

THE LINCOLNIAN



VOLUME XXXVI

Number 2



Congress formally dedicated the Lincoln Room on May 1, 2019. Here Representative Darin LaHood addresses the audience. Please see the article inside this edition for details on the ceremony. (Bruce Guthrie photograph)

Lincoln Room Dedicated!



Speakers at the May 1, 2019 dedication of the Lincoln Room included, from left to right, Jerry Weller (President of the Illinois State Society), Representative Darin LaHood (IL -18), Linda Elliff, John O'Brien (President of the Lincoln Group of DC), and Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-8). They stand in front of the Lincoln Room. (Bruce Guthrie photograph)

In This Edition

Lincoln Room Dedication: pages 1 – 4

Upcoming Events: September dinner: James Loewen: pp. 5-6; October dinner: Thomas Bogar: pp. 6-7

Lincoln-Thomas Day event: page 6

List of Other 2019/20 Dinner Programs: page 7

Report on Tour of Manassas Battlefield Park: pp 8-9

Emancipation Documents Program: pp. 9-10; DC Emancipation Act: pp. 11-14

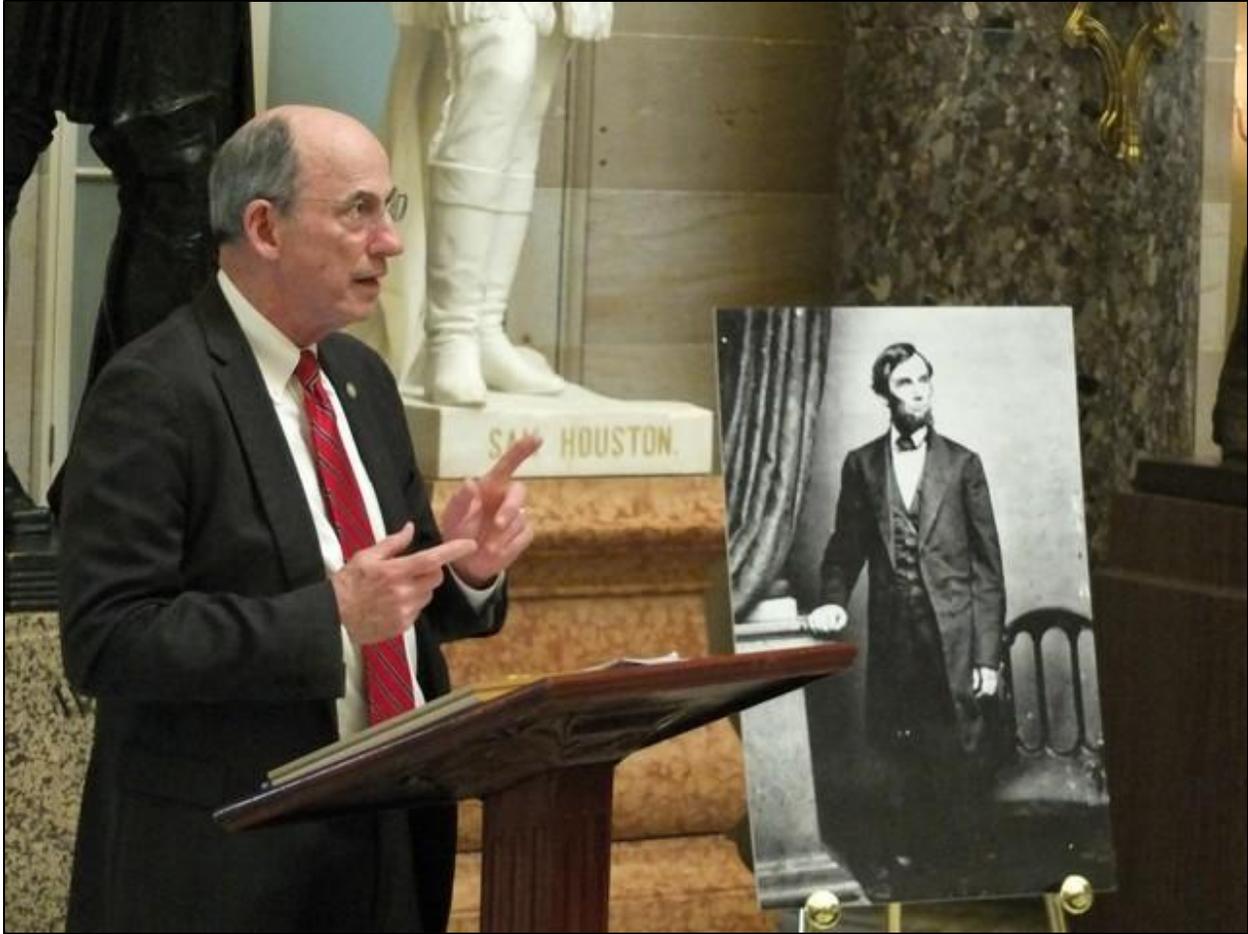
Passings of Note: page 14

Book Reviews by David J. Kent: pp. 15-17

Spying for the Union: pp 18-19

Assassination Tale: page 17 September Archives Event: page 19

Library of Congress Online Letter Collections: p. 20



Lincoln Group President John O'Brien speaks at the Lincoln Room Dedication Ceremony. He noted that Lincoln was now honored on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. (Bruce Guthrie photograph)

Mission accomplished! Over the past year we have written of the efforts to make permanent the designation of a “Lincoln Room” in the U.S. Capitol. The site, the old mail room or post office, is behind the spot occupied by Lincoln’s desk in what is now Statuary Hall. Now that designation is official. On May 1, 2019, Congress officially dedicated the room to Abraham Lincoln. Our late president John T. Elliff had worked with the Illinois State Society with a goal of seeing a bi-partisan resolution to have the space renamed in honor of Lincoln. Late last year the House of Representatives unanimously passed House Resolution 1063, a proposal to make permanent the designation of the “Lincoln Lounge.”

