



# The Wide Awake Bulletin



**The Lincoln Group of New York** FEBRUARY 2014  
DEDICATED TO THE STUDY OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## In This Issue



• 1 • **President's Letter**



• 1 • **David Von Drehle Wins Award of Achievement for 2013**



• 2 • **February 2013 Meeting**



• 2 • **April 2013 Meeting**



• 3 • **November 2013 Meeting**



• 3 • **Harold Holzer Immortalized in Paint**



• 4 **The Lincoln Conspiracy Trial Courtroom**



• 8 • **Lincoln's Forgotten Vice President: Hannibal Hamlin**



• 9 • **Lincoln Tomb Restoration for 150th Anniversary of Lincoln's Death**

• 9 • **In Memoriam**

**Editor: Steven R. Koppelman**

**Photographer & Artist:  
Henry F. Ballone**

## President's Letter

**D**ear Members & Friends,

Once again, a new year presents exciting opportunities and new challenges. As I reflect on the past year, I do so with gratitude and appreciation.

I'm thankful for our outstanding speakers this past year. Professor James Oakes and award-winning screenwriter Tony Kushner were also headliners at the 18th Annual Lincoln Forum Symposium this past November. After eighteen years of building their organization and prestige, the Lincoln Forum has developed into the largest most significant gathering of Lincoln enthusiasts and scholars in the nation. What we enjoy three meetings each year at The Lincoln Group of New York also occurs non-stop at the Forum for three consecutive days of outstanding scholarship and presentations in Gettysburg.

Our joint meeting with the Civil War Roundtable of New York last year was a memorable occasion. I'm grateful to Harold Holzer for suggesting that we convene such a meeting and for his skillful assistance in the planning process. Everyone in attendance will long remember Harold's penetrating interaction with Tony Kushner. I'm especially grateful to my friend William Finlayson, president of the Roundtable for his outstanding cooperation with this event.

As an organization, we have much to be grateful for. For more than ten years, I've enjoyed serving with Steve Koppelman in various capacities; most notably with him as our vice-president, but perhaps equally important through his role as editor of our informative bulletin, *The Wide Awake*. Steve is an excellent editor; he constantly brings out the best in our contributors. He rarely needs to make corrections to his final manuscript or to extend publication deadlines. Moreover, he produces a superior publication we can all be proud of. My hat is off to Steve and his commitment to excellence for making our bulletin an informative and reliable resource in the Lincoln historical community. One of our members in the state of **continued on page 7**



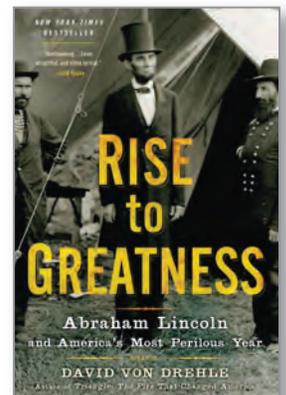
Henry F. Ballone

## David Von Drehle Wins Award of Achievement for 2013

**T**he Work that has done the "most to encourage the study and appreciation of Abraham Lincoln" as selected unanimously by The Lincoln Group of New York Award Committee is *Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year* by David Von Drehle.

Committee chair Paul Ellis-Graham stated that:

"In this engrossing story of 1862, David Von Drehle lays out the complexity and challenge for Lincoln as he works tirelessly to keep the nation on a steady course during its most severe crisis in its history. The author's well-organized and **continued on page 7**



## 2013 Meetings Review

**2013** stood out as an impressive year of meetings and guest speakers as attendees were treated to some very special presentations on the life and times of Abraham Lincoln...

**February 28 2013:** Though many believe that what is commonly known as “awards season” ends with the presentation of the Oscars, this year, that simply was not the case. That’s because just four short days after the Academy Awards were presented (and if I may say, in many cases to the wrong recipients), The Lincoln Group of New York (and The Civil War Round Table of New York, who joined us in a combined meeting) presented Tony Kushner, screenwriter, with our annual Award of Achievement for Steven Spielberg’s film, *Lincoln* (the film also won the Barondess Award presented this evening by The Civil War Roundtable of New York).



Stuart Schneider, Tony Kushner, Joe Garrera, Paul Ellis-Graham, Henry F. Ballone, & Steve Koppelman

Mr. Kushner, already a recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, two Tony Awards, an Emmy Award, and an Oscar nomination, now adds these prestigious awards to his impressive collection.

After welcoming remarks by Presidents Henry Ballone of The Lincoln Group of New York and William Finlayson of The Civil War Round Table of New York, Harold Holzer introduced Mr. Kushner and then led a conversation with him spanning multiple



Tony Kushner & Harold Holzer

aspects of his work on the film. Mr. Holzer, who pointed out that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the focus of the film, is an area that had been severely lacking in Lincoln scholarship, praised Mr. Kushner and Steven Spielberg for bringing this important topic to the forefront.

Amongst many other things, Mr. Kushner discussed his meetings and dealings with Daniel Day-Lewis as well as how he researched Lincoln prior to beginning his writing. He also stated that one of his favorite scenes in the film was when Lincoln is shown at Petersburg, and as the soldiers are passing him you can see their shadows across his face. The discussion closed when Mr. Holzer eloquently and adroitly stated that, “The man and the hour met when Steven Spielberg asked Tony Kushner to write this screenplay.”

