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Editor’s Note

In this issue of Lincoln Lore we hear from prize-winning scholars Harold Holzer and Kate Masur regarding their latest work on Lincoln and his times. Holzer discusses his most recent book, Brought Forth on this Continent, of airing insights into Lincoln’s personal and political interactions with immigrants both before and during his presidency. Masur draws from her prize-winning Until Justice Be Done to help explain the turbulent world in which Black and white reformers fought for equal rights for African Americans in the Midwest before the Civil War. T e essay by Mark Noll, which was commissioned by Sara Gabbard (for which I am grateful), examines Lincoln funeral sermons to recapture a spiritual dimension of the nation’s mourning in 1865. Accompanying Noll’s piece is a wonderful set of mourning ribbons drawn from the Lincoln Collection by Jessie Cortesi and Jane Gastineau.

I thank Lincoln Lore’s designer Chris Viel for the work he is doing to modernize our design. As always, I hope readers enjoy the articles, interviews, illustrations, and design in this issue.

- Jonathan W. White

An Interview with Harold Holzer
by Jonathan W. White

Harold Holzer is the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College in New York City. T e author or editor of 56 books, he won the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize for Lincoln and the Power of the Press (2014) and a second-place Lincoln Prize for Lincoln at Cooper Union (2004). H is most recent books are T e Presidents vs. the Press (2020) and Brought Forth on this Continent: Abraham Lincoln and American Immigration (2024). A recipient of the National Humanities Medal, he is chairman and co-founder of T e Lincoln Forum, which held its 28th annual symposium in Gettysburg in November.

Jonathan White: You and I have spent a lot of time working together over the past five years on T e Lincoln Forum. For readers of Lincoln Lore who are not yet members, what should they know about the Forum?

Harold Holzer: T e Forum has become, I truly believe, the best Lincoln symposium, the best Lincoln “experience” in the nation. T is time, we welcomed a record-shattering 350 scholars, students, and enthusiasts, along with some of the most renowned and popular historians of our time. T e Forum takes place in Gettysburg every November 16–18, leading up to the annual observances of the anniversary of the Gettysburg Address, so it has a unique and spellbinding atmosphere. We feature veteran and young historians alike, not only in lectures and panel discussions, but also small breakout sessions, battleflied
tour, book signings, and art displays, not to mention breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. T is time around, we featured a spectacular concert of Civil War music by Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, and as a finale on-stage discussion with Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Merely recounting the highlights of the 2023 event reminds me of how complex it has become to plan and stage, though well worth the effort. Perhaps the most unique thing about the Forum is that even though it has more than tripled in size over the decades, it has retained a friends-and-family atmosphere—of eering equal parts history immersion and annual reunion. And thanks to support from members, along with organizations like the Lincoln Presidential Foundation and the History Channel, we’re able to bring both students and teachers to the event on full scholarships, encouraging new generations to the study of Lincoln. A lot of work, yes, but as you well know, Jon, we took only a few days off for decompression and Thanksgiving before launching into the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. We gave the students an exclusive view of the exhibits. I must say, I also enjoyed prodding our paintings and photography departments to encourage more Lincoln and Civil War collecting and exhibits.

Above all, I think all my professional experiences taught me the unwavering importance of communications in politics, governing, and influencing public sentiment, as Lincoln called it—by which I mean communications in both words and images. Lincoln understood both forms of messaging, almost from the beginning of his political career—and certainly once mass-produced image-making began flourishing in 1860. If I’ve accomplished anything, I hope it has been to remind modern readers about Lincoln’s own communications genius.

You mention my grandparents; I never knew three of the four—they died before I was born, and one shortly after. But the one grandmother I knew combined devotion to old-world religious traditions (and cooking) with a deep appreciation for her new life in America. I actually never heard her talk about her early years in Romania, which must have been dark and dangerous, else why leave as an eleven-year-old—on her own? It was as if her life started only when she arrived in the United States in the 1890s, even though she never learned to read or write English. I can’t imagine that it felt much different for the previous generation of foreign-born immigrants who yearned to breathe free, even though not everyone here made them feel welcome. And that’s the sensibility—and the politics— I wanted to bring to this book. It was a major issue in Lincoln’s time, and it deserves more attention now.

You told us about some of Lincoln’s earliest encounters with immigrants. How did his interactions with them compare with his interactions with white Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans?

I’m not sure Lincoln even met a “foreigner” until he journeyed down the Mississippi River on a fable to New Orleans in 1828. When he disembarked in that cosmopolitan multi-ethnic city, he had heard a foreign language (French) spoken and, significantly, glimpsed a slave auction for the first time. I suspect both experiences made him feel welcome. And that’s the sensibility—what little they yearned to breathe free, even though not everyone here made them feel welcome. And that’s the sensibility—and the politics— I wanted to bring to this book. It was a major issue in Lincoln’s time, and it deserves more attention now.

You work in journalism and politics before turning to the arts, working as a vice president at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. How did your careers in those fields inform your thinking about Lincoln and the Civil War Era?

As for the arts side, I certainly learned a great deal about American image-making at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during my cherished time on staff there (1992-2015), but in truth I’d already published three or four books on Lincoln and Civil War iconography (together with Mark N. Neely and Gabor Boritt) before arriving at the Met. Still, I remain deeply grateful to museum leaders like the legendary Philippe de Montebello, who encouraged me to conduct research, write books, and even present my findings at museum lectures. I must say, I also enjoyed prodding our paintings and photography departments to encourage more Lincoln and Civil War collecting and exhibits.

I actually came up with the idea quite a few years ago, suspecting that the 2016 presidential election might focus intensely on the immigration issue (as it did). Sensing that the discussion might get ugly, I felt it might contribute something to the debate to remind readers about how this issue has brought both the best and the worst in America and among Americans almost from the beginning of the republic, particularly so during the Lincoln era. I also concluded that, save for Jason Silverman’s 2015 study for the SIU Press/Conciliation Lincoln Library, this remained a neglected subject in the Lincoln literature. Ultimately, I deferred the project to do The Presidents vs. The Press, which was also inspired, in a sense, by the toxic 2016 campaign, the anti-press diatribes that continued during the Trump administration, and the prospect of an even more contentious presidential campaign in 2020.
of anti-Catholic violence. It was Lincoln who drafted the relatively enlightened declaration issued by Springfield Whigs. I consider this moment to be the “immigration” equivalent of his very first injustice and bad policy condemnation of slavery; it placed him on record supporting a fair path to American citizenship for the foreign born, and on that guarantee he never wavered.

