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The Lincoln Ox Yoke at the University of Illinois

By John Hoffmann

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One of the most valued artifacts owned by the University of Illinois is an ox yoke—not an ordinary ox yoke but one believed to have been made by Abraham Lincoln himself. The traditional story of this yoke rests on brief references to it in 1875 and fuller accounts of it in 1900. Recently, however, information at odds with those statements has come to light. This paper undertakes to set forth the conflicting evidence regarding the history of the “Lincoln ox yoke.”

In 1875, Clark M. Smith, a prominent merchant in Springfield, Illinois, who was Abraham Lincoln’s brother-in-law, wrote to John M. Gregory, Regent of the Illinois Industrial University. (Later in the nineteenth century, the University’s name was changed to the University of Illinois and the Regent became the President.) “I take pleasure,” Smith wrote, “in presenting to your Institution (through our mutual friend Watson Pickrell Esq) an Ox Yoke which was given to me by the late Martyred President Abraham Lincoln. This Yoke was made by his own hands while living at New Salem, Menard County.”¹

Clark Smith, who died in 1885, would not have agreed with later accounts which trace the yoke to Indiana. Carl Sandburg, for instance, included in his biography of Lincoln a picture of the yoke with the caption: “young steers yoked in this helped haul the Lincoln family across the Wabash to the new prairie home in Illinois...” Nor would Smith



The “Lincoln ox yoke” is now located in the University of Illinois Library.

have agreed with Thomas J. Burrill, a member of the faculty since 1868 and Acting Regent from 1891 to 1894, who believed that Lincoln had made the yoke “when he was on a farm near Decatur.” The Lincoln family, upon emigrating from Indiana in 1830, had located on land west of Decatur, where Lincoln broke prairie with teams of oxen. The following year, Lincoln, no longer bound to his family, settled in New Salem, where he engaged in several pursuits before moving to Springfield in 1837.²

In 1875, Smith had presented the yoke to Gregory “through our mutual friend Watson Pickrell,” a graduating senior in that year. In the 1890s, however, Burrill had “fully settled” in his mind that “a certain trustee brought the yoke” to Gregory. Gregory, who paid a visit to campus in 1898, confirmed Burrill’s recollection, suggesting that the trustee in question was James H. Pickrell. Andrew S. Draper, President of the University at the time, then wrote to Pickrell, but the former trustee remembered nothing at all about the yoke: “I am afraid that you will find it a very difficult matter to get the pedigree of it, if you will excuse the term, as

my business runs along the line of recording pedigrees of Short-Horns.”³

It is apparent from Draper’s further correspondence in 1898 that James H. Pickrell, who had been a trustee of the University from 1867 to 1869, had facilitated Watson Pickrell’s delivery of the yoke to the campus. Several interrelated Pickrells lived in or near Mechanicsburg, a community between Decatur and Springfield, and Lincoln particularly valued the political support of Jesse A. Pickrell, Watson Pickrell’s uncle. (The University of Illinois Library’s Illinois History and Lincoln Collections include a letter from Lincoln to Jesse Pickrell, Sept. 15, 1856, and a copy of the first edition of the *Political Debates Between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas* which Lincoln inscribed to Pickrell.) Throughout the later effort to pinpoint which Pickrell should receive the credit for bringing the yoke to the University, Burrill, Gregory, and Draper took for granted that it had been “MADE BY A. LINCOLN”—the wording used in the placard next to the yoke when it was first photographed.⁴

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Watson Pickrell.
Photographer: Thomas Naughton
University of Illinois Archives

In May 1900, the *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield) published an account of the yoke, most of which also appeared in the *New York Times* on the same day. The article began: "A recent rearrangement of the relics in the Agricultural Museum of the University of Illinois brought to light an old ox yoke made by Abraham Lincoln." The yoke, according to Burrill, had been "made by Lincoln when he was on a farm near Decatur. For several years it was in service about the Lincoln homestead. Finally, it passed into the hands of a member of the board of trustees of the university, and he presented it to the institution."⁵

About four months later, however, Watson Pickrell, who by then lived in Tempe, Arizona, wrote to Burrill, attempting to correct the record: "From the enclosed newspaper clipping I learn that you do not know the history of the Lincoln Ox Yoke in the university. I presented the ox yoke to the university..." Pickrell continued, explaining that the late C. M. Smith had given him the yoke and had told him its history: "Shortly after Mr Lincoln returned to Illinois from his term in Congress Mr Lincoln and Mr Smith were visiting near New Salem, Maynard County, where Mr Lincoln once lived. While there they attended a public auction on a farm and among the chattels sold was this yoke. The auctioneer sold it as being a yoke made by a congressman. Mr Smith bought the yoke and kept it in his possession until it came into mine.

Mr Smith said he had no idea of Mr Lincoln being President when he bought the yoke, but thought it would be a good souvenir to have as it was made by his brother in law and by an ex-member of Congress." In other words, the yoke came from the New Salem area, not from a farm near Decatur, and it had been represented as made by Lincoln when it was auctioned off.⁶

Burrill replied to Pickrell: "Your information regarding the yoke was both a surprise and a delight to me." Burrill had "made inquiries during the past ten years, everywhere I could think of, but without avail." It was now time for Pickrell to vouch for his story of the yoke in a sworn affidavit. Pickrell's account was also written up for the *Springfield News* by Laurence Hamilton, formerly the city editor of the *News* who was "spending a few months" in Arizona.⁷

Although Clark Smith had presented the yoke to the University in 1875, it was not until Watson Pickrell wrote to Burrill in 1900 that Burrill was informed that the yoke had been obtained at an auction near New Salem which Smith and Lincoln had attended. Pickrell had presumably acquired this information when he visited Smith's store shortly before or after he graduated in the Class of 1875, and he did not forget the story after he moved west. For fifteen years, he had a farm in southeast Nebraska, in a small community known as Pickrell. He next moved to Tempe, where he served a term in the territorial legislature and made a living by establishing the "Arizona Ostrich Farm." The fashions of the day had created a market for multi-colored ostrich feathers, used in a woman's hat and as a feathered boa wrapped around her neck like a scarf. Watson Pickrell's brother William, after graduating in 1874, also farmed in Nebraska before the two undertook to raise ostriches together in Arizona's Salt River valley.⁸