At the May 1 ceremony, Congressmen Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-8) and Darin LaHood (IL-18) formally unveiled the Lincoln Room. Representative Krishnamoorthi expressed gratitude at having had “the opportunity to have partnered with Congressman LaHood to commemorate President Lincoln’s service in Congress through renaming the room in his honor.” He found it “especially fitting that we should rename this particular room for President Lincoln as the room was formerly the House post office during Lincoln’s time in Congress, a crucial gathering place where President Lincoln built some of the friendships with which helped guide our country



Lincoln Group members and other guests visit the Lincoln Room (Bruce Guthrie photograph)

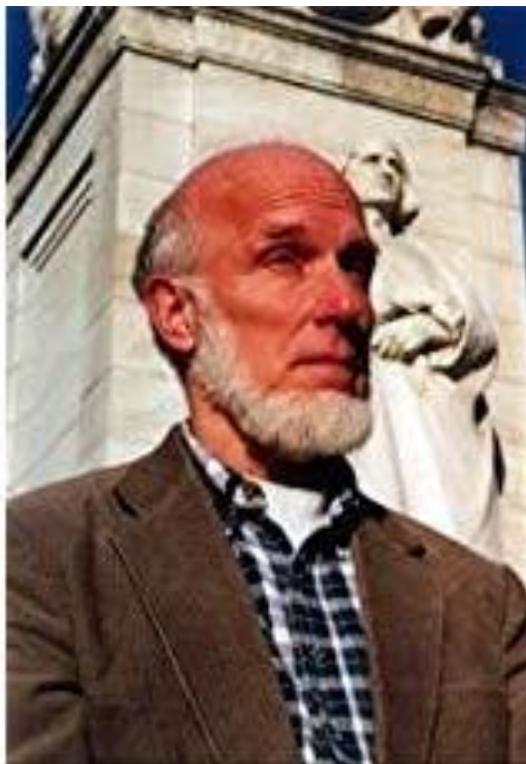
through its darkest years.” Representative LaHood noted that he represented the same district Abraham Lincoln did during his only term in Congress. He added that “during my time in Congress, I have often reflected on the values of hard work and dedication embodied by President Lincoln.” He described himself as “humbled to have joined in the effort to permanently commemorate this room in the Capitol.”

The Lincoln Room, Room H-226, is currently part of Majority Whip Jim Clyburn’s (SC-6) office. During the 115th Congress, Minority Whip Steve Scalise had unofficially named the room after Lincoln and had displayed Lincoln memorabilia there. However, legislation was required to formally name the room in honor of the Sixteenth President. There was no guarantee that the unofficial designation would hold following future party leadership changes. Representatives LaHood and Krishnamoorthi, then co-chairs of the Illinois State Society, saw it fitting to permanently name the room during Illinois’ Bicentennial. Lincoln Group of DC President John O’Brien, Illinois State Society President Jerry Weller; and John Elliff’s wife Linda all spoke at the dedication. O’Brien acknowledged John Elliff’s leadership and work on the project and also noted that “Lincoln now was honored on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.” The United States Capitol Historical Society (USCHS) participated in the event to provide historic context. At the conclusion of the formal program, guests were invited to explore the Lincoln Room.

The Lincoln Room serves as both a fitting tribute to our Sixteenth President and to former Lincoln Group President John Elliff for his role in realizing his dream to get the room so designated.

Upcoming Lincoln Group Events

In September, the Lincoln Group embarks on a new program year. Herein we offer a preview of our upcoming dinner programs. Annotate your calendars now so that you do not miss out on any of these opportunities for education, enlightenment and camaraderie.



Our September speaker will be James W. Loewen

September 17, 2019

Everything Your History Text Got Wrong About Lincoln

Presenter: James W. Loewen, Best Selling Author and Award Winner

The Lincoln Group of DC is proud to announce that our September 2019 speaker will be James W. Loewen who is the author of the mega-bestselling book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, as well as books on discriminatory sundown towns and the “great truth” about the “Lost Cause.” Loewen has won numerous prestigious awards, including the American Book Award, the Oliver Cromwell Cox Award for Distinguished Anti-Racist Scholarship, the Spirit of America Award from the National Council for the Social Studies, and the Gustavo’s Myers Outstanding Book Award. We are proud to say that Jim is a long-time member of the Lincoln Group of DC.

His September presentation will derive from his life’s work of exposing how our history texts actually get our history wrong. From whitewashing to “winner writes the history” to corporate

writing, Loewen digs into the system of writing history in the United States, a system that produced the dearth of factual education and critical thinking that led to our current educational and political crisis. Loewen will focus on how Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War has been taught, often superficially and without the context needed to fully understand Lincoln the man, and the Lincoln the leader of our nation during its greatest trial. A superb speaker, Loewen promises to both entertain and educate even us Lincolnophiles about Lincoln.

A Second September Event!

Lincoln Group of DC Vice President David J. Kent will be the keynote speaker at the annual Lincoln-Thomas Day event to be held Saturday, September 21, 2019 from 12 noon to 2:00 pm at Fort Stevens, Washington, D.C. The event jointly honors Abraham Lincoln's signing of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, the free black owner of the land that became Fort Stevens. The event is free to the public.



