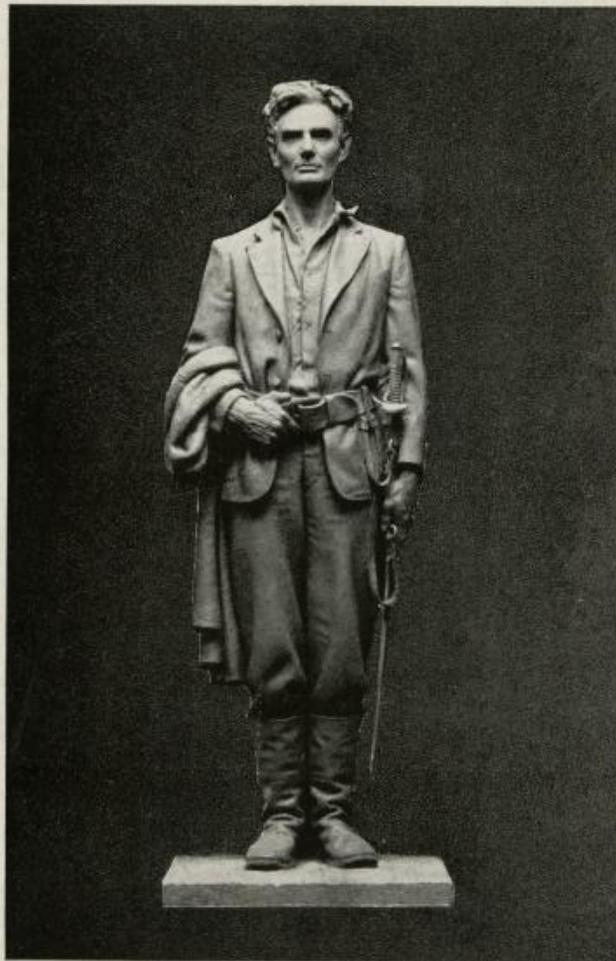

Lincoln LORE

NUMBER 1933 SPRING 2022



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STATUE ERECTED AT DIXON BY THE
STATE OF ILLINOIS, SUMMER OF 1930



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Indiana State Museum & Historic Sites

Hoosiers Reading Frederick Douglass

Levi and Catharine Coffin House State Historic Site, Fountain City
June 30, 2022 • 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
\$5 for Adults/25% off for Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites members

Join Dr. John McKivigan of the Frederick Douglass Papers of IUPUI for a community reading and discussion of Douglass' speech on women's suffrage "I Am a Radical Suffrage Man." Douglass was an avid supporter of women's right to vote, right from the first women's convention in 1848 through the end of his life.

www.indianamuseum.org/historic-sites/levi-catharine-coffin-house

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An Evening with Ronald C. White

Allen County Public Library • Main Library Theater
Thursday April 21, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.
In-Person and Livestreamed

Join the Friends of the Lincoln Collection for an evening with Ronald C. White. White is the author of two New York Times bestselling presidential biographies. *A. Lincoln: A Biography* and *American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant*. His newest book is *Lincoln in Private: What His Most Personal Reflections Tell Us About Our Greatest President*.

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On The Cover: Lincoln, the Soldier - Blawck Hawk War (71.2009.083.2636)



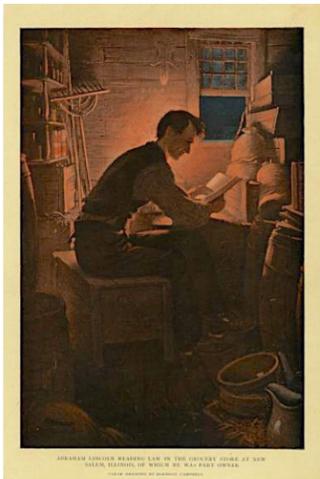
HERNDON'S INFORMANTS

An Interview with Douglas Wilson

Sara Gabbard

Sara Gabbard: This had to have been an enormous project. What first led you to undertake the task?

Douglas Wilson: I had been working on Thomas Jefferson for several years, mostly having to do with his early reading and education, the formation of his library, and his early influences. Most of this research was in support of an edition I had been asked to prepare of Jefferson Literary Commonplace Book for The Papers of Thomas Jefferson being brought out at Princeton. I had published a number of articles dealing with these matters in scholarly journals, and when the edition was completed, I decided that I wanted to write something for a general audience that focused on the importance of books and reading in Jefferson's formative years. I had discovered in my teaching the advantages of presenting things in pairs — two short stories at a time, for example — which tends to bring out interesting differences and similarities. In looking for someone who shared Jefferson's extraordinary attraction to books and reading in his formative years, I found a prime example in Abraham Lincoln.



Lincoln Reading Law
71.2009.081.2818

The differences in their circumstances were great, but their tenacious devotion to reading and learning in their early years was nearly identical. As a child, Jefferson began by reading his way through his father's modest library of perhaps 60 books. Lincoln

did something of the same sort with all the books he could lay hands on in his primitive frontier neighborhood. While my studies had taught me a great deal about Jefferson's experience in this respect, I knew about Lincoln's interest mostly by his reputation, so I set out to find the sources I would need to make the comparison. I had uncovered a lot of fresh information about Jefferson through extensive work in the various libraries where his early papers are found, but I very soon discovered that what is preserved about Lincoln's formative years is heavily concentrated in a single massive collection of letters and interviews collected soon after Lincoln's death by his law partner William H. Herndon.



William H. Herndon
LN-0718

But I was surprised to discover that this collection, which far exceeds anything available for any other nineteenth-century president, had never been published in a scholarly edition and consequently was generally known for only a limited number of key items dug out by the handful of scholars that had ventured into the collection. I don't have time here to go into how and why this invaluable collection was not better known and consulted, except to say that it had not been publicly available for general use until it was acquired by the Library of Congress in 1941, and then accessible only by means of a very poor quality microfilm edition that was hurriedly created as a preservation measure and was very

hard to use. Perhaps even more of a discouragement to its widespread use was the low regard in which Herndon had come to be held by the leading Lincoln scholars.

SG: How long did it take from concept to publication? What was the first thing that you had to do?

DW: Second question first. After I had read my way through the microfilm of these amazing materials, I persuaded my teaching and research partner at Knox College, Rodney O. Davis, to join me in a partnership to remedy the problem of access by producing a scholarly edition of all the letters, interviews, and statements about Lincoln that Herndon acquired in his searches. This turned out to be a much larger order than we anticipated for a number of reasons. First, while it was true that by far the largest collection of these documents was, indeed, in the Library of Congress, a nation-wide survey that we conducted early on disclosed that there were documents that fitted our definition in several other repositories. Another reason was that Herndon, having amassed a sizeable amount of testimony, took the precaution of having it transcribed. Those transcriptions are still extant at the Huntington Library, and they include original testimonies not in the Library of Congress collection. Many of the original accounts written by the informants are ungrammatical, ill spelled, and poorly punctuated. John G. Springer, the person Herndon hired to transcribe what Herndon called his "Lincoln Record," regularized the grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and introduced errors of his own by mistaking one word for another. It was Springer's transcriptions that Herndon sold to Ward Hill Lamon in 1869, and that Lamon's ghost-writer, Chauncey F. Black, drew on in writing Lamon's *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1872). This book was extremely unpopular when it appeared, precisely for its use of anecdotes and testimony collected by Herndon that were generally considered unbecoming and inappropriate in recounting the life of a great national martyr, even if true.

The other part of your question, having to do how long the project took, is worth considering, because from the inception of the project to its publication in 1998 was a period of about nine years.



Ward Lamon
LFA-0288

We began by transcribing the documents available on the Library of Congress microfilm, while at the same time we were conducting our national survey of likely repositories. Most libraries that responded had only a small number of items that they were willing to duplicate and share with our project, but two libraries had such sizeable holdings that we needed to examine on site — The Illinois State Historical Library (since incorporated into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum) in Springfield, Illinois, and the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. The former was nearby and therefore readily accessible; working in the latter required considerably more in terms of time and financial support. In preparing the final manuscript for publication, we took the precaution of checking our manuscript against the original documents, most of which were at the Library of Congress, where the process required five weeks of double reading. In addition to that was the preparation of the explanatory matter that described the parameters of the material being presented, the editorial procedures employed, and the history of Herndon's efforts to

collect information about Lincoln's early life. All of this required about seven years, but the extent of the testimony and the exacting editorial procedures necessary for preparing the manuscript for the press required an additional two years before the appearance of the finished work in 1998.

SG: Did Herndon keep systematic records?

DW: I think it is fair to say that Herndon knew the value of the testimony that was given to him, orally or in writing, and he took pains to preserve and protect it against loss. He had what proved to be the bulk of it transcribed in late 1866, and took the precaution of having these items bound in three large volumes, which he placed in a bank under lock and key. One can argue that he should have done this with the originals and kept the transcriptions for use in his home for consultation. He seems to have wanted to have the originals close at hand in the event that anyone challenged him with misrepresentation. When he went to give a speech, he would take some of his collected testimony with him in the event that he was challenged, and as a result, he admits that this sometime resulted in the loss of one of his "records." We have no way of knowing how these records were organized in his study, but doubtless he had some kind of organizing principle. Personally, I wouldn't be surprised if he relied very heavily on his memory, which seems to have been very good, with the usual caveat for age. Whether these procedures count as "systematic" or not, he was aware that he had in his possession priceless materials, and he acted to assure the preservation of these invaluable testimonies.

SG: How/when did he first begin to correspond with national figures?

DW: Herndon was a serious person even as a young man, and he thought nothing of sending off letters of inquiry to the some of the most notable of national figures — such as Ralph W. Emerson or William E. Garrison. Some of the responses he got from these early ventures suggest

that his answers were perfunctory at best, but he did strike fire with certain national figures who responded candidly and substantially. This was to pay dividends when Lincoln became a national figure, as these forthcoming correspondents were in a position of getting information about this obscure Illinois politician directly from his law partner.



Ralph Waldo Emerson
LN-0524

SG: I was interested in the fact that he corresponded with Theodore Parker. Who initiated this correspondence? Did he subscribe to Parker's Transcendentalist philosophy?

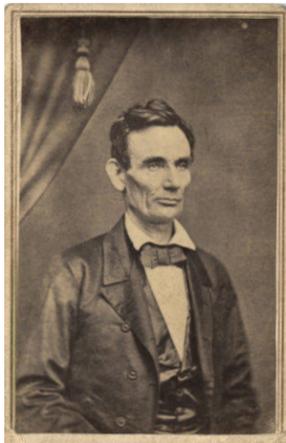
DW: I am pretty sure that Parker did not initiate the correspondence with Herndon, as their exchanges go back to before Lincoln became nationally known. In the years before Lincoln gained a national reputation, we know that Herndon had been writing to Parker, as well as other Eastern figures, such as Wendell Phillips. I think we know enough about his early practice of writing to famous persons to say that Herndon was an eager intellectual intensely interested in ideas and keen to communicate with leading thinkers. One might also point to the situation that it was much more common in Herndon's day to write to famous writers and ask for clarifications and other questions related to their published views. About Parker's Transcendentalist philosophy, I would say that Herndon wrote not as a disciple or fellow transcendentalist, but as someone who was interested in what the

leading lights were writing about.

SG: Please comment on the fact that there are several letters written during Lincoln's 1858 campaign for the Senate.

DW: Herndon worked very hard on Lincoln's campaign and in a number of different ways. First, he volunteered to speak at places that were missed by Lincoln's own energetic speaking schedule, and he seems to have done a fair amount speaking. This was important, because he had a reputation as a public orator in his own right, and thus could draw a crowd.

Next, he was constantly looking for oratorical ammunition for his partner to exploit, such as reading the prominent Democratic newspapers' coverage of the campaign. He was an omnivorous reader, and he put his appetite in this regard to find possible points of attack, possible points suggesting weakness or strength. And being an abolitionist, which Lincoln was not, he could keep Lincoln informed on how this valuable community could be beckoned or appeased.



