



FOR THE PEOPLE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1

SPRING 2017

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

www.abrahamlincolnassociation.org

Governor Bruce Rauner Addresses 2017 ALA Banquet

Illinois's 42nd governor, Bruce Rauner, delivered spontaneous and personal remarks at the Abraham Lincoln Association 208th Birthday Banquet. Before his remarks, the audience watched a video about the Spirit of Lincoln Youth Leadership Academy, featuring Antonio Neal's "I Am America." The Governor was introduced by former ALA president Don Tracy.

I am more than a little bit intimidated to come here tonight. How do you talk about Abraham Lincoln to a room full of Abraham Lincoln scholars and experts? This is challenging to say the least, and the way to do it is to make it very personal and talk about what he means to me and what he's meant in my life and why he's been an inspiration for me.

Before I do that, I want to say three big thank you shout-outs. First of all, we're blessed in Illinois because we have so many outstanding public servants and community leaders. We have one of the best anywhere in Illinois - here in Springfield - the head of the ALA. Let's give a round of applause for Kathryn Harris.

We're also very blessed - we stole him from Texas to the great state of Illinois - one of the great scholars in America with deep expertise in our presidential history and the proud history of America—an outstanding leader, Alan Lowe. Let's have a round of applause for Alan Lowe.

And we are so blessed in Illinois. We have so many wonderful students who are dedicated to working hard and giving back in their community and making a difference. We have many of them right here tonight. That video - I was tearing up. That video was awesome. Keep up the great work. You are our future. God bless you students and all your fellow students.

And I want to say thank you to everyone in this room. Thank you for your patriot-



*Governor Bruce Rauner
Addressing the 2017 ALA Banquet*

ism. Thank you for supporting the importance, the legacy, the study, the learning about America's greatest citizen - America's greatest president. We're celebrating his birthday, but, fundamentally, we're celebrating Lincoln's life and legacy. It's a wonderful thing, because Abraham Lincoln embodies everything that's great about America.

When I first read about him - I remember getting little books in kindergarten and looking at the pictures and reading about Abraham Lincoln when I was just learning the words - I thought, what a great guy. I want to be like him.

You know, when I was growing up, my hero was my grandfather. He was my best friend and he was my hero. He did teach me to hunt and fish and love the outdoors. He was a dairy farmer. He was an immigrant. He didn't speak much English. He lived in a double-wide trailer. He had no money. But he loved America, and he believed in three things.

He believed in hard work. He said, "Bruce, whatever you do in your life, give it a hundred percent - your best effort - whatever you do." The second thing he said, "Get a good education. Do good in school and keep going. Go as far as you can in school. It's the most important thing to get yourself ahead in life." And then he said, "Give back in your community. Wherever you live, people need help. We have a moral duty to help each other. Give back in your community and help out - help other people, all the time. Put other people first, ahead of yourself."

Those are three good rules to live a life, and I love them dearly. I've tried to live up to them. I never can fully live up to his role model, but he was my inspiration.

I have to say that when I've read about Lincoln - I don't have the deep expertise; I don't have the scholarship about him - but, you know what, he is what America, what a good life, is all about. My grandfather, he was saying, "Bruce, you know, success isn't defined by money. It's not defined by fame or power. Success is defined by love of family and friends and by how much we've helped make the world a better place." That's it. It's not complicated." By being here, by being in the world, is the world a little bit of a better place or not? And how can we strive to help others and make the world a better place. The good Lord put us on earth - my grandparents, were deeply religious - the good Lord put us on earth to do His work, to help each other, to make the world a better place. These were guiding principles.

And to me Abraham Lincoln is it. America's greatest citizen. He did more to change the fundamental nature of America and make America a better nation than any other single human being, in my

Continued on page 11

Letter From President Kathryn M. Harris

I'm sending you warm wishes for Spring's arrival. If you are like me, you are eager to begin planting your vegetable and flower gardens. I can hardly wait!

Thank you to everyone who attended our 2017 Banquet, the 208th Birthday celebration. Governor Rauner's remarks were touching and heart-felt as he told us what President Lincoln meant to him and how his character and legacy affected his life. You can watch the Governor's remarks on our website. <http://bit.ly/RaunerALA>. In addition, I was delighted to see so many young people at our Banquet. I extend my sincere "thanks" to their sponsors. I look forward to their attendance next year as well.



