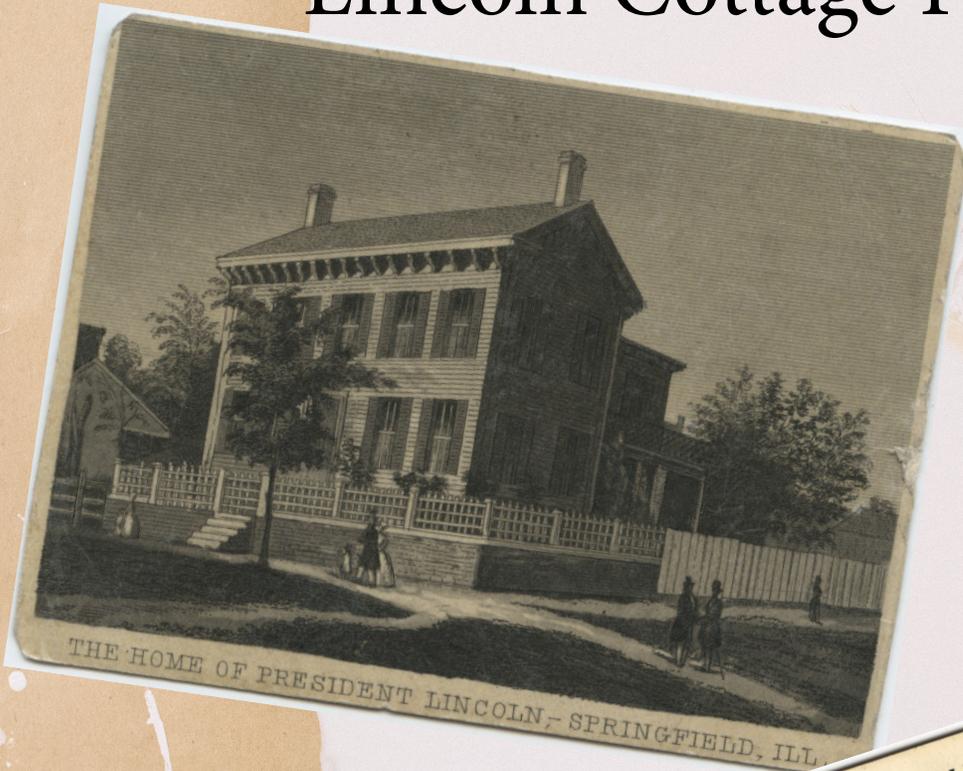
Jason H. Silverman is the Ellison Capers, Jr. Professor of History at Winthrop University.



The Dred Scott Case in the United States Supreme Court 71.2009.084.09941

the name of McIntosh, was seized in the street, dragged to the suburbs of the city, chained to a tree, and actually burned to

# An Interview with Michael Burlingame *regarding the* Lincoln Cottage Project



THE HOME OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN, - SPRINGFIELD, ILL.



CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LINCOLN PARLOR

Home of President Lincoln, Springfield, Ill. LN-2643;  
Lincoln Parlor ZPC-228

Sara Gabbard

**Sara Gabbard: What is the “Lincoln Cottage?”****Michael Burlingame:**

Lincoln’s Springfield Cottage (not to be confused with the Lincoln Cottage at the Soldiers’ Home in Washington, D.C.) is a replica of the Lincoln Home that the family moved into in 1844 (namely, a six-room, one-and-a-half story cottage) and before a second story was added in 1856, transforming the modest cottage into the twelve-room Home we know today.

**SG: When was it originally built?**

**MB:** 1839

**SG: When did the Lincoln family acquire it? From whom?**

**MB:** They bought it in 1844 from the Rev. Charles Dresser, who two years earlier had presided at the wedding ceremony of Abraham and Mary.

**SG: Please describe the interior.**

**MB:** A parlor, a sitting room, a kitchen on the first floor and two bedrooms in the sleeping loft above.

**SG: How long did the Lincoln family live there?**

**MB:** They lived there from from 1844 to 1856, when it was expanded into a two-story, 12-room house, where they continued living until 1861.

**SG: Pleasetellourreadersaboutthe project to reconstruct this home.**

**MB:** The project got started last March, when I suggested to some friends in Springfield that visitors to the Lincoln Home received a misleading impression of the family’s domestic environment. The Lincoln’s had lived in the modest six-room cottage initially. Later, they lived in a twelve-room house- the one that is open for visitors today to tour- even though the Lincoln’s only lived in the newly expanded house for 5 years.

I thought it would be enlightening for visitors to enter a replica of the house before that second story was added. My friends were enthusiastic about the idea, and so last spring an ad hoc committee of the Abraham Lincoln Association began exploring the

possibility of creating a replica of the six-room cottage. The committee has been busy since then, making plans, hiring an architect, raising money (goal: \$400,000), and procuring letters of endorsement from national leaders like Senators Durbin and Duckworth as well as Congressmen LaHood and Davis, local governmental officials like the mayor and city council, civic organizations, and leading Lincoln scholars from around the country, among them Allen Guelzo, Douglas Wilson, and James Oakes. So far we’ve raised over half of our \$400,000 goal, have obtained an option on a lot, employed an architect, and consulted the archeologist of the Lincoln Home (who is a member of the committee) as well as landscape architects. We have good reason to believe that the National Park Service will incorporate the Cottage into the Lincoln Home National Historic Site park.

When I suggested the idea to a friend who had worked as a tour guide at the home a generation ago, he wrote saying that “at least half of the people who toured the Home entered and immediately expressed their shock (and a little dismay) that Lincoln, whom they learned about as the simple prairie lawyer, actually was ‘so affluent’ and lived in such a grand home.” My friend had “to explain that

stand the Lincolns’ life within that context as well as within the 1860 twelve-room Home context, they would have a much more complete picture of the Lincolns’ actual life in Springfield.” The former tour guide added that a replica of the modest cottage “would shed immense light for visitors on the Lincoln family as a whole, and its dynamic. The Lincoln children were raised — and one died — in the small Cottage; Mary Lincoln held teas and sewing circles there; Abraham Lincoln, a young and relatively anonymous lawyer and politician came home from his office or from politicking to his young family in his small house and dreamed big, mature dreams.” The “replica would immensely expand the teaching and learning about the most important years of Abraham Lincoln’s life.”

The replica of the Cottage could be used for receptions, classes, lectures, meetings, and a variety of other functions, unlike the Home. It will be located a few steps south of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, a little over a block from the Home.

The National Park Service website for the Lincoln Home National Historic Site rightly notes that Abraham Lincoln believed that all Americans “should have the opportunity to improve their economic and social condition. Lincoln’s



*Robert Lincoln's Bedroom, 71.2009.083.0753*

life was the embodiment of that idea.”

The Lincolns’ Springfield Cottage Project will illustrate vividly how Lin-

coln "improved his economic and social condition." The Cottage on the northeast corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets that he bought in 1844 was much smaller than the Home that is open to visitors today. In 1856, the Cottage was expanded by the addition of a second story, transforming a six-room abode into a commodious twelve-room house that was, as contemporaries noted, "superior in appearance to those in the immediate vicinity," for it now rose "considerably above the level of the street" and dwarfed "by its great height and size, the adjoining dwellings."

That expansion symbolized the rise of the forty-seven-year-old man who had arrived in Sangamon County a quarter-century earlier as a self-described "strange, friendless, uneducated, penniless boy," who worked as a jack-of-all-trades (boat hand, laborer, clerk, merchant, postmaster, surveyor, farmhand), studied law on his own, passed the bar, worked at first for other attorneys, then established his own firm, and ultimately prospered. The year before he was elected president, he told an audience in Wisconsin: "The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is *free* labor--the just and generous and prosperous system, which opens the way for all--gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all." He knew whereof he spoke.

At the heart of Lincoln's political philosophy was his emphasis on what has been called "the right to rise." In 1861,



Entrance, Abraham Lincoln's Home ZPC-225

while in Cincinnati en route to Washington for his inauguration, he told a group of German workingmen: "I hold that while man exists, it is his duty to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating mankind." Months later, he defined the Civil War's international significance: "it is a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form, and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men--to lift artificial weights from all shoulders--to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all--to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life."

As an active member of the Whig Party in his twenties and thirties, Lincoln championed policies designed to end rural isolation and poverty, thus allowing people like those with whom he had grown up to ascend the social and economic ladder as far as their talent, industry, ability, and virtue would take them. As a Republican in his forties and fifties, he expanded the scope of his sympathies to include African

Americans trapped in a system that did not allow them to rise.

The National Park Service website further states: "We know Lincoln as the sixteenth president but he was also a spouse, parent, and neighbor who experienced the same hopes, dreams, and challenges of life that are still experienced by many people today." Indeed, visitors to the Home are curious about Lincoln's personal life, which comes alive within the four walls of that house. But to some extent, visitors are misled by what they see. To be sure, they can observe the domestic environment of Lincoln's family during its final five years at Eighth and Jackson, but they cannot as easily appreciate what life was like for that family during the preceding twelve years, when their quarters were far more cramped. It is well known that Lincoln's marriage was troubled, and that he often sought refuge from scenes of marital discord in his nearby office or out of town. It is difficult for visitors in Springfield to imagine how little space each member of the family had within the narrow confines of the Cottage. The pressure-cooker atmosphere created by its tight quarters doubtless exacerbated family tensions.

