

THE LINCOLNIAN



VOLUME XXXVI

Number 3



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Transforming into Lincoln

Did you ever wonder how George Buss *becomes* Abraham Lincoln. Attend our February 11 event and learn about his life as a Lincoln presenter. See page 3 for more details.

A Notable Passing



Rodney O. Davis

Lincoln Scholar Rodney O. Davis died on November 5, 2019 at the age of 87. Davis was well-known to Lincoln Group members as both a dinner speaker and, along with his teaching and writing partner, Douglas L. Wilson, as a recipient of our group's annual Lincoln award. We are honored that he shared his fine scholarship with us at our organizational events. He was the Szold Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at Knox College.

Along with Wilson, Davis became co-founder and co-director of the Knox College Lincoln Studies Center. Soon after its establishment, the Center received an invitation from the Library of Congress to produce annotated text of the Abraham Lincoln Papers for its website. The two scholars served as supervising editors for the transcription and annotation of the papers on the Library's website. In 2009, in honor of their work on Lincoln, Davis and Wilson were named laureates of the Order of Lincoln, the highest honor conferred by the state of Illinois. The Davis and Wilson partnership produced a series of publications on Lincoln including *Herndon's Informants* (1998), new editions of *Herndon's Lincoln* (2006) and *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (2008) as well as the first volume of a two-volume collection of the writings on Lincoln by his law partner, *Herndon on Lincoln: Letters* (2016). Memorials in memory of Rodney Davis may be made to Knox College or to the Illinois State Historical Society. Our thoughts are with the Davis family and our condolences so extended. (*Information for this write-up is from, in part, an obituary on the Knox College website as well as a tribute penned by Douglas Wilson in the winter edition of the Abraham Lincoln Association newsletter*).

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Upcoming Lincoln Group Events

What you need to know about our February event:

The Lincoln Group and the Civil War Round Table of DC are jointly sponsoring our February event. Appropriately for Lincoln's birthday month, George Buss will speak on "Transforming into Lincoln: Life as a Lincoln Presenter."

The Date: February 11, 2020

The Place: Patton Hall Officers' Club, Fort Myer, VA

The Schedule:

6 pm: Social Hour (cash bar)

7 pm: Dinner (\$36 for dinner and lecture)

8 pm: Lecture (\$5 for lecture only)

(please arrive at 7:30pm for the lecture)

Reservations:

Please note special reservation arrangements for this event.

All attendees - Members and guests of either the CWRTDC or the Lincoln Group should make reservations on the CWRTDC website.

RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 5pm ET, Monday, FEBRUARY 3, TO MEET CLUB DEADLINES

Space may be limited, so make your reservations early.

**SEE THE INSTRUCTIONS AT
<http://cwrtdc-meetings.blogspot.com/>
TO MAKE RESERVATIONS AND REMIT PAYMENT**

If you have any problems making reservations online or would like to know about alternatives to making reservations or payments online, please email reservations@cwrtdc.org

Please check the Round Table website for information on accessing Ft. Myer and the associated security requirements (gate for entry, access form, etc.)

Our Topic for the Evening:

George Buss has been portraying Abraham Lincoln both locally and nationally for over 30 years. For the several years he has been the featured Lincoln presenter at the Gettysburg National Cemetery Dedication Day each November 19th. Harold Holzer, one of the country's leading authorities on Abraham Lincoln, has said "No one brings Abraham Lincoln to life more brilliantly. George Buss is a national treasure."

In order to present a historically accurate Lincoln, Buss has studied a significant number of primary source documents, and has visited and researched of plethora of sites in the Lincoln story. His frequent conversations with national pre-eminent Lincoln, Civil War, and presidential scholars have added real meaning to his interpretation,

A native of Freeport, Illinois, home of the second Lincoln-Douglas debate, Buss has immersed himself into the life and times of the role he plays. For this joint Lincoln Group of DC and Civil War Round Table of DC dinner event, George will transform into Lincoln as he discusses life as an Abraham Lincoln presenter. His website is www.GeorgeBecomesLincoln.com.

Other Lincoln Birthday Celebrations: At the Lincoln Memorial



(National Archives and Records Administrative photograph, Harry Truman Presidential Museum)

On April 12, 1948, President Harry Truman attended a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial in honor of President Lincoln's birthday. (In the photo, from L to R: W. Elkins Reed, Assistant to the Chairman of the ceremony; Gen. Harry Vaughan; Admiral William Leahy; President Truman; Mrs. Bess Truman; and Gen. U.S. Grant III.)

This year, as in years past, Lincoln's birthday will be remembered at a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial on February 12. This event is a longstanding tradition in Washington, one that historically has hosted national notables, as evidenced in the above photograph. These days presidential attendance is not likely but the Lincoln Group of DC will be there. The 2020 celebration will mark Lincoln's 211th birthday. A musical interlude will precede the noon ceremony which always features a recitation of the Gettysburg Address and a wreath-laying. Wreaths will be placed by or on behalf of the President, the Diplomatic Corps, the Secretary of the Interior, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Lincoln Birthday National Commemorative Committee, and hereditary and patriotic societies including your own Lincoln Group of DC. The program is sponsored by the Lincoln Birthday National Commemorative Committee, the National Park Service and the Military District of Washington. The ceremony is free to all. We offer two advisories: parking is often quite limited near the memorial and, if the weather is cold, attendees should dress warmly, very warmly – the marble setting is quite chilly.

