



FOR THE PEOPLE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

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Did Lincoln Dream He Died?



By Jonathan W. White

Americans have been dreaming about Abraham Lincoln since at least 1861. In May of that year, a woman from Rochester, New York, sent a letter to Mary Todd Lincoln describing a dream that she'd had of the president towering over Washington, D.C., amid a tremendous thunderstorm. As the lightning flashed and the thunder boomed, the sun cast "a soft mellow light around about him." Beneath Lincoln's feet "rolled dark & heavy clouds which the sun light was fast dispelling." Lincoln held a book in one hand, walked toward the southern part of the horizon, "crowned with honors &

covered with Laurels, and looked very smiling." This was a premonition, the woman thought, that Lincoln would restore the Union and free the slaves. In "these perilous times" she hoped that her dream would be "a comfort" to the first lady.

During the war, at least two soldiers dreamed that their commander-in-chief granted them promotions, while a Union POW at Macon Prison, in Georgia, dreamed that he had a conversation with Lincoln about prisoner exchanges. In like manner, a correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* "dreamed that Old 'Abe' was sitting in our room talking with my mother." She asked the president "how soon he thought the war would be over." Lincoln answered, "not before I'm out."

Even after Lincoln's death, he continued to visit his former friends and associates in their dreams. In 1872, Salmon Chase had a "singular dream" in which Lincoln and Jefferson Davis had a "last battle." Davis was beaten and taken prisoner, but then Lincoln resigned his seat and Davis

became president. The Union and Confederate Congresses then met and amended the Constitution to abolish slavery and grant suffrage to blacks, at which point Davis resigned and Lincoln was reelected. Lincoln then granted "Universal Amnesty" to the South and all southern congressmen were seated, leading to "general harmony & reconciliation." Peace at last.

More than thirty years later, John Hay dreamed that he went to the White House and found Lincoln there. "He was very kind and considerate, and sympathetic about my illness," Hay wrote in his diary just a few weeks before his own death in 1905. "He said there was little work of importance on hand. He gave me two unimportant letters to answer. I was pleased that this slight order was within my power to obey."

But if a few Americans saw Lincoln in their dreams, many more have been fascinated by Lincoln's own dreams. Lincoln revealed his most famous dream at a cabinet meeting on April 14, 1865, and he

(continued on page 2)

Lincoln-Era McLean County Court House Uncovered



The 1848 jail was once located on the northwest corner of the Court House Square.

By Floyd Mansberger and Christopher Stratton
Fever River Research, Springfield, Illinois

Proposed improvements for the new south entrance to the McLean County Museum of History in Bloomington, Illinois, are located on the site of the second McLean County Court House. In service from 1836 through 1868, it was in this building where Abraham Lincoln practiced law while travelling Illinois's Eighth Judicial Circuit, and Bloomington resident Judge David Davis presided between 1848 and 1862. It was one of three coffee mill courthouses designed and built by Edgar Munsell of Edgar County. Both this Court House and the 1848 jail show up well in the 1867 bird's eye view of Bloomington. The building was torn down in 1868 to make way for a much larger Court House.

The archeological excavation of the site was performed in the summer of 2014, and pictures of the results are shown here.



The southeast corner of the Court House Square, with an early fence line projecting from the corner. This photograph was taken along the south entrance of the Court House Square in the summer of 2014.

(continued from page 1)

believed that it portended some “great news very soon.” He was on “some singular, indescribable vessel” that was “moving with great rapidity towards an indefinite shore.” Lincoln told the Cabinet that he’d had this dream before the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, as well as preceding the battles of Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Stones River, Wilmington, and the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. Lincoln believed that the dream portended some “great results”—hopefully involving Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman’s army.

Sitting at the Cabinet meeting, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles did not think much of the dream. But two or three days later he remembered it and recorded it in his diary. “Great events did, indeed, follow,” he wrote mournfully, “for within a few hours the good and gentle, as well as truly great, man who narrated his dream closed forever his earthly career.”

The provenance for this dream is quite good. At least four eyewitnesses recorded or retold the dream—Welles, Attorney General James Speed, Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Seward, and a correspondent for the *New York Herald*. Lincoln’s words differ slightly from version to version. In Welles’s, Speed’s and Seward’s versions, each respective man placed himself at the center of the conversation with Lincoln. In the *New York Herald*’s report on April 18, however, Lincoln volunteered the nature of the dream without being asked. Still, the dream undoubtedly occurred.

By May the *Herald*’s story had been picked up by newspapers as far away as San Francisco, and it continues to retain a prominent place in the American imagination 150 years later. Steven Spielberg depicted this dream in one of the opening scenes of *Lincoln*. Spielberg’s rendition is generally true to the historical record, with the sophisticated touch of having Lincoln standing atop what appears to be a *Monitor*-styled vessel. (Ever an enthusiast for technology, Lincoln is alleged to have said when he saw the design for the *Monitor*,

“All I can say is what the girl said when she put her foot into the stocking. It strikes me there’s something in it.”)

Although not a dream of death (Lincoln thought positive news was coming), Lincoln’s ship dream is often portrayed as a portent of his impending assassination. But in April 1865, Lincoln is alleged to have had another, much darker, more explicit dream of death. This story comes down to us through Ward Hill Lamon’s *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (1895).

According to Lamon, Lincoln revealed a “horrid” dream to Mary, Lamon, and a few others at the White House sometime in early April. Lincoln “was in a melancholy, meditative mood, and had been silent for some time,” wrote Lamon. Finally, Mary coaxed her husband into speaking what was on his mind. Lincoln remarked that it seemed “strange how much there is in the Bible about dreams. . . . If we believe the Bible, we must accept the fact that in the old days God and His angels came to men in their sleep and made themselves known in dreams.”