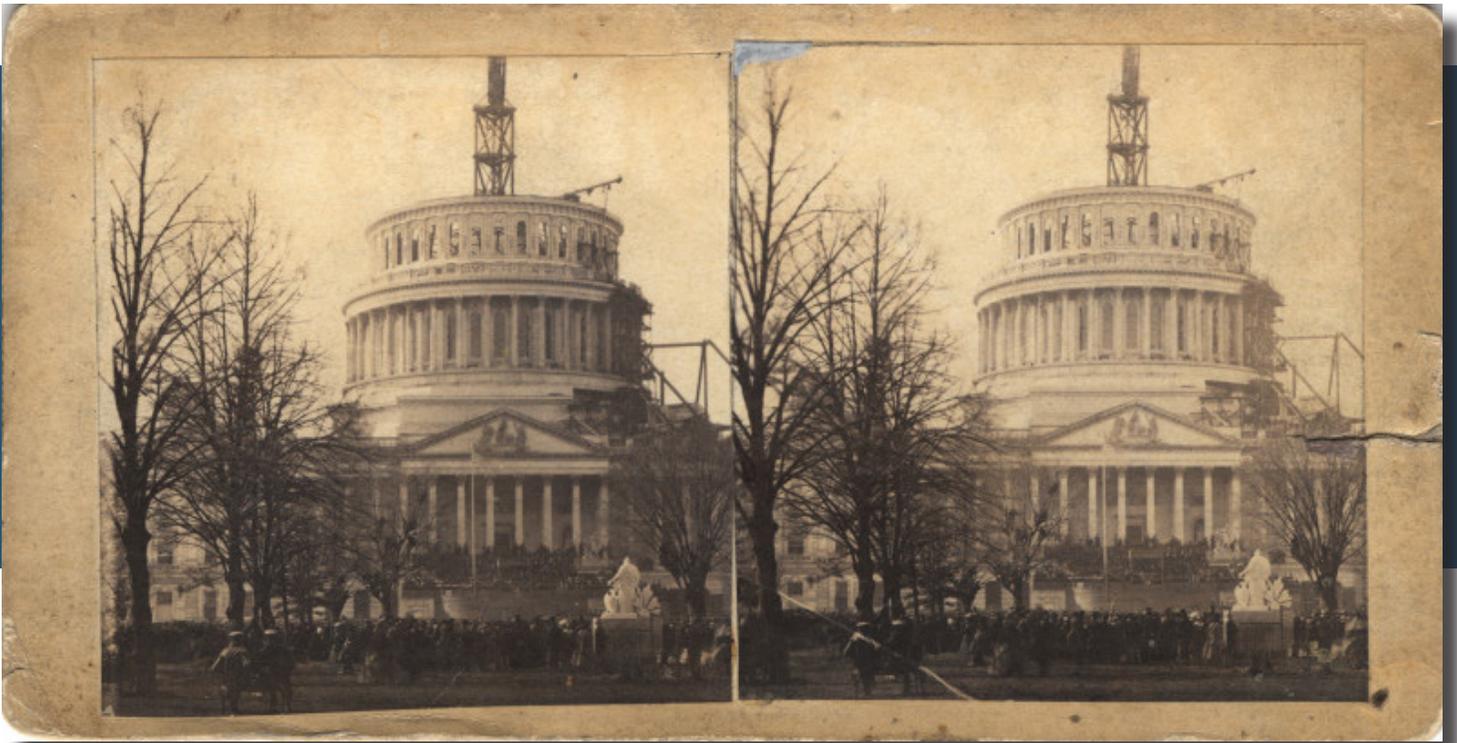
Visitors to the Cottage can better appreciate how difficult it was for Mrs. Lincoln to adjust to life in such a small domicile, so different from the large, comfortable Kentucky home she had grown up in, or the elegant house of her older sister Elizabeth Todd Edwards on Springfield's "Aristocracy Hill," where Mary stayed from the day she came to Illinois in 1839 to the day she married Lincoln in 1842.

**SG: Where can more information be found?**

**MB:** On the website of the Abraham Lincoln Association, <https://abrahamlincolnassociation.org>

*Historian Michael Burlingame currently serves as President of the Abraham Lincoln Association.*

# Lincoln & Democracy



*Lincoln's First Inauguration LN-0060*



the mass of the people would obligingly vote as their representatives.

And no wonder: the freedom Americans enjoyed from entanglement in European wars eliminated any possibility of the formation of a professional military elite, and the prevalence of evangelical Protestant religion undermined any notions of social hierarchy. By the time Alexis de Tocqueville arrived in America to begin his analysis of American political society, *republican* was still the noun, but *democratic* had become the adjective, and the adjective so controlled the noun that it only made sense for Tocqueville to entitle his inquiry, *Democracy in America - Democracy*, and not *Republicanism*. "A democratic republic subsists in the United States," Tocqueville wrote: the country's sheer size, and the preference Americans had for commerce rather than politics, made an indirect system of representation desirable, *but* the internal spirit of that system would be highly democratic because the American people have "a taste for freedom and the art of being free," and don't need to have their views refined and enlarged by others. It is those tastes - Tocqueville called them *mores* - that make what was designed as a republic work as a democracy in a "more or less regulated and prosperous" fashion.

So, when Lincoln spoke of democracy, he was speaking of a republican system in which democratic habits had become so pervasive that they reversed the usual flow of republicanism. Instead of the representatives restraining the wildness of the people, the people themselves set the limits of what those representatives may do. "By the frame of the government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief," Lincoln explained, "and have, with equal wisdom, provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals." Under the canopy of democracy, the people are judged competent to direct their own lives, public and private, without needing or wanting the paternal tyranny of aristocrats and monarchs, or the meddlesome oversight of the wealthy or the learned. "The legitimate object of government," Lincoln wrote in 1854, "is to do for a community of people, what-

ever they need to have done, but can not do, at all, or can not, so well do, for themselves in their separate, and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere." The purpose of government, Lincoln said, was not to organize, stratify or mobilize the people, but simply to level the playing field, in order to guarantee "an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life" by securing equality before the laws. Thus government's principal util-

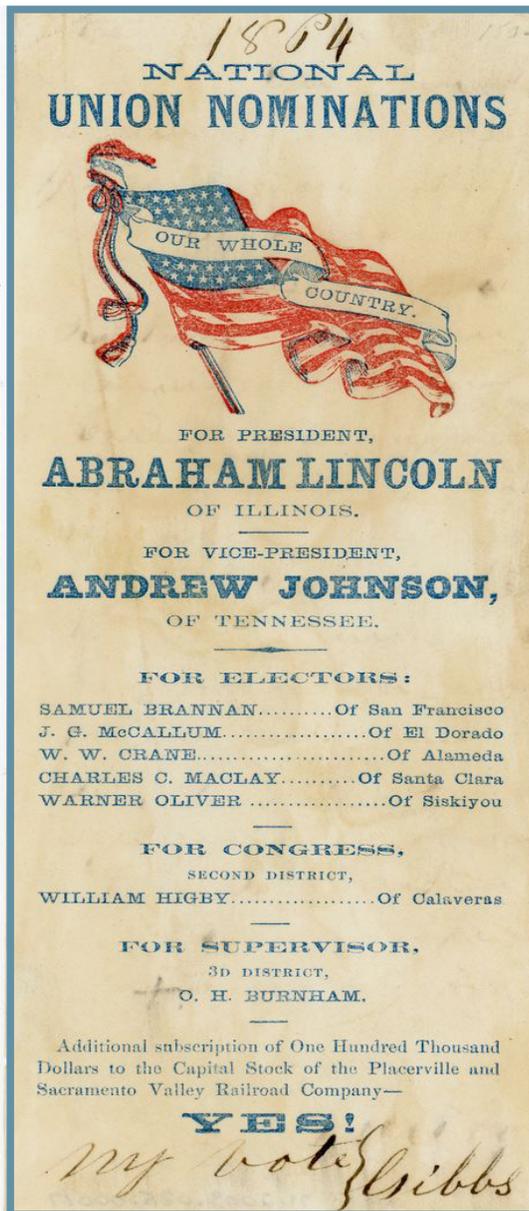
In such a "community" - such a democratized republic -- two rules must be obeyed as with iron rods:

1. *The rule of the majority.*

Whatever principles and policies are endorsed by the majority of that people must become the principles and policies of their government; otherwise, the sovereignty of 'the people' means nothing. "If the majority does not control, the minority, would that be right?" Lincoln asked. "Would that be just or generous? Assuredly not!" By the same measure, the minority who have disagreed must acquiesce in the majority's rule. "If the minority will not acquiesce," Lincoln concluded, "the majority must, or the government must cease." What was worse, an unbowed minority would "make a precedent" for themselves "which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them" whenever disagreement breaks out. The long-term result - and truth be told, it will not be a very long term - will be either "anarchy or...despotism." Sovereignty will either evaporate as each separate faction or individual does what is right in their own eyes; or else, in desperation, decent men will turn to a dictator to sort-out the chaos. "The rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible," Lincoln said, "so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all that is left." That was why the Civil War was what Lincoln called "essentially a People's contest." The Confederate rebellion was an assault by a minority on the decision of the majority, as expressed in Lincoln's own election, and in that way, it was really intended to question the entire principle of democracy.

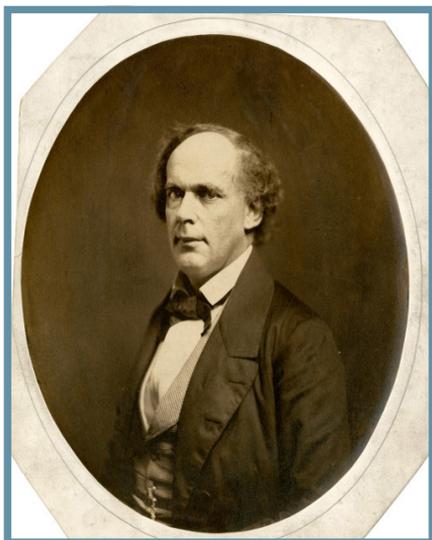
2. *The legitimacy of the minority.*

No majority is perfect or infallible simply for being a majority. In a democracy, the rule of self-interest, persuasion, reason and civility guarantee that a minority may cling to its opinion, and use every legitimate opportunity to convince



National Union Nomination 71.2009.085.00017

ity was to maximize personal transformation, "to lift artificial weights from all shoulders" and "to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all."



