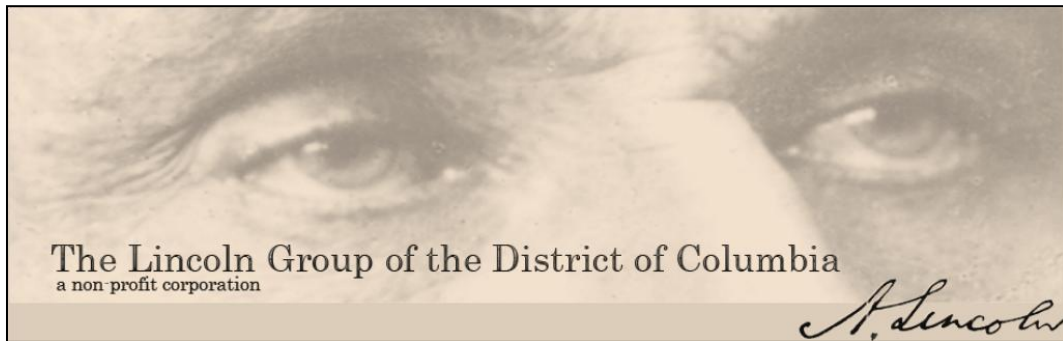
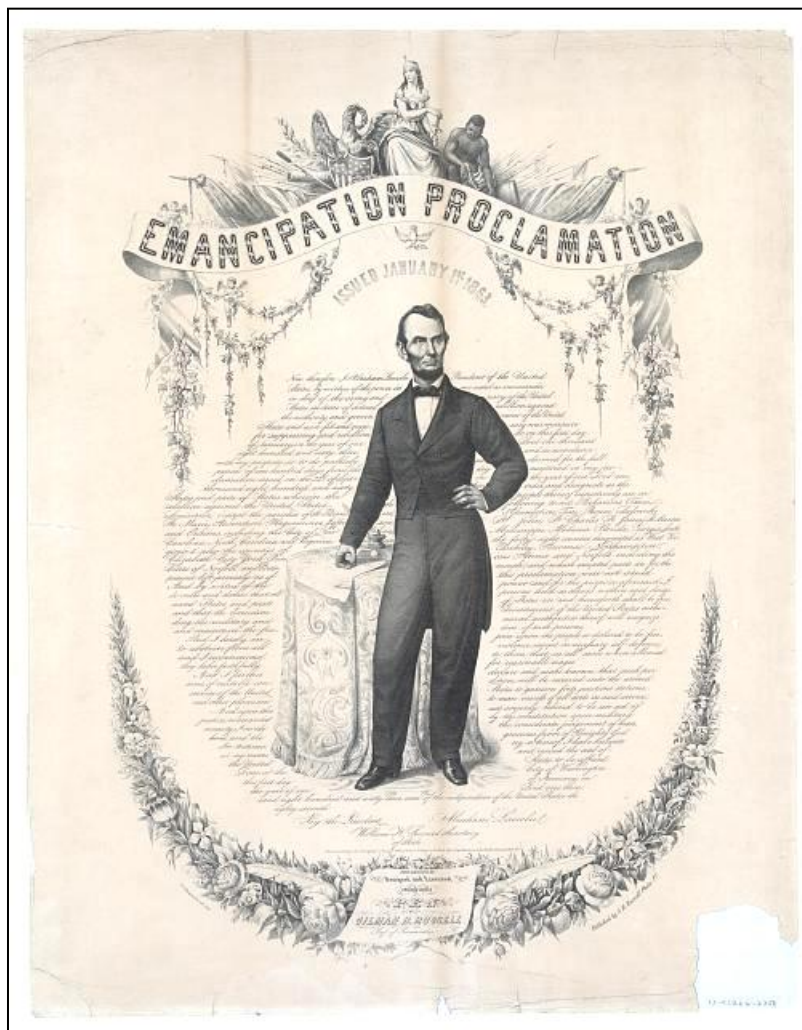


THE LINCOLNIAN



VOLUME XXXVII

Number 2



The Road to Emancipation

Some have labeled Lincoln a reluctant emancipator. David Kent disagrees with this opinion and, in his article on page 7, he explains why. (*Graphic from the Library of Congress Collection*)

The Emancipation Statue



“Emancipation Monument, Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C. – Thomas Ball, Sculptor” is the title of the stereographic card (J.F. Jarvis, 135 Pennsylvania Avenue was the publisher, sometime between 1876 and 1910) shown above. An accompanying notation advised that the monument was cast in Munich, Germany in 1875, shipped to the U.S. and dedicated in 1876) (From the Library of Congress Collection)

Update: The Emancipation Statue, subject of controversy in recent months, remains standing. The fencing that encircled the monument for part of the summer is down. There has been no action on the Congressional bill introduced to remove the statue. The monument’s ultimate fate remains unknown. Meanwhile, Lincoln Group member Rod Ross has offered his own unique solution to resolve this monumental controversy. (See page 12)

In This Edition

The Road to Emancipation – pages 1, 7-10
The Emancipation Statue – pages 2, 12-13
December Dinner Program – page 3
Upcoming 2021 Programs – pages 4-6
Other Lincoln-related Events - pages 6-7
New Lincoln Statue – pages 10-12
David Kent Book Reviews – pages 14-16
Remembering Ed Bearss – pages 16-18
The Better Angels – pages 18-19
A Tale of Thanksgiving – pages 19-22

Upcoming Lincoln Group Programs

Our December Program



Ted Widmer

Our December dinner meeting will spotlight **Ted Widmer** as he discusses his recent publication *Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2020, 606 pp.). His work describes “Lincoln’s Odyssey,” his journey from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, the White House and the presidency. Richard Moe, former president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, reviewed the book for *The Washington Post* (April 26, 2020, page B7) and rated it “superb. Moe emphasizes that the book describes more than just the story of the journey itself but as a one that “introduced Lincoln to the nation” and provided the opportunity to prepare himself for the crisis awaiting him. The reviewer notes the rarity of Widmer’s accomplishment: a historian discovering an episode in Lincoln’s life that provides new insights into his story. Turn to David Kent’s review in this issue of *The Lincolnian* (page 14) in which he describes the work as one of the best Lincoln books of the year and furnishes examples of the adventures facing Lincoln on his journey. *Lincoln on the Verge* confirms that Widmer is a storyteller of extraordinary talents. His expertise and extensive research on the subject should provide for an interesting evening in December.