When immigrants—at first Swedes, then Irish and Germans—made their way to Lincoln’s home state and town amidst the mass European migrations of the late 1840s and 1850s, the future president widened his own horizons and quickly learned to deal with these new residents as potential political allies . . . and foes. For the irrepressible joke-teller, the arrival of the Irish also inspired a new trove of ethnic jokes that Lincoln never quite abandoned even as a sophisticated national leader—they became part and parcel of his arsenal of “funny stories,” always deployed with affection, as cringe-worthy and insensitive as they might seem today.

It’s worth noting that one of Lincoln’s closest early immigrant acquaintances was both foreign-born and a man of color: Springfield barber and entrepreneur William Florville of Haiti, who was a constant reminder of both the opportunities and limits of citizenship in antebellum America. I focus on European migration on a large scale, did the Germans arrive at first?—Swedes, then Irish and Germans—made their way to Lincoln’s home state and town amidst the mass European migrations of the late 1840s and 1850s, the future president widened his own horizons and quickly learned to deal with these new residents as potential political allies . . . and foes. For the irrepressible joke-teller, the arrival of the Irish also inspired a new trove of ethnic jokes that Lincoln never quite abandoned even as a sophisticated national leader—they became part and parcel of his arsenal of “funny stories,” always deployed with affection, as cringe-worthy and insensitive as they might seem today.

“Riot in Philadelphia,” July 7, 1844

William Florville

(LN-1138)

Gen. James Shields

(LN-1240)

HH: Naturally, immigrants—and the immigrant vote—became increasingly important in Springfield and Illinois as the sheer number of foreign-born residents cascaded. Chalk it up to simple arithmetic. Because the path to citizenship and voting rights remained so easy for white men—few years’ residence was all that was required in most places—the Irish and, later, the German-born became more and more crucial as potential voters in swing states, including Illinois. It was a fact of political life that most Irishmen leaned Democratic for the simple reason that the party of Jackson welcomed them, while the opposition Whigs (Lincoln’s party generally did not). Early German Catholic newcomers tended Democratic as well; only after 1848, when the failed liberal revolutions in Europe stimulated Protestant migration on a large scale, did the Germans become important voters within the Whig Party, and later, in the emerging Republican coalition.

Interestingly, one of Lincoln’s earliest political rivals (aside from Stephen Douglas) was Irish-born Illinois Democrat James Shields, whom he ridiculed both anonymously and publicly for years—and with whom he nearly fought a duel after Lincoln took responsibility for a venal anti-Shields satire likely authored, by Mary Todd! Typically, Lincoln, who seldom held a grudge, would later wisely offer Shields a commission in the Union army, which turned into a symbolic triumph but a military disaster. Parenthetically, that near-duel also served to reunite Mary and her former fiancé—and we know where that led—in my view, to Lincoln’s political success, which I still don’t believe would have happened had he not married Mary. But that’s another story.

JW: Tell us about the waves of immigration in the antebellum period. What effects did immigrants have on American society?

HH: The two most important contributing factors to the total wave of immigration—aside from America’s own relatively open borders—were the Great Hunger caused by Irish potato crop failures, and the thwarted political revolutions that spurred German flight later in the 1840s. The resulting hundreds of thousands of refugees, whether they migrated for economic or political reasons— to eat or to think—profoundly changed American life. They brought new music, art, philosophy, and religious and cultural diversity to the United States, and created the foundation for widening the American dream. Of course, they also brought an ugly side to the body politic, which Lincoln was compelled to navigate for the next sixteen years.

In purely political terms, the new Irish and German Catholic arrivals swelled Democratic majorities in Illinois, as the Whigs failed not only because they could not unite on an antislavery policy, but because they nurtured a large nativist, anti-Catholic element that caused disenchantment among many new citizens and voters. The huge waves of immigrants not only changed the voting rolls, they changed political leadership, too. Irish and German-Americans in the East and West, respectively, took important roles in politics and government—men like Carl Schurz in Missouri and Gustave Koerner in Illinois, who became lieutenant governor. The men began their rise in this period, and were destined to be heard from often, both before and during the Civil War.

JW: T e 1850s saw a rise in natisim, especially with the creation of the Know Nothing Party. How did Lincoln respond to these political developments?

HH: In a word: inconsistently. I suspect that my chapters on Lincoln and the Know Nothings will stimulate some attention and debate. It’s long been argued that Lincoln heroically resisted nativism within the Whig Party, and declared himself consistently in favor of citizenship and voting rights for the foreign born. T is is as naïve an assertion as the simplistic onetime view that Lincoln always believed in racial equality. T e truth is much more complex. As on the slavery issue, Lincoln always aimed at the great political middle, and this required him—perhaps encouraged him—a better phrase—to be too coy for comfort on occasion with anti-Catholic nativists who at least shared his opposition to slavery. I try to track Lincoln’s growth in understanding and sympathy to immigration, a maturing process that ran parallel to his growing belief in
were being imported into Illinois to cast illegal votes
any chances that the newly-organized Republicans would
did nationally in the 1856 presidential election, spoiling
well the third-party "American," or Know Nothing, party
HH: of 1860?
JW: What role did immigration play in Lincoln's campaign
"... to stand with any body who stands right' on slavery."
anybody," Lincoln reminded Lovejoy—again privately,
Lincoln had expressed much the same sentiment,
assume today; they were for Speed's eyes only. What was
more, Lincoln had expressed much the same sentiment,
two weeks earlier, to Owen Lovejoy, but had added that
the Republicans needed to remain a wide-tent party that
committed to Lincoln. Germans also mounted major
now counted large swaths of German Protestants firmly
prejudice among Republicans who had once been Know
Know Nothingism in 1858—it played into anti-Irish
This helps explain why Lincoln did not
counter them. It helps explain why Lincoln did not
do much to make it clear, and public, that he opposed
Know Nothingsim in 1858—it played into anti-Irish
priority among Republicans who had once been Know
Nothing antecedents. "I have no objection to 'fuse' with
"... to stand with any body who stands right' on slavery.
In 1860, Lincoln was again subjected to charges
against Republicans and defeat him, too. He warned
supporters of such plots on more than one occasion,
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for Lincoln once he won the nomination, but expected a major diplomatic post in return. He got it, then quit to serve in the military. Schurz's mixed army record is fascinating enough, but his wartime conversations and correspondence with Lincoln are truly extraordinary—exhibiting all the pride, passion, and impatience the German-American community harbored for the president, and in turn eliciting all the respect and tolerance Lincoln exhibited for this young, emotional, sometimes feckless, but always influential German-born leader.

