THE

WIDE AWAKE BULLETIN

THE LINCOLN GROUP OF NEW YORK

DEDICATED TO THE STUDY OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

FEBRUARY 2021

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

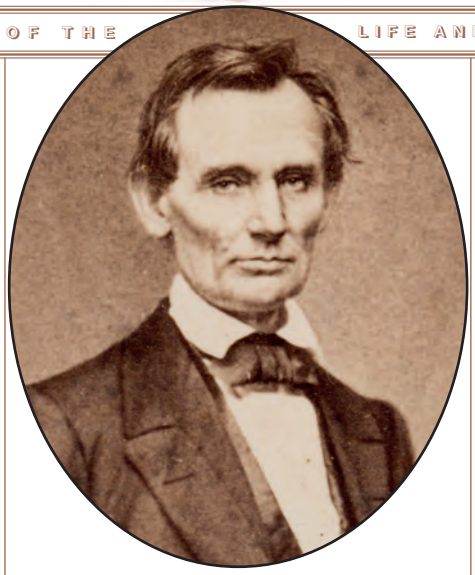
Paul Ellis-Graham

Dear Members,

When we were forced to cancel our meeting this past February due to the sudden illness of the father of LGNY award winner Brian Dirck, none of us knew that we would not come together in person for the rest of the year! The Covid-19 pandemic has permanently altered and impacted many lives. I hope that you and your family are safe and well, and will remain so until we can meet again for our dinner meetings and programs.

Despite the current unfortunate circumstances, your officers and Executive Committee members have met several times via Zoom to plan virtual events in place of our traditional ones, beginning with our first virtual meeting this past November. We were fortunate to have Daniel C. Taylor, author of *Thomas Lincoln: Abraham's Father*, provide us with insights into this often overlooked figure in Lincoln's life. A lively discussion ensued about the man who raised the future president and the life he led. Unfortunately, I don't see us meeting in person again until November 2021. We are, however, scheduling Zoom meetings for this coming February and April. Members will be notified of the specifics via email and provided with the Zoom links required to attend.

Just after this past Thanksgiving, my wife, Mary, and I drove down to Villa Mosconi in Greenwich Village and had dinner there. Jerry Leonardi, the owner and our host, shared with us the difficulty of trying to operate during this crisis. He is grateful that he, his family, and his staff are healthy, and that his family owns the building where the restaurant is located. I expressed our gratitude and that of the Lincoln Group of New York for his dedication, service, and fine food, and wished him well until the pandemic is under control.



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IN THIS ISSUE

President's Letter 1

Ted Widmer Wins Award of Achievement 2

An Interview with Brian Dirck .. 2

2020 Meeting Review 4

Abraham Lincoln, the "Distinguished Speaker," Comes to New Hampshire 5

Lincoln Books 2020 6

An Eyewitness to the Gettysburg Address Remembers. 8

As you will have no doubt noticed, this issue of *The Wide Awake Bulletin* has a new look. Our own Henry Ballone, who has designed and laid it out since its inception in 2007, has decided to take a well-deserved retirement, and we owe him a great debt of gratitude for all his work over the years. Hank is a dear friend to all of us, and I wish to thank and acknowledge his service to LGNY. I also wish to thank Mr. Fritz Metsch, our new designer, who has graciously donated his professional services to *The Wide Awake Bulletin*. It is much appreciated.

As students of Abraham Lincoln's life we are more familiar than most with the difficulties that he and his family had to deal with. During this holiday season, may we also be inspired by his ambition to persevere and succeed, his thoughtfulness and concern for all Americans, especially the less fortunate, and his faith in the core values upon which this nation was founded. Let us all remain true "Wide-Awakes!"