Mary was struck by Lincoln’s solemnity and asked him, “Do *you* believe in dreams?” “I can’t say that I do,” Lincoln replied, “but I had one the other night which has haunted me ever since.” After having the dream, Lincoln said that he thumbed through his Bible and that wherever he turned he “seemed to encounter a dream or a vision.”

Lincoln “now looked so serious and disturbed” that Mary exclaimed, “You frighten me! What is the matter?” She coaxed him into describing his dream, which he did with “his brow overcast with a shade of melancholy.”

In the dream, Lincoln heard sobbing and wailing in the White House. He walked from room to room, looking for the mourners, but “no living person was in sight.” Finally he made his way to the East Room. “There I met with a sickening surprise. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse wrapped in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon

the corpse, whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully.” Lincoln went up to one of the guards and inquired, “Who is dead in the White House?” “The President,” came the reply. “Then came a loud burst of grief from the crowd, which awoke me from my dream. I slept no more that night; and although it was only a dream, I have been strangely annoyed by it ever since.”

In his *Recollections*, Lamon wrote, “there was something about it so amazingly real, so true to the actual tragedy which occurred soon after, that more than mortal strength and wisdom would have been required to let it pass without a shudder or a pang.” It is little wonder, then, that popular writers spanning the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as Carl Sandburg, Stephen B. Oates, Jean H. Baker, Jay Winik, Doris Kearns Goodwin, James L. Swanson, Bill O’Reilly, and others, have all repeated it in their books. Andrew Burstein even recently appropriated Lamon’s story for the title of his new book, *Lincoln Dreamt He Died*, and the dream appears in the National Geographic Channel’s movie *Killing Lincoln*.

But is it true? Any reader should naturally be hesitant to accept such an incredible story. The story’s provenance should cause even greater concern. Lamon’s *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* is notoriously unreliable. In fact, Lamon did not actually write *Recollections*. His daughter, Dorothy Lamon Teillard, compiled writings by her father regarding Lincoln’s life and added her own supplemental prose to turn the disparate pieces into a naturally flowing book. Not all of the words in *Recollections*, therefore, are Lamon’s.

Don and Virginia Fehrenbacher cast significant doubt upon the veracity of the dream, pointing out that Lincoln was at the front from March 24 to April 9, 1865, not at the White House, as Lamon claimed. The Fehrenbachers’ analysis should have been enough to discredit Lamon’s story. But there is more evidence that suggests that it is a fiction.

(continued on page 5)

ALA Supported Project

Re-creation of Historic Oak Ridge Cemetery Original Entrance Nears Completion



3rd Street Entrance
Oak Ridge Cemetery

August 2014

Massie Massie & Associates

The Abraham Lincoln Association was one of the first contributors to the fund to re-create the historic Third Street original entrance to Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois, where Lincoln is buried. The project got under way this summer and the re-created gate will be completed in October. A

dedication of the gate project is planned for later in the fall of 2014.

The original gate was the passageway into the Cemetery for Lincoln's remains on May 4, 1865. For more information about the events planned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln Funeral, see page 6.



The design for the gate was determined from photographs taken at the time of Lincoln's Funeral. This is one of those photographs, taken by Frederick W. Ingmire of Springfield, Illinois.

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

Golden Age of The Abraham Lincoln Association

The photograph to the right was taken on an unknown date (probably in the 1950s) in the center of the first floor of the Myers Brothers department store in downtown Springfield. The store sat at the corner of Fifth and Washington streets on the site of the Joshua Fry Speed store of Lincoln's time.

The four distinguished gentlemen in their winter overcoats pose behind a display case containing what appear to be multiple pieces of antique china and a number of books about Lincoln. On top of the case there are several busts of Lincoln and a number of documents.

These were four of the most important figures in the world of Lincoln scholarship at the time this photograph was taken, and they remain so today.

From left to right they are Benjamin P. Thomas, Roy Basler, Jay Monaghan, and George "Gibb" Bunn.

It truly was a man's world at the time this photograph was taken. But as in most department stores of the time, the ladies hand bag counter (right) held a central place of importance.



Left to right: Benjamin P. Thomas, Lincoln biographer; Roy Basler, editor of the *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*; Jay Monaghan, compiler of landmark *Lincoln Bibliography*; and George Bunn, President of the Marine Bank of Springfield and patron of the ALA and its projects.

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PRESIDENT ROBERT A. STUART'S GREETING

Dear ALA Members,

October marks the beginning of our membership drive. I want to thank each member for your continuing loyal support of the Association. The goals of this Association are ambitious: "to observe each anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln; to preserve and make more readily accessible the landmarks associated with his life; and to actively encourage, promote, and aid the collection and dissemination of authentic information regarding all phases of his life and career."

How has a small group with no real office grown into the oldest and most respected group for the advancement of Lincoln studies? Through the assistance of the many members of the Association whose financial support, time, and talent have enabled such projects as *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, and making every-thing Lincoln easily available to all through the Association's website.

The Association continues its work to engender a love of Lincoln study in the next generation and engage with Lincoln students of all ages. Please join us in this effort by introducing our website and publications to your friends and please recruit new members. Your suggestions are always welcome, and we value your support and input. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Stuart, President



NEW MEMBERS

We welcome our 26 new members from 10 states.

Robert W. Bornemann
Lake Forest, California

Dr. Tofig Arjmand
Springfield, Illinois

Cliff Berg
Sacramento, California

John Coady
Taylorville, New Hampshire

Chris DeRose
Phoenix, Arizona

Robert Govier
Mission Viejo, California

Trey Holland
Indianapolis, Indiana

Sarah Jennings
Springfield, Illinois

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River Forest, Illinois

Ryan Lincoln Stutz
River Forest, Illinois

Mark Trapp
Glenview, Illinois

David Wiegiers
Gurnee, Illinois

Edwin Cogswell
Baltimore, Maryland

RENEW NOW! JOIN NOW!