The two awards were then formally presented to Mr. Kushner by the Chair of The Lincoln Group of New York’s Award Committee, Stuart Schneider, and the acting Chair of The Civil War Round Table of New York, Cindy Hochman. In accepting the awards, Mr. Kushner, referencing the recent results from the Academy Awards, gushed that, “Finally, I get to make this speech! Thanks for not selecting *ARGO!*” Needless to say, this humorous moment was extremely well received by the huge gathering who ultimately gave Mr. Kushner a much-deserved standing ovation! ~

**April 11, 2013:** This evening’s meeting began with a very much deserved presentation by President Henry Ballone of a plaque and gift certificate to former Treasurer Diana Garrera for her many years of dedicated service in helping us honor the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. The standing ovation she received was a testament to the affection the membership has for her as well as their appreciation for her superior performance. Diana remains as a member of our Executive Committee.



Steve Koppelman, Diana Garrera, & Henry F. Ballone

After the conducting of our popular book raffle (with 40 items raffled off, this may have been an all-time record!), Michael Kauffman, a leading expert on the escape of John Wilkes Booth, took the podium to present his lecture, *Pursuits in Search of Lincoln’s Killer*. Extremely detailed with maps of the route and photos of the stops along the way (both then and now!), Mr. Kauffman explained why Booth chose the route that he ultimately took. We learned of the role that southern Maryland played in this great drama (both from a social as well as political point of view), the key people that Booth connected with along the way, and **continued on page 3**

## 2013 Meetings Review, continued

perhaps most importantly, the mindset along the way of John Wilkes Booth.

Booth, the great Shakespearean actor, the American Brutus (to quote the title of Mr. Kauffman's book on John Wilkes Booth), quoted Macbeth twice during his escape according to Kauffman but it's perhaps this quote from Macbeth, that Mr. Kauffman ended his presentation with, that maybe, just maybe, entered Booth's mind at his death:



Michael W. Kauffman

Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.  
*Macbeth Act 5, scene 5, 23–28*

During a spirited question and answer session that followed the presentation, among other things, Mr. Kauffman made a strong and compelling case for his contention that Booth did not break his leg as a result of the leap from the box at Ford's Theatre but rather from a fall while on his horse during the escape. His certainty is based on his reliance of first-hand accounts of the witnesses from the assassination scene as well as medical records as to the type of break Booth suffered and how it is consistent with a horse falling and rolling over one's leg. This is still a much discussed and debated subject within the assassination field. ~

**N**ovember 6, 2013: As is the tradition at the November



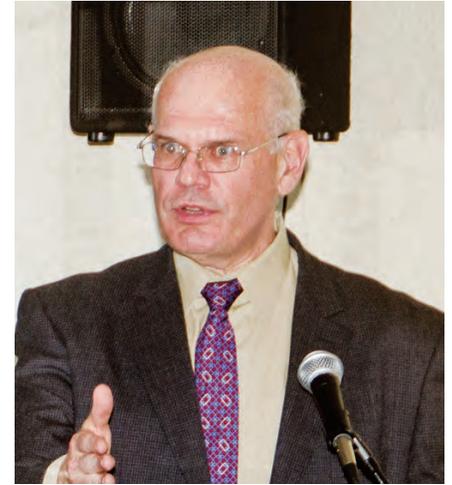
Richard Sloan

meeting, the formal festivities began with the reading of the Gettysburg Address. On this 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's immortal appropriate remarks, Richard Sloan gave a moving and thoughtful interpretation of the speech. Lincoln may have originally thought after giving his speech that perhaps it "was not entirely a failure," it can be said however that Richard Sloan's reading was entirely a success!

Guest speaker, Dr. James Oakes, two-time recipient of the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize (*The Radical and The Republican*, 2008, and *Freedom National*, 2013), presented a lecture on slavery's ultimate eradication, combining his research and conclusions from *Freedom National*, as well as his upcoming book titled *The Scorpion's Sting*. He began by focusing on Harriet Beecher Stowe's article in the January 1863 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* talking of the two current (at that point of time) policies of eradicating slavery, military emancipation and state abolition. By themselves, these two policies were inadequate but

they "intertwine" and culminate with the Emancipation Proclamation.

Dr. Oakes spoke of the Republican Party's original idea (stated in the 1860 party platform) that they would not interfere with slavery where it already existed. The interesting point here is that this states what they would not do; it does not state however what they would do. The theory here being that slavery, like a scorpion surrounded by a cordon of fire (in this case the Free states and the Atlantic Ocean), would sting itself to death.



Dr. James Oakes

Much of Oakes' presentation focused on this idea and the various policies leading to the ultimate abolition of slavery via the 13th amendment. The question is, would this idea of the "scorpion's sting" have worked by itself if the war had not come? As Dr. Oakes stated, "Had things been different, things would have been different—such is counter-factual posing." When asked during the question and answer period following his presentation if Lincoln was the "Great Emancipator" or the "Reluctant Emancipator," Dr. Oakes stated, "he was a Republican, committed to their principles as an anti-slavery party, as it moves, he moves."

