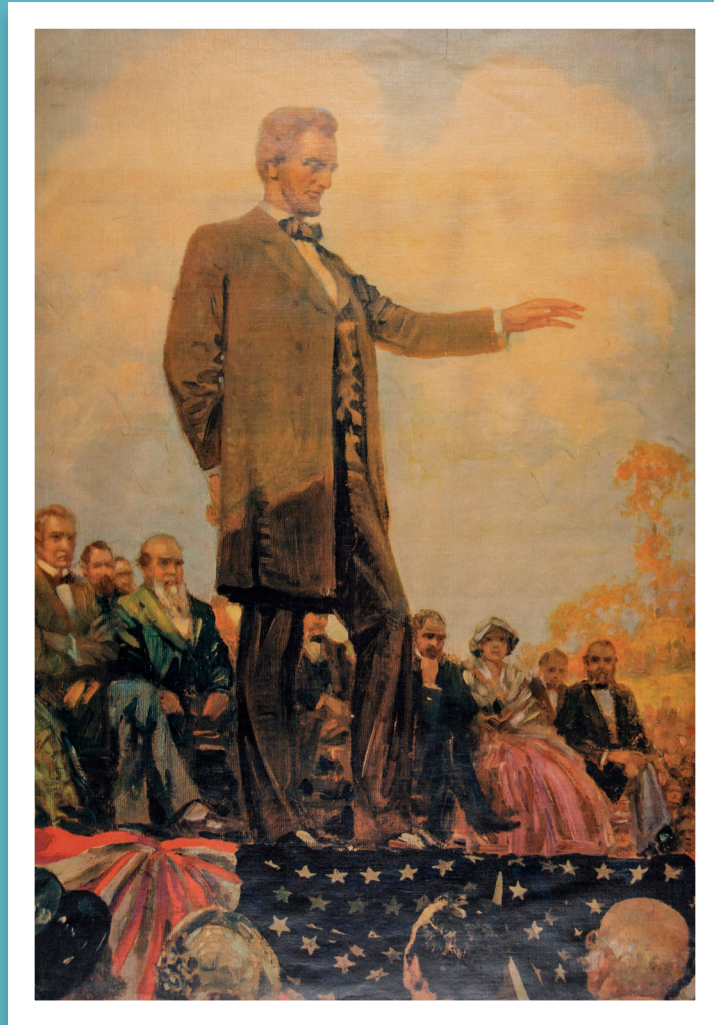

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Editor's Note



It is an honor to serve as the sixth editor of *Lincoln Lore*. My undergraduate mentor at Penn State, Mark E. Neely Jr., edited *Lore* from 1973 until the early 1990s, and I have been pleased to know and work with the two most recent editors, Gerald Prokopowicz and Sara Gabbard, during my career.

I will strive to uphold the tradition of excellence established by *Lore's* first five editors. I have already begun soliciting articles, interviews, and book reviews from some of the leading lights in the Lincoln field. I also plan to introduce several new features. I will occasionally reprint excerpts from books to bring important contributions to readers' attention (such as Michelle A. Krowl's essay in this issue). Working with the staff of the Lincoln Collection in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, I plan to regularly run pieces that highlight objects and other items from the Collection. Finally, as space permits, I will select classic articles from *Lore* that have perhaps been forgotten over the years.

A few years ago, Harold Holzer gave me a complete run of *Lincoln Lore* from issue #1 to #1823. My "*Lore* box" has a prominent place in my office at Christopher Newport University, right next to my desk. I am thrilled that I will now be able to add to that number with my own contribution to such a longstanding, important publication.

- Jonathan W. White

On The Cover: *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (71.2009.081.1683)



Elizabeth Keckly

ELIZABETH KECKLY

1818 - 1907

Close-Up of photograph of Keckly grave in 2011.
Photograph by Bruce Guthrie.

NOT-SO-FINAL RESTING PLACES

*Grave Reflections on the Historical Reputation
of Elizabeth Keckly*

Michelle A. Krowl

"To look upon a grave, and not feel certain whose ashes repose beneath the sod, is painful, and the doubt which mystifies you, weakens the force, if not the purity, of the love-offering from the heart." This is how former slave Elizabeth Keckly explained her decision not to visit the final resting place of her beloved mother, buried in an unmarked grave in a public cemetery in Vicksburg, Mississippi. While Keckly moved north after buying her freedom in 1855, her enslaved mother followed the Garland family to Vicksburg, after which Keckly "lost sight of the family for a few years" and the location of her mother's grave as well.

While my connection to Elizabeth Keckly lacks the intimacy of a family member, I understood Keckly's sentiment when I first tried to visit her grave in October 1995. After writing an undergraduate seminar paper on Keckly, the African American modiste and confidante of First Lady Mary Lincoln, I pledged to place flowers on her grave at Harmony Cemetery on a future visit to Washington, DC. That opportunity came in 1995, while conducting dissertation research. I knew from John E. Washington's book *They Knew Lincoln* (1942) that Keckly had made arrangements to be buried at Harmony Cemetery, a prominent African American cemetery in northeast Washington, DC, and that a granite headstone marked her tomb.



Elizabeth Keckly (LN-1136)

When ready to fulfill my promise, however, I was confused to find that Harmony Cemetery was now listed as National Harmony Memorial Park in Landover, Maryland. More concerning was discovering that Keckly's grave bore no marker at all, as was the case for many of the graves in the Costin section of the cemetery. Cemetery staff provided me with an approximate location near a section marker where Keckly's remains should be located, but in Keckly's own words, I could "not feel certain whose ashes repose[d] beneath the sod." I paid my respects and left my floral offering as best I could, but the visit felt incomplete. For a woman who loomed large in my own studies, and served as an important witness of the Lincoln White House, to have been forgotten and neglected in death seemed wrong. But as it turned out, the state of Elizabeth Keckly's grave often mirrored her own historical reputation.

Born into slavery in Virginia in 1818, Elizabeth Hobbs Keckly was enslaved by the family of Col. Armistead Burwell, who was also her biological father. Burwell loaned the teenaged Elizabeth to his eldest son, Robert, who in 1835 took her with his family to Hillsborough, North Carolina, where he accepted a church position. Here Elizabeth personally experienced the violence of slavery more than ever before. The Burwells engaged a neighbor to whip her, which Keckly resisted with as much force as she could. Another white man in Hillsborough, Alexander Kirkland, pursued and sexually violated her, leading to the birth of her only child, George. (Years later, George passed for a white man to enlist in the Union army under the name George Kirkland. He was killed at the battle of Wilson's Creek in 1861.) By 1842, she and her son had returned to Virginia, where she was reunited with her mother. In 1847 Colonel Burwell's daughter Anne and her husband, Hugh Garland, moved to St. Louis, Missouri, taking Elizabeth and her immediate family with them. While the Garlands' social standing remained high, their coffers continued to empty, and Hugh Garland contemplated renting out Elizabeth's mother, Agnes. Horrified at the thought of her mother leaving the only family she had ever known, Elizabeth offered to use her skills as a seamstress to generate income. Garland agreed, and Elizabeth successfully "kept bread in the mouths of seventeen persons for two years and five months," including the Garlands, who could "live in comparative comfort, and move in those circles of society to which their birth gave them entrance."

This arrangement changed the course of Elizabeth's life. As a sought-after dressmaker for prominent women in St. Louis, Elizabeth made connections in the white community. After Hugh

Garland set \$1,200 as the price of freedom for Elizabeth and her son in 1852, several white clients later advanced her the money in 1855. Elizabeth decided to seek a new life in the North in 1860, following the death of her mother in 1857, the failure of her marriage to the dissipated James Keckly, and the enrollment of her son at Wilberforce University. Elizabeth ultimately settled in Washington, DC, where her St. Louis connections provided her entrée with the ladies of political Washington. This included Varina Davis, the wife of then-Senator Jefferson Davis, who offered to take Elizabeth south with them when Jefferson Davis joined the Confederate government.

Keckly's ambition, however, was to work for the ladies of the Union White House. Her chance came in March 1861 when the new first lady, Mary Lincoln, required a dressmaker to replace a gown spoiled in an accident. Keckly's good reputation preceded her, and after assuring Mrs. Lincoln of reasonable rates, she became Mary Lincoln's primary modiste for the next four years. Keckly also became an intimate of the Lincoln family, observing the domestic side of the White House as few did during the Civil War. Mary Lincoln especially came to rely on Keckly's calming presence during many times of trial and tragedy, perhaps finding in the African American Keckly a reminder of the enslaved women in the Todd family home on whom she relied for comfort as a child. "Elizabeth, you are my best and kindest friend," Mary Lincoln told Keckly, "and I love you as my best friend."



Mary Lincoln (OC-0259)

Keckly's association with the Lincolns, and other prominent women who formed her clientele in Washington, provided Keckly with an unusual financial and social status for a woman of her race. Beginning in 1862, Keckly used her connections to form and help fund the Contraband Relief Association, of which she served as president for several years. The association provided aid to formerly enslaved people in their transition to freedom during and after the Civil War.

Abraham Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865, not only changed the course of the nation's history but also the life of Elizabeth Keckly. Mary Lincoln suffered "wild, tempestuous outbursts of grief from the soul," and few but Elizabeth could comfort her. She remained with Mrs. Lincoln for weeks after President Lincoln's assassination and was persuaded to leave her own business to help the Lincolns get settled in Chicago. "I had been with her so long," Keckly explained, "that she had acquired great power over me." Mary Lincoln continued to turn to Elizabeth for assistance, disastrously so in 1867. During her time as first lady, Mary Lincoln amassed tens of thousands of dollars in shopping debts. She rashly proposed selling the gowns and jewelry she would no longer wear and trusted agents in New York to manage the scheme. Mary implored Elizabeth to help her in what became known as the "Old Clothes Scandal." The agents mishandled the operation, Mary Lincoln's reputation sunk even lower in public estimation, and Elizabeth Keckly was left in New York to sort out the mess while her own finances suffered.

To assist in Mary Lincoln's public rehabilitation, and to demonstrate her own upright behavior in the relationship, Keckly published *Behind the Scenes: or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* in 1868. "My own character, as well as the character of Mrs. Lincoln, is at stake, since I have been intimately associated with that lady in the most eventful periods of her life," Keckly wrote. "To defend myself I must defend the lady that I have served." The book combined elements of a slave narrative, autobiography, and exposé of the Lincoln White House. And it was a disaster for its author. Keckly shared intimate details of the Lincolns' domestic life, and Mary Lincoln's candid opinions on notable public figures. Worse, Keckly entrusted her editor, James Redpath, with many of Mary Lincoln's letters to be consulted for context, and they were instead published as an appendix to the book. Keckly's "literary thunderbolt" drew condemnation as a betrayal of the Lincolns and ruined her friendship with Mary Lincoln, who dismissed Keckly as "the colored historian." Mary's son Robert may have had the book suppressed, and it certainly generated no income for Keckly, who lost the trust of

many of her former clients. Not only did Elizabeth lose her good name for a time, but for over a century she also lost her name itself. She signed documents using the surname “Keckly,” but the book was published under the name “Keckley.” While she had been called by many names during her lifetime, and her surname had been misspelled before, *Behind the Scenes* perpetuated the spelling as “Keckley” with an additional “e” for years to come.

Keckly remained a respected figure in Washington’s African American community, where she was active in her church and admired for her dignity, intelligence, and fashion sense. And she returned to her sewing for support. In 1892 she accepted a teaching position at Wilberforce University and helped organize its display at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Sometime in the 1890s she returned to Washington, DC, where she lived modestly at the National Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children. She died at the home on May 26, 1907.