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.

William G. Shepherd,
Membership Chairman

Mail this application (or a copy) and a check to:

The Abraham Lincoln Association
1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield, Illinois 62701

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Student.....\$25

Railsplitter.....\$50

Postmaster.....\$100

Lawyer.....\$250

Congressman.....\$500

(continued from page 2)

An abbreviated version of the White House funeral dream first appeared in a small-town Pennsylvania newspaper as early as Lincoln's birthday in 1874. A much longer, more detailed version (most similar to Lamon's) first appeared in an unsigned article entitled "President Lincoln's Dream" in *Gleason's Monthly Companion* in March 1880 (fifteen years before Lamon's *Recollections* appeared in print). The details in the 1880 version differ in several significant ways from Lamon's account in *Recollections*. First, the 1880 version contains no chronological clues as to when Lincoln was supposed to have had the dream (compared to Lamon's version, which places it in April 1865). Second, Lincoln was in conversation with "Mrs. Lincoln and the children" in the 1880 version, not as Lamon described it, with "only two or three persons present," including himself. Third, in Lamon's account, Lincoln seemed unconcerned with assassinations, while Lamon portrayed himself as deeply concerned for the president's life. In the 1880 version, however, Lincoln "had an ever-present dread of the assassin's hand." Finally and most importantly, Lamon is nowhere to be seen in the 1880 version of the story.

Some may conclude that the story of the White House funeral dream is more credible now that Lamon is not its

source; however, several facts in the story do not align with what we know about the Lincoln assassination. According to the 1880 version, Mary Lincoln's "first exclamation" after John Wilkes Booth shot her husband at Ford's Theatre was, "His dream was prophetic" (Lamon quoted this line as well but did not connect it to any particular dream). "This remark was not then understood," noted the anonymous author in *Gleason's Monthly Companion*. However, no contemporary record cites Mary as saying those words. In fact, Mary told William H. Herndon in 1866 that her husband "didn't in late years dream of death."

The 1880 piece concludes, "Subsequently, the circumstances of Mr. Lincoln's dream was told to many in Washington, and formed one of the most impressive incidents connected with the tragedy which gave the nation its immortal martyr." If it was all the talk around Washington, as the 1880 article intimates that it was, surely it would have found its way into the papers shortly after Lincoln's death. A search of several digitized newspaper databases reveals that the ship dream had gained widespread attention within a month of Lincoln's death, but no such mention of the far more provocative White House funeral dream appeared. In fact, the White House funeral dream did not circulate widely in newspapers and periodicals

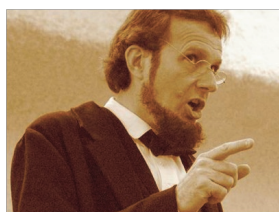
until the 1880s, after the story appeared in *Gleason's Monthly Companion*.

In short, this was a fictional piece written for a newspaper; it was later embellished by a literary magazine; it circulated through other newspapers in the 1880s; finally, Ward Hill Lamon's daughter appropriated and further exaggerated it in the 1890s when she edited and published her father's ill-titled *Recollections*. The dream is an utter fabrication, but it continues to hold an important place in the American imagination because it seems to confirm the almost supernatural character of our nation's greatest martyr.

Jonathan W. White is assistant professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport University and the author of *Abraham Lincoln and Treason in the Civil War: The Trials of John Merryman* (2011), *Emancipation, the Union Army, and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln* (2014), and *Lincoln's Advice to Lawyers* (2015). His current project, "Midnight in America," is a history of sleep and dreams during the Civil War. For more information about his research, please visit www.jonathanwhite.org.



Presidential Press Conference



Featuring

George Buss as President Lincoln

Bob Lenz, former ALA President, as the Presidential Press Secretary

When

Saturday,
November 8, 2014 at 3:00 p.m.

Where

Historical Society of
Quincy and Adams County
425 S. 12th Street
Quincy, Illinois

Editor's Note:

Due to a production error in the last For the People (Summer 2014), an important sentence was truncated at the top of page 10 in Erika Holst's article. Here is the complete sentence:

It is worth noting that Tad was born with a cleft palate [fn. 18], a condition which arises in the 6th to 12th week of gestation and can be caused by environmental teratogens, or substances that cause congenital malformations.[fn. 19]

Footnote 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.

Footnote 19: Ann W. Kummer, *Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Abnormalities: Effects on Speech and Resonance*, Second Edition (Thomson Delmar Learning, 2008), 38-39.

Booking the Iles House

Nancy Chapin, ALA Board Member, has organized a day of books at the Iles House at 638 S. 7th Street, Springfield, Illinois. Please plan to attend.

October 4, 2014

10:00 a.m. to Noon
Books For Children

Katie Johnson - *Goodnight Springfield*
Allison Gnuse - *My African Home*
David Reid and Danielle Fore -

The Honorable Fido,
Judge On the Common Law

12:00 p.m. – Lunch and readings
Gary Vitale - *Untold Rainbows*

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Kevin Corley - *Sixteen Tons*
Ed Cunningham - *The Perfect Patsy*
Dick Hart - *Jameson Jenkins &*
James Blanks, African Americans;
Preston Butler, Photographer

2015 Lincoln Funeral Re-enactment

Abraham Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, and in the following 20 days, the citizens of Springfield, Illinois, prepared for his final funeral and burial. "The entire Springfield community pulled together to honor the man who was not only their president, but also their neighbor and friend," said Katie Spindell, chair of the 2015 Lincoln Funeral Coalition, a not-for-profit corporation planning the re-enactment of Lincoln's Springfield funeral and burial on May 1-3, 2015.

