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Lincoln Updates

2020 LINCOLN FORUM

Online via Zoom

Saturday, November 14

10 AM-5 pm ET

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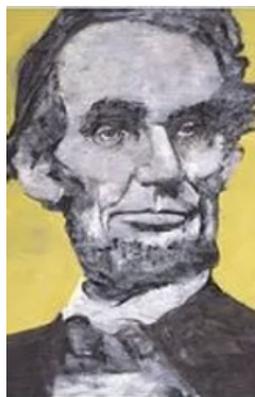
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www.TheLincolnForum.org

Featuring

H. W. Brands, Edward Achorn, Ted Widmer
With Caroline Janney, Manisha Sinha, Tamika Nunley,
Kathryn Harris, Catherine Clinton, William C. Davis, Craig
L. Symonds

And Interviews by Harold Holzer, Jonathan W. White,
Frank J. Williams



LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD COTTAGE

Experience the Life of the Young Lincoln Family

The Abraham Lincoln Association invites you to an exciting new venture, reconstruction of Lincoln's Springfield Cottage. The Cottage will replicate the house purchased by the Lincolns in 1844. The Cottage will provide the setting to experience the Lincolns' life at the time, to research and interpret history, and to participate in period events and activities. Follow the project at www.AbrahamLincolnAssociation.org and on Facebook. We invite you to become partners in donating to the project and in taking part in the many opportunities it is creating now and for the future.

On the Cover

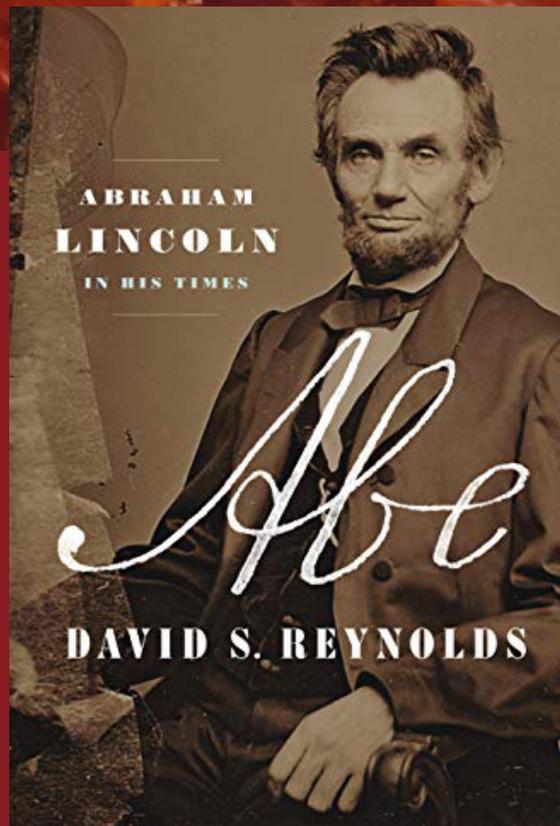
Harrison's Columbian Perfumery, Philadelphia, advertising card using Anthony Berger's photograph of Abraham Lincoln and Tad. Part of the Lincoln Family Album (LFA-0110). See more on page 14 in "From the Collection."

Interview with David S. Reynolds

Regarding His New Book

Abe:

Abraham Lincoln in His Time



Sara Gabbard: You excel in putting historical figures into the context of their times. In terms of date of birth, Abraham Lincoln was born on the cusp between Enlightenment and Romanticism. Were there traces of both in his life?

David Reynolds: He was shaped by both movements. From the Enlightenment, he derived his interest in reason, inventions, mathematics, and free thought. Several people remarked that reason was his preeminent quality. William Herndon wrote, "His reason ruled despotically all other faculties and qualities of his mind. His conscience and heart were ruled by it. His conscience was ruled by one faculty— reason. His heart was ruled by two faculties— reason and conscience."

Enlightenment rationalists had put a high premium on inventions and mathematics. Lincoln is the only president who has a patented invention—a method of lifting boats above shallow places with inflatable bags. Although in his rudimentary schooling he didn't get beyond basic algebra, he spent time in adulthood learning geometry. During his long trips on the Illinois law circuit, he brought along works by the geometrician Euclid. In time he mastered the propositions— all 173 of them—contained in the first six books of Euclid's *Elements*. Euclid's principle of the equality of angles and sides of certain figures gave solid basis to Lincoln's famous "proposition" of human equality at Gettysburg.

There was a sharply skeptical side of Enlightenment thought that also influenced him. Several of the founding fathers—Jefferson, Franklin, Thomas Paine, and others—were Deists, or rationalists who placed all religions on the same level, arguing that they all were man-made systems constructed out of fear of the unknown. In this view, the *Bible* was not supernaturally inspired but was rather a sound moral guide. This was Lincoln's view too, especially early on. When he was in his 20s in New Salem, Illinois, he wrote "a little Book on Infidelity" in which he attacked the supernatural underpinnings of the *Bible*, such as the Virgin Birth, the miracles of Christ, and the Resurrection. A friend found the book so controversial that he threw it into the fire, aware of the opprobrium it would bring upon Lincoln. As attracted as he was to Enlightenment rationalism, Lincoln also appre-

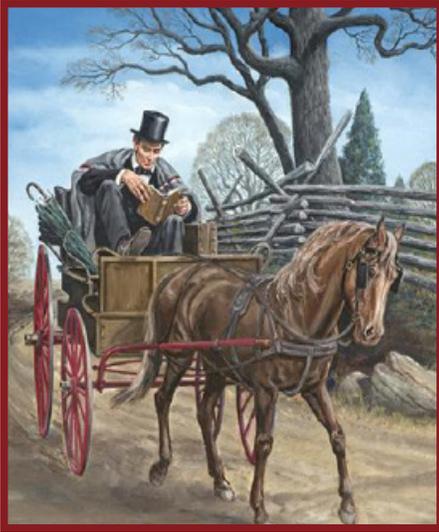
ciated the themes of 19th century Romanticism. He shared with Poe, one of his favorite writers, an interest in the darker side of human nature, which was a preoccupation of some of the Romantic writers. Given to bouts of depression, Lincoln wrote a moving poem on suicide, which was published in an Illinois newspaper in 1838. Two later poems that he wrote, "My Childhood Home I See Again" and "The Bear Hunt," were also portraits of the irrational. The childhood poem in particular dwells on the madness of one of Lincoln's childhood friends, Matthew Gentry, who suddenly went insane and tried to kill his parents and himself. This is dark Romanticism of the Poe variety. Also like other Romantics, Lincoln meditated on death and transience. His favorite poem was William Knox's "Mortality," a long string of quatrains that expand on the theme that every human being, from the weakest to the strongest, poorest to richest, meets the same end: death. He also liked a similar death poem, William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis," and his favorite song was the nostalgic "Twenty Years Ago" about a man and a friend visiting childhood haunts that have totally changed over time. Lincoln was obsessed by this idea of time passing, which is one reason why he loved the dark passages in Shakespeare, such as "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow/creeps in its petty pace from day to day," full of "sound and fury/signifying nothing."

There was an optimistic side to Romanticism that shaped Lincoln as well. Romanticism's belief in human perfectibility fed into his conviction that both society and individuals could improve; its intensely democratic spirit nurtured his faith in the common man; its benign view of religion lay behind his belief in brotherhood and charity. But he rejected the Romantic idea that there was a higher law that transcended human laws. Lincoln was a pragmatist who clung to statute law and the Constitution. As president, he sought to establish a constitutional foundation for even his most controversial actions, such as suspending habeas corpus.

SG: In your research, did you find things about Lincoln that you either didn't know...or that made you say: I never thought of it that way?

DR: I found out plenty of things about Lincoln I didn't know. In the largest sense, I discovered how extraordinarily responsive Lincoln was to his surrounding culture. The standard view is that Lincoln, born in a log cabin, with undistinguished parents and less than a year of formal schooling, rose to the pinnacle of power through hard work, intelligence, political shrewdness, and a good amount of luck. David Herbert Donald in his well-known biography of the president typically portrays Lincoln as the quintessential self-made man, who displayed "enormous capacity for growth, which enabled one of the least experienced and poorly prepared men ever elected to high office to become the greatest American president." Stating that his is "a biography written from Lincoln's point of view," Donald argues that Lincoln "was only indirectly connected with the economic and social transformations of the period." Some version of this single-handed climb from primitiveness to greatness narrative informs other biographies as well. In this view, nineteenth-century America offered few nurturing materials.

In working on my book I discovered that Lincoln, far from distanced from his time, was thoroughly immersed in it. His contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that Lincoln was the "most remarkable example" of "a great style of hero" who "draws equally all classes, all the extremes of society, till we say the very dogs believe in him." When Lincoln entered the presidency, he was neither inexperienced nor unprepared. To the contrary, he redefined democracy precisely because he had experienced culture in all its dimensions— from high to low, sacred to profane, conservative to radical, sentimental to subversive. Like every culture, Lincoln's had its time-specific phenomena that were strongly influential at the moment but then were largely forgotten by later generations. New England Puritans versus Southern Cavaliers; the backdrop of Oliver Cromwell versus Charles I; Daniel Boone; the Crockett almanacs; Quakerism; the new sermon style; intemperate temperance reformers; Phineas T. Barnum; popular songs like "Home Sweet Home" and "Dixie"; British and American poetry; ministers like Theodore Parker; the higher law; John Brown; the tightrope artist Charles Blondin; the working-class figure known as the b'hoy; the drillmaster Elmer Ellsworth and his Zouaves; the military strategist and political pamphleteer Anna Ella Carroll; the hu-



Lincoln Riding the Circuit 71.2009.081.0493

mor character Petroleum V. Nasby; the retailored Thanksgiving and Christmas; the American acting style; the writings of Thoreau, Robert Burns, and Harriet Beecher Stowe—these and other cultural markers are crucial for understanding many aspects of Lincoln's life. My book describes such previously neglected contexts and their significance for Lincoln.

SG: Was Lincoln a successful lawyer?

DR: He was involved in more than 5,000 cases between 1836, when he took up the law, and 1860, when he ran for the presidency. Herndon and others called him an excellent case lawyer who was, however, uninterested in deep study of law books. Lincoln's common sense put him in good stead to succeed in court cases, which he did more often than not. He had such an expansive vision that he would study the opponent's case just as closely as he studied his own; that way he always felt prepared in court. "When I have a particular case in hand," he explained, "I love to dig up the question by the roots and hold it up and dry it before the fires of the mind." Once he was in court, he used the various performance tools that were his forte: rational persuasion, storytelling, and humor. He was not above telling a sentimental story to sway the emotions of his listeners, and in the next breath he could drop an off-color joke that would have the court in stitches. Court cases were popular entertainment in that day, and the little towns and villages that Lincoln and his associates visited in their bi-annual riding on the circuit came out in droves to witness trials, which were often noisy and raucous affairs. Lincoln knew how to play a crowd, and he put both his reason and his wit to good use as a lawyer. He was also very fair. He divided the money that he earned with his law partner Herndon, even though Herndon's role in most cases was not as important as

his. He made a good living as a lawyer, but he never gouged his clients and in fact was accused by fellow lawyers for holding fees down by charging lower-than-normal prices for his services. He was the opposite of ambulance chasers today who want clients to sue just to make money. He advised aspiring lawyers to "discourage litigation." He insisted that no one was "more nearly a fiend" than the lawyer who tried "to stir up litigation." His sterling sense of honor led him to declare that "a moral tone ought to be infused into the profession" of law. He went so far as to advise against taking up the law if it meant sacrificing one's honesty. He wrote, "If in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation" rather than "consent to be a knave."

SG: Is there evidence of the feelings of the Todd family towards Mary's husband?

DR: When the Todd family first met Lincoln in the 1830s, some of them recoiled from what they regarded as his crude ways. The Todds, stemming from a wealthy, respectable family of slaveholders in Lexington, Kentucky, kept up their upper-class lifestyle when some of them moved to Springfield, Illinois. They lived in a large home on what was known as Aristocracy Hill. One of them, Elizabeth Todd Edwards, warned her sister, Mary Todd, against getting involved with the low-born, ungainly Lincoln. Elizabeth reportedly tried to break up the relationship for two years. She recalled, "I warned Mary that she and Mr. Lincoln were not suitable. Mr. Edwards and myself believed they were different in nature, and education and raising....They were so different that they could not live happily as man and wife." But Mary Todd, who had vowed since childhood that she would someday marry a man destined for the presidency, saw great potential in the honorable, ambitious Lincoln, and she rejected a rival for her affection, Lincoln's perennial opponent Stephen A. Douglas.

There's evidence that Mary's father, Robert Smith Todd, appreciated Lincoln. Although the two men were not close, they respected each other—not the least because of their shared admiration for Robert Todd's friend Henry Clay. After the birth of his namesake, Robert Todd Lincoln, Mary's

father visited Springfield—something he never did for his three other married daughters in Illinois. He gave the Lincolns \$200 a year until his death, and he supplied Mary an additional \$120 annually for her own use. He bought a large land lot for the couple south of Springfield that Mary sold in 1854 for \$1,200, and he had his son-in-law represent him in recovering a small debt and let him keep the amount he collected.

SG: Can Thomas Lincoln be labeled a subsistence farmer? Was he a fairly typical pioneer? Has history treated him fairly?

DR: History has not treated Thomas Lincoln fairly. He is normally presented as a lowly, ignorant rube who was lazy, unambitious, and resistant to the young Abe's penchant for reading. Several biographies of Lincoln use his father as the bogeyman against whom Lincoln vigorously rebelled. The facts, however, say otherwise. Tom Lincoln was known as a solid, upstanding, honest man who provided for his family even in hard times, such as the economic downturn that succeeded the panic of 1819. Farmers and carpenters like Tom Lincoln were actually in good shape during recessions, since they lived off the land anyway. During those periods, Tom had a subsistence lifestyle.

Biographers sometimes quote Lincoln's phrase "I used to be a slave" to suggest that he felt terribly oppressed by his father, who put him to work on the farm in various activities. But that was par for the course on the frontier in that era. Social historians have shown that all members of a frontier family except toddlers were expected to contribute to the family's survival. A young man was expected to work for the family until he became independent at 21. By the time the family moved to Illinois, Tom Lincoln did settle into a rather indolent lifestyle that made some people compare him to poor white trash. He did not visit Lincoln or his wife while they were in Springfield, and Lincoln did not go to see his father when he was dying in 1851. But it's wrong to paint a portrait of complete estrangement between the father and the son. Certainly in the earlier part of his life, in Kentucky and Indiana, Lincoln had good reason to respect his father. When he described his past to the lawyer Leonard Swett, he "told the story of a happy childhood....His own description of his youth

was that of a joyous, happy boyhood.”

SG: Did you use William Herndon as a source? Is he reliable...or is he simply “the only one we have?”