Our October Speaker will be Thomas Bogar

October 15, 2019

Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination

Presenter: Thomas A. Bogar, Theatre Historian and Lincoln Author

Our October 2019 speaker will be Thomas A. Bogar. This should be a fascinating presentation by Bogar, both because of his theater background and because for the first time he delves into the stories of the actors and stagehands who become unwilling players in a horrific American tragedy. Some of the forty-six theater workers, stars, bit players, doorkeepers, prompters, musicians, costumers, and callboys would have their lives changed forever, while others would

fade offstage into oblivion. With calls of “Burn the place down” and uncertainty about who may or may not have helped Booth carry out his dastardly deed, no one in the theater that night was safe from scrutiny. Bogar brings us into their lives, some altered, some shattered, and examines how each played out that night and the days that followed.

Thomas Bogar has taught theater history, dramatic literature, and theatrical production for over forty years, most recently at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. He received his Ph.D. in theater history from Louisiana State University after earning Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees at the University of Maryland. He has directed over seventy theatrical productions, authored many books on the subject, and his writing has appeared in many prestigious journals. His presentation is based on his 2013 book, *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination* published by Regnery History press.

Location, Location, Location! Both dinner programs (as well as all our other dinner programs unless otherwise announced) will be held at Maggiano’s - Chevy Chase, 5333 Wisconsin Ave, NW, DC. Social Hour begins at 6:00 p.m., Dinner at 7:00 p.m. and Program at 8 p.m. Cost is \$35 for members, \$40 for non-members, \$20 for program only. The restaurant is metro accessible – take the Red Line to the Friendship Heights Station (once there, use the Wisconsin Avenue NW, Jenifer St NW station exit.) For those driving, the adjacent Chevy Chase Pavilion parking garage has a restaurant discount of \$3.80 for four hours. You can enter the garage from Wisconsin Ave., 50 feet north of the restaurant (between Marshalls and Cheesecake Factory) but the best garage entrance for Maggiano’s is from Western Avenue. **To reserve, contact:** Susan Dennis, 703-532-6188; civilwarsusan@gmail.com; or on-line at www.lincolngroup.org/sep2019.html. Make your reservations for September no later than Friday, September 13.

And Later in the Program Year ...

For those who like to plan in advance, we are furnishing a list of the speakers and topics at our dinner meetings scheduled for the remainder of the program year. More details on these events – as well as updates as to time and location, if needed - will be posted on our website, featured in upcoming editions of *The Lincolnian* and relayed through informational emails. There will be no dinner programs in November (Lincoln Forum month) and March (Annual Lincoln Institute Symposium month).

December 3, 2019 - Ed Steers: Abraham Lincoln as an American icon (Note: This is the first Tuesday of the month and a **luncheon** event rather than a dinner)

January 21, 2020 - Wendy Allen: Lincoln artist from Gettysburg and Vice President of the Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania. Her topic: Searching for the Exact Location of America’s Soul: An Artist’s Pursuit.

February 11, 2020 - George Buss discussing his career as a Lincoln presenter. (This is a joint event with the Civil War Roundtable of DC and will be held at the Ft. Myer Officers Club)

April 21, 2020 - Garrett Peck: DC tour guide and author on Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln

May 19, 2020 - Burrus Carnahan discussing Lincoln and his use of the presidential pardon.

Lincoln Group Activities

LGDC Tour of Manassas Battlefield Park June 1, 2019



***Lincoln Group Tour Leader Craig Howell (fourth from left), flanked by participants at our annual picnic, at the Manassas National Battlefield in June. Craig led his troops through both the First and Second Manassas Battles (as known by Confederates) or, when using Yankee nomenclature, both the Battles of Bull Run.
(Robert Kellerman photograph)***

The small creek known as Bull Run was the focus of not one, but two, disastrous Union defeats in battles early in the Civil War. On June 1, 2019, members of the Lincoln Group of DC swarmed the battlefields to relive the experience (but safely without the weaponry). Led by inveterate and venerated tour guide Craig Howell, our group began at the Henry Hill Visitor Center and toured the site of the First Battle of Bull Run (or First Battle of Manassas if you're a Confederate). Craig plotted out the locations of Brigadier General Irvin McDowell's forces as his divisions attacked Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard's left flank. While first it appeared Union troops would own the day, the afternoon brought Confederate General Joseph Johnston's reinforcements (newly arrived via railroad from the Shenandoah Valley). With General Thomas J. Jackson standing "like a stone wall" on Henry's Hill, and with more Confederate

reinforcements surging the field of battle, the early promise turned into a rout, with Union forces scattering back to Washington in unorganized panic.

After a picnic lunch, we loaded into several vehicles and followed troop movements around the park to various locations associated with the Second Battle of Bull Run (Second Manassas). Here we saw such iconic spots as the Brawner Farm, the Deep Cut, and the Unfinished Railroad as Craig regaled us with the intricacies of the battle. Here was where Union Major General John Pope's 62,000 men were platooned; there where Confederate General Robert E. Lee's 50,000 troops were deployed. With his new sobriquet attached, "Stonewall" Jackson, along with Lt. General James Longstreet hemmed in and outmaneuvered Union troops. Unlike a year ago, however, the more experienced men under Pope's command steadfastly fought until making a strategic – and orderly – retreat under cover of night.