Shortly after Watson Pickrell's account of the yoke appeared in print, John S. Condell, Sr., who had become Clark Smith's business partner in 1864, wrote Draper

about it. According to Condell, it was Smith who had owned the yoke and who had donated it to the University; Pickrell had never owned the yoke, as he had written, but had only delivered it to Urbana. Draper immediately thanked Condell for his letter, which became the basis of an affidavit which Condell then signed. As Draper saw it, "the probabilities of the case" plainly made Smith, not Pickrell, the donor of the yoke.⁹

Condell had learned from Smith, or knew himself, something about the yoke when it was in Springfield: Smith, wishing to remodel the building in which he did business, "had everything brought down from the Atticks which had been used for Storing Old Books, Papers, Saddles, Harness &c &c." Among this "Museum of Old things" was "the old Lincoln 'Ox Yoke'" which had lain neglected for many years but which "when found suddenly became an object of Interest and value" to the business. "We had it cleaned up and kept it in the Counting Room in the store and Mr Smith took great pleasure in showing it to his Friends especially to our Farmer customers" and "telling them how it came into



Lincoln and the Yoke.

A popular early twentieth-century postcard, drawn by M. W. Taggart of New York in 1908, pictured both Lincoln and the "Lincoln Ox Yoke."

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his possession at New Salem.” From Condell’s account, it could be conjectured that Smith had the yoke in his hands for several years but had it mounted for his patrons to see in the late 1850s, as Lincoln rose to national prominence. Another possibility, however, is that the yoke was not displayed until 1872, when it came to light during a complete remodeling of Smith’s store. Condell’s memory in 1900 of an auction near New Salem when Lincoln returned from Congress in 1849 would have been just as likely to have dated from 1872 as from the years of Lincoln’s emergence on the eve of the Civil War. The yoke, as an artifact associated with Lincoln, would have gained much more interest and value after the assassination than before it.¹⁰

Condell was prompted to write Draper a second letter in 1900 after he happened to meet John E. Roll on a street in Springfield. Roll, who at age 84 “certainly must be the oldest and only living man who was associated with Mr. Lincoln at New Salem in 1831,” had been among those who witnessed Lincoln’s ingenuity in dislodging his flatboat when it became stuck on the milldam there. Roll later moved to Springfield, living only a block from the Lincoln home. When Condell “interrogated” him about the yoke, he recalled seeing it in New Salem and declared that “it was undoubtedly made by Mr. Lincoln.” However, because “ox yokes in Pioneer times were no curiosity, this one then attracted only a passing notice....it required a long series of subsequent events to lift both the yoke and its maker from their obscurity.” Such was Roll’s rather quaint way of connecting the yoke to Lincoln.¹¹

By the end of 1900, Draper and Burrill had the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of their research--the affidavits of Pickrell and Condell — published in the *Chicago Tribune*. A few weeks later, Draper submitted the same evidence to the University’s Board of Trustees. In this communication, Draper presented the statements of Pickrell and Condell as complete and accurate. Their affidavits, which were probably drafted by



The yoke as first pictured. The yoke, photographed before 1900, is shown on the top of an exhibit case in the Agricultural Museum of the University of Illinois. An agriculture class is pictured in the foreground. University of Illinois Archives.

Draper, were careful to note that Lincoln, soon after his return from Congress in 1849, had gone with Smith to an auction near New Salem where the yoke was sold, and Lincoln had acknowledged that he had made it.¹²

Clark M. Smith, Watson Pickrell, John S. Condell, and President Draper had no doubt that the “Lincoln ox yoke” was made by Lincoln, and their belief that such was the case has been accepted without question ever since. Yet it is possible to be skeptical. Did the effort to collect sworn testimony that would connect Lincoln to the particular yoke in the University’s possession betray a certain anxiety on the part of the custodians of the yoke to establish its provenance? Can the evidence that Draper presented to the Trustees, which is so dependent upon reminiscences, be regarded as conclusive? More particularly, is Smith’s statement in 1875 that Lincoln made the yoke at New Salem in the early 1830s completely reliable?

There is abundant evidence of Smith’s close relations with Lincoln. Lincoln’s wife and Smith’s wife were sisters, Mary Todd and Ann Maria Todd. Both had been raised in a prominent family in Lexington, Kentucky, and both had come to Spring-

field to live with two older sisters. It was expected that such an arrangement would lead to marriage for both of them, as it did. In 1846, Ann Todd married Clark Moulton Smith, a merchant in Carrollton, Illinois, a community on the road from Springfield to St. Louis, and they presumably lived there for several years. Smith opened his first store in Springfield in 1853,¹³ and built a house for his family in 1854, both steps taken *after* the year, 1849, when he and Lincoln were said to have attended the auction where the “Lincoln ox yoke” was bought. Making allowances for imprecise recollections, however, this discrepancy by itself would not necessarily discredit the story as elaborated by Pickrell and Condell in 1900. The auction in question may have occurred a few years after 1849. It is also conceivable that Smith had business in Springfield in 1849 which coincided with an occasion for him and Lincoln to ride out to that auction.

In 1850, Clark and Ann Smith named a son for her brother-in-law. Lincoln Smith died ten years later, but when another son was born in 1863, his father asked Lincoln what to name him. The President replied: “Why

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not name him for the General you fancy most? This is my suggestion,” whereupon the Smiths named the child Allen, probably after Brig. Gen. Robert Allen of Springfield. In 1856, when Lincoln’s home was enlarged, from one to two stories, it was regarded as so spacious that Stephen Smith, Clark Smith’s brother, boarded there for a time. On occasion the Lincolns, who lived on 8th Street, visited the Smiths, who lived only three blocks west and one block south on 5th Street. There may have been a family gathering at the Smith home (which later became the home of Vachel Lindsay) the night before the Lincolns left for Washington. The Lincolns, especially Mary, frequently patronized Smith’s store on the State House square in Springfield. Over the years, Smith made several trips to New York to build up his stock, and early in 1861, Mary Lincoln accompanied him, to make purchases for the White House.¹⁴

Smith stayed in touch with Lincoln during the war. Early in the conflict, he “brought out money to Illinois for the use of the troops,” shipment by express being uncertain. At another time, when Smith called at the White House, Lincoln took him in his carriage down to the base of the Washington Monument. After asking him to guess its width, Lincoln “paced and measured it” himself (which, in a way, illustrated his mathematical cast of mind). Although Smith from time to time wrote Lincoln on behalf of others seeking positions, he wrote for himself in 1864: “I commenced in the world like you did a poor Boy without Friends money or influence.” However, by “steady perseverance and attention to my business,” and without “fat contracts” with the Government, Smith had accumulated over \$100,000. Wishing “to close out my stocks for money,” he wanted “simply a hint” from Lincoln as to when the war would end. This would give him “a little notice” in advance of the economic collapse that he expected. Perhaps doubting the propriety of his request, Smith asked Lincoln to “burn this letter.” Yet Lincoln replied. As Smith recalled that reply in 1875, Lincoln “had no hopes” of the war’s imminent con-



Clark M. Smith.