DR: William Herndon, who was Lincoln’s law partner in Springfield for nearly two decades, got to see Lincoln up close in many different circumstances. He stands as a valuable witness to Lincoln’s life. To some degree, he is an unreliable source. After Lincoln’s death, he came into sharp conflict with Mary Todd Lincoln. The two had never been close. Mary was repelled by Herndon’s alcoholism, and the relationship became toxic in 1866, when Herndon shocked the world by saying that Lincoln had never loved Mary but instead had always been devoted to the memory of Ann Rutledge, the young woman he had courted while living in New Salem in the 1830s until her untimely death in 1835. There’s now general agreement that Herndon overstated Lincoln’s preference of Ann to Mary. Yes, Lincoln had loved Ann Rutledge, and on some level stayed in love with her, but he was also in love with and deeply committed to his wife, who, despite her quirks, remained fiercely loyal to him and a bastion of support in his political career.

Another of Herndon’s overstatements relates to Lincoln and religion. Herndon insisted that Lincoln was an agnostic, possibly an atheist. While it’s true that Lincoln never joined a church and disbelieved in creeds and doctrines, he was by no means an atheist. He believed that human affairs were in the control of a God who remained unknowable yet all-powerful. He read the *Bible* regularly and memorized a number of its passages. He issued a total of nine public proclamations of prayer, fasting, or thanksgiving during his presidency, and he even considered the idea of adding God to the Constitution by an amendment. It was under Lincoln that the words “In God We Trust” were first stamped on American coins.

On many issues, however, Herndon is an invaluable source. In the years immediately following Lincoln’s assassination, Herndon took it upon himself to interview scores of people who had known Lincoln from an early age—relatives, friends, associates in law and politics. Herndon in many cases got written reminiscences from these people, and at other times took scrupulous notes

during interviews with them. The result of his research is a book that has been published in recent times as *Herndon’s Informants*, edited by Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis. Because many of Herndon’s interviewees were recalling Lincoln from the retrospective vantage point of several decades, their comments cannot always be taken at face value. But if you read through *Herndon’s Informants* you do get a detailed, realistic composite portrait of the young Lincoln and his evolution. Then, too, the three-volume biography written by Herndon and Jesse Weik in the late 1880s is another valuable source, one that contains a lot of information about Lincoln and his contemporary culture that was useful to me when I wrote my book.

All in all, William Herndon left a treasure trove of first-hand accounts that, along with other contemporary accounts—by witnesses like Lincoln’s law associate Henry Whitney, the journalist Noah Brooks, and the president’s wartime secretaries John Hay and John P. Nicolay—provide an ample body of evidence about Lincoln.

SG: You speak of the emergence of antislavery sentiments. Was Lincoln fairly typical of this movement....not a radical abolitionist but a man who gradually came to believe that slavery was wrong? Was he in step with sentiments in Central Illinois?

DR: Lincoln always loathed slavery, even from his early childhood. His parents had been members of an antislavery Baptist group that broke off from the regular Baptist Church in the area of Kentucky where Lincoln grew up. Lincoln probably also witnessed the horrors of slavery around him in Kentucky and later on when he traveled twice to New Orleans in a flatboat. In 1854, he said that he “hated slav-

ery . . . as much as any Abolitionist.” But in central Illinois, where he then lived, many voters were moderates who despised radical abolitionism. Lincoln thus denounced radicals who, in his words, “would shiver into fragments the Union of these States; tear to tatters its now venerated constitution; and even burn the last copy of the *Bible*, rather than slavery should continue a single hour.”

— a reference to the Garrisonians, who rejected the church, the Constitution, and the US government, all of which, they believed, supported slavery. Lincoln argued that, even though some of the founding fathers had been slave owners, the Constitution was fundamentally devoted to human rights, and the founders envisaged the ultimate extinction of slavery. He thought this process would be a slow one that might take a century. He emphasized that the abolition of slavery must take place within the electoral system that the founders had established. For this reason, he opposed those who called for immediate emancipation. He was a pragmatist, and he knew that uprooting so deeply entrenched an institution as slavery would be a torturous process. That’s why he and his fellow Republicans in the 1850s tolerated slavery where it already existed but stood firmly opposed to its spread into the Western territories. They wanted to contain slavery so that it would eventually die out like rotten fruit on the vine. For a time he supported colonization, or the removal of black people to Liberia or elsewhere. But he realized that this program was impractical and unlikely, and he eventually abandoned it.

Personally, he was on familiar terms with many black people. African Americans such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Delany described him as the least prejudiced white person they had ever met. He ended up leading a war that began as one to preserve the Union but increasingly became one to end slavery. Despite fierce right-wing criticism, he intensified the antislavery war after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. By 1864 he was firmly dedicated to amending the Constitution so that it abolished slavery altogether. He was the first president to publicly support the vote for African Americans.



William Herndon LN-0718

All told, despite his long period of public reticence on slavery, he was truly progressive, and without him slavery would not have disappeared as soon as it did.

SG: What was his relationship with his son Robert?

DR: Lincoln and his wife had a relaxed attitude toward parenting. They weren't big on physical punishment or severe reprimands. Lincoln once described Robert (known as Bob or Bobby) as "a little rascal" who over time became "a very decent boy." Lincoln was right about Bob's youthful rascality. Bob came to be known among other children as the "head of pranks." Once he and a few friends tried to reproduce animal tricks they saw at a circus by going into the Lincoln barn and attempting to train dogs to stand on their hind legs and bark, the way the circus lions roared. When all else failed, the boys looped ropes around the dogs' necks and suspended the animals from rafters. A neighbor heard a ruckus and ran to Lincoln in his law office. He rushed to the barn, scattered the boys, and cut down the dogs, two of which had died.

But Bob had a sober side, and he had to endure ridicule from his peers, who called him Cockeye or Cross-eyed Bob because of his condition of right esotropia, a form of strabismus in which the right eye turns inward (his father had left hypertropia, or an upward-turning left eye).

Once senses that during the Springfield years Robert felt distanced from his father, who travelled on the Illinois law circuit for more than half of each year. Bob recalled that his father "was almost constantly away from home." Also, Bob was occupied with his education. In 1853, he entered the preparatory academy of Springfield's newly formed Illinois State University and two years later became a freshman at the university. Al-



Robert Todd Lincoln LFA-0093

though he got better grades in math and science than in the humanities, he was, like his parents, an avid reader. In 1859, he took the entrance exam for Harvard but failed it, upon which his parents sent him to Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. After a year there, he was accepted into Harvard, where he graduated in 1864. He was away at college through most of the White House years.

This is not to say that the father and son were alienated from each other. In 1861, Robert was with his parents was on the historic train ride that Lincoln took from Springfield to Washington DC to assume the presidency. At the end of the Civil War, Robert wanted to join the Union army, and his father secured him a captaincy under Ulysses S. Grant. On April 14, 1865, the last day of Lincoln's life, the twenty-one-year-old Robert breakfasted with his father, to whom he described the surrender of Robert E. Lee to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, which Robert had witnessed.

Robert turned into a reserved, rather stuffy man. In the years after Lincoln's assassination, he became estranged from his mother. Appalled by what he considered her bizarre behavior, some of it associated with her spiritualist visions, he committed her in 1875 to a Batavia, Illinois, asylum, the upscale Bellevue Place, where she stayed uneventfully for four months. Robert, a lawyer and businessman, went on to serve as secretary of war under James A. Garfield and Chester Arthur and as an ambassador to England under Benjamin Harrison. He died at eighty-two in 1926 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

SG: How does President Lincoln rank as a Commander-in-Chief?

DR: If we take an overview of his performance during the whole Civil War, we can say that Lincoln was an excellent Commander-in-Chief. At the start of the war, he was a tyro, because his only previous military experience was a brief term serving in the Black Hawk war back in the 1830s. Largely

self-taught in military matters, he read numerous military handbooks and journals. He made some appointments that in retrospect seemed dubious. People in his time and ours wonder why he stuck so long with Gen. George B. McClellan, who failed famously in the Peninsula campaign and then did not reinforce general John Pope at Second Manassas. But though McClellan was often ineffective on the battlefield, he could inspire and train troops brilliantly. And so Lincoln retained McClellan, who at Antietam in September 1862 stopped Robert E. Lee's northward advance through Maryland. Lincoln was furious when McClellan did not pursue the retreating Lee, and he fired him. He went through a succession of other generals, including Ambrose Burnside and Fighting Joe Hooker, until he found the gritty warriors Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. It is to Lincoln's great credit that he gave Grant and Sherman, truly aggressive generals, great leeway in conducting the war according to their own strengths. He also distributed copies of General Order 100, the code of war fashioned by the military theorist Francis Lieber. In the code, Lieber called for a hard, unrelenting war aimed at emancipating America's enslaved millions while discounting the use of torture, poison, and wanton destruction of enemy property. Lieber's code in effect became Lincoln's code, as when the president favored hard war over what he dismissed as war fought "with elder-stalk squirts [that is, squirt guns], charged with rose water." Lincoln hired Gen. Henry Halleck as a military advisor but when Halleck lost nerve and leadership capabilities the president assumed many of his strategic duties. Always interested in inventions, Lincoln had an undying curiosity in new weapons, such as an early version of the machine gun known as the coffee mill gun. Unfortunately, many of the new weapons that attracted Lincoln's attention proved too expensive to produce during wartime, and so the large majority of field weapons for the U.S. Army were muskets, which were clumsy to load and fire. However, Lincoln pushed for the use of breech-loading rifles, which greatly facilitated the North's victory during the last year of the war. In military strategy, Lincoln wisely turned from concentrating on capturing enemy locations to overwhelming enemy troops at different locations simultaneously. This multi-pronged attack on Confederate forces

led eventually to the victory of the Union.

SG: Your favorite speech? Why? Please comment on his mastery of the English language.

DR: My favorite? What else? The Gettysburg Address. At 272 words, it is one of the shortest political speeches in history, but it is also one of the most suggestive. Its marvelous brevity shows that Lincoln was a master of what the neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux calls parsimony in art—that is, explaining much with little, finding a pattern in the midst of apparent disorder. In art, Changeux detects “a certain economy of means revealed as a bold line, a convincing brushstroke, a contrasting juxtaposition of colors, all creating sensory consonance, and endowing a work of quality with its own unique harmony.” The rhythmic sentences of the Gettysburg Address are literary brushstrokes that deliver timeless truths about human equality and justice.

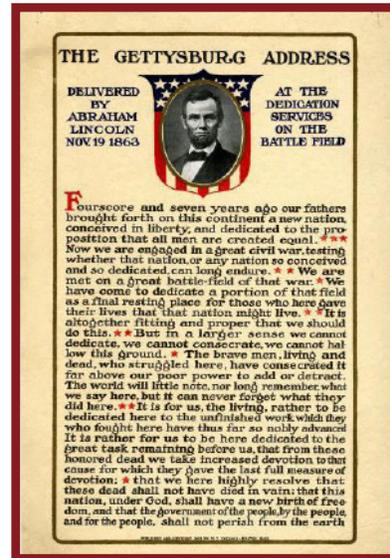
In his opening sentence Lincoln affirmed equality by fusing images of religion, the earth, and the body: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” The words “four score and seven years” directed nineteenth-century American culture’s impulse toward biblical rewriting into a phrase that updated Psalms 90:10: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow”—a biblical dictum that had appeared in Civil War sermons and speeches. In July 1861, Galusha Grow, the newly elected Speaker of the House, had declared, “Fourscore years ago, fifty-six bold merchants, farmers, lawyers and mechanics” had “met in convention to found a new empire, based on the inalienable rights of man.”

Lincoln’s next phrase—“our fathers”—revealed a key point Lincoln was making about the American past. He differed from many antislavery Northerners, for whom the nation’s original fathers were the *Mayflower* Pilgrims. For example, Lincoln’s friend Charles Sumner, whose Pilgrim ancestors included Plymouth Colony founder William Bradford, wrote a widely reprinted letter in which he insisted that there were two fundamental historical referents in America: the *Mayflower*, which carried “the Pilgrim Fathers, consecrated to Human Liber-

ty,” and the Dutch ship that carried nineteen slaves to Virginia around the same time. “In the holds of those two ships,” Sumner wrote, “lay the germs of the present direful war, and the simple question now is between the *Mayflower* and the slave ship. Who that has not forgotten God can doubt the result? The *Mayflower* must surely prevail.”

By contrast, Lincoln at Gettysburg wanted to implant the radically egalitarian principles of Revolutionary fathers deep in the national soil. The date he fixed as the nation’s Ur moment was neither 1620, when the *Mayflower* landed, nor 1787, when the Constitutional Convention met, but 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed. Lincoln’s phrase “brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty” anchored American liberty in the body and nature. (One reviewer, seeing sexual connotations in the words “conceived” and “birth of freedom,” mocked the address as “Obstetrics.”) The continent of the United States was a symbol of unbreakable unity for Lincoln, as in his 1862 message to Congress, where he called the continent “our national homestead,” which “demands union, and abhors separation.” By referring in the Gettysburg Address to liberty as “brought forth on this continent,” he grounded the very meaning of the United States in the indissoluble land itself. In a concise piece of earth-based rhetoric, Lincoln wiped out the rationale behind secession.

In the last phrase of the first sentence—“dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”—he used a word that established equality as a mathematical law. Lincoln had learned from Euclidian geometry that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. In his use of the Euclidian term “proposition” at Gettysburg, he presented a striking political syllogism: all humans are



Gettysburg Address 1.2009.081.1995

equal; blacks are human; therefore, blacks are equal to whites.

Although Lincoln made no explicit reference to race in the address, he did not have to. He had gone on record earlier in 1863 affirming that the military service of blacks proved that they were human. A conservative critic denounced the Gettysburg Address as a perverse announcement of racial equality. Objecting to “the introduction of Dawdleism [political partisanship] in a funeral sermon,” the writer called the address “an insult” to the Gettysburg dead and “a perversion of history so flagrant that the most extended charity cannot regard it as otherwise than willful.” The writer denounced Lincoln’s “proposition” of equality and declared that those who died at Gettysburg gave their lives for the Union, not for the rights of black people. The critic blasted Lincoln in racial terms: “How dared he, then, standing on their graves, misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare that negroes were their equals, or were entitled to equal privileges.”

In the thirty words of the Gettysburg Address’s opening sentence, therefore, Lincoln integrated the ideal of racial justice into the fabric of democratic America, which, as he had called it, was “the last best hope of earth.”

In the rest of the address, Lincoln continued to apply his long-standing oratorical strategies to making sense of the Civil War and its relation to the nation. His logical side emerged again in the sentence in which he said that the war was “testing” if “any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure.” If the nation’s survival was a test, it was one that must be pursued to an egalitarian solution by living Americans. First, however, he addressed those who died at Gettysburg. He simultaneously honored them and put them in the past. He had often uttered concepts in negatives (“A house divided against itself cannot stand,” “We must not be enemies,” etc.), and he did so here as well: “we can not dedicate—

we can *not* consecrate—we can *not* hallow— this ground [*italics added*].” The brave men who fought at Gettysburg did so “far above our poor power to add or detract.” Here Lincoln, who often utilized humility rhetorically, projected his humble persona on his Northern audience—the “we” with “our poor power.”

