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A DEATH IN THE FAMILY: THE LINCOLN FORUM MOURNS JOHN Y. SIMON

Revered teacher, consummate scholar, peerless editor, gifted writer and lecturer, devoted friend, memorably sardonic wit, Lincoln Forum regular, and bigger-than-life personality John Y. Simon died July 8 in Carbondale, Illinois at the age of 75.

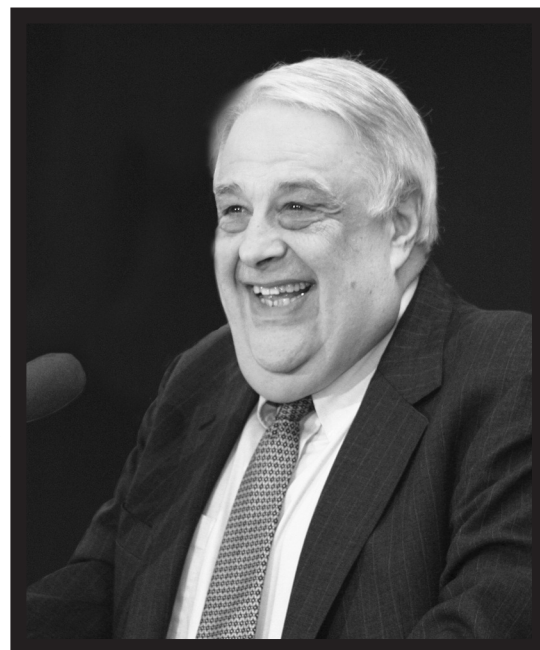
The much-honored dean of American documentary editors had just completed the final volumes, numbers 29, 30, and 31, of his monumental lifelong project, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, the acclaimed series to which he devoted the last 46 years and for which he won a Richard Nelson Current Award and special Lincoln Prize in 2004. Volumes 29 and 30 were published just a few weeks after his passing. Before his final illness, Dr. Simon was planning to begin work on one or two additional volumes of errata and newly discovered supplementary material, along with a long-anticipated, annotated edition of Grant's famous *Memoirs*.

"We acknowledge with immense sadness the loss of a true giant," said Forum Chairman Frank J. Williams. "John Y. was a bigger-than-life man, and a bigger-than-life historian. His contributions to the field of Civil War studies will live on forever even as his colleagues and admirers deeply lament the loss of such a beloved friend. All of us who knew him, or enjoyed his lectures at so many of our symposia, read his books, consulted the *Grant Papers*, or benefited from his wise counsel as a member of our Executive Committee, will deeply feel his loss. He is, in a word, irreplaceable. Our hearts go out to his family."

Meeting in special session in Carbondale on the morning of John Y. Simon's memorial service on August 24, the Ulysses S. Grant Association, chaired by Judge Williams, elected another Forum Board Member, John Marszalek, as the new executive director of the Association and editor of the Papers. Marszalek, emeritus professor of history at Mississippi State University, had been scheduled to debate Simon at Lincoln Forum XIII on the subject of "Who Won the War: Grant or Sherman?" Marszalek will fulfill his commitment, and represent Sherman as planned (he has written several books about Grant's most famous lieutenant), while Jean Edward Smith will return to the Forum to speak on behalf of Grant in tribute to Simon.

In the weeks since his death, John Y. Simon has been widely praised by a chorus of friends and colleagues. Many have been equally vocal in heaping scorn on his longtime academic home, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, which months earlier had suspended its longtime faculty member on charges of verbal harassment, a charge that remained unresolved at the time of Simon's passing. Many friends and colleagues have said publicly that the ordeal caused Simon undeserved pain and pressure that led directly to his final illness and death. "His luster as a scholar will never tarnish despite what the library dean at SIU, with the complicity of the University, tried to do to him by smearing him with spurious charges of verbal harassment and locking him out of his Grant Association office," Frank Williams told *Civil War News* in August.

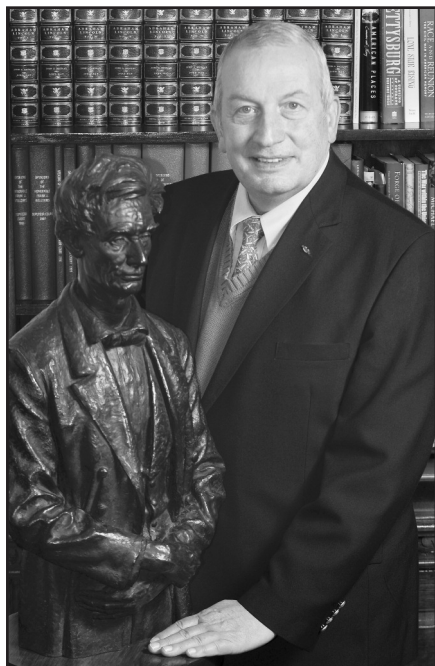
John Younker Simon was born in Highland Park, Illinois. After earning a B.A. at Swarthmore and Masters and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University, he joined the SIU faculty in 1964. In addition to editing the Grant Papers, Simon taught history for more than four decades, published dozens of books and articles, and remained a peripatetic public speaker until his final months. His many other awards included the Award of Merit from the Illinois State Historical Society and the Julian P. Boyd Award from the Association for Documentary Editing.



The Late John Y. Simon. (Photo: Henry F. Ballone)

continued on page 2

ABRAHAM LINCOLN - STILL NUMBER ONE



MESSAGE from the CHAIRMAN


What makes a president a great president? In November, we will definitely rank our two presidential candidates, but whoever wins the election will eventually be subject to yet another ranking effort – that of historians who, every decade or so, compare all the U.S. presidents. Inevitably, Abraham Lincoln ends up at the top of such lists. But the judgments of historians can often seem arbitrary, not to mention politically weighted, making the whole effort seem like a parlor game.

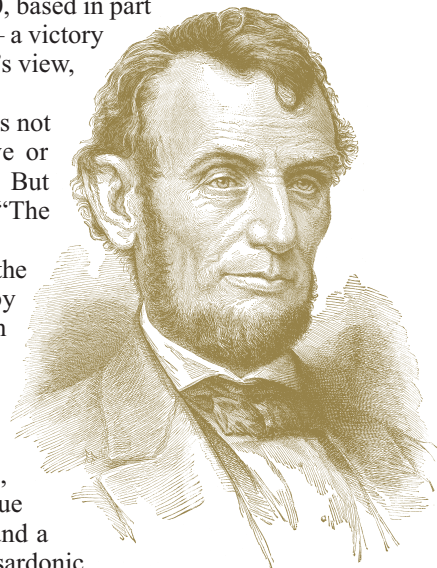
In *The Leaders We Deserve (And A Few We Didn't)*, Alvin Felzenberg opened the survey to laymen with an interest in American history. Mr. Felzenberg did a report card for each U.S. chief executive assigning numerical scores to six categories. Three have to do with what a president brings to the office: character, vision, and competence. Three try to capture what he actually does while there – his policies in foreign affairs and economics and his efforts to preserve liberty, especially at home. An individual score with 30 as the highest, allows for an easy comparison of presidents across the years.

And, yes, Lincoln tops the list with a perfect 30, based in part on his integrity and his great role in ending slavery – a victory for liberty that more than offsets, in Mr. Felzenberg's view, his wartime emergency measures.

Mr. Felzenberg is the first to admit that he does not have the final word on which leaders were brave or independent or overly beholden to special interests. But his book is certain to help this year's debate over "The Leader We Deserve."

What is certain is how historians have joined in the spirit of the Abraham Lincoln bicentennial by examining, and in their own way, surveying Abraham Lincoln as a man and leader. In preparing my annotated bibliography of all books about Abraham Lincoln since 1865, I note that there is at least one book a week now being published about the sixteenth president. While this is very good news, one of our own no longer will witness and continue

contributions about the man we study. John Y. Simon, one of The Lincoln Forum founders and a Ulysses S. Grant and Abraham Lincoln scholar died at 75 on July 8. His erudite writing and sardonic humor were a personal treasure that will be sorely missed. 