Photographer: Charles D. Fredricks & Co., New York
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

clusion but expected that “it would have to be fought out to the bitter end.” For Smith, family ties and his business interests were intertwined, and Lincoln was as responsive to his brother-in-law’s request as he could be.¹⁵

Hurrying from New York to Washington after the assassination, Smith, who was president of the board of managers of Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, was active in conveying Mary Lincoln’s wishes that her husband be buried there rather than on what became the site of the present state capitol. Smith also took the opportunity in New York to buy “thirty thousand yards of mourning goods” for the funeral in Springfield which, it was reported, would be “sold at cost.” Usually doing business as C. M. Smith and Co., although associated with Condell and others from time to time, Smith continued to prosper after the war, selling dry goods, clothing, shoes and boots, groceries, and drugs in his store which occupied a row of buildings on the south side of the Square and along 6th Street.¹⁶

Smith clearly used Lincoln relics to capitalize on his Lincoln connection. Not only did he display and talk about the “Lincoln ox yoke,” obtained at the auction that Pickrell and Condell later described. He also exhibited the desk at which Lincoln, before he left for Washington, had written his inaugural address. Lincoln, to hide himself from “politicians and newspaper reporters” who

called at his office, had used that desk in a “partitioned off” room on the second floor of Smith’s store. Lincoln’s inkstand was given special prominence in Smith’s window during the funeral in 1865.¹⁷

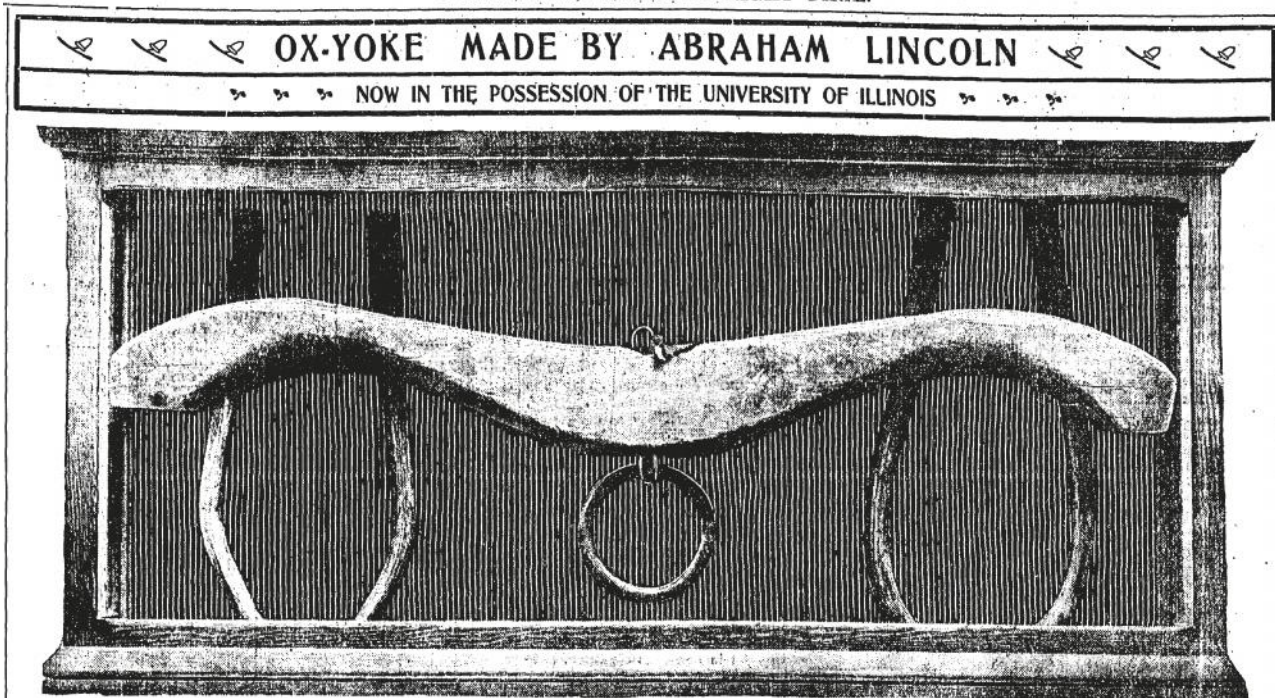
Allen H. Smith, after his father died, let the desk be displayed at the nearby Leland Hotel. That led him to be “annoyed by Relic hunters from Chicago and elsewhere” who wanted to buy it. Both Draper and Condell, however, urged him to give the desk to the University, so that yoke and desk would be “linked together as Gifts by Father & Son.” (In the end, the desk stayed in Springfield, passing from Allen Smith to his younger sister, Minnie Smith Johnson, who in 1953 sold it to the Illinois State Historical Library.)¹⁸

Although Clark Smith in 1875 only wrote that the ox yoke in his store had been made by Lincoln in New Salem, he probably told others on many occasions that he and Lincoln had acquired the yoke at an auction there. Not only would Pickrell and Condell have heard Smith’s story; they also repeated it so often that they wrote similar letters about it in 1900. To a certain extent, the story is credible. Farm auctions, many of which drew large crowds, were common in Lincoln’s day, and one or two ox yokes were often among the chattels being sold. It is thus conceivable that Lincoln and Smith attended such an event, whether for a particular reason or because they had the time and interest to go there. Shortly after Lincoln left New Salem, the town died and most of its residents moved to nearby Petersburg, which became the county seat when Menard County was set off from Sangamon County in 1839. Although Menard was only briefly a part of the judicial circuit that Lincoln traveled, he dealt with several residents of Menard in his law practice, and William H. Herndon, who became his partner in 1844, was particularly active there. The case that comes closest to the time when Lincoln and Smith are said to have attended an auction near New Salem was *Anno et al. v. Anno et al.* Lincoln did not participate in that case, but Herndon did,

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The Chicago Sunday Tribune.