As the evening concluded one thing seemed certain, Dr. Oakes cemented his status as a leading expert on slavery's ultimate destruction and extinction. ~

## Harold Holzer Immortalized in Paint

**C**ivil War Artist Mort Künstler's *Mr. Lincoln Comes to Gettysburg* was painted to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gettysburg Address. It also immortalizes Harold Holzer, whose likeness Künstler included in the crowd (as reported in *Newsday*, November 17, 2013). ~



## The Lincoln Conspiracy Trial Courtroom

by Richard E. Sloan

This article could not have been written without the help of my friends Betty Ownsbey (Lewis Powell's biographer), and John Elliott who has been digging deeply into the trial, the conspirators' incarceration, and their hanging, for a unique book he is writing.

Washington, D.C. offers great restored Lincoln-related sites such as Ford's Theatre, the Petersen House (where Lincoln died), and Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home. A visit to each is truly a memorable trip back in time, and can provide fresh perspectives. A new three-year long restoration has just been completed, and I had the opportunity to visit it on March 18th with three of my friends. It is the room in which the trial of the Lincoln conspirators was conducted, and it is located on the third floor of the oldest building at Fort Lesley J. McNair, situated on the southern tip of the city. Eight defendants were rounded up and charged with either conspiring with John Wilkes Booth and Jefferson Davis, and/or with helping Booth to escape. They were Mary Surratt, Dr. Samuel Mudd, David Herold, Lewis Powell (alias Paine/Payne), George Atzerodt, Michael O'Laughlen, Samuel Arnold, and Edmund Spangler. (One trial reporter called them "the motley crew.")

The trial building, known for years as "Building 20," had once been part of both a huge arsenal built circa 1794, and a federal penitentiary built at the arsenal in 1836. (Incidentally, President Lincoln frequently went to the arsenal to watch small arms experiments.) Since most of the arsenal and the penitentiary were razed in 1867, it's remarkable that the little building survives. When the penitentiary was abandoned in 1862 (by order of President Lincoln), its prisoners were transferred to other penal institutions. So when Secretary of War Edwin Stanton needed a place to detain and try the eight alleged Lincoln conspirators, he had to look no further than the old penitentiary and its vacant cells. He ordered that a room be found there that could accommodate the trial.

It was only through the good offices of the staff at Fort McNair and Betty Ownsbey of Richmond, Virginia that we were able to visit the newly restored courtroom just two weeks before it officially opened. As we approached building 20, I noticed a shiny new plaque officially naming it "Grant Hall," in honor of General Grant (who just happened to be one of the very first witnesses at the trial!). We were warmly greeted by Susan Lemke, who is the Chief of Special Collections at the fort's National Defense University. Ms. Lemke told us that with the exception of the trial room and two adjacent rooms that serviced the trial, Grant Hall now serves as headquarters for the ACSS—the African Center for Strategic Studies.

We followed her up three steep flights of stairs and suddenly there we were in the historic room, as though we had been transported back in time. The re-creation is well done, but not perfect (I'll explain later). The room's exact appearance and layout are well documented, thanks to a diagram that appeared in some of the contemporary published transcripts of the proceedings, woodcuts that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, and some eyewitness descriptions. The room measures about 45 by 27, with an eleven foot-high ceiling. In the rear stands a slightly raised platform with a long wooden railing that serves as the prisoners' bar, where the prisoners sat with guards stationed between and behind them. Eight chairs have been placed there for the accused. I noticed that the railing and the platform are not long

enough to accommodate eight defendants; they need to be extended by a few feet. Additionally, as Betty Ownsbey told me, "There should be two long benches for the accused, not those chairs," adding, "I'll build 'em myself if I have to!" Near the center of the room is the witness stand. (*Leslie's* woodcut shows a witness standing in it, but the *Boston Advertiser* reported that a common arm chair was placed in it.) I was surprised to see that the prisoners' bar and the witness stand are constructed of rough, unfinished pine, and look so crude. I never realized it before, but that's exactly the way they should be, because it was, after all, a makeshift courtroom. In the foreground, on the right side of the room, a large table replicates the one used by the members of the Military Commission. On the left side is a longer and narrower table, intended for the press. These two tables were part of the trial set from the 2010 movie, *The Conspirator*, and were donated by the producer when he learned that the historic courtroom was being restored. Running through the middle of the room are three newly constructed support columns, appearing just as they do in the woodcuts, and finished in a beautiful dark brown stain. (John Elliott pointed out that they should have been painted white!) The modern windows in the room have been removed and replaced by windows more in keeping with the period, and with iron bars, just as they appear in the woodcuts. The heavy iron-grated door behind the prisoners' bar, which led to the prisoners' cell block, is gone, but a mock-up has been created (today such a door would lead to nowhere!). Imitation gaslights and a pot belly stove, just like those visible in the woodcuts, complete the picture. The stove was also donated by the film's producer (there were actually two stoves, though).