Abraham Lincoln


Frank Williams

John Y. Simon • continued from page 1

Daniel R. Weinberg, proprietor of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, in whose stock room Simon worked as a young man—spurring his interest in the Civil War, the historian later said—commented in tribute: "His work with the Grant volumes has been nothing short of magnificent," adding of his famously droll wit, "his sense of humor was like Lincoln's—he made points with his humor."

Michael Stevens, State Historic Preservation Officer for the Wisconsin Historical Society, called Simon "witty, energetic, and sometimes a bit mischievous yet always intellectually rigorous and articulate." These, and other recollections were assembled for a brochure collected by Gordon Pruett, editor of Morris Library's publication *Cornerstone*—the library, ironically, from which Simon had been barred since January.

U. S. Senator Dick Durbin, from Simon's home state of Illinois, spoke publicly of Simon shortly after his death (*Congressional Record*, July 25, 2008/S7474-75): "Just as President Grant's own autobiography raised the standard for Presidential memoirs, Mr. Simon's work raised the standard for Presidential papers collections... He brought honor to my State and a deeper understanding to us all."

The Forum family extends its heartfelt sympathies to the Simon family—including his daughter Ellen and two grandchildren—and especially to his beloved wife Harriet, also a veteran of many Gettysburg gatherings. 



Frank J. Williams and Harold Holzer present the 2004 Richard Nelson Current award to John Y. Simon.

(Photo: Henry Ballone)

KEN BURNS EARNS FORUM'S RICHARD NELSON CURRENT AWARD

Ken Burns—the acclaimed documentary filmmaker whose 1990 PBS series *The Civil War* is widely credited with launching the ongoing revival in Civil War and Lincoln studies, has been named the winner of the 13th annual Richard Nelson Current Award of the Lincoln Forum. Burns will accept the award and deliver the keynote address at the closing event of the 13th annual Lincoln Forum on November 18 at Gettysburg.

“The name of Ken Burns will be forever associated with the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln, and with good reason,” said Lincoln Forum Chairman Frank J. Williams in announcing the honor. “He has brought their story to more Americans, arguably with more artistry and power, and demonstrably with more impact and influence, than any other story-teller in any other medium in history. No one



Ken Burns (Photo: Henry F. Ballone)

ever did more to inspire the golden age of Civil War scholarship than this brilliant filmmaker, or created such vivid and lasting impressions of the men who fought for our freedom and our country during its most severe crisis. It is altogether fitting and proper that we honor him at the Civil War's most famous battleground on the eve of Lincoln's 200th birthday.”

Williams and Vice Chairman Harold Holzer will present Burns with the coveted award—the statuette *Freedom River* created by Decatur sculptor and Current Award laureate John McClarey—at a banquet which 250 are expected to attend.

The prolific Burns also co-authored *The Civil War*, the lavishly illustrated 1990 book that accompanied his television series. He has produced many other widely seen and well-received public television films, including documentaries on the Brooklyn Bridge, baseball, jazz, and most recently, World War II.

Commented Harold Holzer, the author of many books on Civil War-era art and iconography who by tradition makes the official presentation at the award ceremonies: “Lincoln probably never imagined the technology of moving pictures, much less television, video, and the worldwide web. But he certainly understood the power of the camera, and the impact of images. He would probably be the first to recognize how much Ken Burns has done to bring the vivid images of his era to new life, amplified by modern ideas and vivified by a true camera artist's unique gift for drama and beauty. He is that rarest of combinations: a historian and a true artist.”

The Forum's annual award is named for the revered 96-year-old dean of Lincoln scholars Richard Nelson Current, author of *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* and many other volumes, and himself a winner of the Bancroft Prize as well as a special edition of the Forum prize named in his honor. The Current Award has been won previously by: Gabor Boritt (1996), Brian Lamb (1997), John Hope Franklin (1998), Paul Simon (1999), David Herbert Donald (2000), Garry Wills (2001), James M. McPherson (2002), Sam Waterston (2003), John Y. Simon (2004), John McClarey (2005), Doris Kearns Goodwin (2006), and Jeff Shaara (2007). ■

THE LINCOLN MUSEUM CLOSES Market For Lincoln History Will Skyrocket

By Scott M. Bushnell

Reprinted from the *Ft. Wayne Journal-Gazette*.

Imagine you are the owner of a well-respected brand-name store and, that while it has been a tough year in terms of sales, it is now Nov. 1, the beginning of the biggest shopping period of the year. What would you do: close your store or work hard to attract as many past, present and future customers as possible?

If you were Lincoln National, you would close your doors. The financial services company announced last week that it is closing The Lincoln Museum as of June 30. In doing so, the corporation turned its back on the greatest opportunity in the museum's lifetime to share its rare perspective on Lincoln's history and impact on America.

The decision comes as the nation prepares to observe the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln on Feb. 12, 2009. The many events that are being planned from Washington to Illinois to California are breathtaking. It could be one of the largest patriotic celebrations since the nation's bicentennial in 1976. One has to believe that the observance would bring many, many visitors to Fort Wayne, especially since the museum has garnered significant attention since 1995, when it was moved to the present location with well-designed interactive exhibits.

The reason given for the closing was dwindling public attendance. Then why close it just as public interest will reach its highest pitch? Another was that Lincoln National Corp. “is not in the business of managing museums.” The last statement is certainly true when it refers to the current management that hails from the merger with Jefferson-Pilot in North Carolina; however, Lincoln National Life built and oversaw the collection from 1928 until now with little hardship. Why not find someone else to operate the museum?

There are other disturbing questions. Why would a U.S. company shutter the doors of such a valuable research tool for Lincoln scholars around the world? And why would it announce such an action without any details about the dispersement of the books, images and artifacts? When the current museum was planned in the early 1990s, Lincoln National executives were told by counsel that there were strict legal limits on what could be done with items donated to the museum.

Moreover, where are the city leaders in all this? The general reaction from the mayor to the agencies marketing this community seemed to be one of abject resignation. In 1993 when *The Journal Gazette* reported that Lincoln National was looking for a new home for the museum, the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce and people involved in economic development all called upon CEO Ian Rolland to keep it in Fort Wayne. Where is that reaction today? Doesn't anyone realize what increased visitor traffic could mean for city hotels, restaurants and other entertainment venues in 2009?

(Scott M. Bushnell is a local author and served as the director of media relations at Lincoln National Life from 1989 to 1999. He wrote this for *The Journal Gazette*.)

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TIVERTON TEACHER NAMED TO RUN NATIONAL LINCOLN FORUM

By Marcia Pobzecznik
Reprinted from
The Newport Daily News

PROVIDENCE — Tiverton High School teacher Betty Anselmo is sitting in a leather chair to the left of Frank J. Williams in his office on the seventh floor of the Supreme Court building, surrounded by 35 busts and statuettes of Abraham Lincoln and countless books about the 16th president of the United States and the Civil War era.

The teacher and the judge are talking about Anselmo's new job as administrator of the Lincoln Forum, which Williams helped found in 1996 "to enhance the understanding and preserve the memory of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War." Anselmo has been busy booking hotel rooms for the hundreds who already have reserved space for the next forum, to be held in November in Gettysburg, Pa.

She and "The Chief," as she calls Williams, who is the Chief Justice of the state Supreme Court, met 10 years ago when Anselmo was finishing college and had to write a 50-page paper on someone associated with the Civil War. She chose to write about Lincoln. She was put in touch with Williams, who is considered a Lincoln expert, and became hooked to the point that she now refers to herself as a "Lincoln geek."

Anselmo now is more involved than ever with all things Lincoln, with her recent appointment to the part-time post of administrator of the Lincoln Forum and the responsibility of arranging everything from bus travel to speakers at the annual gathering in Gettysburg of Lincoln devotees and scholars.