1858 Campaign
LN-0232

SG: Can you discern a difference in the dialogue between Herndon and his "informants" before and after Lincoln's rise to national prominence?

DW: This is a good question to end on, because it is quite important to

understand that he did not conduct any kind of survey of Lincoln's former friends and associates until after Lincoln's death. Lincoln as president was a much-criticized and often beleaguered chief magistrate, hated by the Peace Democrats (who were very strong in Illinois), and the object of constant criticism from the leaders of his own party.

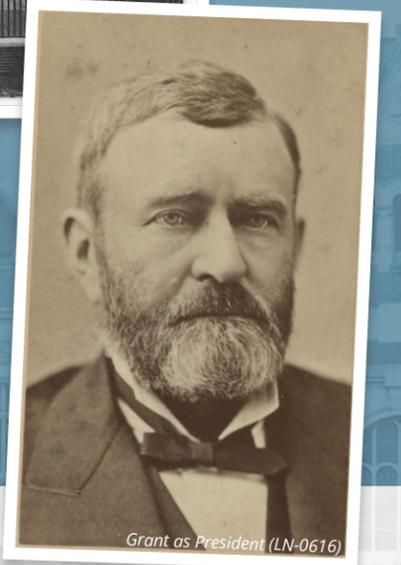
If Herndon had gone out in the area of New Salem and queried the old friends of Lincoln's younger days, say in 1864, he would have gotten a very different response.

But immediately upon being assassinated, Lincoln became an instant martyr, the savior of his country. When Herndon made his first inquiries just weeks after Lincoln's assassination, and in a largely Democratic, anti-war community, the feelings of these old friends were accordingly muted, and for the most part they only had good or at least neutral things to say. And here it is important to say that much of what they told Herndon depicts a young, lively, and quite likeable Abraham Lincoln, not the misguided president they believed him to be. This is not to say Herndon got a false picture. Indeed, he rescued the memories of the early life of a man who would be, and still is, one of the best known and most admired leaders in Western history.

Douglas Wilson is the George A. Lawrence Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of English at Knox College.



The Hague - Peace Palace LC-B2-2822-11A



Grant as President (LN-0616)

"Respect the Rights of All Nations, Demanding Equal Respect for Our Own"

THE GRANT ADMINISTRATION & INTERNATIONAL LAW

Burrus Carnahan

In the last decade, historians have reassessed the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant. Previously considered one of our worst presidents, new scholarship has discovered accomplishments and strengths earlier ignored. Grant wanted “let us have peace” to be the dominant theme of his administration. It is therefore surprising that Grant’s contribution to the development of international law has been relatively neglected in recent reassessments. The Grant administration established important precedents in the peaceful settlement of disputes, in the law of war and neutrality, and in the protection of human rights in both war and peace.

The CSS Alabama Arbitrations

One success of the Grant administration has received considerable attention, more from scholars of international law rather than from Presidential historians. This was the 1872 judgement of an international tribunal awarding the United States \$15,500,000 against Great Britain for the so-called “Alabama claims.”

At the beginning of the Civil War, the Confederacy sent naval officer James Bulloch to the United Kingdom to build or purchase warships there. The British government had declared itself neutral in the war, so Bulloch had to act clandestinely because the Foreign Enlistment Act prohibited British subjects from arming or “fitting out” naval vessels for use against a belligerent power at peace with Great Britain. Through Bulloch’s skill at deception, together with bureaucratic bungling, ambiguity in the law, and perhaps, as many Americans suspected, unofficial English sympathy for the South, several Confederate warships sailed from British ports to prey on Union maritime commerce.

The most notorious of these was the CSS Alabama, constructed in England at Bulloch’s direction and sailing from Liverpool on July 29, 1862. Between then and her destruction by the USS Kearsarge on June 19, 1864, Alabama captured over 60 Northern merchant vessels. She still holds the record for

the most tonnage of enemy merchant shipping destroyed in war, a record not exceeded by any submarine or commerce raider in either World War. The Alabama and Bulloch’s other ships obliterated pre-war Yankee dominance in the international carrying trade.



CSS Alabama
LC-DIG-ppmsca-39729

Britain initially refused to admit that the US damage claims had any legitimacy at all, but she finally expressed “regret” at American losses. (Expressing regret is a diplomatic dodge still used by governments to make sympathetic noises about damage done to another state’s interests without conceding that they had actually done anything wrong.)

President Grant nevertheless insisted that the Alabama claims be decided by arbitration. In the 1871 Treaty of Washington, the United Kingdom agreed to submit the American claims to a five-member international tribunal to meet in Geneva, Switzerland. The United States and Britain would each name one judge, with the other members chosen by Italy, Brazil, and Switzerland.

While continuing to refuse to admit that she had violated any rules of neutrality as they existed in the 1860s, Britain agreed in Article VI of the Treaty that the tribunal should apply the following three rules in judging its behavior during the Civil War:

“First, to use due diligence to prevent the fitting out, arming, or equipping, within its jurisdiction, of any vessel which it has reasonable ground to believe is intended to cruise or to carry on war against a Power with which it is at peace; and

also to use like diligence to prevent the departure from its jurisdiction of any vessel intended to cruise or carry on war as above, such vessel having been specially adapted, in whole or in part, within such jurisdiction, to war-like use.”

“Secondly, not to permit or suffer either belligerent to make use of its ports or waters as the base of naval operations against the other, or for the purpose of the renewal or augmentation of military supplies or arms, or the recruitment of men.”

“Thirdly, to exercise due diligence in its own ports and waters, and, as to all persons within its jurisdiction, to prevent any violation of the foregoing obligations and duties.”

Finally, both parties agreed that these rules would apply to future wars in which they were involved, and to ask other nations to agree to them as well. In 1907, at an international conference at the Hague, Netherlands, these rules were included in a multilateral treaty called the Convention on International Neutrality in Naval War and are now widely considered to be part of international law.



The Hague - Peace Palace
LC-B2-2822-11A

At the Geneva tribunal, the United States claimed that the United Kingdom had violated the three rules in its handling of 14 ships used by the Confederacy. In the end, the tribunal found, by four votes to one (Britain dissenting) that it had failed to exercise due diligence in the cases of the Alabama and two other vessels, the Florida and the Shenandoah. Like the Alabama, the Florida had been built at Liverpool with secret Confederate financing and allowed to escape British territory despite US

diplomatic protests. Between January, 1862, and September, 1864, she captured 37 US merchant ships.

The Shenandoah, on the other hand, had been built in Scotland as a legitimate merchant vessel named the Sea King. In 1864 she had completed one commercial voyage before being secretly purchased by the Confederacy and sailed to Spanish territory to be armed and commissioned as the CSS Shenandoah. The tribunal did not find Great Britain at fault for allowing her to leave Britain. In early 1865, however, the Shenandoah had called at the British colony of Australia, having already captured twelve American merchant ships. Great Britain was found to have failed to exercise due diligence to prevent her from being repaired, resupplied, and recruiting crewmen in Australia, over the protests of the US consul at Melbourne, and the British government was held liable for the loss of the 26 ships she captured after leaving that port.

The Alabama arbitration is still regarded as a major precedent for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. In the words of the Australian legal scholar Julius Stone, “The importance of this case in the history of arbitration is independent of the particular outcome. For it showed that arbitration could be used for claims ... involving interests which important Powers regarded as major and even vital” The success of the Geneva tribunal soon led to numerous other arbitrations involving nations in both Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

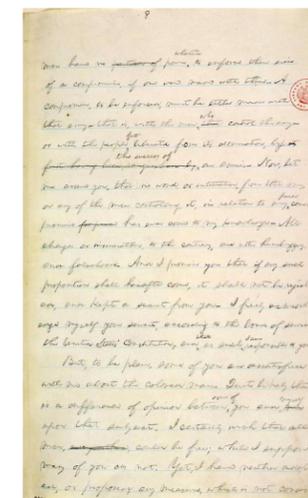
British Claims Against the United States

In addition to the Geneva tribunal, the Treaty of Washington also created a three-member arbitral commission to consider other claims arising from the Civil War, chiefly those of British subjects who owned property, located in rebel territory, that had been seized or destroyed by the Union army. President Grant named James Frazer, a former justice of the Indiana Supreme Court, as the

US member and Russell Gurney, a member of Parliament, represented Great Britain. These two selected Count Louis Corti, the Italian ambassador to the United States, as the third member. This tribunal sat in Washington, DC, from 1871 to 1873, and heard 478 claims against the United States. Only 181 of these were found justified, and an award of \$1,929,818 was made against the United States.

Before 1800, it was generally accepted that all enemy property, whether owned by the government or private citizens, was subject to confiscation or destruction in war. By the 1860s, however, a consensus had developed among legal experts that private property of enemy citizens should be protected unless there was a “military necessity” for its seizure or destruction, that is, unless there was a valid military reason for it.

During the war, President Lincoln had invoked this principle as a legal justification for the Emancipation Proclamation in his August, 26, 1863, James Conkling Letter. If, as the Confederacy claimed, slaves were property, then, he reasoned, “Is there—has there ever been—any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever taking it, helps us, or hurts the enemy?”



Conkling Letter
Library of Congress, series: Series 1.
General Correspondence. 1833-1916

The decisions of the Washington tribunal established early precedents for the application of military necessity to the treatment of civilian, in this case neutral, property. The commission thus disallowed claims for British property damaged by bombardment during sieges of cities, or destroyed to clear a field of fire for artillery. Also disallowed was a claim for destruction of a sawmill in Mississippi by a Union raiding party, when the mill had produced wooded ties for southern railroads. Similarly disallowed was claim for the destruction of a foundry and machine shop in Atlanta, before General Sherman’s army abandoned that city for his march to the sea.



Destruction of Atlanta
71.2009.081.0484

The precedents with the most far-reaching significance related to the destruction of British-owned cotton. The United States argued that cotton played a unique role in the Confederacy’s war economy. As restated in the American counsel’s report to the Secretary of State, cotton was “the great staple from which ... derived the principal means of that government for the carrying on of the war, which was the principal basis of its credit, the source of its military and naval supplies, and on which it relied to maintain its independent existence” All but one of the numerous claims for destroyed cotton were denied. (The exception involved a claimant who had been granted a license by the US Treasury to deal in Confederate-controlled cotton. Frazer dissented, arguing that the license had been procured by fraud.)

The decision that it was lawful to attack industries supporting an enemy economy would assume major significance with the invention of the airplane in the 20th century. It was used to justify strategic

bombing in both World Wars. Most recently, the successful American air campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria concentrated on oil and banking facilities supporting the enemy.

Surprisingly, the Washington tribunal denied most claims for pillaging by Union troops. In its defense, the United State relied on European precedents, principally the denial by the Austrian Empire of British claims based on looting by the Austrian army when suppressing an 1848 revolt in northern Italy. The argument was that a certain amount of looting was to be expected during any large-scale military operation, and was just a normal incident of warfare.

While this assumption has been rejected by later developments in the law of war, the one pillaging claim that was allowed has significance for other reasons. In Missouri, members of the 7th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, US Army, had pillaged a country store owned by a British national. The 7th Kansas was more commonly known as "Jennison's Jayhawkers." Hatred between the citizens of Kansas and Missouri went back to the "Bleeding Kansas" era of the 1850s, when gangs of Kansans and Missourians fought over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a free or slave state. "Jayhawkers" was a common nickname for the anti-slavery Kansans. Both sides terrorized the other's civilians, a practice revived during the Civil War.