Consistent with the self-reliance that characterized her personal life, she made arrangements for her death and burial. Reflective of the racial segregation of the living in Washington, DC, in 1907, burials in most cemeteries, or sections within cemeteries, in the capital region were segregated by race. Keckly chose to be buried at the Columbian Harmony Cemetery. Established in the 1820s as part of an African American mutual aid society, at the time of Keckly’s death Harmony Cemetery had become a prominent burial ground for Black Washingtonians. Keckly’s estate paid \$304 for the undertaker, her grave at the Columbian Harmony Cemetery, and the monument that marked what she anticipated would be her final resting place. “At the grave, at least, we should be permitted to lay our burdens down,” she once wrote. But Keckly could not control events in the living world.

After failing to achieve much circulation in 1868, *Behind the Scenes* was republished in 1931. By 1935, however, not only did Keckly’s authorship of *Behind the Scenes* come into question, but journalist David Rankin Barbee also claimed that no such person as Elizabeth Keckly even existed. Amateur historian John E. Washington quickly disputed Barbee’s assertion, but the incident inspired him to conduct further research and publish the stories he had heard since childhood of African Americans who personally knew Abraham Lincoln. Elizabeth Keckly assumed a prominent place in Washington’s 1942 book *They Knew Lincoln*, which reproduced several documents relating to Keckly’s life. Washington also included a photograph of Keckly’s grave and tombstone at Harmony Cemetery,

plus his description of the spot. “On a beautiful knoll, facing the east beneath a mammoth spreading elm tree rests forever all that remains of Elizabeth Keckley,” he wrote. “Mrs. Keckley’s name and date of death are carved on the face of her tomb, and she selected these words from Psalm 127, second verse, to be inscribed beneath them: FOR SO HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.”

For Elizabeth Keckly and other residents of Harmony Cemetery, “forever” ended in the year 1960, when Harmony Cemetery moved. After having been one of the preeminent African American cemeteries in Washington, DC, at the turn of the century, lack of land for expansion, increasing maintenance costs, and declining revenues had plunged the cemetery into financial crisis by the 1930s. By the 1950s, the physical state of the cemetery reflected its disordered finances, ultimately prompting the Columbian Harmony Society to sell the Rhode Island Avenue property to developer Louis N. Bell in 1958. Bell agreed to expand a cemetery in Landover, Maryland, to accommodate the existing Columbian Harmony Cemetery and to involve the society in the new National Harmony Memorial Park. Bell also agreed to pay for the reinterment in the new cemetery of the 37,000 remains, which included those of Elizabeth Keckly. Part of the old Harmony Cemetery site on Rhode Island Avenue in northwest Washington, DC, was ultimately incorporated into the Rhode Island Avenue Metro subway station, opened in 1976.



Bronze sign marking the former site of Columbian Harmony Cemetery, Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station, Washington, DC. Photograph by Melissa Winn.

While the agreement with Louis Bell specified that he would fund the removal of remains, nothing was said regarding the fate of the existing tombstones and monuments on the graves. Apparently, the markers were either plowed under at the old cemetery or hauled off as debris. In 2009 hikers discovered some old Harmony headstones forming part of a riprap constructed on the

shore of the Potomac River in King George County, Virginia. By 1960, no one seems to have been paying attention to Elizabeth Keckly to ensure that her tombstone accompanied her remains. Without direct descendants or other friends to monitor the marking of her grave, Keckly's remains at the new Harmony Cemetery were left unmarked, just as her mother's had been in Vicksburg a century before.

Similarly, Elizabeth Keckly's name largely seemed to fade from public memory apart from the Lincoln scholars who continued to use *Behind the Scenes* as an essential source for the domestic side of the Lincoln White House. Renewed interest in African American history following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s occasionally generated interest in Keckly's memoir. Various publishers reprinted *Behind the Scenes* every twenty or thirty years, but John E. Washington's important *They Knew Lincoln* remained out of print for decades. Keckly continued to serve as a witness, or a source, but rarely a focus of research in her own right. Her unmarked grave in Maryland reflected her status on the periphery.

The new millennium brought a welcome change to Elizabeth Keckly's historical reputation. In 2003 Jennifer Fleischner published the dual biography *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly*, which not only gave Elizabeth equal billing with Mary Lincoln but also prompted a reevaluation of the spelling of Keckly's surname in light of historical evidence. Steven Spielberg's 2012 motion picture *Lincoln* included Elizabeth Keckly as a supporting character, portrayed by actress Gloria Reuben. In 2013 Jennifer Chiaverini published her novel about Elizabeth Keckly, *Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker*, and Tazwell Thompson's play *Mary L. & Lizzy K.* ran at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. George Saunders quoted Keckly repeatedly in his 2017 blockbuster novel, *Lincoln in the Bardo*. Kate Masur shepherded a welcome 2018 republication of *They Knew Lincoln*, and later that year the *New York Times* included Keckly in its "Overlooked No More" series of obituaries devoted to historical figures neglected at the time of their death. Academics also increasingly gave Keckly her due with scholarly articles devoted to various aspects of her life, some of which were collected by Sheila Smith McKoy in the two-volume *Elizabeth Keckley Reader*. Tamika Y. Nunley's contribution to Gary W. Gallagher and Elizabeth R. Varon's edited volume *New Perspectives on the Union War* (2019) examined Keckly's wartime experiences with barely a reference to Abraham or Mary Lincoln. The proliferation of digitized books in the public domain included *Behind the Scenes*, which is now available to anyone with an internet connection.

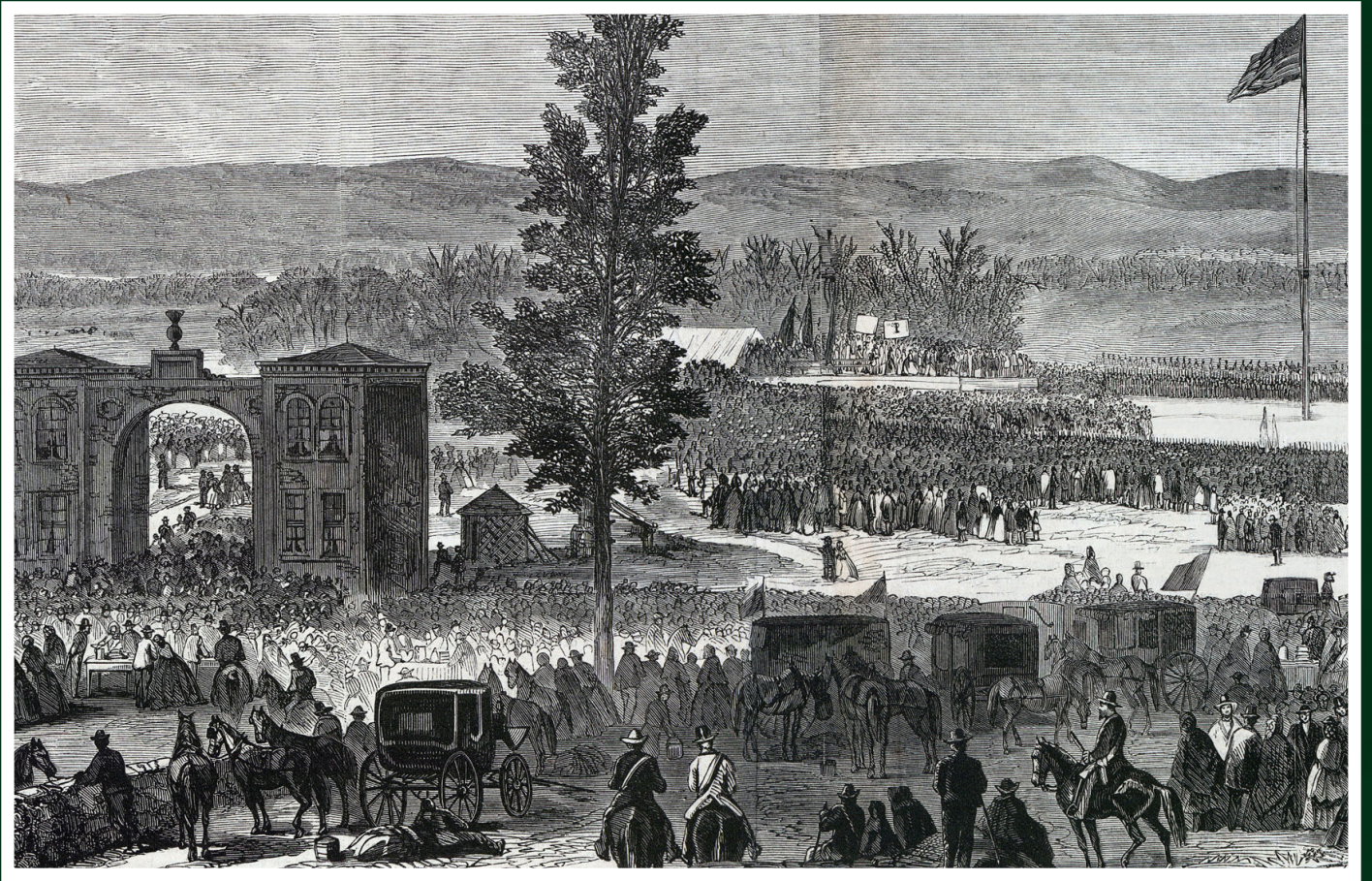
This renewed attention on Elizabeth Keckly extended to her final resting place as well. In 2009 researcher Richard Smyth alerted several historical organizations about the unmarked location of Keckly's grave, which prompted an effort to rectify the situation. The Surratt Society, The Lincoln Forum, and other groups raised the funds for a marker, which was dedicated at the National Harmony Memorial Park on May 26, 2010, the 103rd anniversary of Keckly's death. The new marker includes her name and life dates, a photograph, a copy of her signature, a brief history of her life, and describes her as "Enslaved—Modiste—Confidante."



Flowers placed by Michelle Krowl at Keckly's grave in September 2019.
Photograph by Michelle Krowl.

On a sunny Sunday morning in September 2019, just shy of twenty-four years since my first attempt to visit Elizabeth Keckly's grave, I once again journeyed to the National Harmony Memorial Park in Landover, Maryland. Armed with the grave number and a general memory of the location of the Costin section in the park, I easily located Keckly's grave on a gentle slope. Unlike several other markers I passed that honored the memory of unknown "remains found at Columbian Harmony Cemetery" in the early 2000s, Keckly's new marker proclaims her identity and invites contemplation of her extraordinary life. Unlike my 1995 "offering from the heart," this visit felt complete. The marker over Elizabeth Keckly's grave provided a recognized spot at which to pay my respects and leave royal purple flowers, in homage to Mary Lincoln's purple dress at the Smithsonian Institution, credited to Keckly's craftsmanship. All these years later, my pledge to leave flowers on Elizabeth Keckly's grave has been fulfilled at last.

Michelle A. Krowl is the Civil War and Reconstruction specialist in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress. This article appears as chapter 22 in *Final Resting Places: Reflections on the Meaning of Civil War Graves* (University of Georgia Press, 2023), edited by Brian Matthew Jordan and Jonathan W. White.



"Dedication Ceremony," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, December 5, 1863.

PLACING THE PLATFORM:

*Using 3D Technology to
Pinpoint Lincoln at Gettysburg*

Christopher Oakley

The following presentation was delivered at The Lincoln Forum in Gettysburg on November 18, 2022. It has been slightly revised for clarity.

One hundred fifty-nine years ago, on November 18, 1863, Abraham Lincoln came here, to Gettysburg. The purpose of his trip was to preside as the chief executive over the consecration ceremony for our country's first national cemetery.