Ted Widmer is a Distinguished Lecturer at Macaulay Honor College of the City University of New York. He writes actively for about American history in *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*, where he helped create the Disunion feature about the Civil War. He has taught for or directed research centers at Harvard and Brown University, Washington College, and the Library of Congress.

And in the New Year ...

The following speakers have been scheduled for dinner program meetings during the spring of 2021:

In January: Dr. Curt Fields as General Grant



Dr. Curt Fields will appear as General Ulysses Grant on January 19, 2021, discussing the general's relationship with Abraham Lincoln. An active living historian, Dr. Fields has portrayed General Grant at numerous battle reenactments and at the 150th anniversary of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. A career educator, he taught for eight years at the junior and senior high school levels and then served 25 years as a high school administrator. He has been an adjunct college professor and now is an educational consultant. He also speaks on leadership as demonstrated and advocated by General Grant. He is the same height and body style as Grant and therefore represents a realistic portrayal of the general.

In February: Michael Burlingame



February marks our annual dinner event in honor of Lincoln's birthday and, as has become our custom, will be held jointly with the Civil War Round Table of DC. Our speaker, **Michael Burlingame**, will present a program on a meeting of African American leaders with Lincoln in 1862; the topic was colonization. Burlingame, the holder of the Chancellor Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at University of Illinois Springfield, is the author of *Abraham Lincoln: A Life, The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, and *Lincoln and the Civil War*, as well as the editor of many collections of Lincoln primary source materials. A graduate of Princeton University and Johns Hopkins University, he taught at Connecticut College in New London for many years before joining the faculty at University of Illinois Springfield in 2009. The Lincoln Group welcomes back Mr. Burlingame who has been a dinner program presenter numerous times in the past.

In April: Richard Striner: Summoned to Glory



Richard Striner's latest work, *Summoned to Glory: The Audacious Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Rowman and Littlefield publishers, 2020, 560 pp.) will be the subject of his April presentation. He is the author of *Father Abraham: Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery* (Oxford), *Lincoln's Way: How Six Great Presidents Created American Power* and many other works on American history. He recently retired after serving 30 years as a professor at Washington College. He resides in Pasadena, Maryland.

In May: Jason Emerson on Mary Todd Lincoln



Jason Emerson is a journalist and an independent historian who has been researching and writing about the Lincoln family for nearly 20 years. His most recent book, *Mary Lincoln for the Ages*, (Southern Illinois University Press) was released in April 2019. The book, part narrative historical inquiry and part analytical bibliography, reexamines nearly every word written about her, revealing how views about her have evolved over the years opening the door for new questions and debates about her legacy. Emerson is a former National Park Service park ranger at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, in Springfield, Illinois. His 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*.

The Abraham Lincoln Institute is held each March so we have not scheduled a speaker for that month. We are hoping health conditions permit a tour/picnic in June.

Come Zoom with us! The Lincoln Group continues to hold virtual dinner meetings via Zoom and will use this format for as long as health issues persist. We expect that this status will continue for the spring of 2021. Please keep your eyes on your email box for notices on any changes in schedules, news of additional events and other updates. Additional information on these speakers and their topics will be furnished closer to the actual meeting dates. We welcome suggestions for additional speakers and topics for presentation at future meetings. Please share your ideas with your Lincoln Group officers – let us know who you would like to hear.

Other Lincoln-Related Events

Many of our members are used to traveling to Gettysburg each November to take part in the Lincoln Forum's symposium and Dedication Day activities. This year history buffs can obtain their annual November Lincoln fix virtually from the comfort of their homes.

The Lincoln Forum: This year, like so many of our activities, that program has gone virtual, taking place on Saturday, November 14, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. There is no extra charge for the symposium; however, one must be a member of the Forum to participate – so if you are not currently a member, sign up on the Forum's website (thelincolnforum.org) to attend the symposium. The link to the Zoom program will be sent to members the night before the event.

This year's program will include the following highlights:

- **Ted Widmer**, author of *Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington* (in conversation with **Harold Holzer**)
- **Edward Achorn**, author of *Every Drop of Blood: The Momentous Second Inauguration of Abraham Lincoln* (in conversation with **Frank Williams**)
- **“American Moses:” Harriet Tubman**, a conversation with Catherine Clinton, Manisha Sinha and Katherine Harris (the latter as moderator and reenactor – she has perfected a highly proclaimed living history tribute to Tubman)
- **H.W. Brands** on his book, *The Zealot and the Emancipator: John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and the Struggle for American Freedom*

- A panel discussing “**How Should We Teach Lincoln and the Civil War?**” (with William C. Davis, Caroline E. Janney, Tamika Nunley, Craig Symonds and Jonathan White, moderator)
- Awarding of **The Lincoln Form Book Prize**.

The Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania also has turned to the virtual for the 157th Dedication Day anniversary event on November 19. The Fellowship is working to present an online event that date – visit the group’s website (www.lincolnfellowship.org) and Facebook page closer to the date for event details. The Fellowship also will hold its annual meeting that evening.

Abraham Lincoln’s Long Road to Emancipation by David J. Kent

(Editor’s note: On September 5, 2020, Lincoln Group Vice President David J. Kent gave an outstanding presentation at the Rock Creek Round Table on “Lincoln’s Long Road to Emancipation.” David graciously agreed to prepare a written version of that presentation to share with all members via [The Lincolnian](#).)

Abraham Lincoln has been called “The Great Emancipator” for the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War. The Proclamation, and his role in promoting the 13th Amendment so eloquently displayed in the Steven Spielberg’s movie, *Lincoln*, secured Lincoln’s recognition for ending slavery in America. And yet, some have argued that Lincoln was “forced into glory” and that he was a reluctant emancipator. These claims are without merit. In fact, Lincoln was an active emancipator and completely consistent in his beliefs about slavery and how to overcome the constraints on its removal from American society.