He then made the transition to the future: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.” That “cause,” as Lincoln had established in his first line, was human equality.

The cause, if attained, would bring about national regeneration. If Americans worked hard, “this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom,” so “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Lincoln’s image of a “new birth of freedom” revived the spirit of unified commitment that had brought political opponents together in the weeks just after Fort Sumter, when a journalist wrote, “Regenerated as by a new birth of freedom, and purified by trial, we shall emerge from the clouds which at present surround us to a career of glory and prosperity never dreamed of before.” It also caught the patriotic emotion of a New York Times reporter who had lost his son in the Battle of Gettysburg and had written, “Oh, you dead, who at Gettysburgh [*sic*] have baptized with your blood the second birth of Freedom in America, how you are envied!”

No fewer than twelve sources for the phrase “of the people, for the people, by the people” have been suggested. The most likely ones, given Lincoln’s preferences, were either Daniel Webster, who in his Second Reply to Hayne praised “the People’s Government; made for the People; made by the People; and answerable to the People,” or Lincoln’s favorite minister, Theodore Parker, in a sermon Lincoln was said to have marked in 1858: “Democracy is direct self-government, over all the people, by all the people, for the people.” Whatever its source, the final line made the democratic process timeless through its controlled language. Lincoln’s fluid trochees—“of the people, by the people, for the people”—gave wings to the rhythmically bumpy phrases of Webster and Parker. Turning their platitudes into poetry, Lin-

coln drove home his belief that the goal of human equality, proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence, could be approached only through a democratically elected government, as established by the Constitution. Democracy was holy for him. His speech invested democracy with religious meaning through words like “consecrated” and “hallow.” Nor can we forget the phrase he apparently added extemporaneously in the last line: “under God.” Since early in the war, he had made religious proclamations in order to foster cultural unity. At Gettysburg, cultural religion merged with personal faith.

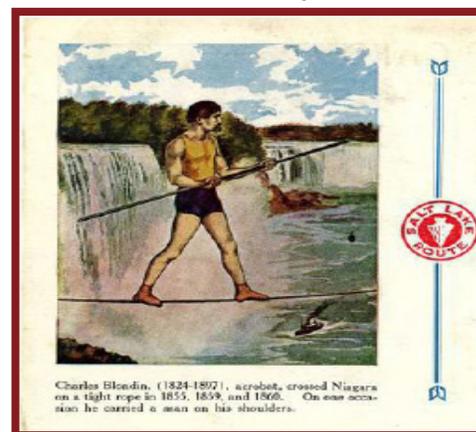
SG: Readers will be intrigued by two chapter titles....“The Isms and the Woolly Horse” and “Blondin, Barnum, and B’hoys.” Please explain.

DR: The collapse of the Whig Party in the early 1850s let loose what Lincoln called an array of “*strange, discordant, and even, elements,*” many of which slowly regrouped as the Republican Party. During the transition period, Democrats pilloried the emerging Republican Party as an amalgam of what one journalist called “the various isms and fanaticisms that have infected our country,” including nativism, women’s rights, socialism, spiritualism, prohibitionism, and what was branded as “negro worship.” The anti-ism argument was repeated by many Democrats who wanted to present the Republicans as dangerous fanatics. Lincoln responded to this charge by carefully distancing himself from radical movements that were associated with the isms. He unified his party by reducing its goal to stopping what he termed “Douglasism”—the Democratic Party’s effort, under Stephen A. Douglas, to open the way for the westward spread of slavery. “That ism,” Lincoln wrote, “is all which now stands in the way of an early and complete success of Republicanism.”

To highlight the Republicans’ supposedly Negrophile tendencies, Democrats seized on an unusual symbol they associated with them: the Woolly Horse. The showman Phineas T. Barnum, always on the lookout for curiosities, made a sensation when he exhibited a brown, curly-haired horse that the explorer John Frémont had allegedly captured in the West. When

Frémont became the Republican Party’s candidate for the presidency in 1856, his political enemies called him the Woolly Horse—woolly in the sense of being an abolitionist who defended black people. Soon the Republican Party was branded as the party of “Woolly Heads” who wanted to bring about a racial reversal in America by which African Americans would reign over white people. The Woolly label resurfaced in 1860, when Lincoln was the Republicans’ presidential candidate. One of Lincoln’s Democratic opponents typically said of the Republican Party that you might “simmer it down, and then dissolve it in a fluid, and all you could find would be ‘WOOLLY- HEAD, WOOLLY-HEAD,’” and that America should be “ready for disunion in the case of Lincoln’s election.”

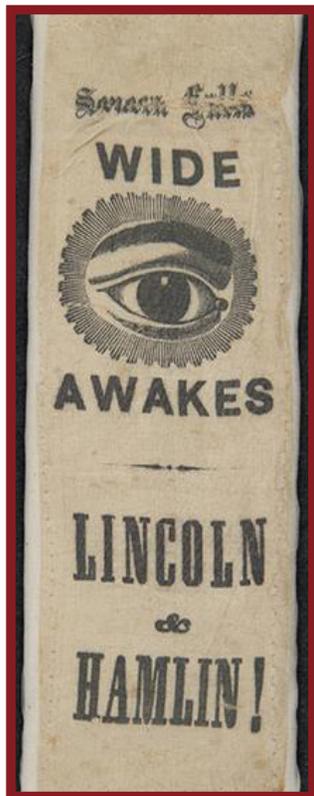
Actually, however, Lincoln maintained a moderate public stance on race and slavery that made him palatable to a large swath of Northern voters. He was compared to Charles Blondin, a famous tightrope artist whose daring crossings of Niagara Falls (sometimes while pushing a wheelbarrow or carrying a man on his back) provided a metaphor for Lincoln, who carefully maintained a



Dont Wiggle the Wire 71.2009.083.0496

balance between extremes in order to avoid inflaming the partisan passions of his divided culture. Cartoonists of the day often portrayed him as Blondin, poised in the middle between radical abolitionism on the left and conservatism on the right. Lincoln picked up the image and likened himself to Blondin, always balanced on a political tightrope.

Another important phenomenon of the 1860 election was the culture of spectacle created by the impresario P. T. Barnum. Lincoln’s opponents capitalized on his physical idiosyncrasies--his



Lincoln and Hamlin Campaign Ribbon
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swarthy complexion; unruly black hair; and long arms and legs—to compare him to Barnum’s chief exhibit that year, “What Is It?” a microcephalic black man who was billed as the missing link between apes and humans. Lincoln’s supporters, on the other hand, made much of his image as Abe the Illinois Rail-splitter. The rail-splitter craze began when a relative of his toted into a political convention in

Decatur, Illinois, two fence rails Lincoln had allegedly cut many years previously, when he was a frontiersman. Throughout the 1860 campaign, frontier images were everywhere. Republican parades and rallies featured rails, rail makers, log cabins, blacksmiths, and flatboats. People sent Lincoln frontier-related gifts: axes, mauls, wedges, pieces of rails and cabins, and the like—so many that his Springfield office became, in the words of John Nicolay, “a perfect museum” of curiosities.

The image of Abe as the rough common man held special appeal for young voters, who were then a large element of the electorate. Lincoln saw the crucial importance of winning what he called the “shrewd wild boys about town,” a reference to the so-called b’hoys, working-class men— butchers, wagon drivers, day laborers, and so on— who were always in a “muss” (a brawl) and ever ready to run with their “masheen” (a hand-drawn fire engine) to fight fires in fierce competition with other b’hoys companies. Dressed in colorful shirts and stovepipe hats (like Lincoln’s hat) and with hair cut short in back and waxed long in front (hence the nickname Soap Locks), the b’hoys, generically called Mose or Sikese, was unruly but good-hearted, loyal to his friends and to his g’hal, the working-class woman who walked with confidence and defiance. Although

unlearned, the b’hoys and g’hal were ‘cute (acute). They aped the tastes and manners of the upper class, and they enjoyed Shakespeare as much as they did melodramas or minstrel shows. Originating in urban street culture, the b’hoys had become a national figure when he merged with other masculine types. The journalist George Foster wrote in 1850, “The b’hoys of the Bowery, the rowdy of Philadelphia, the Hoosier of the Mississippi, the trapper of the Rocky Mountains, and the gold-hunter of California are so much alike that an unexpected hand could not distinguish one from the other.”

When Walt Whitman sought a national type from which to fashion the persona of the quintessentially democratic, he chose the b’hoys. Whitman’s description of himself as “one of the roughs”—swaggerer, idler, boaster—was patterned after the b’hoys, which explains why early reviewers dubbed him “Walt Whitman the b’hoys poet” and “the Bowery B’hoys in literature.” If Whitman tried to redirect the energy of the b’hoys in poetry, Lincoln did so in politics. Lincoln was aware that his Republican Party was at a disadvantage in winning over the “shrewd wild boys.” In the competition for the b’hoys and their ilk nationwide, the Democrats had taken an early lead. The popularity of Lincoln’s Democratic opponent Stephen A. Douglas resulted largely from his combative style, which was immensely attractive to the male voters who made up Young America. Feisty yet genial, the whiskey-swaggering, tobacco-chewing Douglas, known as “the favorite son of Young America,” used words as if he were engaged in a bare-fisted brawl or in an eye-gouging fight. A journalist remarked, “He appeals to the rowdy element, the wild types. Mr. Douglas and the b’hoys are similarly matched.”

In time, Lincoln succeeded in attracting Young America, formerly Democratic, to the Republican side. He declared in an 1859 speech, “We have all heard of Young America. He is the most current youth of the age.” Lincoln described an updated Young America, one “very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies.” Lincoln, in the persona of Abe the frontiersman, was a b’hoys writ large. If, as George Thompson wrote, the b’hoys had proliferated nationally as the Indiana Hoosier, the western

trapper, and other male types throughout the nation, Lincoln was, in the words of a campaign song, the rail-splitting “son of Kentucky, / The hero of Hoosierdom through; / The pride of the Suckers [Illinoisans] so lucky.” If the b’hoys loved both Shakespeare and minstrel shows, so did he. If the b’hoys was ill-educated yet shrewd, he brandished his lack of education. He earned great political capital from his identification with average Americans. His uncle Charles Hanks tried to shock the public when during the 1860 campaign he recalled Abe as “nothing more than a wild *harum scarum boy*,” and lazy to boot, but this combination of disorder and idleness held great attraction for young roughs.

And the roughs were ready to channel their energy into tightly focused action when he ran for president. This was the new Young America, pro-Lincoln and pro-Republican. The clubs that backed Lincoln had names in which “Wide Awake,” “Young,” and “Young America” were used interchangeably, as in rallies represented by the Young Men’s Lincoln Club, the Upper Alton Wide Awakes, and the Young America Lincoln Club of Alton. When organized as the Wide Awakes, these young Republicans, wearing long oilskin coats and carrying torches, formed huge nighttime parades holding placards and banners that read “Lincoln Against Slavery,” “Free Soil and Free Men,” and the like. Mass demonstrations by the Wide Awakes became a defining feature of the campaign to elect Lincoln and his running mate, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine.

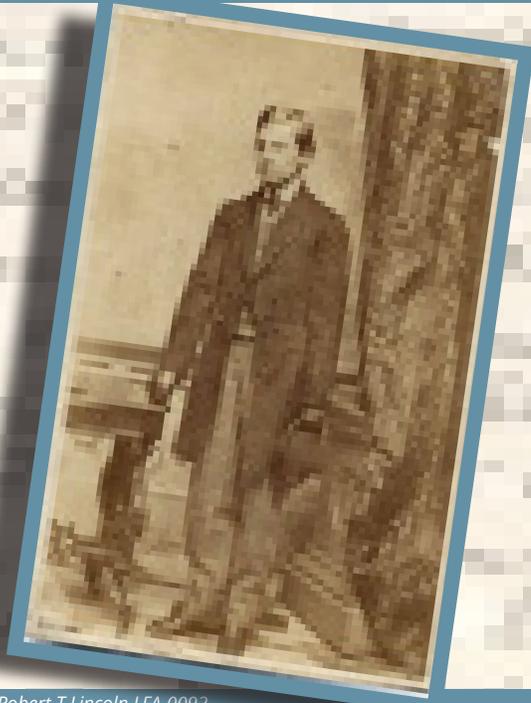
SG: What is your next project?

DR: I’ve begun to do research toward a book tentatively titled *My Mayflower Family: A Historical Memoir*. I’m descended from nineteen *Mayflower* passengers. The idea of the book is to explore these nineteen people—their lives, their beliefs, their social and political views—as case studies of the Puritan origins of America. I’ll intertwine my stories about them with reflections on my experiences as a child growing up in New England and, later, as a historian making ever-growing discoveries about the American past.

David Reynolds is Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He won the Bancroft Prize for Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography.

Robert Lincoln

Writes About the End of His Mother's Estrangement



Robert T. Lincoln LFA-0092
Mary Lincoln LFA-0496

Jason Emerson

One of the most common questions asked about the relationship between Mary Lincoln and her oldest son Robert is whether they ever reconciled after becoming estranged due to Mary's commitment to Bellevue Place Sanitarium in 1875. The answer is yes, but it took five years. I have previously written about Mary and Robert's relationship in an article included in the wonderful book *The Mary Lincoln Enigma*, edited by Frank J. Williams and Michael Burkholder. But a previously unknown letter recently has been found in the Library of Congress that adds a little more to the story.

The relationship between Mary and her oldest son Robert was, quite simply, one of the closest and most important of Mary's life. Robert was not only the first-born of the four Lincoln children, but, after the death of his little brother Eddie in 1850, six-year-old Robert became his mother's constant comfort and companion. Two more sons were subsequently born to the Lincolns, Willie and Tad, but Robert, older than his brothers by seven and nine years respectively, was some-

what apart from them. While Willie and Tad were best friends, Robert's natural companion, Eddie, was gone. Instead, his close companion at home became his mother. Mary and Robert shared many interests and activities in common. They both loved reading literature and poetry, they took piano lessons together, and shared a skill and interest in the French language, in which both were fluent.

During Robert's childhood and adolescence, when his father was constantly away from home riding the judicial circuit and making political appearances, Robert acted as his mother's social and intellectual companion, and also in many ways as her protector. When his father was gone Robert was the man of the house; he not only did the male chores, but also acted as an anodyne to his mother's emotionalism. Mary was a high-strung woman and suffered from many fears. Many of her terrors occurred at night, when she feared burglars, and when she was particularly afraid of lightning and thunderstorms. When Robert was a child and his father

was away, a local neighbor boy often would stay at the Lincoln home. As Robert grew older, he became the calming presence to his mother.