Please mark your calendars and participate in these upcoming events: Illinois History Day, sponsored by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, will showcase outstanding history projects developed by students across Illinois. At this May 4th event in Springfield, you can serve as a judge. Contact Genevieve Kaplan, Education Director, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum 217-558-8935 genevieve.kaplan@illinois.gov

Make your reservations for our June 24th Road Trip and you will enjoy learning about Lincoln's 8th Circuit from Guy Fraker. Thank you to Nancy Chapin for organizing this fun day for Lincoln lovers. See page 3 for details. The Conference on Illinois History is scheduled for October 5th and 6th at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield. The Call for Papers can be found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/ihpa/Involved/>. The Iles House, the oldest house in Springfield, opened on April 1 celebrating its 180th birthday. This summer Iles will host a series of "Porch Chats," the first of which on June 23 will be *Thomas Lincoln Reconsidered*. Enjoy these events!

Thank you for your continuing support of our Association, and I hope to see many of you at these events. Invite your friends and encourage them to become ALA members, too!

Warm regards to all of you,
Kathryn M. Harris, President

Lincoln the Lawyer Award Presented to Thomas S. Johnson

By Judge Ronald Spears

The Lincoln the Lawyer Award recognizes individuals who reflect the character and ideals of Abraham Lincoln in their legal careers. This year The Abraham Lincoln Association is proud to present the award, posthumously, to Thomas S. Johnson.

Tom was a member of the Williams McCarthy law firm in Rockford, Illinois where he served for 46 years prior to his death in 2016 at the age of 73.

A Rockford native, Tom joined the firm after graduation from Rockford University and Harvard Law School, and service in the United States Army. He was a recognized expert in estate and trust law. Over the years Tom actively served in leadership positions in a wide range of professional organizations in the legal profession, including local, state, and national bar associations. He worked dili-

gently to improve the delivery of legal services, including to the poor and underserved. He was selected as a Laureate in the ISBA Academy of Illinois Lawyers, a group maintaining the highest principles of the legal profession as demonstrated by service to the law and to the public.

Tom was a staunch supporter of education, serving as a trustee or board member of several schools. For many years, he served as President of the Board of American Legion Premier Boys State of Illinois, conducting leadership conferences at Eastern Illinois University for thousands of young people. He served as Chancellor of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

Among Tom's many gifts was public speaking. A Rockford paper reported: "After hearing him speak, the story goes, people would joke that they wanted it written in their wills that upon death Thomas Johnson would deliver their eulo-



ALA Director Judge Ronald Spears presents the Lincoln the Lawyer Award posthumously to Thomas S. Johnson. John Holevas accepts the award on his behalf.

gies." His humor, wit, and intellectual depth allowed him to speak with force to almost any topic. Lincoln was the source of many of his stories and anecdotes.

Tom was truly a "Lincoln-hearted person." He admired Lincoln's personal qualities and devoted great efforts to study all aspects of Lincoln's life, including his legal career. He served on the Board of The Abraham Lincoln Association.

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Guy Fraker to Lead Tour of Lincoln's 8th Judicial Circuit (West Side)

Saturday, June 24, 2017 Depart at 8:00 a.m. Return at 4:00 p.m.

**As Lincoln experienced it at the end of the 1840s
(in an air-conditioned, wifi enabled bus rather than horse back)**



We have all seen the crowded, restored, more renowned Lincoln sites. Yet somehow the back roads of Lincoln's Circuit have an unvarnished authenticity that is different. Many of the roads are the same, winding through the prairie landscape, across streams Lincoln and his fellows crossed. They include courthouses, inns, and other sites visited by Lincoln. This landscape, far from crowds, evokes a sense of Lincoln's presence that is unique. I urge you to join us as we go looking for Lincoln.

Guy Fraker

Bus will depart from the Iles House,
7th and Cook, Springfield, Illinois

Trip stops include Middletown, Metamora, and Mt. Pulaski.

Box lunch will be provided.

ALA members: \$45.00 Non-ALA members: \$55.00

Mail check with name, cell# and email to:

ALA 8th Circuit bus trip

6820 Wagon Ford Rd.

Chatham, Illinois 62629

Thomas Lincoln Reconsidered

Summer Porch Chat at the Iles House

Friday, June 23, 7:00 p.m.

A roundtable discussion on the life of Thomas Lincoln.

Free and Open to the Public.

Participants

William E. Bartelt Author of "There I Grew Up" Remembering Abraham Lincoln's Indiana Youth. Spent several summers as a guide at Lincoln's Boyhood Home in Spencer County, Indiana.

Brian Dirck Author of *Lincoln in Indiana*, professor of history at Anderson University in Indiana.

Steve Haaff Dale, Indiana woodworker and expert on Thomas Lincoln furniture.

Matthew Mittelstaedt IHPA site manager at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site.