JW: We tend to think of Irish-Americans as being anti-Lincoln and German-Americans as pro-Republican. Are these fair characterizations?

HH: Generally, this was indeed the case. The horrific New York City anti-draft riots in 1863 were visibly initiated by Irish-American Manhattanites outraged by conscription laws that exempted the wealthy, largely Protestant, elite and, worse, in their view, required them to fight a war now devoted to freeing slaves as well as restoring the Union. Lincoln won less than a third of the vote in the presidential elections of 1860 and 1864 in largely-Irish New York City.

Looking at the Irish weekly newspapers of 1864, one does sense an initial reluctance to embrace the Democratic peace platform. But in the end, they came out strongly for McClellan, arguing that Lincoln's "despotism" could not be endorsed at the polls. Conversely, German-language newspapers began the election year of 1864 almost universally opposed to Lincoln, particularly critical of his failure to include Border States like Missouri (where many Germans lived) in his emancipation policy. Like the Irish press, though, the German editors ultimately came home, rejecting the third-party Frémont movement, endorsing Lincoln, and making a major difference in Lincoln's re-election triumph in November.

JW: Now that you've tackled yet another large and important topic, what is next?

HH: I'm not quite sure. My agent and my book editor have both stepped down from their jobs, and now that I've passed a milestone birthday, I'm considering the possibility that Brought Forth might be the last book that I bring forth. T en again, I've always wanted to do a book on Lincoln and the artists and sculptors who helped forge his image and define his legend. I've been researching the book, on and off, for more than thirty years. I've done several magazine and journal articles on the subject, and I'd love to make further use of all the material I've amassed. Is there still a market for well-illustrated books? I suppose it's worth finding out.

JW: Thank you so much for joining us!

A scene from the New York City Draft Riots: "Charge of the Police at the Tribune Office" (Library of Congress)

INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD HOLZER

The Biblical Texts in Memorial Sermons for Abraham Lincoln

by Mark Noll

In the wake of Abraham Lincoln's assassination, churches and synagogues became the most prominent sites for the nation's most fervent memorials to the slain president. Usually the centerpiece in these memorial events was a sermon, and almost always the sermon began with a text from the Bible.

Kayla Gustafson's informative article in the Winter 2022 issue of Lincoln Lore, "We Mourn Our Fallen Father: Abraham Lincoln's Easter Sermon and the Beginning of his Martyrdom," prompted me to revisit some of the research I had earlier carried out on these memorial sermons in the course of writing America's Book: The Biblical Texts in Memorial Sermons for Abraham Lincoln.

As is well known, Lincoln was shot on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, and died the next morning. Ministers throughout the nation scrambled as many set aside sermons prepared for Easter Sunday to preach new discourses responding to the news. At a few synagogues, rabbis had already done the same on Saturday, April 15, although most Jewish sermons honoring the late president, as also most Christian sermons, were delivered on Wednesday, April 19, when memorial ceremonies took place throughout the nation, or on Thursday, June 1, a day designated by President Andrew Johnson for national mourning. It is no surprise that the vast majority of Lincoln memorial sermons that made it into print came from supporters of the Union.

Kayla Gustafson's informative article in the Winter 2022 issue of Lincoln Lore, "We Mourn Our Fallen Father: Abraham Lincoln's Easter Sermon and the Beginning of his Martyrdom," prompted me to revisit some of the research I had earlier carried out on these memorial sermons in the course of writing America's Book: The Biblical Texts in Memorial Sermons for Abraham Lincoln's Easter Sunday and the Beginning of his Martyrdom.
ministers and others chose to memorialize three other American presidents: George Washington after his death in 1799, and then James Garfield and William McKinley after their assassinations in 1881 and 1901.

In 1865, and as an example especially pertinent to the Friends of the Lincoln Collection, the minister of Fort Wayne’s First Presbyterian Church, John Lowrie, spoke on Easter Sunday from Isaiah 2:22 (“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?”). From this relatively obscure verse, Lowrie developed a message that bemoaned the evil of the American people, but that also affirmed “the apparent destiny of the Republic...our remarkable history seems inseparably linked with the well-being of man.”

T reedays later, Joseph Tuttle, president of Wabash College, sought to encourage a Crawfordsville, Indiana, audience with a text from Philippians 4:6 (“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”). In choosing to speak from the New Testament, Tuttle illustrated a national trend away from interpreting American destiny with ancient Israel as a model to drawing support from the New Testament at times of national crisis. Almost all of the Washington memorial texts had been taken from the Hebrew Scriptures; in 1901, slightly more than half of the texts for McKinley would come from the New Testament. For Lincoln, the proportion of Old Testament to New Testament verses fell in between what was preached for Washington and McKinley.

The focus on Scriptures used in the Lincoln memorial sermons makes sense when remembering the unique status of the Bible in nineteenth-century America. Much of the population, to be sure, remained religiously indifferent or even hostile to traditional faith. Yet compared to any other source guiding formal discourse, providing a vocabulary for moral reasoning, or opening a reservoir of rhetorical tropes that did not need to be explained, the Bible stood alone.

Abraham Lincoln’s skillful use of Scripture is a prime example, especially given that his personal beliefs were a mystery unto himself and that he never joined a church. In large part because of how skillfully he used the Bible, Lincoln’s words became fixed in national consciousness—to make political points (“a house divided against itself cannot stand” from Matthew 12:25), to endorse a public statement with gravity (“four score and seven years ago” echoing Psalm 90:1), or to describe the moral sign cance of the Civil War (four biblical quotations in the short compass of the Second Inaugural Address).