To those with even a casual interest in Lincoln, the facts of the story are familiar. We know that a prominent local attorney named David Wills invited Lincoln to make "a few appropriate remarks" at the dedication of what is now the Gettysburg National Cemetery. We know that Lincoln finished writing his speech while he was in Gettysburg. We know that on the morning of the 19th, Lincoln mounted a chestnut horse and rode in a grand parade from downtown Gettysburg to the new and uncompleted Soldiers' National Cemetery. We know that an estimated crowd of 15,000 spectators showed up to witness the ceremony. We know the main orator of the day, Edward Everett, spoke for two hours and that Lincoln spoke for a little over two minutes. We know *all* of this because it was widely reported by the press and has been written about in history books ever since. But for all the hoopla over Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and all the witnesses to it, there is one thing we *don't* know—where Lincoln was actually *standing* when he called for a national "new birth of freedom."

Over the years, several scholars and bloggers have attempted to identify the location where the Gettysburg Address was delivered. These researchers relied on written and photographic records from the 19th century to reach their conclusions. But each of those locations, some more accurate than others, must be classified as "educated guesses" since there were no scientific methods available to test them.

I have been asked to share with you some of my research into where Lincoln stood when he delivered his Gettysburg Address. I have also been asked to show you how my undergraduate students and I married 19th-century analog materials with 21st-century 3D digital technology to solve this lingering mystery. Over the past ten years our deep dive into the digital humanities has led me to understand that some of what we've been told about Lincoln at Gettysburg is, frankly, suspect. My goal is to offer a new perspective. As revealed by 3D digital modeling, a lot of old-fashioned photographic sleuthing, and a healthy dose of common sense, I can tell you exactly where Lincoln stood to deliver the most famous speech in American history.

I'm a former Disney animator and currently a professor in New Media. People often ask me, "What the heck in New Media?" I'll give you a very technical definition—we make cool stuff on computers. And this is precisely what led me to this area of research. That, and my fixation on all things Abraham Lincoln. I share that passion for Lincoln with Walt Disney. When Walt Disney was a young schoolboy, he memorized the Gettysburg Address and delivered it to his classroom. The school's principal was so impressed, he asked Walt to go to *every* classroom in the school and deliver the speech. Walt's obsession with Lincoln lasted throughout his lifetime. It reached a climax when he and his Imagineers brought Lincoln back to life through Audio-Animatronics for the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair. Using cutting-edge robotics, "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" still delights Disneyland audiences to this day.

Back in 2011, in the spirit of Walt Disney, I launched an undergraduate research endeavor called "The Virtual Lincoln Project." The initial concept was to have my animation students create a digital, photo-real Abraham Lincoln, and bring him to life delivering his Gettysburg Address. We digitally scanned two life masks of Lincoln to get our project underway. We took those scans into a program called Maya, which is an industry-standard software used for animation, digital modeling, and creating special effects for film and television. Several teams of students labored on this project over many years. Unfortunately, the project was put on hold when the pandemic hit.

Early in our production, however, we began building the 3D digital environment that would be needed for our recreation of Lincoln's speech. In 2013, I brought nine of those students here to Gettysburg. The purpose of the trip was to make this place real for the students and not just a series of zeros and ones in a computer program. While in Gettysburg, we took hundreds of reference photos and videos. We even measured the iconic Evergreen Cemetery gatehouse with lasers. Because the gatehouse was a front row witness to the Battle of Gettysburg and to Lincoln's address, we knew a digital model of it would be needed for our digital world. Using the measurements taken on site, as well as 19th-century photographs of the gatehouse we had found online in the Library of Congress' Prints and Photographs Division, my students created a highly accurate 3D digital model of the structure.

When we got back to North Carolina, I downloaded geographic data from the Internet for both Evergreen Cemetery and the National Cemetery and gave this data to UNC Asheville's Atmospheric Science department. A few days later, they gave me a three-

dimensional GIS map. I took that map into our Maya modeling software and was completely blown away by its accuracy. Every hill, valley, stream, and road was clearly visible. To this surface we added a Google satellite map—and it all lined up perfectly. This would serve as the foundation for our digital world.

To build upon that foundation, we added the two objects whose locations are absolutely known—the gatehouse and a flagpole that had been erected for the consecration ceremony where the Soldiers' National Monument now stands. Finally, we added a 90-foot poplar tree that in 1863 stood across the street from the gatehouse. [Fig. 1]

But what was missing in our 3D world was the speaker's stand where Lincoln delivered the address. Historical accuracy was our goal, so I told the students to keep working on everything else while I figured out what the platform looked like and where it was located. I had no idea what I was getting into!

I began by using the same 19th-century materials that other researchers have used—the written record, illustrations, maps, and a handful of photographs. Recent scholarship of what happened on that speaker's stand seems to reference the work of one historian in particular—Frank L. Klement, whose 1993 book *The Gettysburg Soldiers' Cemetery and Lincoln's Address* compiles years of papers and articles into one volume. When I read the book, I thought I'd

hit pay dirt. It's all there—platform sizes and locations, a who's who of every VIP seated on the stand, and even the printed music of the songs that were performed during the ceremony.

Because we don't have a photograph of Lincoln actually delivering his address, many artists have tried to illustrate it over the years. The most compelling piece is by Joseph Becker, whose contemporaneous illustrations of Civil War scenes appeared regularly in publications throughout the war. His illustration of the consecration ceremony appeared as a centerfold in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in December 1863 and is a remarkable resource. [Fig. 2] In it, Evergreen Cemetery's gatehouse serves as a doorway to the ceremony taking place up on Cemetery Hill. Here we can see the enormous crowd spread out over the grounds of both cemeteries. But Becker's rendition of the speaker's stand raises a number of questions we will need to answer.

At first glance, the photographic record of the consecration ceremony leaves much to be desired. Only six photographs of the actual ceremony are known to exist, and they all were taken at some distance from the speaker's platform. In all of the views, the crowd of spectators, soldiers, and marshals on horseback obscure the physical stand. But once you begin to get your bearings and learn to decipher blurred images, these photographs are rich with detail and crucial information.

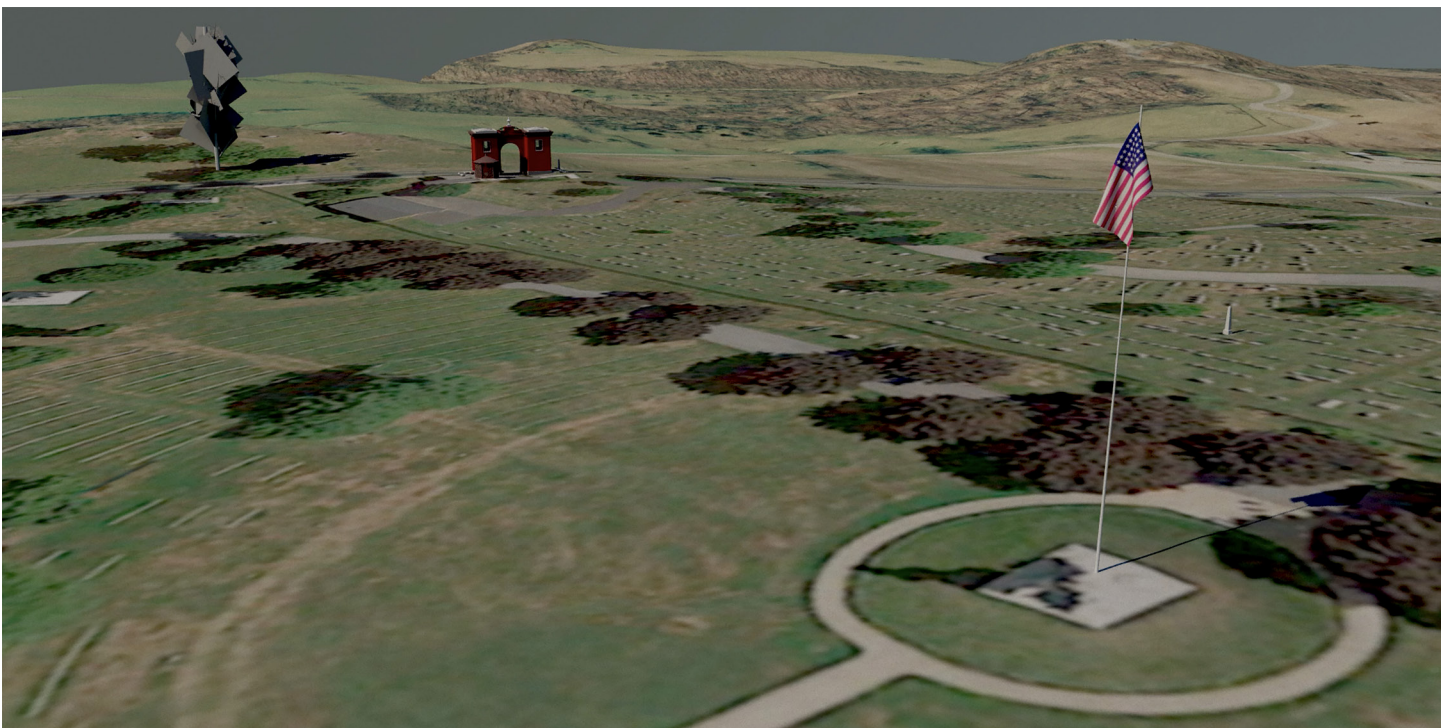


Fig. 1. GIS and Google map recreation of the Gettysburg National Cemetery and Evergreen Cemetery. (The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)



Fig. 2. "Dedication Ceremony," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, December 5, 1863.

Civil War photography scholars have determined the six photographs were taken by three photographers: Two of the photographs were taken by Peter Weaver, who was based in Hanover, Pennsylvania. Weaver's first photograph was taken from an upper floor window of the Duttera house, according to William Frassanito, a former U.S. Army intelligence analyst who made a name for himself as *the* expert on photography at Gettysburg. The Duttera house was located at the base of the hill on Steinwehr Avenue, where the Quality Inn now stands. This image looks uphill, past Taneytown Road, across the National Cemetery, and into Evergreen Cemetery. Several years ago, Bill and I were having drinks at the Reliance Mine

Saloon, where Fraz (as his friends call him) keeps "office hours." We were introduced to Fred Sherfy, who had something he wanted to show us. He pulled a folder out of a briefcase and produced this image—the only known original print of this photograph. I'd previously seen poor reproductions of it, which I was using on the project. [Fig. 3]

The details in this photograph are astounding. In the foreground you can see that the Dutteras' backyard is being used as a parking lot for carriages. Up on the horizon you can see the gatehouse, the 90-foot poplar tree, the flagpole, the rise of the speaker's stand, and even the platform that Alexander Gardner



Collection of Fred Sherfy

Fig. 3. Peter Weaver photograph taken from the attic of the Duttera house. From the collection of Fred Sherfy.

was using to take his photographs. Crouched on top of the platform is a human figure, which could be Gardner or his assistant. This photograph also offers a sweeping view of the fresh graves in the National Cemetery and helped us to determine which soldiers had been buried. At the time of the ceremony, only one-third of the soldiers had actually been buried.

The second photograph credited to Peter Weaver is this view of the ceremony taken from the second-floor rear window of Evergreen Cemetery's gatehouse. [Fig. 4] In this somewhat washed-out photo, we're looking uphill, across the grounds of Evergreen. Spectators are making their way toward the ceremony. To the right is the National Cemetery. As you can see, in 1863 there was no fence separating the two properties. To the left on the horizon, you can see the rise of the speaker's stand. In the middle of the horizon is the flagpole. And over to the right, you can see a section of fresh graves on the National Cemetery side. You can also vaguely see Alexander Gardner perched high above the crowd on his photography platform.

Over the years of my research, I've become good friends with Brian Kennell, the superintendent of Evergreen Cemetery. During the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Brian allowed me to go up to the second-floor window in the gatehouse, where Peter Weaver took his photo. As I aimed my camera out the very same window at approximately the same time of day, 150 years later, I was able to understand

why Weaver's shot was washed-out—he was shooting directly into the sun.