Salmon P. Chase LN-0457

others that they are right. "We should remember," Lincoln cautioned his own allies once he became president, that "while we exercise our opinion... others have also rights to the exercise of their opinions, and we should endeavor to allow these rights, and act in such a manner as to create no bad feeling." It is the mark of the dictator, not a democracy, to treat the minority as a social enemy, to be put up against the barn wall and shot, or (in the case of the Confederate rebellion) to engage in a "deliberate pressing out of view, the rights of men, and the authority of the people." There was, in Lincoln's 'idea of democracy,' no need for firing squads to conclude arguments. "I do not deny the possibility that the people may err in an election," Lincoln admitted in 1861, "but if they do, the true cure is in the next election."

To set aside those rules, whether out of weakness or confusion, was to cast doubt on whether democracy really had any legitimacy whatsoever. The challenge of the Confederate rebellion was not directed solely at him or his party or his administration; it presented "to the whole family of man, the question, whether a constitutional republic, or a democracy, a government of the people, by the same people can, or cannot" survive the push-and-shove of its own people's disagreements, or whether democracies are doomed forever to fly off, by their own centrifugal force, into fragments. "For my part," he told his secretary, John Hay, in May, 1861,

*I consider the central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity that is upon us of*

*proving that popular government is not an absurdity. We must settle this question now, whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose. If we fail, it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves.*

Or, as he would put it more eloquently at Gettysburg in November, 1863, the war was "testing whether this nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."

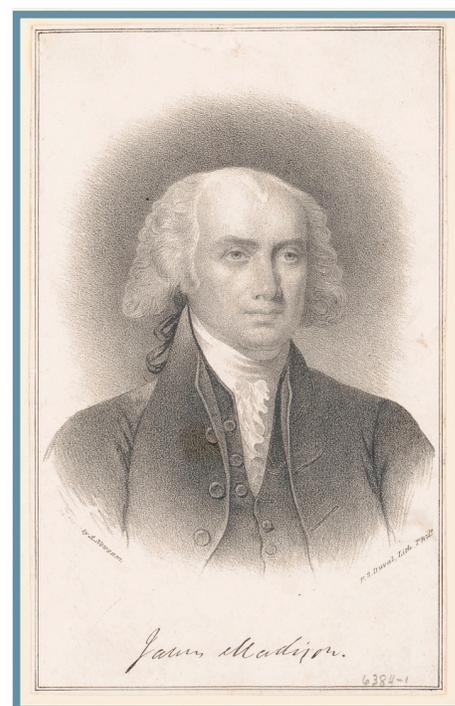
If those two rules are the basic operating system of a democracy, then we should also notice that these two rules also require rules of their own to operate rightly. *First*, democracy operates best within the boundaries of a nation-state. This is not a concept that, in an increasingly globalized world economy, meets with much enthusiasm today, but the nation-state actually provides the only effective means of identifying who belongs to a certain democratic entity (which is to say, its citizens) and who is an interloper not subject to its restraints and who could harm it with impunity. *Second*, within that nation-state, there should be a reasonably broad franchise – in other words, almost all adults within its boundaries should be entitled to vote and to hold office. *Third*, voting should be without coercion or manipulation. *Fourth*, citizens may organize themselves into political associations of their own choosing. And *fifth*, political information is permitted to circulate freely and without hindrance among the citizens.

Having laid down these five secondary rules, it will not take much insight to see that the Confederacy formed as much a threat to these secondary rules as it did to the two operating rules. To begin with: the Confederacy did not exhibit "a reasonably broad franchise," and had not for years, even for its white population. In the eleven states which would form the Confederacy, only one (Tennessee) showed voter participation higher than the national average in the 1852 presidential election; the rest showed voter participation 15 percentage points lower, and in some cases lower by 20 percent than in the free states. A pro-secession propagandist like Edmund Ruffin frankly despised his own Virginia legislature as "that despicable assembly" because of "the enlargement of the

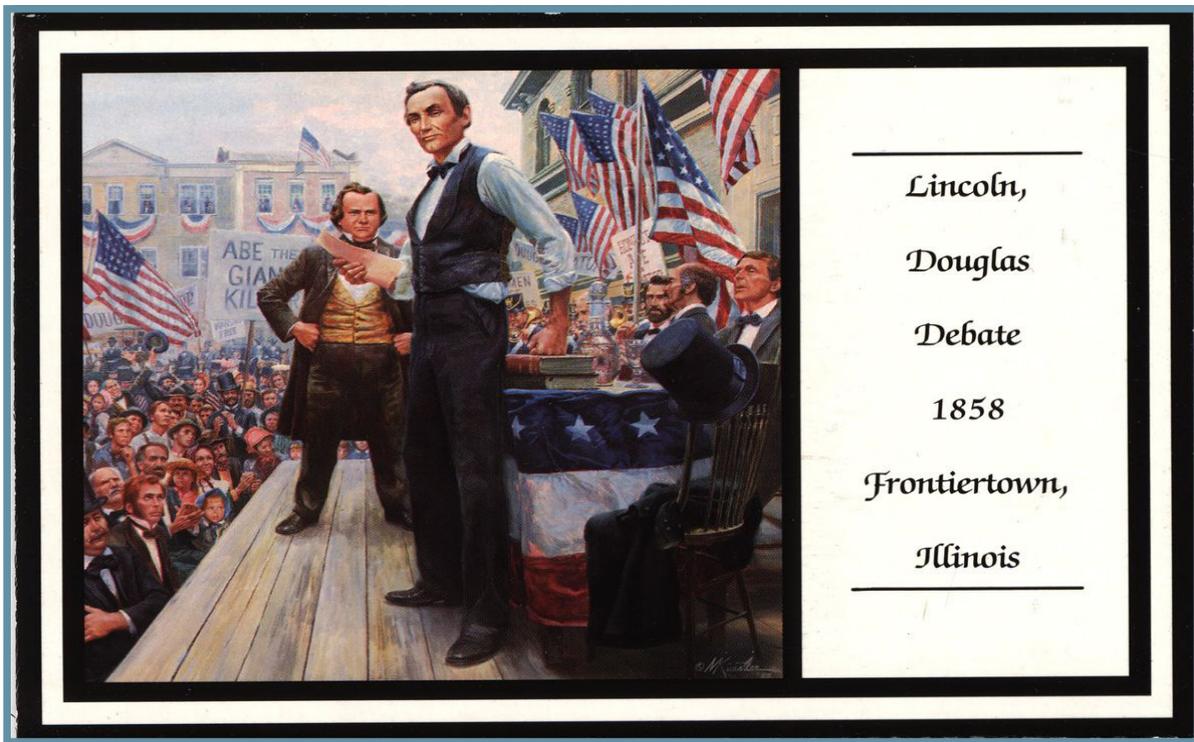
constituency to universal suffrage."

Likewise, the Confederacy did not permit full and free discussion of political issues, because its political life was marked by nothing so much as the suppression of free speech and the control of the circulation of free political information. In 1835, the postmaster-general, Amos Kendall, refused to protect the distribution of anti-slavery materials through Southern post offices in terms eerily reminiscent of 'cancel culture,' because (Kendall said) "we owe an obligation to the laws, but a higher one to the communities in which we live," and those communities demanded censorship to save them from offense.

In truth, the Confederacy had lost all grip on democracy, and had become an oligarchy, managed by a handful of slaveowning elites. "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." The stones, in this case, were slaves. No wonder James Madison feared slavery as the oligarchic snake in the republican garden, since the classical republics whose vices he had studied had demonstrated all too well that "in pro-



James Madison LC-DIG-pga-10283




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Lincoln,  
 Douglas  
 Debate  
 1858  
 Frontiertown,  
 Illinois

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Lincoln Douglas Debate 1858 ZPC-559

portion as slavery prevails in a State, the Government, however, democratic in name, must be aristocratic in fact." At every point, the Confederacy had failed the democratic test.

Yet, the Confederacy is also a chilling example, for us as much as for Lincoln, of how easily a democratic republic can slide backwards into coercion and hierarchy. For the realization that haunted Lincoln was that democracies tend to be, like Thomas Hobbes's definition of life, *nasty, poor, mean, brutish and short*.

Especially short. Most human societies had maintained order by either coercion or superstition, and the few which had not done so sooner or later succumbed to the fear of anarchy and welcomed the Alexanders and the Caesars to create order. At the very beginning of his political career, Lincoln had feared this was about to overtake the American democracy. In his first major political speech, the Lyceum Address of January 1838, Lincoln was convinced that Americans were in real danger of political self-destruction, since the tsunami of mob actions in the previous year looked so destabilizing that Americans might be tempted to look to some "Towering genius" who "thirsts and burns for distinction" to save them from "a Government that offers them no protection."

Once installed, people tolerated the rule of Alexander and Caesar, not only because they promised law-and-order, but because (and this Lincoln did *not* explore in 1838) they dispensed patronage and deployed favoritism. This was not the prettiest glue a society could use to hold itself together, and it frequently descended into corruption, but patronage and favoritism *worked*, in their own oppressive way.

Democracies would need social glue as well; but the glue which the American founders hoped to apply was *virtue*. If Americans could be persuaded to deny themselves, to place the public interest first, and to govern with a view to truth, even to their own personal harm, then the United States would prosper. Self-government in a nation could only flourish in an atmosphere of personal self-government, supported (as John Adams insisted in 1776) "by pure Religion, or Austere Morals. Public Virtue cannot exist in a Nation without private...Virtue."

The problem with *virtue*, however, was that it demanded more of people than they might be willing to give. In the same year that Americans declared their independence, Adam Smith declared in *The Wealth of Nations* that "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We ad-

dress ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages." By 1787, there were a good many sadder but wiser Americans who agreed: the only way to make the American republic work was by appeals to *self-interest*. "Individuals of extended views and of national pride may bring the public proceedings to" the "standard" of virtue, complained James Madison, "but the example will never be followed by the multitude." What was true in economics was true in politics: the real governor of human behavior was self-interest, not virtue. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary," Madison conceded. But they were not, and so "ambition must be made to counteract ambition."