**continued on page 5**



Contemporary Woodcut from Harper's Weekly



Restored Courtroom (Photo by Richard Sloan)

## The Lincoln Conspiracy Trial Courtroom, continued

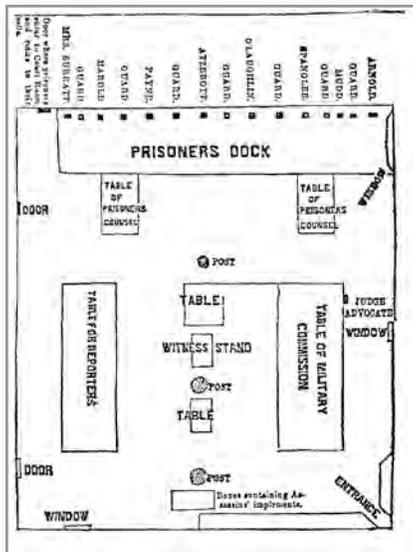


Diagram of Courtroom

The government decided upon a military trial for the accused, because President Lincoln had been Commander-in-Chief and his murder was considered an act of war committed by supporters of the Confederacy. (There is still debate as to whether or not the defendants were entitled to a civilian trial and if the outcome would have been any different.) Nine high-ranking officers were selected to conduct the proceedings. And so it was, during a forty-nine day period from May 12th to June 29th, 1865, that 371 witnesses testified here. Sometimes the sessions were tedious. Sometimes they were dramatic. Sometimes (quoting from Michael Kauffman's book, *American Brutus*) they were acrimonious, especially when one of the prosecution lawyers, John Bingham, "scolded, mocked, and intimidated his adversaries." When the defendants were marched into court on the first day, they were—with the exception of Mrs. Surratt and Dr. Mudd—hooded, manacled, and weighed down with heavy iron balls that guards had to carry when they escorted them to and from the courtroom. (Some say that Dr. Mudd was chained, but not "heavily." Perhaps he wore manacles, but did not have the ball and chain on his feet.) The canvas hoods were only worn in court on that first day and removed when they were seated; someone must have objected to them—probably one or two of the Commissioners, who later privately wrote that they had found the sight offensive. Mrs. Surratt always wore a black dress and a black bonnet. She was also heavy veiled, which prevented reporters and spectators from seeing her face and thereby gave her an air of mystery.

Passes to the trial were "the hottest tickets in town," as we'd say today. Only those with "connections" managed to obtain them (original tickets, signed by the Commission's President, General David Hunter, are now valuable collector's items). General Custer and John Hay were among those who attended. Some of the female spectators came just to be seen. The public never knew in advance who would be taking the stand each day, and if they were lucky enough to get tickets, they may have seen and heard some of the most interesting witnesses—actor Sam Chester revealing how John Wilkes Booth tried but failed to recruit him in his earlier plot to kidnap Lincoln or Major Henry Rathbone and Boston Corbett giving their eyewitness accounts of the assassination and Booth's capture. Maybe they caught the testimony of the government's star witness, Louis Weichmann. Maybe they were lucky enough to be there on the dramatic day Mrs. Surratt finally showed her face when she was instructed to raise her veil so that a witness could identify her, or on the day William Bell, the Seward family's house servant, was asked whether or not Powell was the man who attacked

Secretary of State Seward, his son Frederick, and his household. The prisoner was directed to stand up; his manacles were removed; and he was instructed to put on the hat and coat he had worn that night, so that Bell could identify him. It was one of the trial's most chilling moments.

The female spectators were dressed in all their finery and constantly chatted, whispered, and chuckled about the defendants. Many of them considered the proceedings simply a form of entertainment. They flitted their fans in a futile effort to cool off, as the temperature in the crowded room sometimes soared to 100 degrees! Mrs. Surratt used a palm leaf fan, but as the summer progressed, the heat became unbearable for her, despite the fact that there were four windows in the courtroom. She was eventually permitted to sit in the doorway of the nearest side room for a few days, where the air moved a bit, and where she could still be seen by the Commission. During another portion of the trial she was allowed to sit with her lawyer at his table in front of the prisoners' bar. (*The Conspirator* movie took the liberty of placing that table in front of a window along the right side of the room.) Mrs. Surratt became ill during the trial and for a while would not eat. She was so ill that she was removed from the cell altogether during the last two weeks of the trial and allowed to remain in that side room, instead. Her daughter, Anna, attended her there. That room must have been crowded, since it was also used to hold witnesses waiting to testify, and for doctors who spent two days examining and interviewing Lewis Powell in an effort to learn if he was insane (a second adjacent room was used solely by the Military Commission, its staff, and by the prosecuting attorneys).

Ms. Lemke showed us both of these equally historic rooms, which contain some neat items donated by the producers of *The Conspirator*. These include replicas of the conspirators' knives and guns, and the black dress worn by Robin Wright, who starred as Mrs. Surratt. There are also photographs, woodcuts, newspapers, sheet music, and a beautiful rare antique fan illustrated with scenes related to the assassination story. Ms. Lemke told us that she had personally gathered together some of these last-mentioned items.