"It's like another piece of my life," she said. "It's enriched my life so much."

The people she has met through the forum are like family.

"We call it the Lincoln family," Anselmo said. "We all share a passion. It's like a bunch of guys sharing their love of football. We're sharing our love of Lincoln."

Making the arrangements for the forum takes up hours of Anselmo's time every afternoon after school ends and before she makes dinner for her family.

"There are a million and one details to running one forum," said Williams, who is confident Anselmo can do the job in addition to her full-time job teaching high school students history and law.

Williams — author of several books about Lincoln and one of 15 members of a national Bicentennial Commission appointed by the president to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, beginning next month in Kentucky — was one of the founding members of the Lincoln Forum 12 years ago, along with Harold Holzer, senior vice president for external affairs at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Anselmo said "Lincoln geeks" from around the country spend three days every November talking about Lincoln and the Civil War, visiting Civil War battlegrounds and landmarks and listening to notable guest speakers. Past speakers have included U.S.



Betty visits The Chief in Chambers

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, authors Doris Kearns Goodwin, James McPherson and actor Sam Waterson. McPherson, noted Anselmo, is the author of the textbook she uses in her classroom.

Anselmo has attended seven of the past twelve symposiums in Gettysburg near the National Military Park, which supposedly is the most haunted of all Civil War battlegrounds. The forums always end the night before the annual reading of the Gettysburg Address at the Soldiers National Cemetery on the anniversary of Lincoln's famous speech there on Nov. 19, 1863.

Lincoln and his determination in the face of adversity is what so impresses Anselmo, who often mentions Lincoln to her students during history lessons and uses him as an example during talks about problems in life and how to overcome them.

"He was so ordinary and he had so many problems, but he still became one of the most successful people," Anselmo said. "He is the perfect success story. He's a great role model for our kids. ... He never gave up. I admire him so much."

Williams' fascination with Lincoln began nearly six decades ago.

Williams travels around the country to share his expertise on Lincoln, whom he first admired at the age of 11 when he sat in the back row of his sixth-grade Cranston classroom next to a "humungous portrait" of the former president. It was then — 57 years ago — that he started collecting Lincoln memorabilia, including tattered books about Lincoln that he bought using his lunch money.

Williams and his wife, Virginia, now own one of the largest collections of Lincoln memorabilia. Their collection numbers tens of thousands of items. He keeps his most valuable items — signed Lincoln photographs and a signed presentation copy of the Lincoln-Douglas debates — in a bank vault.

"He was just so representative of the American dream," said Williams, noting that Lincoln was self-educated and determined. "He had this ability to communicate, so people, even if they didn't agree, understood what his position was. He had a basic humility and was never perceived as an elitist."

Anselmo and Williams are two of hundreds of people who are members of the Lincoln Forum — a group of people from all walks of life who are "dedicated to the study of our greatest president and the unforgettable era he dominated."

Williams said there has not been a man of such greatness since, but this country is in great need of someone of his caliber. "We're a house divided in 2008 and our enemies are taking advantage of it," he said. 📌



Russ Weidman and Betty Anselmo

THE LINCOLN MUSEUM IS NO MORE: FAMED COLLECTION TO FIND NEW HOME

By Harold Holzer

Reprinted from the *Ft. Wayne Journal-Gazette*.

This must be how people felt the first time Lincoln was assassinated.

For all the years I've been studying and writing about Abraham Lincoln, Fort Wayne's stupendous collection - whether it's been called the Lincoln National Life Foundation, the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum or in its most recent incarnation, the Lincoln Museum - has remained an indispensable resource, a captivating public attraction, a reliable refuge for scholars and a safe home for its countless treasures.

That is why, together with so many of my colleagues in the field, I find myself in profound mourning over the unexpected news of its imminent loss. My fellow historians are disappointed and outraged. I share their pain.

My own relationship with the institution has been longer and closer than most, and I'm proud to disclose it. Back when I was a teenager, more years ago than I'd like to remember, legendary director R. Gerald McMurtry took me seriously enough to correspond with me, later urging me to specialize in Lincoln iconography - the study of political image-making. The encouragement and opportunities he provided helped transform my life, and I will forever be grateful.

Dr. McMurtry's successor, Mark E. Neely Jr., became a fast friend and treasured colleague. Together, we delved deeper into the field, and with fellow historian Gabor Boritt authored a series of books that began in 1984 with "The Lincoln Image."

Later, I was close at hand when Neely engineered the most spectacular of the museum's many storied acquisitions: the Lincoln family's trove of personal photographs, some unknown, many unique, all precious. Their arrival in Fort Wayne inspired yet another of our collaborations, "The Lincoln Family Album."

In recent years, I've been privileged to enjoy no less close a relationship with the museum's current CEO, Joan Flinspach. Under her able leadership, I was invited to curate an exhibition called "Lincoln from Life," came to town to speak on many occasions, invited actor Sam Waterston to record Lincoln's voice for the galleries, sat for a long interview there with Brian Lamb of C-SPAN, and with the indefatigable Sara Vaughn Gabbard I co-edited one final book - who knew it was the end of an era? - "Lincoln and Freedom." It will still be on sale - somewhere - but not at the Lincoln Museum gift shop, alas. Point made: The museum has been a second home to me. But I was astounded by the volume of e-mails that poured in last week from all parts of the country from writers who feel no less connected to the place.

Clearly, the museum will be missed by everyone who seeks inspiration from Lincoln's words and deeds and everyone who delves deeply into the past to illuminate the future. For behind the superb public displays lies a staggeringly deep collection of manuscripts, art and artifacts without access to which dozens of the best Lincoln books published this century - check the acknowledgments - would have been the weaker. To prepare my own next book, I spent countless profitable hours in the museum's legendary clipping files, unearthing gem after obscure gem - reminiscences, editorials, firsthand accounts - all but impossible to find anywhere else. My book will also boast several images from the Lincoln Museum collection. What recent Lincoln book has not?

So now the obvious, troubling question: What will become of it all? We are told the material will be digitized - making it more

accessible. Even if we accept the implied argument that virtual reality is equal to the real thing, will this commitment extend to the clippings? The prints? If not, where will they go, and when?

We hear that the museum must lock its doors because school visitation has dipped from 12,000 to 7,000. But what will replace this crucial educational experience for the 7,000 local students who still profit from it? If money is not the issue, why not invest more, not less, in the educational mission and rebuild school visitation instead of throwing out the baby with the bath water?

Finally, what of any museum's most sacred trust: its collections? The Lincoln Museum owns the last painting for which Lincoln ever sat ("horribly like the original," he joked when he first saw it), copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, relics he used and touched, documents and manuscripts he wrote in his own hand, sculptures, broadsides, sketches and thousands of prints. Not to mention that Lincoln Family Album - the one-of-a-kind photos of his children he displayed in his own home, and took with him to Washington. These are not surplus goods: They are the tangible lifelines to our greatest American.

In the end, I suppose a museum may elect to limit its public hours, or worse, shut its doors forever, whatever the impact on its public, its scholars or its home. But those of us who have revered and relied on the Lincoln Museum - and the institution's own benefactors - have a moral obligation to safeguard the holdings and ensure both perpetuation and access. Cohesiveness would be nice, too. The institution has worked so hard to amass its holdings. It would add insult to injury to scatter it, lock it away or sell it off. There are plenty of fine new spaces that lack collections of equal grandeur - like the new Tredegar Museum in Richmond, Va., or the soon-to-open Civil War Museum in Philadelphia. With apologies to Fort Wayne, why not a request for proposals to house and preserve the Lincoln Museum trove?

To be sure, Lincoln Financial has been heroic in its decades-long commitment to the museum. Its generosity has been extraordinary. But lock the doors, walk away, and scatter the collections it simply cannot do.