DECEMBER 9, 1900—SIXTY-EIGHT PAGE.



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and a settlement was reached in which the assets of Samuel Anno, who died intestate, were sold off, the personal estate in June 1849 and the real estate in January 1850. Not only do these dates appear congruent with the time that Lincoln returned to Springfield from his term in Congress, but Lincoln and Herndon altogether dealt with fourteen cases in Menard in those years.¹⁹

But it seems unlikely that Lincoln at that time and Smith, who had not yet moved to Springfield, went together to the Anno or any other auction near Petersburg in 1849 or after that year. It is also rather speculative that Lincoln at such an auction would have recognized a particular yoke as his own handiwork and acknowledged it as such. (A situation like that, if it occurred at all, would have been somewhat similar to Lincoln's remarks at the Illinois State Republican convention in Decatur in 1860: when a pair of fence rails was carried into the meeting, Lincoln recalled that he had indeed split many such rails upon coming to Illinois, although he could not claim to have split those particular rails — a decla-

*A woodcut of the yoke as first published.
Chicago Sunday Tribune, December 9, 1900.*

ration that was not only greeted with cheers by the delegates but launched Lincoln as the rail-splitter candidate for President.)²⁰

Above all, how does the auction story square with John G. Nicolay's record of his interview of Clark M. Smith? Nicolay, Lincoln's trusted personal secretary, came to Springfield in 1875 in search of information to use in *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, the ten-volume work which he and John Hay completed in 1890. Nicolay and Hay made no reference to Smith in the *History*, but among Nicolay's papers is a brief but extremely significant note that there was an ox yoke in Smith's store which he "found in the garret" of Lincoln's home and "proposes to give" to the "State Agl. College." Nicolay's note clearly indicates that the yoke that came to the University was first in Lincoln's attic and then in Smith's store. Would not Nicolay's note to himself in 1875 be at least as credible as the assertions in 1900 that the yoke in Smith's store had come directly from a farm auction? To rephrase the question from Nicolay's per-

spective, what is the probability that Lincoln kept that yoke in his home?²¹

Although Lincoln, as he grew up, sought to escape from the hard manual labor of farming, he fully appreciated the agricultural basis of the American economy in his day. "How vast and how varied a field is agriculture," he declared to the Wisconsin Agricultural Society in 1859.²² Lincoln also had acquired from his father an appreciation of carpentry such as is exemplified by the skillfully crafted ox yoke that came to the University of Illinois. It is indeed possible to imagine that he had a certain attachment to a yoke of this kind and choose to keep it, storing it in his attic. Even if there was nothing about that yoke that would have led Lincoln to believe that he himself had made it, he may have acquired it in payment for legal assistance of some kind at any time after he became a home owner in Springfield in 1844.

After alluding to the yoke that was found in Lincoln's attic, Nicolay added: "Smith says

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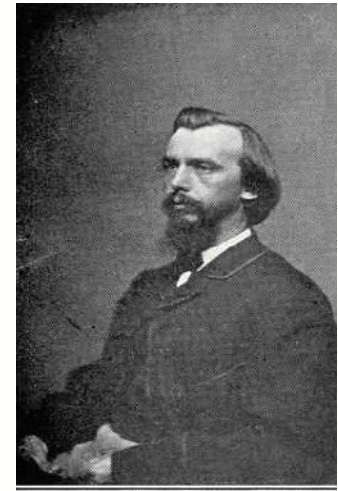
the model of L's patented boat was also found in the house." This was Lincoln's own copy of his model of his invention for "buoying vessels over shoals," the original model of which he took pains to patent in Washington in 1849, and which remains in the Smithsonian Institution. Lincoln's copy is said to have been "discovered" by Smith in Lincoln's home shortly after his death, and, as Nicolay wrote in 1875, "it has been given to and is preserved at Shurtleff College" in Alton, Illinois. That copy was lost, however, when Shurtleff closed in 1957, and Southern Illinois University acquired the college's property. It can be argued, however, that the ingenuity of Lincoln's patent, and his general interest in discoveries and inventions, illustrated his intensely mechanical way of thinking. In a similar although more commonplace way, the yoke was indicative of Lincoln's special regard for agriculture.²³

In the end, it is impossible to reach a clear and persuasive interpretation of the evidence regarding the "Lincoln ox yoke" before it came to the University of Illinois. There is simply no way that Clark M. Smith's letter and John G. Nicolay's notes, both written in 1875, can be reconciled, and statements in 1900 that supplement Smith's letter only widen the gap between Smith and Nicolay. However, were it necessary to come down on one side or the other, it would seem that Nicolay's record of his interview with Smith should be given more weight than the words of Smith and the letters and affidavits of others that expanded on what he wrote. Nicolay's notes, although too brief to settle the matter, can be regarded as not only plausible but also reliable. By contrast, Smith's assertion that Lincoln gave him a yoke that he remembered to have made in New Salem, seems a bit improbable, and the accounts of Condell and Pickrell, expanding on Smith 25 years later, seem too detailed to be authentic. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Nicolay's notes as

far as they go, but Smith's letter in 1875 may have claimed too much credit for himself. More particularly, Smith seems to have taken advantage of his relation to Lincoln when in 1864 he asked him for inside information that would be of benefit to his business. After the assassination, Smith was obviously proud of his connection with "the late Martyred President" and made the best of it, as did Condell and Pickrell. By 1900, everyone involved with the yoke, including officials at the University, were naturally prone to subscribe to an account of its history that included many particulars about its connection to Lincoln that cannot stand up under close scrutiny. In short, the yoke's authenticity as a Lincoln artifact is not unimpeachable.

Although this excursus into the evidence regarding the early history of the "Lincoln ox yoke" is inconclusive, the handling of the yoke in Urbana is clear. It was first kept in University Hall, the institution's first building. It can be seen in the Hall's "Agricultural Museum," where, in a picture of students and faculty, it is resting atop a row of exhibit cases. A sign, "MADE BY A. LINCOLN," is attached to the yoke. The yoke was next pictured on a table with beveled edges. The weight of the black walnut cross-bar and the iron ring fastened to the bar had already caused the hickory bows which rest on the table to splinter. At the time, anyone who saw the yoke would know that each bow would fit around the head of an ox, and that a pair of oxen would be harnessed to the ring.