Not in Washington on the 12th? If you will be in The Land of Lincoln AKA Illinois, the Benjamin P. Thomas Symposium, sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Association, takes place February 11-12 in Springfield. Carl Guarneri will give the opening address on his new book *Lincoln's Informer: Charles A. Dana* at 6 p.m. in the Old State Capitol. On the 12th, again at the Old State Capitol, 11 a.m. speakers will be Manisha Sinha ("Allies for Emancipation: Lincoln and the Abolitionists") and Jason Emerson ("Mary Lincoln for the Ages"). The annual Thomas F. Schwartz Luncheon and Lecture will be at 1 p.m. in the Atrium of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Speakers will be William E. Bartelt and Joshua A. Claybourn on their book *Abe's Youth: Shaping the Future President*. After lunch, Michael Burlingame will moderate a speakers' roundtable discussion with booksigning. The banquet that evening will be at the Presidential Ballroom of the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Springfield. The Honorable Ray LaHood, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, will be the guest speaker. All presentations are free and open to the public; however, there is a charge for both the luncheon (\$30) and banquet (\$85) with reservations required. Online reservations are available at www.abrahamlincolnassociation.org. If you are in the Lincoln birth state of **Kentucky**, National Park Service staff will hold a 10 a.m. wreath laying at the Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park in Hodgenville.

The Latest in Lincoln Scholarship

In Washington, students of Lincoln know that the month of March not only brings us nearer to spring but also to the annual edition of current Lincoln scholarship. The Abraham Lincoln Institute (ALI) and Ford's Theatre have scheduled the 23rd annual symposium for March 21 at Ford's. ALI provides free, ongoing education on the life, career, and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln as well as resources for educators. Tickets are now available online at both the ALI and Ford's Theatre websites.

Speakers and their topics for the event have been announced as follows:



**The Symposium Speakers: Top Row (left to right); Dr. Carl J. Guarneri and Dr. Joseph A. Fry
Second Row: (left to right): Dr. James M. Lundberg, William Bartelt and Jason Emerson**

Dr. Carl J. Guarneri – *Lincoln's Informer: Charles A. Dana and the Inside Story of the Union War*
Topic: "Dana's Lincoln: A War Department Insider's View of the President and Commander-in-Chief"

Carl Guarneri is Professor of History at Saint Mary's of California, where he has taught since 1979. Trained as an undergrad in European history, he came to American history with an interest in comparative and transnational approaches. Among his publications are a study of transatlantic utopian socialism, *The Utopian Alternative* (1991); a college-level textbook, *Global Americans* (2017); a collection of essays, *America Compared: American History in International Perspective* (1997, 2005); and *America in the World: United States History in Global Context* (2007). His current research interests include the American Civil War, the history of European settler societies in the Americas and Australia, and the global influence

And the symposium speakers will be discussing:



Top Row: Charles A. Dana, William Seward, Horace Greeley, Mary Todd Lincoln and (Bottom Row: The Young Abraham Lincoln)

of American reformers Edward Bellamy and Henry George. At Saint Mary's, Guarneri teaches a wide variety of courses in historical methods, world history, and American history from the colonial era to World War II.

Dr. Joseph A. Fry — *Lincoln, Seward, and U.S. Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era*

Topic: “An Unlikely Partnership: Lincoln, Seward, and Civil War Foreign Relations”

Joseph A. (Andy) Fry is distinguished professor of history emeritus at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV). He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 1970 and 1974 and his B.A. from Davis and Elkins College in 1969. He joined the UNLV faculty in 1975 and retired in December 2013. He taught courses on U.S. foreign relations, history of the American South after 1850, U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and the U.S. history survey. He has published six books. *Henry S. Sanford: Diplomacy and Business in Nineteenth Century America* (1982), *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (1992), *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (2002), *Debating Vietnam: Fulbright, Stennis, and Their Senate Hearings* (2006), *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie* (2015), and *Lincoln, Seward, and U.S. Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era* (2019).

Dr. James M. Lundberg — *Horace Greeley: Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*

Topic: “Horace Greeley’s Newsprint Nation”

Lundberg describes himself as a cultural and intellectual historian of the 19th-century United States with a particular interest in the history of media and journalism. His book on Greeley traces the career of one of 19th-century America's most confounding characters while at the same time telling a larger story about the problems of American nationalism and the limits of print communication in the Civil War era.

Mr. William E. Bartelt — *Abe's Youth: Shaping the Future President (with Joshua Claybourn)*

Topic: "Lincoln's Youth and the 1920s Indiana Lincoln Inquiry"

William E. "Bill" Bartelt is a Lincoln historian and author of *There I Grew Up: Remembering Abraham Lincoln's Indiana Youth* and other books. For many years Bartelt worked as a ranger and historian at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. He is a board member of the Abraham Lincoln Association and the Indiana Historical Society, and received the Indiana Historical Society's "Hoosier Historian" award in 2003.

Jason Emerson — *Mary Lincoln for the Ages*

Topic: "Mary Lincoln for the Ages: Why Lincoln's wife is not the woman we think we know"

Jason Emerson is a journalist and an independent historian who has been researching and writing about the Lincoln family for nearly 20 years. He is a former National Park Service park ranger at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, in Springfield, Illinois. Emerson's previous books include *Giant in the Shadows: The Life of Robert T. Lincoln*; *Mary Lincoln's Insanity Case: A Documentary History*; *The Madness of Mary Lincoln*, *The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln's Widow, as Revealed by Her Own Letters*; and *Lincoln the Inventor*.

Edna Greene Medford will be the 2020 Symposium Panel Chair.

Websites: Ford's Theatre – www.fords.org ALI – lincoln-institute.org

Note: No LGDC Dinner Meeting in March – Join Us at the Symposium

The John Elliff Scholarship

The Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia has been promoting Lincoln scholarship in the nation's capital since 1935. The mission of the Lincoln Group is to study, to educate, and to engage new generations in understanding the life and significance of our 16th president. The educational work of the Lincoln Group enjoyed a significant boost under the leadership of its most recent past president, Dr. John T. Elliff.

John was a scholar and a dear friend to those who shared his enthusiasm for all things Lincoln. The Board of the Lincoln Group decided in 2018 to further our mission and to honor John's memory with a program that unites his passion for Lincoln education and his love for Ford's Theatre. The Elliff Scholarship provides tuition for selected professional educators at the annual Ford's Theatre summer seminar where they will study techniques for teaching about Lincoln.