Sincerely,
Paul Ellis-Graham

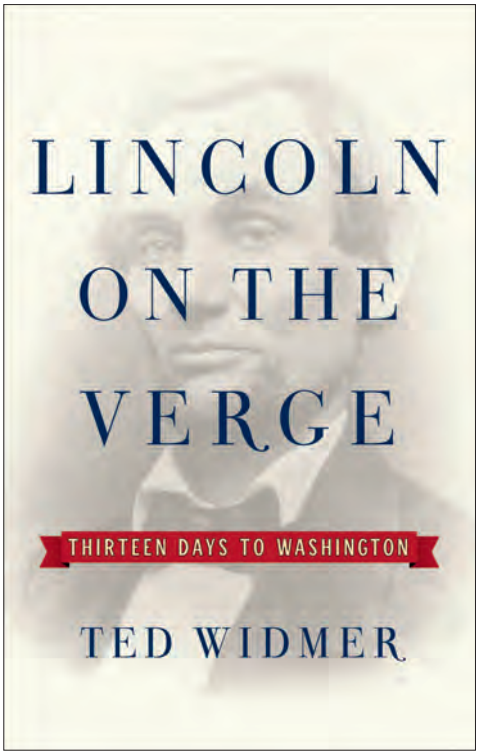
The editor would like to express his appreciation to Paul Ellis-Graham, Steven R. Koppelman, and especially Fritz Metsch for their assistance in preparing this issue of *The Wide Awake Bulletin*.

TED WIDMER WINS AWARD OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR 2020

Ted Widmer

Ted Widmer, author of *Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington*, has been chosen as the recipient of the Lincoln Group of New York's 2020 Award of Achievement. The award, presented to the individual or organization that has done the most to encourage the study and appreciation of Abraham Lincoln during the year, has been conferred annually since 1988. Mr. Widmer, who is currently a Distinguished Lecturer at Macaulay Honors College of the City University of New York, is the author of six previous books on American history and the editor of several others. His work has also appeared in a variety of publications, including *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. He also helped create the "Disunion" series for *The Times*, a feature that ran between 2010 and 2015 in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

Lincoln on the Verge tells the story of Lincoln's exhausting, thirteen-day, 1,654-mile trip from Springfield to Washington, DC in February 1861. Although there have been other books on the subject, what makes Mr.



Widmer's unique is that in it he manages to convey through his words an extraordinary sense of immediacy, one that enables readers to *feel* what it must have been like to travel with Lincoln and his entourage across the country. But Mr. Widmer doesn't only tell readers about the trip itself. He also provides capsule histories of each of the cities the train passed through as well as of the people on the train—their backgrounds, and how they came to be there, all of which serve to put the trip into a broader historical context.

Mr. Widmer's fellow historians have been equally enthusiastic about *Lincoln on the Verge*. James M. McPherson agrees that Mr. Widmer's "narrative captures the drama and tension with sparkling prose that projects the reader back in time." Douglas L. Wilson calls the book "a richly detailed and colorful narrative" that is "surely the fullest account yet of Lincoln's perilous trip." And LGNY Executive Committee member Harold Holzer says that Mr. Widmer "has successfully undertaken a great task of his own in crafting a cohesive, dramatic, and ultimately stirring account of the politically fraught, emotionally draining, and physically dangerous voyage that brought Illinois' favorite son to the nation's capital in time, and shape, to meet his destiny."

The award committee members for 2020 were Rob Kaplan, Steve Aronson, and Tony Czarnecki. The award will be presented, virtually, to Mr. Widmer at our February 2021 meeting, when he will speak on the subject of the book.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN DIRCK

Brian Dirck

Brian R. Dirck, winner of LGNY's 2019 Award of Achievement for his book, *The Black Heavens: Abraham Lincoln and Death*, is a professor of history at Anderson University in Indiana. Although his academic interests were initially focused on Civil War military history, he discovered an interest in Abraham Lincoln in graduate school, and it led, as he says, to "somewhat of an unexpected turn in my career." Since then he has written numerous articles and several books about Lincoln, including *Lincoln and Davis: Imagining America, 1809-1865*; *Lincoln the Lawyer*; *Abraham Lincoln and White America*; *Lincoln and the Constitution;* and *Lincoln in Indiana*. Because Professor Dirck was unable to come to New York to accept his award and speak at our February meeting, he agreed to be interviewed for this issue of *The Wide Awake*.

Death is a subject that many—if not most—people try to avoid thinking about. What was it that led you to examine the effect it had on Lincoln's life?