To indicate the scope of the Bible’s presence, it is noteworthy that northern agencies like the American Bible Society (ABS) provided a total of two Bibles (or New Testaments) for each of the more than two and one-half million men who served under arms for the Union. Provision of Scriptures for the million or more Confederate troops was not as extensive, but the ABS and other northern groups managed to sneak perhaps 300,000 Bibles past the Union blockade, and a comparable number of scriptural portions were smuggled in from England for the soldiers.

Another indication of the Scripture’s reach is found in the printing history of the years of conflict, 1861–1865. During that period, twenty-nine different American publishers brought out fifty-four Bible editions, the vast majority providing the Protestants’ King James Version, but also with several printings of Catholic translations and at least six other versions. Bible publishing, as for the print industry as a whole, was concentrated in New York City and Philadelphia, though in that half-decade Bibles were also published in Boston; Baltimore; Cincinnati; Nashville; Hartford, Connecticut; Rochester, New York; Geneva, Illinois; and by the Confederate Bible Society in Atlanta and Augusta, Georgia.

My conclusions from the ninety Lincoln memorial sermons I have read square with what Jay Monaghan earlier found in the 404 he studied and David Chesebrough from the 340 he examined. Shock, mourning, recognition of Lincoln’s heroic stature, and reaffirmation of divine providence—generally—and the destiny of the United States particularly—were the major themes drawn from the texts. A few ministers chose verses featuring vindication against an enemy or punishment of malefactors. A few others rose above sorrow and dismay to encourage specific calls to Christ, and, or in the Jewish sermons, the spiritual resources of Judaism.

Admiration for the slain president was the main message communicated by the text chosen most often for these sermons, 2 Samuel 3:38 (“And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”). Israel’s King David had uttered this lament after one of his soldiers deceitfully murdered the chief general who had served David’s rival and predecessor, King Saul. It had been the verse chosen most frequently for Washington, as it would be also for services to honor Presidents Garfield and McKinley. In the spring of 1865 it gave a host of clerics a prompt as they responded to the national tragedy, including a Maine Episcopalian, a Massachusetts Congregationalist, P. B. Day, to the national tragedy, including a Maine Episcopalian, a Massachusetts Congregationalist, P. B. Day, to the national tragedy, including a Maine Episcopalian, a Massachusetts Congregationalist, P. B. 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their opposition to slavery, joined together once again, this time for a Totenfeier to honor Lincoln. For his brother in Christ, Prussian König Hofprediger (court preacher) spoke from this same text.

T e messages sparked by 2 Samuel 3:38 covered a spectrum. In Brooklyn, A. N. Littlejohn of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church used it to make a strenuous assault on the southern cause and the unimaginable evil to which it had now led. His conclusion: "Henceforth, Slavery will have no apologist in the world's civilization. T e mark of Cain is upon it." A sermon in Boston by the Baptist minister William H. Hague deployed the same text to stress their opposition to slavery, as had been the case for Washington, a number of sermons were organized around incidents from that great lawyer's life. T e most notable was preached by Henry Ward Beecher at his church, Plymouth Congregational, in Brooklyn. For this brother of the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin and probably the North's best-known preacher, words from Deuteronomy 34:1–5 provided his opening to eulogize the fallen president: "(And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo. . . . So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord").

In one of the rare objections raised to such preaching, an anonymous correspondent to a Jewish periodical tried to make a distinction. While the writer saw no problem in expressing "sorrow at the death of the Chief Magistrate of the country," there was a problem in "getting carried away: "Is there a Jew in this whole land, educated in the history and traditions of his people, who would consider a Christian deserving of any of the religious services appertaining to Jewish worship or who in a moment of calm reflection can find any comparison between the late President and their great law-giver whom the Lord knew face to face?"

Such worries about ascribing sacred meaning to Lincoln's life did not dissuade Methodist John Baugham in Houghton, Michigan, as he quoted from a New Testament sermon by the Apostle Paul, Acts 13:36 ("For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption"). Charles Robinson of Brooklyn's First Presbyterian Church also found another Lincoln-model in the New Testament, this one from Luke 23:50 ("And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just"); a passage describing the bystander whom Roman soldiers constrained to carry Jesus' cross.

As might be expected, sermons in synagogues made more of Abraham Lincoln's similarity to the patriarch Abraham. But the same trope was also put to use by a few Protestants, including T eodore Cuyler of Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn—a congregation proud of being founded by abolitionists. Cuyler spoke from Genesis 24:1 ("And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things").

As only to be expected, many of the Lincoln preachers chose texts that simply communicated shock and dismay. For two Boston ministers, the Methodist William Sprague Studley and Andrew Leete Stone of the historic Park Street Church on Boston Commons, sermons from Lamentations chapter 5 fulfilled that purpose ("T e joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned to mourning. T e crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!"). Robert Lowry, a New York City Episcopalian, joined many other preachers in turning to 2 Samuel, the Old Testament book narrating Israel's violent history in the days of King David, and the book that supplied more of the sermon texts than any other in the sermons I examined. As his text, Lowry chose 2 Samuel 19:2 ("And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son").

In many churches, congregations heard sermons that began by affirming God's control over events, despite the in-breaking of tragedy. At the Dutch Reformed Church in New York City, E. P. Rogers chose Psalm 96:10 ("Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteousness"). In Berlin, an American, H. B. Tappan, spoke in German from Psalm 46:10 ("Be still and know that I am God"). For Albert Barnes, a Philadelphia Presbyterian almost as well-known, and also as controversial in his denomination as Henry Ward Beecher was among the Congregationalists, Isaiah 44:24–25, 28 served the same purpose. "T e earth is the Lord's, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things. . . . T at saith of Cyprus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure".
When William Ives Buddington of the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church in Brooklyn sought a text with the same message, he drew on a verse that had been enlisted at another crisis in earlier American history. Buddington preached from Psalm 76:10 (“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”), the same text that John Witherspoon, the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence, had expounded in May 1776 as he urged a New Jersey audience to join the struggle for independence.

One of the rare published sermons from the South also enlisted a historically renowned passage. A Baptist, Richard Fuller of South Carolina, spoke in Baltimore from the text that Lincoln himself had made famous, Matthew 12:25 (“every city or house divided against itself shall not stand”).