The cases against Arnold, O'Laughlen, and Spangler were the weakest, but all eight defendants undoubtedly felt that their case was hopeless and that they were bound to be found guilty to some extent. The most damning testimony against Mrs. Surratt and Dr. Mudd was provided by John Lloyd and Louis Weichmann, who took the stand within the first couple of days of the trial. The "bibulous" Lloyd (a great word once used by author Lloyd Lewis in describing him) was Mrs. Surratt's tenant in lower Maryland. He testified that she gave him a message on the afternoon of the assassination to have rifles ready for someone who would call for them that night. Weichmann was the very next witness. (I wonder if he was able to hear any of Lloyd's testimony from the side room in which he sat as he waited to testify. Perhaps the door to the room was deliberately kept shut, to preclude that possibility). Weichmann was the 23 year-old former school chum of Mrs. Surratt's son, John. He had rented a room at her D.C. boardinghouse (sharing it with John) where, as he told the Court, he observed strange activities and whispered conversations between some of the defendants, John Surratt, John Wilkes Booth, as well as between Booth and his landlady (Mrs. Surratt). It all made him suspicious. He also **continued on page 6**

## The Lincoln Conspiracy Trial Courtroom, continued

testified that Booth held a private conversation (outside of his hearing) with John Surratt and Dr. Mudd in Booth's hotel room, while they left him seated in a side room. On the afternoon of the assassination, he was sitting right next to Mrs. Surratt when John Lloyd claimed she gave him the message about the guns, yet he claimed not to have heard a word of it. Weichmann's testimony was actually more devastating to Dr. Mudd than to Mrs. Surratt. He spent the rest of his life defending himself against charges that he was privy to the conspirators' original plan to abduct Lincoln and that he had been forced by Secretary of War Stanton to testify for the government in order to save his own neck, at the expense of Mrs. Surratt's life. Having researched Weichmann for a play I wrote, I found it to be a unique experience to actually stand in the witness box and recall his testimony. (As I stood there, I imagined him sweating it out as Mrs. Surratt and Dr. Mudd sat just a few feet away).

All eight of the defendants were found guilty to various degrees. Powell, Herold, Atzerodt and Surratt were sentenced to be hanged. The others were banished to Fort Jefferson in the Gulf of Mexico, to serve various sentences. Although most people looked upon Mrs. Surratt as the mother hen and "the female fiend incarnate," few expected her to be executed, owing to her sex. In fact, five of the nine Commissioners attached a petition of clemency to their findings, asking President Johnson to commute her sentence to life imprisonment, due to her sex and her age (although she was only in her forties). Joseph Holt, the Army Judge Advocate General—the man who headed the prosecution for the government—personally delivered the findings and verdicts to President Johnson. (However, the president later claimed he never saw the Commission's plea). A scaffold was hastily erected next to building 20, and the four were hanged on July 7, 1865. Their bodies were cut down and buried just a few feet away, in plain pine boxes.



Warner Baxter as Dr. Mudd in *The Prisoner of Shark Island* (Collection of Richard Sloan)

I brought with me to Fort McNair my replica pair of lilly-irons, hoping that I'd be allowed to pose for a picture wearing them at the prisoners' bar, just as Warner Baxter did when he portrayed Dr. Mudd in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*, a 1936 movie containing so many abuses of historic license in its telling of the Dr. Mudd story. (Nevertheless, it remains one of my favorite Lincoln movies!). I thought the photograph would be a unique way to remember my visit.

This restoration is a work in progress because some small, but nevertheless important, tables are still missing—one for the official court reporter who took down the testimony, two or three for the defense and prosecuting attorneys, and one for the trial exhibits. Also missing are chairs and benches that had been set up for people lucky enough to get those spectator passes (the chairs, benches, and small tables from the movie's trial set were not among the items donated, for some unknown reason). Unfortunately, funds have run out, and donations will be needed in order to purchase them. In spite of this, the restoration has gotten off to a very good start, and certainly gives visitors a unique experience and a very good idea as to how the room appeared when it played host to "the trial of the century." I wondered how accessible Grant Hall will be to the public in the future, since visiting the Fort is so restricted and we needed special clearance (since our visit, the current President of the Surratt Society, Louise Oertly, reported that plans now call for the room to be open several Saturdays each year).

Years after the conspiracy trial was held, the courtroom and the two side rooms were used as offices and then as officers' quarters. Residents who had heard what had taken place there began having weird experiences. The tormented ghost of Mrs. Surratt (dressed in black, of course!) was seen walking the halls and climbing the staircase. Moans and groans were heard. Children claimed that Mrs. Surratt's ghost visited them. A father reading to his daughter one night felt a hand on his shoulder, turned around, and discovered no one else was in the room. Does Mrs. Surratt's restless ghost really haunt the building? Or did those observations simply come from the fertile imaginations of the people who lived there? I'll leave the answer up to you.

When my friends and I left Grant Hall and headed back to our cars, we walked along the edge of tennis courts that stand just a few feet away. In doing so, we passed over the exact spot where the scaffold had been erected and, just a few feet further on where Mrs. Surratt, Powell, Herold, and Atzerodt were unceremoniously buried.



Richard Sloan (Photo by Jan Kasoff)

The 150th anniversary of the trial in 2015 will reportedly be marked in the historic room with a re-enactment of highlights from the trial. I hope that all the missing pieces of furniture will be in place and that the event will be televised. As for the ghost of Mrs. Surratt, unless she floats through the room during the re-enactment and is captured by cameras, television audiences will just have to use their imaginations!