R. Dale Ogden Chief Curator of History and Culture, Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites.



Cherry corner cupboard constructed by Thomas Lincoln. Courtesy of the collection of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee

The 2017 Benjamin P. Thomas Symposium



Daniel Crofts
Keynote Speaker



Noah Andre Trudeau
Luncheon Speaker



Burt Solomon
Symposium Speaker



James Conroy
Symposium Speaker



Book signing in the Atrium of the
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library



The audience at the Benjamin P. Thomas Symposium in the
House of Representatives of the Old State Capitol



Mary Patton, Kathy Hoffmann, ALA Board Member Bill
Bartelt, and his wife, Kathryn Bartelt

Thank you to our co-sponsors: The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum,
The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Old State Capitol State Historic Site

The 2017 Abraham Lincoln Birthday Banquet



Alan Lowe
Director of the Abraham Lincoln
Presidential Library and Museum



The *Spirit of Lincoln Youth Leadership Academy*
participants with Governor and Mrs. Diana Rauner



Mrs. Diana and Governor Bruce
Rauner and Kathryn Harris



Kevin Corbin, Justin Blandford, and Don Tracy



Sarah Watson, John Elliff, and
Heather Wickens



Kathryn Harris, President of
The Abraham Lincoln Association



Andrew White and Shaun Williams
participants in the *Spirit of Lincoln Youth
Leadership Academy*



ALA Board Member Bill Shepherd,
Diana and Governor Bruce Rauner, ALA
President Kathryn Harris, and ALA Ex-
ecutive Manager Mary Shepherd



114th Illinois Volunteer Infantry
Regiment Reactivated



Raymond Rongley, Bob Willard, and
Ann Hart



Bill Read and Nancy Chapin

Forsaking the Law to Save the Nation: Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, Attorney

By John A. Lupton

Executive Director of the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission

Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth is one of the well-known heroes of the Civil War because of his death in May 1861 after removing a Confederate flag from the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia -- directly across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. After Colonel Ellsworth cut down the flag, he was shot and killed instantly by the hotel owner. President Abraham Lincoln experienced heavy grief over the loss of his 24-year-old friend, and penned a touching letter of condolence to Ellsworth's parents.¹ When Lincoln first met Ellsworth, presumably in December 1859, he saw a younger version of himself in Ellsworth and immediately sought to become a mentor to the young man. Ellsworth accepted Lincoln's invitation to study law in the Lincoln & Herndon law office, and Ellsworth served as a campaign surrogate for Lincoln in the weeks leading up to the presidential election. One unanswered question in the life of Ellsworth was whether he had completed his legal studies and had become licensed to practice law in Illinois.

Several newspaper reports after his death noted that he had obtained his law license, and a handful of articles repeated that claim.² In her 1960 biography of Ellsworth, Ruth Painter Randall questioned that claim. Randall acknowledged that there was no record at the Illinois Supreme Court or at the Sangamon County Circuit Clerk that Ellsworth had received his license.³ Ellsworth's name is not found in the Supreme Court's Roll of Attorneys.⁴ Randall correctly noted that becoming a lawyer in Illinois was a multi-step process and surmised that Ellsworth completed several steps, but not all of them. Most prospective attorneys studied the law with an established lawyer or law firm. Others, like Lincoln in the 1830s, studied with no one and simply read the principal law books of the time. Only a handful of lawyers attended law school. Regardless of the method of education, the next step, required of everyone, was to obtain a certificate of good moral character near the completion of the legal studies.



*Col. Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth,
by Mathew Brady, 1861.
Courtesy of the ALPLM/Taper Collection.*

Then a committee would give the candidate an oral examination to test whether he had knowledge of forms and actions. If the committee approved, it would notify the Illinois Supreme Court, which entered the person's name onto the Roll of Attorneys and sent him the law license. (Lincoln's license, if ever received, has never shown up.)

Ellsworth began his legal studies at the behest of Charles Spafford, a Rockford, Illinois, banker. Ellsworth and Spafford's daughter, Carrie, had become closely acquainted, and Charles would approve of their marriage if Ellsworth would make a responsible career choice. While Ellsworth was active in military drilling, Charles recommended the legal profession. Ellsworth then moved to Chicago intending to study law with Judge Charles Morgan, but Morgan moved to Elgin and made arrangements for Ellsworth to work with John E. Cone in April 1859. Cone experienced financial difficulties, and in August had to sell off his books and furnishings. In September 1859, Ellsworth continued his legal studies with Evert Van Buren.⁵ Ellsworth's military pursuits frequently interrupted his legal education.