The 2015 Coalition (which receives no public funds) began planning in 2010, and scores of companies, school districts, private citizens, public officials, churches, and community organizations have endorsed the project.

"This was Abraham Lincoln's final return to the city he called home," Spindell explained. "We have three weeks of events to commemorate his life, death, and legacy, and everyone is invited to participate."

COMMEMORATION EVENTS

The planned commemoration events are listed below. Many of the final details will be announced at the website of the Coalition:

www.lincolnfurcoalition.org

Tuesday April 14, 2015

Our American Cousin

Hoogland Center for the Arts

Performance of *Our American Cousin*, the play Abraham and Mary Lincoln were watching when the President was shot by John Wilkes Booth.

**Wednesday April 15 through
Sunday May 3, 2015**

Lincoln Symposia

The names of speakers and the schedule will be announced in the future.

Wednesday April 29, 2015
***Lincoln and
the Music He Loved***

Washington Park, Springfield,
noon and 7:00 p.m.

Robin Austin, Springfield Park District Carillonneur, performs a free concert on the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon. Bring a lawn chair or a blanket and enjoy this musical tribute to Lincoln.

**Thursday April 30 -
Sunday May 3, 2015**
***Civil War Military
Encampments***

Civil War military and civilian re-enactors plan to set up encampments in a number of Springfield locations.

Friday May 1, 2015
Lincoln through the Arts
Hoogland Center for the Arts

Performances of poetry, music, and visual arts celebrating the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Friday May 1, 2015
***Lincoln's Life:
A Musical Celebration***
Illinois Symphony Orchestra

Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts in Bloomington, Illinois 8:00 p.m.

Saturday May 2, 2015
***Funeral Train Arrival and
Funeral Procession***

Amtrak Station, Springfield 11:00 a.m.

Plans for Lincoln Funeral Train replica arrival at the Amtrak Station in downtown Springfield carrying a replica of President Lincoln's coffin. The coffin will be placed in a replica of the Lincoln Funeral Hearse and proceed to the corner of Washington and Sixth Streets followed by a procession of dignitaries, Color Guard, Civil War re-enactors, and direct descendants of original Honorary Pallbearers all dressed in 1860s-period attire.

**Commemoration and
Candlelight Vigil**

Sixth and Washington Streets

At Sixth and Washington Streets, there will be a service of commemoration followed in the evening by a candlelight vigil throughout the night and ending at mid-morning on Sunday May 3.

Saturday May 2, 2015
***Lincoln's Life:
A Musical Celebration***

Illinois Symphony Orchestra
Sangamon Auditorium,
U of I Springfield 8:00 p.m.

Sunday May 3, 2015
***Commemorative
Church Services***

Local churches draped in period mourning will conduct commemorative services.

Lincoln Funeral Procession

Washington & 6th Street to
Oak Ridge Cemetery Noon

A replica of the Lincoln Funeral Hearse will transport Lincoln's replica coffin to Oak Ridge Cemetery. On all streets possible, the Lincoln Funeral Procession will follow the historic route from downtown to Oak Ridge Cemetery. Procession participants must be in 1860s-period attire. The procession will enter the Cemetery at the re-created Third Street entrance. See a map of the Funeral Route at

www.lincolnfurcoalition.org

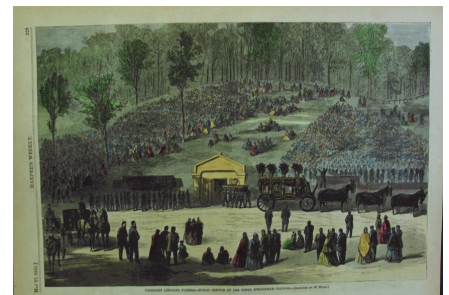
Lincoln Funeral Commemorative Service

Receiving Vault
Oak Ridge Cemetery

Clergy and Civil War re-enactors conduct eulogies, speeches, and salutes at the original public Receiving Vault. Musicians and choirs will perform original scores heard during the 1865 Funeral ceremony.

To volunteer or learn more, visit
www.lincolnfurcoalition.org

Follow the Coalition on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/lincolnfurcoalition2015



This drawing was published in *Harper's Weekly*, May 27, 1865, and was titled "President Lincoln's funeral — burial service at Oak Ridge, Springfield, Illinois. — [Sketched by W. Waud.]"

UIS Lincoln Legacy Lectures to Preview Lincoln Funeral Commemoration

By Barbara Ferrara

The 12th Annual Lincoln Legacy Lectures will be held at the University of Illinois Springfield on October 16, 2014, with the theme "Lincoln's Funeral." The lectures will provide background before the 150th anniversary commemoration of Abraham Lincoln's funeral in Springfield in 2015.

James L. Swanson, senior legal scholar at The Heritage Foundation, will present a lecture titled "I give you my sprig of lilac": The Death and Funeral of Abraham Lincoln."

Dr. Richard Wightman Fox, professor of history at the University of Southern California, will present a lecture titled "What We've Forgotten about Lincoln's Funeral, and What We've Never Known."

Dr. Michael Burlingame, who holds the Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at UIS, will offer opening remarks, titled "Why Lincoln was Murdered," and will serve as moderator.

Swanson is the author of *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* (William Morrow, 2006), and its sequel *Bloody Crimes: The Funeral for Abraham Lincoln and the Chase for Jefferson Davis* (HarperCollins, 2011).

Fox is the author of the forthcoming *Lincoln's Body: A Cultural History* (Norton, 2015).

Burlingame is the author of the two-volume biography *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). The authors' books will be available for purchase and signing at the reception following the lectures.