In 1900, President Draper not only collected testimony regarding the yoke but arranged for it to be mounted on "some oak boards which had formed a part of the original flooring" of the Lincoln home in Springfield, and enclosed the ensemble in a glass display case. During the re-flooring of the Lincoln home, James S. McCullough, Auditor of the State of Illinois and an Urbana resident, procured this wood, and the new case was made under the direction of the campus superintendent



John G. Nicolay.
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

of buildings and grounds. Thus the yoke that Draper had "indisputably established" as made by Lincoln in New Salem was encased in floor boards from his home in Springfield. Draper then gave the yoke "a favorable and prominent" place in the new library (now Altgeld Hall), hanging it behind the circulation desk in the rotunda of the building. It was important to Draper that the yoke, being among the University's "most sacred possessions," be "religiously cared" for.²⁴

The yoke was widely noticed over the years. For example, in 1919, Garreta Busey, who later joined the English faculty, even wrote a poem about it:

"An ox-yoke, rude, and marred, and weather-dyed,

Fashioned in curves of strength by hero hand!

A Lincoln drove the shaggy beasts it spanned,

Across the prairie--he, the destined guide

To liberty and union nation-wide!"²⁵

In the late 1920s, when the present Library was constructed, the yoke was installed at the intersection of the first-floor hallways,

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but after it lost the glass-enclosed case that protected it, it was shifted to the more secure Lincoln Room (Library 422). In 2009-2010, the yoke was displayed at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in an exhibit on "The Agricultural Vision of Abraham Lincoln." In preparation for this exhibit, the yoke was detached from the oak-board backing to which it had been screwed and given careful conservation treatment. After its return from Springfield, it was mounted in a new and carefully designed case that is now installed in the reading room of the Library's Illinois History and Lincoln Collections (Library 322).

Although the yoke is a revered artifact, it is impossible to link it firmly to Lincoln. And yet, while its history is uncertain, like so many objects preserved in museums around the world, it remains a treasured possession of the University.

Acknowledgments: In attempting to resolve the vexing history of the "Lincoln ox yoke," the author of this paper wishes to acknowledge the suggestions of several Lincoln authorities in Springfield, including Wayne C. Temple, Daniel W. Stowell, Mark L. Johnson, and James Cornelius.

Endnotes

¹ Smith to Gregory, Oct. 9, 1875, "Lincoln Ox Yoke," Illinois History and Lincoln Collections, University of Illinois Library (hereafter Ox Yoke file). This letter is not in Smith's hand but appears to be a clean copy of the original.

² Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), I, opp. 33; Burrill, in *Illinois State Journal*, May 21, 1900, p. 1, col. 5.

³ Smith to Gregory, Oct. 9, 1875; Burrill to Watson Pickrell, quoted in *Springfield* (Ill.) *News*, Oct. 20, 1900, p. 11, col. 2; Draper to James H. Pickrell, Feb. 21, 1898, Draper Letter Books, p. 118, Draper Papers, 2/4/3, University Archives, University of Illinois Library (hereafter University Archives); Pickrell to Draper, Feb. 22, 1898, General Correspondence, Box 14 (PH-PL 1894-98 folder), Draper Papers, 2/4/1, University Archives.

⁴ Draper to Don Carlos Taft (formerly a professor at the University of Illinois), Feb. 21, 1898, Draper Letter Books, 2/4/3, p. 119 [copy, Ox Yoke file]; Draper to J. W. Judy (formerly president of the

Illinois State Board of Agriculture), Tallula, Ill., Feb. 21, 1898, *ibid.*, p. 117 [copy, Ox Yoke file]; Lincoln to Jesse A. Pickrell, in Thomas F. Schwartz, "Lincoln, Form Letters, and Fillmore Men," *Illinois Historical Journal*, 78:1 (Spring 1985), 66, and see "Form Letter to Fillmore Men," Sept. 8, 1856, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler et al. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 8 Vols., 1953-55), 2:374-75 (hereafter *Collected Works*).

⁵ "Lincoln's Ox Yoke; Interesting Historical Relic in the Museum of the University," *Illinois State Journal*, May 21, 1900, p. 1, col. 5; "Lincoln's Ox-Yoke Found; Discovered in Museum at Urbana, Ill.; Made on Farm at Decatur," *New York Times*, May 21, 1900, p. 1, col. 6.

⁶ Pickrell to Burrill, Sept. 17, 1900, Ox Yoke file (copy).

⁷ Affidavit, Oct. 6, 1900, Ox Yoke file (copy); "Identity Revealed; Owner of a Famous Lincoln Relic Found in Arizona: Watson Pickrell, formerly of this City, Gave Yoke to the University of Illinois," *Springfield News*, Oct. 20, 1900, p. 11, col. 2.

⁸ Watson Pickrell folder, Alumni and Faculty Biographical File, 26/4/1, University Archives; "In the Illini Vineyard: William Pickrell, '74, Ostrich Farmer," *Alumni Quarterly and Fortnightly News*, 2:2 (Oct. 1, 1916), 27.

⁹ Condell to Draper, Oct. 25, 1900, Draper Papers, University Archives, 2/4/1; Draper to Condell, Oct. 27, 1900, Draper Letter Books, p. 455, University Archives, 2/4/3; affidavit, Nov. 19, 1900, Ox yoke file.

¹⁰ Condell to Draper, Oct. 25, 1900, Draper Papers, University Archives, 2/4/1. Regarding the renovation of Smith's store in 1872, see *Illinois State Register*, Sept. 14, 1872, 4:1; Dec. 9, 1872, 4:1; and "Annual Review for 1872," *Illinois State Journal*, Jan. 1, 1873, 2:7.

¹¹ Condell to Draper, Nov. 10, 1900, Draper Papers, University Archives, 2/4/1; affidavit (unsigned), Ox Yoke file; and see John Carroll Power, *History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois* (Springfield: Edwin A. Wilson & Co., 1876), 628.

¹² "Ox-Yoke Made by Abraham Lincoln Now in the Possession of the University of Illinois," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1900, 45 (Part 6, 1:2-6); "Communication from President Draper. The Lincoln Ox-Yoke," *Proceedings*, Jan. 23, 1901, *Twenty-First Report (Seventh annual, Fourteenth biennial) of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois for the Two Years Ending September 30, 1902* (Springfield: Phillips Bros., 1902), 43-45.