Lincoln first encountered slavery as a child in Kentucky. While only seven years old when the family moved to the free state of Indiana—partly on account of slavery—Lincoln was already aware that black people were treated differently than white people. The Baptist church was splitting into pro-slavery and anti-slavery branches; his family adamantly followed the northern anti-slavery route. Though still very young, he knew that slavery existed and it was somehow wrong.

Jump forward to 1837. Twenty-eight-year-old Lincoln is now a state legislator in Illinois. As with many free states, Illinois was being pressured by slaveholding states to ban abolitionist societies and criminalize anti-slavery “agitation.” The bill passes overwhelmingly, 95-6. Lincoln is one of the six and decides to write a protest to explain his vote. He and fellow legislator Dan Stone lay out their beliefs:

- 1) The institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy.
- 2) But, abolition doctrines increase rather than abate its evils.
- 3) Congress has no power to interfere with slavery in the states.
- 4) But, Congress does have the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.

These four principles lay out Lincoln's positions on "the peculiar institution." He remains consistent with these principles his entire career. In short, he believes slavery is immoral and ought to be ended. The question is how to accomplish this goal. He felt that the abolitionist tendency to demonize slaveowners put them on the defensive, thus making it harder to get them to free the men and women they held in slavery. Additionally, abolitionists wanted Congress to arbitrarily ban slavery in the states in which it still existed, an unconstitutional act that would invite a pro-slavery Supreme Court to strike down the legislation and damage other attempts to convince slaveholding states to end enslavement. But, Lincoln said, Congress does have authority over federal territories such as the District of Columbia and the substantial acquired lands from the Louisiana Purchase and the war with Mexico. These principles guided his path forward.

In 1849 Lincoln was a U.S. Congressman. While most freshman congressmen are instructed to sit in the back of the room, keep their mouth shut, and vote the way they are told, Lincoln decided to draft a bill to emancipate the slaves in the District of Columbia, consistent with his beliefs a dozen years before in Illinois. Initial support for the bill fell through after slaveholding powers pressured fellow legislators, so he was forced to withdraw the bill before introduction. His first attempted toppled domino.

Flash forward another baker's dozen years. As President in 1862, Lincoln worked with Congress to produce and sign the DC Compensated Emancipation Act. The Act immediately freed approximately 3,100 enslaved African Americans in the District. The first domino had finally fallen. But Lincoln didn't stop there. He repeatedly encouraged the four border states (Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware) — slave states that had remained in the Union—to voluntarily enact state laws ending slavery, similar to what had just been done in the District. Lincoln even persuaded Congress to cover the cost of owners' compensation. Despite several attempts by Lincoln to convince them, the border states rejected his efforts. These dominos remained standing.

Lincoln still wasn't finished. Over the summer of 1862 he continued to explore every option he could find; more dominos. In August he responded to influential New York *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley with a now famous public letter outlining how he would save the Union. "If I could save the union without freeing any slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that." These words have been twisted by some to suggest Lincoln only reluctantly freed the slaves, but the opposite is true. Lincoln had already drafted the Emancipation Proclamation, holding only for a Union victory to release it. His letter to Greeley prepared the public to accept his actions.

When he did release the Proclamation, it was entirely consistent with his views expressed years ago in Illinois. Congress, he said then, was constitutionally restricted from banning slavery in the states in which it existed. But, he argued, the Constitution gave him, solely in his role as Commander-in-Chief during a time of insurrection, the power to take whatever steps were deemed a military necessity to protect and save the Union. This is why the Proclamation is rather dry language; it's a legal document, a military order, because that is the only authority Lincoln had at his disposal. By freeing the slaves only in those areas in rebellion—the border states the remaining in the Union could not be touched because of the Constitution—Lincoln could remove assistance enslaved men were forcibly providing to Confederate troops while increasing the



(Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Shown above is "The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation Before the Cabinet," painted by Francis B. Carpenter, engraved by Alexander Hay Ritchie. The work shows a reenactment of Lincoln signing the proclamation on July 22, 1862 as painted by Carpenter at the White House in 1864. From left to right are: Secretary of War Stanton, Secretary of the Treasury Chase, President Lincoln, Secretary of the Navy Welles, Secretary of the Interior Smith, Secretary of Secretary of State Seward, Postmaster General Blair and Attorney General Bates. The original painting is in the collection of the United States Senate.

the number of Union troops available to fight. Indeed, up to 50,000 men held in bondage were freed immediately, with many more gaining their freedom as they escaped into encroaching Union lines. Meanwhile, close to 200,000 African American men, many of them having newly gained their freedom, fought gallantly for the Union Army and Navy. Not only had more dominos fallen, they had begun exerting greater force.

Again, Lincoln wasn't finished. During 1863 and 1864 he continued to tip dominos as Union armies regained control of southern states. He sent former Senator Andrew Johnson, the only member of Congress to remain with the Union when his state seceded, back to Tennessee as a military governor. Lincoln did the same with North Carolina and Louisiana, slowly pushing to reconstruct them back into the Union, yet always working every option within the constraints of the Constitution. Understanding that the Emancipation Proclamation would become moot once the war ended, Lincoln worked with Congress to amend the Constitution. The Senate passed the bill on April 8, 1864. Shortly thereafter the House voted in the majority, but short of the two-thirds needed to pass an amendment, setting the stage for Spielberg's epic film. Lincoln worked

throughout 1864 both for his own prospects and the success of Republicans in the November elections. Finally successful pushing the House over the line on January 31, 1865, Lincoln knocked over another domino in his quest for permanent African American freedom.

Sadly, the last domino he tried to tip would become the rationale for his murder. On April 11, 1865, Lincoln made a speech from the White House window on reconstruction, using Louisiana as an example because it was furthest along the process. Lincoln had privately encouraged the state to include African American suffrage in its new constitution, which it failed to do. On this fateful night Lincoln publicly asserted for the first time. “It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man,” he said, adding that “I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.” John Wilkes Booth was among the crowd on the White House lawn who heard these words that would stir him to assassinate Lincoln four days later.