In December 1859, Ellsworth traveled to Springfield as part of his duties as newly appointed paymaster of the Illinois militia. While in Springfield, he stayed with John Cook, who was the Commandant of the Springfield Greys militia unit. On this trip Ellsworth met Lincoln, who offered him the opportunity to study in the Lincoln & Herndon office. Lincoln told Cook that he would "leave no means unturned" to recruit Ellsworth to his law office.⁶ By May 1860, Ellsworth had decided to move to Springfield, but only after a national tour with his Chicago Zouaves unit, which earned him accolades and celebrity status. Ellsworth returned to Springfield in August 1860 to continue his studies under the tutelage of Lincoln.⁷

With the 4-way presidential race impending, Ellsworth again became distracted from his legal studies. He made at least 10 speeches on behalf of his mentor Lincoln around Sangamon County.⁸ After Lincoln's victory, Ellsworth presumably returned to complete his legal studies, and most likely took the bar examination before a committee. With no evidence in the records of the Supreme Court of Illinois, the question whether Ellsworth had obtained his law license had remained a mystery — until now.

A discovery in late 2016 in the Clerk of the Illinois Supreme Court records now housed at the Illinois State Archives definitively shows that Ellsworth received a license to practice law in Illinois.⁹ In 2009, then-Clerk of the Supreme Court Juleann Hornyak had deposited with the Illinois State Archives a large collection of Attorney Oaths dated as early as the 1850s. This material consisted of 90 cubic feet, and nearly all of the 142,000 oaths were in excellent condition. Unfortunately, a handful of documents had been exposed to moisture and had developed mold.

Nearly 300 of the case files had developed significant mold, fusing the documents together. Among these 300 files was one file cover labeled simply "E.E. Ellsworth," but it could not be opened. Through the expertise of Illinois State Archives conservator Alex Dixon, the Ellsworth file was re-humidified, allowing it to be opened, cleaned, encapsulated, and examined. It

Recollections of Betty J. Hickey (1923-2016)

By Thomas F. Schwartz

Director of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum and former Secretary of The Abraham Lincoln Association and currently a Distinguished Director

Betty J. Hickey died on August 26, 2016. Although she never served on the Abraham Lincoln Association board, she attended every event with her husband, James "Jim" Hickey, who served on the board for decades. Betty did more for the Association and advancing the Lincoln story than most but did it quietly and gracefully, without show or boast. She loved to travel, host parties at the family's Pine Lodge Farm barn, promote Lincoln history and Mt. Pulaski history. But most of all Betty loved people. No one was a stranger to her and everyone was welcome at Pine Lodge Farm.

Born Betty Booker on February 4, 1923, in Mt. Pulaski, Illinois, she grew up in the heart of Lincoln country. James Thomas Hickey, a handsome young farmer in neighboring Elkhart, caught her attention, and the two were wed on August 30, 1947. Out of their loving union would be born a daughter, Julie, who followed a calling to become an Ursuline Sister. Betty and Jim were perfect complements to one another. Both loved to travel, loved social occasions, and loved history, especially that dealing with Illinois's favorite son, Abraham Lincoln.

Upon his return from serving in World War II, Jim attended Lincoln College, and upon graduation worked in establishing the Lincoln Museum at the College while also offering a course on Lincoln. This began Jim and Betty's life-long association with supporting that museum through the Grand Soiree. For many decades Betty was one of the major planners of this fund-raising event. Their life changed from the rhythm of farming 360 acres to the demands of Abraham Lincoln when a cover story in *Life* magazine featured Jim's interest in unearthing new Lincoln documents. From that notoriety, they were hired to run a gift shop and museum in the Lincoln Home neighborhood. Always active in the Illinois



*Betty and Jim Hickey
Image is courtesy of Louise Taper*

State Historical Society, Jim was then hired in 1958 as the first Lincoln Curator at the Illinois State Historical Library, now the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. In this capacity Jim became acquainted with every governor from Otto Kerner to Jim Edgar, and Betty became friends with every First Lady.

Jim's efforts at restoring the Old State Capitol, the Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices, the Great Western Railway Station, the Governor's Mansion, and the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan in Dixon, Illinois, required a depth of research that was greatly aided by Betty, who also typed numerous drafts of papers and reports regarding these projects. When Jim developed a friendship with Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, the last direct descendant of Abraham Lincoln, Beckwith invited Jim and Betty to help him sort through family belongings at the Hildene estate in Manchester, Vermont. They spent a hot summer sorting through trunks in an attic as well as materials stuffed in closets and desk drawers. During these efforts, Jim discovered the cabinet containing Robert Todd Lincoln's 46 letterpress volumes. A project that Jim never completed was to publish a selection of Robert's letters from those volumes. Betty assisted with the transcripts and typed drafts.

Often overlooked in these activities was the very important element of fellowship. Betty provided the perfect social settings for people of like interests and dissimilar interests to meet and network.