As always, Craig Howell's uncanny grasp of even the most minute facts – brigade leaders, troop numbers, strategic plans – had our group feeling as if it was on the battlefield with the failing Union troops. And as Craig informed us, saying that Jackson stood "like a stone wall" was actually a negative; his fellow general in need of help near the Stone House was complaining that Jackson was useless to him (Jackson, having taken a commanding position on high ground, was not about to leave such a strongly strategic spot). But in the end, our squad of Lincolnians were happy to have Craig lead us safely through another key battle of the Civil War.

An Early Monument to Those Lost in Battle



(Library of Congress photograph)

At the Dedication of the Monument in 1865

The above article notes that the Lincoln Group tour gathered at the Henry Hill Visitor Center at the Manassas Battlefield. Ours was not the first group to begin touring at that location or gathered to commemorate the occasion at the Henry Hill monument. At the 1865 dedication Civil War Veterans and other dignitaries posed for their own tribute at the monument.

Emancipation Documents Times Two

The Lincoln Group partnered with the Library of Congress and the DC government on April 16, 2019 to present a program on Emancipation, a presentation which highlighted both DC Emancipation Day and the Emancipation Proclamation. The date chosen for the program was most appropriate, as the event took place on the actual anniversary of the signing of the DC Emancipation Proclamation. Participants on the panel discussion included Howard Professor Edna Greene Medford as moderator, Bowie State Professor Roger Davidson, historian and author C.R. Gibbs, and Howard University Professor Elizabeth Clark-Lewis.

The tone for the evening was set before the actual discussion began as both the Emancipation Proclamation and the DC Compensated Emancipation Act were on display in the hallowed area near the Archives Rotunda, home to the nation's founding documents known as the "Charters of Freedom." As visitors studied these two particular documents of freedom, the Artists Group Chorale of Washington provided a special musical performance, featuring numbers consistent with the history of the period and the program's theme: a rousing start to the evening indeed.

The evening discussion began with a recap of the history behind the occasion. Abraham Lincoln signed the DC Emancipation Proclamation on April 16, 1862, the law having been passed earlier by Congress. Lincoln took this action more than eight months before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation and 3 ½ years before the 13th amendment. Under the act, "each person in DC was free." Owners of slaves received "compensation for loss of property if the former owners were loyal to the US and pledged allegiance to the nation." In addition, the act provided "voluntary colonization of former slaves to locations outside the US with payments for persons choosing emigration." To re-enslave an individual was a felony offense under the act. The Archives reported that that "over the next nine months, the Board of Commissioners appointed to administer the act approved 930 petitions, completely or in part, from former owners for the freedom of 2,989 former slaves." (*See pages 11-14 for more details of the Act itself*)

What was the DC environment at the time? C.R. Gibbs described the area "as becoming more urban." He referenced an elderly woman who was the "4th largest slave owner, one who had both rural and urban slaves. Elite slave owners received returns on their investments." He noted a census quote from an enslaved man "We live like free." Professor Davidson added that urban slaves differed from many rural counterparts – "many were skilled and included domestics, mechanics and traders." They intermingled with free blacks at such locations as churches. "They were living on the edge of freedom." Many Washingtonians saw slavery as an embarrassment to the capital city. Professor Clark-Lewis described "the strangling effect of slavery despite this intermingling that left nonwhites still vulnerable." She believes that this factor along with "the inability to escape the press of war without bold action were what pushed the president." The issuance of the act also "allowed the Union to make a statement, particularly to the Europeans." Granted, "slavery was not dead yet;" (The Thirteenth amendment was still a necessity). Rather, Gibbs described the event as "symbolic, the road to freedom begins here."

As we know, that road was not an easy one. The panel painted a clear picture of the bumpy journey ahead for the former slaves. Some slave owners did not tell the slaves they were free. There were risks to being free “with dangers from pursuit.” People going to Union posts found some measure of safety. One girl, seeing others apprehended, went over the side of Long Bridge and, thus, “displayed a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice.” Those running into DC found contraband camps. No one was there to welcome the newly freed. The government was not doing much to assist: only charitable institutions were there to help “survivors.” Clark-Lewis described how both documents faced challenges, often running into “speed bumps and brick walls.” She explained how “slavery was part of the social fabric of the nation. Ending slavery forced the nation to reframe everything. African Americans continued to push so change was inevitable. In the end, Lincoln had to live with his decision and its impact on morale and the military.” Davidson opined that “at the end of the day Lincoln believed slavery was immoral and could not help but see people streaming toward freedom.” Clark-Lewis summarized subsequent actions. Progress slowed once southerners returned to the city. Later, issues surfaced when Woodrow Wilson established segregation in federal agencies. “After short periods of progress, the pendulum would swing back.”

The Lincoln Group partners with other organizations such as the National Archives as an outreach tool to educate our community on the Sixteenth President. Archives programs prove to be an important tool in accomplishing this mission – on April 16 the Archives’ auditorium was jammed packed and others joined the program virtually via live streaming. Such programs also give audience members the opportunity to ask questions in order to clarify their understanding of events and to learn more about such topics as the road to emancipation.

A Closer Look at DC Emancipation

One of the documents discussed at the April 16 Archives event was the DC Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862. Here we present a transcription of the document, as provided by the National Archives (Search for selected documents on the Archives website: www.Archives.gov) The document clarifies some nuances of the act and explains some of the issues not fully covered during the April program discussion.

An Act for the Release of certain Persons held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia

Freeing of those of African descent:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons held to service or labor within the District of Columbia by reason of African descent are hereby discharged and freed of and from all claim to such service or labor; and from and after the passage of this act neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, shall hereafter exist in said District.