Abraham Lincoln deserves the sobriquet “Great Emancipator.” He was not reluctant in any way. Indeed, he was utterly consistent in this lifelong belief that slavery was wrong but the Constitution prohibited Congress from banning it where it existed. Congress could, however, ban slavery in the District of Columbia and federal territories in accordance with the Constitution, which it did under Lincoln. All of the northern states ended slavery within their boundaries by state law, so Lincoln encouraged the four border states to do the same (Maryland would become the first border state to end slavery in November 1864, followed by Missouri in January 1865). The Emancipation Proclamation was also consistent with Lincoln’s unique powers as Commander-in-Chief in time of war. Permanent emancipation occurred by amending the Constitution, again, consistent with the founding document and the principles outlined by Lincoln back in Illinois.

The Emancipation Proclamation could have occurred only during a time of war, and Lincoln used it as one more tool to set the dominos in motion toward ultimate freedom for all. And as Lincoln understood, each domino toppling can exert enough power to tip an even bigger domino, growing in intensity and power until great things happen. Each of us has the power to exert our forces for the greater good. I encourage all of us to do so.

Washington Welcomes a New Lincoln Statue

On September 22 Washington’s African American Civil War Museum held a virtual dedication ceremony for a new statue of Abraham Lincoln. A project that was about 18 months in the making, the statue depicts Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation. The statue was designed to fit outside the museum’s new building, placing the work directly across the street from the “Spirit of Freedom” monument – the memorial honoring the over 200,000 United States Colored Troops who, freed from enslavement, took up arms for freedom – and the Wall of Honor enumerating each of their names. Thus, the statue will serve as a teaching tool to connect Lincoln’s signing of the document and the enlistment and service of the Color Troops. At the ceremony Museum Director Frank Smith noted that the date of the ceremony not only reflected the signing of the proclamation but also the battle at Antietam. He reminded viewers that the



In the photo on the left, Frank Smith, Director of the African American Civil War Museum, and Lincoln Group President John O'Brien pose with a model of the new Lincoln statue in front of a model of the new museum building. On the right is a larger image of the model depicting Lincoln's signing the Emancipation Proclamation.

proclamation was to take effect January 1, 1863; thus, the South was given 100 days to come back into the fold of the Union. The museum plans an outdoor dedication once health conditions permit. The Lincoln Group of DC made a donation towards the funding of the statue and our President John O'Brien gave the following remarks at the dedication ceremony:

Lincoln and Antietam

(Comments by John O'Brien at the dedication of the Lincoln Statue at the African American Civil War Museum, September 22, 2020)

This is the day in 1862 when Abraham Lincoln told his cabinet and the world that he would proclaim emancipation on January 1. He had accepted their advice in August when they suggested that making the announcement after a military victory would make it more effective. Five days after Gen. George McClellan defeated Lee at Antietam, the moment had arrived.

Lincoln had determined a year earlier that he would commit himself to ending American slavery. He began with a proposal to the Union slaveholding states that they voluntarily end the institution with compensation from the federal government. They rejected his offer in July. That was when Lincoln wrote the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. He then prepared his profoundly racist country for this momentous act by publicly assuring them that whatever he would do "about slavery and the negro race" would be necessary to save the Union. Now, fresh after the victory at Antietam, Lincoln declared his intention to proclaim emancipation in the

rebellious states if they would not stop fighting. He offered that they could keep slavery if they would resume their place in the Union. This offer too was rejected.

Lincoln portrayed his proclamation as a military necessity that would deprive the confederacy of the labor of enslaved people. Though he was in desperate need of additional troops, this proclamation did not yet allow Black men to join the army. McClellan was his most popular general and he did not support emancipation. Lincoln had been warned that white soldiers would not fight alongside Negroes and it would be disastrous if his top general would defy him. But when McClellan failed to destroy the rebel army after Antietam, Lincoln felt the support of the country to fire him in November.

With the way now clear, Lincoln added an important clause to the final Emancipation Proclamation. He invited Black men to serve in the army. Freedom was not only granted, but the way was now open for men of African descent to demonstrate their right to equality with, as Frederick Douglass demanded, the brass “U.S.” on their uniforms. **Freedom and equality** are the legacies of the document that Lincoln signed on January 1, 1863. Lincoln understood better than his countrymen that **freedom and equality** were necessary to “save the Union,” and to make it worth saving for all time.

The Emancipation Statue in DC’s Lincoln Park

By Rod Ross

Editor Wendy Swanson has graciously allowed me to do a follow-up piece to my review in the last issue of *The Lincolnian* of an 1885 volume by William G. Eliot, *The Story of Archer Alexander: From Slavery to Freedom*. Alexander is the African American whose crouching figure is next to that of Lincoln in the Emancipation Statue. Until recently, the statue was encircled with protective fencing as was the nearby Lincoln Park statue dedicated to Mary McLeod Bethune. My purpose in writing is to suggest a way of resolving the current dispute as to the Emancipation Statue’s “disposition.”

Thanks to historical sleuthing by historians Jonathan W. White and Scott A. Sandage, the American public has become aware of an 1876 submission by Frederick Douglass to the editor of the *National Republican* voicing the hope that another statue could be erected in Lincoln Park to complement the “admirable” Emancipation Statue — “. . . a monument representing the negro, not couchant on his knees like a four-footed animal, but erect on his feet like a man.” While Douglas most likely envisioned that this second statue would portray an African American male, I don’t think he would be troubled by the fact that the companion statue, dedicated in 1974 thanks to efforts of the National Council of Negro Woman, honors an African American woman. To turn the two statues into an ensemble, the National Park Service repositioned the Emancipation Statue so that Lincoln would face to the east, i.e., looking directly at the Bethune Statue. Originally, back in 1876, Lincoln faced the west, towards the U.S. Capitol a mile to the west.