Jennison's Jayhawkers
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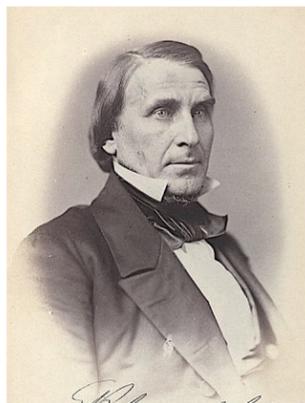
The colonel of the 7th Kansas was Charles R. Jennison. Historian Thomas Goodrich has described him as "a genuine savage." During the winter of 1861-62, according to Goodrich, Jayhawker bands "went

on a rampage of theft, arson and murder" in Missouri. "None displayed more ferocity nor reached greater heights of savagery than Jennison's regiment." The US counsel's 1873 report to the Secretary of State conceded that the evidence showed "great neglect of discipline on the part of Colonel Jennison, ... and his neglect and refusal to take any steps for the surrender of the stolen property or the punishment of the offenders"

On these facts, the tribunal unanimously approved an award of damages. This decision established a precedent for the modern principle that governments have a duty to maintain discipline in their armed forces, to include enforcing the laws of war. Grant vocally supported peaceful settlement of international disputes for the rest of his life. In 1877, during his post-presidential world tour, he spoke to a pro-arbitration group in Birmingham, England. There he expressed the hope that, "at some future day the nations of the earth will agree upon some sort of congress," that would render binding decisions on international "questions of difficulty," thus anticipating the 20th century League of Nations and United Nations. While neither of these organizations lived up to the hopes of its founders, Grant's speech demonstrated thinking far ahead of his time.

The Humanitarian Role of Neutral Powers

Elihu Washburne was a congressman from Galena, Illinois, Ulysses Grant's home town at the start of the Civil War. A strongly anti-slavery Republican, he was an ally of the Lincoln administration and Grant's legislative sponsor during the Civil War, supporting his promotions and defending him from political critics. When Grant became president in 1869 he appointed his friend to the plum diplomatic post of American minister Paris. Neither realized, of course, that in 1870 the French Emperor Napoleon III would plunge his country into war with Prussia and its German allies in the North German Confederation.



Elihu Washburne
LC-DIG-ppmsca-26793

When armed conflict breaks out between nations, each country normally breaks off diplomatic relations with the other. In such circumstances it is common for a country to request a neutral nation, known as the "protecting power," to act as a channel for diplomatic communications with the enemy and to otherwise look out for its interests. In 1870 the United States accepted this role on behalf of France's German enemies. As President Grant reported in his State of the Union message for that year, soon after war broke out, "the protection of the United States minister in Paris was invoked in favor of North Germans domiciled in French territory. Instructions were issued to grant the protection." Protection was later extended to Prussian allies Saxony, Gotha, Hesse and Sax-Coburg. The President noted that the "charge was an onerous one, requiring constant and severe labor, as well as the exercise of patience, prudence and good judgement."

The task was onerous because Washburne had gone beyond the minimum diplomatic tasks of his position to extend humanitarian assistance to the thousands of Germans, most of modest economic means, residing in France. As enemy aliens they were subject to expulsion or internment by Napoleon's government. The US mission issued safe-conduct passes and arranged railroad transportation for 30,000 Germans expelled from France. For those who remained, Washburne's mission intervened on behalf of those arrested for espionage on inadequate

evidence, distributed relief funds from their home governments, and provided other assistance. President Grant expressed his "entire satisfaction" with Washburne's performance, an opinion later echoed by the French and German governments.

With President Grant's support, the American diplomatic initiative during the Franco-Prussian War laid the foundation for an expansion, during the later 19th and 20th centuries, of protection by neutral powers of enemy civilians, prisoners of war, and other war victims. The humanitarian role of protecting powers is now codified in the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

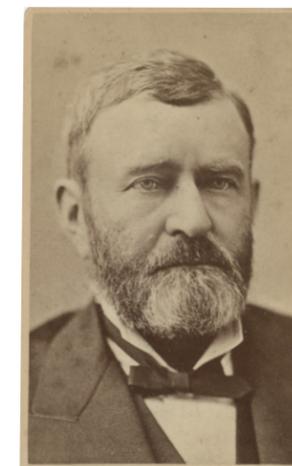
Human Rights Protection of Religious Minorities

The single most disturbing incident in Grant's career occurred on December 17, 1862, when, as major general commanding the Military Department of the Tennessee, he issued an order expelling all Jews, "as a class," from the area under his command. The order was quickly rescinded at the direction of President Lincoln, and thereafter Grant was embarrassed at having issued it. As he explained to a friend on September 29, 1868, the order had been hurriedly issued "without one moment's reflection" at a time when he believed Jewish merchants were engaged in smuggling goods to the Confederacy. He specifically repudiated the order, rejected "prejudice against any race or sect," and wanted "each individual to be judged by his own merit."

During his presidency, Grant tried to make up for the order, personally attending the opening of a new synagogue in Washington, DC, and appointing a record number of Jewish officials. At the international level, he asked the State Department to protest the forcible movement of 2000 Jewish families by Russia. Czar Alexander II eventually reversed the removal order, though it is not clear to what extent this was due to foreign reaction.

In response to newspaper reports of pogroms in Romania, then a vassal

state of the Ottoman Empire, Grant visited the State Department to request investigation of the reports and ask the Turkish government to intervene on behalf of the Jews. In further response to the situation in Romania, in 1870 Grant appointed an American Jew, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, as US consul in Bucharest. The President analogized his role to that of "a missionary ... for the benefit of the people who are laboring under severe oppression ...," i.e., the Jews. During his five years as consul, Peixotto formed a friendship with the country's ruler, Prince Carlos I, formerly Prince von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen of Germany. While the prince was constrained by his country's 1866 constitution (which denied civil rights to Moslems and Jews), Carlos retained considerable influence as a national symbol and, at the urging of Peixotto, was able to prevent some pogroms and moderate anti-Semitic policies of elected politicians. After an 1872 riot involving alleged Jewish desecration of a church, the US consul sheltered some victims in his home and was able to secure the release of those wrongly charged.



Grant as President
LN-0616

Grant's support for international human rights was far ahead of its time, and was opposed by his own Secretary of State. Under 19th century international law, persecution of ethnic and religious minorities was regarded purely an internal matter, off-limits to official expressions of concern by

other governments. The President nevertheless persisted. As his biographer Ron Chernow observed, "Grant set a new benchmark for fostering human rights abroad."

Conclusion: "It is too late in the day to persecute any one on account of condition, birth, creed, or color"

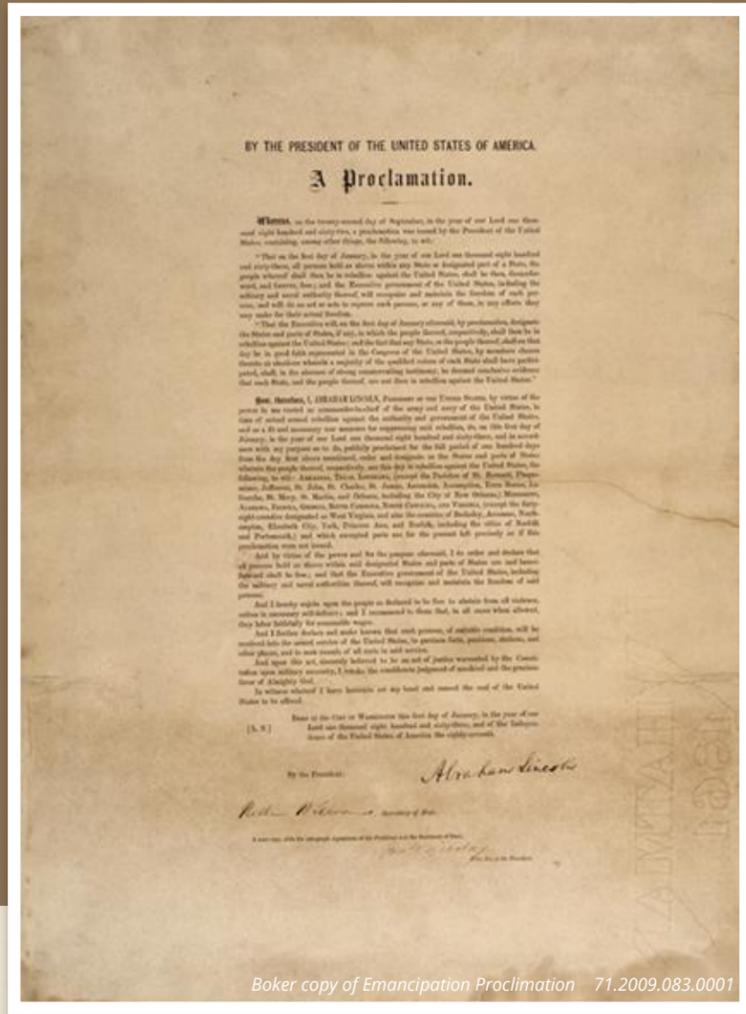
By submitting the Alabama claims to an international tribunal, President Grant was arguably pursuing not only the peaceful settlement of an important dispute, but also the interests of the United States. In light of British reluctance to even entertain the claims, a negotiated settlement was unlikely. That is less true of the war claims considered by the Washington tribunal. Little publicity was given to its activity, probably deliberately. The American public was isolationist, and was unlikely to welcome foreigners judging the legitimacy of military measures taken to save the Union.

Napoleon III had tried to violate the Monroe Doctrine and had leaned towards the Confederacy, so US public opinion was hostile to France at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, a sentiment shared by President Grant. Still, American exertions as protecting power for German nationals went contrary to the general isolationism of the American public and served no material interest of the United States. Fundamentally, Grant's decision to back his Minister in Paris rested on humanitarianism. Again, as his own State Department pointed out, no discernable US national interest justified Grant's policy of promoting the human rights of foreign Jews.

A soldier who had fought in two major wars, as an infantry subaltern and as a commanding general, Grant knew the inherent cruelty of war. As president he left his country a worthy legacy of promoting peace and humanity in international relations.

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Editor's note: all citations for articles will be included in the online version of Lincoln Lore at www.FriendsOfTheLincolnCollection.org.



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REDEEMING THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR

the Harvard University Lecture

An Interview with Allen Guelzo

Sara Gabbard

Sara Gabbard: What were the circumstances surrounding your Lecture titled Redeeming the Great Emancipator.

Allen Guelzo: That requires a long answer. Redeeming the Great Emancipator really began in 2004, when I published *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, because that was where I tackled directly the question of what made Lincoln an emancipator. Although the image of Lincoln as "the Great Emancipator" had been one of the principal ways of describing him, there has been an increasing amount of skepticism since the 1960s about whether African Americans (or anyone else) should regard Lincoln in that light any longer. Beginning with Lerone Bennett and Vincent Harding and then moving to Barbara Fields, an increasing number of African American historians and activists began questioning whether Lincoln was instead a very reluctant emancipator (who only resorted to emancipation as a shrewd tactical or political gesture), or whether he was actually a racist who would have been happy never to have emancipated anyone, or whether the slaves themselves performed their own emancipation by running away from their Confederate masters and pressuring Lincoln into issuing his Proclamation. Underlying these questions was, I think, a discomfort on the part of many African Americans with being made to feel that they "owed" their freedom to a white man, that they had somehow been incapable of seizing it with their own hands. As John McWhorter once put it: "I just can't wrap my head around celebrating the fact that someone else freed my ancestors. It puts too much focus on a time when we were so starkly in the down position."

Well, that's a fair enough objection. There is something genuinely demeaning in having to think that freedom is a gift someone else gives you, rather than a natural right endowed by your Creator. Julius Lester put this about as plainly as anyone has when he said in 1968, "The black school-child...grows up feeling half-guilty for even thinking

about cussing out a white man, because he's been taught that it was a white man who gave us freedom." It means having to remember, all the time, "that you'd still be down on Mr. Charlie's plantation working from can to can't if Mr. Lincoln hadn't done your great-great-grandmother a favor."



George McClellan OC-0808

But does the objection square with the reality? Slaves could free themselves by running away, but that kind of freedom is only de facto freedom; it's only a circumstance, and if circumstances went in other directions – say, if George McClellan had been elected president in 1864 instead of Lincoln – all that de facto freedom would have vanished.