Requests for compensation and loyalty oaths:

Sec.2. *And be it further enacted*, That all persons loyal to the United States, holding claims to service or labor against persons discharged therefrom by this act, may, within ninety days from the passage thereof, but not thereafter, present to the commissioners hereinafter mentioned their respective statements or petitions in writing, verified by oath or affirmation, setting forth the names, ages, and personal description of such persons, the manner in which said petitioners acquired such claim, and any facts touching the value thereof, and declaring his allegiance to the Government of the United States, and that he has not borne arms against the United States during the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid or comfort thereto: *Provided*, That the oath of the party to the petition shall not be evidence of the facts therein stated.

Appointment and Role of Commissioners

Sec.3. *And be it further enacted*, That the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint three commissioners, residents of the District of Columbia, any two of whom shall have power to act, who shall receive the petitions above mentioned, and who shall investigate and determine the validity and value of the claims therein presented, as aforesaid, and appraise and apportion, under the proviso hereto annexed, the value in money of the several claims by them found to be valid: *Provided, however*, That the entire sum so appraised and apportioned shall not exceed in the aggregate an amount equal to three hundred dollars for each person shown to have been so held by lawful claim: *And provided, further*, That no claim shall be allowed for any slave or slaves brought into said District after the passage of this act, nor for any slave claimed by any person who has borne arms against the Government of the United States in the present rebellion, or in any way given aid or comfort thereto, or which originates in or by virtue of any transfer heretofore made, or which shall hereafter be made by any person who has in any manner aided or sustained the rebellion against the Government of the United States.

Report of Commissioners and apportionment of claim payments

Sec.4. *And be it further enacted*, That said commissioners shall, within nine months from the passage of this act, make a full and final report of their proceedings, findings, and appraisement, and shall deliver the same to the Secretary of the Treasury, which report shall be deemed and taken to be conclusive in all respects, except as hereinafter provided; and the Secretary of the Treasury shall, with like exception, cause the amounts so apportioned to said claims to be paid from the Treasury of the United States to the parties found by said report to be entitled thereto as aforesaid, and the same shall be received in full and complete compensation: *Provided*, That in cases where petitions may be filed presenting conflicting claims, or setting up liens, said commissioners shall so specify in said report, and payment shall not be made according to the award of said commissioners until a period of sixty days shall have elapsed, during which time any petitioner claiming an interest in the particular amount may file a bill in equity in the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, making all other claimants defendants thereto, setting forth the proceedings in such case before said commissioners and their actions therein, and praying that the party to whom payment has been awarded may be enjoined from receiving the same; and if said court shall grant such provisional order, a copy thereof may, on motion of said complainant, be served upon the Secretary of the Treasury, who shall thereupon cause the said amount of money to be paid into said court, subject to its orders and final decree, which payment shall be in full and complete compensation, as in other cases.

Session Guidelines

Sec.5. *And be it further enacted*, That said commissioners shall hold their sessions in the city of Washington, at such place and times as the President of the United States may direct, of which they shall give due and public notice. They shall have power to subpoena and compel the attendance of witnesses, and to receive testimony and enforce its production, as in civil cases before courts of justice, without the exclusion of any witness on account of color; and they may summon before them the persons making claim to service or labor, and examine them under oath; and they may also, for purposes of identification and appraisal, call before them the persons so claimed. Said commissioners shall appoint a clerk, who shall keep files and [a] complete record of all proceedings before them, who shall have power to administer oaths and affirmations in said proceedings, and who shall issue all lawful process by them ordered. The Marshal of the District of Columbia shall personally, or by deputy, attend upon the sessions of said commissioners, and shall execute the process issued by said clerk.

Commission expenses and compensations

Sec.6. *And be it further enacted*, That said commissioners shall receive in compensation for their services the sum of two thousand dollars each, to be paid upon the filing of their report; that said clerk shall receive for his services the sum of two hundred dollars per month; that said marshal shall receive such fees as are allowed by law for similar services performed by him in the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia; that the Secretary of the Treasury shall cause all other reasonable expenses of said commission to be audited and allowed, and that said compensation, fees, and expenses shall be paid from the Treasury of the United States.

Appropriation for carrying out the act

Sec.7. *And be it further enacted*, That for the purpose of carrying this act into effect there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, a sum not exceeding one million of dollars.

Felony Offenses

Sec.8. *And be it further enacted*, That any person or persons who shall kidnap, or in any manner transport or procure to be taken out of said District, any person or persons discharged and freed by the provisions of this act, or any free person or persons with intent to re-enslave or sell such person or person into slavery, or shall re-enslave any of said freed persons, the person or persons so offending shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and on conviction thereof in any court of competent jurisdiction in said District, shall be imprisoned in the penitentiary not less than five nor more than twenty years.

Schedule Requirements

Sec.9. *And be it further enacted*, That within twenty days, or within such further time as the commissioners herein provided for shall limit, after the passage of this act, a statement in writing or schedule shall be filed with the clerk of the Circuit court for the District of Columbia, by the several owners or claimants to the services of the persons made free or manumitted by this act, setting forth the names, ages, sex, and particular description of such persons, severally; and the said clerk shall receive and record, in a book by him to be provided and kept for that purpose, the said statements or schedules on receiving fifty cents each therefore, and no claim shall be allowed to any claimant or owner who shall neglect this requirement.

Certificates of Freedom

Sec.10. *And be it further enacted*, That the said clerk and his successors in office shall, from time to time, on demand, and on receiving twenty-five cents therefore, prepare, sign, and deliver to each person made free or manumitted by this act, a certificate under the seal of said court, setting out the name, age, and description of such person, and stating that such person was duly manumitted and set free by this act.