In the wake of the George Floyd murder, there has been much debate in America as to which commemorative statues should remain in place and which should be pulled down. Who would have thought that the Emancipation Statue in Lincoln Park would have almost succumbed to the same fate as the Judiciary Square statue to Confederate General Albert Pike? Various proposals have been put forward as to how to address the presumed racism inherent in the composition of the Emancipation Statue. On July 1, 2020, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton introduced HR 7466, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to remove the “Emancipation Monument” from Lincoln Park and arrange for its donation to a museum “or other similar entity” with the understanding that the statue could not be placed out of doors by the recipient.

Earlier this year in a feature in the online *History News Network* of George Washington University, the British researcher Jenny Woodley eloquently explained why the two Lincoln Park statues should be considered in relationship to one another. In follow-up to that idea, I propose that the Emancipation Statue be repositioned. Instead of being torn down, or shipped off to a museum or have yet another statue erected in the park, the Emancipation Statue should be turned 90 degrees, so that it is Archer Alexander — and not Lincoln — who faces Bethune. In coming months the state of Florida will replace one of its two statues in U.S. Capitol Statuary Hall Collection with a sculpture honoring Bethune. Archer Alexander, through the new arrangement, would be gazing into the future, a future what would see national recognition given to a notable African American woman.

The full Douglass quotation can be found in the June 2020 *Smithsonian* White-Sandage article “What Frederick Douglass had to say about monuments” — in the form of “A Suggestion” addressed to the editor of the *National Republican*:

“ Sir: Admirable as is the monument by Mr. Ball in Lincoln park, it does not, as it seems to me, tell the whole truth, and perhaps no one monument could be made to tell the whole truth of any subject which it might be designed to illustrate. The mere act of breaking the negro’s chains was the act of Abraham Lincoln, and is beautiful expressed in this monument. But the act by which the negro was made a citizen of the United States and invested with the elective franchise was pre-eminently the act of President U.S. Grant, and this is nowhere seen in the Lincoln monument. The negro here, though rising, is still on his knees and nude. What I want to see before I die is a monument representing the negro, not couchant on his knees like a four-footed animal, but erect on his feet like a man. There is room in Lincoln Park for another monument and I throw out thus suggestion to the end that it make be taken up and acted upon. Frederick Douglass.”

The Lincolnian is a quarterly publication of the
Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia.

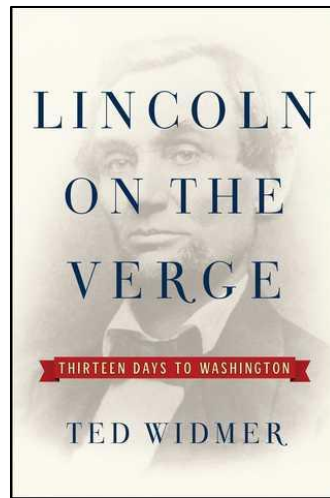
Direct correspondence to:
Wendy Swanson, Editor
6200 Wilson Blvd. #906
Falls Church, VA 22044
www.lincolngroup.org

Note: The Lincoln Group invites readers to submit articles for publication in The Lincolnian, articles which address today's national challenges by drawing on the wisdom, statesmanship, humanity, and leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

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 davidjkent.writer@gmail.com.

Recently Released



Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington

by Ted Widmer

(Simon & Schuster, 2020, 607 pp)

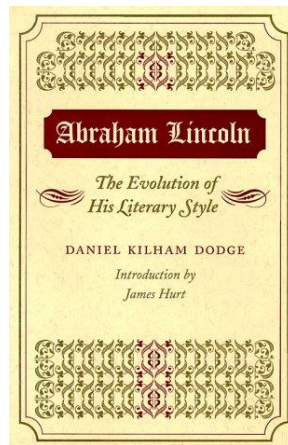
Distinguished lecturer and prolific writer Ted Widmer pens what is certainly one of the best Lincoln books of the year. The focus is on the thirteen days Abraham Lincoln traveled from Springfield, Illinois to Washington in time for his first inauguration. All told, Lincoln traveled 1,904 miles, taking 18 different railway lines through eight states, engaging in adventures and misadventures along the way. Widmer captures all of these events, both the well known and the obscure.

For example, many have heard of the assassination attempt planned for Lincoln's passage through Baltimore. Widmer keeps us apprised of the developments as the Lincoln party learned of them, and the thrilling nighttime diversion from schedule to ensure his safe arrival in the District. Less well known was the unattended carpet bag containing a grenade that would have destroyed the entire car, fortuitously discovered just before the presidential train left Cincinnati. Or the over-exuberance of welcoming festivities at Alliance, Ohio, when a celebratory cannon fired too close to the car, showering a less than happy, but subsequently uninjured, Mary Lincoln with broken glass. [Another spectator would blow off his own hand when a cannon fired prematurely outside of Cleveland.] Or the coincidental occurrence of John Wilkes Booth staying

in Albany when Lincoln arrived, having traveled a nearly identical route between there and Rochester, New York, touring a series of Shakespearean tragedies.

Wary of entering into southern territory—seven states had already seceded from the Union by this time—the Lincoln entourage kept to a winding route through the northern states. Each stop provides fodder for Widmer to regale the reader with the historical significance of the city in addition to Lincoln’s activities. Upstate New York, for example, allows him to meet 12-year-old Grace Bedell, who had encouraged him to grow a beard, while Rochester was the home of Frederick Douglass, who may (or may not, we don’t know for sure) have greeted the train during Lincoln’s brief stop). It turns out Cincinnati was a center of scientific excellence while simultaneously also known as “Porkopolis” for its massive number of pig slaughterhouses. The anecdotes are endless. While the focus is on Lincoln’s travels, the book interweaves thousands of small details and flashbacks relevant to Lincoln’s life. The author does this in a breezy storytelling style that is as interesting as it is informative. I highly recommend this book for all to read.

Classic Literature



Abraham Lincoln: The Evolution of His Literary Style
by Daniel Kilham Dodge
(University of Illinois Press, 1900/2000, 58 pp.)