Robert left for college in 1860, but during the next four-and-a-half years, he became his mother's traveling companion. Mother and son both loved traveling, and whenever Robert had a break from college (at Harvard) he and Mary were usually on the road somewhere together. Robert met his mother during many of her trips to New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, where the two would not only spend hours together shopping in the most fashionable stores, but also entertaining with social, political, and military leaders. Mary also visited Robert at Cambridge when she could, at least once a year. Every summer mother and son spent one to two weeks traveling around New England on vacation: in August 1861 to Long Branch, N.J. for two weeks; in 1862 to New York City for one week; in 1863 to the White Mountains of New Hampshire for one week; and in 1864 from Boston to New York City to Manchester, Ver-

mont, for a total trip of about ten days.

Robert does not appear to have been a “mama’s boy,” but just a good companion to the mother he respected and the woman with whom he shared so much in common. After his father’s assassination in 1865, Robert derailed whatever plans he had as a 21-year-old man, and instead cut his Eastern ties and went with his mother and brother Tad to Chicago. When the fam-



Robert Todd Lincoln LFA-0087

ily first moved to Chicago in May 1865, Robert was not happy by the cramped accommodations at their hotel in Hyde Park. “I presume that I must put up with it, as mother’s pleasure must be consulted before my own,” he said.

Over the next ten years, Mary Lincoln considered her oldest son to be a blessing to her—in 1871 she called him “all that is noble and good”—and showered him with all the love and generosity she could. She loaned him money, postponed her European trip with Tad to attend Robert’s wedding to Mary Harlan in 1868, sent her son and daughter-in-law money and gifts from Europe, and as they were setting up their new house she told them to take and use anything of hers that was in storage in Chicago. Mary’s letters are filled with lavish praise over her son; and she more than once bestowed upon him the greatest

compliment during her widowhood she could give, such as when she declared in 1868, “Robert grows every day, more and more like his father.”

After Tad Lincoln died at age seventeen in 1871, Mary was distraught and depressed. She had now lost three sons and her husband, and felt like heartache and tragedy were to be her lot in life. “Ill luck presided at my birth,” she told her daughter-in-law, “certainly within the last few years it has been a *faithful attendant*.” Robert invited his mother to live with him and his wife, which she did for about six months, until the two Marys had a falling out in 1872. Mary spent the next three years living out of hotel rooms, traveling the U.S. visiting health spas and Spiritualist retreats.

By March 1875, Mary Lincoln was suffering from mental troubles including hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, and depression. The story of her insanity episode and trial is well known (and which I have written multiple books about), with the outcome being that she was declared insane and committed to Bellevue Place Sanitarium in May 1875. During the one-year period from May 1875 to June 1876, while Mary was judged legally insane and Robert acted as her conservator, their relationship bottomed out. By the time of Mary Lincoln’s second trial, in June 1876, during which she was declared “restored to reason,” she was so angry at Robert that she had threatened to kill him more than once. After the trial, she threatened to sue him for theft of her property (which he was storing for her) and to spread salacious stories about him in the newspapers.

When Mary was released she quickly fled to Europe in a self-imposed exile. Part of the reason she left America was because she could not stand the way everyone looked at her as if she was insane; but the main reason was that she feared her son would commit her again. Mary was gone for the next four years. She was so bitter over what her son had done that she refused to communicate with him, and even avoided writing his name, generally referring to him only as “RTL,” “that one,” or one of numerous epithets such as a “monster of mankind.” She credited her separation from Robert as contributing to her tranquility, writing in

1876, “I am allowed tranquility here and am not harassed by a demon.” Their estrangement was so thorough that in 1877 Robert even admitted to a correspondent that he did not know his mother’s address, only that she was “somewhere in Europe” and that “she has for unfortunate reasons ceased to communicate with me.”

While she was away, Mary ignored Robert, but continually sent gifts to her granddaughter, Mamie. Robert hoped this small connection meant that one day his mother would forgive him, telling his aunt, “I am very glad that she has sent the things to Mamie for it makes it seem probable that the time will come when her great animosity toward me will cease and I am very anxious that it should. Its existence has been very distressing to me.” But Robert knew that reconciliation would only come when his mother was ready. When his aunt Elizabeth Edwards suggested to Robert in 1879 that he send a letter to his mother to help repair the family breach, Robert replied, “I am afraid a letter from me would not be well received. If I could persuade myself otherwise, I would write to her at once and not think I was making any concession, for I have not allowed her anger at me to have any other effect upon me than regret that she should so feel and express herself towards me.”

It took two more years, but Mary and Robert’s reconciliation finally did occur in May 1881—after five years of estrangement. Mary was then living at the Edwards home in Springfield, after returning to the U.S. in October 1880 due to deteriorating health. She did not inform her son of her return. Robert was at that time President James A. Garfield’s secretary of war, and in mid-May left Washington for an official visit to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He stopped in Springfield on his way back to Washington, and spent an entire day with his mother at the Edwards home on Sunday, May 29.

No existing records show exactly how the meeting was arranged, but it is logical that Elizabeth Edwards set it up. She was the mother figure who understood her stubborn younger sister, and the matriarch who respected Robert and always regretted the mother-son rift. Elizabeth was in fact probably the only person who *could*



Elizabeth Todd Edwards LFA-0254

have brought them together. A few days after the visit, Robert wrote to his mother's friend Sally Orne, "Just arriving from the west I find your kind letter of Sunday. That day I spent with my mother in Springfield where she is with her sister, Mrs. Edwards. The reports you have seen about her are exaggerated very much. She is undoubtedly far from well and has not been out of her room for more than six months and she thinks she is very ill. My own judgment is that some part of her troubles is imaginary."

For the rest of Mary's life, Robert (usually with his family) visited his mother every few weeks; when Mary stayed in New York City for medical treatment from October 1881 to March 1882, she saw her son every week. Robert and his wife also worked diligently behind the scenes in Washington in 1881 to get Mary Lincoln's government pension increased from its original \$3,000 to \$5,000 — the amount Lucretia Garfield was given as a pension after her husband's murder. Mary Lincoln died of a stroke on July 16, 1882. Robert was informed that his mother was critically ill only that morning and immediately began arranging his affairs in the War Department so he could leave Washington that night and be in Springfield with his mother by Tuesday morning. He asked his relatives to send him hourly updates on his mother's condition. Before he

could leave Washington that night, however, he received a telegram informing him that his mother had died.

Robert, assisted by his aunt Elizabeth, planned his mother's funeral and traveled to Springfield for the event. Shortly after returning to Washington from Springfield, Robert received a condolence letter from Lucretia Garfield, the widow of Robert's former boss when he was Secretary of War, President James A. Garfield. Robert's response, only recently discovered in the Lucretia Garfield papers at the Library of Congress (which have for decades been stored off-site), includes previously unknown comments by Robert about his reconciliation with his mother, as well as a reference to the assassination of President Garfield, at which Robert was present in July 1881:

Washington, July 30, 1882

Dear Mrs. Garfield,

Many thanks for your kind letter which I found on the return from the funeral of my mother. Her death was very sudden and unexpected to me but it was a painless release from much mental and bodily distress. I have a great satisfaction that a year ago I broke down the personal barrier which her disturbed mind had caused her to raise between us, so that in the end her estrangement had ceased.

I am sorry to tell you that my wife is far from well. She has been in Colorado but is now here hardly able to leave the house. I am anxiously waiting for an opportunity to take her away again from our oppressive weather. She desires to join me in the warmest expression of remembrance and regard to you and the children.

The anniversary of the long and anxious days of last summer make us think of you very often and of how full of sad recollection they must be to you.

*Believe me
My dear Mrs. Garfield*

*Sincerely yours
Robert T. Lincoln*

For the next 44 years, Robert Lincoln wrote only a handful of letters (of which posterity is aware), that referenced his mother's mental condition, but none are known to exist that explain or even mention how mother

and son reconciled that spring Sunday in 1881. The only tantalizing clue to more details that historians have to agonize over is an 1890 letter from Henry White in which he told his wife that Robert Lincoln had unburdened his sorrows to him, including things about his late mother. This unburdening came right after the funeral of Robert's 16-year-old son Jack, who died of blood poisoning in London while Robert was the American minister to Great Britain. White was Robert's assistant, and urged him to take a walk after the funeral. "He has been telling me how all his interest in the law business was for Jack's sake only, and to keep the place open for him," White wrote. "He also told me a lot about his trouble with his mother, and seemed generally most confidential." Unfortunately, White did not detail in that letter or any other that has ever been found exactly what Robert told him about his mother.

True to his statements, Robert did not appear to hold any ill feelings against his mother for the rest of his own life. He followed all of her pre-written wishes for her funeral and burial, and a few days later had her casket secretly removed from the Lincoln tomb and buried in the basement next to the hidden casket of his father to prevent potential theft (as was attempted of Abraham Lincoln's body in 1876) and to make sure they were together. Robert spent years thwarting the publication of articles about his mother's mental illness (to protect not only her reputation, but also his father's and his own, no doubt), and encouraged and assisted in the family-approved — and first published — biography of his mother, written by his cousin Katherine Helm and published in 1928. When Robert died in 1926, he believed he would be buried in the Lincoln family tomb in Springfield, Illinois, to spend eternity with his parents, younger brothers, and, eventually, his own wife and children. Robert's widow changed the plan and had her husband buried in Arlington National Cemetery instead. But that is another story.

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

From the Collection:

Abraham Lincoln and His Son, Tad

Variations on Anthony Berger's photograph of Tad Lincoln and his father absorbed in a book constitute by far the most common image of Tad in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, with well over 150 examples. Even in the Lincoln Family Album, the personal photographs of the Lincoln family, there are multiple versions, including a cased image, an advertising card and ten *cartes-de-visite* showing Adam B. Walter's composite family portrait from 1865 incorporating the Berger photograph. It is not difficult to see the appeal of this image, especially at a time when so many families were suffering loss and absence.

The original photograph was taken at Mathew Brady's Washington, DC, studio on February 9, 1864. The sitting was organized by the painter Francis Carpenter and produced several enduring images of the president, used on currency and stamps. This highly personal picture was captured after the photographers noted Lincoln and Tad looking through an album of Brady photographs.

The photographs from the session were quickly disseminated by the Brady studio. Lincoln, aware of the power of photographs to help shape his public image, knew that these would immediately be public. He expressed concern, reported by journalist Noah Brooks, that the ornate volume might be misrepresented as a Bible.



Currier & Ives, *President Lincoln at Home, Reading the Scriptures to his Wife and Son*, lithograph, New York, 1865.



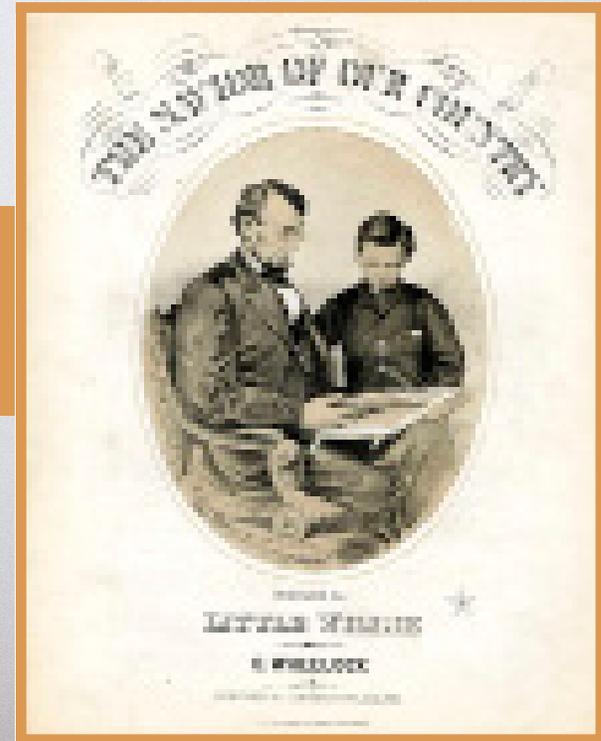
Lincoln knew his audience, and the demands of the marketplace, well. After his assassination, the photograph became ubiquitous, on its own and incorporated into dozens of prints of the Lincoln family, including J.C. Buttre's 1867 engraving of Carpenter's painting. The image was often transposed into a domestic setting, providing solace and an idealized vision of Lincoln for a public mourning their national and personal losses. The alterations and captions emphasize these qualities: Lincoln as a father, Lincoln within the family circle, Lincoln at home, Lincoln with his boy, and, as Lincoln foresaw, reading the Scriptures. Even Berger made these changes, going so far as to detail that Lincoln was reading to Tad from the prophet of Isaiah. On sheet music, Tad became his brother Willie, emphasizing the theme of familial loss.

Susannah Koerber

Chief Curator and Research Officer
Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites



J.C. Buttre, *The Lincoln Family in 1861*, mezzotint after the painting by Francis Carpenter; New York, 1867.



O. Wheelock and James W. Porter, *The Savior of Our Country, "Dedicated to Little Willie,"* John Marsh, Philadelphia, 1865.



"The Death of Lincoln" from *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War*, Volume 2; Harper & Brothers, New York, 1868.



Anthony Berger, *President A. Lincoln Reading the Bible to His Son*. Photographed and retouched by Berger; published by W. Schaus, New York, 1866.

The image of father and son together has continued to appeal far beyond the period following Lincoln's death. It appeared frequently during the 1909 centennial of Lincoln's birth and in subsequent decades. The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company distributed copies of the Emily Sartain print based on the Berger photograph, and in 1936, commissioned an oil painting by Frederick Mizen of Lincoln and Tad, adapting the Berger pose for a more informal with a livelier rendition of Tad. In 1984, it graced a 20-cent stamp, with the caption "A Nation of Readers," combining the domestic appeal with Lincoln's well-known love of books.

Lincoln's Clemency:

The Policy Limits

Burrus M. Carnahan

Abraham Lincoln has a well-deserved reputation as a merciful man who liberally exercised his presidential pardoning power. John Hay was "amused at the eagerness with which the President caught at any fact which would justify him in saving the life" of a condemned man. Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt, his chief advisor on military trials, remembered that in every case Lincoln "always leaned to the side of mercy. His constant desire was to save life."

There were exceptions. Hay observed that Lincoln "was only merciless in cases where meanness or cruelty were shown." Holt recalled that he was always "prompt to punish ... outrages upon women." The most famous case where Lincoln refused clemency was that of Captain Nathaniel Gordon, convicted in 1861 and sentenced to hang for engaging in the African slave trade. Operating a slave ship would commonly be understood to involve "meanness [and] cruelty." But might other factors have entered into Lincoln's decision? No other slave ship captain had been executed before him; earlier presidents had always commuted death sentences for that crime. The decision to withhold clemency sent a clear signal that the new Republican administration would take a hard line on slave traders.

Captain Gordon's trial and execution have been thoroughly covered by author Ron Soodalter, and will be mentioned again only in passing. This article will instead focus on three other cases where Lincoln refused to grant

clemency, and will seek a pattern to his decisions. These incidents displayed little or no evidence of meanness or cruelty and none involved sexual assault. The first of these incidents may be the least serious to those involved, since it did not involve the death penalty, but it does illustrate Lincoln's approach to clemency decisions in key cases.