Colonization Aid

Sec.11. *And be it further enacted*, That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, is hereby appropriated, to be expended under the direction of the President of the United States, to aid in the colonization and settlement of such free persons of African descent now residing in said District, including those to be liberated by this act, as may desire to emigrate to the Republics of Haiti or Liberia, or such other country beyond the limits of the United States as the President may determine: *Provided*, The expenditure for this purpose shall not exceed one hundred dollars for each emigrant.

Repeal of Ordinances Inconsistent with the Act

Sec.12. *And be it further enacted*, That all acts of Congress and all laws of the State of Maryland in force in said District, and all ordinances of the cities of Washington and Georgetown, inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

Passings of Note

The Lincoln Group notes the passing of three friends. Earlier this year we learned of the death of Teresa Wren at age 98. Teresa was a long-time Lincoln Group member who studied physics at Trinity College and went on to a career with the Navy's David Taylor Model Basin and the U.S. Geological Survey. Anthony Pitch passed away at the end of June. We avidly have read his books and heard him speak on the 1814 British invasion of Washington and the Lincoln assassination. He led us on tours marking sites from both events here in Washington. Mark Ozer was a fount of information on Washington history, knowledge he shared with fellow dinner program attendees. He passed away in April. The Lincoln Group extends condolences to the Wren, Pitch and Ozer families.

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

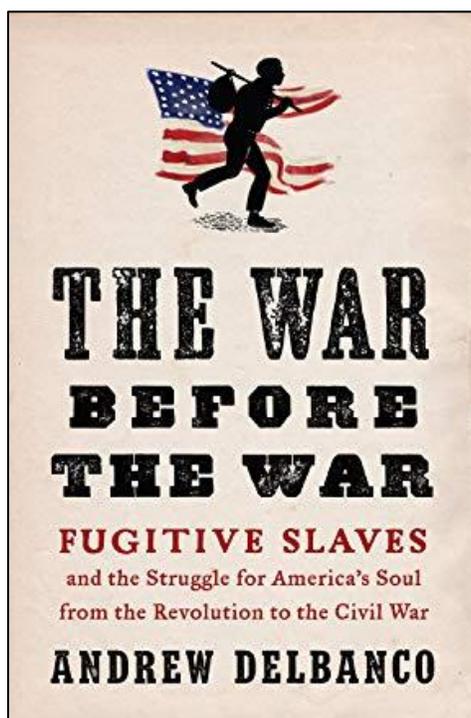
www.lincolngroup.org

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



The War Before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul from the Revolution to the Civil War
by Andrew Delbanco
(Penguin Press, 2018, 464 pp)

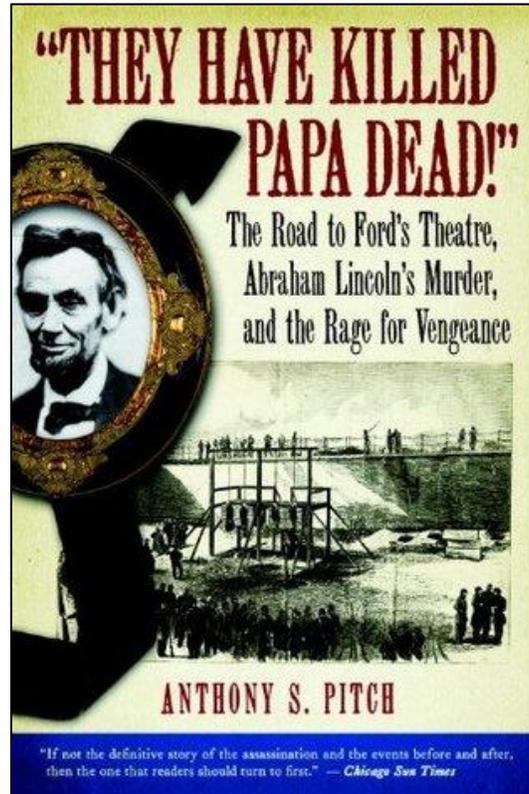
Technically, this book only glances at Abraham Lincoln, but it serves as an extraordinary look at the history of "the slavery question" that puts to rest any of the false narratives. It is must reading if you want to understand how entrenched slavery was as Lincoln struggled to find an answer before and after becoming President. As the Alexander Hamilton Professor of American Studies at Columbia University, Andrew Delbanco is well positioned to examine the role of slavery in our history.

He does a superb job. Beyond any doubt, slavery was the cause of the Civil War, and indeed, the cause of much of our historical strife beginning even before our inception as a nation. Delbanco

describes in detail how the Founders dealt with the existing presence of slavery in half a nation that was created based on the idea that "all men are created equal." He traces the compromises made by the Founders in order to gather the disparate views into a national Constitution, and the attempts to restrict the expansion of slavery until such time as its ultimate extinction under its own immoral weight. Delbanco goes on to discuss the various compromises during the first half of the 19th century to allow slaveholding states to continue slavery while seeing it expand rather than contract. He shows how the Compromise of 1850, and in particular the strengthening of the Fugitive Slave law, led to a fundamental crisis between the choice of freedom and the choice to withhold others from their freedom. And the war came.

This is a must-read book for all Americans. To understand Lincoln, we must understand the "peculiar institution" that infected every facet of our nation's economy, psyche, and politics. We as a nation must understand the role of slavery in our history...and how the residual effects of it still affect us today.