Originally published in 1900, this small but informative book was reissued in 2000 with an introduction by James Hurt as the first volume in what evolved into the University of Illinois Press. Its diminutive length should not be considered a reflection of its value. Daniel Dodge was born in 1863 and was somewhat of a prodigy, who earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University when only 23 years of age, then went on to chair the English department at the University of Illinois. In his book, Dodge delves deeply into Lincoln's literary style and growth. From relatively unsophisticated doggerel early in his career to emotionally lifting literary gems such as the Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural, Dodge notes that Lincoln's "intellect continually broadened and his sensibilities were quickened." As president, the knowledge that he was speaking to the country "informed his important papers with dignity and impressiveness." Along the way, Dodge digs into Lincoln's hits and misses in lectures he gave (e.g., temperance address, discoveries and inventions, notes on a law lecture), his attempts to write poetry (My childhood's

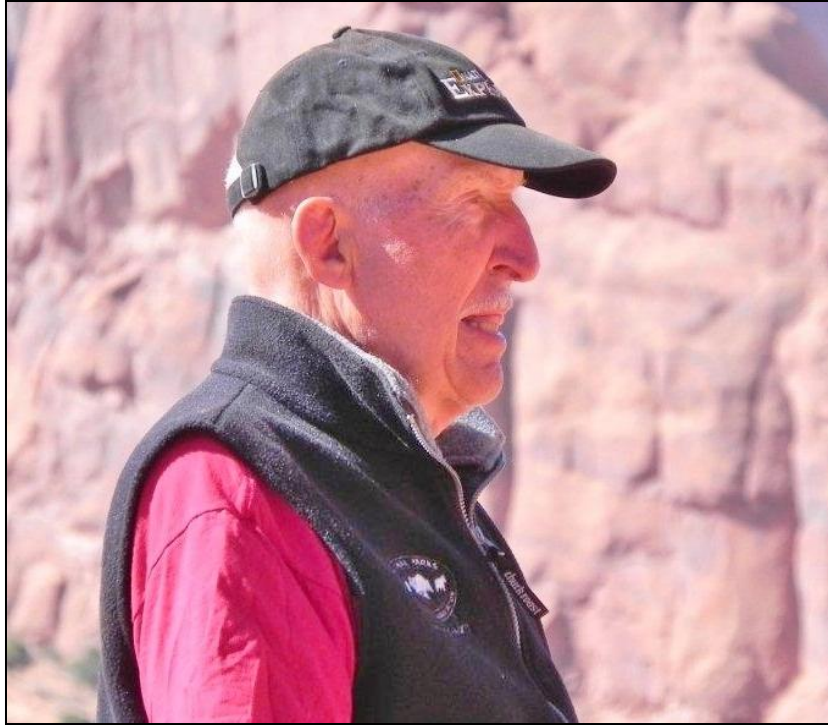
home I see again), and even his love of Shakespeare and critique of theatrical performances.

Dodge's book predates the availability of many of the state papers on which researchers examine today. He relies much on notable early biographies such as those by Herndon, Lamon, and Nicolay and Hay. Thus, the analysis was done without the benefit of the 1950s Basler "Collected Works" series or such luminary biographers as Beveridge, Donald, Holzer, or Burlingame. Later works have examined Lincoln's rhetorical style, his humor, and literary evolution, but Dodge provides an exceptionally well-informed, interesting, and well-written early appraisal that should be on the reading list of any student of Lincoln.

The Lincoln Group Remembers Ed Bearss: A Life Well-Lived

The Lincoln Group and the history community as a whole lost an icon with the passing at age 97 of our long-time member Ed Bearss on September 15. Ed was an original, a born storyteller; his lectures and tours were not only jammed packed with information but were entertaining as well. His lectures on the battlefields not only educated his tour groups but also other visitors who by chance were in the immediate area. One morning as he gave his narrative on Gettysburg's Little Round Top, the crowd around him grew larger and larger as others in the vicinity, attracted by his booming voice, gathered around him. As Ed ended his remarks, a gentleman in the crowd stated "I feel like I just heard the 'sermon on the mount.'" If a gathering included youngsters with questions, Ed always took extra time to share his knowledge with them in order to enhance an interest in history. While more closely associated with generals such as Grant, Sherman and Lee, Ed did not forget Lincoln. On one my first "Ed" tours, one that journeyed "out west," we visited sites highlighting Lincoln's Kentucky beginnings. During a meal on that tour some of us wondered whether there might be a tour available that followed Lincoln from his Kentucky birthplace to his farewell in Springfield as he left that home for the last time. Not long thereafter the Smithsonian offered just such a tour, led by Ed; travelers not only followed Lincoln through his developmental years but also gained a primer on log cabins of all variations. One of Ed's themes on the tour was that Thomas Lincoln was no slouch and the case he built was convincing. Not until years later did we learn that our meal-time discussion had provided the spark that resulted in the tour. That was Ed – he always worked to weave the special interests of his group members into his tours and events. He taught his students well – they have gone on to author books and articles, lead tours themselves and become leaders in historic and preservation groups. He was one of a kind; we will not see his like again. We were fortunate to gain from his expertise and will remember his teachings whenever we journey through the trails of history. He enriched our lives, captured our imagination and inspired us to make a difference.

In 1992 Lincoln Group officers Clark Evans and Carolyn Quadarella approached Ed to see if he would be willing to join the Lincoln Group Board of Governors. He not only joined the board but for many years served as its chairman. At the time although Ed backed many groups, he offered to his name to only a few. Ed did not take his Lincoln Group duties lightly – he spoke before



Ed Bearss on tour in New Mexico

the group, led us on tours, and even in the days of the annual auction offered a private tour as an item up for bid. Needless to say, that tour served as a great fundraiser for the group. Here former Lincoln Group President Carolyn Quadarella (with some assistance, I'm sure, from her husband Paul Kallina) offers "Recollections of Ed:"

I first met Ed Bearss in the "Rethinking Grant" seminar offered by the Smithsonian in 1985, the 100th anniversary of Grant's death. I had never met an historian like Ed before and, as I soon found out, never would. His knowledge of the Civil War and actually of all wars was phenomenal. I asked him once how he prepared for his talks. He said soaking in a bath going over his notes. As one might say, "Whatever floats your boat."