Preachers, like the Rev. Edwin B. Webb at Boston’s Shawmut Congregational Church and Rabbi David Einhorn at Philadelphia’s Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, who sought a word of hope to counter grief, found such a word in Isaiah 21:11–12 (“Watchmen, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night”).

By contrast, occasional notes of Christian forbearance were heard, but only occasionally. A notable instance came from one of the few women to leave a published memorial. Emma Hardinge, an English spiritualist and effective campaigner for Lincoln’s reelection in 1864, began her address at New York City’s Cooper Institute by quoting Luke 23:34 (“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”).

For addresses that regularly canvassed a range of reactions, it was only fitting that ministers sometimes spoke from more than one verse. As an example, Samuel Cheney Damon, a missionary to Hawaii known as a strong supporter of the islands’ Chinese Christians, enlisted two texts for the sermon he preached at Honolulu’s Seamen’s Chapel: Psalm 75:7 (“But God is the judge: he putteth down, and setteth up another”) and John 13:7 (“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter”).

One of the most unusual publications included sermons of mourning preached on Sunday, April 16, and Wednesday, April 19, after the assassination, but printed with a sermon of jubilation from Sunday, April 9, which had celebrated the Union capture of Richmond.

Henry J. Fox of the Sands Street Methodist Church in Brooklyn let four texts outline a sermon in which he opined that Lincoln’s only fault had been erring on the side of mercy: Jeremiah 9:21 (“For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets”); Isaiah 27:7 (“Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?”); Proverbs 24:10 (“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small”); and Hebrews 10:30 (“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people”).
die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not?"
how the Union dead could be likened to Christ foreseeing on Palm Sunday that he must soon die cruelly. T. at sermon was full of civil religion: "The Hebrew Commonwealth, ‘in which all the families of the earth were to be blest,’ was not more a part of the whole world’s concern than is this Republic. T ere has been no other people and no other cause, save one, for which Christ himself could so soon have come and died. . . . O, see the cross! T. e cross of our country’s sacrifice (e.g., bloody battles) and our salvation. . . . T. e Easter Sun of the Republic is already dawning. T. e day of peace and joy and prosperity is at hand. T. e Kingdom is come."

For the second sermon, Walden’s mood changed dramatically, but the same text allowed him to say that “the only consolation we have is, that in some mysterious way, the death of Abraham Lincoln will work a greater result than his life.” On April 19, Walden spoke from Jeremiah 8:15 (“We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble”). It led him to condemn peremptorily all who had caused the war: “T. e best result that we can foresee. . . . is not only the annihilation of the rebellion, and the rebuke of treason, but the merciful extinguishment of the sentiment in which they originated. Whetber by execution, or expatriation, those minds will be removed from our midst in whom the infernal flame burns."

As much as the texts chosen for Lincoln memorial sermons revealed the complex character of Union anguish, at that time, they also pointed to a significant shift in national self-consciousness. When Washington died, as for a few of the examples we have seen from 1865, the parallel between the United States and the Hebrews of the Old Testament loomed large. T. R. Hovvitt, the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D. C., recalled that parallel by choosing Psalm 147:20 (“He has not dealt of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D. C., recalled that parallel by choosing Psalm 147:20 (“He has not dealt so with any nation”) as the text for his sermon, which began, “I hope I do not abuse this beautiful passage—applying it to our own country. Is it not as true of us as of ancient Israel?”

Yet only a few preachers in 1865 drew this parallel to preach jeremiads, which had been common in 1799–1800. (T. e term “jeremiad” comes from the prophet Jeremiah’s denunciation of Judah’s sins that, according to the prophet, had led directly to the nation’s captivity.) Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in Cincinnati was one of the very few who emphasized in his address what many ministers had stressed two generations earlier: that since the American people had been visited with affliction, it was imperative for the entire community to turn in repentance to God. In his sermon for George Washington,

In moving from the sermons for Washington to the sermons for Lincoln, a shift was taking place away from rhetoric key to Old Testament demands for personal moral purity and toward rhetoric taken from both testaments describing the destiny of the United States. In 1865, congregations often heard a message that, while still emphasizing God’s control of events, focused more on the nation’s position in the world. So it was that William H ague of Boston spoke for many others in the lesson he took from the tragedy. It concerned the United States’ new global prominence. We have, he said, proved to the world “that our republican government had enough of coherent strength to withstand the shocks of a great rebellion.”

In a sermon preached to his Baptist church in Utica, New York, A. S. Patton included the same conclusion with the other lessons he drew after choosing Jeremiah 4:17 for his text (“All ye that are about him, comfort him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod?”): First, “the murder of the President is but a crowning illustration of the desperate and brutal spirit of rebellion.” Second, “the duty of executing justice is the vindication of violated law.” T. ird, the outcome of the war, despite the terrible tragedy of an assassination, conf rm “the soundness of our Republican form of government.” And fourth, despite reversal, believers should “cherish unshaken conf dence in God.”

As the nation’s nonpareil source of rhetoric, moral insight, and spiritual guidance, the Bible’s deployment at times of national crisis revealed much about the nation.

T. e texts chosen for memorial sermons in the spring of 1865 certainly illustrated the extraordinary scriptural knowledge of American preachers, even as they also showed the conf dence of preachers in their congregants’ respect for biblical wisdom. In that hour nothing served better than the Bible to register shock, express grief, fuel vengeance, and recall the mysteries of providence. Yet it remains a question whether speakers and their audiences were learning from Scripture or simply exploiting the Scriptures as a handy rhetorical reference. Few at that time, or since, have drawn from the Bible what Abraham Lincoln seemed to conclude from his biblical references in the Second Inaugural Address. He ended by appealing for “malice toward none . . . charity for all” alongside “I remiss in the right as God gives us to see the right.” As so often in the United States’ history, so also at the death of Lincoln, it was easier to urge “I remiss in the right” from Scripture than to inquire “malice toward none.”

Mark Noll, professor of history emeritus at the University of Notre Dame, is the author of In the Beginning Was the Word: T. e Bible in American Public Life, 1492–1783 (2010) and America’s Book: T. e Rise and Decline of a Bible Nation, 1794–1911 (2022).
An Interview with Kate Masur

by Jonathan W. White

Kate Masur is the Board of Visitors Professor in History at Northwestern University. She is the author or editor of several books, including Until Justice Be Done: America’s First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction, which won the Littleton-Griswold Prize, the John Nau Book Prize, and the John Phillip Reid Book Award, and was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize.