**continued on page 7**

## The Lincoln Conspiracy Trial Courtroom, continued

There are far too many excellent books about the Lincoln assassination to recommend here, but I am compelled to list the following essential works that provide excellent information on Ft. McNair's history, the trial, and the execution: *Alias 'Paine'*, by Betty Ownsbey (McFarland, 1993); *The Lincoln Assassination Conspirators—The Letterbook of John Frederick Hartranft*, Edward Steers & Harold Holzer, eds., (Louisiana State University Press, 2009); *Lincoln's Assassins—A Complete Account of Their Capture, Trial, and Punishment*, by Roy Z. Chamlee, Jr. (McFarland & Co., 1990); *Silent Sentinel on the Potomac, Fort McNair, 1791-1991*, by Phyllis McClellan (Heritage Books, 1993); *Lincoln's Assassins—Their Trial & Execution*, by James Swanson & Daniel Weinberg (James Crump, 2001); and *The Trial*

[Ben Pitman's transcript with essays by noted scholars], Edward Steers, ed. (University Press of Kentucky, 2003). For the most colorful, entertaining, but not always factual book about the trial, the executions, and Louis Weichmann, I suggest one of my favorites—*The Assassination of Lincoln*, by Lloyd Lewis, Mark Neely, ed. (MJF Books, 1994). This is a reprint of Lewis' 1940 book, *Myths After Lincoln*. I also highly recommend these websites:

Randall Berry's [www.Lincoln-assassination.com](http://www.Lincoln-assassination.com),  
John Elliott's [www.facebook.com/itw1865](http://www.facebook.com/itw1865),  
Dave Taylor's [www.BoothieBarn.com](http://www.BoothieBarn.com), and  
Roger Norton's [www.Rogerjorton.com/LincolnDiscussionsymposium](http://www.Rogerjorton.com/LincolnDiscussionsymposium)

## President's Letter, continued

Oregon maintains his membership specifically so that he can receive our bulletin; other out-of-state members do so too.

My activities as president are extremely rewarding because of the assistance and support of our executive committee. They are a distinguished committee of professionals who promote excellence and service for our membership.

Most of all, it's you, every member; you represent our most important asset and greatest resource. Serving you is an honor I never take lightly. It's our members who continue to invite their friends, associates, and other like-minded people to our meetings. That's what keeps us thriving and moving forward.

Many of our new members are introduced to us through our existing members. Let's all embrace a New Year's pledge to bring a guest and to each enroll at least one new member this new

year. That simple act of support will keep our sails to the wind and our ship headed in the right direction.

Our February meeting promises to be a memorable event. The winner of our coveted Award of Achievement for 2013 is David Von Drehle for his book *Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year*. I am already excited to greet Mr. Von Drehle for what is certain to be an engaging and informative evening of Lincoln scholarship.

Best wishes to all for a prosperous and healthy 2014.

Sincerely,



Henry F. Ballone

President, The Lincoln Group of New York

## David Von Drehle Wins Award of Achievement for 2013, continued

superbly written text brings into play the wide-ranging host of issues that confronted the president at that time.

Von Drehle details how Lincoln delicately balances the political considerations necessary to keep both Republicans and Unionist Democrats loyal to the overall objectives of the war. On the foreign policy front, Lincoln weighs decisions that are meant to prevent intervention from Europe as he readies his decision to free the slaves. Both political and diplomatic considerations were, in large part, dependent on the military successes and failures of the Union army in the field. The relationship between President Lincoln and his generals is given proper treatment because so much of what happens on the ground affects the outcome of the war.

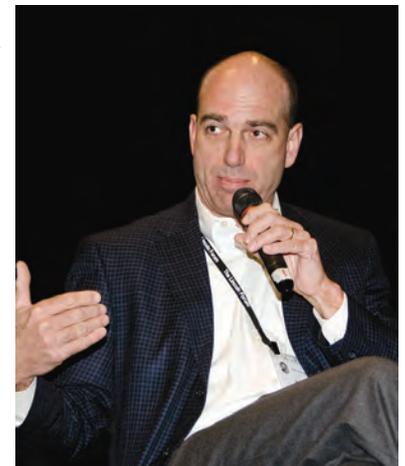
Lastly, Von Drehle deeply appreciates the personal sacrifices of Lincoln the man, who goes through the death of his beloved son Willie while also trying to care for his troubled wife and youngest son. One cannot be anything but sympathetic to the President who had to endure so much so often in a war that would ultimately cost him his life.

This is a special book and that is why we chose it as our award winner for 2013."

The first book received by the committee after selecting the 2012 winner (Spielberg's *Lincoln*), it stood up against all subsequent submissions for the year and came away as an extremely enthusiastic choice by the committee! The committee was comprised of

Paul Ellis-Graham, John Bodnar, and Stuart Schneider.

David Von Drehle will be our guest speaker at the upcoming February meeting, speaking about his book and of course, accepting his most-deserved award.~



David Von Drehle

## Lincoln's Forgotten Vice President: Hannibal Hamlin

by Steven R. Koppelman

Hannibal Hamlin from Maine was born in the same year as Abraham Lincoln, 1809, and served for four years as Lincoln's first vice-president (1861-1865), during one of the most tumultuous and epic periods in our nation's history. Yet, today, little is known of Hamlin and he has essentially been reduced to nothing more than an afterthought, regarded as an inconsequential player overshadowed by Lincoln of course, but also virtually all of Lincoln's cabinet members. Is this due to the vice-presidential position itself or the man, Hannibal Hamlin, himself?