Three of the six Dedication Day photographs have been attributed to Alexander Gardner. (We are reproducing one of the images as Fig. 5.) Taken from high atop Gardner's platform, these three views face northeast, across the National Cemetery and into Evergreen Cemetery. In the foreground, soldiers carrying rifles with fixed bayonets mill about while several boys who are fascinated by the camera are posing. Assistant marshals with white sashes are processing on horseback past the flagpole and toward the speaker's stand. Beyond the line of horses is the gatehouse and the 90-foot poplar tree. You can see East Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill off in the distance. The speaker's stand rises up just in front of the "comfort tent," which was provided for Edward Everett, who had suffered a recent stroke and had issues controlling his bladder. To the right of the tent is the parking area for the VIPs' horses. Further to the right and beneath a stand of trees is the "Rocky Center," which is where boulders were piled up after being excavated while digging graves in Evergreen.

When I remembered that Gardner or his assistant was visible in Peter Weaver's photograph from the second-floor window of the gatehouse, I wondered if the opposite was true. The scan of this photograph was very high in resolution, so I took the image into Photoshop and zoomed way in. Sure



Fig. 4. Weaver photograph of dedication ceremony from Evergreen Cemetery gatehouse. The flagpole can be seen faintly in the center of the image and the speaker's stand is the elevated portion of the crowd to its left. (LC-DIG-ppmsca-32845)

enough, you can see Weaver's box camera just inside the window, pointing in our direction. You can even see Weaver standing next to it! But there was yet another surprise in this photo. On the right side of the image, there's a bearded man standing on the edge of frame. It looks like Alexander Gardner is photobombing his own photograph!

The final photograph of the ceremony, according to Bill Frassanito, was taken by a 19-year-old photographer named David Bachrach. Bachrach was positioned about 168 feet northwest of the front of the speaker's stand. [Fig. 6] This photograph first came to the public's attention in 1952, when Josephine Cobb, chief of the Still Photo section of the National Archives identified a photograph labeled "crowd of citizens, soldiers, etc." as being the consecration ceremony of the National Cemetery. Knowing that Lincoln had to be in there somewhere, Cobb enlarged the negative plate several times and eventually found Lincoln seated on the platform. To Lincoln's left is Secretary of State Seward. Edward Everett appears to be standing over to the right.

Now that I had all these 19th-century materials in hand, I turned my attention back to the size, shape and location of the speaker's stand. According to

Klement, the speaker's stand was 12 feet wide and 20 feet deep. There were 30 VIPs seated in three rows of ten chairs each. Abraham Lincoln sat in the center of the front row, with Seward seated at his left and Everett seated at his right. How did Klement know the exact size of the platform? Because W. Yates Selleck said so.

W. Yates Selleck had been appointed by the governor of Wisconsin to serve as a commissioner representing the soldiers from that state who were to be buried in the National Cemetery. As a commissioner, Selleck had a reserved seat on the platform, and he wrote that it was 12 feet wide and 20 feet deep. Not only did Klement accept the 12 by 20 measurement, he repeated that configuration 33 times throughout his book! Here's what 12 feet wide by 20 feet looks like. Now add to it 30 chairs in rows of 10 each. We modeled these chairs after the ones on display in the Gettysburg Military Park Museum, which were said to have been on the speaker's stand. As you can see, they don't fit. Only eight chairs fit across, and that's very tight. [Fig. 7]

Common sense tells us that Selleck's measurement was wrong. In Joseph Becker's illustration for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, we can see that the stand is a much larger platform than 12 by 20 feet.



Fig. 5. Gardner photograph of the dedication ceremony. The gatehouse can be seen in the distance. The flagpole is to the left of the gatehouse, rising out of the damaged portion of the photograph. The speaker's stand is in the middle of the image, just to the left of the comfort tent. (LC-DIG-ds-04063)



Fig. 6. Bachrach photograph of the dedication ceremony. The speaker's stand is the elevated part of the crowd on the left. (LC-DIG-ppmsca-32847)

And there are over 100 people on it, many of whom appear to be standing on risers on the back half of the stand (see the rear, center of Fig. 2).

In the Gardner shot, we're looking at the stand from the left side. We can see that this is much deeper than 20 feet. We can also see that many people standing on the platform appear to be elevated higher than the rest. It makes sense. If the folks in the back weren't elevated, they wouldn't be able to see what was happening up front. And folks in the crowd wouldn't be able to see them. In the Bachrach photo, we can see that there are far more than 30 people on this stand and that many of them in the back are elevated. Clearly the speaker's stand was significantly larger than 12 by 20 feet.

But take a look at something else in the Bachrach photograph. On the left side of the image there is a line of folks who are raised higher than the ones on the ground. That line flares out to the left. That's the left edge of the platform. Now, notice we can see a similar flaring out on the right side of the platform, just past the seated governors. How is this possible? It defies geometry and laws of perspective. Unless the platform is actually shaped like a trapezoid. [Fig. 8]

Now we have room to place three rows of ten chairs each. In 1908, Selleck was asked to write down his memories of the Gettysburg Address. Forty-five years after the event, he recorded the names of thirty-nine VIPs who were seated on the platform. So now we need to add nine more chairs.

One issue did come up when we made this adjustment to the speaker's stand. In the Gardner photos, I discovered you can actually see William Seward sitting on the platform in profile. While I was excited to have discovered images of Seward that had previously gone unidentified, it did raise another issue—why does Seward look like he's sitting in the third row, when we know he sat in the front row? I stood in my office in front of a white board with a couple of my students trying to puzzle this out. We were coming up blank, until one of my students, Kenny Michaud, suddenly said, "Maybe they were sitting like an orchestra." That would explain it. If they were sitting in a semi-circle, from the side it would look like the middle of the front row would be further back. It would also explain why the stand was shaped like a trapezoid. Looking more closely at the Bachrach photo, you can see the curve. The folks sitting on the ends are a little closer to camera than the ones in the middle.

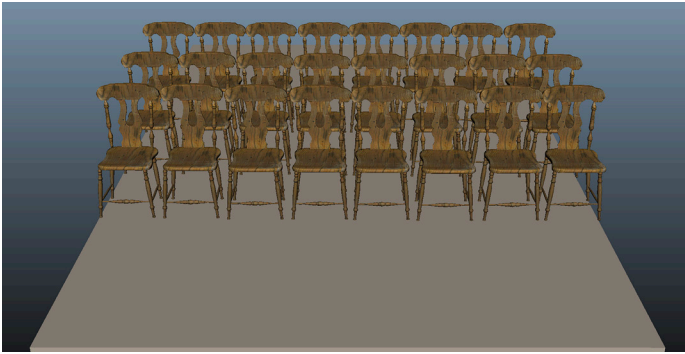


Fig. 7. To scale digital model of 12x20' speaker's platform with three rows of eight chairs. (The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)

We now have an approximate size, and we have a shape. Now we need to figure out where the platform was. And this question took years to figure out.

In his personal copy of the *Revised Report of the Select Committee of the Soldiers' National Cemetery* (1865), Selleck drew the location of his 12 by 20-foot speaker's stand on a map inside the report. When this document was published by *Civil War Times Illustrated* in July 1976, it caused a bit of stir because Selleck's location flew in the face of what, for over 100 years, had been the accepted, traditional position of the speaker's platform—where the Soldiers' National Monument now stands.

Klement dismissed Selleck's location because it put the speaker's platform downhill and close to where the New York monument stands today. Had the ceremony taken place there, the graves would have been behind the speakers stand and not in front of it. Eyewitness press reports placed the stand much higher on the hill, describing a "commanding view" of all the surrounding area. Most people took that to mean where National Monument stands. But according to one reporter who was there, the flagpole stood where "it is proposed to erect a national monument." The flagpole and the speaker's stand could not occupy the same space.

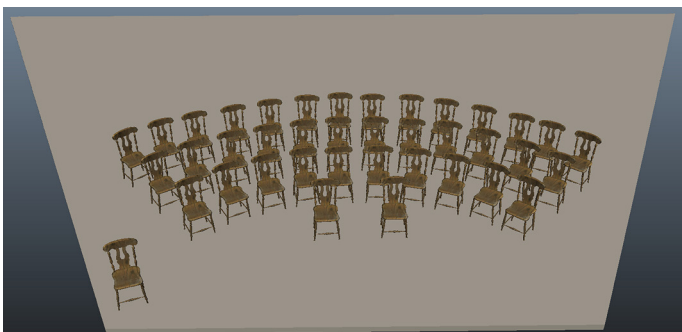


Fig. 8. To scale digital model of Oakley speaker's platform with thirty-nine chairs. (The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)

In 1978, Gettysburg National Military Park historians Thomas and Kathleen Harrison studied eyewitness accounts as well as the existing photographs and shocked historians when they declared that the speaker's stand was much further uphill, where the Brown Mausoleum is located. This places the stand entirely within the borders of neighboring Evergreen Cemetery! This meant Lincoln wasn't in the National Cemetery at all when he delivered his address. The main problem with this placement is that the Brown Mausoleum stands where that pile of boulders known as the "Rocky Center" was located. You could not build a stand there. But for years, some accepted this location.

In 1995, when Bill Frassanito released *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, he placed the speaker's stand within the confines of Evergreen Cemetery and listed the graves that formed the boundary of the stand. He made a convincing case, and for the past twenty-seven years, Frassanito's placement of the platform has been regarded as *the* location.

Back at UNC Asheville, my team and I continued to build our 3D digital version of the cemeteries. Somehow, I got it into my head that it would be a cool opening for our video if we showed one of the photographs of the dedication ceremony and then had it dissolve into our digital recreation, with everything matching up. The digital cameras in Maya are designed to mimic real world cameras, from the focal lengths of lenses to the angles of view. This is how they blend live action actors into digital worlds in film. So, I decided to give it a try. But to make this work, I would need to know where the photographers actually stood. I always loved the Gardner view, so that was a good place to start.

In Maya, you can import a photograph onto something called an "image plane," which sits like a piece of film in front of the digital camera's virtual lens. Imagine putting a photograph you've taken back into the camera, then using that photograph to line up everything you can see in the photo with the real world. If you're able to do it, you will be standing in the exact same position you were in when you took the photo in the first place. It seemed to me that if I could line up our digital world's horizon line and the gatehouse and the flagpole with an analog photograph from 1863, our digital camera would be in the same place as Gardner's camera when he took the photo.

It took a while, because I had to make hundreds of minute adjustments to our digital camera's



Fig. 9. Gardner photograph superimposed over 3D digital render.
(The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)

positioning, focal length, and angle of view in order to match the photograph. Here is the Gardner photograph and our digital recreation together. [Fig. 9] The horizon matches, the speaker's stand matches, the flagpole matches, and the comfort tent matches.

Then it hit me—each of the photographers took their photos from very different positions that all triangulated each other. It stood to reason that if I could digitally match each photographer's physical location, photograph, and angle of view (which is what their camera saw), I should be able to figure out the size, shape, and location of the speaker's stand. Anything lying within each camera view would have to match the photograph. If it didn't match what I was seeing through the digital lens, it wasn't correct. If I matched an object's size and shape, but moved it just a few inches from the correct location, it went out of alignment in every view. A piece of a jigsaw puzzle can only fit in its intended spot.

Because we know Weaver took one of his two photos from the gatehouse, I had a pretty good idea where to place him. I spent the next year trying to match Weaver's position from the attic of the Duttera House. This was especially difficult because no photograph of the house itself seemed to exist—until I found the house in the background of a photograph of Ziegler's Grove and Cemetery Hill which was taken around the turn of the century. The house had exactly what I was looking for—an attic window facing uphill.