Jonathan White: When you did an interview with Sara Gabbard for Lincoln Lore in 2019, you told her that you were writing a book about the origins of the Fourteenth Amendment. Did you always envision writing such an expansive book that would go from “the Revolution to Reconstruction”?

Kate Masur: Until Justice Be Done took shape over a period of years, and it did take some twists and turns along the way. I always knew there were aspects of federal policy during Reconstruction that I wanted to reconsider by going back in time, to the antebellum period and even earlier. By 2019 I had in mind the basic shape of the book. I was very interested in how northern states, after the American Revolution, both abolished slavery and implemented new and varied policies when it came to race and inequality. To me the most striking examples were the states that emerged from the Northwest Territory. The Northwest Ordinance (1787) outlawed slavery in the territory. It’s widely known that slavery already existed there and that some people fought to maintain it. What was less known—and far less grappled with—is that even as many white people in the region (today’s Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan) accepted and even supported slavery’s abolition, they also moved to implement racist laws that restricted and marginalized people of color.

For me, those anti-Black policies brought into focus the reality that in the aftermath of race-based slavery, a society could decide to create essentially a regime of overt, legally sanctioned racial subordination. That is what the governments of Ohio and other Midwestern territories and states envisioned in the early nineteenth century. When we look at that development, we should ask the question: How did that system ever get discredited? Why didn’t the Republicans of the Civil War period try to implement a system of racial apartheid at the national level? Instead of imagining that American policymakers somehow naturally tended to favor racial equality over the long term, we need to ask how this country got the policies it did. That is, given what so many free state governments supported before the Civil War, why were the racial equality policies of Reconstruction, including the Fourteenth Amendment, as ambitious as they were?

JW: Please set the stage for us. What restrictions did the state and federal governments place on African Americans? And what rights did they have? Was there a change over time, and were there different types of laws and customs in different places?

KM: Black Americans faced a patchwork of restrictive laws across the country, including in the free states. John Jones, Chicago’s best-known Black activist of the period, explained this in a May 1848 letter to
States therefore could and did determine what rights their inhabitants were supposed to enjoy. States regularly regulated speech—for instance, when southern states barred abolitionist publications. States violated people’s due process rights (not to mention their human rights) when they permitted slavery. States decided what rights to property women would retain when they married and whether, and under what conditions, they had to turn over their property to their husbands. And the list goes on. And all that is before we get to the local level and the question of whether state laws were consistently enforced.

We need to keep in mind, however, that government in the United States was about much more than just individual rights. It was also about defining and promoting shared welfare. One thing that really interested me as I dug into this history was the relationship of the “black laws”—or really, anti-Black laws—of the Midwest to what people sometimes call the poor law tradition. Dating back to early modern England, communities took control of deciding how to deal with poverty in a way that would provide for the common welfare as they understood it. That’s included making distinctions between destitute people who were established members of the community and considered deserving of relief, in contrast to those who were considered transient outsiders and not entitled to help from the community. Transients who were not self-supporting could be involuntarily deported to their community of origin. Poor laws were the framework through which community leaders decided who was an insider and who was an outsider, who was part of the community and who was not. And of course, these questions mattered most for those who were poor or vulnerable and perhaps didn’t have anywhere else to go.

British colonists brought the poor law tradition to North America and aspects of it continued into the nineteenth century. In the Midwest, state legislatures passed anti-Black legislation that built on poor law principles. For instance, the same of clauses—oversers of the poor—were charged with enforcing the anti-Black residency laws, as enforced the poor laws. Sometimes legislation even said, as was the case in an Ohio law, that free Black people would be treated as “in the case of paupers.”

For the many white northerners who supported anti-Black laws such as these, it made eminent sense to cast free Black people as outsiders not worthy of support or membership in the community. It didn’t matter how much money they had. What mattered was that white Midwesterners and others used the poor law framework to construct anti-Black policies. I argue in Until Justice Be Done that such laws had legitimacy and staying power in part because they built on an existing legal framework. Of course they also received broad support because white northerners, living in a society that had long sanctioned race-based slavery and the violent removal of Native people, were predisposed to see people who weren’t white as outsiders and inferiors.

From the early nineteenth century to the Civil War, states often changed their laws regarding Black Americans. Slave states increasingly elaborated their “slave codes,” which regulated all aspects of slavery. They also placed increasing restrictions on free Black people, particularly after Nat Turner’s Rebellion in 1831. In the free states, the story was a bit more mixed. Some free states never passed racist residency laws like those adopted by Midwestern states and later by California and Oregon. Yet Pennsylvania legislature considered such measures in the 1810s but didn’t pass them; Massachusetts rejected a push for them in the early 1820s. Yet both New York and Pennsylvania, which hadn’t had racial restrictions on men’s right to vote at the time of the American Revolution, moved...
to restrict Black men’s right to vote (as in New York) or to end it entirely (as in Pennsylvania). The movement for racial equality scored a major victory in 1849 when the state of Ohio repealed most of its Black laws after a long and coordinated push by activists. Around the same time, however, Illinois and Indiana moved in the opposite direction, doubling down by trying to ban Black migration completely.

Most of these fights occurred at the state level because the U.S. Constitution promised so little in the way of individual rights. The Constitution did, however, offer an intriguing clause in Article IV, section 2. Often called the “privileges and immunities clause,” it reads: “the citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states.” From the 1820s to the Civil War, people who wanted to secure safety and basic rights for free Black people often invoked this clause, which seemed to promise that people who were recognized as citizens of a state were “entitled” to certain things (“privileges and immunities”) in other states too. Indeed, its mention of “citizens in the several states” could even be read to imply a kind of national citizenship that transcended state lines, though it was hard to square such a reading with the clause’s clear reference to state citizenship. If readers today have a hard time making sense of the clause’s clear reference to state citizenship, it was even harder to understand it. The Constitution did, however, offer an intriguing clause in Article IV, section 2.