Well, it was not at all the book I started out to write. I was originally under contract to write a book about Lincoln's leadership during the last summer of the war, the summer of 1864. The working title was "Lincoln's Hardest Summer," and in so many ways that is exactly what it was. Grant appeared to be stalemated in the Wilderness, Lincoln's re-election prospects appeared dim, the war's end was nowhere in sight. But most of all, the body count was stunning, so many thousands upon thousands of deaths. And I asked: How did Lincoln deal with that? How could any president deal with that many dead Americans? This question inevitably led to another: What exactly did Lincoln think about death, dying, and mourning generally? I looked around and there was surprisingly little written on that subject—an article or essay here and there, but nothing systematic or thorough, and no book-length treatment at all. So I switched course and re-thought the entire project, turning it into a study of how Lincoln encountered and coped with death from his childhood through his presidency.

How would you describe what that effect was?

I believe it was an evolutionary process. As a child and young man, when he encountered deaths of people close to him, such as his mother and sister, I think he learned to internalize his grief, to suppress much in the way of open emotion. As a father who lost two children, he learned to sort of play by the rules, to observe the grief and mourning rituals dictated by a society that took such things very seriously. But the scale of the war dead, the sheer numbers and his own unique position as president giving the orders that sent so many people to their deaths, that experience I suggest drove him closer to God and more mysterious, divine explanations regarding death's meaning and purpose.

The opening chapters of the book focus on Lincoln's earliest experiences of death. Life being what it was in the first half of the 19th century, many individuals, like Lincoln, must have endured the early deaths of people who were close to them. Do you think that Lincoln's response to that reality—his internalization of it—was different from that of other people?

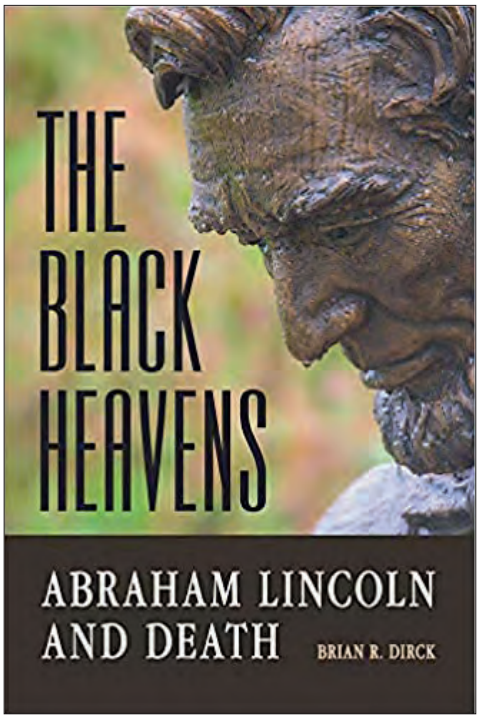
You are entirely correct that death was more common in Lincoln's time. It was also far more intimate and personal. There were no funeral homes, nor really anything that might be described as a funeral "industry." People often died at home, and their services were normally held in the home—Eddie Lincoln's service was held in the front parlor of the Lincoln home in Springfield. Back in those days people knew death, and they knew it well. So, yes, Lincoln's frequent encounters with death before the war, which might strike us as excessive, really weren't all that unusual for the time.

I also think Lincoln's personal responses to that death—his internalization of his grief, his relatively rare emotional outbursts, his tendency to keep his grief tightly under wraps—were all pretty normal for that day and age. Men were supposed to do this. The model of masculinity common in that time required them to make only a slight showing of their emotions. This was one reason why, for example, women commonly did not attend funerals. It was widely assumed they could not control their emotions in public, whereas with men this was expected. Lincoln fit this model pretty well. As I point out in the book, when it came to society's rules for mourning, Lincoln played by them. What I did find unusual in Lincoln was his relative lack of speculation about death's meaning in a higher spiritual sense. People in his day were given to endless speculation about the afterlife, the nature of heaven and hell, God's purpose in allowing loved ones to perish, etc. But you see very little of that in Lincoln. He was fatalistic almost to a fault—people died, and that was it.

There is a great deal of documentation about Lincoln's life as an adult but very little about his early life. In discussing the deaths he had to confront in his youth, then, you had to make what might be considered educated guesses about how he would have reacted to them. How did you determine what his thoughts and feelings might have been when there was such a scarcity of information?