The most difficult photo to match digitally was Bachrach's photo taken from the front of the speaker's stand. After almost three years of trial and error and a ton of frustration, I was finally able to match his position. Our digital speaker's stand, the horizon, the comfort tent, and the flagpole all came into alignment.

But there was a problem. I couldn't match our stand-in digital humans with the real humans captured in Bachrach's photo. The folks near the speaker's stand almost matched. But the ones right in front of the camera were sinking into the ground up to their shins.

During one of my many visits to Gettysburg, Brian Kennell, the superintendent of Evergreen Cemetery, accompanied me while I was surveying the spot where I believed the speaker's stand to have been. I kept staring at the ground and finally asked Brian if it was possible that the ground was lower in 1863. "Not only is it possible," he replied. "It's probable." He explained that at the time of the ceremony, no graves had been established in this part of the cemetery. And when you dig a grave, you disturb the earth and raise the ground level. He pointed to the narrow alleys that separate the sections of graves, which were a good 6 inches to a foot lower, like the gutter in a bowling alley. "That's the original height" he said. Armed with that information, I carefully lowered the ground level in our digital world about 8 inches. And suddenly everything fit! None of our digital humans looked like they were sinking in quicksand. The last piece of the puzzle fell into place.

Based on ten years of research and the fusion of 19th-century analog materials with 21st-century digital tools, I can now reveal what I propose is the size, shape, and location of the speaker's stand.

The speaker's stand was much larger than the accepted size, it was shaped like trapezoid, and it straddled both cemeteries. [Fig. 10] The back half of the platform stood in Evergreen Cemetery, while the front half, where the VIPs and Lincoln sat, was on the National Cemetery side. When Lincoln rose to deliver his Gettysburg Address, he was standing well within the grounds of the National Cemetery. I humbly submit that this isn't just another educated guess. The 19th-century reporters, witnesses, illustrators, and

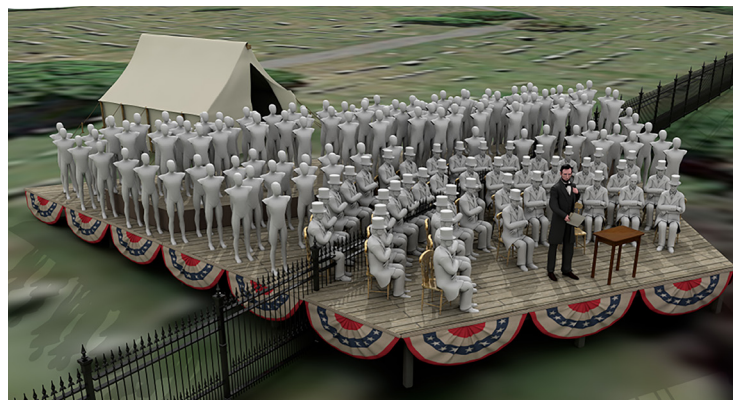


Fig. 10. To scale digital model of the Oakley speaker's platform on GIS and Google map. The modern fence between the cemeteries runs right through the location of the platform. (The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)

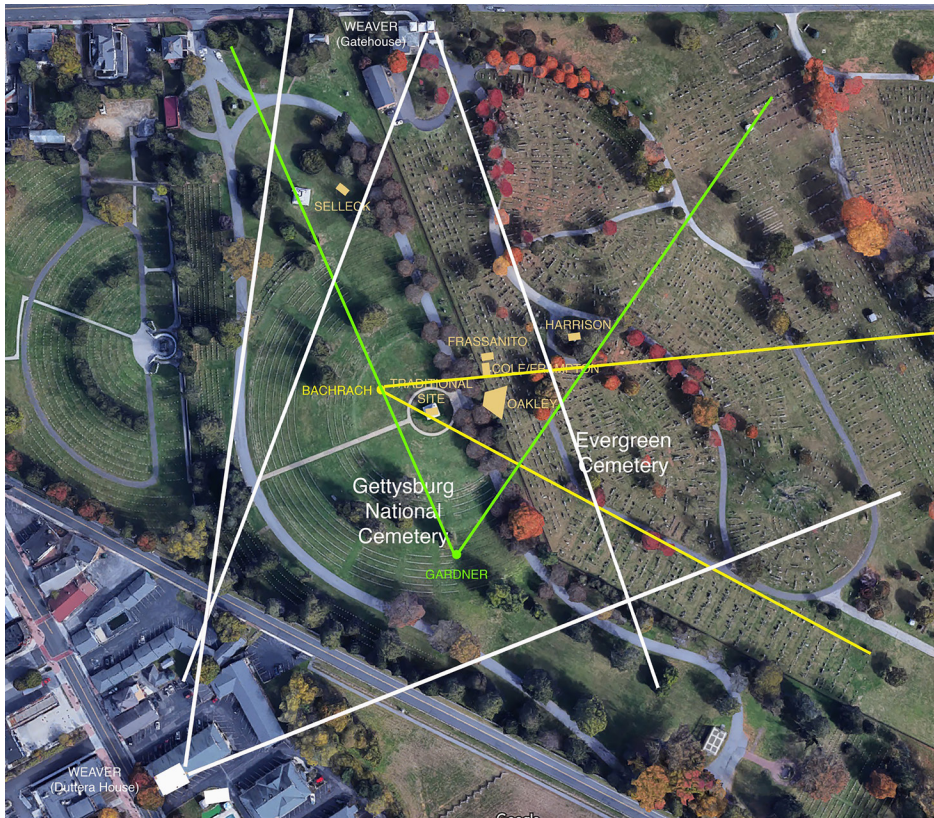


Fig. 11. Google map showing the photographers' camera angles of view and the various proposed locations of the speaker's stand. (The Virtual Lincoln Project/Oakley)

photographers left us many clues. All we needed was the 21st-century technology, the patience, and the will to put it all together.

Using our digital model and cameras, we can trace what each photographer's camera can see. Here is where each photographer took their photographs and their cameras' angles of view. [Fig. 11] Everything outside of each of these cones is not in the photos. Everything within them is. As you can see, when viewed this way, we get a sort of Venn Diagram, which shows only one area where their views overlap. The "traditional" location is mostly within this central area, but the other stands fall outside of this intersection. Only the speaker's platform that my research revealed falls completely within this central zone.

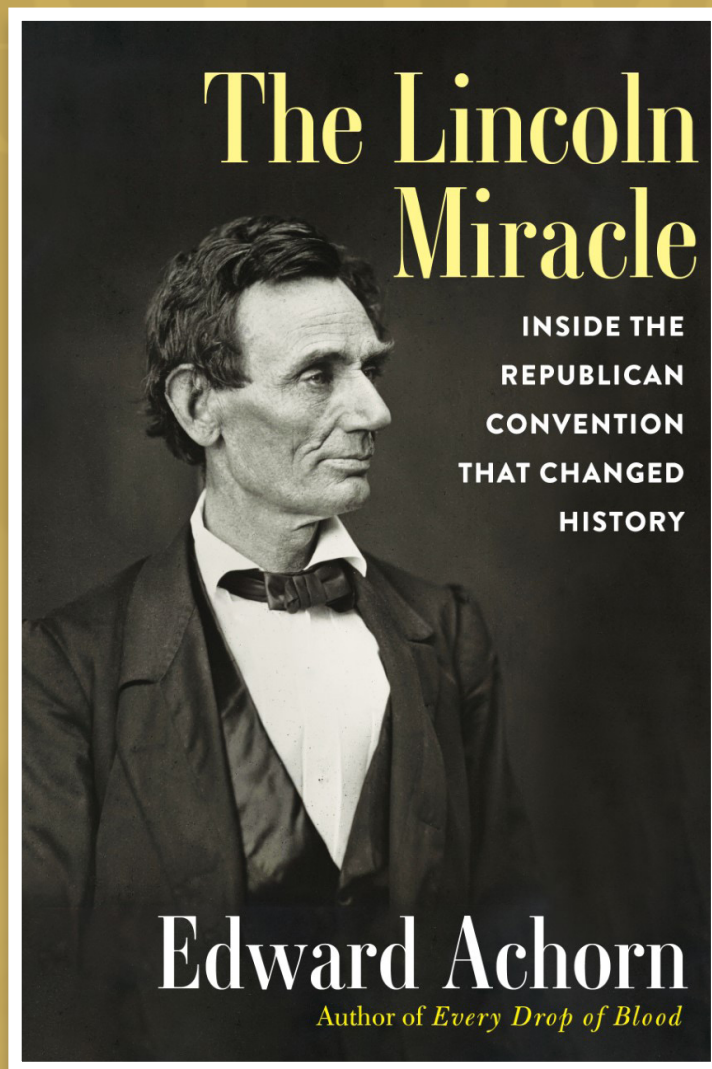
Does it really *matter* if we know where Lincoln was standing when he delivered his Gettysburg Address? Certainly, *what* he said matters more than *where* he said it. But I believe it *does* matter. Knowing you are standing on the very spot where Lincoln proclaimed that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth" ignites the imagination and transports you back in time. *You* become another witness to the event.

Nine years ago, my students and I explored Evergreen Cemetery for a couple hours, trying to find the Frassanito platform location. As we got closer and closer, I noticed that the students' small talk and messing around had begun to taper off. I could sense *their* growing awareness of where they were. And by the time they were using their bodies to mark off the dimensions of the speaker's stand at the location, there was absolute silence. It felt like we were standing on holy ground. I've had many of these students tell me over the years that they had very little interest in history when they joined the project. They were in it for the technical challenge. But by the time their work on the project had come to an end, they'd all become history buffs. Digital humanities was the gateway to a world they had not yet explored and the journey for us all was incredibly immersive.

Does it really matter if we know where Lincoln was standing when he delivered the Gettysburg Address?

Absolutely.

Christopher Oakley is a professor of new media at UNC Asheville. His entire presentation, which includes more images than could be reprinted here, can be viewed at www.c-span.org.



THE LINCOLN MIRACLE:

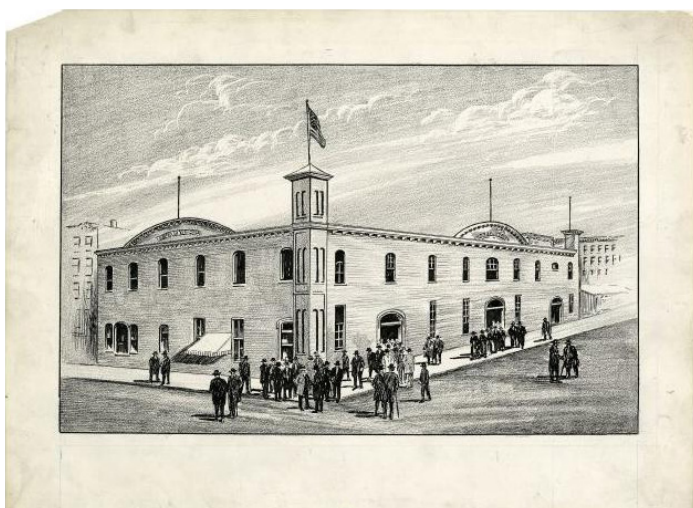
Inside the Republican Convention
that Changed History

Book Review by Phelps Gay

Sixty-three years ago, the Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission published a three-volume work called *Lincoln Day by Day, A Chronology, 1809-1865*, edited by Earl Schenck Miers. An invaluable reference work, it tells us in short factual entries what Lincoln was doing each day of his life, at least so far as could be reconstructed at the time.