The Lincoln Group Board considers this critical to our mission. It also appropriately honors the memory of our late president, John Elliff, and builds a strategic relationship with Ford's Theatre, an iconic memorial to President Lincoln. It is our goal to make this scholarship fund a continual effort to raise support and money for Lincoln education. ***An Award announcement will be made in March every year at the Abraham Lincoln Institute in Ford's Theatre.*** The Lincoln Group is traditionally a co-sponsor of the Ford's Theatre event.

Please remember to make an annual gift to this cause. Make your check payable to LGDC and note that it is for the Elliff Scholarship. Send it to:

LGDC
PO Box 5676
Washington, D.C. 20016

Lincoln Group Members and Events

David J. Kent Gives Lincoln-Thomas Day Keynote Lecture



(Photograph courtesy of The Historical Society of Washington, DC and the National Park Service)

The above photograph shows Elizabeth Thomas with Civil War veterans at Ft. Stevens in 1911. That year she joined veterans of the Battle of Ft. Stevens for the dedication of a monument to President Lincoln at the site where he observed the conflict.

Abraham Lincoln took a long road to emancipation. That was the topic of Lincoln Group of DC Vice President David J. Kent's keynote presentation at the annual Lincoln-Thomas Day Commemoration held September 21, 2019.

Lincoln-Thomas Day is celebrated annually at Fort Stevens, part of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The event was initiated in 1924 by the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of America and is observed in conjunction with the anniversary of Lincoln signing the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. Lincoln-Thomas Day honors President Abraham Lincoln and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, who until her death in 1917 was the owner of the land that became Fort Stevens. Currently the day is sponsored by the Military Road School Preservation Trust and the National Park Service.

Lincoln's connection to Fort Stevens has become legendary. When Confederate General Jubal Early attacked Washington in July of 1864, Lincoln made the short trip from the Soldier's Home (now President Lincoln's Cottage) to Fort Stevens to observe the battle. Legend has it that Lincoln stood up on the ramparts and, after a Union surgeon was wounded by gunfire beside him, aide-de-camp Oliver Wendell Holmes yelled "Get down you fool" and pulled the president to safety.

Elizabeth Thomas's story is less well known. Thomas was a free black woman who owned the land seized by the Union army to build Fort Stevens. Many years later she recounts an occasion in September 1861; standing with her baby as her home is being demolished, a tall, slender man dressed in black approaches her and says "It is hard, but you shall reap a great reward." She believed that man to be Abraham Lincoln and retold the story for the rest of her long life.

In his presentation, David Kent traced in reverse Lincoln's road to the Emancipation Proclamation. From release of the preliminary proclamation in September 1862 we jump back to April of that year when Lincoln signed the DC Compensated Emancipation Act, freeing enslaved people in the District of Columbia. Jumping back thirteen more years we find Lincoln during his solo term in the U.S. Congress and his efforts to construct his own DC Emancipation bill; efforts that failed because of timing – substantial new lands had been added to the United States the year before as spoils of the Mexican War. Ah, but jump back yet another dozen years to the Lincoln-Stone protest over passage in Illinois of anti-abolitionist legislation. Lincoln explained that while slavery was "based on injustice and bad policy," he thought abolitionist doctrines increased rather than decreased the evils of slavery. More germane for Lincoln-Thomas Day, Lincoln also argued that while Congress did not have the authority to ban slavery in states where it existed, Congress did have the authority to end slavery in federal territories, including, and in particular, the District of Columbia. A long road to emancipation, but a consistent one.

The event was well attended and Kent's presentation well received. This was a great opportunity for the Lincoln Group of DC to reach out to the public and participate in an important, yet little known, commemoration of the intersecting lives of Abraham Lincoln and Elizabeth Thomas.

Another Interesting Event

For those interested in the assassination aspect of the Lincoln story, the Surratt Society has scheduled its 21st annual conference for April 3-5 in Clinton, MD. Entitled "Lincoln Assassination Studies: Snapshots from the Big Picture," the theme is described as a "potluck" of related topics that have grown out of the main event. Discussion subjects (all held on Saturday, April 4) range from Booth's fiancée, Lucy Hale; germ warfare (the Confederate yellow fever conspiracy); and a history of Ford's Theatre to life at Ft. Jefferson; trial commissioner Lew Wallace and the 1995 court case regarding the exhumation of Booth's body. Speakers include Leon Greene, Scott Schroeder, Dave Taylor, E. Lawrence Abel, our own Diane Putney and Francis Gorman. Mr. Gorman was the attorney for Baltimore's Green Mount Cemetery during the 1995 court case. The Saturday banquet will feature a musical evening in the form of "Special Blend," a barbershop quartet. Early registration for the symposium (thru March 25) is \$200 and \$225, thereafter. The symposium also offers two bus trips (separate registration required - \$85 and \$95 for the Saturday and Sunday tours, respectively) The Friday April 3 trip will explore Maritime Maryland including the Captain Salem Avery House and the London Town and Garden, both in Edgewater. The Sunday tour will travel south to Richmond to view the core exhibit "A People's Contest: Struggles for Nation and Freedom in Civil War America" at the new American Civil War Museum and then go on to Tuckahoe Plantation, boyhood home of Thomas Jefferson. Hotel arrangements have been made with the Colony South Hotel, 7401 Surratt's Road in

Clinton (5 minutes from the Surratt House) Additional information on the program is available on the Surratt Museum website Surrattmuseum.org.