The event will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in Brookens Auditorium at UIS. It is free and open to the public; no reservations are required. Those who arrive early will have an opportunity for seating in the auditorium; overflow seating will be in Public Affairs Center room C/D. A live webcast can be viewed at:

www.uis.edu/technology/uislive.html

The event is sponsored by the UIS Center for State Policy and Leadership, in cooperation with the Lynn Chair in Lincoln Studies. The lectures are cosponsored by The Abraham Lincoln Association, Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund, Engaged Citizenship (ECCE) Speaker Series, *Illinois Issues*, Illinois State Historical Society, Illinois State Library, Staab Funeral Home, University of Illinois Alumni Association, UIS College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, UIS College of Public Affairs and Administration, and WUIS Public Radio. For more information, call Barbara Ferrara at UIS, (217) 206-7094.

2014 LINCOLN LEGACY LECTURE SERIES

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

Lincoln's Funeral

October 16, 2014 • 7 PM
Brookens Auditorium

"I give you my sprig of lilac": The Death and Funeral of Abraham Lincoln
James L. Swanson
The Heritage Foundation

"What We've Forgotten about Lincoln's Funeral, and What We've Never Known"
Dr. Richard Wightman Fox
University of Southern California

Presented by the Center for State Policy and Leadership
and Dr. Michael Burlingame, Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies
Co-sponsored by Abraham Lincoln Association and Illinois State Historical Society

http://cspl.uis.edu • (217) 206-7094
Live webcast: <http://www.uis.edu/technology/uislive.html>
Engraving by William T. Crane, 1865

What is Pennyroyal?

Comments and Responses

Editor's Note: The last issue of *For The People* contained an article by Erika Holst entitled "Puzzling Lincoln Purchase at Corneau & Diller's Drug Store: *What is Pennyroyal?*" An important correction of a production error in one sentence of the article may be found on page 5.

We invited comment on the article by Jean Baker and Daniel Mark Epstein, and their comments appear below. If you would like to make further comment, please send them to the editor at rhart1213@aol.com.

A NOTE ON THE PURCHASE OF PENNYROYAL

BY DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

Nearly everything the Lincolns said and did is of interest to us, and sometimes one bit of information will lead to another that is more important.

This is one reason a historian's time is well spent poring over a person's "farm book," checkbook, or a family's record of purchases at a drug store, such as Corneau & Diller's in Springfield. It was just such attention that enabled one biographer to support the claim that Mrs. Lincoln struck her husband in the face with a piece of cordwood on January 28, 1857. Before the discovery of the purchase of the gelatin plaster, the evidence of Mrs. Lincoln's abusive behavior the day previous was largely hearsay.

Ms. Holst's article is fascinating and careful, and deserves to be weighed against the circumstances of the Lincolns' marriage during those years, 1852 and 1853. She has got her dates right, the date of purchase of the pennyroyal on August 14 lining up neatly with the probable dates of conception, pregnancy, and birth. She's got her pharmacology right, too: pennyroyal was the herb of choice in those days for a woman who wished to end a pregnancy or bring on menstruation. If the herb was purchased only once in all those years, particularly in the oil and not the dried form, it would have been more likely to be used as a remedy for suppressed menstruation than for killing fleas. And no woman knowing she was pregnant would take it for any other reason.

If Mrs. Lincoln wished to terminate a pregnancy in mid-August of 1852, she might have bought, and drunk, the pennyroyal.

From what I know about the Lincolns' marriage, this is a decision the husband would have left to his wife.

What was Mrs. Lincoln's state of mind at the time? From April 8 until the end of 1852 Mr. Lincoln was gone 150 nights out of 267, on the Circuit Court. But from June 10 until September 15 he was home and it appears, from all we know, to have been a happy summer for the couple. Robert was nine years old, Willie was a year and a half, and Mary had recovered from her "baby-sickness" of the year before. Mr. Lincoln was making an extra effort to please his wife, who had sorely missed him: he bought her a bolt of fine muslin, and a very expensive new carriage. She had servants. The Lincolns entertained their old friends Orville and Eliza Browning in their home, for dinner, on July 22.

Mrs. Lincoln's mood swings were becoming more pronounced when she was in her mid-thirties. She had been depressed in April, but definitely recovered her spirits in June. She had breast-fed Willie until he was eighteen months old, to delay ovulation; she then weaned him in late spring of 1852, before her husband returned.

It seems to me that she wanted to be pregnant that summer, but she might have had cause later, in September and October, to change her mind. Mr. Lincoln would be gone almost the entire autumn. Perhaps she tried to abort the pregnancy when she realized she would be left alone again. We will never know, but it is an arresting possibility. It is easy to imagine a sad woman, foreseeing another entire autumn in Springfield, with two children, without her husband, wanting to end her pregnancy.

It is difficult for this biographer to imagine her taking the pennyroyal in mid-August. It is easier to imagine her doing it in September. This is not history, it is conjecture.

Who bought the pennyroyal, and why? Mary had female servants. Maybe one of those women wanted it. More likely Mary wanted it, just in case she should decide to take it.

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A TEACHABLE MOMENT: SPECULATION, PENNYROYAL, AND MRS. LINCOLN

BY JEAN BAKER

Erika Holst's piece "A Puzzling Lincoln Purchase at Corneau & Diller's Drug Store: What is Pennyroyal?" provides us with an opportunity to consider the process of historical verification, the use of evidence, and the distinction between gossip and history. As Holst writes in her carefully parsed piece, in August 1852 someone in the Lincoln household purchased pennyroyal from Corneau & Diller, the local Springfield pharmacy. A 19th century herb of the mint botanical family, the magical pennyroyal has multiple uses ranging from driving away fleas and killing snakes to treatment for upset stomachs and headaches, relieving flatulence, and serving as an abortifacient. It is this last application that Holst focuses on.