Consortiums are needed; advisers are required; ideas are needed. I am relieved to know that the company has already indicated its intention to convene a group to explore these possibilities. If it takes longer than four months to craft a plan, perhaps the chains can even be left off the doors for a few more months. One final exhibition of the collection's best pieces would at least inspire the kind of send-off the place deserves.

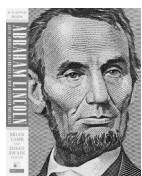
Lincoln once warned, "We cannot escape history." Lincoln Financial never has, and it shouldn't now. Its historic obligation, first to Robert Lincoln himself, when the foundation was first established, and all through the years as the collection was amassed, does not vanish with the publication of a news release.

Otherwise what has been described as a shutdown will in reality be an assassination.

(Harold Holzer is the senior vice president of external affairs for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the author of several books about Lincoln. His forthcoming book is "Lincoln: President-Elect." He wrote this for The Journal Gazette).

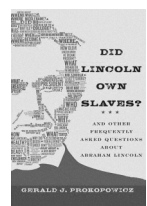
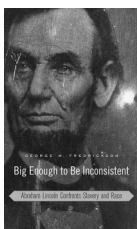
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The Bicentennial book renaissance is in full efflorescence—with no fewer than 60 new Lincoln volumes already published or scheduled to come off the nation’s commercial and university presses between now and Lincoln’s 200th birthday next February. Some of the nation’s leading historians are back on the shelves with long-anticipated new efforts, other notable writers are tackling the Lincoln theme for the first time, while a few much-mourned giants of the profession, recently deceased, are being published posthumously. Except where noted, all of the following books have appeared or will appear in 2008.



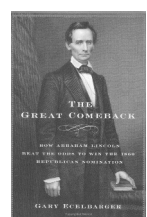
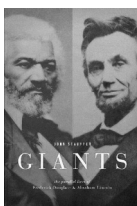
Abraham Lincoln: Great American Historians on Our Sixteenth President, edited by Brian Lamb and Susan Swain (PublicAffairs Press), brings together for the first time in print form the transcripts of countless C-SPAN interviews on Lincoln over the course of 20 years. A list of historians is impossible—every prominent scholar who has written on Lincoln this generation is included.

Big Enough to be Inconsistent: Abraham Lincoln Confronts Slavery and Race by George M. Fredrickson (Harvard University Press). The final book by the late Stanford historian is a collection of his 2006 Du Bois lectures: “Great Egalitarian or Hard-Core Racist?” “Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free White Men,” and “Becoming an Emancipator: The War Years.” Historian Eric Foner hailed it as “marked by meticulous scholarship.”



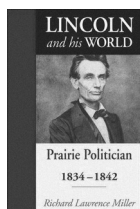
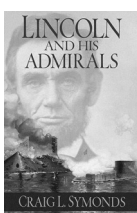
Did Lincoln Own Slaves? And Other Frequently Asked Questions about Abraham Lincoln by Gerald J. Prokopowicz (Pantheon) is at once accessible for beginners and essential for serious students. David Donald called this mini-encyclopedia of everything-you-wanted-to-know a “wonderful book, as witty as it is wise,” and Harold Holzer praised it as “an essential reference and a page-turning good read.”

Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass & Abraham Lincoln by John Stauffer (Twelve Books), is the latest volume to compare the lives of the 16th President and his only African-American advisor. Stauffer, chair of the history of American civilization and professor of English at Harvard, wrote *The Black Hearts of Men*, which won a 2002 Frederick Douglass Prize.



The Great Comeback: How Abraham Lincoln Beat the Odds to Win the 1860 Republican Nomination, by Gary Ecelbarger (Thomas Dunne/St. Martin’s) chronicles what Daniel Stowell, editor of the Lincoln Papers, calls the “startling transformation of political fortune” that made Lincoln President. “Anyone who has thought there was nothing more to be said about Lincoln,” noted Civil War scholar Steven Woodworth, “will have to think again.”

Lincoln and His Admirals by Craig L. Symonds (Oxford University Press), the leading authority on the naval history of the Civil War, is the first book to illuminate the neglected story of Lincoln as commander-in-chief of the Navy. The author, former professor of history at the U. S. Naval Academy and chief historian of the U.S.S. Monitor Center, examines Lincoln’s role as strategist, administrator, and high-tech innovator.



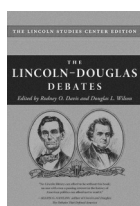
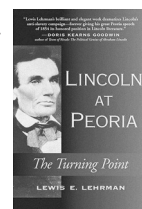
Lincoln and His World: Prairie Politician, 1834-1842 by Richard Lawrence Miller (Stackpole Books) is the second book in the author’s planned multi-volume Lincoln biography series. Brian Dirck called it “a thoroughly researched, lively portrait of Abraham Lincoln’s early years as an up-and-coming Illinois politician.”

Lincoln and the Decision for War by Russell McClintock (UNC Press) takes Lincoln, as President-elect and President, through a dramatic, chronological, month by month account of the pressures to either forestall or prevent civil war. Frank J. Williams called the book “an excellent reappraisal—sincere, intelligent, and absorbing,” and historian William C. Harris praised it as “well-written and brilliantly analyzed.”



Lincoln & the Court by Brian McGinty (Harvard University Press), explores Lincoln’s evolving relationship with the U. S. Supreme Court, as attorney, opponent of the Dred Scott decision, and president of a divided country. Frank J. Williams called this “complete account...beautifully written” by an author “who makes complicated legal issues accessible” to show that “Lincoln was *the* lawyer in the White House.”

Lincoln at Peoria: The Turning Point by Lewis E. Lehrman (Stackpole Books), is the first account of the 1854 Illinois oration that brought Lincoln roaring back into the political arena as an anti-slavery foe of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. James O. Horton asserted: “Lewis Lehrman’s meticulous analysis of one of Lincoln’s little known speeches...contributes to our understanding of one of America’s greatest leaders.”

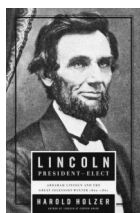


The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The Lincoln Studies Center Edition (University of Illinois Press), takes into account the varying, party-influenced transcripts of the famous “joint meetings” to yield a definitive consensus record—adding colorful details about each encounter and analysis of their political and historical meeting. Scholar David Zarefsky said: “This edition will serve as the standard reference work on the debates.”

Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations Associated with Our Greatest President by Edward Steers Jr. (University Press of Kentucky, 2007) provides an often amusing, but deadly serious, hoax-puncturing analysis of some of the most stubborn misconceptions about Lincoln’s life and death. Allen C. Guelzo called it a “delightful romp through the myths...funny and instructive all at the same moment.”

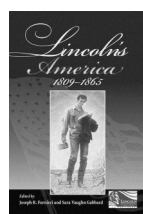
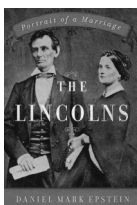


COLN BOOKSHELF



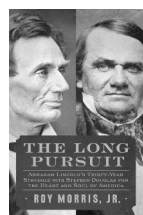
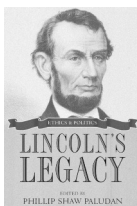
Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861 by Harold Holzer (Simon & Schuster), takes Lincoln from Election through Inauguration in re-evaluating his surprisingly active role in saving the Union before swearing his oath. Doris Kearns Goodwin called it “a stunningly original work that casts completely new light on the most turbulent and critical presidential transition in American history.”

The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage by Daniel Mark Epstein (Ballantine Books) is a long, complex, and lyrical look at the married lives of Abraham and Mary Lincoln by the author of *Lincoln and Whitman*. Doris Kearns Goodwin called it “a splendid addition to the Lincoln literature” written with “a novelist’s feel for detail and drama,” Ken Burns hailed it as “impressive,” and Frank J. Williams lauded it as “brilliantly conceived.”