Classic Literature



They Have Killed Papa Dead!

by Anthony S. Pitch

(Skyhorse Publishing, 2018, 493 pp. [Reissue of original 2008])

[Two notes: First, the following is the complete review of the book to replace an inadvertently truncated review published in the last issue of *Lincolnian*. Second, Anthony S. Pitch, a longtime

LGDC member, author, speaker, and tour guide well known to many of our members, passed away on June 29, 2019. The Lincoln Group offers sincere condolences to his family.]

Originally published in 2008, this book has recently been reissued in soft cover by a different publisher. In his preface, Anthony Pitch notes that critics assumed nothing new could be found to justify yet another volume on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Then he proceeds to write a wonderful book that proves that criticism wrong. The book tracks the preparations made by the conspirators, the assassination itself, the 12-day manhunt to capture John Wilkes Booth, and the controversial trial and hangings. Throughout the 400 pages of text, Pitch's writing is highly readable, its story-like cadence keeping the reader glued to the pages for every twist and turn.

But this isn't just a glitzy story for the populace (although it is that too). The nearly 70 pages of notes document the phenomenal level of research Pitch put into the preparation of the book, a nine-year effort of scholarship. The level of detail rivals that of the most intensive Lincoln researchers. Pitch makes extensive use of the two most comprehensive compilations of the assassination trial, extracting testimony from conspirators, the military, and key eyewitness, then using them to reconstruct dialogue and timelines that bring the story to life. But he doesn't stop there. In addition to the assassination trial transcripts, he also dives deeply into the extensive contemporary newspaper coverage, the diaries of a multitude of peripheral players, and even the Andrew Johnson impeachment investigation records. All of these primary sources provide tremendous detail for a fulsome tale rich in imagery.

The book opens with the Lincoln entourage gaining awareness of the first likely assassination attempt as Lincoln passes through Baltimore on the way to his first inauguration. We then fast forward to the immediate days and hours leading up to the events of April 14, 1865, including Benjamin Brown French stopping a man identified as Booth from approaching the President as he ascended the platform for his second inaugural. By Chapter 6 (of 29), Lincoln has been shot and the chase for his killer is on. The book's title, "They Have Killed Papa Dead," comes from the horrific cries of the 12-year-old Tad Lincoln upon learning of his father's death. Much of the rest of the book follows the search for Lincoln's assassin, the attempted assassin of Secretary of State Seward, and the rest of the conspirators and sympathizers who helped them along the way. The book takes an extensive look at the trial, hangings, and imprisonments, finally ending with the capture and trial of John Surratt two years later, long after the taste for blood and conspiracies had mellowed.

Throughout, Pitch shows that he can blend deep research with highly readable prose. I found it to be both comprehensive and an enjoyable read.

[Disclosure: I received a copy of the Pitch book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.]

For Theater Aficionados: An Assassination Tale

Signature Theatre (Signature.org) is presenting Stephen Sondheim's "Assassins" (through September 29). Not surprisingly, Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth is a major character. How do actors approach playing history's bad guys and girls? *The Washington Post* (Weekend Section, August 23, 2019, pp. 16 and 18) interviewed several of the actors, including Vincent Kempinski as Booth, on understanding and "unearthing humanity/an emotional core" in the historic figures they portray.

Spying for the Union



In his book on Lincoln's Spies, Douglas Waller focuses on Alan Pinkerton, Lafayette Baker, George Sharpe and Elizabeth Van Lew (shown left to right, above). He considers two as heroes, one a failure, and the other, a scoundrel.

One of the Archives speakers this summer was Douglas Waller who spoke on his most recent book, *Lincoln's Spies: Their Secret War to Save a Nation*. Waller in the past has written extensively on political, espionage and military subjects. However, for the current book, he focused on a different war, a different period of history.

Waller identified a “revolution in war fighting” during the Civil War era, citing such advancements as “more deadly weapons; faster movement of supplies, etc. via the railroad; enhanced communications via the telegraph; and changes in tactics.” These changes, in turn, required “better intelligence, a revolution in how the armies spied on each other.” For instance, “Confederate General Stonewall Jackson wanted to know four things about his foe: the position of the enemy; the number of hostile troops he faced and their movements; the generals and commanders on the other side (many generals had a good feel as to their opponents tactics from experience together at West Point, etc); and the location of the headquarters of the enemy commanders.” Waller opined that “such information did not guarantee victory but increased the odds for success.”

Contrary to the message given by many Civil War movies, Waller considers the Yankees to have had a “more efficient and comprehensive intelligence system than did the Confederates.” As proof, he cited the fact that “by war’s end, General Grant had a better count of Lee’s forces than Lee himself.” The era saw increased importance of such approaches as signal intelligence/encrypted messages, photography (photos of enemy camps and potential fields of conflict) and aerial reconnaissance (especially the use of balloons by the Yankees). Waller found the Northern spies “more interesting” than those from the South. Moreover, he noted that “blending into the opposition is easier when one shares a language and culture.” He discussed four spies – Alan Pinkerton, Lafayette Baker, George Sharpe and Elizabeth Van Lew – and describes them as “two heroes, one scoundrel and one failure, or a good mix of characters.”

To this company of spies, Waller added a fifth player, Lincoln himself, whom the author considered “hardly a neophyte to the dark arts of subterfuge and intrigue.” As president, he not

only requested daily intelligence reports but had operatives send information from all parts of the country, encouraged the use of new technology and used propaganda. He “had no qualms about covert activities” and “was ruthless, if needed.” Waller described Lincoln as “knowing how to keep a secret and able to operate in secret.”