In August 1852 Mary Lincoln was pregnant; her fourth son Thomas "Tad" was born in April 1853, eight months later. The purchase and the birth of Tad are the only facts that lead the author to weave a series of speculations that someone in the household bought the pennyroyal. Mary took it to abort her fourth child, but was unsuccessful. Obviously the pennyroyal did not work and Tad Lincoln was born in April of the following year. (One wonders why the Lincolns did not return to the pharmacy the next month for more pennyroyal if their intention was abortion!) Doubling down on her speculation, Holst suggests that the pennyroyal Mary Lincoln ingested did not abort the fetus, only harmed it; hence Tad Lincoln's cleft palate (itself not entirely documented) was the result of Mary Lincoln's use of pennyroyal.

There are several ways to address the assumptions in this piece that move it into the realm of gossip. The Illinois census of 1855 reveals a female between the ages of ten and twenty, most likely Catherine Gordon, living in the Lincoln household. It is just as plausible to suggest that a woman Mary Lincoln described as one of those "wild Irish" may have used the pennyroyal. Among the many uses of pennyroyal was its effectiveness as an insecticide. It was August during the buggy

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season in Springfield. On other occasions Mr. Lincoln's home had a broken blind and window, suggesting free entry for mosquitoes and biting flies. There was as well a dog — Fido — in the house at Eighth and Jackson. Pennyroyal was also used for tuberculosis, an especially feared disease in the Lincoln household after four-year-old Eddie Lincoln's death from tuberculosis in the winter of 1850. One can easily imagine Mary Lincoln rubbing the leaves onto Willie's chest. Besides its multiple health applications, pennyroyal was used in folklore to ward off the evil eye, and the ever superstitious Mary Lincoln might have used it to scent a sachet as the women of her birth town of Lexington sometimes did. Surely the multiple possibilities suggested in the above paragraph suggest the impossibility of verifying the critical proposition in Holst's article.

Holst speculates that Mary Lincoln was six weeks pregnant, using the traditional nine months as her target dates with Tad born on April 4th 1853 and the purchase made on August 14th. But the wide variation in the duration of pregnancies is well established. Mary Lincoln may have had an eight-month pregnancy that began in August. Thus Mary Lincoln may not have been pregnant at all or more likely, less (or more) than six weeks pregnant. If less than six weeks, it is doubtful that she knew she was pregnant. Moreover one missed period would not have been sufficient time to take such a bold step that contradicts all other evidence indicating the attachment of the Lincolns to their children and to parenthood.

A notably long nurser of her babies, Mary Lincoln had just stopped nursing Willie in the summer of 1852. Establishing regularity in any menstrual cycle is always difficult after a period of nursing, again suggesting that Mary Lincoln may not have known she was pregnant in August 1852 when the pennyroyal was purchased. Or alternatively she may have been trying to regulate her menstrual cycles after their long cessation while she was nursing. In any case to reach the conclusion that the pennyroyal was used by Mary Lincoln for an abortion requires the rejection of many equally likely alternatives.

It also requires proceeding by asking questions that are not answered definitively. Thus Holst's piece is peppered with interrogatories that frame her hypothesis with-

out requiring a factual statement: "Could Mary Lincoln etc.?" "Why might the Lincolns have terminated a pregnancy?" "Might Mary Lincoln's ingestion (of pennyroyal) have harmed but not killed the fetus?"

Documentary evidence — as opposed to inference — has the Lincolns telling neighbors and friends that Willie needed a playmate, hence the pregnancy. Certainly one reason to have a fourth child was their mutual hope for a daughter. And as for the evidence-by-exception that Mary Lincoln did not have as many children as her sisters, she had a prolapsed uterus and was physiologically unable to conceive after Tad's birth. Using a larger profile, not just the family one that Holst espouses, couples in Springfield bore an average of four children and according to Kenneth Winkle "middle class Springfielders practiced the most rigorous regimen of family limitation," most using coitus interruptus. There is substantial evidence that the Lincolns understood contraception, given the nearly five-year gap between Eddie and Willie's births. The evidence reveals that Mary Lincoln got pregnant when the couple wanted another child as indicated in her response to Eddie's death.

Given its lack of explicit concrete evidence "A Puzzling Purchase" introduces us to questions of the limits of inference, with the title itself somewhat misleading. The subject here is not a puzzling purchase or even pennyroyal: it is the suggestion that Mary Lincoln used it for an abortion. Yet there is neither empirical nor contextual nor documentary evidence that Mary Lincoln did so. There is no corroboration, no smoking gun in a letter or even gossip around town that might have been harvested by William Herndon's later interviews. There are no documents to suggest this conclusion. And these are devastating charges, despite their prudent presentation by Holst who nonetheless encourages us on the basis of her inferential case "to reexamine what we know about the Lincolns and their desire for children."

Using David Hackett Fischer's list of historical fallacies in his engaging *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* as a measure, Holst is guilty of many violations. First **the fallacy of possible proof** for which there is no real evidence but rather a web of possibilities that might have occurred, one building onto the other into the final hypothetical house of

cards. Next **the prodigious fallacy** that mistakes sensation for significance and describes events that are fantastic and extraordinary. Who would have cared if the pennyroyal was purchased as a solution for Fido's fleas? Rather it is the suggestion of abortion and the possibility of causing Tad's cleft palate that titillates. As Fischer writes, suggestions "like sinners gain something from an unsavory reputation" and surely the proposition of a possible abortion is unsavory. Certainly Holst exaggerates the neutrality on abortion of this generation. Twenty years later the Comstock Act passed Congress making the advertisement or practice of abortion a *federal crime*.