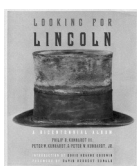
Lincoln’s America: 1809-1865, edited by Joseph R. Fornieri and Sara Vaughn Gabbard (Southern Illinois University Press), is the latest—and last—in the series of books issued by the late and lamented Lincoln Museum. Essays by Herman Belz, Allen C. Guelzo, Harold Holzer, Myron Marty, Mark Noll, James Oakes, Richard Striner, Frank J. Williams, and Kenneth Winkle.

Lincoln’s Legacy: Ethics and Politics, edited by Philip Shaw Paludan (University of Illinois Press) offers, historian Ronald C. White says, “outstanding” essays that “offer fresh new perspectives” on the Lincoln theme. Contributors include William Lee Miller, Mark W. Summers, Mark E. Neely Jr., and Paludan, who died as this book was being completed.

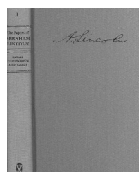


The Long Pursuit: Abraham Lincoln’s Thirty-Year Struggle with Stephen Douglas for the Heart and Soul of America by Roy Morris Jr. (Smithsonian Books) is the latest book by the editor of *Military Heritage Magazine*. Historian Jeffrey D. Wert called it a “gripping narrative,” noting it “captures their burning ambition, political skills, and deeply held beliefs” amidst the background of their country’s unfolding tragedy.”

Looking for Lincoln: The Making of An American Icon by Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt Jr. (Knopf) is the companion book to the forthcoming (February) PBS series by the Kunhardts, but more, a lavishly illustrated exploration of the myths, memories, and questions surrounding our most famous—and enigmatic—president.

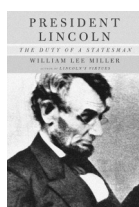
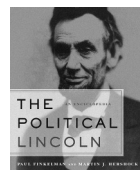


Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World, edited by Eric Foner (W. W. Norton), offers original essays by veteran and new Lincoln scholars alike, all inspired by the approaching bicentennial. Included are James M. McPherson, Sean Wilentz, James Oakes, Manisha Sinha, Christopher L. Brown, Richard Carwardine, Catherine Clinton, Andrew Delbanco, David Blight, Harold Holzer, and Foner himself.



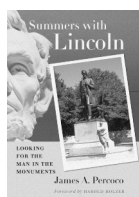
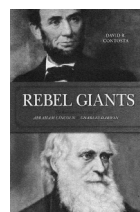
The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal Documents and Cases, edited by Daniel W. Stowell, et. al. (4 volumes, University of Virginia Press). The long-awaited highlights compendium of the milestone Lincoln Legals Project, this boxed set of four big volumes essentially completes the unfinished work of the 1953 *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, which omitted all legal documents.

The Political Lincoln: An Encyclopedia edited by Paul Finkelman and Martin J. Hershock (CQ Press). Two distinguished university professors draw on the latest in Lincoln scholarship from a distinguished roster of contributors to present what its publisher heralds as “a complete and up-to-date picture of the life and politics of America’s Civil War President.”



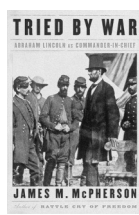
President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman by William Lee Miller (Alfred A. Knopf), is the second volume in the “ethical biography” series (the first was *Lincoln’s Virtues*) by the Scholar in Ethics and Institutions at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. Miller explores Lincoln’s unique combination of resolve and judgment as he applied it to his twin goals of saving the Union and destroying slavery.

Rebel Giants: Abraham Lincoln & Charles Darwin by David R. Contosta (Prometheus Books), represents another title in the strong new vogue for joint biography. Examining the two historical giants born on the very same day—February 12, 1809—the author contends that each, who had more in common than previously understood, made a major impact on history in ways neither could have predicted as young men.



Summers with Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments by James A. Percoco (Fordham University Press), recounts the odyssey of a committed educator to connect his 21st century students with America’s 19th century heritage. Harold Holzer called it “a unique and inspiring story,” and David McCullough hailed its author as “one of the finest examples the nation has of a history teacher.”

“There I Grew Up:” Remembering Abraham Lincoln’s Indiana Youth by William E. Bartelt (Indiana Historical Society Press) is the first volume in generations to explore in detail Lincoln’s varied and challenging early life in his boyhood home state. The author is a veteran educator who serves now as vice chair of the Indiana Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.



Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief by James M. McPherson (Penguin Press). America’s foremost Civil War historian turns his attention to the Union commander in chief as maker of policy and military strategy. Publishers’ Weekly observed: “Lincoln may have been an amateur of war, but McPherson successfully establishes him as America’s greatest war leader.”

STEW WAS HOT – WEATHER WAS NOT; BICENTENNIAL LAUNCH EVENT SNOWED OUT

By Don Pieper

What do you do with leftover burgoo?

It was a problem Brian Grant and others faced after a February 12 snowstorm — so severe that the National Park Service closed the road to the site of Abraham Lincoln’s birthplace near Hodgenville in central Kentucky.

The launch of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission’s two-year array of celebratory events had been scheduled at Hodgenville on his 199th birthday. First Lady Laura Bush was to have attended. But the weather was so wretched that the launch was, as NASA would say, aborted.

The cancellation left Brian Grant with a cauldron of burgoo he had prepared to help feed the anticipated crowds. It left the Carl Howell Jr. family with an over-supply of home-baked apple and peach pies. It left Carolyn Martinette with an inventory of Abraham Lincoln “driver’s licenses” she had hoped would be purchased as souvenirs by the launch crowd. (She had intended to give one to Mrs. Bush.)

“It was so sad,” Martinette says of the snow-out. “We were so ready.”

“It was a financial setback for a lot of folks,” Howell says.

There will be another chance for Hodgenville to show hospitality to Lincoln fans when a new statue is unveiled there May 31. The town square now features a Lincoln bronze by Adolph Weinman (a student of another Lincoln sculptor, Augustus St. Gaudens). Weiman’s work was dedicated May 31 of the birth centennial year, 1909.

The new piece, created by the Berkeley, Calif., sculpture studio of Daub-Firman, depicts a young Abe with a dog. Smaller copies (50 numbered copies only) will be sold. Howell says the No. 1 piece may be auctioned.

After Mother Nature spoiled the February birthday party, there was nothing for organizers to do but try to sell as many of the Howell family pies as possible to locals — and to the hardy souls who had fought their way through the snow, including the media, National Parks Service staff and Lincoln impersonator John Voehl who came from Colorado.

The launch ceremonies will be available “virtually” on the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Website (www.lincolnbicentennial.gov), according to Tommy Turner, a commission member and a resident of the Hodgenville area.

Commission Executive Director Eileen R. Mackevich and communications intern Hasam Aloul are gathering audio and text versions of speeches that would have been delivered February 12.

Turner, despite being “extremely disappointed” by the awful weather, still sees a bright side. The event got wide publicity in advance and since. “The idea was to open a window to let Americans know about the bicentennial, and we accomplished that,” he says.

The virtual version won’t be quite the same as being there. You’ll have to provide your own burgoo, pies and souvenir licenses.

As for Hodgenville’s leftover burgoo — that’s a spicy stew and a central Kentucky specialty with lots of meat and whatever else is available — it was divvied up. Carl Howell says he had burgoo for dinner three nights in a row after the cancelled bicentennial launch. No problem; “I wish we had taken more,” he says.

Howell says the launch leftovers also included donuts, biscuits, sausage, ham and other delicacies.

In 1928, Howell’s grandfather, Jim Howell built the Nancy Lincoln Inn near Thomas Lincoln’s Sinking Spring farm site. His son Carl Sr., eventually took over and now Carl Jr. and his wife are proprietors.

The souvenir shop has lots of Lincoln memorabilia and collectibles, and the four guest cabins are furnished with period furniture and accessories. The cabins are built with sturdy chestnut logs, a rarity now in that part of Kentucky, hit by a chestnut blight early in the last century. The hard pine floors are originals.