And, yes, it's true, Lincoln could sound strangely remote and aloof when talking about emancipation, as though his Proclamation was something he did out of compulsion. The key exhibits here are the letter he wrote to Horace Greeley in August, 1862, explaining that whatever he did about slavery was about the Union, not the slaves – that he'd free all the slaves, some of the slaves, or none of the slaves if any one of those promoted the restoration of the Union – and the legalese in which the proclamation is couched. But those exhibits actually point in the other direction: no previous president would ever have dared to suggest that he'd consider emancipating any slave at all, for

any reason; and the language of the Proclamation is so legalistic because the Proclamation is a legal document. It has work to do, and the work it does is to invoke the "war powers" of the President to emancipate three million slaves – and that's permanent, de jure emancipation, not just circumstantial de facto emancipation. And the proclamation is worded as carefully as it is because Lincoln understood that he had to keep this Proclamation free from challenges in federal court – where the last word would have been uttered by Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney, who was simply itching for a chance to strike emancipation out of Lincoln's hands. So, my conclusion in Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was that Lincoln was indeed an emancipator – a Great Emancipator – and that the principal response we all can have is to admire the skill with which he dodges every possible opposition to make it happen.

That was part one. In 2008, Henry Louis Gates was creating a PBS documentary, *Looking for Lincoln*, and he came to Gettysburg to film a segment there. He contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in going on camera. We met at Tommy's Pizza in Gettysburg for lunch, then headed out to the Soldiers National Cemetery to talk about Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address. That became the start of a great friendship. And in 2010, as the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard, Gates invited me to deliver the annual Nathan I. Huggins Lectures at Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. It's a distinguished lecture series, and was all the more attractive for me since as an undergraduate I had written a paper on the Harlem Renaissance, using Huggins' newly-published *Harlem Renaissance* (1971). And besides, I had been a Fellow at the Charles Warren Center at Harvard in 1994-95, and (so to speak) knew the Harvard territory; so, add Skip Gates to the equation, and it was an opportunity not to be missed. I delivered the Lectures as a series in 2012 under the title *Redeeming the Great Emancipator* as a way of reclaiming the legitimacy of describing Lincoln by that title, and

they were then published by Harvard University Press in 2016.

SG: Please explain your interest in the topic Lincoln and the Doctrine of Necessity.

AG: Lincoln grew up in the Kentucky and Indiana backwoods as part of a family deeply entwined, in religious terms, around Calvinism – Calvinism being the doctrine that God ordains every event, every action, every thought, and has done so even before the world began. It can seem like a tremendously depressing doctrine, since you could assume that this means we don't really make any decisions under our own power; on the other hand, it can be tremendously empowering, because it could also mean that nothing can touch you or harm you except by God's personal decree. Lincoln grew up, putting a good deal of distance between himself and his family's religion – he never joined a church, never embraced any formal religious creed – but he also never lost the impress of that fundamental sense that all human events were determined beforehand. He called this, in 1847, the "Doctrine of Necessity" – "that the human mind is impelled to action, or held in rest by some power, over which the mind itself has no control." And he would refer to this repeatedly throughout his life. William Henry Herndon once said that Lincoln believed that an individual was "simply a simple tool, a cog, a part and parcel" of a Great Mechanism of necessity "that strikes and cuts, grinds and mashes, all things that resist it." Even as President, Lincoln could point to "many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will," and he told Albert Hodges in 1864 that "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

Now, it may seem odd that a man who should be known as a Great Emancipator should believe that there is no human free will. On the other hand, it may have been precisely the conviction that God's will overrules human wills which nerved him to take the step he did in

emancipation.

I came to this subject because I had written my doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania on the problem of determinism in 18th-century moral philosophy. I knew that Lincoln had said things pertinent to that, and as I planned a second book on American theories of determinism in the early 1990s, I thought it would be clever to be able to include Lincoln among the voices in that book. That led to writing a paper for the Abraham Lincoln Association's annual meeting in Springfield in 1995 on "Abraham Lincoln and the Doctrine of Necessity." The success of that paper was so surprising that I never returned to my determinism project. Once my hand was in the Lincoln cookie-jar, it's stayed there.

SG: In the lecture, you include a thoughtful quote by Alexis de Tocqueville about the perception of inequalities in America. Please comment.

AG: Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (which was the product of Tocqueville's exploratory tour of American politics in the 1830s) is a book which still abounds in pertinent and surprising insights into democratic life. He made a comment which explained a great deal to me about our current troubled racial environment: "When inequality is the common law of a society, the strongest inequalities do not strike the eye." But "when everything is nearly on a level, the least of them wound it," so that "the desire for equality always becomes more insatiable as equality is greater." Tocqueville was talking more about class than race, but it has application to race in America as well. In the long history of human societies, none has achieved greater and more prevailing environments of equality than the American one, or overcome more obstacles in its path. But that real equality is occluded by the remainders of inequality, which rise up to what seem to be intolerable and mountainous heights. The result, in the case of Lincoln, is the urge to cast him in shadow for what he failed to accomplish in terms of equality, while forgetting the extraordinary

steps he made us take to cross the most unimaginable gulfs of inequality.

SG: I loved your statement that "Every reputation has a shelf life." How does this concept apply to Abraham Lincoln?

AG: There's never been a time when I can remember not regarding Lincoln as a great statesman and a Great Emancipator. But I also have to acknowledge that Lincoln's reputation is not what it once was. Barry Schwartz has written two wonderful books on Lincoln's historical standing, and locates the apex of Lincoln's cultural appeal between the two World Wars; thereafter, polls and surveys show a definite slippage in popular adulation for Lincoln, while visitation to Lincoln-related sites has



Alexis de Tocqueville
LC-DIG-ds-08055

fallen by double-digit percentages. African American ratings of Lincoln likewise dropped (in Schwartz's calculations, from 48% of African Americans evaluating Lincoln as one of the "three greatest presidents" in 1956 to just 28% in 1999). Maybe the hinge moment was 1968, when Congress – to my mind, absurdly – combined Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays into "Presidents' Day." Perhaps there is a certain inevitability in this: every generation crowds onto the stage of human history with its own set of heroes and villains, and shrinks the time and attention we can spare to give to other, earlier figures. But I think Schwartz was right when he put his finger on modern

democratic society as a major culprit, for the way in which it "no longer requires great men and women to revere" and develops "cynicism toward cultural ideals." Looked at that way, the deterioration of the Lincoln reputation is not simply an inevitability imposed by time but a pathology we absorb from our culture.

SG: What is a "world come of age?"

AG: It's a slightly different, more theological way of making Schwartz's point. The phrase was coined by the German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was martyred by the Nazis in 1945. Bonhoeffer was trying to describe how the world of the 20th century had seemingly abandoned any need for God – and, as a result, deified monsters like Hitler. We live, Bonhoeffer explained, in a "world come of age" – a world in which we behave like newly grown-up adolescents who strike out on their own path in life, leaving the family home or even rejecting family direction and authority. When young people "come of age," they imagine they have no debts to the past, or any other authority. I think this has application to the way we have treated, not only Lincoln, but American history as a whole. We are invited, for instance, by The 1619 Project to believe that the "old history" of America is nothing but a mess of deceptions, put over on us by earlier generations who simply wanted to control us. Boil it down to psychological terms, and it's not much different from the adolescents who suddenly decide that their parents are fools and that they are the ones who truly understand the way the world works and what should be valued in it. It seemed to me that this was an apt parallel to how we, as a culture, have come to view Lincoln. Just as European civilization believed it had "come of age" – that it no longer required God or the Church but was capable of setting-up its own truth – we have arrived at the point of knowing how ragged and diminished Lincoln must be, especially when compared with ourselves.



William Lloyd Garrison
LN-0585

SG: You report some conflicting feelings of freedmen about Northern "liberators."

AG: How could they not? Very few of those who marched South to put down the Confederacy did so out of love for African Americans, or with a view to promoting African Americans to social and civil equality with themselves. Many Northern enthusiasts for the abolition of slavery saw the problem of slavery as its threat to white free labor, and didn't imagine the War as some gesture of racial generosity.

Even as thorough-going an abolitionist as William Lloyd Garrison could not conceal his resentment at Frederick Douglass when it began to appear that Douglass was achieving greater prominence than Garrison. For the same reason, people who had been in slavery for generations because they were black, by masters who ruled them because they were white, had no particular reason to trust whites, even when they came as liberators in the form of the Union Army. George Henry Nichols, a staff officer for William Tecumseh Sherman on the March to the Sea in 1864, was stunned when an elderly African American displayed something less than enthusiasm for the arrival of Sherman's troops. "I spose dat you'se true," he replied when Sherman tried to assure him of the white soldiers' good will. "But, massa, you'se 'll go way to-morrow, and anudder white man'll come." This mistrust was one reason

why there was no general slave insurrection during the Civil War. Slave rebellion, after the pattern of Nat Turner's uprising in 1831, had haunted the days and nights of white Southerners, and many northern whites fully expected that when the Civil War drained Southern whites away from home and into the Confederate Army, the slaves would seize the opportunity to rise up and strike them from behind. They didn't. This was not because of some Uncle-Remus-like affection for the Ol' Massa; it was a hard-headed calculation of risk, and there was no compelling reason why African Americans in bondage should risk themselves and their families for the sake of one collection of white people over another.

SG: Are there points in Lincoln's life when you can see his views on race and emancipation change? Please explain your statement that his anti-slavery feelings and actions developed in a "bafflingly obtuse fashion."

AG: Lincoln was not exaggerating when he said that he had always hated slavery, that if slavery wasn't wrong, nothing was wrong. But he began as a politician in the 1830s with the very common assumption that slavery was a backwards-facing institution, a left-over of "injustice and bad policy" from British colonial days, and that if it was confined to the states where it was already legal, it would asphyxiate from want of land and room to grow. He was not entirely wrong to think that way, since Southern slaveholders agreed, only drawing an entirely different conclusion – that they must have room to expand. But the Missouri Compromise in 1820 sharply limited the available room for the growth of slavery, and even the Compromise of 1850 only gave it a possibility of growth, through the doctrine of popular sovereignty, and in places like New Mexico where hardly anyone expected it could flourish. So, the expectation of "ultimate extinction" persisted. Lincoln hoped, in his solitary term in Congress from 1847 to '49, that he could sponsor legislation at least to exclude slavery from the District of Columbia. But

at the same time, he represented Robert Matson in an Illinois case that involved re-possessing a fugitive slave. How could he do both? How could he be so, well, obtuse?

Partly, he could be that indifferent to slavery because so many other anti-slavery people thought exactly the same way about the future of slavery: don't kick the dying lion. Partly, it was because the people who were outright abolitionists in the 1840s were Garrisonian absolutists, and Lincoln had seen enough of moral absolutism in his parents' religion to want as little to do as possible with it (an attitude which is, by the way, amply reflected in Lincoln's Washingtonian Temperance speech in 1842). And he could defend Robert Matson because Matson could stand behind at least some semblance of Illinois' transit laws, or at least enough for Lincoln to see Matson, in a lawyer-like fashion, as having the letter of the law on his side. (Actually, Matson didn't, but that would only emerge as a product of discovery). It's not until 1854 and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act that Lincoln awoke to realize that he – and the rest of the anti-slavery movement – had been fooling themselves about slavery's soon-to-happen demise. Even then, though, Lincoln campaigned against the extension of slavery into the West, not its abolition in the South, and largely because he understood that there was no Constitutional warrant to intrude into Southern state legislation on slavery. On that point, he is not so much being obtuse any more, as he is playing within the rules of the game set out in the Constitution.

SG: Can you identify a specific time during Reconstruction when the "long slide backwards" in race relations began?

AG: In some ways, I'm not sure that there is a slide backwards, as much as there had been a slide forward in Northern optimism about race relations after the War, a slide forward which was fairly quickly extinguished. The Emancipation Proclamation did not meet with anything like universal approval, as Lincoln acknowledged to Hannibal Hamlin; in fact, Republicans lost

over thirty seats in the House of Representatives in the off-year Congressional elections only weeks after Lincoln issued the preliminary Proclamation. The 13th Amendment passed through Congress in January, 1865, but only after earlier failures, and only by a squeaker of a vote in the House of Representatives. The war was hardly over before several Northern states explicitly voted down equal voting rights for African Americans (an embarrassment which forced Congress to take action through the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th and 15th Amendments). The Ulysses Grant administration was bolder in its defense of African American civil rights. But that was only until the Panic of 1873 put control of the House of Representatives back into Democratic hands. That, together with the Supreme Court's decisions in *Slaughterhouse Cases*, *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, and ultimately *Plessy v. Ferguson*, wiped out whatever real gains had been made toward racial equality. The backwards slide was long only in the sense that it took two decades to erase many of the gains made by 1869 and the 15th Amendment; but it was not long in distance.