In his new book, *The Lincoln Miracle: Inside the Republican Convention that Changed History*, Edward Achorn also takes a day-by-day approach, from Saturday, May 12, 1860, when people began arriving in the thriving city of Chicago to nominate a Republican candidate for president, through Saturday, May 19, when people began boarding trains to go home. Most were stunned that a relatively obscure former congressman named Abraham Lincoln, instead of the heavily favored New York Senator William H. Seward, had been crowned the nominee.

As in his previous book, *Every Drop of Blood: The Momentous Second Inauguration of Abraham Lincoln* (2020), Achorn offers us not only a day-by-day but virtually a minute-by-minute account of the proceedings, spiced with vivid sketches of the main characters, descriptions of late-night deals made by political managers, and a near-cinematic picture of the city where these momentous events took place. Indeed, the bustling, dynamic, exciting though occasionally odiferous city of Chicago, whose population had quadrupled over the prior decade, is itself a character in this compelling story, as exemplified by can-do contractors who constructed an enormous barn-like auditorium called the Wigwam in just six weeks.



The Wigwam (71.2009.081.1788)

Although we know the eventual outcome, Achorn recreates the tension and drama surrounding the week's events as they were experienced by people like David Davis, Leonard Swett, Thurlow Weed, Carl Schurz, and the influential but much-despised (at least by the Seward camp) *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, all of whom did not know how things would turn out. By tradition the candidates stayed home, but Achorn duly notes all letters and telegrams that managers and friends sent to Seward, Lincoln, Edward Bates, Salmon P. Chase, and other aspirants. Lincoln, who loved politics, was divided about whether to show up, saying he felt "too much of a candidate to go, and not quite enough to stay home."

The book opens with a scene at a train station on a rainy night in October 1858. Lincoln is winding up his campaign against Stephen A. Douglas for the U.S. Senate. Waiting on the platform, the tired candidate encounters a "prim young journalist" named Henry Villard. When it starts to rain, the two men dash into an empty freight car and strike up a conversation. In a "reflective mood," Lincoln reminisces about his early days clerking in a store in New Salem and shares with the young man his nagging doubts about whether he is "qualified" for the U.S. Senate. He believes he is qualified but confesses that each day he hears a voice saying, "it's too big a thing for you; you will never get it." As for the highest office in the land, with a hearty laugh Lincoln says: "Just think of such a Sucker as me as President!"

Finally, the train to Springfield rolls into the station. Achorn writes: "The train disappeared into the darkness, carrying a rising young reporter and a strange politician who was moving toward a heartbreaking defeat in the Senate fight but a future of greatness that not even his ambitious wife could have imagined." From the endnotes we learn this account is drawn from the *Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier, 1835-1900* (1940). Throughout the book, Achorn weaves in facts and stories from a remarkably wide variety of sources—books, letters, diaries, telegrams, interviews, memoirs, newspaper accounts, magazine articles—designed not so much to reflect upon events as to describe how they unfurled in real time and were perceived by those present. In short, the book has a novelistic "you are there" quality, grounded in scrupulous historical research. Asked in a recent interview about his approach in writing this book, Achorn replied: "I tried to look at history as it was happening."

Among Achorn's sources is Murat Halstead, a thirty-year-old journalist, editor, and part-owner of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, whom Achorn describes as "a



Lincoln Receiving Notification of Nomination (71.2009.081.2738)

lively stylist with a sharp eye for detail." Popping up at regular intervals, at one point Halstead exposes a "devious plot" in the Ohio delegation whereby Benjamin Wade attempts to "wrest political power from his Senate colleague Salmon P. Chase." This scheme involved adoption of a "unit rule" under which the delegation would commit to vote for Chase on the first ballot and switch entirely to Wade on the second. Upon learning this, Chase supporters "threatened to defect to Seward if the Wade forces persisted," at which point Wade's forces "quickly backed off, and instead tried to persuade the influential Halstead to support their man."

The author paints an excellent portrait of resourceful Judge David Davis, whose mission was to "attempt the impossible" by making his friend president—a daunting task to be sure. On the day Davis arrived in Chicago the morning edition of *Harper's Weekly* featured portraits of eleven potential Republican nominees, with William Seward prominently in the center and Lincoln relegated to the bottom row. In the accompanying text on each candidate, Lincoln's profile was the shortest and appeared last. He was, Achorn writes, considered "the darkest of dark horses."

To make matters worse, upon arriving at the Tremont Hotel, Davis discovered that no one on the Lincoln team had reserved a room for its headquarters. Taking charge, Davis paid "a

premium for the evacuation of certain rooms by private families," and without anyone electing him to the position, "he at once became the leader of all the Illinois men." Leonard Swett characterized the "leading trait" of Davis's character as "unconscious strength." According to Lincoln, Davis "had that way of making a man do a thing whether he wants to or not."

And yet, the great irony of the story is that Seward's prominence became his Achilles heel. Although his 1858 speech on the "irrepressible conflict" between slavery and freedom and Lincoln's House Divided speech (delivered months earlier) said much the same thing, Seward was more famous than Lincoln, so his words "set off a firestorm" whereas Lincoln's were "all but ignored outside of Illinois." Achorn notes that even after Lincoln's well-received speech at the Cooper Institute in New York City on February 27, 1860, and publication of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, both of which raised his profile, Lincoln was still relatively unknown on a national level. He had no administrative experience beyond running a two-man law office, and he had not held public office since 1849, having lost two subsequent races for the U.S. Senate. Compared to Seward, Lincoln was small potatoes. In fact, party leaders had chosen Chicago as a "neutral site" for the convention, in part because they believed no serious candidate resided in Illinois.

As it turned out, many delegates in Chicago worried that Seward's "irrepressible" language and

his invocation of a “higher law” than the Constitution, especially when viewed in the context of John Brown’s recent attempt to provoke a slave rebellion by raiding a federal armory at Harper’s Ferry, portended the outbreak of civil war. To them, only a more “moderate” candidate, one who could appeal to both the party’s anti-slavery base as well as “swing state” voters who desired to keep the Union together, could prevail against the Democrats in the November general election. A westerner like Lincoln or Bates might fit the bill. “Perhaps more than any other politician,” Achorn writes, “Seward set Southerners on edge.”

In addition, Achorn shows that many delegates were not so much concerned about choosing the “best-qualified” candidate as they were about selecting someone who could help *them* get elected or re-elected in their home states. Andrew G. Curtin, who hoped to be governor of Pennsylvania, believed a ticket led by Seward “would prove electoral poison” to his chances, as did Henry S. Lane, who sought the same position in Indiana. Regarding these self-interested delegates, Achorn quotes Connecticut journalist Isaac H. Bromley: “They were altogether human,” and whoever believed they were “saints” who “pursued no devious ways” was sorely mistaken. Emphasizing the political nature of the delegates’ task, the pro-Lincoln *Chicago Press and Tribune* editorialized to arriving delegates: “Constables are worth more than Presidents in the long run, as a means of holding political power. . . . We look to Mr. Lincoln to tow constables and General Assembly [members] into power. . . . The gods help those who help themselves.”

A key part of Lincoln’s strategy was to lay low and position himself as the second choice of most state delegations. To his Ohio friend Samuel Galloway, he wrote: “My name is new in the field; and I suppose I am not the first choice of a very great many. Our policy, then, is to give no offence to others—leave them in a mood to come to us, if they shall be compelled to give up their first love.” This proved to be a sound approach, particularly since Horace Greeley, nursing old wounds suffered (as he perceived it) at the hands of Seward and Weed, was telling everyone Seward could never win the general election.

However, as a Chicago humorist named Finley Peter Dunne would write years later, “politics ain’t beanbag.” Something more than anodyne behavior was needed, and by all accounts Judge Davis and his “Lincoln men” delivered it.

For one thing, Lincoln’s friend Norman Judd was assigned to come up with a seating chart for the delegates. In doing so, he decided to position half the

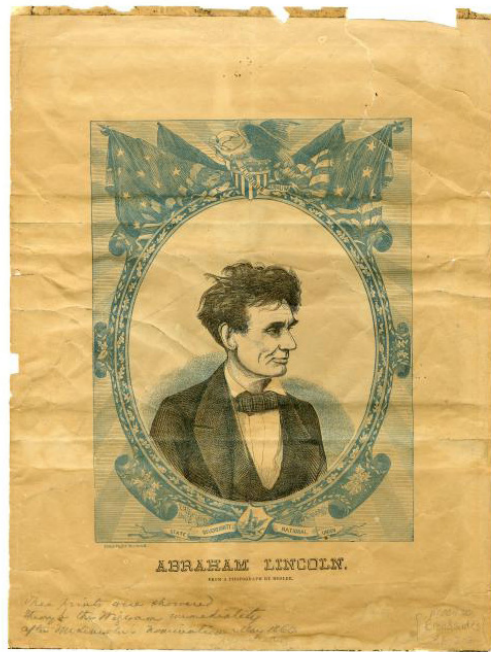
delegates on one side of the massive center stage and half on the other side. He “shrewdly positioned” the entire New York delegation to the right of the podium and surrounded it with other Seward supporters. He then placed the important “wavering delegations” on the other side of the stage, near the Illinois and Indiana camps. The result was that Lincoln’s men “could easily communicate with them during the balloting,” whereas Judd had made it “all but impossible for the Seward men to get over there.” Joseph Medill of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, who assisted Judd with this scheme, later confessed, “It was the meanest political trick I ever had a hand in in my life.”

Luck, as usual, played a role. As the proceedings wound down on Thursday, May 17, with approval of a moderate party platform and confirmation that Seward needed only a simple majority of delegates to prevail, the New York senator appeared to be on the verge of victory. Much credit was due to Thurlow Weed, who used his prowess as an experienced “power broker” (and his capacity to provide financial support to delegates who needed it) to his long-time friend’s advantage. Also helpful was Weed’s success in whipping up pro-Seward marching bands outside and screaming crowds inside the Wigwam. Moreover, despite Greeley’s persistent efforts, support for Edward Bates of Missouri was crumbling due to his prior association with the anti-immigrant American (Know-Nothing) Party. Now, with seemingly all momentum on Seward’s side, it was time to vote.

But it was after 6 p.m., and some tired and hungry delegates moved to adjourn, preferring to vote the next morning; others, also tired and hungry, wanted to vote right away. At that point the convention chair announced that the presidential tally sheets “are prepared but not yet at hand, but will be in a few minutes.” According to Achorn, “the prospect of further delay took the spirit out of the famished delegates,” and they decided to adjourn for the evening.

Given a reprieve, Lincoln’s men used the remaining time well. Upon receiving a note from Lincoln urging his team to “make no contracts that will bind me,” Judge Davis brushed it aside. “Lincoln ain’t here,” he said, “and don’t know what we have to meet, so we will go ahead as if we hadn’t heard from him, and he must ratify it.”

To shore up Indiana’s support Davis and company offered former Congressman Caleb B. Smith a cabinet seat—Secretary of the Interior. Later that night this deal apparently helped a hastily-formed “committee of twelve”—three men each from the



Abraham Lincoln, Issued for the 1860 Republican National Convention 71.2009.081.2801

Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania delegations—tentatively settle on Lincoln as their alternative to Seward, but only if New Jersey would agree to give up on former Senator William L. Dayton and Pennsylvania would abandon Senator Simon Cameron. (This was all under the assumption that their respective delegations would go along.) Still later that night, four Lincoln men (Davis, Swett, Stephen T. Logan, and William P. Dole) met with Pennsylvania leaders at the Tremont House in an effort to seal this deal. When it appeared they had been successful, journalist Joseph Medill asked Davis how he did it. “By paying their price,” Davis replied. That price included a position for Cameron in Lincoln’s cabinet.