The cabins aren’t primitive like the tiny log dwelling where Nancy Lincoln gave birth to a son almost two centuries ago, but they give lodgers an idea.

Howell is president of Preservation of Lincoln’s Kentucky Heritage, Inc. Howell, Turner and others recently worked with the National Park Trust Fund and the park service to add 232 acres of the Lincoln farm at Knob Creek Hill, where Abraham spent his early boyhood, to the National historic site complex that already included the Sinking Spring birth site. More than \$1 million was raised to transfer the property in 2001.

Turner, a county judge with a keen and long-standing interest in the Lincoln story, is a co-chairman of the Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. He was one of the local leaders who, in 1989, formed the Lincoln Museum in downtown Hodgenville. The cabin symbolizing the presidential birth home is on display there. Turner also was chairman of the Lincoln Trail Area Development District.

Martinette, meanwhile, says her replica Lincoln driver’s license project had its roots in, of all places, Elvis Presley’s Graceland. She says during a visit to Memphis she bought souvenir Presley driver’s licenses as gifts for folks back home in Hodgenville.

As the Lincoln bicentennial launch approached, she wondered what kind of “crafty” item she could offer to visitors — and she remembered the Elvis driver’s license.

Her version has pictures of Mr. Lincoln and a log cabin, an address (2995 Lincoln Farm Road, Hodgenville, KY 42748, LaRue County, address of the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site), birthday, sex, height, weight, and eye color (hazel). The expiration date is April 15, 1865, the day Lincoln died.

She offers similar Lincoln “license” cards for Indiana, Illinois and the District of Columbia, where he also was a resident.

Martinette says she hasn’t made a profit yet, but is making sales through a Web site (<http://lincolnlicense.com>) and souvenir shops. “I’m enjoying it,” she says. 🍌



Six inches of snow covered postponed ALBC event

JAY (LENO) WALKING AT GETTYSBURG WHO WON THE BATTLE?

By Don Pieper

I wasn't trying to embarrass anyone, honest, Abe. I was bitten by a whimsy bug, I guess, when I asked our waitress at the Lincoln Diner who won the Battle of Gettysburg.

"We did," she replied.

"Who's 'we'?"

"The Yankees? Yes, the Yankees."

"O.K.," I said, "who was the Yankee commander?"

"Lee!"

Oh, my goodness. Lee!

Marse Robert, who had no fond memories of Gettysburg anyway, must surely have winced in his grave. I can't even imagine what happened in George Meade's grave.

At the Lincoln Diner, of all places, in Gettysburg, of all places, a local girl thought Lee was a Yankee. This happened this July while Judy Kambestad, my wife Jan and I, Lincoln Forum members all, were in town attending the Civil War Institute's exceptional program at Gettysburg College. The CWI attendees, many of them also Lincoln Forum regulars, know all about the Battle and the Address.

But the waitress's response made me curious about the general public's knowledge. I asked the cashier at the Diner who won the Battle of Gettysburg. She shrugged.

"Are you from around here?" I asked.

"All my life," she said.

Wow.

At the new battlefield visitors' center, I asked my question of a young tourist. His reply: "The East."

I kept asking at Gettysburg and during our drive home to California. Two of the most provocative answers: A young man at the Gettysburg College cafeteria said, "Gettysburg," and a clerk in a Pipe Spring National Monument in Arizona (near the northern border of Arizona), souvenir shop said, "Nobody."

Well, it certainly could be argued that Gettysburg, in the long run, has exploited the Battle and the Address and fairly could be called the ultimate winner. And it's not wrong to say that nobody won the Battle because of the slaughter and the shattered military and civilian lives.

But how can you grow up in Gettysburg, where nearly every storefront plays on the drama of the Battle and the Address, and not know which side the history books say won? How, even, could you grow up in Pipe Spring National Monument in Arizona (near the northern border of Arizona), and not be sure? A waitress at the Grand Canyon Lodge said she didn't know. "I'm taking history, but we didn't get to the Civil War — just World Wars," she said. A clerk at Bart's Book Store in Ojai, California, said she thought the Battle took place during the Civil War, but was unsure and had no idea who won.

How can this be? She was surrounded by thousands of books, including some written by Catton, Sandburg, Foote, McPherson and Holzer — even CDs of Ken Burns's programs. "History just isn't 'cool' for today's young people," according to Debra Novotny, who spent 35 years trying to convince Gettysburg-area students that history can, indeed, be cool. "You really have to work hard to teach history," she said.

Miss Novotny retired this spring, and after years as a part-timer, is now a fulltime, licensed battlefield guide. She is disappointed, but not surprised, that local young people don't know who won the battle waged in their backyard.

She says today's parents don't insist that their offspring strive for academic excellence. Parents, she said, back up students who expect good grades without learning. "It's as if they don't want to work, but expect an employer to give them a paycheck," Miss Novotny said.

Moreover, she said, taxpayer groups that take over school boards cut education as well as expenses. She said earlier in her career, the Gettysburg schools would take elementary and secondary students on field trips to the battlefield. But cost-conscious board members cut back to only one field trip a year, and the faculty decided a visit to museums in nearby Washington would be a better learning experience than the battlefield available just down the street.

She is grateful for the new Gettysburg school superintendent, Dr. Robert Hall, who, she says, wants all students to know about the Battle and the Address.

There is a trend now in history classes — never hers — to teach broad concepts and avoid the details, such as which side prevailed in the Battle of Gettysburg.

(The Las Vegas, Nev., Review-Journal, in a July 21 article on this same subject cited a student who said it was the Vietnamese who bombed Pearl Harbor. A Carson City, Nev., school board member, a former history teacher, was quoted as complaining that today's students are getting a "dumbed-down" version of history.) Earlier in Miss Novotny's teaching career, especially in the advanced placement classes, she emphasized Lincoln's Address and even spent time studying and discussing the long speech Edward Everett gave before Lincoln's dedication address at the new national cemetery.

I explained to D. Scott Hartwig, supervising historian for the National Park Service at Gettysburg and a 28-year veteran at the site, my frustration with the who-won answers. He was neither surprised nor dismayed. "The depth of knowledge about the Battle of Gettysburg (and the Address) pretty well runs the gamut from visitors who don't know anything about the Civil War to those who can rattle off the names of all the regimental commanders of Kershaw's South Carolina brigade," he said.

"Our average visitor has minimal knowledge before they arrive, but is interested in learning. Many arrive with preconceived notions of what the war was fought over, and these opinions are often shaped by the Lost Cause. Hence, it is not uncommon to encounter visitors who think the Confederate states seceded and fought to preserve states' rights, and that slavery had little or nothing to do with the war. Yet, we also have a sizeable number of visitors who arrive relatively well informed about the causes of the Civil War but know little about the details of the Battle of Gettysburg," he said.

This mixture of visitor curiosity and lack of information is illustrated by a citation from "Confederates in the Attic," in which author Tony Horwitz quotes an NPS ranger at Fort Sumpter as saying the strangest question he has fielded from a visitor: Why were so many Civil War battles fought in National Parks?