One can almost see the headline in the *National Inquirer* of the day — New York's *Police Gazette*: First Lady's Abortion Cause of Son's Cleft Palate! Finally there is the **fallacy of false extrapolation** that takes us, as on a magic carpet, from the pharmacy to Tad's cleft palate.

Perhaps this article will encourage students of history to think about our responsibility to the past, especially to a woman whose life has long been besmirched by gossip. Is it fair to present such salacious speculations, knowing how long it takes evidence to catch up to inference? While Holst is careful to suggest and speculate and conjecture, staying far away from any moral judgments and offering disclaimers along the way, the mere presentation of the suspicion is harmful to Mary Lincoln's reputation. Rebuttals never entirely catch up to assertions. There are still folks who believe the canard promoted by Herndon that Abraham Lincoln had syphilis which he gave to Mary, hence her insanity! Finally we might recall the advice of those common sense logicians Tweedledum and Tweedledee: "I know what you are thinking about," said Tweedledum, "but it ain't so." To which Tweedledee replied, "Contrariwise if it was so it might be and if it were so it would be, but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic."



Mentha pulegium,
commonly (European) pennyroyal

The Global Lincoln

International Noises from 1864

By James M. Cornelius

Lincoln Curator

Abraham Lincoln

Presidential Library and Museum

International tensions were one result of the nationalism that arose everywhere after 1815. Using a historic word with broad resonance in 1862, Secretary of State Seward quoted Lincoln in a letter to Paris: "In the president's opinion, the emancipation of this continent from European control has been the principal feature of its history during the last century."

In 1863 Sen. James Doolittle (R-Wisc.) intoned to England and France: "We have just begun to fight ... we will never surrender." Harkening back to John Paul Jones (1779); foreshadowing Winston Churchill (1940); pointing to global struggle that grows out of civil war -- Doolittle was prophetic.

Foreign trade that once favored the secessionist cause was mostly gone; cotton was no longer king. The south in 1860 produced 90% of world supply, but by 1864 its production and export had been decimated. Other fibers had greatly replaced it: wool, flax (for linen), hemp, jute, etc. Other cotton producers, especially India and Egypt, all ramped up. New Englander Stephen Allen published *Fibrilia: A Practical and Economical Substitute for Cotton* ... (260 pp., \$1.00) and when war broke out it appeared in Paris, too. Kentucky grew 30% of our flax in 1860, another reason Lincoln needed them in the Union. Wool also replaced cotton, a boon to states from Ohio to Minnesota, and to European shepherds.

To the north, Canada had sharp elbows. Navy Sec. Gideon Welles's diary: "August 12, 1864: Have news this evening that a new pirate craft, [CSS] *Tallahassee*, has appeared off New York, burning vessels. Steamers ordered off in pursuit. Aug. 18: Mr. Seward brought me this A.M. a dispatch from Consul Jackson at Halifax [Nova Scotia], saying the pirate Rebel *Tallahassee* had arrived at that port," for supplies.

CSS *Alabama*, built in Liverpool, sank more Union ships than any other vessel, but was sunk herself near France in June 1864. CSS *Florida* took 37 fishing and shipping vessels before its capture in a Brazilian port in Octo-

ber. To stop the *Tallahassee*, Welles sent specific orders to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, but feet dragged. "Not one of them [in Brooklyn] is a Farragut, or Foote, or Porter, I fear." On 25 August Union vessels sent after the *Tallahassee* in Canada returned, failures all.

In July, Horace Greeley at the *N.Y. Tribune* forced Lincoln to heed rumors of CSA 'peace agents' at Niagara, Ontario, who proved to be unauthorized to act. Greeley wrote it up to make Lincoln look like he preferred war to negotiation. Gov. Yates of Illinois was apoplectic about Canadian-based raiders storming Chicago to liberate Camp Douglas POW's, though no raid materialized. One did reach St. Albans, Vermont, on 19 October, when 25 Confederate agents crossed from Quebec, robbed 3 banks, killed 2 Americans, and fled back north.

Spain, as the Fort Sumter crisis loomed in 1861, took the opportunity to re-annex the Dominican Republic, against strong but bullet-free protests from Washington, and held her till May 1865. More needling was Mexico, soft underbelly of the American continent. After Sumter, more than 8,000 Spanish, French, and British sailors lit out to claim unpaid debts, though by summer 1862 the Spanish and British withdrew. Lincoln could not spare men for republican president Benito Juarez against the Franco-Catholic-royalist forces, so Seward tried to face down the French with punch-less diplomacy. *Harper's Weekly* in April 1863 responded with a cartoon, "Mr. Seward and the Frenchman": Seward gently drops a boxing glove, while Mercier, with big moustache, politely whispers that he will fight the Mexicans instead. Lincoln told General Banks in New Orleans to keep an eye on Euro-monarchist moves toward Texas, while generals Grant and Sherman also pondered turning west rather than east after Vicksburg.

In 1864 Napoleon III poured it on, choosing for his new crypto-French monarchy in Mexico his political underling Archduke Maximilian of Austria, brother of emperor Franz-Josef. He and Empress Carlota landed at Tampico in June, to the cheers of Jefferson Davis, who desperately needed their muscle; which never was lent. In fall



Maximilian I of Mexico, from Mary Lincoln's album. (Courtesy ALPLM).

1864 the *Atlantic Monthly* feared a foreshadowing at home: "What has happened to Mexico would assuredly happen here, if we should allow the country to Mexicanize itself at the bidding of [N.Y. Democrat August] Belmont & Co."

International debate over the nature of our war boiled. Is the money-minded Union conquering the agrarian Confederacy? The embarrassing parallel of Poland arose. In 1863 its nationalist uprising was crushed by Russian troops. Then Russian naval vessels showed up unannounced in New York harbor as a 'gesture of friendship' for the Union. Lincoln was obliged to send Mary to thank them, though Russian maneuvers merely announced that Britannia did not rule all waves.