But if virtue was difficult for democracies to practice, was self-interest not toxic? And did that explain why democracies were so short-lived? Abraham Lincoln believed as profoundly in self-interest as Adam Smith. "We have been mistaken all our lives if we do not know" that "everybody you trade with makes something." Lincoln "maintained that there was no conscious act of any man that was not moved by a motive, first, last, and always," wrote William Henry Herndon of his old law partner. Even when Lincoln was arguing for the recruitment of black men

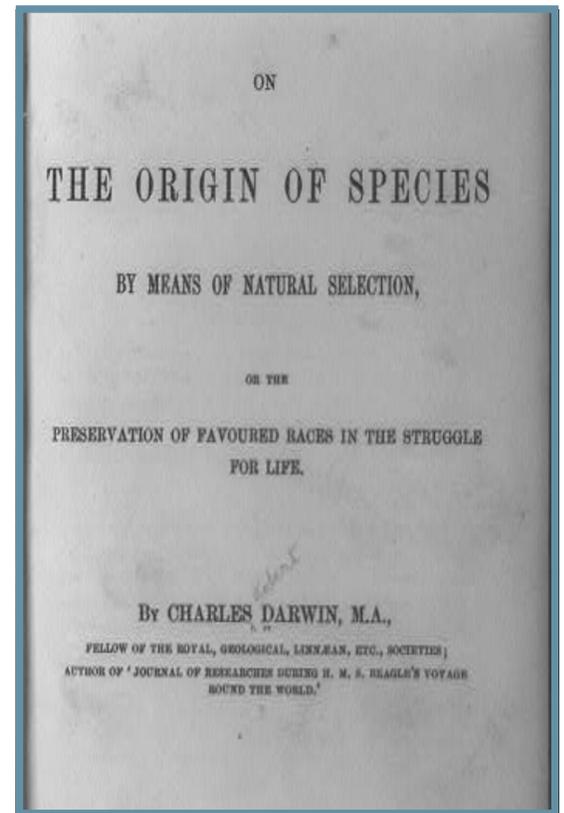
as Union soldiers, he framed the argument in terms of self-interest rather than virtue. "Negroes, like other people, act upon motives," Lincoln reasoned. "Why should they do any thing for us, if we will do nothing for them?"

But he did *not* believe that self-interest *alone* could sustain a democracy. Even Madison had constrained political self-interest by the Constitution's separation of powers; Lincoln believed that there was a natural law in morals which restrained self-interest in democracy. In any question of policy, then, "let us be brought to believe it is morally right"; but, at the same time, he added, let us believe that it is "favorable to, or, at least, not against, our interest." It was slavery, he believed, which insisted "that there is no right principle of action but selfinterest." Slavery was the instrument of men "bent only on temporary selfinterest." So, as much as Lincoln believed that self-interest was too instinctive a rule in human society to deny completely, he also believed that there was a circle to be drawn around certain tenets of natural law which neither self-interest nor majorities could invade.

Nothing showed this to better effect than the series of debates Lincoln held with Stephen A. Douglas during the campaign for the senior U.S. Senate seat from Illinois in 1858. For

Douglas, democracy was really simple majoritarianism: whatever 51% of the people wanted for the nation ought to be the rule. What mattered most in Douglas's mind was *process* -- whether the rules of counting the majority had been properly observed. Once that requirement was satisfied, Douglas cared not at all whether slavery was "voted up or voted down" in the territories. "Let the voice of the people rule." This was an example of what Michael Sandel has called, the "procedural republic," which treats its citizens strictly as independent individuals who have *rights*. Since, in Douglas's reasoning, slave-owning was a constitutionally-guaranteed and morally-neutral right, it was no business of anyone in the free states to interfere with the free exercise of that right.

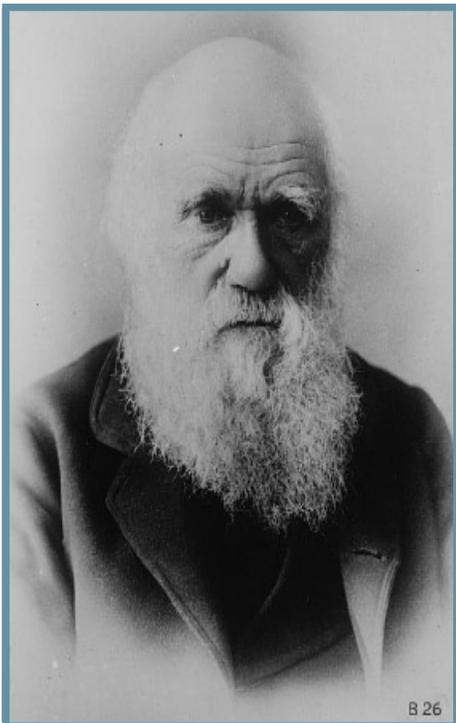
Lincoln represented an entirely different perspective. Democracy was not about helping people exercise rights apart from doing what *was* right, and even if slavery was legal by certain state laws, it was nevertheless a clear violation of natural law. No majority, of 51% or any other per cent, had the power to reverse natural law, and certainly not the natural laws Lincoln could find written in the Declaration of Independence about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or in physical nature and the instinctive resistance of the humblest creatures to oppression and exploitation by members of their own species. "The ant, who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest, will furiously defend the fruit of his labor, against whatever robber assails him," Lincoln declared, which made the wrong of slavery "so plain, that the most dumb and stupid slave that ever toiled for a master, does constantly know that he is wronged." In the face of Douglas's belief that democracy existed only to provide a procedural framework for exercising rights, Lincoln insisted that democracy had a higher purpose, which was the realization of a morally-right political order. For Douglas, democracy was an end in itself; for Lincoln it was a means rather than an end, a means in political life of realizing the natural ends for which men were made.



*On the Origin of the Species by Charles Darwin*  
LC-USZ62-95224

restraint and appeal for centuries before Lincoln, and the audiences to which he appealed in 1858 understood what he was talking about even if they balked at his application of it to slavery. In 1859, all of that fell to pieces. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in November of 1859, set out a vision of a world system from which all laws *except* that of self-interest were fully and finally banished. Lincoln died before the full effect of Darwin's ideas could draw any form of comment from him. But the democratic project that Lincoln felt was a full and satisfactory statement of the truth of human nature could, after Darwin, no longer justify itself in any terms other than the simple satisfaction of human demands -- and in that case, monarchies, oligarchies and dictatorships might serve those ends just as well as democracy.

World War One's aftermath saw Europeans plunge into an orgy of constitution-making, seeking to replace the dynasties toppled by the war -- the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Romanovs, and sultans -- with a world made safe for democracy -- only to see those democracies, bereft of any moral law, crumble and collapse before more insidious but also more effec-



Charles Carlyle Darwin  
LC-DIG-ggbain-03485; *On the Origin of the Species* by Charles Darwin LC-USZ62-95224

Natural law had been a source of

tive appeals to self-interest. And even when, in 1989, democracy achieved its most notable victory in the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, it still managed (as Paul Berman wrote in *Terror and Liberalism*) “in its pure version...to seem mediocre, corrupt, tired, and aimless, a middling compromise, pale and unappealing—something to settle for, in spirit of resignation.”

By contrast, Lincoln was not nearly so limp in his embrace of democracy. Self-interest has a role to play, but so does a confidence in the moral right. And yet even that confidence had to obey the iron rod of democracy’s operating rules. Right without law was little better than Douglas’s law-without-right, or even lawlessness itself, and he did not believe that democracy could survive without both a determined advocacy of natural right and an equally determined acquiescence to the rule of law. When his earnest Treasury Secretary, Salmon Chase, urged him to step beyond the Emancipation Proclamation and unilaterally emancipate all slaves everywhere in the United States (rather than just the Confederacy), Lincoln replied with a sharp reminder that this unilateralism, even in the name of freedom, was exactly what put democracy in danger. “If I take the step,” Lincoln argued, “must I not do so, without the argument of military necessity, and so, without any argument, except the one that I think the measure politically expedient, and morally right? Would I not thus give up all footing upon constitution or law? Would I not thus be in the boundless field of absolutism?”

The question before us today is whether the confidence Lincoln reposed in democracy is still possible. In our universities, critical theory tells us that, just as all biological entities reduce to survival, all human relationships reduce to power, so that what calls itself *democracy* is really only a linguistic cloak for the same power employed by dictatorships; in our streets, what Lincoln would have at once recognized as his old nemesis, “that lawless and mobocratic spirit...spreading with rapid and fearful impetuosity, to the ultimate overthrow of every institution, or even moral principle,” insists that *it*, and not the laws, is the vehicle of justice; even in the halls of Congress, a sitting U.S. Senator announces that “democracy is unnatural,” that