The toughest question for most folks I queried about the Battle of Gettysburg (in fairness, I should say there were some correct answers) was simply, Who won? 📌

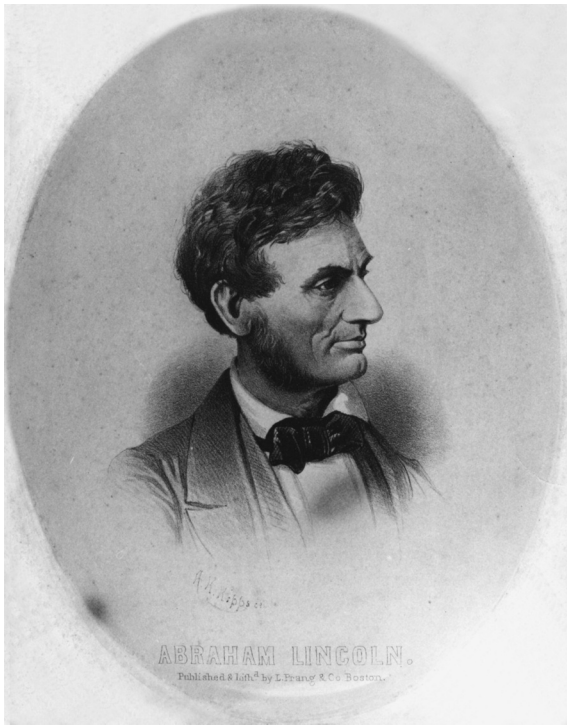
*"The better part of one's life
consists of his friendships."*

A. Lincoln

PICTURE PORTFOLIO: "PUTTIN' ON [H]AIRS"

"Old Abe is puttin' on [h]airs," *New York Herald* correspondent Henry Villard wittily observed when President-elect Abraham Lincoln began sprouting whiskers in November 1860.

America's printmakers responded quickly—if inaccurately. With audiences clamoring for new pictures of the newly elected chief executive's new look, engravers and lithographers rushed out slapdash revisions of their previously issued Lincoln campaign prints. The results were seldom more lifelike than the wholly invented A. K. Kipps print (shown here) depicting Lincoln wearing a style he never adopted: side-whiskers.

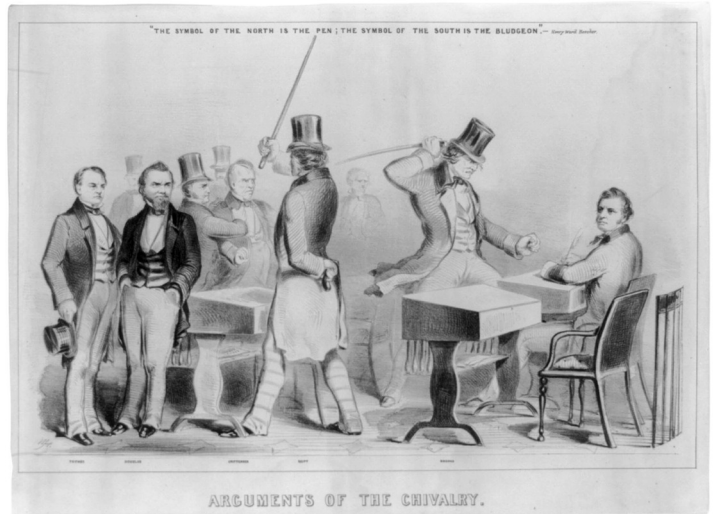


Abraham Lincoln—with ludicrous sideburns—lithographed by A. K. Kipps and published by L. Prang of Boston in 1861. (Author's Collection)

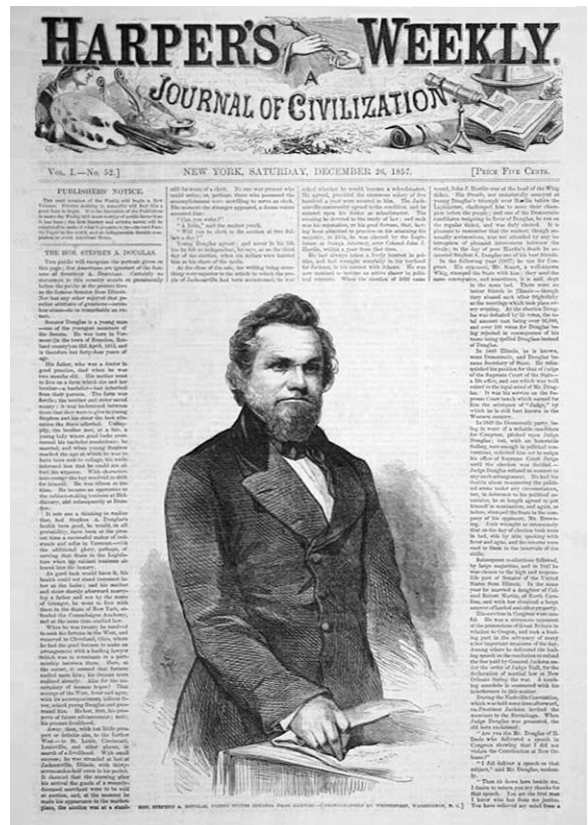
Historians and iconographers have written scores of articles and book chapters on Lincoln's famous image transfiguration, though seldom analyzing it in context. The fact is, politicians frequently grew and shaved beards in the mid-19th century, with little attention and little regard for the impact on their public image. Civil War generals on campaign did so often: most famously, perhaps, Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. Jackson.

But new research by George Buss, the Freeport, Illinois Lincoln re-enactor who has become a leading collector of Stephen A. Douglas material, reveals that the 16th president's lifelong political rival grew and removed whiskers years before Lincoln even gave such fashion transformation a thought.

As shown on these pages, in both a vicious 1856 political cartoon charging that the Little Giant ignored the near-fatal attack on Charles Sumner on the Senate floor, and from an adulatory woodcut on the cover of an 1857 edition of *Harper's Weekly*, Stephen A. Douglas "put on [h]airs" long before Lincoln. Apparently, either he, or his supporters, did not much like the look. By the time the two leaders met for their famous senatorial debates in 1858—150 years ago this year—Douglas was again clean-shaven.



Arguments of the Chivalry, a cartoon by Winslow Homer, published by J. H. Bufford of Boston, comments on the May 22, 1856 assault on Senator Charles Sumner by Southern Congressman Preston Brooks. Douglas is the bearded eyewitness, second from left, who ignores the attack, hands in pockets. (Library of Congress)



A bearded Stephen A. Douglas woodcut adorns the cover of the pictorial newspaper *Harper's Weekly* in December 1857. The date indicates Douglas wore his beard for at least 19 months. (George Buss Collection)

PAINTING LINCOLN: AN ARTIST PICTURES HISTORY

By Richard Wengroth



Candidate Lincoln

Between 1998 and 2007 I made more than fifty images of Abraham Lincoln. One might assume that such an effort was guided throughout by some plan, but the truth is my extended involvement with painting Lincoln had a very different original intention from the eventual results, and was, in many respects, haphazard. I had no idea that I would wind up with a body of work comprised of six 5 feet by four feet portraits, dozens of drawings, studies and sketches and a series of limited edition prints.

Instead, I intended to make one painting based upon what I thought was a pretty straightforward idea and a logical expansion of my usual landscape-based painting. The origin of my “idea” lies in the familiar observation about the American Civil War: that the ultimate Union victory was in large measure due to Northern manufacturing capacity versus the (slave-based) agricultural economy of the South.

When I started work on my first Lincoln image I had a studio in a converted barn in the northwestern corner of New Jersey at the foot of the Kittatiny Mountains. It was a rural area, dotted with dairy farms, in a landscape with which I had been familiar since childhood. But it was succumbing to suburban sprawl with the resultant changes in population, environment, and way of life - a familiar tale.

On a visit to our local library I was casually going through oversize art volumes when I happened upon a collection of Lincoln photographs. Many of the images were unfamiliar to me and I was fascinated by a visual record that showed the ungainly, raw and clean-shaven Lincoln gradually change into the familiar images embedded in our national memory: Mount Rushmore, the Lincoln penny, five dollar bill (the old one), and the Lincoln Memorial. There was the obvious, but still arresting, realization: He Didn't Always Look Like That! The Lincoln I “knew” was simplistic and incomplete. I took the volume home and tried to “read” the images as they revealed that process of change, of transformation. As I studied the changes in Lincoln's face I began to wonder what Civil War era Americans must have felt as they witnessed the transformation of what had been a largely agricultural America to an urban and industrial nation. I believed that that transformation could be compared to the ravaging changes gradually carved into the face of our 16th president. I would make a painting using Lincoln's visage as a metaphor for the changes wrought on the American agricultural landscape by industrialized warfare. At the time it seemed a logical extension of my usual landscape work and of the changes I was witnessing to a familiar landscape being overtaken by suburban sprawl.