**Meanwhile, at our December 2019
Holiday Luncheon**



In the photograph above on the left: These young Lincoln enthusiasts were guests of past president Karen Needles at the holiday lunch meeting on December 4, 2019. Pictured with Karen and Lincoln Group President John O'Brien are Aaron Kuhlman from the University of Pennsylvania, and Avery Efew from University of Memphis. They are working with Karen on the Lincoln Archives Digital Project (Web address: lincolnarchives.us)

An unexpected highlight of the December holiday meeting was attendance by a large number of past presidents. Our speaker was past president Ed Steers, who presented his work on correcting some misunderstandings of Lincoln that tend to persist in the literature. Steers attracted the other former presidents. Shown are (top, l to r) Charlie Doty, Ed Steers, John O'Brien; (seated: again, l to r) Joan Chaconas, Karen Needles, Edgar Russell. Steers spent most of his time presenting a strong case that Lincoln himself did write the famous 1864 letter to Mrs. Lydia Bixby, consoling her on the loss of her five sons in battle. (Photos provided by Lincoln Group President John O'Brien)

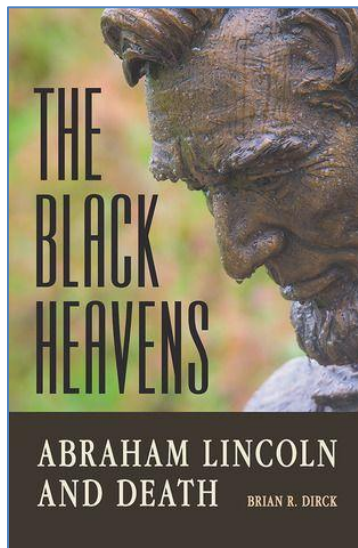
Did You Know?

In a recent poll of leading historians, Charles A. Dana was named among the “Twenty-Five Most Influential Civil War Figures You’ve Probably Never Heard of?” (This tidbit is from the University Press of Kansas write-up on Carl Guarneri’s *Lincoln’s Informer* [website: <https://kansaspres.ku.edu/978-0-7006-2846-9.html>]) Just one reason to attend the Lincoln seminar at Ford’s on March 21 – ensure you are in the know about Dana.

Book Reviews by David J. Kent

This continuing column reviews two books about Abraham Lincoln in each issue. One review will come from the recently released literature. The other review will take a look at an older but worthwhile read – a classic Lincoln tome or one of the more obscure books. The goal is to introduce, or reintroduce, the Lincoln literature to LGDC members, both for their enjoyment and to stimulate research ideas. Comments and feedback are welcome to davidkent.writer@gmail.com.

Recently Released



The Black Heavens: Abraham Lincoln and Death.
by Brian R. Dirck
(Southern Illinois University Press, 2019, 228 pp)

Death would seem to be a gloomy topic for a book. Sure, there have been plenty of books that examine Abraham Lincoln's assassination, and while the assassination is covered, it isn't the focus. Instead, author Brian Dirck (*Lincoln in Indiana*, *Lincoln the Lawyer*, and others) takes a unique look at how Lincoln handled the recurring death themes in his life. It seems death was nearly always close at hand. Opening chapters deal with the death of Lincoln's mother, and those of other neighbors and relatives, due to contaminated milk from cows eating snakeroot, a wild weed containing a deadly toxin. Dirck leads us through the recurring losses of those close to Lincoln – his son Eddy, his sister Sarah, Ann Rutledge, Henry Clay, John Brown, Elmer Ellsworth, Edward Baker, his son Willie, the myriad of battlefield deaths, even the ghosts of war via the spiritualism industry that gained strength during the course of the war. The author delves into how Lincoln struggled for control over his emotions with each death, his "meditation on the divine will," and the sense of duty that helped him survive his own anguish while serving as a pillar of support for a nation where every family felt the agony of war.

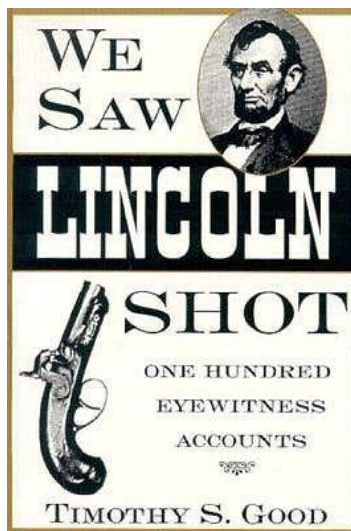
Did Lincoln see his mother's departure as a "Good Death"? Perhaps not. Perhaps this and other deaths steeled him for the many deaths to come. Perhaps Lincoln saw death as an inevitability. Or perhaps his views on death evolved over time from the desperate pain of the passing of loved ones to finding a higher purpose. His Gettysburg Address is remembered as much for its soaring rhetoric as its redefinition of the war as "a new birth of freedom." At times his second inaugural seems to resemble an orator's sermon from the pulpit. Perhaps a lifetime of death both

inoculates you from the pain of unfathomable death and opens those wartime deaths as windows into the meaning of life for us the living. Dirck examines these and other themes throughout the book, bringing the personal to the historical catalog of facts that many students of Lincoln will find familiar.

The book's title, by the way, comes from a speech Lincoln gave at an 1864 sanitary fair. He tells the audience that the war "has carried mourning to almost every home until it can almost be said that the 'heavens are hung in black.'" Dirck explains that Lincoln was borrowing from Shakespeare, the opening lines of Henry VI's funeral scene in which the new king mourns the early death of Henry V: "Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!" Lincoln, a huge fan of Shakespearean plays, especially his tragedies, certainly had many, and instilled many, black heavens.

Dirck does a wonderful job taking on a tough subject. Rather than depressing, he seeks to make the topic of death inspiring.

Classic Literature



We Saw Lincoln Shot: One Hundred Eyewitness Accounts
by Timothy S. Good
(University Press of Mississippi, 1995, 215 pp.)

An interesting collection of eyewitness accounts to the Lincoln assassination. The book is organized into four main sections: 1) The First Accounts, April-May 1865; 2) The Conspiracy Trial Accounts, May 1865; 3) The Transition, 1877-1908; and 4) The Last Accounts, 1909-1954.