SG: Please comment on the "four causes which lie at the root of the failure of emancipation."

AG: One of these – perhaps the principal one – was Lincoln's murder. Lincoln played his political cards so close to the chest that it's extremely difficult to guess at what Reconstruction might have looked like in his hands. But I think it's fair to say that it would have at least involved voting rights, education funding, and very possibly some form of redistribution of land confiscated from Confederates convicted of treason. But under Andrew Johnson, none of that takes place except for the first, and that only because of Congressional determination. The second was the failure to exclude former Confederates from returning to power in the South, and using that power to clamp decisive restrictions on African American life. This may have been an overly open-handed application of Lincoln's urging to show malice

toward none, but it allowed too much of the South to be recaptured by the same people who had led it into a war to defend slavery. The third was Democratic politics in the North, which had always been opposed to emancipation and to its consequences. And the last was the Supreme Court, which in an effort to re-assert the prerogatives Lincoln had slipped away from it during the war, now boldly advanced to claim jurisdiction over federal oversight of racial politics in the South -- and to make a perfect slop of them. By the time we get to *U.S. v. Cruikshank* in 1876, the promise of emancipation had been reduced to what one African American complained was "nothing but freedom."

SG: What was the "contradictory position African Americans themselves were forced to occupy in Reconstruction?"

AG: The North's victory in the Civil War was supposed to be the victory of free labor economics over the slave system – of capitalism over feudalism, if you will. African Americans would be liberated, not just *from* enslavement, but *for* participation in the smiling world of free labor. As Carl Schurz wrote, "The immense resources of the soil will, as by enchantment, spring to light under the magic touch of free labor, and her riches will be enjoyed by a free, happy, and—who doubts it? –loyal people." But how were they to enter this free labor environment? The war did next to nothing to change the patterns of land ownership in the South – in many cases, the same property owners appear in the 1870 census owning the same property they're described as owning in the 1860 census. Without access to land of their own (the legendary "forty acres and a mule"), African Americans had no path to independent ownership of production; they would have to sell their labor at whatever price white Southerners would pay for it, and there was no guarantee that white Southerners would not collude to suppress that price, even to the point of eliminating cash wages in favor of sharecropping. The victorious North might have solved that problem by confiscating and redistributing Confederate property,

but confiscation and redistribution cut straight across the ethos of free labor capitalism, not to mention the Constitutional prohibitions on bills of attainder and arbitrary search and seizure. As a result, African Americans were expected to pull themselves up by their own emancipated strength – but without any rope to pull on.

SG: I was fascinated by your coverage of the story of Freedmen establishing their own churches, unions, and fraternal organizations. Please comment.

AG: One story of the post-war South is about segregation, with Southern whites gradually inventing separate spheres for whites and African Americans to inhabit, and the African American spheres being rendered intentionally inferior to those of the whites. But there is also a real sense in which postwar African Americans consciously self-segregated for their own protection. The South's pre-war slave society was a curiously integrated one, but one in which the integration was structured always to remind African Americans of their inferiority to whites. Hence, Southern churches often contained both blacks and whites in their congregations (in fact, Southern whites preferred this rather than allow their slaves to create unsupervised congregations of their own), but the physical organization of such spaces gave the authoritative areas at the front or on the floor to whites and relegated African Americans to the rear or to galleries. This was integration, yes, but arranged to discourage any notions of equality rather than promoting them. The same patterns followed in other social spaces. Once emancipation had loosed the bands of slavery, African Americans withdrew from white organizations to create their own self-regulated autonomous ones. By 1870, the Methodist Annual Conference of Georgia reported that its African American membership had shrunk from 27,000 to just 1500; Georgia Presbyterians lost so many African American members that they stopped reporting African American membership statistics. African Americans instead organized their own associations (for instance: the Colored Methodist Episcopal

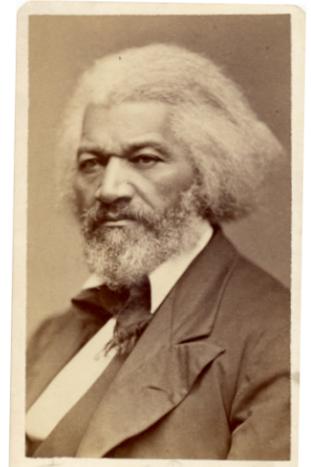
Church in 1870) or else Southern branches of historically-black northern denominations (the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal—Zion Church). This should not be mistaken for co-operation with Southern white racism; it was instead a tactic for obtaining independence from Southern white dictatorship, even after emancipation.

SG: Please comment on the statement that slavery, for Abraham Lincoln, "was a political and economic problem before it was a racial one."

AG: Lincoln's primary aversion to slavery grew from the way it said "You toil, and work, and earn bread, and I'll eat it." This was a "tyrannical principle," and as such it actually transcended race. Any king, as much as any slaveowner, was doing the same thing when he "seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor." Lincoln even compared himself to a slave in the 1850s when John Roll heard him say "that we were all slaves one time or another," even if "white men could make themselves free and the Negroes could not." Slavery, then, described any relation of power in which one person exploited or extracted the product of someone else's work without their consent. That certainly described the work Lincoln had been compelled to provide for his father; and it was for Lincoln a moment of emancipation when, as a youth, he had been able to earn money for himself by ferrying passengers out to midstream in the Ohio river to flag down passing steamboats. In the same way (Lincoln said) Roll "used to be a slave, but he has made himself free, and I used to be a slave, and now I am so free that they let me practice law."

Any form of such subordination, whether it came from "crowned-kings, money-kings, and land-kings," was politically and economically offensive to Lincoln. His notion of a free society was a network of independent small-producers, "deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil." That the principal target of slavery was, in Lincoln's America, African Americans was the least-

important consideration in his mind; it was the fundamental existence of slavery itself in the American republic which he feared "is undermining the principles of progress, and fatally violating the noblest political system the world ever saw."



Frederick Douglass
LN-0513

This helps to explain his general indifference to racial questions in the 1850s, even to the point in 1854 of admitting that, even if slavery could be ended, he could not countenance making African Americans "politically and socially, our equals." But on the other hand, it meant that he could also begin to see, in the striving of African Americans to control their own labor and transform themselves by its improvement, a striving identical to his own. Hence, Frederick Douglass's comment years later that Lincoln "was the first great man that I talked with in the United States freely, who in no single instance reminded me of the difference between himself and myself, of the difference of color," something which Douglass shrewdly guessed was "because of the similarity with which I had fought my way up, we both starting at the lowest round of the ladder." He had been a slave; Lincoln had been a slave. After that, race faded as a consideration. Perhaps it may yet for all of us.

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Sangamon River 71.2009.083.1515



Ann Rutledge ZPC-179

THE SANGAMON, SOURED

Lincoln, The Man & Its Twisted Tropes

Bethany Villaruz

A slight summer breeze ruffled through the leaves lining the shimmering Sangamon River. A young Edgar Lee Masters, known to his family as only “Lee,” frolicked along Menard County’s defining feature. The winding river curved like an artist’s desultory brushstroke through the landscape of central Illinois, providing a backdrop for Masters’ first brush with the folkloric history surrounding President Abraham Lincoln.



Sangamon River 71.2009.083.1515

He perched upon the riverbanks alongside his father, laid on the courthouse lawn, and drove along the Illinois countryside throughout his childhood, all while William Henry Herndon told stories “grave and obscene” about Lincoln. Herndon relayed to Masters what were likely the beginnings of his own biography, unknowingly providing fodder for Masters’ own scathing rendition of Lincoln’s life. As he grew into a lawyer and biographer in his own right, Masters warped Herndon’s nostalgic tales into one of his own: *Lincoln: The Man*, an unrelenting criticism of Lincoln and all that he represented.¹

Lincoln: The Man came to fruition slowly; Masters’ research began with Herndon’s first retellings of Lincoln’s exploits and ended with Albert Beveridge’s own biography, which was published around the same time as his own. Masters proclaims that he sets out not to give mere details of Lincoln’s life, as Beveridge does, but rather to form “an analysis of Lincoln’s mind and character.” His analysis proved to be a critical one, an attempt to debunk the legend that had defined Lincoln’s legacy up to that point. Given that Masters endeavored to produce not a pure history but a biographical narrative, it’s only natural that common themes come to the fore in his work surrounding Lincoln’s life. In *Lincoln*

in American Memory, Merrill D. Peterson posits that all Lincoln “lives” characterize Lincoln as one of five archetypes: The “Savior of the Union,” the “Great Emancipator,” the “Man of the People,” the “First American,” and the “Self-made Man.” Lincoln appears as all these things throughout Masters’ works: Biography, poetry, and pure prose alike. However, the theme that is most prominent—and that Masters most seems to despise—is Lincoln as the “Self-made Man.”²

To be a self-made man would seem, put simply, a good thing. At the very least, Peterson says so, stating that through “ambition and a handful of books, [Lincoln] achieved the eminence of a ‘self-made man.’” Peterson’s use of the word “eminence” to describe the fruits of Lincoln’s labor implies that he, and society at large, believe his “rags-to-riches” narrative is a positive one. Masters would disagree. Therein lies the question—what might Masters, himself a man who “thought he was destined to be a farmer—” have against Lincoln’s own rise from the sludge that lines the Sangamon? Masters’ opinion of the virtues of the “self-made man” differs greatly from that of Peterson. Where Masters criticizes Lincoln’s tendency to be “profoundly ashamed of the poverty of his youth,” Peterson identifies this “fierce desire to rise above the life into which he was born” as a positive narrative throughout the canon of Lincolniana, echoing that of other self-made men of the time like Frederick Douglass and Henry Clay (who is known for coining the term). Masters flips the “self-made man” archetype on its head in order to supplement his critical analysis of Lincoln’s mind and presidency, creating dissonance between the traditional tools of biographing Lincoln and the light in which he is portrayed. That is to say: Archetypes as Peterson describes them are usually used in adulation of Lincoln, whereas Masters subverts a specific archetype in order to pose a critique. *Lincoln: The Man* is the product of resentment for Lincoln that grew over the course of Masters’ entire life. The book made his long-standing frustration with Lincoln and his policies explicit rather than implied,

as it had been in his previous works.³

Masters’ professional interest in Lincoln began early in his career, his opinion only festering as the Progressive political movement marched on and his career dwindled. Masters was a born and bred Democrat. His grandfather’s political convictions sparked Masters’ own long-held admiration for Stephen Douglas, which manifested itself in both vitriolic Progressivism and hatred for Lincoln.