2. Often called the “privileges and immunities clause,” this clause offered an opening to claim a right to move freely from state to state and to settle in new states. It implied a kind of national citizenship that transcended state lines, though it was hard to square such a reading with the clause’s clear reference to state citizenship. If readers today have a hard time making sense of the clause’s clear reference to state citizenship, it was even harder to understand it. The Constitution did, however, offer an intriguing clause in Article IV, section 2.

“In the course of arguing that some Black men, at least, should have the right to vote in Illinois: ‘What, think you, would your courts of justice do with a citizen of New York, if he should come to the city of Chicago to live, that is if his skin were of a dark cast? I think he would be entitled to all the privileges that our State could afford to any citizen of English ancestry.’

Black Americans such as John Jones actively participated in the antebellum movement for racial justice and engaged in the process of legal and constitutional contestation. T is is something I wanted to emphasize in Until Justice Be Done. It wasn’t just elite white men who debated how to understand the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and statutes; and those conversations took place not just in courts but in popular fora like newspapers, petitions, and stump speeches.

JW: What did people mean when they talked about “civil rights” in the years between the Revolution and the Civil War? How were civil rights different from political rights?

KM: Nineteenth-century Americans defined “civil rights” a bit differently from how most people talk about civil rights today. Today when people think of “the civil rights movement,” they often envision things like lunch counter sit-ins, marches for voting rights, and the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the nineteenth century, however, it was commonplace to separate “civil rights” from “political rights.” People envisioned civil rights as the most basic rights of personhood, including the rights to bodily safety, to personal liberty (often considered free mobility from place to place), to own property, and to sue and be sued, which is associated with owning property. Such rights also roughly correspond to the “life, liberty, and property” mentioned in many declarations of rights. Political rights, by contrast, were the rights to vote, hold of office, and serve on juries. Such rights were considered less fundamental; most nineteenth-century Americans believed that not all free people, or all citizens, were entitled to enjoy political rights. Indeed, this was part of how they justified denying the vote to white women. Many considered white women citizens, but a less privileged kind of citizen than white men.

The distinction between civil rights and political rights is reflected in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment discusses who is a citizen, the privileges or immunities of citizenship, and the entitlement of all persons to equal protection and due process of law. T is was understood as a civil rights measure. During debates in Congress, some legislators wanted it to include the right to vote as well. But the Republican leadership decided not to include in the amendment a provision requiring states to enfranchise Black men for fear that such a measure would not pass with the necessary two-thirds majority, or that if it did, it would be politically unpopular and cause Republicans to suffer in the upcoming midterm (1866) elections. After those elections, Congress returned and Republicans passed “political rights” measures: the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and the Fifteenth Amendment, which Congress passed in 1869.

All along, some Americans disagreed with the prevailing strict separation between civil and political rights. For instance, some advocates of Black men’s voting rights insisted that citizenship for men should always include the right to vote. T at is, there should be no male citizens who were denied political rights. Some advocates of women’s right to vote made a similar argument, insisting that all adult citizens should have the right to vote and that sex or gender should have nothing to do with it. T at view on women’s right to vote did not prevail during Reconstruction, and it was only in 1920 that the U.S. adopted the Nineteenth Amendment, finally associating women’s citizenship status with the right to vote and, implicitly, to hold office.

JW: You write that the “struggle against racist laws was America’s first civil rights movement.” You then say that “we have often failed to see this movement because our focus was elsewhere.” Why have historians missed this story until now?

KM: T is is an important question. First, I think people have generally been more interested in...
questions associated with slavery itself than with questions about race and equality, which can be even more difficult to grapple with. In the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education, the eminent twentieth-century historian C. Vann Woodward wrote of the Civil War Era: “Equality was a far more revolutionary aim than freedom, though it may not have seemed so at first. . . . [S]lavery was property based on law. The law could be changed and the property expropriated. Not so inequality. Its entrenchments were deeper and subtler.” Woodward was saying slavery was decisively ended, whereas racial inequality was much harder to root out; he also seemed to imply that whereas people in the mid-twentieth century could look back on slavery as something safely consigned to the past, they were much more implicated—as our society still is today—in slavery’s difficult aftermath.

For historians and history teachers, questions about slavery are also very directly associated with one of the central questions in all of U.S. history: Why did the Civil War happen? As Lincoln said of slavery in his second inaugural address, “All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war.” Historians have endlessly discussed that “somehow,” offering varying theories on how exactly arguments over slavery helped bring about the sectional crisis and civil war. Scholars interested in social movements and radicalism mainly looked at abolitionists’ views on slavery (rather than on race and inequality in places where slavery had been abolished) as they argued over how much difference abolitionists had made. Were they a niche group of maladjusted weirdos (as many mid-twentieth-century scholars argued?) Were they intellectually important even if limited in their popularity? Were they more influential than traditionally recognized, because abolitionism also comprised what many have called the “political antislavery movement”? Historians have also delved into questions associated with slavery and the original Constitution. Should we characterize the Constitution as fundamentally proslavery or antislavery? How did people understand its relationship to slavery from the founding to the Civil War? All these questions associated with slavery are interesting and important. But they are also quite different from the question of how people conceived of a postslavery society, how they grappled with the structural inequalities and prejudices that slavery left in its wake, how they made legal and political claims, and what the Constitution had to do with any of that.

My point of entry into these questions was informed by having spent a lot of time writing about the Civil War and Reconstruction. I had thought a lot about how people in the 1860s and later envisioned a postslavery society. But I also thought we needed to consider these questions in light of what historians long before me called the “first emancipation,” when northern states abolished slavery. As abolition was occurring in those places, people were thinking about what a postslavery society should look like. While the issues that arose were not identical to issues in the post-Civil War South, the two periods (the “first” and “second” emancipations) shared quite a bit in common. Historian Willie Lee Rose wrote of the U.S. occupation of the Sea Islands of South Carolina during the Civil War as a “rehearsal” for Reconstruction; I thought of political conflicts over the rights of Black Americans in the antebellum North as another kind of rehearsal. Unlike the rehearsal described by Rose, which lasted just a few years, this one was more prolonged, unfolding over decades as northerners argued over whether to have a society that was more or less racially egalitarian.
JW: What surprised you most as you were researching this book?