Not surprisingly, the first accounts are by far the most historically accurate, although even they contain inconsistencies as the perceptions of each individual observer in the theater would be different depending on their location and immediate actions. One big discrepancy - when did Booth yell "sic semper tyrannis" and did he say anything else? Witness accounts don't all agree on this.

Accounts during the assassination conspiracy trial are also interesting because most would be under oath and therefore should be reliable. Here too, however, there are inconsistencies. But the real issues begin appearing in what the author calls "the transition" period many years after the event. Here we see insertion of "memories" of Booth breaking his leg as he jumped to the stage, something no immediate witness reported. We also see some indications that witnesses embellish their role in the proceedings. This embellishment, either through conscious or

unconscious attempts to boost their own stories or failing memories predominate the "Last Accounts," which were recorded in newspapers many decades after the event and usually after most collaborating (or non-collaborating) witnesses had passed away. [Many accounts are "the last living witness" despite there being many apparent witnesses still living; the actual last dying in 1954.] Reviewing the accounts is a good reminder that while immediate perceptions can be somewhat inconsistent, legends tend to grow with time as memories are replaced with fantasies. As such the book loses steam as it progresses into the final, and especially last, section where accounts are contradictory and unreliable. Still, it provides significant value as a primary (or at least secondary) resource to see how people reacted in person to an event that has been mythologized over the ensuing 150+ years.

Nance Legins-Costley – Grave of 1st Slave Freed by Lincoln Found

By Carl Adams

The location of Mrs. Nance Legins-Costley's grave, unknown for about 115 years, was revealed through an Undertaker's Notebook from 1892 in Peoria, Illinois. Mrs. Legins-Costley (circa December 1813 – April, 1892) was identified only as "...a slave girl named Nance" in the benchmark slavery case of *Bailey v Cromwell* in Abraham Lincoln's first Supreme Court session in 1841.

Nance's appeal through abolitionist David Bailey set the broad precedent that doomed "indentured servitude" in Illinois as a disguise for slavery just a few years later in 1845. Even though "indentures" were the legal term in Illinois, Nance's old master Major Nathaniel Cromwell, Jr. (1772 – 1836) from the slave state of Maryland apparently did not fully appreciate Illinois' sensitivity to slavery and he had represented Nance "...as his slave..." which is what caught the attention of the courts and Lincoln.

The undereducated Abraham Lincoln never thought of himself as a historian; however in his book *Lincoln at Peoria* (2008), Lewis E. Lehrman mentioned that "The force, the vigor, and the learning of Lincoln's intellect were much more evident at Peoria, (October 16, 1854), than ever before when Lincoln, the self-tutored historian of the American Founding, made his first dramatic appearance, (p. 103)."

About three-quarters through the Peoria speech, Lincoln referenced historical citations of which most of his audience were unaware and which would have surprised even history professors of the 1850s.

“(T)he fathers of the republic eschewed, and rejected it (slavery)...

In 1794, they prohibited an out-going slave trade...the taking of slaves FROM the United States to sell.

In 1798, they prohibited the bringing of slaves from Africa INTO the Mississippi Territory- ... the States of Mississippi and Alabama ...TEN YEARS before they had the authority to do the same thing as to the States existing at the adoption of the Constitution.

In 1800 they prohibited AMERICAN CITIZENS from trading in slaves between foreign countries - as from Africa to Brazil.

In 1803 they passed a law ... in restraint of the internal slave trade.

In 1807, in apparent hot haste, they passed the law, nearly a year in advance, to take effect the first day of 1808 ... prohibiting the African slave trade by heavy pecuniary and corporal penalties.

In 1820, ... they declared the trade piracy, and annexed to it the extreme penalty of death...

But NOW it is transformed into a "sacred right." (p. 318)

With little education, the question was -- where and when did Lincoln learn these historical facts? Herein is an important history lesson for all students of history: "Why study dates?" For the accurate sequence of events;

Lincoln's lesson: "...BEFORE the constitution, they (Founding Fathers) prohibited (slavery), its introduction into the Northwest Territory - The Ordinance of 1787 dated July 13, 1787 - the only country we owned, then free from slavery. At the framing and adoption of the Constitution," dated September 17, 1787, two months later. Lincoln underscored the importance of the dated sequence of events to bolster his arguments against national slavery.

Back to the question of where and when did Lincoln learn the history of the Founding Fathers and the answer was in the Library of Congress between 1847 and 1849, the only place it was thoroughly documented at that time. Fortunately for us, that was shortly before the "Great Fire" of 1851 in the Library of Congress when over 35,000 volumes were consumed including most of Thomas Jefferson's collection from 1815. Oh, the fateful fires of history!

If the Congressional Library in the Capitol Building was Lincoln's source for the national history of slavery; and since Lincoln did not attend any Illinois schools, what was his classroom for Illinois political history on slavery, but the precinct polling places during Illinois elections held each August. Lincoln's education there began August 1, 1831. *Lincoln Day by Day* shows: "Lincoln casts his first vote and gains reputation as storyteller. Voting place of Clary's Grove precinct, which included New Salem, is at John Camron's house..." Elections during non-Presidential election years usually have a lower voter turnout and Clary's Grove had a low density population anyway, so what did these men at the polls do all day, but "gains reputation as storyteller;" tell bawdy jokes about a farmers' daughter; fish stories, etc. However, many Illinois men took politics and candidates quite seriously enough to even fight over elections and some candidates offered free corn liquor in exchange for a vote. So discussions of candidates led to the political issues as well as, issues led to discussions of candidates and previous elections of popular or infamous names and, therefore, the past political history of the state.