Yes, that is always a problem when writing about Lincoln's early life. Sometimes there just isn't much information, and the evidence we do have must be treated carefully and often skeptically. Can you really trust, for example, what someone who knew him back in, say, 1840, says he or she remembers about him 50 years later? These questions constantly bedevil Lincoln scholars, and it is the area where I see non-specialists get tripped up the most often, trusting sources that actually aren't altogether trustworthy.

Where *The Black Heavens* is concerned, I was in a couple of places compelled to use modern day psychological insights. For example, there is almost no reliable information regarding how Lincoln reacted to the death of his mother, so I looked at modern studies of the various ways children react to losing a parent at a young age. Using such modern information to analyze the past must be done with caution, of course, and I try to be as up front as I can in the text regarding the fact that this is a speculative approach.



You seem to suggest in the book that over the course of Lincoln's life, particularly as the Civil War continued to take its enormous toll, there was a progression in his understanding of death itself, in both personal and political terms. How would you describe that progression?

I see a definite progression, yes, as Lincoln comes to terms with the horrendous human cost of the war. Early on, neither he nor any other American, North or South, truly understood the carnage that was coming. And so, when it came, I think it caught Lincoln ill-prepared to guide the nation through the storm. His early speeches and writings say very little by way of comforting the bereaved, or the higher meaning of the war dead. I also argue that he was distracted by personal losses. Elmer Ellsworth, one of the war's first casualties, was a young man who had read for the law in Lincoln's office in Springfield; Edward Baker was a close friend who died in an early battle; and worst of all, Lincoln lost his young son Willie in 1862. All of this combined to make Lincoln a less-than-effective leader when it came to the nation's coming to grips with the dead.

But as the war continued, he found surer footing. He realized the need to speak to Americans regarding the war's higher purposes, to explain why these men had died—and thus we have some of his greatest public pronouncements, like the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address.

Lincoln was brought up in a religious tradition that included the belief that God involves Himself in people's day-to-day lives, yet his belief seems to have grown even stronger during the war. Do you think this was in any way due to the increasing death count and/or any sense of guilt Lincoln might have felt for his part in it?

This is absolutely so. During the war Lincoln began to attend church regularly, he developed a good relationship with a minister named Phineas Gurley, and he began to speculate, publicly and privately, about God's purpose in allowing all of the war's death and suffering. I'm not sure this stems from a sense of guilt, exactly, but more a sense of vast, weighty moral responsibility. To borrow Harry Truman's phrase, the buck stopped with Lincoln. He gave the topmost orders that filtered down and resulted in all those deaths. He was uniquely responsible, and uniquely alone here. He needed God's help to carry that heavy load.

Throughout his presidency Lincoln seemed to have a misplaced—and ultimately unfortunate—lack of concern for his own safety. Do you think it was his experience of death—his intimacy with it, or a streak of fatalism, that was responsible for that thinking?

That's a great question. One wonders why, in a time of such widespread death, he did not give serious thought to his own demise. He never made out a will, for example, and he was notoriously cavalier about his personal security. I tend to ascribe this to that same fatalism he learned while growing up a "Hard Shell" Baptist at an early age. God will take me when He's ready, Lincoln seemed to be thinking.

You've written or edited seven books about Lincoln over the last twenty years. Do you remember what it was that originally attracted you to him?

It was somewhat of an unexpected turn in my career, that's for sure. I began as someone intensely interested in Civil War military history. Then, in grad school, I studied under two outstanding historians, Harold Hyman and Phil Paludan, both of whom shifted my focus away from military matters and more towards the war's political, constitutional, and legal issues. I also acted as Phil's research assistant for his book *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, and I then discovered just how intriguing and rewarding investigations into Lincoln's life and career can be. I also find Lincoln to be a truly great American, and I don't normally use the term "great" very often. He was, like all of us, a flawed human being, but what sets him apart, I think, is his ability to govern his flaws and rise above them. A rare quality.

Finally, after all you've learned about Lincoln, what do you think it was that ultimately enabled him to achieve what he did?

That is such a complex question involving such a complex man. I'd say, at bottom, it was his ability to learn, and to change, and to grow. It really is inspiring. I observed the process in which he learned how to deal with death and dying in researching *The Black Heavens*, and in earlier books I saw much the same thing. Sometimes he struggled, lost his way, or just didn't quite know how best to proceed. But he had the rare ability to recognize this and do something about it.