The gatherings at Pine Lodge Farm were always casual, with plenty of tasty food and drink. It allowed people to get to know one another and through the informality of the occasion, have conversations that built long-lasting relationships that resulted in important Lincoln research. It was at these grand events that I met governors, former Illinois first ladies, and government officials who had served former presidents. I also met local families who shared invaluable information about Lincoln, passed on to them through family oral tradition. The annual Lincoln dinner every February 12th honors the memory of Abraham Lincoln; but Jim and Betty's gatherings helped build the friendships that would keep Lincoln studies vibrant, complementing a personal with the professional dimension.

I saw Betty at dinner in May 2016 after the Lincoln College commencement ceremony. She was full of stories about her recent travels, and it was a delightful evening. Her proudest accomplishments were improvements in the Mt. Pulaski Historical Museum, an institution she helped create and promote. Several months later I received a call from Julie indicating that Betty had fallen. In the course of having x-rays to confirm that no bones were broken, it was discovered she had inoperable cancer, with only months to live. Cathy and I made arrangements to visit Betty. She was frail but determined to make the most of the time remaining. We looked at photo albums, recalling many of the great memories from past events.

Betty was an individual of deep faith and did not fear death. It was only upon saying our goodbyes that we knew it would be the last time we would see Betty alive. Perhaps it was only fitting that after the funeral mass, a number of us were invited out to Pine Lodge Farm for one last gathering to remember Jim, Betty, and Mr. Lincoln.



Thomas Lincoln Reconsidered

By Richard E. Hart

Past President and current Board Member,
The Abraham Lincoln Association

Thomas Lincoln has been the subject of description and judgment since at least 1860 when a political biography of his son Abraham was written. Since then, thousands of books have been written about Abraham with most having brief descriptions of Thomas. Those written shortly after Abraham's death were assembled quickly to meet the demand for a record of Abraham's life and accomplishments. Some elevated Abraham to Biblical heights. Indeed, he became *Father Lincoln*. As Abraham rose to the heavens, Thomas was pushed into a hellish abyss. From that post-mortem period to present, most published critical judgments of Thomas conclude that he was a miserable failure both as a man and as a father. That is today's conventional wisdom among Lincoln historians. It is time to take a fresh look at Thomas and reconsider those judgments and that wisdom.

There have been a few historians who differed with the conventional wisdom. In 1942, Louis A. Warren wrote a critique clearly describing what he thought was the unfair demonization of Thomas Lincoln.

Thomas Lincoln has been the scapegoat for all who would make Lincoln a saint... As one writer put it: "Not a single one of Mr. Lincoln's deifiers has had the audacity to claim anything superior for Tom Lincoln." Folklore and tradition have made him one of the most despised characters in American history, and as long as he is portrayed as a vagabond, an idler, a tramp, a rover, and as poor white trash, lacking in energy, void of ambition, wanting in respectability, and a general failure in life, it will be impossible to trace any tendencies which the President may have inherited from his father.

Warren was not alone in his sympathetic view of Thomas. Some teachers, historians, writers, historical societies, and Lincoln aficionados who lived in Indiana and Kentucky agreed with Warren's assessment of Thomas. Scholars distant from the Indiana-Kentucky scene ignored and brushed the locals aside as provincial defenders of their own and Thomas's home turf. The conventional wisdom that Thomas was a deplorable man and father survived and remains alive and well today.

Until a few years ago, I accepted the conventional wisdom and was among those who



Thomas Lincoln

Courtesy of the Lincoln Memorial University,
Harrogate, Tennessee.

judged Thomas a worthless failure. After all, these were the judgments made by several of my closest friends and preeminent Lincoln biographers. I was unaware of the small band of Indiana and Kentucky dissenters, the Warren school, and I had no basis for accepting their judgments and rejecting those of my friends and Lincoln biographers.

Then I discovered a whole new Thomas Lincoln. He was revealed to me by Indiana and Kentucky friends of the Warren school who are part of a growing, somewhat silent, unorganized, subculture of Thomas Lincoln revisionists. Their voices are quiet and unpretentious, but what they say resounded in my ears like a loud clap of summer thunder rolling across the Illinois prairie.

The revisionists strongly disagree with the conventional descriptions of Thomas Lincoln found in many contemporary biographies. To support their position, they point to Thomas's role in religious and civil affairs of the communities where he lived. He was quite active in his Baptist church, where he served as a well-respected counselor and contributor to the building of a new church meeting place. Before every meal he asked a simple blessing. *Fit and prepare us for humble service. We beg for Christ's sake, Amen.*

He also served in many civil positions in Hardin County, Kentucky. He was a juror on many occasions, a jail guard, a member of the militia, a road commissioner and a tax payer.

He paid for the limited education of his children and step-children on every available occasion. He was not materialistic and was generous almost to a fault in assisting those in need. By the standards of the burghers of any small community, Thomas was a respected member of his community.