But Ed wasn't all dates and facts. He had a humorous side – Ed style. If he felt you could take his teasing on the bus trips and seminars, he would do it. However, he was always very sensitive to be sure his intended victim could take it and not be offended. Among his favorite teasing was when he proclaimed that certain couples were "courting" on his tours (which in several cases was indeed true). At the time, I was very much into General James Longstreet or as my husband put it, my latest "reclamation project." So Ed, picking up on that, frequently called me Mrs. Longstreet on the tours. He had pet names for others as well – and they suited them to the proverbial "T".

What I saw as time went on was just how comfortable Ed was in his own skin. As we all know he was badly injured in WWII and spent 24 months in hospitals for treatment. It left him with a permanent lack of use of one arm. Ed forged ahead, but if he needed help, he was never too proud to accept it. He knew he had some limitations, but that was part of the whole package.

In remembering Ed's connection to our Lincoln Group, the word that comes first and foremost to mind is generous. Ed was always very generous in giving his time to our group whether as the guest speaker at our dinners or the tours he frequently gave to us in conjunction with our annual picnics. Ed really enjoyed the camaraderie he felt with the Lincoln Group. He loved the cocktail hour of our meetings which were so wonderfully enhanced with the homemade pate and bread made by our late member Bob Denny. Many of our members were regulars on his tours and lectures through the Smithsonian or other historical organizations, and we formed a significant part of what became known as the Bearss Brigade on these tours. One of the highlights of his year and ours was his annual birthday celebration, organized by *Lincolnian* editor Wendy Swanson, starting on Ed's 69th birthday and continuing through to his 97th. His birthday "present" eventually became donations to Civil War organizations that needed funds and funds they indeed got from Ed's birthday, donations which ran into thousands of dollars. What I can say of Ed was that he lived life to the fullest – enjoying his many friends, his wonderful birthday celebrations, and above all sharing his historical knowledge with all who came across his path. We will miss Ed and his wry humor but above all we will miss a great historian and dear friend.

The Better Angels

Author Robert C. Plumb recently spoke on his book *The Better Angels: Five Women Who Changed Civil War America* (Potomac Books, 2020) at a Montgomery County library event. He started his talk admitting, as one would suspect, that the "better angels" terminology comes from Lincoln. Moreover, four of the five women he spotlights come as no surprise. Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Clara Barton and Julia Ward Howe would appear on just about everyone's list of prominent women of that time period. Their actions and achievements are well known – Tubman for leading enslaved persons to freedom; Harriet Beecher Stowe for her anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Clara Barton for furnishing supplies and support to Civil War soldiers and for founding the American affiliate of the Red Cross; and Julia Ward Howe for our second national anthem, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The final woman profiled by Plumb is familiar to many but not to all. She is Sarah Josepha Hale who served as the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* and is sometimes called "The Mother of Thanksgiving." During his talk, Plumb placed considerable emphasis on the characteristics that set these ladies apart and which enabled them to accomplish the achievements for which they are known.

The first of the characteristics described by Plumb is *persistence*. Yes, these ladies persisted. Despite barriers and rejections, all kept pressing forward, attempting different approaches when needed. Despite the dangers involved, Tubman personally guided many escaped slaves to freedom. Stowe met publishing deadlines for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – submitting 40 chapters in all, a chapter per month to *The National Era*. She missed only two deadlines but the delays whetted readers' appetites for the next installment. Post-publication, she responded to criticism of the novel with a response entitled *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Howe had to endure "a confining domestic life" and a husband who sought to restrict her pursuits. Barton just kept pushing throughout her life – as a teacher establishing a school with high academic standards for both men and women; earning pay equal to that of men; delivering supplies to the troops during the Civil War despite the resistance of the quartermaster; and spending four years of lobbying and

meetings to establish the American Red Cross. Hale spent four decades as editor of a national publication and campaigned endlessly for a national day of thanksgiving.

Faith had an important role in the lives of all five women and such was evident in their writings. Likewise, all possessed **courage**, displaying strength in pursuing their objectives. Two of the five, of course, are known for doing so while facing physical danger: Barton on the battlefield and Tubman as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Plumb's fourth characteristic is **self-assurance**, a trait which he describes as being "built on incremental successes." Stowe and Hale had earlier writing achievements before success as a novelist and editor, respectively. Barton, tested in a variety of positions, at times was resented by male coworkers; successful missions built Tubman's confidence. For Howe, such assurance was longer in coming. All had to display **assertiveness** to achieve but Barton, Tubman and Hale "shone" in this area. Tubman carried a pistol while traveling on the Underground Railroad; as a teacher, Barton spoke up for equal pay; and Hale guided a national publication. The women were **Persuasive**, communicating their convictions through written and spoken words as well as deeds.

Compassion guided the women throughout their lives and enabled them to turn actions into deeds. All were **resourceful**. To guide slaves to freedom, Tubman used "trails, waterways and stars for guidance." Barton utilized senior level leaders to break through government red tape. Hale enlisted a group of talented writers to ensure four decades of success for her publication. **Discipline** (or per Plumb, "self-discipline") and **Sovereignty**, or "free from external control" rounded out the author's list for success. The women set ambitious goals and never gave up until they succeeded. Howe struggled the most to gain autonomy. She had a controlling husband and was "most productive when apart from him." She had a separate room at the Willard when she wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." She was only free to pursue her dreams once he died. Barton was self-sufficient from early adulthood and the author described Tubman as "emancipated in all respects." Stowe gained respect as an accomplished writer and Hale, widowed young and sole support of five children, became the most diligent editor of her period. Characteristics not out of date for those who want to make a difference in today's society.