I. Major Key

On the evening of September 25, 1862, eight days after the battle of Antietam, Abraham Lincoln rode from the White House to his cottage at the Soldiers' Home, accompanied by his secretary John Hay. During the ride, the president told Hay he had learned of a disturbing rumor. According to Hay's diary, "he said he had heard of an officer who said they did not mean to gain any decisive victory" at Antietam, "but to keep things running on so that the army might manage things to suit themselves." If such language had been used, Lincoln thought the officer's "head should go off."

By the next day the president had learned the details of the incident. The officer in question was Major John J. Key of General-in-Chief Henry Halleck's staff. Key made the offending statements in conversation with Major Levi C. Turner, a military lawyer (Judge Advocate) assigned to investigate persons in the Washington, D.C., area suspected of discouraging enlistments, making disloyal statements, or in any other way giving aid and comfort to the enemy. The president confronted Key with the accusation

in writing and offered him the opportunity to defend himself personally.

"Washington. Sep. 26. 1862

"Sir:

"I am informed that in answer to the question "Why was not the rebel army bagged immediately after the battle near Sharpsburg? [i.e., the battle of Antietam]" propounded to you by Major Levi C. Turner, Judge Advocate, etc., you answered 'That is not the game. The object is that neither Army shall get much advantage of the other; that both shall be kept in the field till they are exhausted, when we will make a compromise & save slavery.'

"I shall be very happy if you will, within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this, prove to me by Major Turner, that you did not either literally (sic), or in substance, make the answer stated." John Hay noted that this letter was delivered to Major Key at 10:25 AM on September 27.

Majors Key and Turner presented themselves at the White House around 11:00 the same day. Turner reaffirmed that Key had made the alleged statement, although the wording differed slightly from what was originally reported to the president. "As I remember it," Major Turner said, "the conversation was, I asked the question why we did not bag them after the battle at Sharpsburg? Major Key's reply was that was not the game, that we should tire the rebels out, and ourselves, that that was the only way the Union could be preserved,

we come together fraternally, and slavery be saved." Key did not deny that he had made the statement, but argued he was loyal to the Union cause. Turner confirmed that he had never heard Key express disloyal sentiments.

For Lincoln, however, loyalty was not the issue. The president replied: "that if there was a 'game' even among Union men, to have our army not take an advantage of the enemy when it could, it was his object to break up that game." He informed the War Department that in his "view it is wholly inadmissible (sic) for any gentleman holding a military commission from the United States to utter such sentiments as Major Key is ... proved to have done. Therefore let Major John J. Key be forthwith dismissed from the military service of the United States."

It must be noted that Lincoln ordered that Key be "dismissed" from the army, not merely discharged. "Discharge" was the term ordinarily used when officers were honorably released from active duty at the end of their term of service or for medical or administrative reasons. When an officer was "dismissed" by sentence of a court-martial, it was the equivalent of a dishonorable discharge for an enlisted soldier. Key was not court-martialed, but dismissed by the president after a summary hearing. In the nineteenth century U.S. Army, dismissal by the president, while not technically a punishment, nevertheless had "the moral effect of punishment, in that it not only deprives the party of that which is valuable to him but affixes a reproach upon his reputation." Key was not merely thrown out of the army, he was publicly stigmatized by the president. The administration later made sure that Key's fate, and the reasons for it, were published in the *New York Times*.

The next day Key sent the president a written rebuttal, again declaring his loyalty and arguing that he was referring only to the Confederate army. "I have often remarked, that the Rebels would never let this contest be decided (sic), if they could help it — by a decided (sic) battle between us, but would protract this war — as they hoped to make a compromise in the end & that they were fighting with that end in view —

"In conclusion I solemnly aver — that if this war terminate in the entire destruction of the South — they have brought it on themselves."

Key sent this request for reconsideration through his old boss, commanding general Henry Halleck, who sat on it for almost two months. In the

meantime, Key's son, Captain James R. Key, had died of wounds received at the battle of Perryville, Kentucky. When the president finally saw Key's letter, his reply offered condolences on the loss of the author's son. The expression of sympathy was undoubtedly sincere, since Lincoln had lost two sons of his own. However, neither sympathy nor the passage of time inclined the president toward leniency.

"In regard to my dismissal of yourself from the military service," Lincoln wrote, "it seems to me you misunderstand me. I did not charge, or intend to charge you with disloyalty. I had been brought to fear that there was a class of officers in the army, not very inconsiderable in numbers, who were playing a game to not beat the enemy when they could, on some peculiar notion as to the proper way of saving the Union; and when you were proved to me, in your own presence, to have avowed yourself in favor of that 'game,' and did not attempt to controvert the proof, I dismissed you as an example and a warning to that supposed class. I bear you no ill will; and I regret that I could not have the example without wounding you personally. But can I now, in view of the public interest, restore you to the service, by which the army would understand that I indorse (sic) and approve that game myself? If there was any doubt of your having made the avowal, the case would be different. But when it was proved to me, in your presence, you did not deny or attempt to deny it, but confirmed it in my mind, by attempting to sustain the position of the argument.

"I am really sorry for the pain the case gives you, but I do not see how, consistently with duty, I can change it."

Lincoln still seems to have had doubts about his action. On December 27, 1862 he examined the file again and concluded that "On full re-consideration, I can not find sufficient ground to change the conclusion therein arrived at[.]"

Dismissing an officer for a single casual remark in a private conversation seems a punishment vastly excessive in light of the offense. (Lincoln himself later described Key's remarks as "silly.") Lincoln was, deservedly, known for his clemency towards offenders. So why did the president stubbornly refuse clemency to Key? He twice referred to the treatment of Key as an "example." Examples are used to illustrate a rule or policy, and to warn against the consequences of violating the rule or policy. What policies involved in Key's case would be so important to President Lincoln that

they would override his usual inclination towards leniency? Two policies suggest themselves. First, and more obviously, to counter suspected disloyalty among the officers of the Army of the Potomac. Second, to reinforce the President's policies on slavery.

By the end of September 1862, the President had ample cause to doubt the loyalty of the officers of the Army of the Potomac. Major General George B. McClellan was commander of that army for most of the period between July 27, 1861, and November 5, 1862. Under his command the Army of the Potomac adopted a conciliatory policy towards the white civilian population of the Confederacy. He urged the president to conduct the war "upon the highest principles known to Christian Civilization." "Neither confiscation of property, ... or forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment."

In early 1862, Lincoln became increasingly frustrated with McClellan's reluctance to aggressively attack the enemy. After a desultory campaign in the spring of 1862, the general was defeated outside Richmond and driven back to the James River. The president then created a new Federal army, designated the Army of Virginia, to operate in northern Virginia under the command of Major General John Pope. One of the few abolitionist officers of the pre-war U.S. Army, he adopted a less lenient policy towards southern civilians than those of McClellan and his supporters. Unfortunately for Pope, his army was soundly defeated by the Confederates at the battle of Second Bull Run at the end of August 1862. Pope blamed his defeat on the disloyalty of one of his subordinates, Major General Fitz John Porter. Porter had close ties to McClellan and allegedly disobeyed Pope's order to attack the enemy on August 29 in order to discredit Pope as an alternative to McClellan. Porter was later court-martialed for disobedience and dismissed from the service, a sentence President Lincoln quickly approved.

Following the Union defeat at Second Bull Run, General Lee invaded Maryland and was in turn defeated by McClellan and the Army of the Potomac at the battle of Antietam, Maryland, on September 17, 1862. However, despite the President's urging, McClellan failed to pursue Lee's army into Virginia. It was in this context that, on September 25, Lincoln heard of Major Key's remarks. They provided an explanation for both Porter's disobedience and McClellan's reluctance to pursue the enemy after Antietam. As Lincoln later explained to John Hay,



Maj Gen Geo B McClellan LN-0830

he began to suspect that McClellan and his officers were “playing false,” that they “did not want to hurt the enemy.” As a public example of what could happen to them, the president’s dismissal of Key might persuade McClellan and his supporters to take a more aggressive approach towards the enemy. However, if McClellan understood the message of Key’s dismissal, he did not heed it. His continued a dilatory pursuit of Lee until Lincoln removed him from command on November 5, 1862.

Finally, it is significant that Key’s remarks came only three days after Lincoln issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Key had, after all, declared the purpose of the “game” was to “save slavery.” The president had already reversed two efforts by the military to set policies toward slavery. In September 1861 he countermanded a proclamation by General John C. Frémont freeing the slaves of Confederate supporters in the Department of the West; the proclamation had adversely affected public opinion in Kentucky, at that time still wavering between remaining in the Union or joining the Confederacy. More recently he had reversed a similar proclamation issued by General David Hunter in the Department of the South. At that time he publicly declared that he reserved to himself the power to make policy on slavery and that no military officer in the field was authorized to make such policy. Now the president was faced with a possible cabal of officers to undercut his Emancipation Proclamation. More than anything else, this made Major Key’s action unforgivable.

II. Dr. Wright

Alanson L. Sanborn was an idealist. Appointed a Second Lieutenant in the new United States Colored Troops (USCT), he told his mother that the formation of the USCT was “a work of justice” and “a work of humanity to elevate downtrodden humanity.” On July 11, 1863, Lieutenant Sanborn was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. That day he marched a column of troops from Company B, First USCT, down Main Street toward the U.S. Customs House, where the troops would be reviewed by a Union general. On the way they passed Dr. David M. Wright, a local native, who swore at Sanborn and called him a coward. The Lieutenant halted the column and told Wright he was under arrest, whereupon Wright raised a revolver and shot Sanborn in the hand and shoulder. The latter wound proved fatal and Wright was arrested and tried for murder by a military commission. Found guilty, he was sentenced to hang.

Clemency efforts began almost immediately. Ninety five “citizens of Norfolk” asked President Lincoln to stay any sentence even before the trial had concluded, a request the president honored. Dr. Wright had built up considerable good will in Norfolk due to his humanitarian efforts during a yellow fever epidemic in 1855. There was also evidence that Wright had offered medical assistance to Sanborn after shooting him.

Dr. Wright was a slaveholder who had opposed secession in 1861 and remained in Norfolk after it was recaptured by the Union in 1862. By 1863, however, his views may have changed. The New York Times described him as a “violent Secessionist,” and he had a son in the Confederate army who was killed at Gettysburg, though the family kept this news from his father as he awaited execution. At his trial, he claimed that the prospect of being arrested by African-American soldiers pushed him over the edge unto violent action. At his trial the Doctor claimed he acted in self-defense because, as a slave owner, he could not accept being arrested by men who might have been his former slaves. “No, sir, I could not submit to that,” he said.

To fully appreciate the significance of the clemency movement, one must understand the unusual legal and political status of Norfolk in 1863. When Virginia seceded in 1861, representatives from the western counties of the state held a convention in Wheeling, today in West Virginia. There they formed their own government, claiming to be the legitimate, loyal government of Virginia with Francis H. Pierpont as

state governor. While the Pierpont government only controlled peripheral areas of the state that were occupied by the U.S. Army, in the areas it did hold it elected senators, representatives and a full range of state officers. Like other slave states that had remained in the Union, Norfolk and other counties controlled by the Pierpont government were excluded from the Emancipation Proclamation. At his trial, Dr. Wright was defended by Senator Lemuel J. Bowden and Lucius Chandler, who had been nominated as U.S. District Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

After the trial and sentence, these loyal Virginians, one of whom had been nominated for federal office by Lincoln himself, led the clemency movement, which also included loyal Virginia congressmen, elected local officials and a former mayor of Norfolk. If Lincoln executed Wright, he would turn his back on Virginia Unionists whose support he could need in Congress and during reconstruction. Bowden and Chandler initially argued that they could not raise the defense of insanity before the military commission. In response, the President appointed a noted medical expert on insanity to go to Norfolk and examine Dr. Wright. When he reported that the accused was currently sane and had been sane at the time of the crime Lincoln approved the death sentence. Dr. Wright was hanged on October 23, 1863.

Dr. Wright’s action appears to have been a sudden, unpremeditated crime of passion, the product of deeply-seated racial prejudice, rather than an intentional act of meanness or cruelty. The evidence that, once he had calmed down, he had offered medical aid to his victim supports that conclusion. President Lincoln had already granted clemency in capital cases involving sudden passions. In a precedent that appears to apply to Wright’s case, where a soldier had been condemned to death for mutiny and assaulting a superior officer, Lincoln noted that the offense, “being to some extent the result of sudden passion, and not of premeditation,” the death sentence was mitigated to imprisonment and dishonorable discharge.

Lincoln’s decision to reject the pleas of Virginia Unionists should be considered in the context of his support for the USCT, and the Confederate reaction. Initially reluctant for political reasons to raise African-American military units, by early 1863 he was an enthusiastic backer of the USCT. In a famous letter to Andrew Johnson, military governor of Tennessee, he de-

clared that African Americans were “the great available, yet unavailed of, force for restoring the Union,” and optimistically predicted that the “bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once.”

By August 1863, while the record of Dr. Wright’s trial was on his desk for review, the President had empirical evidence to support the value of the USCT. In his public letter to James C. Conkling, dated August 26, 1863, he declared: “that some of the commanders of our armies in the field who have given us our most important successes believe the emancipation policy and the use of the colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the Rebellion, and that at least one of these important successes could not have been achieved when it was but for the aid of black soldiers.”

The Confederate government, on the other hand, regarded the enlistment of African American soldiers as part of a plot to instigate a slave insurrection, contrary to the rules of civilized warfare. The Confederacy refused to recognize captured USCT troops as prisoners of war, and passed a law that declared white USCT officers like Lt. Sanborn to be subject to trial and execution if captured. Lincoln issued a retaliatory order “that for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed.” This seems to have deterred the Confederates from actually executing any USCT officers, but did not address the issues raised by Dr. Wright’s crime.

If the Confederacy could not punish white officers after capture for the “crime” of leading Black soldiers, the same result might be achieved by assassination of these officers before capture. Carried out by southern sympathizers behind Union lines, such attacks would avoid direct involvement of Confederate officials, though they might praise such patriotic acts after the fact. Leniency towards those who attacked white USCT officers would only encourage future attacks. Dr. Wright’s hanging foreclosed this possibility.

III. John Yates Beall

John Yates Beall, 24, was operating his family’s farm near Harper’s Ferry when John Brown raided the U.S. Arsenal there in 1859. Brown’s attempt to incite a slave revolt failed, but Beall, like many white Virginians, feared more abolitionist raids and joined the local militia company, “Botts Greys.” The Greys stood guard during Brown’s trial and execution, and when the Civil War broke out they were folded into the Second Virginia Infantry, part of the

famous “Stonewall Brigade.” Separated from his regiment during its retreat up the Shenandoah Valley in the spring of 1862, Beall became dispirited and joined his elder brother, a businessman in Iowa. Learning that his identity as Confederate soldier was about to be revealed he fled to Canada in September.