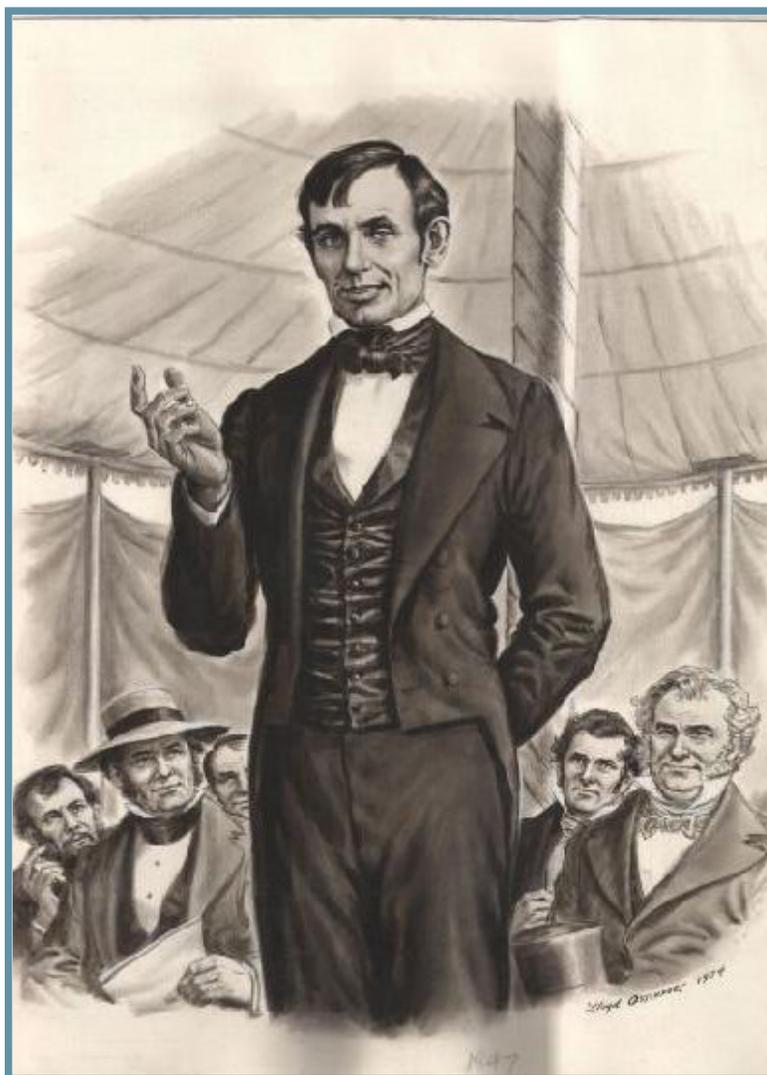
“we don’t run anything important in our lives by democratic vote other than our government,” so “it’s illogical to think it would be permanent. It will fall apart at some point, and maybe that isn’t now, but maybe it is.” These are words we have not heard since 1860; and they appall us with the thought that the ghosts of 1860 have reappeared on the stage of our public life to try us once again. Where, then, shall we find an antidote to this pessimism about the democratic future?

When he spoke to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Fair in 1859, Lincoln described “an Eastern monarch” who “once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence...which should be true...in all times and situations.” They came back with this formula: *And this, too, shall pass away*. This was, Lincoln acknowledged, a useful saying, “consoling in the depths of affliction!”

But he did not want it to be the epitaph of democracy. “Let us hope it is not quite true,” he continued. “Let us hope, rather, that by the best cultivation of the physical world, beneath and around us; and the intellectual and moral world within us, we shall secure an individual, social, and political prosperity and happiness, whose course shall be onward and upward, and which, while the earth endures, shall not pass away.” To which I, for one, can only say, *let it be so*.

*Allen Guelzo is Director of The Initiative on Politics and Statesmanship in the James Madison Program at Princeton University.*

*Editor’s note: all citations for articles will be included in the online version of Lincoln Lore at [www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org](http://www.FriendsoftheLincolnCollection.org)*

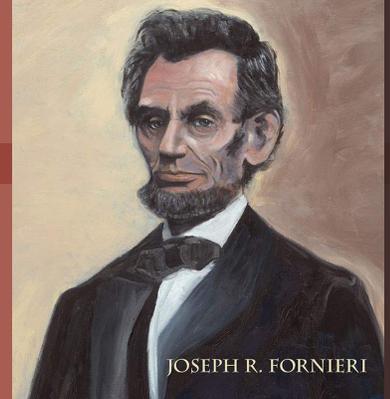


*Young Lincoln Giving a Public Speech 71.2009.081.0773*

# Joseph R. Fornieri, *Abraham Lincoln: Philosopher Statesman*

*Abraham Lincoln*

PHILOSOPHER  
STATESMAN



*Abraham Lincoln Philosopher Statesman,*  
Southern Illinois Press, 2014

Reviewed by:  
Burrus M. Carnahan,  
U.S. Department of State

In the preface to *Abraham Lincoln: Philosopher Statesman*, Joseph Fornieri recounts President Lincoln's response to a group of serenaders after his 1864 reelection. Recalling the events of the bitter, divisive campaign, the president reflected that human nature did not change. "In any future great national trial," he said, "we shall have as weak, and as strong; as silly and as wise; as bad and good," citizens as in 1864. "Let us, therefore study the incidents of this [election], as philosophy to learn wisdom from, and *none of them as wrongs to be avenged.*" (Emphasis added.)

Today, it is difficult to imagine any national leader of either party expressly renouncing revenge in a similar manner. More than anything else, this underlines America's need to study and understand Lincoln's political thought and the greatness of his statesmanship. In this quest, Joseph Fornieri's work is a reliable guide.

A professor of political science at Rochester Institute of Technology, the author's goal is to demonstrate that Abraham Lincoln was a philosopher statesman, as that term was understood in the Western tradition of political philosophy. The focus is on Lincoln's presidential years. As a young politician, Lincoln could use political and personal invective so brutally that one of his opponents was reduced to tears during debate, and another challenged him to duel. It was not until the 1850s that he had matured to become Professor Fornieri's subject.

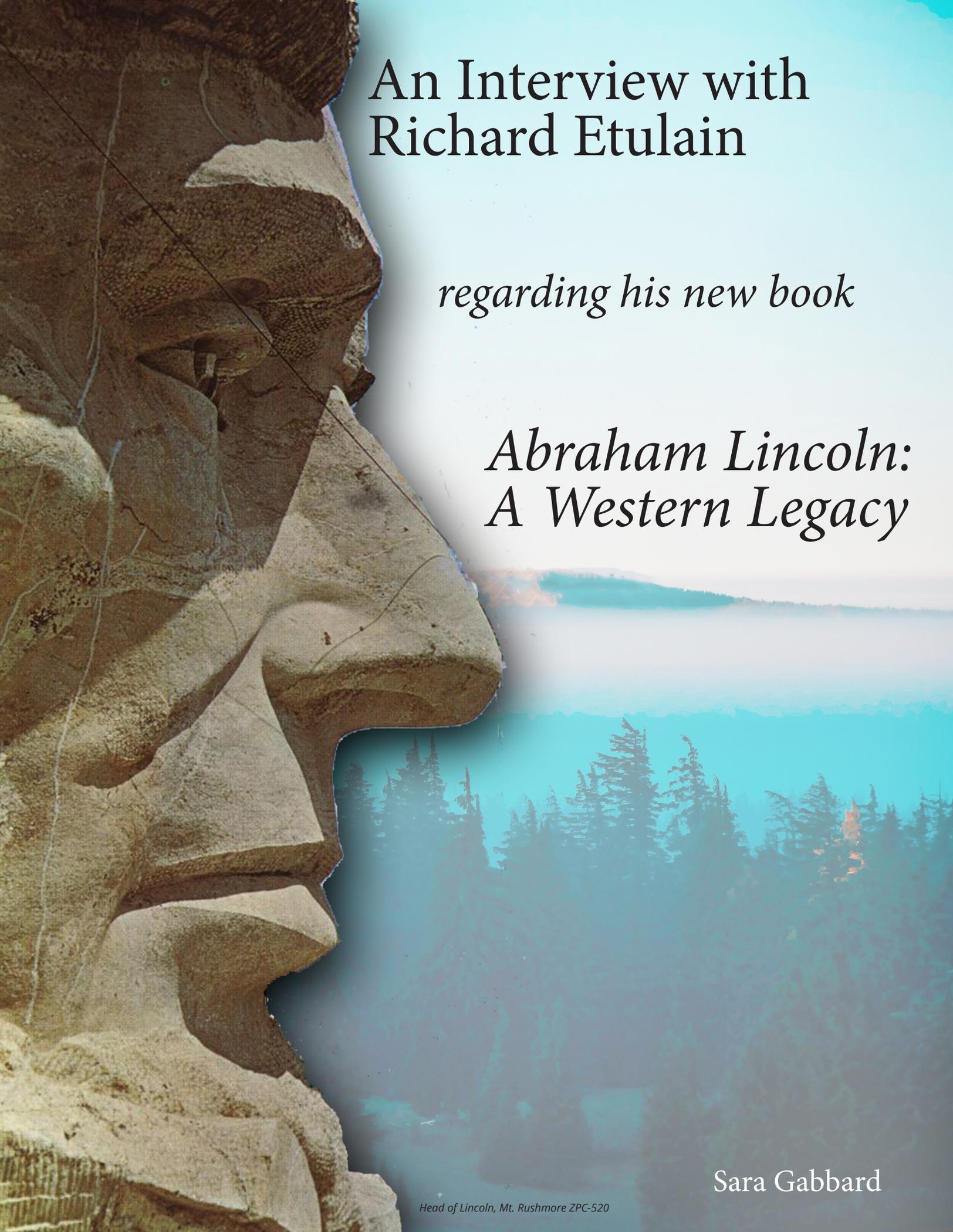
While drawing on the work of contemporary authors, including Allen Guelzo, Mark Neely, and Gabor Boritt, the book goes beyond them, also drawing on the thought of the American Founders and the great thinkers of the ancient and medieval worlds.

Fornieri finds that a philosopher statesman must possess both theoretical wisdom, to "know rightly," and practical wisdom, to "act rightly." The author then analyzes the President's character and performance through the lens of six qualities – wisdom, prudence, duty, magnanimity, rhetoric, and patriotism – devoting a chapter to each. The heart of the book is its discussion of wisdom, prudence, and duty. While Lincoln never wrote a general work on political philosophy, Fornieri attributes theoretical wisdom to him due to his "ability to articulate and defend a vision of self-government, free labor, and free society on philosophical and theological grounds."

Practical wisdom is equated to the classical political virtue of prudence, which dictated that the philosopher statesman harmonize "principle and practice ... narrowing the gap between ... the ideal and the real." "For an act to be truly prudent," Fornieri concludes, "it must be good in its intent, its action and its consequences." In Lincoln's case "prudence sought to harmonize ... moral obligation to the principles on the Declaration [of Independence] with his legal obligation to the rule of law under the Constitution."