2020 MEETING REVIEW – NOVEMBER 9, 2020

Daniel Cravens Taylor

As with virtually everything else, the coronavirus wreaked havoc on our meeting schedule for 2020. Meetings, of course, are normally held three times a year, with the February meeting reserved for the presentation of the previous year's Award of Achievement and a talk by its recipient. The winner of the 2019 award was Brian Dirck for his book, *The Black Heavens: Abraham Lincoln and Death*, but due to family obligations he was unable to join us in February. Unfortunately, by the time we could reschedule, the pandemic had struck. (An interview with Professor Dirck appears on page 2). We also had to cancel the April meeting, and it was only through the use of Zoom that we were able to hold a virtual meeting in November.

Our first foray into online presentations began with President Paul Ellis-Graham calling the meeting to order and welcoming those members who were able to participate. He briefly discussed why we were unable to meet earlier in the year, and explained that, since it's unlikely we will be able to meet again in person before November 2021, at the earliest, we are planning to hold virtual meetings in February and April. He then asked Rob Kaplan, vice president and chair of the Award Committee, to report on the status of choosing the 2020 award recipient. Mr. Kaplan explained that, although the publishing industry had been hard hit by the coronavirus, and many books had been postponed, virtually all the scheduled Lincoln books had been published close to their original publication dates. The committee, he said, had considered fifteen new titles for the award and was at that point very close to making a final selection. Then, continuing our tradition of having a member recite the Gettysburg Address at our November meeting, Mr. Ellis-Graham introduced Past President Steve Koppelman, who made an excellent presentation. President Ellis-Graham then introduced the evening's speaker, Daniel Cravens Taylor, author of the recently published *Thomas Lincoln: Abraham's Father*.

Mr. Taylor began by introducing his cat, appropriately named "Lincoln," who had apparently jumped into his lap—a reminder, if we needed one, of the relative casualness of Zoom meetings. Then, beginning his more formal presentation, he said that although Thomas Lincoln has traditionally been seen primarily as an obstacle for his son to overcome, much of that characterization came primarily from William Herndon's writings. Herndon, he said, propagated that image because he knew the elder Lincoln only when he was failing both financially and in health, and assumed he'd been the same as a young man. Herndon was also intent on bolstering Abraham's image as a hero, and heroes, in his mind, were people who had pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and overcome hardships. Mr. Taylor also noted that Louis A. Warren, one of the preeminent Lincoln scholars of the early twentieth century, was of the opinion that Thomas was actually an ideal father whom Abraham adored. His own research, Mr. Taylor said, suggested that the truth is somewhere in the middle, and that in fact Thomas passed many valuable lessons as well as positive traits along to his son.

Thomas Lincoln was born in 1788, and at

the age of eight witnessed his father being killed by a group of Native Americans, a story Abraham said he heard over and over again as a child. Thomas' father, also named Abraham, had owned thirty-two acres of good farmland, but because of primogeniture, it all went to Thomas's older brother, and Thomas was left to make his own way in the world. Although he didn't have an extensive education he did have some learning, and as he grew into adulthood he was able to develop skills, particularly as a carpenter and cabinet maker, which he subsequently taught to his son. Contrary to his generally accepted image, he was not poor but actually in the top 20% of wealth in the area at the time, and was accordingly able to purchase a good deal of land. He did, however, subsequently run into legal problems over deeds, particularly in Kentucky, and lost much of his property.

He was also, according to Mr. Taylor, a man who took care of things, an industrious worker, which was one of the traits his son picked up and practiced throughout his life (although Abraham applied that work ethic to intellectual rather than physical labor). Also contrary to popular belief, according to