And a Tale of Thanksgiving

The Better Angels highlights the story of Sarah Josepha Hale, dubbed "The Mother of Thanksgiving." With that holiday rapidly approaching, the time is appropriate to review her effort to make that holiday national. Plumb describes Hale as one who "tried to strike a balance between the nation's two regions," e.g., North and South, in her early writings and for also making a case for emancipation. Her publisher wanted "no part of politics or mention of war." As a result, circulation of her publication dropped during the war – Northern readers turned to other publications for information on the conflict and Southern readers found it "tainted by its Yankee location." To show no sectional bias, she focused on more neutral stories such as the establishment of Vassar and Mount Vernon preservation. She sought means to foster unification and one such initiative was to foster the idea of a national day of thanksgiving. She wrote editorials and hundreds of letters to leaders in support of the idea. States began days of thanksgiving but Hale wanted such a holiday to exist on a national level and regarding this idea, she *persisted*. She advanced the idea to U.S. Presidents, beginning with Zachary Taylor who did not respond. Likewise, Presidents Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan did not act on her correspondence. Finally, on September 28, 1863, she wrote Abraham Lincoln:

The Request

Sir- Permit me, as Editress of the "Lady's Book", to request a few minutes of your precious time, while laying before you a subject of deep interest to myself and -- as I trust -- even to the President of our Republic, of some importance. This subject is to have the day of our annual Thanksgiving made a National and fixed Union Festival.

You may have observed that, for some years past, there has been an increasing interest felt in our land to have the Thanksgiving held on the same day, in all the States; it now needs National recognition and authoritative fixation, only, to become permanently, an American custom and institution.

Enclosed are three papers (being printed these are easily read) which will make the idea and its progress clear and show also the popularity of the plan.

For the last fifteen years I have set forth this idea in the "Lady's Book", and placed the papers before the Governors of all the States and Territories -- also I have sent these to our Ministers abroad, and our Missionaries to the heathen -- and commanders in the Navy. From the recipients I have received, uniformly the most kind approval. Two of these letters, one from Governor (now General) Banks and one from Governor Morgan are enclosed; both gentlemen as you will see, have nobly aided to bring about the desired Thanksgiving Union.

But I find there are obstacles not possible to be overcome without legislative aid -- that each State should, by statute, make it obligatory on the Governor to appoint the last Thursday of November, annually, as Thanksgiving Day; -- or, as this way would require years to be realized, it has occurred to me that a proclamation from the President of the United States would be the best, surest and most fitting method of National appointment.

I have written to my friend, Hon. Wm. H. Seward, and requested him to confer with President Lincoln on this subject As the President of the United States has the power of appointments for the District of Columbia and the Territories; also for the Army and Navy and all American citizens abroad who claim protection from the U. S. Flag -- could he not, with right as well as duty, issue his proclamation for a Day of National Thanksgiving for all the above classes of persons? And would it not be fitting and patriotic for him to appeal to the Governors of all the States, inviting and commending these to unite in issuing proclamations for the last Thursday in November as the Day of Thanksgiving for the people of each State? Thus the great Union Festival of America would be established.

Now the purpose of this letter is to entreat President Lincoln to put forth his Proclamation, appointing the last Thursday in November (which falls this year on the 26th) as the National Thanksgiving for all those classes of people who are under the National Government particularly, and commending this Union Thanksgiving to each State Executive: thus, by the noble example and action of the President of the United States, the permanency and unity of our Great American Festival of Thanksgiving would be forever secured.

An immediate proclamation would be necessary, so as to reach all the States in season for State appointments, also to anticipate the early appointments by Governors.

Excuse the liberty I have taken

With profound respect

Yrs truly

Sarah Josepha Hale,

Editress of the "Lady's Book"

The response: Unlike his predecessors, Lincoln did not ignore Hale's letter; in fact, his response was immediate. The proclamation below established the precedent for our national day of Thanksgiving.

Washington, D.C.
October 3, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

*William H. Seward,
Secretary of State*

Last year *The Washington Post* (November 24, 1919 edition, page B2) gave readers a Thanksgiving gift in the form of article entitled “Thanksgiving’s origin as a unifying holiday in a time of political division.” The author was Ted Widmer (yes, our December speaker) and the article described some of the behind the scenes actions at the White House surrounding Lincoln’s Thanksgiving proclamation.

In her letter to Lincoln advocating a national Thanksgiving, Sarah Josepha Hale advised that she had written her friend William Seward requesting him “to confer with Lincoln on the subject.” And concur he did – and more! In fact, Widmer reminds readers that much of the proclamation was “written by Seward.” The author describes the close partnership between Lincoln and Seward as one including “acts of writing” and emphasizes that “better angels” terminology in Lincoln’s first inaugural address originally came from “a thought expressed by Seward.” Many Southern leaders, opposed to Hale’s anti-slavery writings and “turned off with the idea of a holiday featuring Northern ties (e.g., pilgrims in New England)”, dismissed her idea of a national day of thanksgiving. However, the summer of 1863 had seen two major Union victories – Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The timing was right for a proclamation to “give thanks on behalf of the entire American people, including those at war against the United States.”

Frederick Seward, in his father’s memoirs, described the subsequent conversation on the subject. Visiting the President at work, Seward suggested in that the South always was accusing the United States of “stealing away the rights of the States,” they “at least should steal something valuable.” Lincoln agreed with the idea of the theft of “the right to name Thanksgiving Day ... as one national holiday all over the country.” Ever the lawyer, Lincoln added the holiday was “a custom, not a law,” so, as President, he had “as good a right to thank God as a Governor.” Ever prepared, Seward already had written an outline of such a proclamation, one which he and Lincoln worked on together “to perfect.” The proclamation “importantly celebrates one nation, not two.” Widmer hears echoes of the proclamation in later memorable speeches by Lincoln. For instance, the Gettysburg Address language “it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this” repeats the “fit and proper” wording in the proclamation. Likewise, Lincoln’s second inaugural address reiterates thoughts and words from the proclamation: assistance to “the widows and orphans,” “heal the wounds of the nation,” and “bind up the nation’s wounds.”

Last November Widmer described the holiday for giving thanks as “arriving just when we need it – our most unifying holiday at one of the most divisive moments in recent American history.” Considering the events of the last twelve months, the words of forgiveness penned by Lincoln and Seward are even more relevant than a year ago. Sarah Josepha Hale – and Lincoln - had a vision of a national holiday not only as a day for giving thanks but also as a time for reflection. As we gather to give thanks this year, may we too take a moment for reflection.