¹³ *Illinois State Journal*, Mar. 24, 1853, 2:4.

¹⁴ *Collected Works*, 6: 464-65; Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 1:221; Harry E. Pratt, *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln* (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1943), 90-92, 154-61; "Historic Furnishings Report" in Katherine B. Menz, *The Lincoln Home, Lincoln*

Home National Historic Site (National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, 1983), 99-100; *Lincoln Day by Day: A Chronology, 1809-1865*, ed. Earl Schenck Miers, with C. Percy Powell (3 vols., Washington: Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, 1960), 3:4.

¹⁵ John G. Nicolay, "Conversation with C. M. Smith Esq.," Springfield, July 8, 1875, in Michael Burlingame, ed., *An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay's Interviews and Essays* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 17-18 (hereafter cited as Nicolay); Smith to Lincoln, Feb. 7, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress (online).

¹⁶ *Illinois State Journal*, Apr. 27, 1865, 3:3.

¹⁷ Nicolay, "Some Incidents in Lincoln's Journey from Springfield to Washington," in Nicolay, 107; "Principal Decorations in the City," *Illinois State Journal*, May 8, 1865, 1:1-2.

¹⁸ Draper to Condell, Oct. 27, 1900; Condell to Draper, Nov. 10, 1900; Nicolay, 107; Card file for LR230, Lincoln Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

¹⁹ Daniel W. Stowell, editor and director of The Papers of Abraham Lincoln, extracted this information from *The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln, Second Edition* (Springfield: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, 2009; online).

²⁰ Wayne C. Temple, "Lincoln's Fence Rails," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 47:1 (Spring 1954), 26.

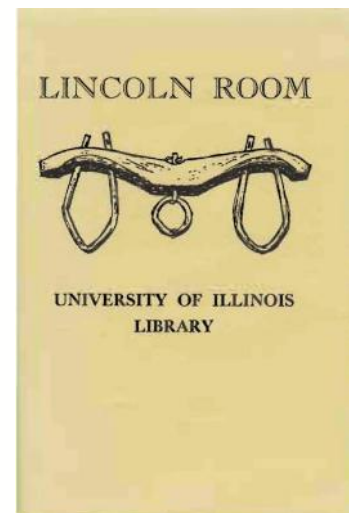
²¹ Nicolay, 18.

²² *Collected Works*, 3:480.

²³ Nicolay, 18; Jason Emerson, *Lincoln the Inventor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 33, 94.

²⁴ Board of Trustees, Proceedings, Jan 23, 1901, 44-45; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1900, 45.

²⁵ Bruce Weirick, ed., *Illini Poetry, 1918-1923* (Chicago: Covici-McGee Co., 1923), 19.



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PRESIDENT ROBERT A. STUART'S GREETING

Dear friends,

Over the past few years, I have had the good fortune to travel extensively abroad as a Rotary International Director and volunteer. Throughout my travels, the name of Abraham Lincoln consistently arises and I am amazed at how well known and revered he is on almost every continent. (I can't speak to Antarctica yet.)

In Lima, Peru, when looking at an "emancipation proclamation", the tour leader referenced the importance of Lincoln. In Kano, Nigeria, an article on the new Presidential Library and Museum jumped out at me on a newspaper front page. I have found an appreciation of Lincoln in Moscow, Beijing, London, Sydney and Delhi.

I recognize a good bit of this is myth. But, here in the United States and even in his hometown, do we reflect on Lincoln and his actions in his House Divided speech, the Emancipation Proclamation, or his efforts in the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment and their connection to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or their effects on and in not only the United States but outside the United States? Is there any relevance today? We need to examine and challenge how effectively we communicate. If we don't do our job today, will Lincoln even be mentioned in the decades ahead?

Bob Stuart, Jr.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS OF THE ALA

We welcome our 5 new members from five states.

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Your membership is essential to the ALA's success. It allows the ALA to provide you with the *For The People* newsletter and the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* and to sponsor many worthwhile programs related to the life of Abraham Lincoln. Please join.

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A Puzzling Lincoln Purchase at Corneau & Diller's Drug Store

What is Pennyroyal?

By Erika Holst

Erika Holst is the curator of collections at the Springfield Art Association, where she manages historic Edwards Place. She holds a master's degree from the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture through the University of Delaware. She has previously worked at Dickson Mounds Museum and the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. Her articles have appeared in the Journal of Illinois History, the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Illinois Heritage, and the Illinois Times.

On August 14, 1852, someone in the Lincoln family purchased a bottle of pennyroyal from Corneau & Diller's drug store for 10 cents; the first and only time they bought this product.¹ Pennyroyal had varied uses in the 19th century. It was recommended for everything from killing bugs to easing stomachaches.² What makes this particular purchase significant is that one of pennyroyal's many uses was as an emmenagogue and abortifacient,³ and Mary Lincoln was six weeks pregnant with Tad when this purchase was made.

There can be no way ever to know for certain why the Lincolns bought pennyroyal that August day. The reason may be as unremarkable as the one surmised by James T. Hickey, who pointed to pennyroyal's use "to prevent flea and mosquito bites" and guessed that "possibly, the Lincoln dog brought home a little problem for the boys."⁴ But the fact of the purchase of a known abortifacient in the early stages of Mary's fourth pregnancy must at least raise the possibility that the Lincolns, or at least Mary, did not want the pregnancy to progress.

Pennyroyal is a medicinal herb of the mint family found growing in woods and fields throughout the United States and Canada. It was most commonly employed as an infusion or tea, which the 1852 *American Practice of Medicine* recommended taking "warm, freely, and frequently."⁵ It appears frequently in 19th century medical treatises as a remedy for a variety of ailments, from "hooping-cough,"⁶ "sickness of the stom-

ach, heartburn, and flatulent colic,"⁷ to "dropsies, jaundice, and other chronic distempers."⁸ It is most frequently mentioned, however, as an emmenagogue and remedy for hysterical disorders and the diseases of women. A *Treatise of the Materia Medica and Therapeutics*, published in 1843, observed, "As a popular remedy for suppressed menstruation there is, perhaps, no other article so generally employed."⁹