Here it should be noted that Cameron enjoyed a checkered reputation for honesty and fair dealing, to put it mildly. Sarcastically, Congressman Thaddeus Stevens later conceded he didn’t think Cameron “would steal a red-hot stove.” Cameron denied making a deal with Lincoln’s men, protesting that he stood by Seward while Davis and Swett “bought all my men.” The evidence, Achorn notes, suggests Cameron was both aware of the deal and approved it.

Still, as Friday morning, May 18, dawned, the Seward forces remained highly optimistic. A thousand men, “wearing their silk Seward badges,” marched in the streets toward the Wigwam behind the “brilliantly uniformed” Dodworth Band of New York. The wily Weed planned to “fill the building with men who would scream at the mere mention” of Seward’s

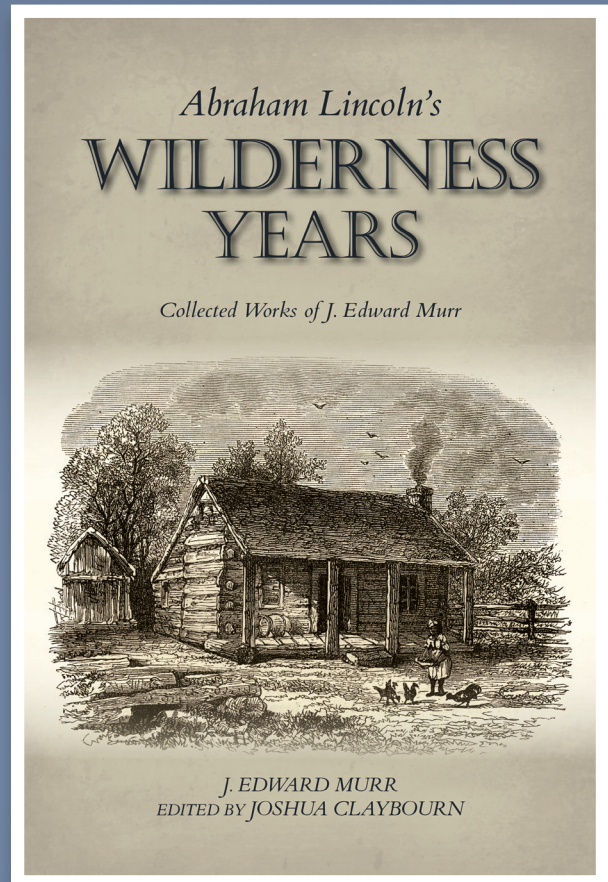
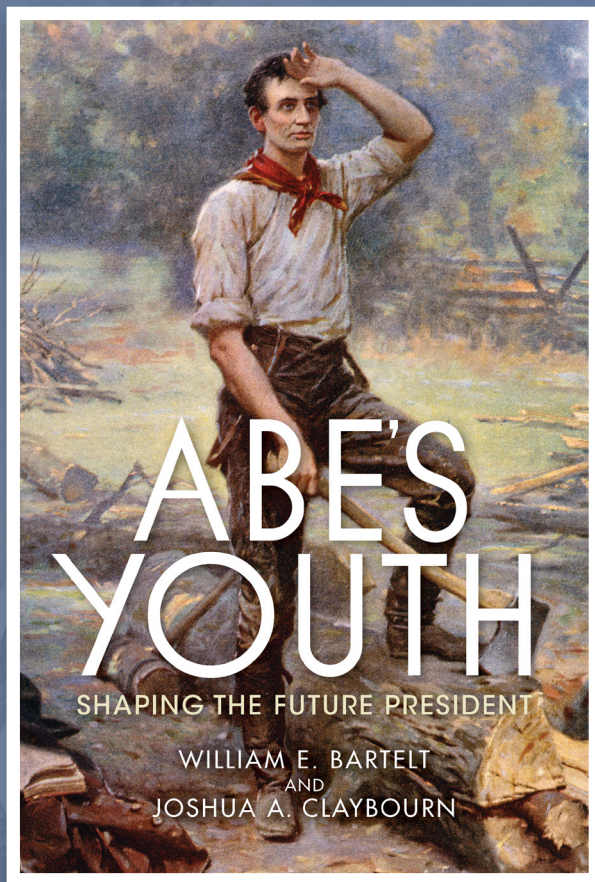
name. Alas, as Murat Halstead observed, they “protracted their march too much,” because when they arrived at the 11,000-seat auditorium, many of them couldn’t get in. Why? According to one account, certain young men supporting Lincoln spent Thursday night printing “counterfeit tickets” so that on Friday morning three hundred Lincoln supporters gained admission to the Wigwam, keeping the same number of noisy Seward enthusiasts out.

As we know, on the first ballot Seward, needing 233 votes, fell short with 173 ½ to Lincoln’s 102. On the second ballot, the gap narrowed considerably, with Seward at 184 ½ and Lincoln 181. On the third, the delegates closed ranks behind their new nominee, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Graciously, William M. Evarts, chairman of the New York delegation, moved that Lincoln’s nomination be made unanimous, but as Achorn notes it took a quite a long time before Seward and his Empire State friends could even begin to digest the fact that the “darkest of dark horses,” an obscure lawyer from a small town in a western state, had become the Republican nominee for the presidency of the United States.

In the end, what distinguishes this fine book, as was the case with *Every Drop of Blood*, is the creative manner of its telling. Part historical narrative, part non-fiction novel, part screenplay, *The Lincoln Miracle* is suffused with drama. Scenes are colorfully set; people are physically described, such as Lincoln’s friend Jesse K. Dubois, with his blue eyes and auburn hair. We learn what people wore, such as Greeley’s worn-out white linen coat, battered beaver hat, and dirty boots. We learn how the trains belched, how factories “filled the sky with an acrid haze,” and how the sluggish Chicago River smelled. Inside the Wigwam, we learn not only about the delegates but about cloth bunting, unfinished wood, and gaslights flaring. (Historian Bruce Catton later wrote “it must have been one of the most dangerous fire traps ever built in America.”) We even learn what Judge Davis could see outside the window of his Tremont Hotel room—namely, a huge sign with one word: SEWARD.

In sum, Edward Achorn bears a striking resemblance to one of his characters—reporter Murat Halstead, “a lively stylist with a sharp eye for detail.” He is something of an artist-entertainer, yet one who has clearly done his historical homework. If we are lucky, we will hear from him further.

Phelps Gay is an attorney from New Orleans who currently serves as chair of the Louisiana Supreme Court Historical Society.



ABE'S YOUTH:

Shaping the Future President

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S

WILDERNESS YEARS:

Collected Works of J. Edward Murr

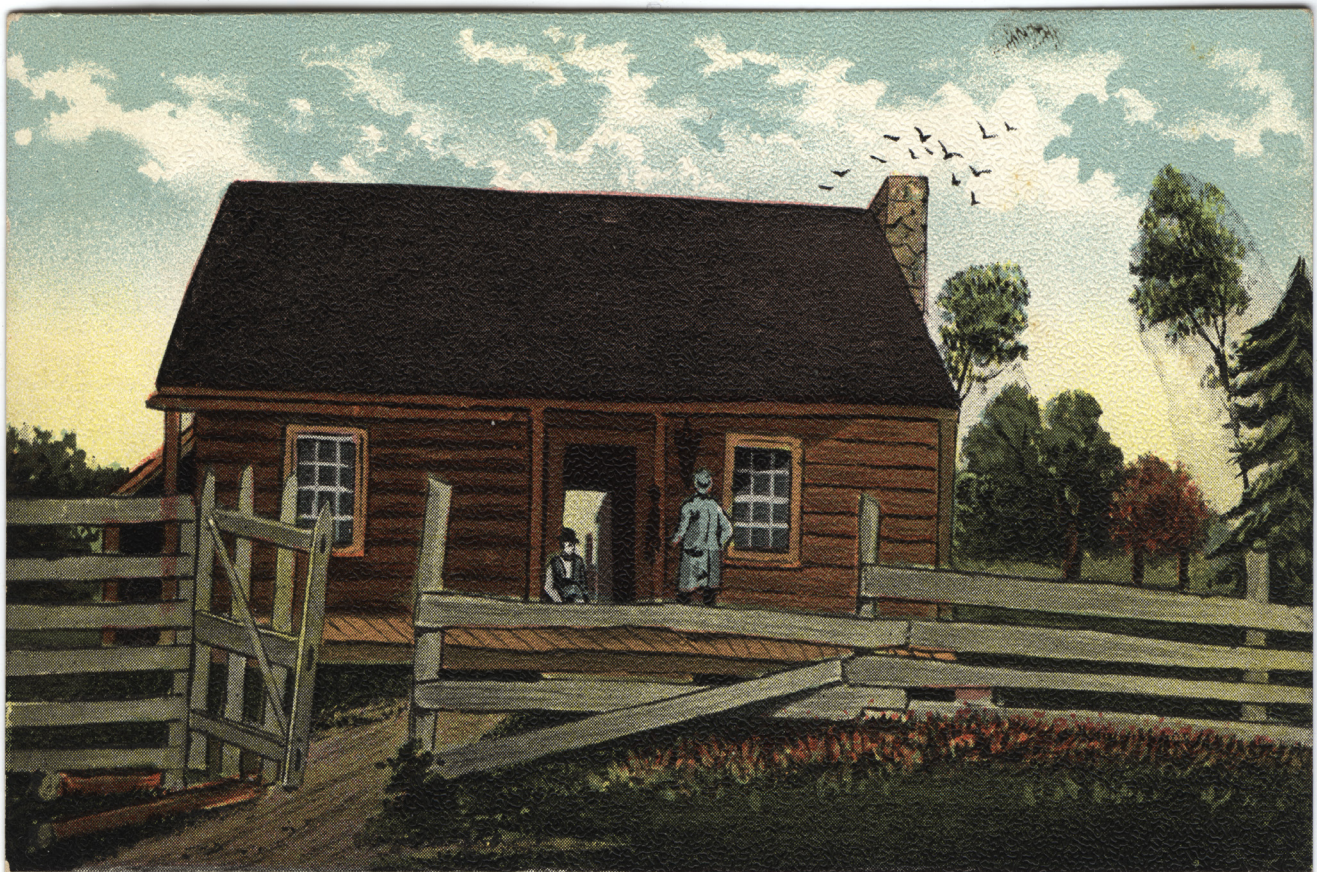
Review Essay by Andrew F. Lang

The "Lincoln legend" goes something like this. Born in 1809 to impoverished Kentucky parents whose earthly possessions consisted of little more than a small log cabin, Abraham Lincoln moved with his family in 1816 to Indiana. There, the Lincoln flock labored in obscurity, eking out a subsistence living amid the tangled thickets of the American frontier. Burdened by the death of his beloved mother and sister, and deprived of formal education, an ambitious Abraham longed to escape his gloomy, unfulfilling reality. In 1830, his father Thomas again moved the family, this time to the Illinois prairie. But opportunity struck. At twenty-one years old, Abraham broke from his clan. He vowed never to return to a life of fruitless toil. With a sharp mind, unmatched wit, and enviable work ethic, Lincoln mastered the law and matured into a shrewd politician. Seats in the Illinois state legislature and the United States Congress enhanced his public confidence. With the advent of an irreconcilable sectional crisis during the 1850s, Lincoln emerged as a leading spokesperson of the antislavery cause. The American people then elevated him in 1860 to the presidency as the best hope to contest disunion and civil war. The most unlikely but also the most authentic

of American presidents, Lincoln sacrificed his life to liberate an enslaved people and save his beloved Union.

The myth continues. Guided by his better angels, Lincoln had transcended the humble obstacles of his birth. Indeed, he rarely spoke of his roots. "It is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of my early life," Lincoln informed a Republican campaign biographer in 1860. "It can all be condensed into a single sentence, and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy: 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' That's my life, and that's all you or any one else can make of it."