Emancipation is the author's primary example of Lincoln's practice of prudence. Respect for the Constitution would not allow the emancipation orders of generals Fremont and Hunter to stand in the fall of 1861 and the spring of 1862. By the summer of 1862, however, the defeat of the Peninsular Campaign to capture the Confederate capital had so radically changed the strategic situation that President Lincoln could, in good faith, argue that emancipation had become a military necessity for Union victory.

In the chapter on "duty," the author applies William Lee Miller's insight that Lincoln found the duties of the presidency both empowering and constraining. To illustrate Lincoln's exercise of duty as president, Fornieri examines his response to secession as president-elect, contrasting it with President Buchanan's dithering. The author next cites Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, where Lincoln acknowledged his duty to respect slavery where it already existed but also rejected secession, called for reform of the Fugitive Slave Act to protect free African Americans, and declared his resolve to hold and protect federal property in the South. Finally, the author assesses Lincoln's performance of duty as war president. Rejecting frequent charges that Lincoln had become a dictator, Fornieri draws on the work of Herman Belz and Mark Neely to show that the President based his actions on closely-reasoned arguments from the Constitution, and, unlike a true dictator, insisted on remaining accountable to the people through the election of 1864. This work is important today for several reasons. In an iconoclastic age, we must remember Lincoln's true "greatness of soul" and why generations of Americans have seen him as our greatest president. We also need to be reminded that our country, whatever its defects, was and is capable of producing such a leader. Finally, we need to understand what makes a philosopher statesman, as a standard, albeit a high one, for judging the politicians and office holders of our own time. While it deals with weighty subjects, the book is clearly written and no background in political philosophy is needed to appreciate the arguments. It would be accessible to any general reader.



# An Interview with Richard Etulain

*regarding his new book*

## *Abraham Lincoln: A Western Legacy*

Sara Gabbard

**Sara Gabbard: Please explain the series on South Dakota history which this book represents.**

**Richard Etulain:** This book is part of the South Dakota Biography Series published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press. In 1997, the ambitious and diligent editor, Nancy Tystad Koupal, helped establish the Press. It was a valiant, successful effort. Under Nancy's efficient and energetic leadership, the Press quickly made itself known as a publisher of books about South Dakota and the American West. To expand its offerings, the Press launched its biographies series. Soon thereafter, the biographies series was expanded to include the subseries, Faces of Mount Rushmore. This volume, *Abraham Lincoln: A Western Legacy* (2020), launched the Mount Rushmore series. Books on presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt, as well as books on other figures connected with Mount Rushmore, will soon follow.

**SG: Why is Lincoln's legacy in the history of the West frequently given only a cursory glance?**

**RE:** Historians of the Civil War usually depict the horrendous conflict as one between two American regions, the North and the South. That is a valid, helpful approach. But most historians do not treat the American West as part of the deadly, fratricidal war. They should.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the importance of the West for the future of the United States gradually emerged. Oregon Fever, the Mexican War, and the California Gold Rush brought the West onto the scene for Abraham Lincoln and other Americans. By the mid-1850s, the North and South were already in an emotional argument about who would own and control the West. The central point of the argument was slavery. The new Republican Party in the North began its emphasis on not expanding slavery into the West. The so-called "Bleeding Kansas" in the later 1850s demonstrated how fractious the no-expansion argument was becoming.

By the election of 1856, Lincoln had made clear his stance as an anti-ex-

pansionist. Historians have noted that Lincoln agreed with the Republicans in the no-expansionist stance but have failed to see how these actions expanded Lincoln's interests in the West, as his statements in the Lincoln-Douglas debates, his letters as a president-elect, and his presidential actions proved.

A corrective to this oversight of the importance of the West to Lincoln and others of the time is historian Elliott West's provocative new Greater Reconstruction thesis. Professor West argues that we must realize how the two most important subjects of the mid-nineteenth century--the issues leading to, through, and after the Civil War, and expansion into the West--must be viewed together to understand how much they are linked in importance and mutual influence. Following the Greater Reconstruction thesis will bring the West more thoroughly into the Civil War and Reconstruction stories, as it should be.

**SG: One of your chapters is titled "Lincoln Shapes the West." Please comment on his actions which you consider to be the most important.**

**RE:** Lincoln's strong links with the American West are often lost in the understandably extensive emphases on the Civil War and events largely east of the Mississippi River. But even during his nonstop wartime schedule, Lincoln had time to deal with the West and encourage measures important to the history of the region.

Lincoln's most important connections with the West include those involving homesteads, a transcontinental railroad, and a land-grant college act. Of Whiggish political background, Lincoln believed that new legislation was primarily the job of Congress, but he made clear his support for these notable congressional acts. In May 1862, Lincoln signed the Homestead Act granting 160 acres to a new owner who paid a small fee and resided on the land for five years. Lincoln was convinced the act would benefit the West and new settlers, veterans, and farmers--and the Republican Party. The following July, Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act, providing generous land grants and funding for a transcontinental railroad stretching

from the Midwest to the West Coast. Two years later, he backed greatly enlarged land grants and funding for the railroad. Since Lincoln's days in the Illinois legislature and as a lawyer, he had supported railroads. At the same time, he signed the bill establishing the Morrill Land-Grant College Act furnishing federal lands to support the establishment of educational institutions providing training in "agricultural and mechanical arts." Here was another example of Lincoln's ongoing support of agriculturists.

Lincoln's decisions on slavery clearly impacted the West. He supported the congressional legislation in May 1862 ending slavery in the western territories, and his Emancipation Proclamations in 1862-63 ended slavery in the rebellious sections of the South and the western states of Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas. In addition, Lincoln made clear that illegal slavery in other areas of the West must stop.

The western area where Lincoln was least successful was in handling Indian affairs. Although he promised to address problems in Indian policy, he was unable to do so. Plus, his actions vis-à-vis the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota in 1862 were controversial--then and now. Lincoln countered the military's decision to hang 303 Sioux men but allowed 38 to be hanged for the crimes of murder and rape. Lincoln saved the lives of 265 Sioux warriors but his permitting the others to be hanged in the country's largest mass hanging remains controversial to this day.

One must conclude that during his presidency, Lincoln kept his eye and hands on the West--as much as his overloaded schedule allowed. He was a Man of the West, before and during his presidency.

**SG: How did the Civil War affect his Western vision?**

**RE:** The Civil War both expanded Lincoln's previous ideas about the West as well as introduced new subjects for his consideration. Sandwiched among the nonstop demands of daily managing an all-out war, Lincoln nonetheless found time to deal with the West in a range of measures and activities.

Lincoln's support for and signing of the Homestead Act, the Pacific Railroad Act, and the Morrill Land-Grant Act, all congressional legislation in 1862, were part of the president's push into the West during the Civil War. This legislation, Lincoln thought, was important to Republican and national growth beyond the Mississippi. Equally important was Lincoln's backing for the establishment of the Department of Agriculture. Congress followed Lincoln's push for this new organization so important to a nation of farmers, and Lincoln signed the act in May 1862.

Even more time-consuming were Lincoln's dealings with territories in the West. When Lincoln entered the White House, eight territories existed in the West; during his presidency, three new territories were organized: Arizona and Idaho in 1863, Montana in 1864.

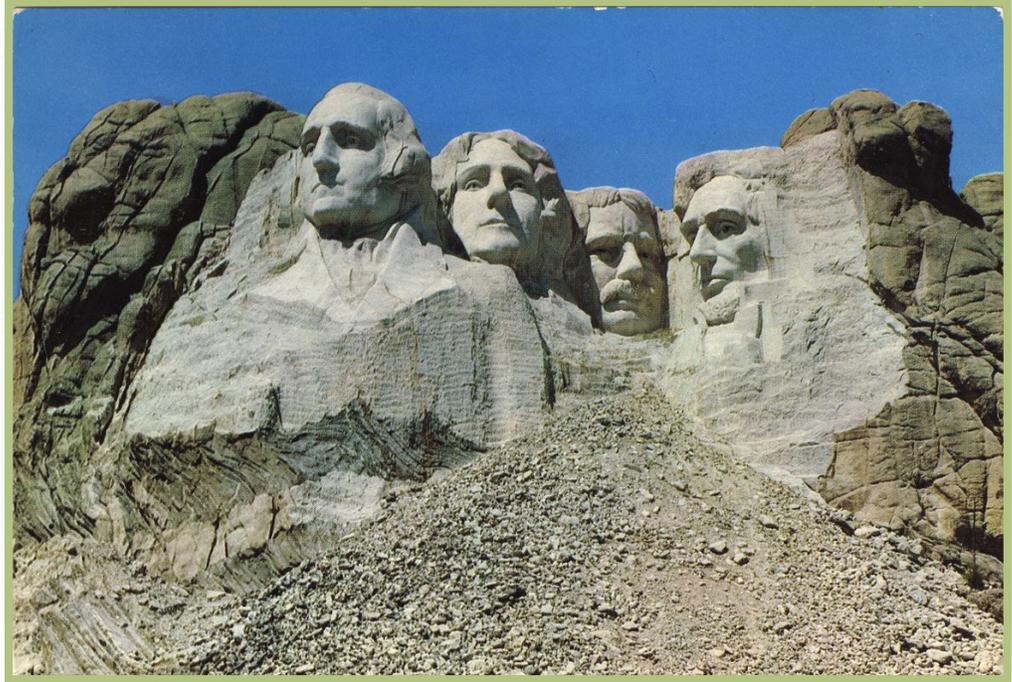
So, while president, Lincoln appointed governors, secretaries, judges, Indian agents, and surveyors-general in eleven territories. He may have appointed as many as 100 men to these offices from 1861 to 1865. Usually, he selected friends of his, Cabinet members, or members of Congress; nearly all loyal Republicans. This power of appointment and his advice to many of his appointees added up to Lincoln's becoming something of a political founding father of the American West, particularly for his party's expansion into the region.