"Suppressed menstruation" may well have been an oblique way of referring to unwanted pregnancy, as that is certainly the most obvious cause of a missed period. Nineteenth-century women certainly had no trouble making the deductive leap between emmenagogue and abortifacient. In "The 'Pennsylvania Model': The Judicial Criminalization of Abortion in Pennsylvania, 1838-1860," Anthony M. Joseph examines the case of Eliza Sowers, an unmarried woman who took magnesia, tansy, and pennyroyal in 1838 after missing a period. "All of these remedies had long been used as emmenagogues intended to restore the menstrual flow," Joseph points out. "Sowers, however, was probably worried that she was pregnant and used the remedies as abortifacients."¹⁰ And in "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village," Cornelia Hughes Dayton explains, "Most accounts of induced abortions among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century whites in the Old and New Worlds ... refer to the taking of savin or pennyroyal -- two common herbal abortifacients."¹¹

Assuming for a moment that the Lincolns' purchase of pennyroyal was not related to fleas or flatulent colic, what might have prompted them to seek it out? One possibility is that Mary missed a period but did not yet realize she was pregnant. She may have turned to a common herbal remedy to restore her menstrual flow, ascribing its suppression to a medical malady other than pregnancy.

However, it seems unlikely that a woman who had experienced three previous pregnancies would not recognize the symptoms of a fourth. Could Mary, in fact, have real-

ized she was pregnant and taken steps to end the pregnancy? If this is the case, one must be careful to consider her actions in the context of mid-19th century America and not early 21st century America. Abortion was not the public and culturally divisive issue that it is today. Contemporary wisdom also varied as to whether life began at conception or at the "quickening," when the first fetal movement is felt in utero. William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (a favorite legal text of Abraham Lincoln's)¹² declared that life "begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb."¹³ In this context, Mary's consumption of pennyroyal during the very early stages of her pregnancy might well have been conceptualized as something closer to birth control than to abortion.

It has generally been accepted that Tad was a deliberately planned addition to the Lincoln family. David Herbert Donald notes that "because Willie needed a playmate, Mary in 1853 gave birth to a fourth child."¹⁴ The Lincolns famously adored their children, so why might they seek to terminate a pregnancy? The most likely explanation presents itself as a concern for Mary's health. She seems to have had trouble with Willie's delivery; three weeks after he was born she was still "sick-abled" with what Lincoln termed "baby-sickness" (though he hastened to add "I suppose it is not dangerous").¹⁵ With firsthand experience of the pain of childbirth, as well as secondhand knowledge of all that can go wrong when delivering a child, Mary might simply have preferred not to undergo the experience again. Indeed, Willie's excessively long nursing period of a year and a half may have been an attempt to avoid the trauma of a subsequent pregnancy.¹⁶ As it turned out, Tad's birth was apparently even more difficult than Willie's, resulting in permanent damage to her urethra that left her vulnerable to urinary tract infections throughout the rest of her life.¹⁷

(Continued on page 10)



Lincoln Heritage Museum Grand Opening

On Saturday, April 26, 2014, the Lincoln Heritage Museum held a Grand Opening. Located on the campus of Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois, the opening was indeed a grand event. After years of patient planning and anticipation, the relocated and redesigned museum was truly worth the wait. It is a spectacular exhibit of a rare and valuable collection of artifacts that tells the story of the life and times of Abraham Lincoln.

Ron Keller reported that “The \$1.6 million, 9,000-square-foot museum features both traditional and modern approaches to the museum experience. The first floor of the museum has a more traditional feel, with artifacts displayed in modern cases that protect them from climate, light, and mishandling. The second floor has an “immersive” gallery, where visitors can interact with touch points and move through a variety of scenes depicting different stages of Lincoln’s life.”

The Lincoln Heritage Museum, which focuses heavily on Lincoln’s time in Logan County, features such rare artifacts as a Bible owned by the president; a chair on which young Tad Lincoln carved his name; a dinner bell Mary Lincoln used at the family’s Springfield home; and a rare copy of Lincoln’s favorite poem, William Knox’s “Mortality,” written in Lincoln’s own hand.

The ALA takes pride in this wonderful new approach to telling the Lincoln story. ALA Board member Ron Keller has been largely responsible for the vision and implementation of this new facility and we congratulate him for his perseverance and success. ALA Board members Daniel R. Weinberg and Louise Taper are also members of the Board of Directors of Lincoln College and have been strong supporters of the new museum project.

Visit the website for more information:
<http://museum.lincolncollege.edu/>



Director Ron Keller and Assistant Director Anne Moseley pictured at the April 26, 2014, Grand Opening of the Lincoln Heritage Museum.

Plan a visit to the museum.
It is open Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
and Saturday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Closed on Sundays & holidays.

(Continued from page 9)

caused by environmental teratogens, or substances that cause congenital malformations.¹⁹ This timeline corresponds to the Lincolns’ purchase of pennyroyal. Might Mary’s ingestion have harmed but not killed the fetus? It is also worth noting that the Lincolns had no more children after Tad, their fourth, even though Mary was only 34 years old when he was born. By comparison, Mary’s three sisters in Springfield each had at least five children and continued giving birth into their late thirties and early forties.²⁰ Clearly, the Lincolns were looking to circumscribe their family to a greater degree than was common in their particular kinship group.

It must be reiterated that there are many possible reasons the Lincolns purchased pennyroyal in August 1852, ranging from a flea problem to an upset stomach to an assumed menstrual malady. However, it must also be conceded that the fact that they bought a known abortifacient during the early stages of Mary’s fourth pregnancy places a desire to end that pregnancy among those possible reasons, and invites us to reexamine what we think we know about the Lincolns and their desire for children.

Comments

The Fall edition of For the People will feature comments on this article by Jean Baker and Daniel Mark Epstein. If you also would like to submit a comment, please do so by emailing Richard E. Hart at rhart1213@aol.com.

Endnotes

1. James T. Hickey, “The Lincoln Account at the Corneau & Diller Drug Store, 1849-1861, A Springfield Tradition,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Spring 1984), 64.
2. Eliza Leslie, *Miss Leslie’s New Receipt-Book*, Third Edition (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850), 278; J. Moore Neligan, *Medicines: Their Uses and Modes of Administration*, Sixth Edition (Dublin: Fannin and Co., 1864), 491-492.
3. Cornelia Hughes Dayton, “Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village,” *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1991): 19.
4. Hickey, “Lincoln Account,” 62-63.
5. Wooster Beach, *American Practice of Medicine*, Volume 3 (New York: Wooster Beach, 1852), 210.
6. Jonathan Pereira, *The Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics*, Fourth Edition, Volume II Part I (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 514.
7. Neligan, *Medicines*, 491-492.
8. Henry Phillips, *The Companion for the Kitchen Garden*, Volume 1 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 349.
9. John Eberle, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica and Therapeutics*, Volume 1 (Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot, 1843), 434.
10. Anthony M. Joseph, “‘The Pennsylvania Model’: The Judicial Criminalization of Abortion in Pennsylvania, 1838-

-1860,” *The American Journal of Legal History* Vol. 49 No. 3 (July 2007): 292.