So how did the spies Waller selected for examination perform? During the war, Pinkerton was the spymaster for General McClellan. He orchestrated a covert operation to sneak Lincoln through Baltimore to avoid a possible assassination before the inauguration. He also used women and runaway slaves as operatives and sent spies to Richmond. However, Waller dubbed him “a failure in the end.” His network had “no military experience and was too slow for military intrigue needs.” Worse yet, he “told McClellan what he wanted to hear, not what he needed to hear.” He even “spied on Lincoln” and visited the White House to learn the leader’s thoughts on McClellan. (Lincoln, of course, knew what he was up to and would convey the message to “speed up.”) Waller did not mince words when describing Lafayette Baker as “corrupt, devious and having the heart of a sneak thief.” He had no spy training but talked General Winfield Scott into giving him a job in that field. Baker abused his authority and expense account, accepting bribes. He also displayed a life style inconsistent with his salary, raising questions in Washington. He failed miserably “by not detecting the threat that resulted in Lincoln’s assassination” although Waller remarked that he “redeemed himself in capturing Booth at the Garrett Farm” (The author noted that Baker “was outraged that he had to share the reward with others on the raid.”) Obviously, Baker was considered the “scoundrel” in the group.

Waller’s last two subjects embodied the success displayed by Union intelligence. George Sharpe was appointed as Fighting Joe Hooker’s spymaster. He knew little about spying at the time but his appointment was a good fit – he became quite effective in this area. His agents read “captured mail” to learn of troop movements; in a form of aerial reconnaissance, they “dropped leaflets from a kite behind Confederate lines, seeking deserters, and doing so successfully.” His agents infiltrated the enemy. Basically, he introduced a major espionage innovation, the concept of “all sources intelligence.” The “analysis of the material accumulated from all sources resulted in the most comprehensive and highly accurate intelligence to date.” His estimate on the number of Lee’s men was “only off one-quarter of one percent.” His best spy in Richmond was Elizabeth Van Lew, dismissed by most as “a harmless Yankee lover,” who moved from “assisting Union prisoners to formulating a sophisticated spy ring in the Confederate capital.” “Confederate security was never able to crack this ring” which turned out an average of three intelligence reports per week on such topics as troop movements, citizen morale and the condition of Lee’s army. Her use of couriers and messages was truly ingenious. Waller’s remarks concerning the achievements of Sharpe and Van Lew clearly identified them as the heroes of his story.

**A September Archives
Program**

On September 10, 2019, Sidney Blumenthal will speak at the National Archives on Volume III of his biography, *The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln*. This volume brings Lincoln out of the Wilderness and into the presidency. The free program will be held at noon in the McGowan Theater. A book signing will follow the talk. For those who cannot make it to the Archives at the scheduled time, check the Archives website for information regarding online viewing.

Library of Congress Adds to Online Letter Collections

Michelle Krowl of the Library of Congress has announced that two more sets of historic papers at the Library of Congress are now available on line: the George Brinton McClellan Papers and the James A. Garfield Papers. The collections can be accessed in several ways:

- Through an **online presentation** for McClellan, (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-brinton-mcclellan-papers/about-this-collection/>) that includes not only the collection items themselves, but also a selected bibliography in “Related Resources,” a [timeline](#) of McClellan’s life, and featured items displayed in a slide carousel of images that suggest the range of materials available in the collection. For Garfield, the link is <https://www.loc.gov/collections/james-a-garfield-papers/about-this-collection/>. This link takes you to not only the collection items but to a bibliography, timeline, etc., as described above for McClellan.
- Through the **HTML version of the finding aid**: (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010155>) for McClellan and for Garfield, (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008147>); click on the “digital content available” hyperlinks in the Contents List section of the guide. A new window will open containing the object record for that material. Click on the document image in the center to open the viewer that provides access to the content.
- Through the **PDF version of the finding aid**: (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010155.3>) for McClellan and (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms008147.3>) for Garfield; click on the “digital content available” hyperlinks in the Container List section of the guide. Clicking on the hyperlink will forward that page to the object record for the material, and hitting the “back” arrow will return you to the start of the PDF (not at your last location in the guide).

If you anticipate needing to toggle back and forth between the finding aid and object records, then the HTML version will be easier to use as object records are automatically opened in a new window. If using the PDF version of the finding aid, right clicking on the “digital content available” link will allow you to manually open a new tab in which to access the material without losing your place in the finding aid on the first tab. The bulk of the online presentations was scanned from the microfilm edition of the collection, and items without a microfilm surrogate were scanned from the original documents.

Please note that the collections are not indexed to the level of individual documents, and that the collections are presented at the level of description found in the finding aid (from which the metadata in the online collection is derived). Keyword searching the collection will not return hits for individual items; it will only search the level of description available in the container listing of the collection finding aid. The best way to approach searching the online collection is to pretend that you are in the Manuscript Reading Room and are examining the microfilm reels/containers most appropriate to your research. This may only involve searching through a single folder, or it may require you to scan through a microfilm reel’s worth of material.

The *Index to the James A. Garfield Papers* (PDF and page view), created by the Manuscript Division in 1973 after the bulk of the collection was microfilmed, provides a full list of the correspondents and notes the series number and dates of the items indexed. This information is helpful in finding individual letters or documents in the online version. Additional letters received by the Library of Congress after 1973 are not listed in this index. The Library also recently published a blog on the love letters of James and Lucretia Garfield, which is available at <http://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2019/08/now-online-the-love-letters-of-james-and-lucretia-garfield/>.