While in Canada he formed two plans to help the Confederate war effort. The first would involve acquiring one or more vessels on the Great Lakes, to be armed and manned as irregular warships under Confederate authority (“privateers”). He would use his ships to rescue Confederate prisoners of war on Johnson’s Island in Lake Erie and might also threaten U.S. cities on the Lakes with bombardment unless they paid a ransom. The second idea was similar to the first, only his privateering operations would take place on Chesapeake Bay, raiding Union shipping, prison camps, and military targets on the coasts.

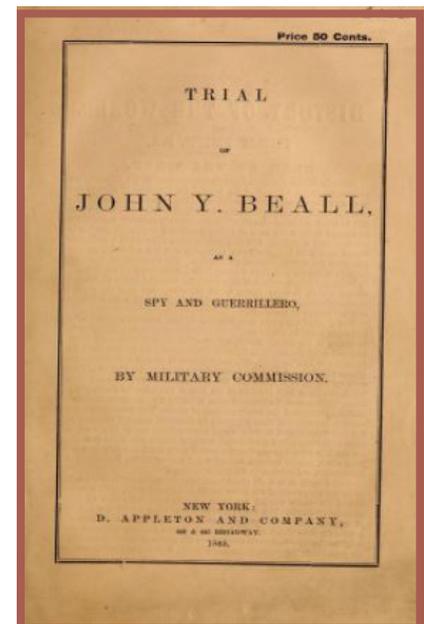
In January 1863 Beall travelled to Richmond to present his ideas to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who referred him to Secretary of the Navy Mallory. Concerned that privateering on the Great Lakes would compromise British neutrality, Mallory approved the Chesapeake Bay proposal. After discharge from the Confederate Army, Beall was commissioned an Acting Master in the Confederate Navy. Provided with two small craft, he recruited about 20 men and began operations on August 1, 1863, when his men cut a telegraph cable crossing the Bay. Over the next few months they raided a light house, capturing 300 gallons of oil and seized eight Union merchant ships. Captured by U.S. forces, Beall was released in a prisoner exchange in March 1864.

Confederate sensitivity to British neutrality had weakened by early 1864. Jefferson Davis then personally sent Jacob Thompson and Clement Clay to Canada with broad discretion to engage in clandestine activities to encourage anti-war forces in the North and otherwise weaken the Union war effort. “Thompson’s operation included efforts to free the Confederate prisoners held ... on Johnson’s Island ... burn several northern cities, including New York, Boston and Chicago, poison the Croton Reservoir, which supplied water to New York City, and cause epidemics of smallpox and yellow fever in certain cities.”

By August 1864 Beall was back in Canada. There Thompson assigned him to lead the operation to free prisoners of war on Johnson’s Island. On September 19, 1864, Beall and a team of nineteen men hijacked the ferryboat

Philo Parsons, bound from Canada to Sandusky, Ohio. After capturing a second steamboat, the *Island Queen*, they placed the passengers and crew of both craft ashore, scuttled the *Island Queen* and headed towards Johnson’s Island. Their plan next called of them to surprise and seize the fourteen-gun U.S.S. *Michigan*. Unfortunately for Beall, the captain of the *Michigan* had been alerted to the threat by a union agent and the raiders decided they were not being paid enough to take on the U.S. Navy. Over Beall’s objections they returned to Canada empty-handed.

Back in Canada, Beall next became involved in an ill-conceived plan to derail a passenger train in upstate New York. The true purpose of the raid is unclear. A sympathetic account by one of Beall’s friends stated that the original “scheme was to capture a military train on the New York and Erie Railroad, between Dunkirk and Buffalo, in the State of New York.” Lt. Colonel Martin, 14th Kentucky Cavalry (CSA), the leader of the band, later claimed that they were trying to rescue Confederate prisoners of war on the train, two generals and other officers. On the other hand, Major General Dix, in his order confirming the findings and sentence of the military commission, noted robbing the express company safe on the train as a possible motive. All sources agree, however, that three attempts were made to stop a train on this route in December 1864. The first two efforts failed because a four-man raiding party was unable to remove a section of track. Finally, after the group was raised to five raiders, the train was stopped briefly on December 15 when Colonel



Trial of John Y. Beall 71200908404990

Martin succeeded in placing a rail across the tracks. Beall appears to have played only a passive role, witnessing Martin alone placing the rail. This series of events suggests that the raiders were trying to derail any train that came along, and not targeting a specific train carrying Confederate officers.

Beall was arrested on December 16 while trying to return to Canada. Brought before a military commission he was convicted of acting as a spy and guerrilla and sentenced to hang. The charges covered both his Lake Erie and New York raids, but the most serious charge was that he carried on "irregular and unlawful warfare, as a guerrilla," in the state of New York by attempting "to destroy the lives and property of the peaceable and unoffending inhabitants of the said State, and of persons therein travelling, by throwing a train of cars ... from the railroad track."

Beall's defense counsel, James T. Brady, immediately organized extraordinary efforts to secure clemency for his client, including a petition from 92 members of congress and personal appeals to the president by former Illinois senator Orville H. Browning, former Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, Lincoln confidant Francis P. Blair, Sr., and others. These efforts were unavailing and the president refused to intervene. Beall was hanged on February 24, 1865.

In many respects, Beall's case would appear to be appropriate for presidential clemency. There is little in his record to suggest meanness or cruelty on his part. There were no civilian casualties in either the Lake Erie or New York railroad operations, nor in the earlier raids he led in the Chesapeake. True, he was convicted of attempting to harm peaceable citizens by causing a train wreck, but an examination of the evidence reveals that he was not a leader in this plot, and that his role was largely passive. In fact, the railroad raids suggest more ineptitude than menace, from the raiders' failure, three nights running, to bring the proper tools or manpower (only four to five men) to lift a section of track, to the pathetic attempt by Lt. Colonel Martin to stop a train by placing a single rail across the tracks.

To many Victorians, Beall's activities may have called to mind those of a young romantic outlaw, a Rob Roy or Robin Hood, or some other character out of Sir Walter Scott's novels. This may help explain why it was so easy for his lawyer to mount a major clemency movement in only a few weeks.

This was not, however, the total context in which President Lincoln considered the case. A month after Beall's

Lake Erie raid, a force of approximately twenty Confederate soldiers in disguise left Canada to infiltrate the town of St. Albans, Vermont. On October 19 they rounded up the town population, robbed two banks of about \$200,000, and escaped back to Canada. Three townspeople were shot by the raiders, one fatally. The raiders also attempted to burn the town using an inflammable substance called "Greek fire." Pro-Confederate Canadian officials blocked efforts to have the raiders extradited to the United States.

A month after the St. Albans raid, on the evening of November 25, 1864, a team of six Confederate agents attempted to set fire to at least a dozen hotels in New York City, along with Barnum's Museum, a popular tourist attraction, and docks on the Hudson River. Again, Greek Fire proved less than effective, and little damage was done. The intent, nevertheless, was to set lower Manhattan ablaze.

In this context, the New York railroad raids were part of pattern of escalating Confederate attacks on northern civilians. The Lake Erie raid arguably had a legitimate military purpose, the freeing of prisoners of war, though it could have proved deadly for the passengers and crewmen of the *Philo Parsons* or *Island Queen* if they had failed to respond to the orders of Beall's men quickly enough. However, the raids on St. Albans and New York City appear to have been solely directed against civilians and civilian targets.

While an effort was made to establish a legitimate military goal for the raids on the New York railroad, at trial the Judge Advocate, in his role as prosecutor, ridiculed the idea that "with a force of five men, armed with five revolvers, a sledge-hammer, and a cold chisel," the raiders could have "expected to capture a train of fifteen cars and fifteen hundred passengers, and to plunder the express-man's iron safe!" It was "a glaring absurdity," he argued. The true purpose of the raid was "to endanger the lives, destroy the property, and weaken the strength of those Yankee citizens whom these brigands of the border so bitterly hate." In other words, to terrorize the civilian population.

Presidential approval of Beall's execution sent a strong signal that the United States would not tolerate, and would punish severely, direct attacks on northern civilians. This message was reinforced when Robert Cobb Kennedy, who had participated in the New York city incendiary attacks, was sentenced to death by another military commission. In his order affirming the findings and sentence, General Dix

stressed that the "lives, the property, the domestic security of non-combatant citizens must be protected against all invasion not in strict accordance with the laws and usages of civilized States in the conduct of war." Crimes in violation of these laws and usages must not only be punished, "but the sternest condemnation of the law must be presented to others to deter them from the commission of similar enormities." Kennedy was hanged a month and a day after Beall, on March 25, 1865.

Conclusion

One theme runs through all these case studies. While President Lincoln always leaned toward mercy, he was willing to deny clemency in key cases to underscore important general policies. In the case of Major Key, he would punish an officer for "silly" treasonable talk to emphasize that the officers of the army would not be allowed to undercut the Emancipation Proclamation and "save slavery." Dr. Wright would go to the gallows to show unyielding administration support for the United States Colored Troops, and that it would respond strongly to unlawful Confederate violence against them and their officers. Young Beall would hang to demonstrate a similarly strong response to Confederate attacks on northern civilians. Finally, Captain Gordon would die to end the era of official tolerance for the slave trade.

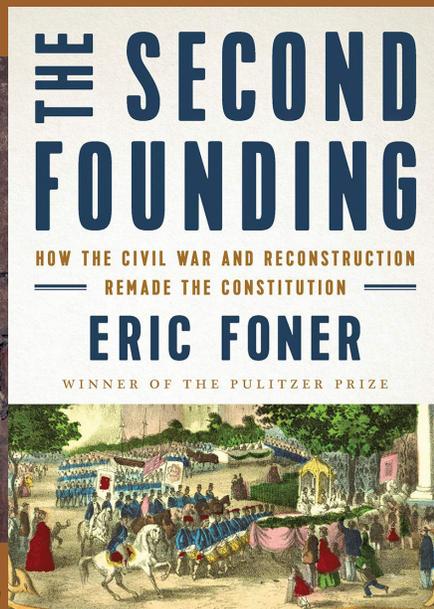
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Abraham Lincoln OC-0059

An Interview with Eric Foner about his new book:

The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution



The Second Founding, W.W. Norton & Company, 2019

Sara Gabbard

Sara Gabbard: Please explain the significance of the fact that “Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation” was added to the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.

Eric Foner: The fact that each of the Reconstruction amendments ends with a section empowering Congress to enforce its provisions illustrates the radical change in the federal system brought about by the Civil War. The Bill of Rights was almost universally understood to apply only to the national government, not the states. The First Amendment begins with the words “Congress shall make no law ...” It reflected the widespread assumption in the founding era that the greatest danger to liberty was a too-powerful national state. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments all restrain the states, not the federal government. They reflect the emergence of the idea that the nation state is, in the words of Charles Sumner, the “custodian of freedom” and that the danger to Americans’ rights

comes from the state government. Thus the three Amendments reflect a sea change in the balance of power between the national and state governments, and a new conception of where the ultimate responsibility lies for protecting the rights of all Americans.

SG: Please give an example of a Supreme Court ruling which furthered the original intent of the Reconstruction Amendments.

EF: There were very few such rulings until the era of the Warren Court. Mostly, the Supreme Court whittled away at the rights the Reconstruction Amendments were intended to protect. The Supreme Court decisions barring racial segregation in education, and upholding the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were certainly in tune with what the framers of the Reconstruction Amendments hoped to accomplish (even though in the former case, the Court based its decision on the original Constitution’s commerce clause, rather

than the 14th Amendment). It was not willing to repudiate a long train of decisions which, wrongly in my opinion, declared that the protections of the 14th Amendment applied only to “state action” – discriminatory state laws and discriminatory action by state officials – not the acts of private individuals that undercut the rights of other Americans.

SG: A decision that was an impediment to progress?

EF: Numerous Supreme Court decisions of the late 19th century were impediments to progress toward racial justice. The Slaughterhouse Cases eviscerated the clause of the 14th Amendment barring states from abridging the “privileges or immunities” of American citizens. The Cruikshank case, which arose from the Colfax Massacre of 1873, placed roadblocks in the path of federal action against racist violence in the South. Later, Plessy v. Ferguson declared that state laws requiring racial segregation did not violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, and

Giles v. Harris essentially said that there was nothing the Supreme Court could do if states abrogated the 15th amendment by depriving African Americans of the Right to vote. Sadly, the current Supreme Court has followed in these footsteps, for example on *Shelby County v. Holder*, which declared unconstitutional key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, undermining the purpose of the 15th Amendment.

SG: The Jim Crow movement: How did it get its name? Can you document a specific point in time for its birth? Can it be argued that the movement is still with us today?

EF: The phrase Jim Crow originated as the name of a character in popular minstrel shows before the Civil War. For reasons not entirely clear, it later became a shorthand for the system of white supremacy adopted in the Southern states in the late 19th century. There is no specific date for the birth of Jim Crow – the implementation of this system occurred over twenty or thirty years, after the end of Reconstruction. The pillars of the Jim Crow system were the disfranchisement of black voters; legally-required segregation in all walks of life; the use of the judicial system to discipline the black population and provide a form of cheap labor to plantations, mines and other enterprises (the convict lease system); a collapse in public funding for black education; a labor market in which well-paying jobs were reserved for whites; and extra-legal violence (lynching) as a form of racial intimidation. The system was regional – blacks, for example, retained the right to vote in the North and West. Certainly vestiges of this system survive today even though the legal edifice of Jim Crow was dismantled during the civil rights revolution.

SG: Please explain your comment “In that sense, Reconstruction never ended.”

EF: One of the arguments of my book is that Reconstruction was both a specific time period (usually dated 1865-1877), although some historians use other dates) and a long historical process – the process by which the United States tried to come to terms with the consequences of the Civil War, especially the destruction of slavery. We are still in some ways grappling with that challenge, in debates over who should be a citizen, who should have the right to vote, how to ensure equal protection of the law to all Americans. In that sense, Reconstruction never ended.

SG: Recently Supreme Court Justices have referred to the 14th Amendment in several decisions. Please explain.

EF: The irony of the modern Supreme Court’s interpretation of the 14th Amendment is that it has involved a vast expansion of the amendment’s application to all kinds of Americans, yet a narrowing of its application in cases related to racial justice. Key decisions of the last half century or more that expanded the rights of Americans were based on the 14th Amendment – for example *Baker v. Carr* (the one man, one vote decision); *Roe v. Wade*, barring states from criminalizing abortion; and the recent decision establishing the right of gay men and lesbians to legally-recognized marriages. These and many other decisions of what is sometimes called the “rights revolution” were grounded in the amendment’s guarantees of equal protection of the law and enjoyment of life, liberty, and property by all Americans. Yet when it comes to race, the Court has generally proved more sympathetic to whites claiming that affirmative action policies are a form of “reverse discrimination,” and, as noted above, has severely limited the scope of federal action to protect voting rights.