11. Dayton, “Taking the Trade,” 19.
12. Lincoln advised aspiring lawyer John M. Brockman to “Begin with Blackstone’s Commentaries” and “reading it carefully through, say twice.” Abraham Lincoln to John M. Brockman, 25 September 1860, in Roy P. Basler, et al., eds., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953) IV:121.
13. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* Vol. 1, Books 1 & 2 (New York: W. E. Dean, 1838), 94.
14. David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 154.
15. Abraham Lincoln to John D. Johnston, 12 January 1851, in Basler, *Collected Works*, II:97.
16. A letter from David Davis to his wife states, “Lincoln got a letter from his wife. She says ... [her baby] has the nursing sore mouth – child 18 mos. old. I guess she ought to have quit nursing some time ago.” Quoted in Willard King, *Lincoln’s Manager, David Davis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 84.
17. Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 270.
18. John M. Hutchinson, “What Was Tad Lincoln’s Speech Problem?” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* Vol. 30 No. 1 (Winter 2009) 39-40.
19. Ann W. Kummer, *Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Abnormalities: Effects on Speech and Resonance*, Second Edition (Thomson Delmar Learning, 2008), 38-39.
20. Elizabeth Edwards’s fifth child, Ninian Edwards, was born ca. March 1852, when Elizabeth was 39 years old. Frances Wallace’s sixth child, Charles, was born ca. 1858, when Frances was 43. Ann Todd’s sixth child, Minnie, was born ca. 1868, when Ann was 44. *Illinois State Journal* 5 September 1853; Oak Ridge Cemetery Interment Records, Vol. 1, p. 33; 1860 United States Census Records, 18

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS REVISITED

In November 1863, Abraham Lincoln rode a train into Pennsylvania. On the journey he reviewed his brief address of 272 words, dedicating a new national cemetery for the 50,000 soldiers, Rebel and Union alike, who fell there in July 1863. He did not expect his thoughts to endure, but they became his most famous utterance, an affirmation of national purpose and unity. To mark that 150th anniversary, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, gathered comments on the meaning of the Address for today's America — each comment written in 272 words. Below is one comment, written by a Springfield native.

Reading the Gettysburg Address, I notice first its strong focus on the melancholy task of consecrating a mass grave. “Dedicatory Remarks,” the program stated: Lincoln seizes on *dedicate* and repeats six variations of that word. To dedicate is to mark as respected or sacred, and on that clear November day he was a mourning patriarch in public and in private. His stovepipe hat still wore a black band for his son Willie, dead of typhoid at eleven.

The shape of the Address is taut yet perfect. Lincoln exercises the power of threes, built in parallel triplets: historical, political, spiritual; past to present to future. In 272 words he confirms the nation's birth into possibility, mourns the losses of a terrifying present, and promises future rebirth. With a catch: if Freedom is worth any price, then so is Unity. He mentions the Declaration only indirectly and the Constitution not at all. He favors neither side in the ongoing, bloody war. His new compact with the dead and living is intensely personal, an oath of private conscience made national.

Applause interrupted the President's address five times, remarkable in part because his text is so brief. Not many voices from 1863 sound modern to us, but he speaks hard thoughts stripped to the core as if for the telegraph, or a jury summation. *Multum in parvo*, saying much in little, is the hardest effect to achieve. Thoreau and Dickinson distill the language of feeling. Sherman and Grant remake the words of war. Lincoln's heartbreaking gravity, in that late autumn graveyard where the stench of death still hovered, is our greatest voice, and rightly so.

—William Howarth
Princeton University

This essay, and dozens more by other notable Americans, was solicited by the Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation in 2013. Look for them in a forthcoming book from Lyons Press in 2015.

The 2014 Annual Lincoln Colloquium

Sponsored by the Allen County Public Library, the Friends of the Allen County Public Library, and the Abraham Lincoln Association.

The 2014 Annual Lincoln Colloquium, “Amid the Din of Arms: The Election of 1864,” will be hosted by the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on Saturday, September 27th from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The program features four outstanding speakers who will provide a variety of perspectives on the election:

Nicole Etcheson, Alexander M. Bracken Professor of History at Ball State University, will discuss “Sustaining the National Government: The Election of 1864 in Indiana.”

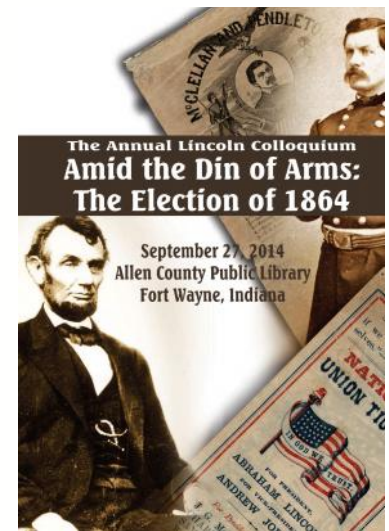
Jeffrey J. Malanson, Assistant Professor of History at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, will present “‘George Washington, the founder of American independence, and Abraham Lincoln, the liberator of the slave’: The Founding Fathers and the Election of 1864.”

Jennifer Weber, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Kansas at Lawrence, will talk on “The Summer Lincoln Lost the Election.”

Jonathan W. White, Assistant Professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport University, will speak on “Emancipation, the Union Army, and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln.”

The formal program will conclude with a speakers' panel discussion moderated by *Lincoln Lore* editor Sara Gabbard. Following the panel discussion, colloquium attendees may tour the stellar collection of Lincoln and Lincoln-related books, documents, and photographs that are part of the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection.

Colloquium attendees are also invited to arrive a day early and attend the 34th Annual R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture on Friday, September 26th at 7:00 p.m. The 2014 McMurtry lecturer will be **Eric Foner**, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University. The lecture will be held in the Allen County Public Library's Main library theatre and is free and open to the public.



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