Thomas left no letters or diaries, but he did leave a body of work as significant as any writer or artist. His work is in the cabinets and cupboards that he created and left for us to see and enjoy. The revisionists generously shared photographs of these pieces and information about Thomas's abilities as a cabinet maker. And not just a rough cabinet maker, but a master, whose pieces are treasured by private collectors, museums, and universities. The State of Illinois owns two magnificent pieces that unfortunately are in storage rather than on display.

As I learned more about Thomas's beautiful cabinets, I came to agree with the revisionists. Thomas was truly a master craftsman with superior artistic and mathematical skills. This became even more remarkable when I learned that Thomas was blind in one eye at least since he first moved to Indiana and that his eyesight continued to decline. By the time of his death, he was most likely blind in the other eye. In modern parlance, he was physically disabled and would have been eligible for public assistance. All of this important information was new to me as well it might now be to those biographers who have judged Thomas harshly.

As I examined other aspects of Thomas's life and character, I continued to discover a man unlike the one I knew from Lincoln biographers. He and his famous son were very different in their views of the world and their hoped-for positions in the future of that world. Thomas's view was simple. It was a matter of fact, unconscious acceptance of a hard and unjust life consumed by a day to day survival on the edge of the American frontier and spiritually dependent on a literal and judgmental Lord. To the contrary, Abraham's world view was cerebral. He consciously and expansively examined life and its possibilities beyond the day to day grueling fight for survival. Abraham's world view was a luxury made possible by the preceding survival mentality of Thomas and the early pioneers. Their struggles made possible the fresh world view of the next generation.

Despite their fundamental differences in world views, they remained respectful and

Continued from page 9

loving of one another. Their differences did not create hatred or disgust. In fact, their "differences" were nothing more than the age-old father-son rivalry and tension common to man since the beginning of time.

In analyzing and describing the relationship between father and son, some historians have interpreted letters and events to show Abraham's disrespect for his father. These interpretations need to be reexamined.

One such interpretation is of letter that Abraham wrote to his stepbrother, John D. Johnston, regarding Thomas Lincoln as he lay sick and dying. The letter is dated January 12, 1851, five days before Thomas died, and 22 days after Willie Lincoln's birth, and was in response to a letter from John requesting that Abraham come visit his father. Abraham response letter said he could not come because Mary had just had a baby and was sick-bed. Some historians have offered certain parts of Abraham's as evidence of Abraham's disdain of his father. Here is Abraham's letter.

*Dear Brother [John D. Johnston]:
Springfield, Jany. 12. 1851—*

On the day before yesterday I received a letter from Harriett, written at Greenup. She says she has just returned from your house; and that Father [is very] low, and will hardly recover. She also s[ays] you have written me two letters; and that [although] you do not expect me to come now, yo[u wonder] that I do not write. I received both your [letters, and] although I have not answered them, it is no[t because] I have forgotten them, or been uninterested about them—but because it appeared to me I could write nothing which could do any good. You already know I desire that neither Father or Mother shall be in want of any comfort either in health or sickness while they live; and I feel sure you have not failed to use my name, if necessary, to procure a doctor, or any thing else for Father in his present sickness. My business is such that I could hardly leave home now, if it were not, as it is, that my own wife is sick-bed. (It is a case of baby-sickness, and I suppose is not dangerous.) I sincerely hope Father may yet recover his health; but at all events tell him to remember to call upon, and confide in, our great, and good, and merciful Maker; who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads; and He will not forget the dying man, who puts his trust in Him. Say

to him that if we could meet now, it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant; but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous [meeting] with many loved ones gone before; and where [the rest] of us, through the help of God, hope ere-long [to join] them.

Write me again when you receive this.

*Affectionately
A. LINCOLN*

Abraham's letter is beautifully poignant in its gentle words to be given to his father in his final illness. It is the Lincoln of our better angels. However, some have interpreted the letter as acceptable evidence of the low regard with which Abraham considered his father.

That interpretation, I believe, lies largely in Abraham's use of the word "painful" as a description of the sorrow he would feel if he were to see his father on his deathbed. But the pain that he would experience and that he intended to convey was not a loathing or disdainful pain, but rather a sorrowful pain. The loathing pain interpretation would be totally contrary to Abraham's nature, a nature that found it hard to harm an ant, turtle, turkey or small animal, much less his father on his deathbed.

If the "loathing pain" interpretation were true, it would be Abraham and not Thomas who would and should suffer in repute. What son would write such a cruel letter to his 73-year-old father in his final moments of life? A dastardly, mean-spirited and cruel son. Abraham had none of those characteristics.