When Lincoln's closest confidants chronicled his life, they echoed what appeared to be their dear friend's modesty. But in so doing, they salved their own embarrassment about their hero's backward youth. Ward Hill Lamon pictured the inhabitants of Southwestern Indiana as shoeless, primitive folk who found solace in the bottle. William Herndon denigrated the Hoosier state as an uncultured, retrograde boondock. John Nicolay and John Hay's enormous ten-



Abraham Lincoln's Boyhood Home, near Gentryville, Indiana.

Abraham Lincoln's Boyhood Home (ZPC-405)

volume biography featured a single, brief chapter on the Indiana years. Reducing Lincoln's contemporaries to a people "full of strange superstitions," Nicolay and Hay fled Indiana as quickly as possible before conferring sainthood upon their martyred chief.

Never satisfied with the status quo, historians often question anew subjects of old, yielding transformational revisions to conventional wisdom. Between 1920 and 1939, an aspiring cluster of Indianans founded the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society (SWIHS) and charted the Lincoln Inquiry. Their tireless energy produced hundreds of interviews with people who knew the Indiana Lincolns, grew up with the young Abraham, and attested to the rich frontier upbringing that shaped the future president. The SWIHS comprised amateur historians and genealogists who delivered nearly 400 presentations and authored more than 200 papers to recreate Lincoln's youth. Likewise, a native of Corydon, Indiana, Rev. J. Edward Murr (1868–1960), came of age with Lincoln's cousins. With unparalleled access to Lincoln's earliest acquaintances and unmatched knowledge of the Indiana environs, Murr compiled an immense archive of interviews, writings, and manuscripts.

A vast majority of the SWIHS's and Murr's work was never published. Though much of the documentation remained scattered in various state archives and libraries, their materials shaped influential biographies by Ida Tarbell, Albert J. Beveridge, Mark E. Neely Jr., and Michael Burlingame. These authors emphasized Indiana's abiding sway on Lincoln's intellectual development and budding political outlook. Now, thanks to the superb talents of editors William E. Bartelt and Joshua A. Claybourn, much of the material from the SWIHS and Murr are published in accessible annotated volumes. Alongside William Herndon's essential interviews with Lincoln informants, Bartelt and Claybourn's editions present the most comprehensive, complex, and colorful entryway into Lincoln's mysterious Indiana upbringing.

As with all reminiscences, readers should exercise caution when engaging the memories and varied purposes of informants. Indeed, the Lincoln Inquiry aimed to rehabilitate the sullied image of Southwest Indiana as an anti-intellectual, backward pit that Lincoln would have to conquer on his path to greatness. When approached with dispassionate care, however, both the SWIHS collections and Murr's writings convey an overwhelming sense that Lincoln the successful lawyer, Lincoln the skilled debater, and Lincoln the moral statesman, all grew from the Lincoln of the streams and rivers, the woodlots and hamlets, of frontier Indiana. As coeditors of *Abe's Youth: Shaping the*

Future President, Bartelt and Claybourn culled the best samples from the Lincoln Inquiry's work. In the single-edited *Abraham Lincoln's Wilderness Years*, Claybourn compiled chapters from Murr's unpublished biography, his essays published between 1917 and 1918 in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, and his correspondence with Beveridge. Both works represent a masterwork of documentary editing. The editors correct falsehoods and misrepresentations. And they provide learned commentary on even the most minute but essential facts.



Young Abe Lincoln in Indiana (71.2009.081.1226)

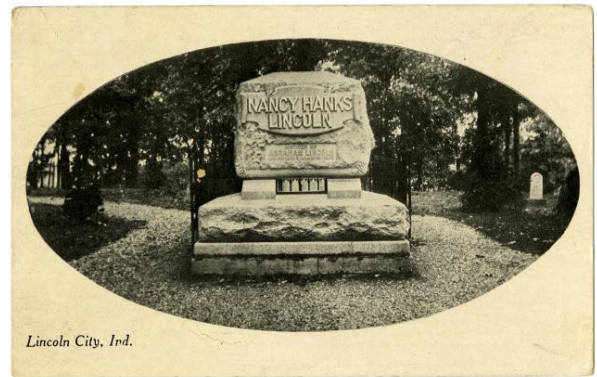
Taken together, the Lincoln Inquiry and Murr tell a story of roughhewn but idyllic Indiana communities, bustling with economic and intellectual energy, peopled by curious and determined citizens. Bound by kinship and friendship, Lincoln developed a kind manner, a gentle spirit, a restrained disposition, a talented ambition. Neither the informants nor the writers deify Lincoln, ascending him high above the river towns and beyond the broad prairies of his common youth. They love him, to be sure. But he was one of them, and they an enduring part of him. Indiana gave Lincoln life. And when he died, a part of that proud community also died. Though as Lincoln himself believed, the honored dead may no longer breathe, but their spirits never perish from the earth. The memory of his Indiana days conceived and dedicated the Lincoln Inquiry and J. Edward Murr's devotion, to which the latest generation remains indebted.

* * *

In 1816, the very year that Indiana joined the Union, the Lincolns settled in Spencer County in the southwestern part of the state known as “the pocket.” From ages 7 to 21, Lincoln lived one-quarter of his life in the region. Between 1816 and 1830, his world was shaped by personal trial. His mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died when Abraham was only nine years old. His sister, Sarah Lincoln Grigsby, perished when he was a teenager. Though he knew Nancy for but a short time, Lincoln later recalled, “All that I am or hope to be I get from my mother—God bless her.” His father, Thomas, soon remarried, bringing into the family the widow Sarah Bush Johnston and her three children. Lincoln adored Sarah, and she bestowed a motherly love of which Lincoln had been deprived at a young age. The Lincoln Inquiry and Murr both paint a relatively happy childhood. Popular memory—enhanced by some of the SWIHS essayists—nevertheless denigrates Thomas as an uninspiring ne’er-do-well who formed a tense, distant relationship with his son. Yet Murr disagreed. He paints Thomas as a man of character, decency, and honesty, a man who committed himself to his family and faith, a man who subordinated his self-interest to the broader community. In this vein, Murr portrayed Thomas as “father of the [very] president” in whom we identify similar traits.



Spencer County Memorial (71.2009.083.1891)



Nancy Hanks Lincoln Monument (71.2009.083.1959)

The Lincoln Inquiry and Murr portray Lincoln's Indiana years as positive and constructive. We see Lincoln learning the values of cooperation and friendship, of local associations and civil society. He was surrounded, T. H. Masterson spoke in his 1928 SWIHS paper, by a people “profoundly religious, almost mystic in their belief that right would prevail.” But later in life, Lincoln expressed ambivalence toward his years in “the pocket.” When he returned to Indiana in 1844 to campaign for his political idol, Henry Clay, Lincoln ventured to his boyhood region. And though he reflected on his attachment to place and people, to love and fondness, he also dwelled on the pain and the personal loss he experienced as a boy. He fixated on the immovable force of history, of perplexing circumstance and necessity. Might the passage of time, he wondered, cure the aching memories of yesteryear? Was his early life of poverty and strain predestined and determinative?

His 1844 trip inspired a heartrending poem that harked back to the Indiana days. “I range the fields with pensive tread, / And pace the hollow rooms; / And feel (companions of the dead) / I’m living in the tombs.” He continued: “Now fare thee well: more thou the cause / Than subject now of woe. / All mental pangs, but time’s kind laws, / Hast lost the power to know. / And now away to seek some scene / Less painful than the last.” The poem agonizes on the haunting memory of Matthew Gentry, a dear friend of Lincoln's, who suffered a manic collapse when Abraham was sixteen. Even as a young man, Lincoln believed that only by harnessing his mind, controlling his passions, and resorting to reason would he resolve his destitute condition. Lincoln saw in Matthew's deterioration the devastating loss of mental fortitude, the sole source of individual mobility and personal sovereignty.

And herein resides the great value of the Lincoln Inquiry and Murr's literature. They demonstrate how Indiana stuck with Lincoln long after he departed the Hoosier state. As he wrote in 1846,

"That part of the country is, within itself, as unpoetical as any spot of the earth; but still, seeing it and its objects and inhabitants aroused feelings in me which were certainly poetry." Here was a brief expression of gratitude, of affection, a realization that something profound had occurred in that unknown corner of the Midwest. Lincoln sensed that he had been placed for a reason in rural Indiana. There, he was a young citizen living on the edge of a young republic. As the fledgling boy matured to manhood, so too did the youthful Union strengthen in stature. As man and nation grew in tandem, they each remained uncertain of their destiny, but each searched for a moral core, desirous to know their higher purpose.



*Home that Entertained Lincoln in October 1844, Rockport, Ind.
(71.2009.083.1975)*

The Lincoln Inquiry and Murr insist that we can see planted in the silty Indiana soil the seeds of Lincoln's mature thought: his obsession with education, his faith in the individual's right to rise in a free society, his belief in the law and mediating institutions, his search for spiritual and civil order, his quest for personal peace amid waves of melancholy. Lincoln's Indiana acquaintances and associates appear to have left a lasting influence on his young life. From the antislavery sermons of Adam Shoemaker to the industriousness of local merchant James Gentry, and from the unmatched law library of John Pitcher to the ferry operator James Taylor, with whom Lincoln traveled the Mississippi River in 1828, a diverse host of influences paved Lincoln's future paths. About these noteworthy personalities, Bess V. Ehrmann, the fourth president of the SWIHS, wrote in her 1925 paper, "His neighbors were largely clear-minded, unpretending men of common sense, whose patriotism was unquestionable."

Like most members of the Lincoln Inquiry, Ehrmann transposed Lincoln's iconic stature back onto his childhood. But there is a convincing, substantial degree of truth in her observation. Dozens of writers

and informants documented the rich networks of communication and news that traveled among "the pocket's" small communities. Country stores bustled with commerce and politics. And Lincoln himself borrowed books, forged a reputation for dependable labor, and exhibited a strange curiosity for the world around him. How else, Ehrmann asked, could a twenty-three-year-old Lincoln be equipped to announce his candidacy for the Illinois General Assembly in 1832, a mere two years after leaving Indiana? To the citizens of Sangamon County, Illinois, Lincoln's first political announcement brims with themes derived from his life in Indiana: the West's need for internal improvements, pleas for popular reverence of the law, and the necessity "that every man may receive at least, a moderate education." This budding politician of the western prairie even admitted that "his peculiar ambition" was to be "esteemed of my fellow men."

One can little doubt the sincerity in Lincoln's entreaty. He trusted his abilities, but he well understood the limits imposed by his frontier condition. Though the Lincoln Inquiry touted all the seeming benefits afforded by the bustling life of Southwestern Indiana, Lincoln was still a poor, penniless, beginner in the world. That unenviable condition presented Lincoln with a choice: either harness a determination to rise or strive in obscurity. Both paths required hard work. But work was not passive. Labor in a free republic required knowledge, it required desire, it demanded the hope of becoming something better. "His youthful ambition to rise in the world," Murr noted, "was native, domineering, and irresistible." As difficult as his early life was, Lincoln was a free citizen, unburdened by the suffocating yoke of enslavement and enslaving. He learned at an early age that he possessed the natural right to dream ambitious dreams and pursue happiness as he understood it. A free citizen maintained an obligation to improve one's condition and to ensure the same equal right for others. Lincoln never abandoned this enduring democratic faith. It was a faith that he later brought forth to the nation.

Andrew F. Lang is associate professor of history at Mississippi State University. He is the author most recently of *A Contest of Civilizations: Exposing the Crisis of American Exceptionalism in the Civil War Era* (UNC Press, 2022), which was a finalist for the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize. A recipient of the Society of Civil War Historians' Tom Watson Brown Book Award, he is now writing an intellectual and cultural biography of Lincoln's nationalism.

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