Edgar Lee Masters LC-G401-4499-004

Masters’ earliest reference to Lincoln is also his most famous. *Spoon River Anthology*, which shot him to literary fame in 1915, is home to a poem that once decorated Anne Rutledge’s grave. The poem itself implies a rosy view of Lincoln’s alleged dalliance with Rutledge—Masters described her as “Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln, / Wedded to him, not through union, / But through separation.” Taken at face value, it seems a standard rendition of the legend that makes Lincoln and Rutledge’s relationship out to be a tragic romance—for indeed, “when [Masters] wrote *Spoon River* in 1914 the Anne Rutledge story was unquestioned so far as [he knew].” *Spoon River* perpetuates the very myth of everlasting love that Masters would come to disassemble. However, his romanticization of “separation” hints at the future bitterness he would feel towards both Lincoln’s interpersonal life and his policies.⁴

First, the interpersonal: In *Lincoln: The Man*, he declared that Lincoln had “no lasting love, if any love, for Ann Rutledge.” To prove this, Masters

quoted letters from Lincoln to Mary Owens, a woman with whom Masters claimed Lincoln had been involved at the same time he was ostensibly seeing Rutledge. However, Rutledge had already died by the time Lincoln began corresponding with Owens. He also pointed out the suspicious lack of letters from Lincoln to Rutledge—despite their physical proximity in New Salem, it seems strange in Masters' mind that Lincoln would be so diligent in his correspondence to Owens but not with Rutledge (if indeed he had been in love with her). In proving this, he returns to the concept of separation—according to Masters, “lovers in separation do not so act.” He paints a picture of a coarse man without the capacity to love Rutledge, being too caught up in his own political motivations (for Mary Owens “was born of an excellent family, of means”) for marrying to pay her much mind. This brazen claim led to a proposition that Masters' epitaph be chiseled off Rutledge's grave. If Rutledge and Lincoln were separated not because of a tragic love, as in Masters' original epitaph, but because of a historical lack of connection, it followed that the epitaph was not historically accurate and mustn't remain on Rutledge's tombstone. Though never carried out, the proposed destruction mirrors Masters' own deteriorating views on Lincoln.⁵



Ann Rutledge
ZPC-179

Second, the political: throughout his biography, Masters criticized Lincoln's mission of prioritizing the Union above all else. The romanticization of physical separation in “Anne Rutledge” reflects the romanticization of political separation, or secession, in *Lincoln: The Man*. “The South knew and had been saying for years that under the guise of freedom for the negro lurked centralization,” said Masters of Lincoln's abolitionist

stance. Separation was preferable to the centralization that was Lincoln's real goal. Despite his Midwestern upbringing, Masters sympathized with the South's desires and writes that “secession was perfectly legal.” Even in a work elegizing Lincoln's relationship with Ann Rutledge, Masters romanticizes the notion of separation. This idea manifests in the form of Masters' agreement with the South's secession and disagreement with Lincoln's drive to centralize and preserve the Union. His Democratic roots, coupled with his own Progressivism amid its rising popularity, ensured this criticism of Lincoln's overtly Republican actions.⁶

Spoon River Anthology also houses Masters' poems “William H. Herndon” and “Hannah Armstrong.” Told from Herndon's point of view, the former exemplifies the glorified stories of Lincoln that Masters heard as a boy. The Herndon of Masters' mind “saw a man arise from the soil like a fabled giant,” painting an image of grandeur out of Lincoln's rise to power. The latter poem relays the story of Hannah Armstrong, a figure from Lincoln's childhood who requests that he discharge her son from the army. She succeeds; Lincoln greets her with “a laugh” and spends time talking about “the early days” in a nostalgic vignette. The idealistic view of Lincoln that Masters expresses through Herndon and Armstrong in the poems, however, is discordant with Masters' later opinions on Lincoln. Although it seems as if Masters portrayed the “self-made man” trope positively in “William H. Herndon,” the use of the words “fabled giant” once again foreshadows his eventual disdain. Even in “Hannah Armstrong,” there is a moment wherein Armstrong worries that Lincoln “ain't the same” and has become callous in his newfound power. Masters believed the perception of Lincoln as a “man of the people” was a “myth,” a product of “the American folk-making lore of the times.” To Masters, Lincoln's rise from poverty to the presidency was merely a folktale grown from American citizens' desire to have a hero. The language Masters used to describe Lincoln in 1915—that is, that of a fable—predicates his argument in 1931. In *Lincoln: The Man*, he argues that the perception

of Lincoln as a “self-made man” is just that: A fable and a falsehood. Here, Masters manipulates the common trope of the “self-made man” in order to pose his own critique of Lincoln.⁷

One wonders if Herndon's voice is not just a vehicle for Masters' own dissatisfaction with Lincoln. For example, below are lines 20-26 of “William H. Herndon.”

*O Lincoln, actor indeed, playing well
your part,
And Booth, who strode in a mimic
play within the play,
Often and often I saw you,
As the cawing crows winged their
way to the wood
Over my house-top at solemn
sunsets,
There by my window,
Alone.*

Although subtle, Masters' chosen metaphors imply a skepticism that later manifested in *Lincoln: The Man's* harsh critiques. By referring to Lincoln as an “actor,” he conveys a disingenuous view that taints his impression of Lincoln's legacy throughout his works. To Masters, Lincoln's achievements were shallow. What is metaphorical in “William Henry Herndon” becomes explicit in *Lincoln: The Man*. Unadorned with figurative language, Masters states that “Lincoln was profoundly an actor.” In his career as a trial lawyer, argues Masters, Lincoln relied on dramatic effect to win his cases. This is, of course, inaccurate; Lincoln was widely known to have relied on his own logic in court. In Peterson's words, Masters described Lincoln as “a lazy sneak without brains.” He acknowledges that Lincoln's strategy in court was successful. However, according to Masters, they did “not need the learning and the skill of a man well read in the law, and studiously grounded in its principles.” Lincoln's successes were coated by the sheen of what Masters perceived as his ignorance. Needless to say, this is another example of Masters subverting Peterson's trope of the “self-made man.” Masters' disdainful tone in his biography is his poetic metaphors in full bloom—as in Herndon's nostalgic reminiscence, Lincoln is an actor not only on the stage of the Civil War but in his

intelligence and career. The poem as a whole is tinged with skepticism that mirrors Masters' skepticism of the “self-made man.” It seems almost as if Masters viewed Lincoln as a mythical figure, as he is portrayed in the poem—but a mythical figure that needed to be disproven in his own biographical undertakings.⁸

Masters did not wait until his biographical work, however, to start sharing his own burgeoning critiques of Lincoln. His 1922 novel *Children of the Market Place* began the pursuit in earnest. Following James Miles, a fictional disciple of Stephen Douglas who believes Lincoln is a cheap hack, *Children of the Market Place* is the first explicit documentation of Masters' hatred towards Lincoln and “veneration of Douglas.” Once again, Masters flips the “self-made man” archetype to degrade Lincoln. He is “an educated gawk, a rural genius, a pied piper of motley followers.” Although Masters acknowledges Lincoln's command of words and of his voters, his use of the words “gawk” and “motley” betray his true opinion. Miles is unimpressed by Lincoln and his debates with Douglas. His description of Lincoln as a “pied piper” implies that he is almost like a charlatan—all of Lincoln's arguments are shrouded in falsity and the ignorance of an uneducated man.⁹

Despite Masters' broadly negative portrayal, Lincoln's image in *Children of the Market Place* contains much more nuance than in *Lincoln: The Man*. When Lincoln appears in the former, Masters focuses chiefly on his campaign in contrast to that of Stephen Douglas. The latter, of course, covers the entirety of Lincoln's life. Masters' portrayal of Lincoln's campaign in *Lincoln: The Man* is unrelentingly acrid. Any reference to “his lowly origin,” writes Masters, is naught but a “guise” meant for political gain. In *Children of the Market Place*, however, Miles is at one point impressed by Lincoln's “face out of the womb of poverty and sorrow.” This sentence, written a decade before the publication of *Lincoln: The Man*, reflects the opposite sentiment that one would expect from Masters. The contradictions in *Children of the Market Place* set out a puzzle—why, when Masters so clearly views Lincoln

as the aforementioned “pied piper,” would he then go on to compliment his rise from poverty through Miles? The answer might be a mere matter of characterization—perhaps Masters was only attempting to paint Lincoln as Miles would have seen him. Then there is the book's subject matter. In a novel that amounts to a glorified Douglas campaign booklet, it is not unbelievable that Masters may have been trying to show Lincoln some small mercies. Might he, for once, have been buying into Peterson's notion that Lincoln “called attention to his commonness, thereby shaping his own myth?”¹⁰

The answer lies in Masters' own life. Although he clearly preferred Douglas to Lincoln, Masters still composed near-poetic musings that convey a rosier image than one might expect. In *Children of the Market Place*, Masters says of Lincoln:

“...I saw for a swift moment in the glancing of the sun, as he uttered these words, the genius of the poet who knows and states, who has lived years of loneliness and failure, who has seen others grow rich, notable, and powerful, and who has remained obscure and unobeyed, with nothing but a vision which has become lightning at last in a supreme moment of inspiration.”

Lincoln's story in this quotation bears a striking resemblance to Masters' own. His comparison of Lincoln to a poet, of course, echoes his own profession, and the following descriptions are reminiscent of Masters' own experiences at the time. Masters “had tried and failed to produce an equal to *Spoon River [Anthology]*,” and “there was by mid-1921 some justification for referring to him as a one-book author.” Masters, as Lincoln with Douglas in *Children of the Market Place*, watched contemporaries like Carl Sandburg rise to fame as he lost notoriety. His struggles in his professional life gave him newfound sympathy for what he viewed as Lincoln's own struggles in overcoming Douglas. Although the novel is primarily a treatise on the Jeffersonian democracy Masters held so dear and a vehicle promoting Douglas, the flashes of sympathy

for Lincoln stem from Masters' own similar struggles.¹¹

By 1928, Masters' anti-Lincoln opinions were firmly cemented. *Children of the Market Place* was neither a commercial nor a critical success, and Masters embarked on a new attempt to maintain his place in the literary canon. He did so through *Jack Kelso: A Dramatic Poem*. *Jack Kelso* is exactly what it sounds like—a dramatic poem surrounding the folkloric life of Jack Kelso, one of Lincoln's alleged childhood teachers. Although Kelso did not achieve the commercial success Masters had hoped for, it reveals a great deal about his changing attitude towards Lincoln's mythos. Lincoln becomes a caricature of himself, a bumbling cartoon who stumbles into glory. “I'm for you, Kelso. Here is my paw,” says Lincoln as he introduces himself. His simple language is played for laughs, once again demonstrating how Masters subverts the trope of the “self-made man” to imply his own criticisms. By the end of the poem, says biographer Herbert K. Russell, “Lincoln was on his way to becoming an American ogre, and Jack Kelso had tried to throw himself down a well.” *Kelso* was so critical of both Lincoln and several groups that it was never staged and secured Masters' place as a “writer of verse dramas never performed.”¹²

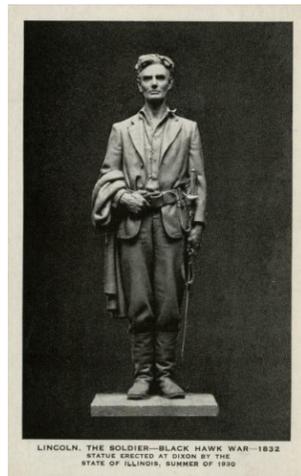
However, it was quite successful in beginning to debunk the Ann Rutledge romance and in establishing Masters' profound dislike for Lincoln. Although Kelso bears witness to Lincoln and Rutledge's burgeoning courtship within the poem, Rutledge's fiancé later states that “never, so they say / At any time did [Lincoln] evince / An interest in her.” Although this may seem to be merely a matter of characterization, Masters' later claim in *Lincoln: The Man* that “Lincoln never courted Ann Rutledge” indicates that the line in *Kelso* is simply the start of Masters' disillusionment with the Rutledge romance. Moreover, Masters refers to Lincoln's more concrete courtship of Mary Owens in *Kelso*; one character notes that “Abe sometimes provokes / A woman with his careless ways, / Means nothing by it.” Not only did Lincoln care little for Rutledge, he was also a callous lover

in general. This is in keeping with Lincoln's political characterization in *Lincoln: The Man* as a man without "definite vision." Douglas, Masters' most favorite politician, comments that "Lincoln would ruin the state on a chance / Theory to save it." In both *Kelso* and *Lincoln: The Man*, Masters portrayed Lincoln as a man without any real knowledge of how to properly lead and govern. In both the personal and the political, he was rash and indecisive. Lincoln's ignorance, a product of his humble upbringing, prevented him from becoming great in Masters' eyes. The "self-made man" type is all the more reason to dislike Lincoln, rather than a reason to venerate him.¹³

In the few years between *Jack Kelso* and *Lincoln: The Man*, Masters' resentment for Lincoln only grew. Rarely did Masters publish political opinions unmasked by the guise of fiction, but his work speaks for itself—he lived and died for Douglas' view of democracy in *Children of the Market Place*, and according to scholar Matthew D. Norman, fixated on the "continuing struggle between Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian principles" throughout his life. Indeed, the rise of progressivism might be the impetus for *Lincoln: The Man*. Political scientist Bradley C.S. Watson writes that the Midwestern progressivism in which Masters would have partaken had one "ultimate purpose: democracy." As the mid-century approached, progressivism and democratic ideology grew ever more popular in the Midwest and across the United States. Such an increased acceptance of Masters' own beliefs, held dear since childhood, gave him both reason and excuse to write a work so openly critical of the man who was the country's gold standard for moral Republicanism. The first pages of *Lincoln: The Man* criticize his policies and the glorification thereof, claiming that "his acts were against liberty, and so much to the advantage of monopoly and privilege, from his first days in 1832 at New Salem, Illinois, to the end of his life." As Russell writes, Masters "regarded [1860 to 1912] as a half-century of Republican misrule." The political undertones in "Ann Rutledge" are no longer undertones in *Lincoln: The Man*. Rather, the

Midwestern progressive movement buoyed Masters' expression of discontent with the Republican party in both the Civil War era and his own.¹⁴

The vitriol with which Masters attacks Lincoln from the very beginning of his biography results from the "Masters family tradition to be suspicious of Lincoln." Squire Davis Masters, Edgar Lee Masters' grandfather, had instilled in his son and grandson an instinct to criticize Lincoln after his own negative experiences with him in the Black Hawk War.