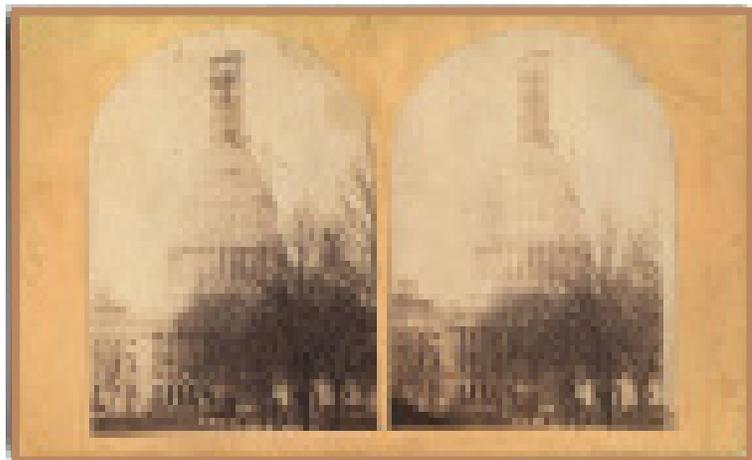
SG: What was the Dunning School? Are the concepts still being cited?

EF: Named after

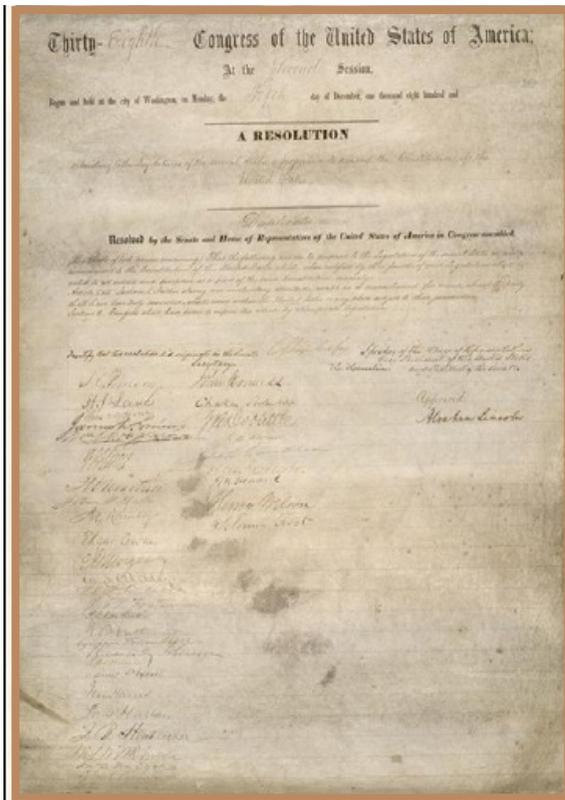
Columbia University historian William A. Dunning, the Dunning School viewed Reconstruction as the lowest point in the saga of American democracy, a period of corruption and misgovernment caused by the ill-advised expansion of the right to vote to African American men after the Civil War. Writing around 1900, these scholars in effect offered a justification for the South’s Jim Crow system and especially the disfranchisement of black voters. For decades, when confronted with criticisms of the racial system, white southerners would warn that restoring the constitutional rights of African Americans would lead to a replay of the so-called “horrors” of Reconstruction. This scholarly interpretation reached a broad audience in the film *Birth of a Nation*, which glorified the Ku Klux Klan, and was adopted in every U. S. history textbook until the mid-twentieth century and beyond. Works of the Dunning School were long cited by Supreme Court justices in decisions related to the Reconstruction amendments. Today, no reputable historian holds to this outlook. Reconstruction is widely seen as a praiseworthy effort to create an interracial democracy for the first time in American history, a precursor to the modern Civil Rights Era. Yet elements of the Dunning approach survive in popular historical consciousness.

SG: Did Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton support the 15th Amendment in the belief that women would win the vote at the time? Was there serious support for including them?

EF: The 15th Amendment prohibited states from denying any citizen the right to vote “because of race.” It said nothing about the right of women to vote. As a result, it produced a deep split in the era’s women’s rights movement. Some feminists, black and white, saw it as a step toward universal suffrage that should be supported. Others, including Stanton and Anthony, saw it as a betrayal of the rights of women and opposed ratification unless discrimination on the basis of sex was also prohibited. They warned, correctly, that if this opportunity were missed, decades would pass before a woman suffrage amendment could be adopted. Others, including Frederick Douglass, a long-time advocate of voting rights for blacks and whites, men and women, argued that Reconstruction was “the Negro’s hour” – that is, that an amendment enfranchising black men could be adopted



US Capitol with dome LN-0115



Thirteenth Amendment 71.2009.083.0002

but that popular support for woman suffrage was not sufficient to ensure passage of an amendment including women. As Lucy Stone, a leading feminist, observed, both were probably right. The result was a breakup of the women's movement and the creation of two new suffrage organizations, one opposed to the amendment, the other in favor. They would not reunite until around the turn of the century.

SG: Please elaborate on your statement that the Civil Rights Era “did not need a new Constitution; it needed the existing one enforced.”

EF: One of the points of my book is to emphasize that our Constitution is not self-enforcing, and that for decades, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were not fully enforced, thanks to Supreme Court decisions and congressional inaction. Thus, a racial system emerged in the South, with the acquiescence of the rest of the country, that flagrantly violated what the authors of the amendments were trying to accomplish. When South Africa abolished apartheid in the 1990s, it wrote a new constitution, since its old one institutionalized that unequal system. In this country, the Reconstruction amendments had created the legal framework of racial equality. The amended Constitution did not need to be rewritten; it simply needed to be enforced. Not until a great mass movement forced the courts, Congress, and the president to

act, and to implement the plain language of the Reconstruction amendments, was the Jim Crow system overturned.

SG: Please comment on each Reconstruction Amendment as to support and opposition in Congress and subsequently in the ratification process.

EF:

13th Amendment

Even though the end of slavery seems in retrospect an inevitable outcome of the Civil War, there was considerable opposition in Congress to its passage, especially among northern Democrats and border state Unionists (those from the slave states that did not secede to join the Confederacy). All Republicans supported the amendment; they understood that slavery was the fundamental cause of the Civil War. Many opponents argued that the original Constitution had been adopted only because southerners were persuaded that the document protected the right of states to legalize slavery if they desired. Thus, they claimed that the amendment undermined the Constitution. They also insisted that blacks were incapable of enjoying freedom and would refuse to work, or run amok committing acts of violence against whites. Some warned (correctly as it turned out) that Congress would use the amendment to pass legislation guaranteeing the basic rights of the former slaves, thus further undermining the powers of the state governments and elevating Blacks to full equality, which they strenuously opposed.

14th Amendment

All Republicans in Congress voted for the 14th Amendment, and all Democrats opposed. Even supporters, however, lamented the amendment's limitations. It did not guarantee the right to vote for black men as many Republicans desired. But the basic point – establishing the citizenship of all persons born in the United States and guaranteeing them the equal protection of the laws – was by now seen as a logical result of the end of slavery. Opponents again drew on racism (that blacks were supposedly unfit for citizenship) and federalism (that the Amendment undermined the legitimate powers of the states) to charge that the amendment fundamentally and unwisely changed the constitutional structure.

15th Amendment

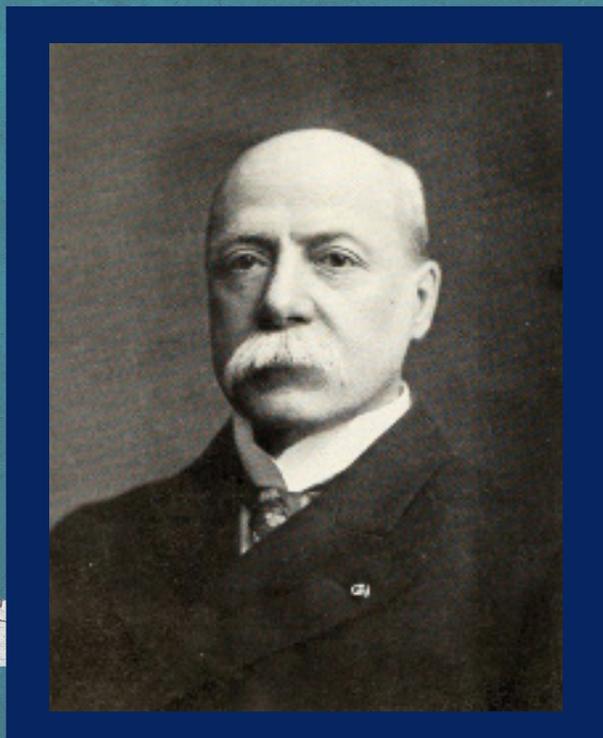
Like the 14th Amendment, the 15th was a compromise that did not satisfy all Republicans. Some wanted a positive statement that all male citizens were entitled to vote. They warned that the language barring exclusion on the basis of race allowed states to enact literacy tests, poll taxes, and other ostensibly race-neutral laws that in practice would eliminate most black voters. But again, all Democrats, the party of white supremacy, bitterly opposed the amendment, arguing that blacks were incapable of exercising the right to vote intelligently, and that the amendment contradicted the long tradition of state control of voting rights.

SG: Please comment on the history of the Lost Cause and its status today.

EF: The ideology of the Lost Cause emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century as a legitimization of the South's system of white supremacy. It saw slavery as a benign institution that would have died out peacefully without war; insisted that the Confederate cause was motivated by states' rights and individual liberty (for whites), not the defense of slavery; and that Reconstruction was a terrible mistake. It was embodied in the proliferation of monuments to the Confederacy that came to dominate the public landscape of the South, and in history books and novels (notably *Gone with the Wind*). While no historian today holds to the Lost Cause outlook in full, its elements are still widespread in popular historical understanding, as evidenced by the vigorous defense of Confederate monuments when their presence is challenged. A romantic view of the Confederacy as a symbol of local rights and individual liberty – with no consideration of the liberty of African Americans – remains widespread, and not only in the South. On the other hand, I think a realistic view of slavery as a brutal system of oppression and as the basic cause of the Civil War, and of Reconstruction as a key moment in the history of American democracy, is today much more widely shared than in the past.

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LINCOLN'S FIRST RESPONDER— DR. CHARLES AUGUSTUS LEALE



E. Lawrence Abel

Dr. Charles Augustus Leale 71200908503290

April 14, 1865, was a pleasant day in Washington, a welcome change from the rainy weather that had turned Washington's streets into mud. The dogwood trees were in full bloom, their pleasant scent wafted through the air. The sky was clear throughout most of the day, turning partly cloudy in the evening. By 8:30 p.m. when President Lincoln, his wife and their two guests, Major Henry Rathbone and his fiancée arrived at Ford's Theatre on 10th Street, the temperature had dipped to a cool 54 degrees and a light fog had settled in.

It was a slow night at the Armory Square General Hospital at the corner of 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, where 23-year-old Dr. Charles Leale was Surgeon-in-Charge of the Wounded Commissioned Officers. Leale was anxious to get to his army quarters that night. He had read that President Lincoln would be at Ford's that night, and he wanted to get to the theatre early enough so that he could get a good seat from which to see the President.

Just before leaving the hospital, Leale informed his Ward Master that he would be gone "for a short time," made his way to his tent, and quick-

ly changed out of his military uniform into his civilian wear. Leale did not have a pass from his superior to be out at night. Had he been in uniform, he might be stopped by military guards on the lookout for army personnel wandering about the city, instead of remaining at their assigned workplaces.

The Armory Square Hospital was about four blocks from Ford's Theatre. Leale thought he would have enough time to buy a seat on the first floor Orchestra section from which he would have a good view of Lincoln in the Presidential box on the second floor Dress Circle, but the streets were still muddy and it took longer than he anticipated trudging through the muck. By 8:15 p.m., when he finally arrived, all the seats in the Orchestra Section were taken. Leale grudgingly paid the 75¢ for a Dress Circle seat, climbed the red carpeted stairs to the second floor, and found his seat about 40 feet from the President's box. About an hour later, Leale rose with the rest of the audience and cheered as Lincoln, his wife Mary, and their two guests, Major Henry Rathbone and his fiancée, Clara Harris, arrived and made their way along the back wall of the Dress Circle to the ves-

tibule leading to the Presidential box.

Charles Augustus Leale was born on March 26, 1842, in New York City. His father, William Pickett Leale, had emigrated from England in 1836, when he was 16. William found work as a deck officer on board a merchant vessel. Four years later he married 17-year-old Anna Maria Burr, the daughter of a wealthy sea captain, William Burr.

The marriage was tragically cut short a year later when Leale's father drowned at sea, leaving Anna to care for their one-year-old son. Anna did not remain a widow for long. In June 1844, she married Dr. George Humphries Wilson.

A year after their marriage, Wilson took a job as Superintendent of the United States Marine Hospital in Portland. Allowed to roam the wards with the attending surgeons, 14-year-old Charles watched physicians operate on patients and saw how they were bandaged, and medicines were compounded.

Wilson was pleased when his stepson told him he wanted to be a physician like himself. In 1860, Leale enrolled at a local medical school where

he was taught how medicines were compounded, analyzed, and tested, and the antidotes for poison.

Although he graduated in 1863, Leale felt he had much more to learn. With his stepfather's financial support, Leale enrolled at Bellevue Hospital Medical College and became the private pupil of Dr. Frank Hastings Hamilton, Sr. Leale's timing was fortuitous. Hamilton had just returned from serving in military hospitals.

When he wasn't attending lectures at Bellevue, Leale shadowed Hamilton as he made his rounds at the Blackwell Island Hospital, and learned military hygiene, how to dissect, amputate and ligate arteries, repair dislocations, and the treatment of gunshot wounds, by his mentor.

By February 1864, Hamilton felt Leale was competent enough to recommend him for the Army's Medical Cadet Program. After passing his Army Medical Board exam, Leale was commissioned and posted to Camp Chemung, in Elmira, New York, as assistant to the Post Surgeon, and subsequently was appointed duty surgeon at the Barracks, attending Sick Call. In March 1865, Leale was awarded his M.D. degree, and subsequently sat for and passed his Army Medical Board exams. Commissioned as Assistant Surgeon of Volunteers, he was assigned to the Army Square General Hospital, as Surgeon-in-Charge of the Wounded Officer's Ward.

Like hundreds of others, Leale trekked along Pennsylvania Avenue the evening of April 11, 1865, to hear Lincoln speak from the balcony of the White House about his plans for binding the nation's wounds. Three days later he was at Ford's Theatre, too late to buy a ticket in the Orchestra section where he would have been able to look up at Lincoln during the play and settled for a seat in the second floor Dress Circle.