One of Lincoln's western actions, often overlooked, was a pathbreaking environmental decision. In June 1864, he signed into law the Yosemite Valley Grant Act, setting aside nearly 40,000 acres of California's Yosemite Valley for "public use, resort and education." The act was something new in American history.

Lincoln's western interests were not limited to the territories. Noah Brooks, the California journalist who became virtually a Lincoln advisor, enlarged the president's attention about the state of California (1850). Il-

linois Whig Edward Baker, after whom the Lincolns named their son Eddie, moved to California and then Oregon, where he was elected to the U. S.

**RE:** Although South Dakota historian Doane Robinson was the first to consider a possible historical monument in the Black Hills to draw many more



Mount Rushmore National Memorial ZPC-518

Senate. Lincoln's physician, Dr. Anson Henry; David Logan, son of Lincoln's second law partner; and Simeon Francis, editor of a Springfield, Illinois, newspaper--all moved to the new state of Oregon (1859). These friends kept Lincoln aware of political shifts in California and the Pacific Northwest. Other political friends, including several appointed to territorial slots, also kept Lincoln up-to-date on the West.

One needs to keep in mind that throughout his life Abraham Lincoln was a forward-looking man. As a young man, as a rising politician, and as president he often considered his and the country's future. For Lincoln, the American West was a large part of the nation's future. He wanted to help shape that future--and did.

No American president up to Lincoln's time, save perhaps for Thomas Jefferson (via the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition), provided as much shaping power on the West as Abraham Lincoln.

**SG: Please describe the concept of creating a presidential monument in South Dakota.**

tourists, sculptor Gutzon Borglum fathered the idea of making it a presidential memorial. Where Robinson, a western historian, wanted to celebrate the historical West in a South Dakota setting, Borglum wished to lionize national figures in a western location. Over time, the sculptor came to view the Mount Rushmore carvings as a "Shrine of Democracy."

The next month after Robinson contacted Borglum about the sculpting project in late summer 1924, Borglum visited the Black Hills, and almost overnight announced his plans for the huge venture. It must be a presidential site, the sculptor asserted, starting with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Later, he added Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt to the presidential quartet. Borglum grandiosely promised that his faces-in-the-sky project would entice the entire nation to Mount Rushmore.

A patriotic man with a strong attachment to conservative views of American history, Borglum was convinced that the four presidents, towering over other American leaders, must be memorialized. For Borglum. Lin-

coln dwarfed all other presidents, and the sculptor set out to prove his mountain-top regard for the sixteenth president. But the three other White House residents were extraordinarily worthy too: George Washington as a Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson as an expansionist, and Theodore Roosevelt as a sturdy, dependable leader. For fourteen years, from 1927 to 1941, Borglum set out to endow the presidential faces with his esteem for those leaders.

There is a danger in stressing too much the central role of Borglum in the Mount Rushmore story. True, his dreaming, energy, and never-stop actions are in all ways notable. Still, other important men stayed on the scene and worked through several conflicts with the contentious Borglum. The key figure as peacemaker and adjudicator was U.S. Senator Peter Norbeck of South Dakota. A supporter of Doane Robinson, Norbeck was willing to swing his backing behind Borglum's presidential project. Even more important, Norbeck, using his strong congressional connections, successfully lobbied several times for government funds that saved the project and kept it moving. On a few occasions, he spoke strongly and correctively to Borglum but most often backed the project, urged the congressional financing, and worked out several vitriolic contests between Borglum and others working on Mount Rushmore.

Mount Rushmore, now eighty years after its virtual completion, is emblematic of Gutzon Borglum's dream of a presidential monument dramatizing four notable American presidents. The crowds of American and international travelers visiting the site most often view the place as sacred to the American past.

#### **SG: How was the site chosen?**

**RE:** The selection of the Mount Rushmore monument site took a quick turn early on. Doane Robinson, a leading South Dakota historian and promoter for expanding the state's tourism, wanted to place images of noted western figures in the "Needles" area of spiked granite formations in the Black Hills. He planned to place sculptures of frontier characters such as Lewis and Clark, Sa-

cawaea, Buffalo Bill, and Red Cloud.

But when the strong-minded sculptor Gutzon Borglum was invited to consider the project and came to the Hills for a look-see, he immediately expressed a very different opinion of the site and possible sculptures. For Borglum, the figures ought to be national characters--such as leading presidents--and the site should be on the granite face of Mount Rushmore, a mountain that crested at nearly 6,000 feet.

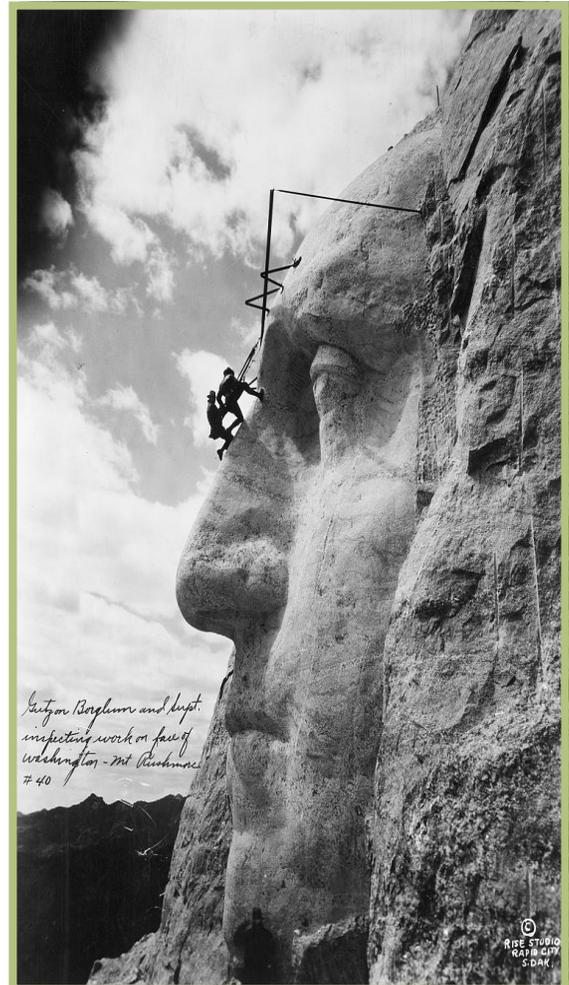
The Robinson and Borglum plans spawned more than a few emotional reactions. Some academics and journalists castigated the memorial ideas as "a desecration of the natural beauty of the [Black] Hills," and other critics said the carvings would "ruin" the scene. But Senator Peter Norbeck and U. S. Congressman William Williamson, both from South Dakota, supported the idea, thinking the monuments would be beneficial for the state and its tourism. The support of the state's congressmen, and the congressional funding they helped secure during the Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt presidencies, proved to be decisive. Without both the presidential support and congressional funding, the Lincoln and other presidential faces are likely to have never appeared on Mount Rushmore.

#### **SG: Please give a brief description of the life and work of Gutzon Borglum. How long did he work on Mount Rushmore?**

**RE:** Gutzon Borglum (1867-1941) was an extraordinary complex man. Born into a polygamous Latter-day Saint family, Borglum early on proved himself by launching a notable career as an artist and sculptor. He quickly established an escalating reputation with his artworks. Among many others, his statues of Genl. Phil Sheridan, labor activists Sacco and Vanzetti,

and the Mares of Diomedes (galloping horses) gained national attention.

From his youth, Borglum was fascinated with Abraham Lincoln. His Lincoln was a westerner, a man of the people. In 1908, he carved a large head of Lincoln that captured the interest of President Theodore Roosevelt, was purchased, and placed in the Rotun-



*Gutzon Borglum and spt. inspecting work on the face of Washington LC-USZ62-63648*

da of the Capitol. A few years later his seated Lincoln, tired but thoughtful, was placed near the courthouse of Newark, New Jersey, where it became a favorite site for children and adults to rest and reflect. Borglum also named his only son Lincoln. In 1915, Borglum had been hired to prepare a huge Confederate memorial spread across the rocky side of Stone Mountain in Georgia. Eventually, the venture blew up, but as Borglum worked on that project in the early 1920s, he enjoyed an ongoing reputation as one of the country's best-known sculptors.

After Borglum initially commenced carving on the George Washington and Thomas Jefferson faces on Mount Rushmore, he began to block out Lincoln's head in the late 1920s. With much-needed congressional funding, the carving on the sixteenth president moved on apace, with the Lincoln face officially dedicated on 17 September 1937.

Working with Borglum was daily difficult. Believing he was always right and could accomplish any task to which he set himself, he was stubborn, opinionated, and sometimes defiant. Still, he was a top-notch sculptor, always en-

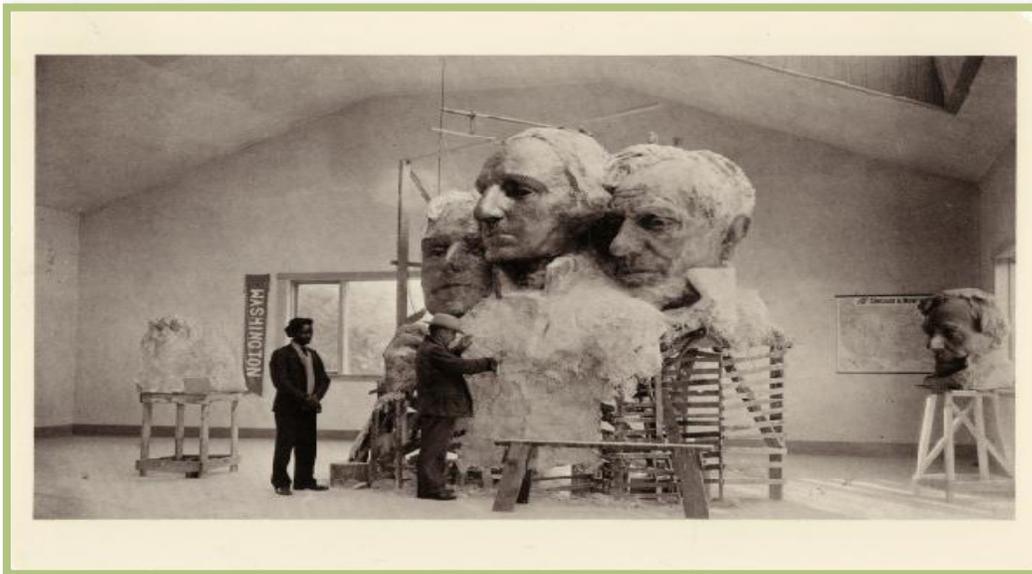
Each celebration, Borglum believed, proved the project's ongoing success.