Lincoln, the Soldier - Black Hawk War
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Although he "had liked" Lincoln, Squire Davis "voted against Lincoln for United States senator because he thought Lincoln's policies would bring on war between the states." That the youngest Masters resisted this anti-Lincoln mindset long enough to convey a broadly positive view of Lincoln in *Spoon River Anthology* and brief moment of praise in *Children of the Market Place* is almost impressive, especially taken with his claim in *Lincoln: The Man* that Lincoln had "something of distaste for the specimens of Democracy about him." His political motivations, implied in "Ann Rutledge," are stronger than ever in *Lincoln: The Man*. Although none of Masters' work can be called "pro-Lincoln," there is a stark contrast between his previous work and *Lincoln: The Man*. The slight progression in his hatred for Lincoln from *Spoon River Anthology* to *Children of the Market Place* to *Jack Kelso* does not account for his sharp switch in

tone—such a startling change can only be explained by external factors, the political among them.¹⁵

The progressive movement and political motivations that came with it were not the only reasons driving Masters' tome. His personal and professional life were in a rut that would require a strong push to exit—not only was he recently divorced, but he still had yet to produce any work that compared to *Spoon River Anthology* in either critical acclaim or commercial success. Moreover, other Lincoln biographies rose in prominence as the Great Depression set in and American citizens looked to the glory of historical figures to cope. Fellow Midwesterners Albert Beveridge and Carl Sandburg had also published new biographies of Lincoln. Sandburg, himself a poet, wrote multiple volumes on Lincoln's childhood and presidency.



Sandburg visits Fort Wayne

Sandburg's idyllic portrayal of the Lincoln legend was "so popular that it was making people think of Sandburg rather than Masters when they spoke of the New Salem-Petersburg area." Masters, a profoundly bitter man, could not let this stand. In his eyes, Sandburg owed his own notoriety in literary circles to Masters, inasmuch as *Spoon River Anthology* popularized the New Salem-Petersburg area and the idyll of the Sangamon. Furthermore, Sandburg's biography was inaccurate. Not only did he lean into the "self-made man" type that Masters so hated, making Lincoln "one who grew from the common folk and the great national experience of pioneering," but also presented a "blend of fact and fiction, the whole presented as truth." Aside from Masters' own political motivations, he needed to prove that he could produce a Lincoln biography founded on facts rather than a whimsical

fiction. Strangely enough, Masters fails to mention Sandburg in the opening pages of *Lincoln: The Man*. Although he references William H. Herndon and Albert Beveridge as fellow trustworthy contributors to the Lincolnian canon, he pointedly leaves out any reference to Sandburg's own set of biographies in what may be a petty slight. Instead, he calls the complimentary "stuff that has been written about Lincoln... pure unctuous twaddle." Masters was keen on discrediting not only Lincoln, but those authors who had spoken highly of him.¹⁶

Considering Masters' many motivations, it's unsurprising he set out to write *Lincoln: The Man* with the express purpose of reckoning with "the corruption of the intellectual life of the country... with such regard to Lincoln as the colossal and sacred figure of a just war raged for liberty!" From the start, Masters endeavored to write what he considered a realistic portrait of Lincoln. He attempts to dismantle the "self-made man" type under the guise of realism—and although most of his writing is based in fact, Masters cannot help but slander Lincoln and his Republican policies throughout. Writes Russell of his process:

"If Masters discredited Lincoln's politics and character, the Republicans would also be discredited, and with them the Lincoln mythmakers—the chief and most popular one now being Masters' competitor for public hearts and minds, Carl Sandburg. Masters would discredit Sandburg by discrediting Lincoln, by showing the American people that Sandburg had been wrong, and in the process reclaim his homeland, 'the Lincoln country' that was his by birth."

From Russell's writing about Masters and Masters' own, his twofold motive is evident. He set out to dismantle both the Lincoln folklore Sandburg had created and Sandburg's reputation itself. His disillusionment with both Republican politics and his own declining reputation turned Lincoln from a creature of shaky mythology—as seen in *Spoon River Anthology*—to a full-blown scapegoat for governmental wrongdoing.¹⁷

Masters executes this mission by dismantling Peterson's "self-made man" archetype. In each section of *Lincoln: The Man*, he takes great pains to bring up Lincoln's upbringing and lack of formal education. Although he acknowledges "Lincoln was the better candidate" than William H. Seward for the Republicans in the 1860 presidential election, he cannot do so without a reminder of Lincoln's past as "the rail splitter, the self-educated flatboat man." He weaponizes Lincoln's past to discredit him, even when acknowledging his political merits. Peterson states that "no issue had been more marked in the definition of Lincoln's character than that between the folk hero and the godlike statesman," and Masters was interested in neither. Rather, Lincoln "showed his profound ignorance" at every turn. His upbringing and lack of formal education prevented him from becoming either a folk hero or a godlike statesman. Masters' dual motivations caused him to ignore both dueling aspects of Lincoln's legacy—his commitment to destroying the "self-made man" type eliminated the potential to portray him as a folk hero, and his mission to criticize Republican politics meant he certainly would not opt to make him a godlike statesman.¹⁸

It may be that Masters' "almost... irrational hatred" for Lincoln stemmed from shame about his own roots. In *Across Spoon River*, he speaks to his grandfather's "meager" education—but Squire Davis Masters is a "farmer gentleman," not a rube. Lincoln, despite having a similarly meager education, "had luck all the way" and "could not forget the meanness of his origin." As the son of a lawyer, Masters had an altogether different upbringing than Lincoln. He had access to a college education and resources that Lincoln likely did not. However, he was perhaps closer to being a "self-made man" than he would have liked—for after all, Masters' home was the rural town by the Sangamon, too. He, like Lincoln, had a "new life" when he began to read books other than the limited options he had at home. Masters, like Lincoln, knew what it was like to struggle out of obscurity (as shown by his sometimes sympathetic portrayal

in *Children of the Market Place*). And although much of Masters' early education was done through books, like Lincoln, he pictured himself a success where Lincoln was "ignorant" and "unversed" in the knowledge he needed. By the time *Lincoln: The Man* was published, however, Masters may have grown to be ashamed of his roots and criticized Lincoln's as a manifestation thereof.¹⁹ In an interview published about a decade after *Lincoln: The Man*, Masters claims with fervor that his origins are political, not geographical. When asked what his roots are, Masters replied:

"The America of Jefferson—of Jeffersonian democracy. I date back a long time. I believe in an America that is not imitative, that stands alone, that is strong, that leans on nothing outside itself and permits nothing to lean on it. I date back. I have a number of Revolutionary ancestors. Israel Putnam was a collateral ancestor of mine—in my mother's family. And a soldier of the Revolution who was born in Virginia and died in Tennessee was my grandfather. Hilary Masters—I once saw his grave."

When describing his own origins, Masters names Jeffersonian America as his homeland and emphasizes his connections to the Revolutionary War. He glosses over his family's farming history in New Salem-Petersburg, and instead intentionally foregrounds his inherited political beliefs. Perhaps this is the difference that allows Masters to disparage Lincoln's journey from Illinois to Washington—Lincoln's origins are somewhat similar to Masters', but they are also in Hamiltonian politics. He stands in complete antithesis to what Masters defines as his origins in Jeffersonian democracy. This is but one instance when Masters "faulted Lincoln for doing things he himself had done."²⁰

Whatever the reason for Masters' aggression towards what he perceived as Lincoln's ignorance, his "demolition of the Lincoln myth" was poorly received. His son Hilary Masters writes in his own memoir that the "Lincoln biography was still being clubbed by the press" up to

a year after its publication. Russell describes the varied and abundant published critics of the book, as well as the public's "spontaneous, immediate, and lasting" reaction of hatred towards Masters and *Lincoln: The Man*. Masters took a gamble when he pursued the unpopular avenue of criticizing Lincoln, and it failed to pay off. Indeed, sociologist and Lincoln scholar Barry Schwartz references *Lincoln: The Man* solely in the context of the criticisms that "ranged from contempt to outrage." In destroying Lincoln's image as a "self-made man," Masters accomplished very little (aside from destroying his own image). His "outright sloppiness" in doing so caused him to become an object of ridicule in the press, only serving to exacerbate the professional troubles that drove him to write the book in the first place.²¹

Perhaps it was the intense backlash to *Lincoln: The Man* that contributed to Masters' "mellowed" opinions in his later works. In *Richmond: A Dramatic Poem*, he tells the story of a Southern family torn apart by the Civil War. Although the poem is sometimes sympathetic to the people of the South, ruined by conflict, Masters does not attribute the destruction he describes to Lincoln. In fact, Lincoln is never mentioned by name—why, after establishing his anti-Lincoln opinions so clearly in *Lincoln: The Man*, would Masters refuse to do so in *Richmond*? It was likely a matter of professional worry; after the backlash sparked by his first criticism, it is doubtful that Masters would care to criticize Lincoln further in his other works if he wanted them to sell. This phenomenon holds true in *The Sangamon*, Masters' personal history of New Salem - Petersburg. Lincoln remains a constant presence—he is in the stories Masters hears, the places he visits, the people he knows. Published about a decade after *Lincoln: The Man*, *The Sangamon* conveys a broadly positive view of Lincoln. Instead of framing Lincoln's success as a result of "luck" and "devoted friends" whose intelligence concealed his lowly beginnings, as he does in *Lincoln: The Man*, Masters uses the "self-made man" narrative as a positive attribute. He looks fondly on

the stories he heard about Lincoln's goodbye to New Salem, noting that he "fittingly acknowledged his indebtedness" to the town whence he came. In *The Sangamon*, Masters returns to the whimsical tales William H. Herndon relayed in his youth, trading embittered criticism of Lincoln for an idyllic history of the hometown they shared.²²



New Salem
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The trajectory of Masters' opinions on Lincoln, though unusual when compared to those of his contemporaries, is consistent across all historians' accounts of the matter. From the few scholars that have delved into Masters' motive for writing such a controversial piece as *Lincoln: The Man*, it is clear that the convergence of political, personal, and professional troubles is what caused his merciless destruction of the Lincoln myth to take shape. Despite his dislike for Lincoln, his history was entangled with Masters' own. The presence of Lincoln throughout Masters' life—from hearing stories in his childhood to his pro-Douglas writings to his harsh criticisms—forced Masters to have a mutable opinion of the man. The gradual growth in his hatred for Lincoln followed by his eventual sentimentality does not reveal much about the American opinion of Lincoln writ large. Rather, it reveals the motivations of one man determined to make himself and his beliefs relevant at any cost. Masters was forever chasing the success of *Spoon River Anthology*. That he became resentful of Lincoln along the way is only a side effect; *Lincoln: The Man* might only be collateral damage in Masters' pursuit of professional success.²³