Would the overbearing Union crush its poorer provinces? The issue was bruited enough that James Russell Lowell in the *North American Review* in 1864 had to defend Lincoln's course: "As for subjugation, when people are beaten they are beaten, and every nation has had its turn.... To talk of the South as our future Poland is to talk without book."

John Stuart Mill, thinker on 'democracy,' never chose a side in our war. As late as July 1864 the shipbuilding interest in Parliament (heavily Liberal) moved for recognition of the Confederacy. Thomas Baring, M. P. and banker, warmly supported the North -

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Taylor House Saved!



Today, only a few unrestored Lincoln-era structures remain in Springfield, Illinois. One is the historic Judge John Wycliff Taylor House at 902 South 12th Street, on Springfield's near east side. The House was built by 59-year-old Taylor in 1856. Judge Taylor knew Lincoln and later the House was witness to significant events in Springfield's African-American history. Just a short time ago, the House was

saved from demolition at the last minute by preservationists, historians, and neighborhood residents. This photograph taken in August 2014 shows a contractor removing shingles and revealing clapboard painted a Quaker brown color similar to the Lincoln Home. If you know anything about the House, please share your information with the editor at rhart1213@aol.com

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because his bank had loaned large sums to Mr. Chase's Treasury. But what if victorious peace-man George McClellan repudiated Union debts to Baring, or to liberal bankers in Frankfurt? The state of Mississippi repudiated its debts in 1853; the pro-slavery 'cause' had a history of that. Federal debt was so large by late 1864, at nearly 50% of GDP, that some doubted our capacity ever to repay.

Could Lincoln hope that newcomers would support him? In his annual message to Congress in Dec. 1863, he wrote, "I again submit to your consideration the expediency of establishing a system for the encouragement of immigration." Mineral finds in western territories, particularly gold, accelerated movement. Congress agreed, passing on 4 July 1864 a bill to establish a commissioner of immigration. Lincoln wrote to new Treasury Sec. Fessenden on 9 August to place the \$25,000 appropriation to the credit of the State Dept.

Perhaps Lincoln's trickiest problem -- certainly the one with loudest repercussions -- was Prussia. In 1862 Otto von Bismarck became minister-president. In spring 1864,

while Napoleon III's moves in Mexico froze attention, Prussia invaded little Denmark, annexing its provinces of Schleswig and Holstein. This was the dawn of the Second Reich (d. 1918). Mormons and others poured out of Denmark to the U.S.; so too Germans. Could Lincoln afford to take a side? No more than could Queen Victoria, herself a German with a new Danish daughter-in-law, Alexandra. We can plausibly argue that the beginning of the end of the old European order was the fall of Schleswig-Holstein. One could more directly argue that Lincoln's ability to win over more German-American votes in 1864 than in 1860 hinged upon his remaining silent on this topic.

The comparison between Prussia / Denmark and USA / Virginia always stung Lincoln. About 35% of each 'lesser' place got hived off by its strong neighbor in 1863-64. Bismarck's wars were not at first popular with his new soldiers, but grew more so with success -- so too Lincoln's. Richard Nelson Current, though, examined this comparison, and found "not one" of the 5 or 6 factors required for "great power" status resulting from the Union's 1865 victory. In Germany, two.

More personally: in April 1864 came revelations that an Italian named Orsini, after he threw a bomb at Napoleon III in 1858, found refuge in the London home of a British M.P. Surely Lincoln had political enemies in Washington. Were any that aberrant?

Newspaper writers across our map called for Lincoln's murder -- in Greensburg, Pa., NYC & Chicago of course, but most famously La Crosse, Wisc.: "If he is elected to misgovern for another four years, we trust some bold hand will pierce his heart with dagger point for the public good." In more worldly vein, an Albany editor paraphrased Patrick Henry of 1765: "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell" with the update "we the People recommend Abraham Lincoln to profit by their example."

If today's news from abroad seems a maelstrom, so too in 1864. Lincoln took refuge in marking Shakespeare's 300th birthday that season at performances of the Bard's tragedies. Eight times Lincoln saw Edwin Booth (son of immigrants), once, by his request, as Hamlet. Poor Danish Hamlet.

The author is pleased to provide footnotes. Write james.cornelius@illinois.gov.

Harold Holzer to Speak on New Book: *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*

October 29, 2014

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum

Harold Holzer, good friend and former ALA Board Member, will be in Springfield on October 29 to sign and discuss his new book, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion*.

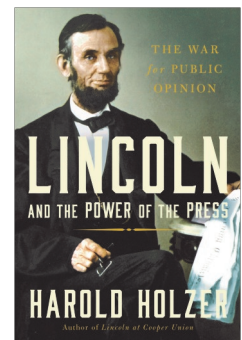
The book sheds new light on the long-ignored intersection of press and politics in the age of Abraham Lincoln — when newspaper publishers often doubled as politicians, and politi-

cians as publishers, and journalism itself was unabashedly partisan. The book explores Lincoln's mastery of and rise in this roiling milieu, from Illinois to Washington.

The profusely illustrated book constitutes a new biography of the three New York publishing giants who dominated Civil War journalism before and during the crisis: James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald*, Horace

Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, and Henry J. Raymond of the *New York Times*.

The book examines Lincoln's lifelong career as a dabbler in journalism, his efforts to win loyalty from pro Whig and pro Republican journals over the years, his use of political patronage to secure and maintain press support, and his use of censorship during the Civil War.



Harold Holzer, author, co-author, or editor of more than 40 books, is chairman of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, Roger Hertog Fellow at the New-York Historical Society, and a winner of the National Humanities Medal. Previous books include *Lincoln at Cooper Union* (2004), winner of a second-place

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