In retrospect, I realize too, that seeing Ken Burns' marvelous, *The Civil War*, on PBS probably influenced the notion of using Lincoln's image metaphorically.

Like many ideas that sound good in theory and come a cropper when put to the test, I ran into a series of problems almost immediately. How does one show a “before” and an “after” in one image? How does one capture a process in a static image? I knew that the Cubist painters of the early 20th century changed the history of art by showing simultaneous, multiple images—but at the cost of legibility to the uninitiated viewer. (Theodore Roosevelt famously quipped that Cubist paintings looked, to him, like “an explosion in a shingle factory.”) Other visual genres like comic strips and graphic novels show sequential narratives; but the viewer/reader experiences these forms as we do movies: through time. Struggling to put the concept into painterly form, I realized that the original notion had to be modified because it was more conceptual than visual—overall, too theoretical.

In an attempt to solve my problem painting (I was still thinking of a single painting) I began reading about Lincoln. I didn't know exactly what I was looking for; so my reading was casual and unprogrammatic. I was not reading as an historian might but as an artist trying to better understand his subject. David Herbert Donald's *Lincoln, Honor's Voice* by Douglas L. Wilson, *Abe* by Richard Slotkin, Gore Vidal's *Lincoln, a Novel*, were all helpful. I was learning the complexity of the man, of his very considerable ambition and consummate political skill.

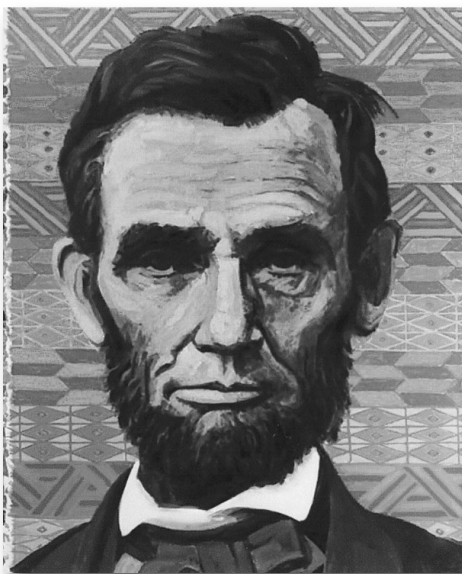
Too, I was becoming more interested in the era: the epic issues and remarkable cast of characters of the Civil War Period. My expanding interests led me to the historical novels of Michael and Jeff Shaara and to Civil War historians James McPherson and Bruce Catton. My reading led to the recognition that not only were most Americans woefully under-informed about the second most consequential event of our national history, but that the reason is that the issues of 1861-65 are still active, still sensitive, still controversial. Our Civil War is not only history but current events. And, to some, Lincoln remains a deeply controversial figure.

Like most Americans north of the Mason-Dixon Line, I grew up with a received reverence for President Lincoln, Savior of The Union. My reading made me realize that the Lincoln of legend: Honest Abe, The Rail splitter, Father Abraham, the Emancipator, et.al.

were caricatures of a man of great complexity, spiritual depth and mental sophistication? The Lincoln I “knew” was not only visually limited and incomplete but in every sense simplistic and incomplete. I had no idea who Abraham Lincoln, the man, was.

I abandoned my original idea but kept reading and studying those old photographs which “told” me something. I never studied any of the contemporary paintings or sculptures of Lincoln. I didn't think most were very good art but, more to the point, I wanted to “discover” Lincoln for myself.

Like many before me, the more I learned about Lincoln, the more I wanted to learn. None of the words and

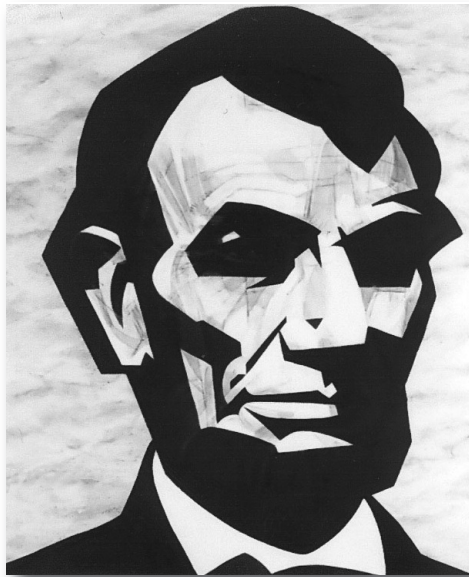


Emancipation Lincoln

continued on page 12

Painting Lincoln • continued from page 11

phrases used to describe him: noble, profound, honest, great, seemed adequate. “Deep”, yes. But mysterious, too. Spiritual? Yes, but never a church member. Idealistic, but pragmatic. Humorous, but melancholy. I was changing my focus from using the face of Lincoln as a metaphor for changes in an exterior landscape to recognition of the complicated interior “landscape” of Lincoln himself. My initial idea was unworkable because it was too small for the subject. It was my own expanding knowledge of a challenging subject which made me realize the paucity and unintentional hubris of my original idea. No single painting—at least by me—could “capture” him. I finally settled on six images: “Frontier Lincoln,” “Lawyer Lincoln,” “Candidate Lincoln,” “Emancipation Lincoln,” “Gettysburg Lincoln,” and “Iconic Lincoln.”



Iconic Lincoln

Based upon key periods in his life the paintings are executed in differing styles and techniques intended to reveal various aspects of his character or temperament.

The resulting paintings should be understood not so much as depictions but explorations of a great and complex personality.

“Lawyer Lincoln,” for example, presents an ambitious, tough, and determined adversary— an opponent about whom one contemporary said was “able to split hairs as well as rails.”

“Candidate Lincoln,” on the other hand, presents a more impersonal image: a campaign poster. In technique it combines the linear modeling of 19th century engraving with the red, white and blue of patriotic bunting. The most intentionally “impersonal” image is “Iconic Lincoln,” for which I reduced his likeness to the threshold of abstraction. The man has become legend: mythic, sanctified, and institutionalized.

“Emancipation Lincoln,” based upon Alexander Gardner’s classic photograph, presents Lincoln at the height of his powers: a seasoned, tested, solemn and resolute Commander-in-Chief.

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He is seen against a background derived from African Kente cloth. The painting departs from the original image not only through the addition of color and an invented background but the use of highly structured and vigorous paint handling.

In each case, the subject of the painting is Lincoln; but the content is what dictates the various styles of execution.

The photography of Lincoln’s time did not permit the kind of candid shots which only became possible with faster film and shutter speeds. Lacking color and movement the photographic material upon which I had to depend required interpretation to “fill in” both physical and psychological attributes. The brute facts of physical reality—weight, height, coloring, the “presence”—are only hinted at in photographs. Facial expressions, how one holds and presents one’s self, the nature of movement in time—what today we call “body

language”—reveal thoughts, states of mind and spirit that a formal 19th-century studio portrait seldom does. So, in addition to making objective critical judgments and decisions about the developing work, mine was also a very subjective effort requiring sustained emotional focus.

What started as an idea for one painting grew into something quite different. Along the way I have met many other knowing and friendly people whose original interest in Lincoln had been casual but subsequently grew into libraries, collections, pilgrimages to Lincoln sites and so on. During one of the lively Q & A periods at a Lincoln Forum, one of the attendees commented that he thought some of Lincoln’s attributes tended to rub off on those who spent time studying him. Would that it were so!

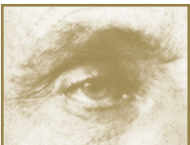
(Author Wengenroth is a longtime Forum member)



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