One such a candidate in 1831 who garnered strong emotional feelings both pro and con was former Governor Edward Coles, that "damned abolitioner (*sic*)" running for Congress agin (*sic*) James Turney. As Lincoln listened and asked occasional questions, he would have learned all about the heated elections of 1822 thru 1824 and how Governor Coles sought to outlaw "indentured servitude" and allow "free N-----s" to live in Illinois. Coles in 1823 had been opposed by a then popular state senator, Thomas Cox of Springfield, who had again run for senator of Sangamon the year before and was still local. However "*Election Returns*" of 1830 showed Cox getting only 25 votes of 1,800 ballots, while old rival Edward Coles received less than 14% of the vote in 1831. These were the last elections for both candidates and both left the state the following year. Lincoln also voted against the abolitionist and voted for James Turney for Congress in 1831.

So 1831 was the beginning of Abraham Lincoln's political education, which prompted him to run in the election of 1832 and his virtual classroom was the process and effects of election canvases. On August 4, 1834, Lincoln was easily elected Sangamon County Representative to the Illinois General Assembly; he borrowed books from Attorney John T. Stuart and started reading law. In fall of 1835 a Virginian, John C. Vance, who subscribed to the *Washington Globe*, died leaving copies of Washington D.C. newspapers unclaimed in the New Salem Post Office and there is every reason to believe Postmaster Lincoln started reading the national capital's current events.

Finally, young Lincoln, age 22 thru 26, was applying his own college level education of which he had been deprived. And just in time, for the slavery serpent in the Garden of Eden was about to threaten the "domestic tranquility" of Congress with the fight over "the right of petition" argued by John Quincy Adams in behalf of petitioners for the abolition of slavery in 1836. The fuse to the "30 years war" of the United States was lit.

Sixty miles north of Springfield "a slave girl named Nance..." age 22, had blossomed into a woman and in 1836 a first time mother-to-be, but would have to remain unwed for another four years. Nance Legins-Cromwell, a slave by any other name, had learned her old master of ten years had made plans to leave Illinois for the slave state of Texas. Perhaps as a ploy to avoid the journey, Nance became pregnant with an unknown Black laborer, at least, that is what she wanted master Nathaniel Cromwell Jr. (1772-1836) to believe.

Major Nathan Cromwell during the War of 1812 in Maryland was a gunsmith turned gun merchant. His associate in Texas was Dr. Anson Jones who became the last President of the Republic of Texas; he urged Cromwell to come in haste. The Texas Revolution had begun and there was big opportunity there and money to be made, but he must not delay. Cromwell, a land speculator, knew he could get land cheap, as little as ten cents an acre. And just as Cromwell had tried to make money selling "stacks of arms" to Governor Reynolds during the Black Hawk War,

Cromwell wanted to supply weapons to the Texans, so he packed a steamer trunk full of guns, later inventoried by Bailey.

The Texas Revolution was no place for a young pregnant girl, slave or free borne, she would just be excess baggage, so Cromwell called on an existing business partner, David Bailey, a miller and storekeeper to make him an offer he couldn't refuse. David Bailey and Mrs. Sarah Brown Bailey, daughter of conductor of the Underground Railroad Rufus Brown of Chicago, knew the Cromwell family and Nance very well for years. Nathan Cromwell was the richest man in the county and Bailey already owed Cromwell a sizable amount of money, a situation which Nathan used to pressure the Baileys to take Nance into their store as servant and domicile Nance for one year. With this Nathan promised to return in one year to settle accounts and provide proof of his ownership of Nance in exchange for a promissory note of about \$400.00. Mrs. Bailey may have sensed that Cromwell at age 65 might not return and that she could then spirit Nance and her baby farther north and out of the reach of slavery laws. With no records; even the promissory note has disappeared; no one knows for certain.

Nathan Cromwell had been a rich client of John Todd Stuart since 1828 when Stuart represented him in an earlier case of *Cromwell v (Sheriff) John Taylor* over the lawful possession of Nance and her younger sister Dice in Springfield Circuit Court presided by Justice Samuel Lockwood. The case split Nance and Dice; Dice was awarded to John Taylor and Cromwell claimed Nance. So Abraham Lincoln had been introduced to all parties. Lincoln met Dice first as Lincoln surveyed Petersburg for John Taylor as early as 1834-35 and a little later when Lincoln apprenticed to John Stuart. The latter was the village attorney of Pekin who introduced Lincoln to the town trustees, Bailey and Cromwell, probably at Cromwell's boarding house. When Cromwell left Pekin in May, 1836, on a river boat for Texas, Nance was moved from Cromwell's home in Tremont nine miles to a log cabin on Bailey's property along the old Pekin-Peoria road, route 29. Cromwell's health failed during the trip and the news reached back to Pekin. Cromwell died the third week of July in St. Louis.

About ten years earlier back in Springfield, Nance had appealed her sale as an orphan to Cromwell in 1827 and again in 1828 to Justice Samuel Lockwood, who feared Nance age 13, would be kidnapped unless she was in a white male head of household. However, Justice Lockwood wrote the Illinois *habeas corpus* law in 1826, which provided that Nance be given of copy of the court's verdict as well as a verbal explanation. Nance still may have had the paperwork even though she could not read nor understand it. Regardless Nance considered Cromwell's death as her emancipation and while still on friendly terms with Bailey, she insisted she was no longer a slave and needed to be paid wages to support her baby. All concerned then realized this meant going back to court.

Lincoln's legal education required him to know and understand the supreme laws of the land including the U.S. as well as the Illinois State Constitution, the similarities and the differences of such as well as the first law of the county, (which applied to both federal and state), the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 with the article six provisions prohibiting "Neither slavery nor involuntary Servitude shall exist...". Staring at the core of the issue, Lincoln saw the simplest argument for the Supreme Court case of *Bailey v Cromwell* 1841. If Lincoln had any doubts of the case importance -- a year after he became a lawyer, Lincoln was working on legal papers for John Stuart's case of *Dr. William Cromwell v John Taylor* (1838), revealing the fate of Dice and Nance. The same week Lincoln delivered his first important speech "Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions" following the murder of abolitionist Rev. E.P. Lovejoy, "the first shots of the Civil War," at the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield.