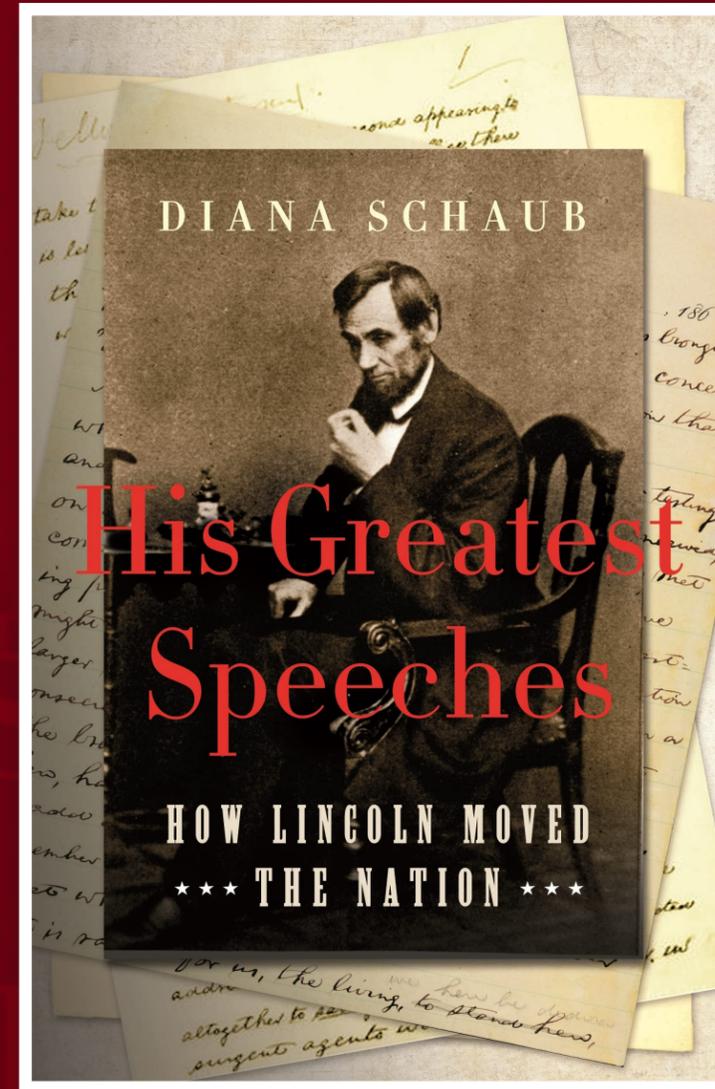
Masters had all of the proper tools to write an excellent biography of Lincoln. His origins were inextricable from Lincoln's influence—Masters had an intimate knowledge of Lincoln's own hometown, as well as access to a "battery of facts and a privileged position" through Herndon's oral history. Contemporaries like Sandburg couldn't hope to use such a wealth of information as Masters had. However, his own biases and desperate need to write an attention-grabbing piece prevented him from writing the "very interesting Lincoln book" for which he was equipped. Although *Lincoln: The Man* revealed a great deal of new information about Lincoln, the acerbic voice in which it was delivered made certain that very few respected the historical work for what it was. In indulging his own grudge against Lincoln and the Republican party, Masters sealed his own legacy as a washed-up poet "slinging mud" at a man to whom he could never measure up. Had he resisted this urge, perhaps *Lincoln: The Man* would have flourished as the new definitive Lincoln biography. Instead, it remains a prime example of history contorted by bitterness into a childish rant.²⁴

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Editor's note: all citations for articles will be included in the online version of Lincoln Lore at www.FriendsOfTheLincolnCollection.org.



The Sangamon, Soured: Lincoln, The Man and Its Twisted Tropes by Bethany Villaruz is part of our reoccurring series, *Lincoln Through The Eyes of History*.



HIS GREATEST SPEECHES: *How Lincoln Moved the Nation* by Diana Schaub

Book Review by Burrus Carnahan

Diana Schaub has written a thought-provoking book that may be the first of a new genre of Lincoln studies - reflections on his ideas in the context of the mob violence that struck major cities in 2020 and the riot at the Capitol on January 6, 2021. The author begins with Lincoln's 1838 Lyceum speech on "The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions," a meditation on mob violence in his era. She links the three orations she covers to the years 1787, 1776, and 1619. The Lyceum Address was thus intended to reinforce the legal regime established by the 1787 Constitution. The Gettysburg Address reaffirmed the calls for liberty and equality in the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Finally, the Second Inaugural presented Lincoln's own "1619 Project" on the historical importance of American slavery.

The Lyceum speech is usually considered unsophisticated and not one of Lincoln's best speeches. Schaub convincingly argues, however, that it reflects key themes that would recur throughout his career, including survival of democratic institutions, the tension between reason and emotion, and the importance of public opinion.

After reviewing recent lynchings and other incidents of vigilante justice, the young Lincoln argued such acts were wrong both for humanitarian reasons and in the interests of the rioters themselves. In an early example of his ability to set aside his own beliefs and understand the position of his adversaries, he recognized that vigilantes often acted with the worthy goal of seeing wrongdoers punished. Nevertheless, mob actions weakened respect for the rule of law, and could pave the way for an ambitious leader to overthrow the Constitution and seize absolute power.

Lincoln's answer was twofold. He called for the public to turn way from "passion," a term, the author notes, that had negative connotations for Lincoln throughout his life, and to embrace "cold, calculating reason." "A passionate and impassioned politics is likely to be divisive," Schaub notes. "From the Lyceum Address through to the Second Inaugural, Lincoln

rejects attempts to impassion political life."

Lincoln also called for schools, parents and other authority figures to inculcate "reverence" for the laws and hoped this reverence would become the "political religion" of America. Schaub believes that the call for reverence is intertwined with the call for reason. "In Lincoln's usage, reverence is not a passion," she writes. "Political reverence is itself an instantiation of reason - a mold that reason can be poured into or a form that reason can take."

The author does not, however, explain how reason leads to reverence for laws and institutions. Since Lincoln's time, psychology has denigrated the role of reasoning in our decisions. Rather than reason, we are told, human choices are likely to be based on the unconscious mind (for followers of Freud and Jung) or operant conditioning (for behavioral psychologists). Lincoln himself seems to rely not on reason but on the urging of authority figures, like teachers and parents, to produce public reverence. Just as Pavlov's dogs started to salivate when they heard a bell signaling food, so citizens should feel reverence whenever they think of the law, based on their past conditioning. The problem is that if political reverence is a mold, then passions, such as racial prejudice, might be poured into it instead of reason.

The author indirectly acknowledges that reverence for the law can have undesirable results when she criticizes the Lyceum Address for not allowing civil disobedience against bad laws. In the Address, Lincoln argues that even bad laws should be obeyed. He later supported enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, although he believed it denied due process to alleged fugitives. The author cannot help wondering, however, what "Lincoln would have done had the runaway appeared at his own door." "Would he," she asks, "have found a way to turn the blind eye of justice upon the situation rather than the peering eye of the law?"

An incident from Lincoln's Illinois law practice suggests he might indeed have turned a blind eye. In 1857 Lincoln represented Mrs. Melissa Goings, charged with murdering her abusive husband by hitting him in the head with a piece of firewood during an argument. After she pleaded not guilty Lincoln requested a brief recess so he could consult with his client. When the court reconvened, Lincoln appeared but not the defendant, who resurfaced in California years later. It appears likely that Lincoln suspected she was going to flee and, out of sympathy with an elderly battered woman, made no effort to stop her or help the authorities apprehend her.

Though the author does not mention it in this context, there was at least one instance when President Lincoln decided to ignore bad laws. After decades of respecting slavery laws in the states where they existed, Lincoln ordered the military to ignore those laws in his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. He justified those orders under the laws of war, as necessary to enforce a higher law, the Constitution of the United States. Although not civil disobedience, issuing the Proclamation was similar in principle to the civil rights demonstrators who violated segregation laws in the name of a higher law, the 14th Amendment's promise of equal protection of the laws.

The author finds many of the themes in the Lyceum Address reflected in the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural. With its call for a new birth of freedom and dedication to equality, the author naturally links the Gettysburg Address to 1776. With secession, the lawlessness decried in the Lyceum Address had become "suicidal," but she finds continuity with the earlier speech its description of self-government based on equality as a "proposition" that must continually be re-proven.

There is also continuity in Lincoln's rejection of passion by refusing to condemn the Confederate invasion or the men in Lee's army. The author believes the president was looking ahead to the end of the war by not placing needless emotional obstacles to acceptance of Union victory.

Lincoln continues his passionless approach in the Second Inaugural, discouraging Union triumphalism, and offering the South an historical account of slavery that blamed both the free and slave states for an offense against God. If southern whites refused to accept reunion on the basis of equality for former slaves, the author argues that the Second Inaugural at least offered freedmen assurance that God had been on their side in the past and would be again in future struggles for equality. Schaub calls the Second Inaugural's account of American slavery Lincoln's

"1619 Project." By referring to the bondsman's "two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil," Lincoln recognized the importance of that date long before the New York Times did. Lincoln's historical project is superior to the Times' project, in the author's view, not because the latter stresses the importance of 1619, but because it insists on the unimportance of "1776, 1787 and even 1865." "1776 was not a continuation of the spirit of 1619, but its antithesis." The 1787 Constitution, Schaub argues, should be read as an anti-slavery document, a position historically associated with both

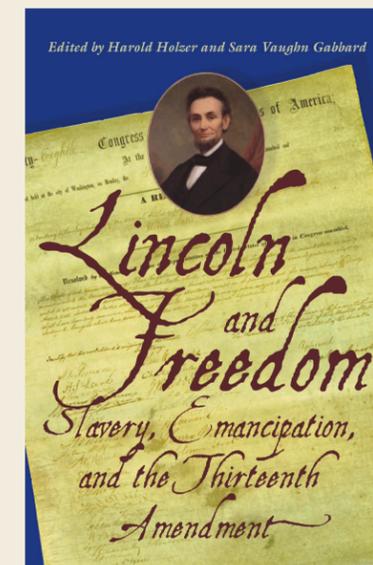
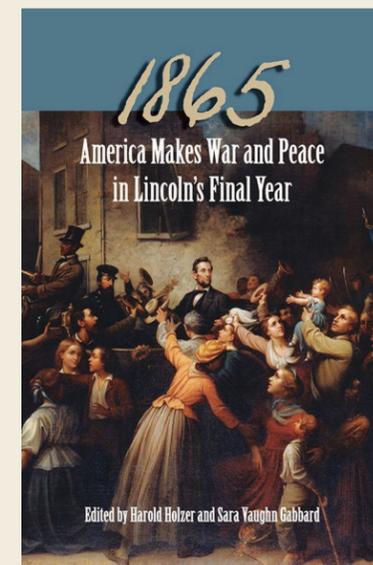
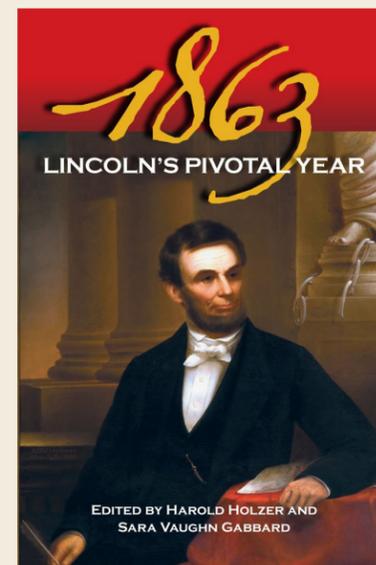
Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, and most recently advanced by the historian James Oakes.

This short, clearly-written book offers original insight into three Lincoln documents that most of us probably thought we had already mastered. All who are interested in Lincoln and his era will find it interesting and stimulating.

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