When the letter was received, Thomas was on his deathbed. He was partially if not totally blind and very weak. He was probably beyond the point of being capable of reading Abraham's letter, let alone being able to understand what it said. His wife Sarah, however, was not. It would have been Sarah, not Thomas, who would have been the recipient of Abraham's cruel judgment of Thomas. Surely, Abraham would have realized this as he wrote the letter and he would not have hurt his beloved stepmother in this way.

To support the "loathing pain" interpretation, some point out that Abraham did not attend his father's funeral that was held only a short time after the January letter. Some suggest and some with great certitude assert that Abraham's absence is clear evidence of his disdain for his father.

But, one must ask, who would suffer the shame of Abraham's slight? Not Thomas. He was dead. It would have been Sarah, and Abraham would not have punished poor

Sarah in this manner. Acts of intentional, harmful judgment were not something that were a part of Lincoln's character. It would be presumptuous to think that Abraham left us little clues of his hatred of his father, clues that future historians might examine like tea leaves and discern the truth of that relationship.

Common sense is often the best method to determine the meaning of human activity or inactivity. In 1851, communication and travel were slow. Burials were not. By the time Abraham learned of his father's death, arranged for the care of his Springfield family, and undertook a 100-mile journey across the January Illinois prairie to Coles County, the funeral would have been long over.

And if one accepts the premise that important deductions can be made about one's feelings for another by failure to attend a funeral, then why no similar analysis and judgment about Mary and her father, Robert Todd? Neither Mary nor Abraham Lincoln attended his funeral after his death at age 58, on July 17, 1849, in Lexington, Kentucky.

One cannot conclude that Abraham did not attend his father's funeral because he disliked him or had extreme, unresolved issues with him. I believe that it was the living, Mary and the new baby boy Willie, and their needs that Abraham chose to care for rather than his father's final illness and death. To read more into Abraham's failure to attend his father's funeral defies common sense and is a real stretch.

I conclude that Thomas Lincoln was a man well suited for his place and time — on the edge of the 19th century American western frontier with thousands of other like men. He moved into places where there was little or no semblance of western civilization and brought the rough, foundational elements of that civilization to those new places. He did so by establishing a home, raising a family, providing for them through subsistence farming and masterful cabinet making, participating in the churches, the militia, and public institutions of the communities where he lived and fending off the last resistances of the American Indians. He rightfully and thankfully demanded that his son assist in these tasks as he grew. Without the vanguard of Thomas and his ilk, the subsequent flow of American settlers could not have occurred. There would have been no Abraham Lincoln.

I respectfully urge Lincoln historians to take a fresh look at Thomas Lincoln and reconsider their judgments. To do so will be a pursuit not only of truth, but will also answer the call of the better angels within us.

Continued from page 1

opinion. How do I put it - I'm not a scholar. I'm just a native son of Illinois who likes to work hard and try to do good.

But I was thinking, how do you get it down to its essence? To me, I like to put things down to a word - a word. What does that word mean, and how does it relate? So I was thinking, when Diana and I were talking. I have to say, Diana and I went to the First Presbyterian Church service this morning - we did that two years ago as well - and both of us were struck by the words. Lincoln wrote a poem that got put to music, and the music was sung as a hymn this morning. I don't know whether any of you were in the church this morning, but we read the words and we both looked at each other. Well, it's a poem, written by Abraham Lincoln and very powerful. But I got a chill - I mean I got sort of a chill on the back of my neck and my spine when I was reading it. It was very strikingly sad. You know? And it made me think about how hard it is and how lonely it is to take on the challenges and face the obstacles that Lincoln faced in his life - losing two of his sons, trying to lead a bitterly divided nation with the struggles and the hurdles and the obstacles. How lonely is that, and how, at times, strikingly sad. I mean it had a big impact on me when I read those words.

To talk tonight, I thought how can I get the essence of what Lincoln means to me, and I think maybe to other Americans. To me there's just a few words that immediately come to mind. The two words that strongest come to mind for me with Abraham Lincoln are **freedom** and **equality**. And to me those are probably the two most important words describing the American essence of who we are. It's about us as human beings - our rights to be free - that is the essence of being human, and God gives us that right to be free. And we need to take away the shackles and the restrictions and what holds people back and holds people down, and have people be free. America is built on that freedom.

And the other is **equality** - equal treatment under the law, equal in the eyes of God, equal opportunity. This is what America is about and what's so clear when you see what Lincoln had to go through - through today - that process of driving for equality is never done. With us it's a step, it's a thousand-mile journey, and we're just in the middle of the journey, taking steps. Even in Lincoln's time, we talked about all "men"

are created equal - just talking about men. When our Founding Fathers talked about equal, it was equal opportunity, equal rights, for European men, not African men. And even today we are challenged to make sure we have equality, equal treatment under the law, equal treatment in the eyes of God, for every person in the United States of America. It's a never-ending process. We owe it to ourselves to keep that process underway and work together every day to achieve it.