A full year after Lincoln returned from Congress in spring, 1851, Lincoln was back on the circuit when the court's business created a "case reunion" of sorts. Lincoln was at the new Tazewell Courthouse in Pekin in April, 1851; David Bailey was also in court, case of *Doolittle v Bailey*, and surprisingly Nance was also there. The case was *People v Nance* tried for resisting arrest. The court record showed Nance had had an altercation with an Irish servant named Gibbons, probably over something one of Nance's children had done; it was a lower court ruling settled with a "peace bond". Historically another lawyer was there: James Haines, who years later as President of the "Old Settlers Society," identified Nance as the "first slave freed by Abraham Lincoln."

Shortly before Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous "Peoria Speech" something very subtle changed on the court circuit route. Before Congress, Lincoln had always passed through Tazewell from south to north, passing Nance's cabin with his head busy with the court's business, not paying much attention. After Congress, the route changed taking Lincoln through Pekin from north to south; the pleasant ride along the Illinois River Road from Peoria to Pekin left Lincoln's head fresh and clear coming first to David Bailey's corn field, then Bailey's home and another hundred yards past Nance's cabin. Pausing to reflect Lincoln could see Nance's family: Amanda age 18 and a

pretty reflection of her mother; Eliza, 16, and her first son William, 13, each emancipated along with their mother over twelve years before. Bill was already taking care of white men's horses. Black Ben was Nance's husband and then there was Mary, 12; son "Dote", 9; Hattie about 7 and Eliza Ann, 4 and Nance also pregnant again with James Willis Costley. In Washington Lincoln had heard the alarming claim that slaves cannot be freed immediately; they won't be able to care for themselves; they'll all die! You will kill them all! Mrs. Nance Legins-Costley was freed suddenly ... and she seemed to be doing just fine.

About the Author:



Carl Adams is a life-long student of Lincoln in his home state of Illinois. Mr. Adams' curiosity became obsessive when he discovered no biographer knew anything about "...a slave girl named Nance" from Lincoln's first slavery case. Genealogy has revealed that Carl is a relative of conductors of the Underground Railroad. So a combination of history and genealogy led him to discover the "Life and Times of Mrs. Nancy Legins-Costley (1813-1892), The First Slave Freed by A. Lincoln." A short story on the subject, "Trials of Nance," is available on YouTube. A leading authority on Nance, Mr. Adams conducted extensive research for his publication on this subject. For this article, he supplemented that knowledge and documentation with information from the online *Lincoln Log* and *Lincoln Day by Day* (reference from the Abraham Lincoln Association), online sources for the Peoria speech and the Lehrer tome. (*Editor's Note: Carl has advised that the undertaker's records show the burial for Nance at "the old settlers cemetery" in Peoria. At this time full details on the burial, such as exact grave site by row and plot number, have not been located but the search for more information goes on.*)

**Sidney Blumenthal: Lincoln's Words Today
"Fresher and More Acute than Ever"**

On September 10, 2019, Sidney Blumenthal gave a presentation at the National Archives on Volume III of his Lincoln biography, *All the Powers of Earth: The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln, 1856-1860*. This volume covers "the gathering storm leading to Lincoln's election as President." The speaker began his program by noting the importance of learning about Lincoln, emphasizing that to do so today "is even more urgent." He noted that "Lincoln's words sound fresher and more acute than ever." To bring home this point, Blumenthal quoted Lincoln's "House Divided Speech" – "if we could first know *where* we are and *whither* we are tending, we could then better judge *what* to do and *how* to do it."

The talk began on a rather unexpected topic: "Lincoln movies;" however, the audience soon understood Blumenthal's reason for doing so. He admitted to the audience that his favorite Lincoln movie is "Abraham

Lincoln, Vampire Hunter.” His reason for this selection: “a rail-splitter with an ax to grind is hard to top and the facts cannot be disputed.” More importantly, the speaker finds no other film that “depicts the scale of the menace Lincoln had to face.” Of course, the speaker was then compelled to discuss whether Lincoln actually killed vampires. He advised that the term “vampire” was often used by abolitionists to refer to slavery. In fact, William Lloyd Garrison in a July 4, 1829 speech “called for a campaign to crush the vampire that is feeding upon our life’s blood.” According to Blumenthal, “Abraham Lincoln needed ‘all the powers of earth’ to drive a stake into the heart of this vampire.” The phrase “all the powers of earth” is Lincoln’s own. To deal with “slave power, the country’s greatest concentration of wealth and power,” he would “need to create new instruments of power each step of the way, whether in the Illinois legislature or the Union Army.” According to Blumenthal, Lincoln had to summon “all the powers of earth” to defeat slavery and preserve our democracy. He doubts that any other candidate would have been successful in doing so.

What aroused Lincoln in 1854 from relative obscurity (one term in Congress and a small claims debt who wanted credit for sponsoring the first transcontinental railroad, a structure that would cross the Great Plains over land not yet organized into states. Douglas had cut a deal to wipe out the Missouri Compromise and to potentially open up the new territory to slavery. He supported the concept of “popular sovereignty” or letting the people decide whether to be slave or free. Lincoln joined the resistance to this approach. Meanwhile, the slavery issue had caused political parties to “crack” and in doing so further empowered the south. Lincoln still thought of himself as a Whig, a party already split into north and south, with a sizable contingent supporting anti-immigrant sentiment (the Know Nothing Party or the American party). He definitely knew “he was not a Know Nothing.” In fact, he stated he would “prefer emigrating to a country with no pretense for loving liberty, Russia, for instance.” What party would be a good fit for Lincoln?

Meanwhile, state by state, “fragile coalitions of Republicans arose.” In 1856 Lincoln found himself on a train to Bloomington for the founding convention for an Illinois Republican party. En route he was looking for “old Whigs” and was “radiant” when he found two. This was a turbulent period in the nation’s history. Within just a ten-day period proslavery forces sacked free Lawrence, Kansas; in Washington Senator Sumner was nearly caned to death while sitting at his desk after delivering remarks against what had happened in Kansas. The Bloomington convention also occurred within this period. Lincoln wrote the platform, acted as peacemaker and delivered the keynote address, the only Lincoln speech never recorded and known as the “lost speech.” Blumenthal believes that “the speech was probably ‘lost’ because Lincoln did not want the text published; the denunciation of slave power was too radical for the time.”