KM: When I started working on the book, I had no idea how significant Black sailors were going to be, and I had no idea how much there would be to say about the U.S. Constitution's privileges and immunities clause. On a research trip at the Massachusetts State Archives, I requested documents that were described as concerning the status of Massachusetts citizens. Nothing in the catalog or index I saw indicated that these records had to do with Black Americans, but I was curious what they were. It turned out they were petitions and reports associated with Black sailors who were arrested in southern ports, and residents of Massachusetts trying to do something about that, at a time when the federal government would almost certainly not intervene. It was the beginning of a thread that I began to pull on. I started to find references to the issue in many different places and was able to put together the disparate pieces of an important historical story that hadn't really been told before.

JW: You've been writing about Lincoln for more than a decade, and he has figured in your books and articles in significant ways. Has your view of Lincoln changed at all?

KM: I continue to find Lincoln extremely interesting. He was smart and a terrific writer, great at expressing himself and at discussing very difficult issues. I've also found Lincoln a useful vehicle for thinking about other people and other issues. For instance, after writing my dissertation on emancipation and Reconstruction in a Black community, I started to find that there hadn't already been more research on the African Americans whom Lincoln knew and interacted with. I thought the topic was interesting and continued to pursue it, in part by writing about Black attendees at White House parties during the Lincoln administration, and in part by working on coordinating a new edition of the first book-length treatment of Lincoln and African Americans, John E. Washington's 1855 volume. I had a lot of thought to Lincoln in the context of Illinois politics in the late 1850s and I got to know Stephen Douglas better than I had before. I enjoyed putting Lincoln and Douglas in conversation with a third person—H. Ford Douglas, a Black activist who was also in Illinois around that time—to illustrate a range of possible views on race, equality, and the Constitution as the 1850s ended. I would say that overall my view of Lincoln hasn't changed much, but that my view of the world in which Lincoln lived has deepened quite a bit.

JW: After completing the book, you coordinated a significant collaborative project on Black history in Illinois. What can you tell us about that?

KM: Our web exhibit is called African Americans in Pre-Civil War Illinois: Creating Community, Demanding Justice. It looks at Black life and political organizing in Illinois, mainly from the 1840s to the 1860s, and includes profiles of twenty-five individual women and men. Check it out! You can find it easily by googling. The project originated in a collaboration with the Colored Conventions Project (coloredconventions.org), a public humanities resource coordinated by a wonderful team at Penn State University. The Colored Conventions Project, which I recommend everyone explore, is an archive of nineteenth-century Black history, with emphasis on Black political organizing both before and after the Civil War. The project also hosts web exhibits that look at particular places and themes. I became a “North American Teaching Partner” with the project before the pandemic, with the goal of teaching a class at Northwestern that would combine history content with digital humanities work and would get started creating an online exhibit on a Black convention in Illinois. To make a long story short, I taught the seminar on zoom in spring 2020. Archives and libraries were of course closed. The class morphed into two summers' worth of research teams composed of graduate students, undergraduates, and Northwestern IT and library staff, and we unveiled our web exhibit in the spring of 2022.

JW: I understand that you've created a graphic history of Reconstruction in the Washington, D.C., region that's being published in fall 2024. How did that book come about?

KM: Our book is called Freedom Was in Sight: A Graphic History of Reconstruction in the Washington, D.C., Region, and it will be published by UNC Press this fall. The National Park Service commissioned the project with the idea that graphic histories can appeal to readers who might not have the patience or interest to read a big book that's all text. The illustrator, Liz Clarke, is a tremendous artist with extensive experience illustrating works of history. Lincoln makes an appearance! So do well-known figures like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, as well as many other less famous people whose stories are fascinating and representative of a period of immense change and intellectual ferment. I'm excited that the book represents Reconstruction as extending from the Civil War all the way to the end of the nineteenth century. Historians increasingly envision Reconstruction in this way, rather than using the traditional endpoint of 1877. So in addition to delivering a gorgeously illustrated history of an important place and time, I'm looking forward to bringing this more sweeping vision of Reconstruction to a broad audience.

JW: Thank you so much for joining us!
Lincoln Assassination Mourning Ribbons

by Jessie Cortesi & Jane Gastineau

Upon President Abraham's Lincoln death on April 15, 1865, the nation turned from celebrations for Union victory to mourning for their fallen chief. Immediately, the nation's manufacturers turned to supplying the public's demand for mourning accessories, including silk mourning ribbons that could be pinned to a lapel, hat, or bonnet, or displayed in the home. Paper ribbons could be included in albums or scrapbooks or framed. The elaborate and precise mourning customs of the day preserved Lincoln's memory long after his death.

Wreaths, flags, eagles, angels, and a grieving Columbia with a portrait of Lincoln were common imagery in mourning ribbons, grieving him as a patriot and emancipator. Some included more elaborate illustrations incorporating the imagery of Victorian mourning and American patriotism.

President Andrew Johnson announced a national day of mourning for Lincoln on June 1, 1865, calling for "a day of humiliation and mourning, and I recommend my fellow-citizens then to assemble in their respective places of worship, there to unite in solemn service to Almighty God in memory of the good man who has been removed, so that all shall be occupied at the same time in contemplation of his virtues and in sorrow for his sudden and violent end." Black mourning borders were featured on most ribbons.

Lincoln's martyrdom for the cause of freedom was often memorialized in mourning ribbons. The San Francisco Daily Dramatic Chronicle published a ribbon featuring heavy mourning borders proclaiming Lincoln to be "Freedom's Martyr." Another ribbon praised Lincoln for emancipation: "He Set the Millions Free." Some ribbons added Lincoln's birth and death dates.

Others included short poems referencing the assassination and Lincoln as the nation's chief as well as father. A poem on "We Mourn Our Nation's Chief" read, "He fell not in the Battle's strife, / He gave not to Disease his breath; / 'T was by the foul Assassin's act / Our noble Chief receiv'd his death!" The "Our Martyred Father" ribbon also referred to Lincoln's role as the country's leader, but it portrayed him as a Father of the nation, putting him in the company of George Washington and the other Founding Fathers.

Lincoln's enduring, larger-than-life legacy was embodied in the simple text, "He Still Lives," and laments for "The Mighty Dead." Lincoln's leadership through the nation's greatest crisis would not be forgotten.

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