But there are three words that come to mind for me that, I don't know, when I was growing up, I didn't really think much about. When I talk to my buddies about Abraham Lincoln, they don't come out much. But they mean a great deal to me, and as I've learned about Lincoln through my lifetime they are very important to me.

One is **education**. Lincoln probably did more for the quality of education in America than any other president because of his advocacy for our state university system, our land-grant colleges. They provide extraordinary opportunity for quality education for all Americans through the land-grant education system, our university system. And he proved how important education is. His passion. He didn't have the access to the full formal education that most people are fortunate to have today, but he was a passionate, voracious reader, and he was a believer in education and took it to the level of becoming an outstanding lawyer. Lincoln embodied the importance and the value of education. To me - and Diana and I share this passion; that's one of the things why we fell in love originally - we both think education is the most important thing we do together as a community. Lincoln was all about education, and we as a community need to be all about education, equal high quality education for every young person, regardless of where they live, regardless of what their family's income is. Outstanding education is critical to a better life and achieving the American dream.

The other word that comes to mind - this one may strike some as unusual, but I feel very strongly about it - that's the word **popularity**. What do I mean by that? Why does it matter? Things that are popular, or things that have wide approval, are not necessarily what's right. There's a difference between what's popular or what has wide approval and what is right, what is good. And it's a big challenge in democracy because democracy is built on what's popular. The vote is popular. It's got approval; I vote for it. That doesn't make it right, and

we owe it to ourselves to make a distinction between what's popular and what's right - what's got approval and what's good - and to constantly challenge ourselves to strive for what's right. That's what's amazing about Lincoln. He saw what was right his entire life and he worked it and worked it and worked it. He was driven back and overcame and finally after so many years, he abolished one of the most immoral institutions ever created by mankind. I mean it's a stunning - it's just stunning leadership and just incredible.

And that brings to me that the ultimate word that is the key to making a difference in having success and that's the word **persistence**. Wow. I think I'm persistent. I am extremely persistent, but you know - think about Abraham Lincoln, what he had to do, what he had to overcome, the circumstances he came from and what he endured and the four or five elections he lost before he became President of the United States. His children are dying. His nation is torn apart. The political parties were in ruins. Think of what he did. He just never gave up. No such word as failure. Failure doesn't exist. It's just an opportunity to learn. There's no such thing as defeat. It's not defeat. Just delay. And he embodied that. To me persistence is the key to every human endeavor. Anything important does not come easily or quickly.

So through my life, my grandfather is my role model, my personal inspiration because I knew him personally and loved him. But from everything I've read and learned about Abraham Lincoln, he stands out as America's greatest and that's why it's a privilege to speak to you - I was excited to come. I don't have that knowledge about many of his accomplishments that many of the distinguished scholars in this room have, but as a citizen, as a native son of Illinois who's lived here my whole life and love it dearly, this is home. I am so darn proud that Lincoln lived here and that he was here in our community of Springfield. I love Springfield. I really do. This is a great community and a community of pride - pride - and hard work and American values. It's a privilege for Diana and me to be citizens of the community of Springfield. Thank you for your dedication to preserving the legacy, the life, the teachings of our greatest citizen. Keep up the great work. It's a privilege for me to work for you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

FOR THE PEOPLE

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Anna Benoit, winner of the Lincoln Essay Prize, leads the banquet in the Pledge of Allegiance.

A New Salem Mirror on the Wall

We are all familiar with the self-deprecating remarks made by Mr. Lincoln regarding his looks, but in the early years, how often did he truly see his full reflection?

These days we are usually aware of our appearance and also have the ability to keep everyone else updated about our looks, outfits, and expressions in real time. In the early 19th century this was not possible. How often did the average rural person actually see him- or herself?

In a rural household, the mirror's primary function was to reflect light, and not a person's image. The mirror was traditionally placed above a mantel or other piece of furniture to reflect sunlight or candlelight throughout the room more effectively. This mirror belonged to Parthena Hill, wife of Samuel Hill, merchant at New Salem and both friend and competitor of Abraham Lincoln.

It hangs on the wall at the reconstructed Hill residence at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, where visitors can "reflect" on the comparison of how we "see" ourselves with how those in the past saw themselves -- or didn't, as the case may be. On another level, the mirror affords the unique opportunity for visitors to connect with the past. Tradition has it that this mirror was in New Salem with the Hills. This opens the possibility that Lincoln, on what would be a rare occasion, saw his reflection in the very way visitors can see their own.



Terry Jones, New Salem, March 2017