In presidential politics Buchanan (D) won the 1856 election narrowly over the Republican; still election results showed a future for Republicans in Illinois. At the celebratory banquet in December of that year, Lincoln was already looking ahead two years to the next Senate contest in the state. His keynote address encompassed the theme that “the government rests in public opinion.” This speech was the beginning of his campaign for the Senate slot. Lincoln emphasized that “traditionally such national opinion supported equality of men but that in the most recent election one party worked to substitute this opinion with one that stated slavery was right.” Meanwhile, in Washington, on the eve of the new administration, the newly elected Buchanan wanted this term to begin with the issuance of a pending Supreme Court case (*Dred Scott v Sanford*) “to settle the issue of slavery in the territories for once and for all.” Scott, a slave, arguing that because he had lived in a free state he was free, had sued his owner. Buchanan lobbied for a quick decision in the case. Two days after the inauguration, Roger Taney issued that decision, ruling that “all men are created equal does not mean the whole human family – the unhappy black race were separated from the whites by indelible marks and were never thought of or spoken of except as property. Blacks had no rights which the whites were bound to respect.” The decision “potentially opened the territories to slavery and rendered illegal the central idea of the Republican Party. Congress could not prohibit slavery anywhere.”

Not surprisingly, Stephen Douglas defended the decision and, referencing the “Black Republican Party,” attacked Lincoln, his opponent for the Senate. He argued that Lincoln’s “true agenda” was amalgamation or the sexually mixing of races. In a June 26, 1857 speech Lincoln disputed both Douglas and Taney. He described the reality of slave captivity, stating that “all the powers of earth seem to be rapidly combining against him (the slave), making the possibility of his escape more complete than it is. The country as well as the slave was held captive.” Lincoln had “to find an invention or power of his own to destroy ... these powers.” Blumenthal emphasized that the imagery of the captured slave as described in this speech was not abstract. Rather, Lincoln drew from a little known personal

experience. He had intervened just weeks earlier to rescue a captured black man, one who was to be sold as a slave. This was a free man, John Shelby, who did not have his appropriate credentials to confirm his free status when he landed as a steamboat hand in New Orleans. Arrested, Shelby lacked the funds to pay his fines and was to be sold as a slave. Lincoln eventually came to the rescue by buying the man's freedom. Blumenthal labeled Lincoln's action as "his first act of emancipation."

Lincoln was becoming more vocal in expressing his beliefs in public. Blumenthal told of his acceptance speech for the Senate nomination, a speech which supporters urged him not to give; the content was considered by at least one colleague as "ahead of its time." We now know this as the "House Divided Speech." Again, paying particular attention to Lincoln's *words*, the speaker read the following excerpt from this pivotal June 1858 speech:

"We are now far into the *fifth* year, since a policy was initiated, with the *avowed* object, and *confident* promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only, *not ceased*, but has *constantly augmented*. In my opinion, it *will* not cease, until a *crisis* shall have been reached, and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved* -- I do not expect the house to *fall* -- but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other. Either the *opponents* of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its *advocates* will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in *all* the States, *old* as well as *new* -- *North* as well as *South*."

Lincoln also publically commented on the subject of nativism. On July 4 of the same year he not only stated that "immigrants were our equal in all things" but also "carried these thoughts further to a condemnation of slavery." He explained how "nativism and racism were being used to create despotism." Lincoln noted that these were the arguments used by "kings for enslaving people throughout the ages."

Blumenthal continued to track Lincoln's path to the presidency as the pace of historical events quickened. He described the Lincoln-Douglas debates (in one debate Lincoln said slavery was wrong 33 times) and the senatorial election (Lincoln won the popular vote but lost the election due to gerrymandered legislative districts). Lincoln's reaction to this setback was "the fight must go on!" He foresaw that another explosion would occur – and it did: John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry. In January 1859 Lincoln met with a group of Republicans on strategy – how to keep the party afloat. When talk turned to potential Republican candidates for president, Lincoln proclaimed "why not run me? I can be nominated, I can be elected and I can run the government." In February *The Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial – "The Presidency – Abraham Lincoln" - listing the potential candidate's virtues and ability to win swing states. A "neutral site" for the Republican Convention was chosen (to not only avoid home state advantages for candidates Seward, Chase and Bates but also to chose a location with "no serious candidate of its own"). The "neutral site" chosen was Chicago. No one was thinking of a possible Lincoln candidacy except the Illinois representative, Norman Judd, who was the one proposing the idea of a neutral site. Other events quickly followed: Cooper Union "where Lincoln's appearance gave credence to his words," the convention roll call and the nomination. Lincoln did not campaign – "the splintered Democratic Party made his election inevitable."

Lincoln won the election with less than 40 percent of the vote. The next day in the South Carolina capital, "the Stars and Stripes came down while the states' rights and palmetto flags rose to take their place." On December 20, delegates to the secession convention assembled in Charleston to sign the secession document. They denounced the election of Lincoln as President, "a man whose opinions and purposes were hostile to slavery." They would "not entrust him to govern because he had proclaimed the government could not exist half slave and half free." Per Blumenthal, "Lincoln's fiery trial was about to begin."

Blumenthal advised that his talk was an overview of his book, just as this write-up is an overview of his September talk. His hour or so presentation gives us much food for thought. The issues of racism and immigration still abound in our national theatre. No wonder Blumenthal spoke of the relevance of Lincoln's words today and the urgency to learn about Lincoln. Many today would do well to listen to this advice.

(Editor's note: Blumenthal talk is available for viewing on the Archives' website).