Hannibal Hamlin (mrlincolnwhitehouse.org)

*TIME Magazine* named him one of America's worst vice-presidents in 2008, calling him a "notorious do-nothing politician." He even called himself "the most unimportant man in Washington, ignored by the President, the cabinet, and Congress."

Apparently, Hamlin was not the most memorable of individuals amongst his contemporaries. Lincoln, who most likely first met Hamlin during his only term as a United States congressman (1847-1849) when Hamlin first entered the United States senate, by way of introduction to his running mate in 1860 wrote, "...I have no recollection that we were introduced." Hamlin replied, "I am not certain whether we ever had a formal introduction or not. My impression is that we have. My recollection of yourself is more distinct undoubtedly, than yours of me." It appears that Hamlin was being kind and did not want to embarrass Lincoln (and himself) by making the point that yes they were introduced, and that Lincoln didn't remember him. He was essentially saying to Lincoln that yes, we did meet, I remember you but you don't remember me.

Hamlin who did not want or seek the vice-presidential nomination in 1860 felt he had no alternative but to accept it. He did believe that the position would, "not be hard or unpleasant." He would ultimately say of the vice-presidency:

"There is a popular impression that the Vice President is in reality the second officer of the government not only in rank but in power and influence. This is a mistake. In the early days of the republic he was in some sort an heir apparent to the Presidency. But that is changed. He presides over the Senate—he has a casting vote in case of a tie—and he appoints his own private secretary. But this gives him no power to wield and no influence to exert. Every member who has a constituency, and every Senator who represents a state, counts for more in his own locality, and with the Executive who must needs, in wielding the functions of his office, gather around him, and retain by his favors, those who can vote in Congress and operate directly upon public sentiment in their houses."

Could Hamlin, had he been more dynamic and had a more aggressive personality, have had a greater influence on Lincoln and the events of the time? Would Andrew Johnson, had he been Lincoln's first Vice-President have had a greater role than Hamlin within the administration? One suspects so. While many have speculated what a President Hamlin administration would have been like had he remained as Vice-President during Lincoln's second term, it was something that many thought was going to happen during Lincoln's first term in 1862 as Robert E. Lee led his confederate army into Maryland.

At that time, legal scholar and political philosopher Francis Lieber encouraged Hamlin to mentally form his cabinet in case the capital should fall to the enemy. Hamlin replied that he thought the possibility unlikely but, "Should however the emergency to which you refer, arise, assured I will be ready to act at once with all the energy and efficiency I possess."

Also, in 1863, when Lincoln returned from Gettysburg with what ultimately turned out to be a mild case of small pox, many in and around Washington wondered about Hamlin's qualifications for the presidency. As Hamlin's biographer, H. Draper Hunt (*Hannibal Hamlin of Maine*, Syracuse University Press, 1969), so succinctly put it, "With Lincoln's recovery, however, the Vice-President could be safely forgotten again." He was the "fifth wheel of a coach."

Shortly after Hamlin returned to Maine upon completing his vice-presidential term, on the morning of April 15, 1865, in Bangor, he heard that Lincoln had been assassinated. He returned to Washington in order to attend the president's funeral. While at the White House, ironically, he stood next to Andrew Johnson at Lincoln's casket. He was that close to having been our 17<sup>th</sup> president, and now, simply a footnote to the Lincoln story.

From the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress:

A Representative and a Senator from Maine and a Vice President of the United States; born at Paris Hill, Oxford County, Maine, August 27, 1809; attended the district schools and Hebron Academy; took charge of the family farm and worked as a surveyor, compositor in a printing office, and school teacher; studied law; admitted to the bar in 1833 and practiced in Hampden, Penobscot County, until 1848; member, State house of representatives 1836-1841, 1847, and served as speaker in 1837, 1839, and 1840; unsuccessful Democratic candidate for election in 1840 to the Twenty-seventh Congress; elected as a Democrat to the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Congresses (March 4, 1843-March 3, 1847); chairman, Committee on Elections (Twenty-ninth Congress); unsuccessful Democratic candidate for election to the United States Senate in 1846; elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate in 1848 by the anti-slavery wing of the Democratic party to fill the vacancy caused by the death of John Fairfield; reelected in 1850 and served from June 8, 1848, to January 7, 1857, when he resigned to become Governor; chairman, Committee on Commerce (Thirty-first through Thirty-fourth Congresses); Committee on Printing (Thirty-second Congress); left the Democratic Party in 1856; Governor of Maine January to February 1857, when he resigned; elected to the United States Senate as a Republican and served from March 4, 1857, until his resignation, effective January 17, 1861, to become vice president; elected Vice President of the United States on the ticket with Abraham Lincoln 1861-1865; appointed collector of the port of Boston in 1865 but resigned in 1866; again elected to the United States Senate in 1869; reelected in 1875 and served from March 4, 1869, **continued on page 9**

## Lincoln's Forgotten Vice President: Hannibal Hamlin, continued

until March 3, 1881; was not a candidate for renomination; chairman, Committee on the District of Columbia (Forty-first Congress), Committee on Manufactures (Forty-second Congress), Committee on Mines and Mining (Forty-second and Forty-third Congresses), Committee on Post Office and Post