The 1925 celebration launched the idea that became the Mount Rushmore monument. Borglum, now in charge, had hoped to attract President Calvin Coolidge to the dedication. When that did not happen, Borglum launched a splashy gathering, dramatically advertising the project and bringing in thousands of spectators. South Dakotans had been ambivalent respondents thus far about Mount Rushmore; in 1925, Borglum succeeded in turning public opinion toward a more positive direction. Two years later, President Coolidge,

Lincoln was Borglum's favorite president, and the sculptor set out to make the Lincoln dedication special. He considered Lincoln a "savior" and a "preserver of the Union" in Civil War times. Borglum worked long and extensively on Lincoln's face, making the sixteenth president's face and eyes reflect his strength and complexity. More than five thousand visitors came the dedication of Lincoln on 17 September 1937. In Borglum's bombastic dedicatory speech, he repeatedly praised Lincoln and the greatness of all the presidents.

On 2 July 1939, the presidential dedications were completed with a celebration of Theodore Roosevelt's face. Roosevelt was a favorite of several Mount Rushmore managers. About 12,000 attendees came to the dedication. Borglum spoke of Roosevelt as the embodiment of the West and symbolizing the completion of the monument.

The series of dedication celebrations worked as the monument planners hoped. The gatherings sparked increased attention, obtained important verbal support of political leaders, and, most important, gained financial support. Over time, federal government funding furnished \$836,000 of the total cost of \$989,000 for the memorial. Celebration gatherings and enthusiastic cheerleading led to needed and necessary dollars.



*Model of Mount Rushmore National Memorial 71.2009.083.3055*

ergetic and forceful. No Gutzon Borglum, probably no Mount Rushmore.

**SG: Please describe the official dedication of Mount Rushmore.**

**RE:** Completion dedications have always been important--and pragmatic--celebrations for public-funded projects. Such dedications signal to funders and tax-payers that projects are moving forward and likely worthy of additional support.

Mount Rushmore manager Gutzon Borglum acted on this belief, convinced that dedications would loosen additional purse strings. In fact, there were six dedications at Mount Rushmore: for the site itself (1925), the first carving (1927), George Washington (1930), Thomas Jefferson (1936), Abraham Lincoln (1937), and Theodore Roosevelt (1939).

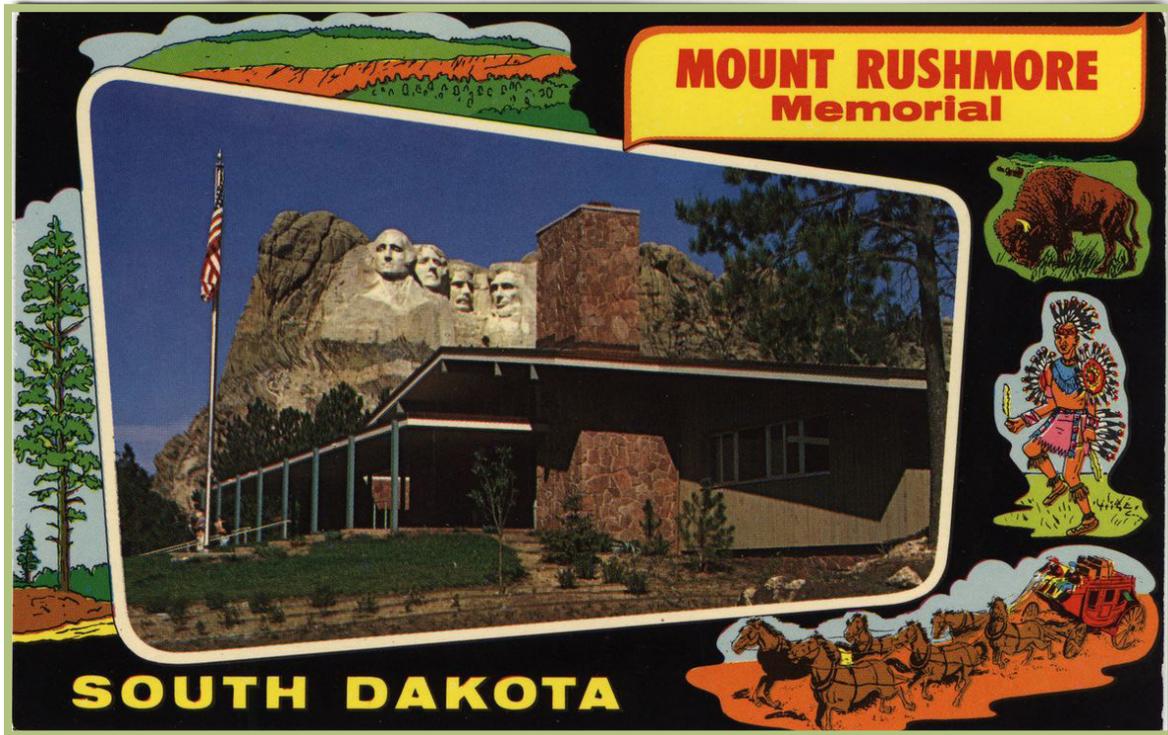
while summering in the Black Hills, spoke at an August 1927 gathering, warmly supporting the monument and encouraging the project managers to apply for government funding. Again, Borglum used the occasion well, gaining the president's support and applying for federal monies.

The George Washington dedication on 4 July 1930 was less dramatic. The celebration illustrated the presidential emphases on Mount Rushmore and the near completion of the first presidential face, but not much more. The Thomas Jefferson celebration on 30 August 1936 gathered more attention because President Franklin Roosevelt was present and spoke at the occasion. The president expressed his backing for the monument and urged another application for government funding.

**SG: What agency has responsibility for Rushmore today? Is there any sign of deterioration?**

**RE:** The National Park Service was put in charge of the Mount Rushmore project in 1933, and then after a gap in its administration, was reassigned to the site in 1939. The Park Service has directed the project since that time.

The Park Service has done an admirable job in keeping the Mount Rushmore National Memorial safe and up to date. It has added needed facilities, greatly enlarged parking, and expanded walkways, eating areas, and a museum section. They have also carefully watched the physical layout of the four faces, as well as the tourist facilities below. Among these watch-cares are maintaining scrutiny of the mountain rock formations to



Mount Rushmore Memorial ZPC-514

check on any granite shifts, filling developing cracks with the latest sealants, and providing monitors to check on the impact of shifting temperatures and other climate changes.

Lacking needed finances, the Park Service has not been able to complete all of Gutzon Borglum's dream for Rushmore. The sculptor had begun work on a Hall of Records behind the Lincoln face and wanted a finely carved staircase leading up to the faces. After Borglum's death in 1941, his son Lincoln took charge of the project, but World War II financial needs blocked more funding to totally complete Mount Rushmore. Besides the incomplete Hall of Records and staircase, the presidents' bodies were to have been carved down to their waists. That too has not happened.

Over time, several leaders and activists have spoken for an expansion of the monument. In the 1930s, women leaders, including Eleanor Roosevelt, pushed for the head of Susan B. Anthony to appear alongside the four presidential faces, to illustrate women's valuable leadership and contributions to American political life. Others have urged President Franklin Roosevelt as a worthy fifth president on the mountain. In 2020, when President Donald Trump spoke at Rushmore, some of his strongest supporters called for placing his face next to Lincoln's.

The most serious and ongoing challenge for the National Park Service in administering Mount Rushmore is in handling the strong and continuing complaints of Indian speakers who claim Rushmore and the Black Hills were stolen from them. Native spokesmen point to the Hills as their territory as a result of the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1869) but that their sacred lands were plundered following the gold rush to the Dakotas in the 1870s and beyond. Since the carvings were begun in 1927, Dakota (Teton Sioux) leaders have especially criticized the desecration of their lands as evidences of racism and white supremacy. Over the years, Indian critics and protesters have continued to speak out against Rushmore. In the early 1970s, protestors invaded the park area. As late as 2020, the strong protests continued. Some activists go as far as to call for the destruction of Mount Rushmore. In 1980, the federal government, through a Supreme Court decision, offered more than \$100 million in recompense for the Black Hills, but the Sioux Nation rejected the offer, stating that the sacred Hills "could not be bought." The challenge of Indian rights concerning Mount Rushmore continues, with no easy agreement in sight.

Yet despite all the challenges and controversies, the Mount Rushmore memorial remains a popu-

lar tourist site--and sight--for most Americans. The National Park Service reports that between two and three million visitors come annually to see the presidential faces.

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Think of a few ways we have celebrated the greatness of Abraham Lincoln. First, the nearly 17,000 books about him and the 60,000 volumes about the Civil War in which Lincoln is often a central character. Second, the reconstructed historical Lincoln homes in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois and other historical sites in Washington, D. C. Third, the museums and libraries dedicated to Lincoln. Fourth, the monuments such as that in Springfield, Illinois, and the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital. The great Lincoln films such as Robert E. Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) and Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* (2012). Gutzon Borglum's gigantic sixty-foot high Lincoln head on Mount Rushmore belongs with these classic interpretations of Lincoln. It provides a unique view of Abraham Lincoln, including a reference to and a celebration of his western legacies.

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