At about 10:15 p.m., while watching the actors on stage from his seat, Leale, like most of the audience, was startled by a gunshot inside the theatre. Moments later, learning forward from his chair, he saw a man scrambling to his feet on stage, just below the Presidential box. The man then turned to the audience holding a knife in the air and shouted "sic semper tyrannis," and then fled toward one of the passageways off stage.

Then from inside the Presidential box, Leale heard a woman screaming, "the President is shot!" Most of the audience panicked and rushed for the doors. Some rushed toward the vestibule entrance that led to the Presidential box. Although his arm was bleeding badly, Major Henry Rathbone, one of the other three people inside the Presidential box whom the assassin had wounded just after assassinating the President, managed to hold back the crowd and shouted for a surgeon.

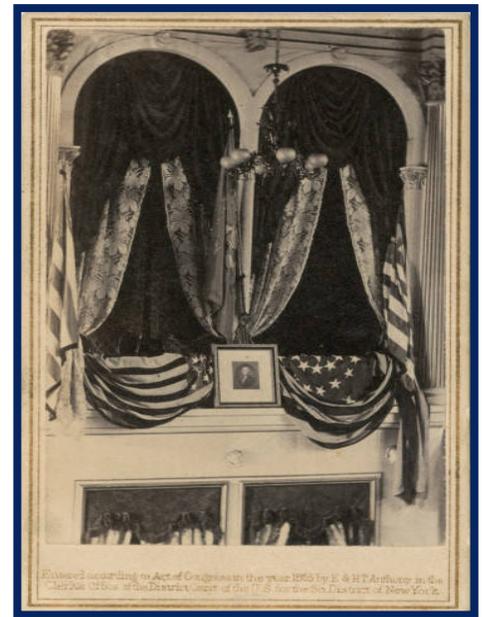
Leale forced his way through the swarming bodies trying to get in, identified himself, was allowed to enter, and rushed into the box. There were other doctors in the audience that night, but because his 75-cent ticket had put him closest to the vestibule, he was the first to reach Lincoln. By medical protocol, that made Lincoln his patient, until more senior physicians took over. Leale would later describe his experience that night in five separate accounts. Four of them were made within two years after the assassination. The last was written fifty years later and contains details not in the previous versions and omits some significant details that are in those earlier versions. Leale's first account was written "a few hours after leaving [Lincoln's] death bed. It remained lost for more than 100 years until discovered among Surgeon General Joseph K. Barnes's papers at the National Archives in 2012.

When Leale entered the Presidential box, Lincoln was unconscious and slumped in his rocking chair. Mary and Clara Harris were on each side, trying to keep him from falling to the floor. Lincoln was still breathing, but his breathing was labored. Leale felt Lincoln's wrist for any sign of a radial pulse but could not detect one. While he was feeling for a pulse, Dr. Albert King and William Kent, who had been sitting with him, entered the room. With their help Leale eased Lincoln's body on to the floor to avoid syncope, a sudden loss of blood pressure that would cut off blood flow to his brain. Lying down, Lincoln's heart would not have to pump as hard.

Leale still did not know where Lincoln was wounded. Seeing blood near Lincoln's left shoulder, his first thought was that Lincoln had been stabbed. Finding no wound in Lincoln's arm or shoulder, he felt for a wound on Lincoln's back and then ran his hand up the back of Lincoln's head where he

found a firm blood clot on the left side of Lincoln's head, behind his ear. Leale picked the scab away and using his little finger on his left hand as a probe, passed it into "the perfectly smooth opening made by the ball and found it had entered the encephalon." More than a hundred years later a modern-day neurosurgeon would accuse Leale of killing Lincoln with that finger probe. But at the time physicians were unaware of germ theory and Leale should not be held responsible for what was not known at the time.

While Leale was examining Lincoln's head wound, a third physician, Dr. Charles Sabin Taft, scrambled over the banister, having been hoisted up from the Orchestra seats by several men below. In the 1909 version of his account, the most accessible of his reports until the recently discovered report he wrote days after the assassination, Leale said that with the help of Drs. Taft and King, he kept Lincoln alive by performing chest compression, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or heart massage. However, those procedures were not known in the United States until 1878 and are not mentioned in that much earlier report and were also not mentioned when Dr. Taft wrote his own account of Lincoln's last hours, less than a week after the assassination. Leale's 1909 account of chest compression was likely the result of "false memory syndrome."



Presidential Box at Ford's Theatre OC-1447

When Lincoln's condition stabilized, the three physicians discussed where to move him. An obvious place was the

White House. But it was seven blocks away and the roads were deeply rutted, and the jolting might worsen his condition. Instead they decided to take him to one of the residences across the street. After no one answered at the first home they tried, they were able to bring the still unconscious Lincoln into the back bedroom at the William Petersen House a few doors away.

The stretcher bearers lifted Lincoln onto the bed, but it was too short for his six-foot-four-inch body. Leale asked someone to pry the end board loose, but it was part of the bed's structure and could not be removed. The only alternative was to position Lincoln's body diagonally across the bed, with his feet, still wearing his boots, dangling over the side. A few minutes later, Mary, Major Rathbone and Clara Harris came into the Petersen House. Mary was immediately ushered into the bedroom, Rathbone and Clara Harris behind her. Seeing Lincoln sprawled across the bed, Mary sobbed for him to speak to her. By then, the room had become so suffocated by curious on-lookers that Leale asked the ranking officer to clear everyone out except the medical men. Mary wanted to stay but agreed to leave when Leale told her to wait across the hall while the doctors removed Lincoln's clothes so that they could conduct a thorough examination.

Once the room was cleared, Dr. Taft stuck his finger into the wound in Lincoln's head to see if he could feel the bullet. It was the second time a foreign object was inserted into Lincoln's brain, enlarging the wound,

and essentially dooming him from infection. Before he died, another finger and three metal probes would be inserted into that wound.

Once Lincoln's clothes were removed, Leale noticed his body had begun to cool, and asked someone to fetch hot-water bottles, warm blankets, and ingredients to make a "sinapsism," a mustard-based paste that generated heat when placed on the skin. Around 11:00 p.m., Dr. Stone, the Lincoln's family physician, came into the room. Leale introduced himself as the physician who had been in charge since the shooting. Leale informed Stone of the nature of Lincoln's wound and what he had done, and asked if Stone wished to take over, which he did. A few minutes later, Surgeon General Joseph K. Barnes, Assistant Surgeon General Charles Henry Crane, Dr. Willard Bliss, Leale's superior at the Armory Square Hospital, other doctors, and all of Lincoln's cabinet members entered the room at one time or another.

Lincoln held onto life for nine hours after being shot. His final breath came at 7:22 a.m. Surgeon General Barnes announced his passing. A stillness hung over the room until Secretary Stanton broke the silence with his now memorable eulogy, "Now he belongs to the ages."

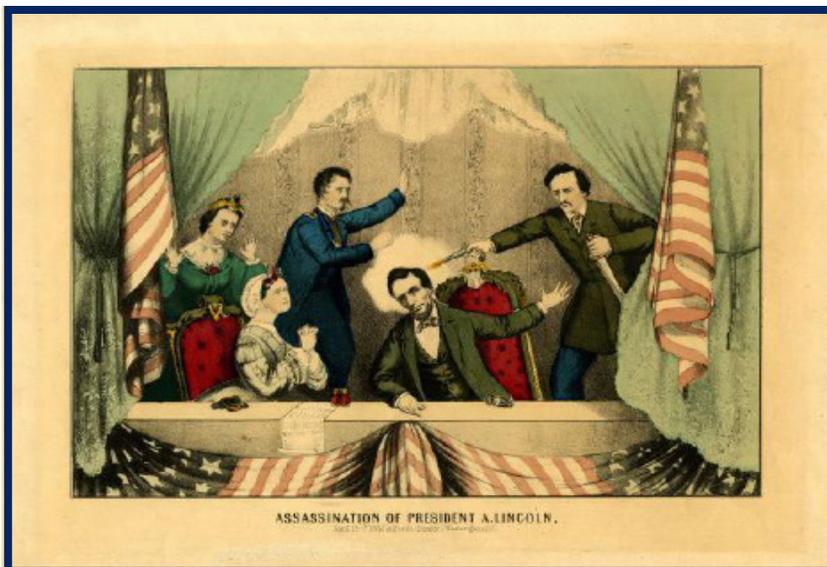
Years later, Leale recalled his last efforts on behalf of the slain President: "I gently smoothed the President's contracted facial muscles, took two coins from my pocket, placed them over his eyelids, and drew a white sheet over

the martyr's face." He then made his way through the crowd outside back to his office. As he walked hunched over to keep a chilly rain from falling down his neck, he remembered he had left his hat back at the theatre and looked down at his once freshly starched cuffs, now embedded with "the martyr's blood," vowing to keep them forever. (The blood-stained cuffs later came into possession of his daughter, Helen Leale Harper who later donated them, along with the sword he held while serving as Lincoln's Honor Guard, to the National Museum of American History.)

The next day while he was attending patients, a nurse informed him that a messenger had called on him inviting him to attend Lincoln's autopsy at the White House later that day at noon, and later another doctor (Leale did not identify) also invited him. Leale declined, saying he "did not dare to leave the large number of severely wounded men expecting my usual personal care. I was fearful that the shock of hearing of the sudden death of the President might cause trouble in their depressed painful conditions."

Leale did agree, however, to be one of the Honor Guards in the East Room of the White House. Wearing his uniform and sword, its handle covered in black mourning crepe, Leale stood solemnly at the head of Lincoln's coffin, beneath the black-draped catafalque, during the viewing and obsequies on Wednesday, April 19. As the long line of escorts formed to accompany Lincoln's casket along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol to lie in state, Leale and the other physicians during Lincoln's last hours, rode in a carriage in the place of honor in front of the funeral car. At some point in the procession, "an officer of high rank" leaned into Leale's carriage and told him "Dr. Leale, I would rather have done what you did to prolong the life of the President than to have accomplished my duties during the entire war." Once Lincoln's casket was laid inside the Capitol rotunda, Leale once again stood at the head of his casket as one of the Honor Guards. Several days later, Leale put on the uniform and his sword, with the mourning crepe, and had his photograph taken by Mathew Brady.

Emotionally drained by the last few days and the lengthy funeral services, Leale returned to his office at the hospital. Unable to stop thinking about it, he asked



Assassination of President A. Lincoln 71.2009.081.1761

Surgeon-General Barnes what he advised to give him some respite. Barnes told him "Cast it from your memory."

A grateful public, however, insisted on honoring his efforts. On May 24, when more than 70,000 Union veterans marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in review, Leale was invited to be in the reviewing stand in front of the White House, along with President Johnson, his Cabinet, and several Foreign Ministers. Leale particularly remembered seeing General Sherman riding by on a horse garlanded by roses. Despite Barnes's advice to try to forget what he had been through, Leale could not refrain from sitting in at one of the sessions of the conspirator's trial. "Dr. Mudd is the only one that has any intellectual expression," Leale told his friend and colleague, Dr. Dwight Dudley. Leale commented that the conspirators were "all very pale except the Dr."

Leale remained at the Armory Square Hospital until it was deactivated in September 1865, after which he was appointed Surgeon-in-Charge of Post Hospitals taking care of soldiers stationed along Washington's Northern Defenses. The area was a breeding ground for malaria, typhoid, and dysentery. After succumbing to "typho-malarial fever" himself, Leale was honorably mustered out of service in January 1866. Seven months later, in recognition of his efforts to save Lincoln, he was brevetted to Captain of U. S. Volunteers.

After his discharge, Leale became aware that Asiatic cholera had become rampant in northern Europe and might soon threaten the United States. Still recuperating from his own illness, he left for Europe to study the disease at clinics in England and France. Returning to London, he learned the disease had become an epidemic in Liverpool, one of the main ports for emigrants leaving for the United States. Leale applied for and was granted legal status to treat patients in England as a physician and went to Liverpool where he examined over a thousand emigrants, quarantining those with cholera symptoms. On May 2, 1866, he sailed from Liverpool with 1,003 immigrants on the *Harvest Queen* as its ship's doctor.

Despite his efforts to prevent the spread of cholera to the United States, the disease had already taken hold in much of the country, including New York City where people were dying

every day from the disease. Until his retirement in 1928, Leale was actively involved in philanthropic, medical and scientific societies. While establishing his own practice in the city, Leale worked tirelessly as a volunteer among the poor stricken with the disease in his neighborhood, saving many lives.

Children had a special place in his heart. From 1866 to 1871, he served gratuitously as physician in charge of the Children's ward at the Northwestern Dispensary, taking care of over five thousand sick and needy children, and served as Chairman of the "Floating Hospital," which took distressed mothers and their children on boat trips on the Atlantic. He helped to reorganize the hospital nursery on Staten Island; was one of the founders and consulting surgeons at the Children's Free Hospital; provided medical aid for the New York Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men; and was a trustee of the New York Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. As President of the St. John's Guild, a charity that annually took care of more than forty thousand poor mothers and their sick children in their homes and helped convert its nursery into one of the largest seaside hospitals for children in the world. While other physicians left the steaming city for cooler summer vacation retreats, Leale stayed in the city providing medical care to children in the city's slums.

If Leale thought he could "cast" the memory of Lincoln's assassination out of his mind, he was mistaken. In July 1867, Leale received a request from Major General Benjamin F. Butler, Chairman of the Assassination Committee. Butler's committee was gathering information to investigate President Andrew Johnson's possible role in the assassination prior to his impeachment hearings and asked him to relate "what he saw and heard" the night of the assassination. Leale duly sent Butler a summary of the notes he had made after the assassination, but the Committee did not find anything incriminating and it was not made public.

In July 1881, after President Garfield was shot, Leale, as "a well-known expert in cases of gunshot wounds, and who was the first surgeon who at-



Abraham Lincoln on Deathbed LFA-0154

tended Abraham Lincoln the night he was assassinated," was asked for his opinion about Garfield's prognosis. Leale's lengthy response was quoted in several newspapers. At the same time, many newspapers also carried stories of Leale's efforts on Lincoln's behalf at the time of his assassination.

Somehow, he found time to meet and marry Rebecca Medwin Copcutt, the daughter of New York industrialist, John Copcutt. The couple were married on September 3, 1867, at the Copcutt Mansion in nearby Yonkers and would eventually have six children.

In addition to the many positions he held at local hospitals, he was also a member of many of the country's medical societies and was elected to several of their executive committees including President of the Northwest Medical and Surgical Society and the New York County Medical Association. In 1881 he was a delegate at the International Medical Congress in London and their meeting six years later in Philadelphia. Leale's proudest association was with the New York Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), a patriotic society whose membership was restricted to Civil War Union officers.

Leale died at age 90 on June 13, 1932 at his home on Madison Avenue in New York City. He was buried in Oakland Cemetery in nearby Yonkers, where his wife (died in 1923) was also interred. Leale was the first doctor to treat Lincoln after he was shot, and the last surviving doctor among those who attended him at his death bed.

E. Lawrence Abel is a Professor at Wayne State University and author of A Finger in Lincoln's Brain.

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