Roads (Forty-fourth and Forty-fifth Congresses), Committee on Foreign Relations (Forty-fifth Congress); United States Minister to Spain from 1881 to 1882, when he resigned; devoted the remainder of his life to agricultural pursuits; died in Bangor, Maine, July 4, 1891; interment in Mount Hope Cemetery. ~

## Lincoln Tomb Restoration Set for 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lincoln's Death

### Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced in

November that the state would be spending \$633,000 to repair and restore the interior of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield's Oak Ridge Cemetery. In a news release, Quinn stated, "The Lincoln Tomb is the main reason that Oak Ridge is the second most visited cemetery in the nation, behind Arlington National Cemetery. It's vital that we keep the tomb in top condition to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of people who visit the 16th President's final resting place each year, including those who will visit for the 150th anniversary of his death in 2015."

Interior finishes needing repair and renovation will be fixed, and new interior lighting will be added. Repair or restoration of decorative plaster moldings, granite wall panels and brass plaques are reportedly also part of the project. Work was set to begin December 2013, and the interior of the tomb will be closed through March 2014 when the project is expected to be finished.

The 117-foot-tall tomb, designed by sculptor Larkin Mead, was originally dedicated in 1874. It contains the remains of Lincoln, his wife, Mary, and three of their four sons, Eddie, Willie and Tad. Their eldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln, is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. ~

## In Memoriam: Herbert Mitgang and Arthur M. Loux

**Herbert Mitgang** (1920-2013), author, editor, journalist, playwright, and producer of television news documentaries passed away in his home on November 21. He was 93 years of age. Mr. Mitgang wrote or edited 15 books, including two on Abraham Lincoln. One of two plays he wrote, *Mr. Lincoln*, had a successful run at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C.; moved on to Broadway briefly in 1980; then helped inaugurate the *Hallmark Hall of Fame* series on PBS when it moved from network to public television the following year.

**Arthur F. Loux** (1944-2013), charter member of The Lincoln Group of New York, passed away on December 29th in Kansas, he was 69 years old. He was our first Secretary and a member of the original Executive Committee.

Art was a thoughtful, quiet, modest man who had many friends and was greatly respected. By profession he had been a brilliant computer systems manager with a New Jersey based insurance company. He moved to Kansas with them many years ago, but remained a loyal member of The Lincoln Group of New York until he died.

He was the author of an important article, *The Mystery of the Telegraph Interruption*, for the Winter, 1979 issue of the *Lincoln Herald*. He was prompted by one of the many questions raised by Otto Eisenschiml in his book, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?* (1937). The specific question was, "Why was the telegraph service out of Washington interrupted for two hours at approximately the same time as the attack on Lincoln?" Eisenschiml himself stated that it was a commercial line that had been cut, not the military one, but he still deliberately gave it a conspiratorial connotation. Art uncovered the innocent details—that one commercial line was deliberately cut, but solely to avoid interference with the military's efforts to capture Booth. His work was duly noted by Professor William Hanchett in his book, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies* (1983) and in such other works as *Sic Semper Tyrannis* (2008) by William Richter, and *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me* (1997) edited by John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper.

Art was also a consultant on the recent and historically accurate National Geographic documentary, *Killing Lincoln*, narrated by Tom Hanks. Erik Jenderson, the project's screenwriter and executive

producer, praised Art for having played a very valuable role in the writing of the script, and singled him out for praise at during his presentation at last year's Surratt Society Conference banquet.

Below, see a picture from the February 12, 1981 meeting of The Lincoln Group of New York of Mr. Mitgang and Mr. Loux:



(Top row, left to right) Herbert Mitgang, Art Loux, Roy Dotrice, (star of the play *Mr. Lincoln*) (Bottom row, left to right) William Kaland, Larry West



## Officers and Executive Committee

### President

Henry F. Ballone

### Vice-President

Steven R. Koppelman

### Secretary

Fran Berman

### Treasurer

James Madden

### Executive Committee

Paul Ellis-Graham

Diana L. Garrera

Joseph E. Garrera

Michael Gray, Ph.D

Harold Holzer

Robert G. Langford

Stuart Schneider

Richard Sloan

Joseph A. Truglio

## ATTENTION MEMBERS: YOUR GENEROUS HELP IS REQUESTED...

As you're certainly aware, one of our most popular Lincoln Group of New York meeting events is the book raffle. What you might not know is that our members donate all of the books. That's where your help is needed. To keep this raffle going with high quality Lincoln publications, we respectfully request that if you have any books that you can spare for the raffle, simply bring them to the meeting and see one of our Executive Committee members to ensure that they're included in that night's raffle.

*Thank you, in advance, for anything you can contribute.*

**Award Committee:** *A special thanks to our dedicated members that served on the 2013 award committee.*

Paul Ellis-Graham, Chair • John Bodnar • Stuart Schneider

**THE WIDE AWAKE** is a publication of The Lincoln Group of New York. We welcome your feedback, letters and comments, as well as news of your Lincoln related activities. Please direct your correspondence to:

Steven R. Koppelman, Editor • The Wide Awake • 5 Leigh Court • Randolph, NJ 07869

Lincoln & Civil War event photos can be viewed at: [civilwarnut.com](http://civilwarnut.com)