Thomas Lincoln

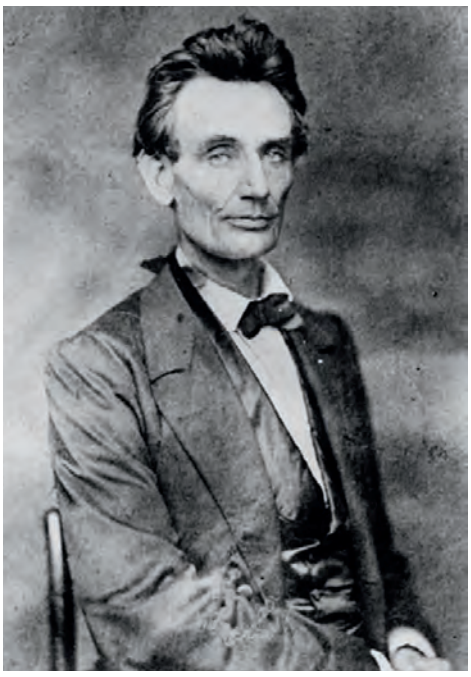
Abraham's stepmother, Sarah, Thomas was not opposed to Lincoln's education, and in fact encouraged it, even to the point of sometimes doing Abraham's chores for him. He was also a moral man who did not use profane language, and was known for his honesty, courage, and high standards, all of which traits he also passed on to his son. He was, in other words, a respected man in the community who held church offices and took on civic responsibilities, including being selected frequently to serve on juries. In his later years, even as he was losing his sight, he continued doing carpentry. After he moved his family from Indiana to Illinois, however, he lost his sight entirely, and, unable to maintain his lifestyle, became one of the poorest people in the county. But just as Thomas, as a young man, had taken care of his mother and sister, providing them with a home to live in, his son in turn saw to it that his parents were taken care of in their later years. Even so, when Thomas lay dying in 1851, Abraham did not travel to Coles County to visit him, nor did he attend his father's funeral. Although, Mr. Taylor concluded, Thomas was very proud of his son—and with good reason—it appears that Abraham was not equally proud of his father.

After Mr. Taylor took a number of questions from the audience, President Ellis-Graham thanked Bob Langford for hosting the meeting, then closed by wishing everyone the best for the upcoming holidays.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE "DISTINGUISHED STUMP SPEAKER," COMES TO NEW HAMPSHIRE

by Rob Kaplan

After Abraham Lincoln delivered his now-famous speech at Cooper Union in New York City on February 27, 1860, he took advantage of having travelled East to visit his son Robert, who was attending Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. Knowing that Lincoln was to be in the area, local Republican Party officials invited him to speak in Concord, Manchester, Dover, and Exeter between March 1st and March 3rd. Of course, if Lincoln had not been elected president later that year, those speeches would have been of little significance. "But," as Mike Pride notes in his updated edition of Edwin L. Page's 1929 book, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, "Lincoln did become president, and his three-day speechmaking tour in New Hampshire helped him do it. Ten weeks after he left the state, when the Republicans met in Chicago to choose their nominee, the New Hampshire delegation was the second to announce



Lincoln in Springfield, May 20, 1860

its vote during the roll call of the states. It had just ten votes, but seven of its delegates chose Lincoln on the first ballot. By becoming the first state to give Lincoln a majority, and a decisive one, New Hampshire started the convention toward its decision to nominate him." Back in March, however, despite the fact that Lincoln's speech in New York had been very well received, he was only starting to be seriously considered for the nomination. On the evening of March 1st, when Lincoln spoke in Manchester, John B. Clark, editor of the Manchester *Daily Mirror*, attended the speech, and the next day recorded his particularly insightful impressions of it, as follows:

"Abraham Lincoln, the distinguished politician and stump speaker, of Illinois, well known for his many contests with the 'Little Giant,' spoke at Smyth's Hall, last evening, to an immense crowd of ladies and gentlemen. He was introduced by the President of

the Republican Club, Hon. Frederick Smyth. The platform was covered with notables and Baldwin's Band. The audience was a flattering one to the reputation of the speaker. It was composed of persons of all sorts of political notions, earnest to hear one whose fame was so great, and we think most of them went away thinking better of him than they anticipated they should. He spoke an hour and a half with great fairness, great apparent candor, and with wonderful interest. Some were not so much amused and gratified with personalities as they hoped to be, but after all, if they look closely at their thoughts, they like the man better for that. He did not abuse the South, the Administration, or the Democrats, or indulge in any personalities, with the solitary exceptions of a few hits at Douglas's notions. He seemed to have certain ideas in mind, that our New Hampshire speakers could be benefitted by following, that you can 'catch more flies with molasses than vinegar,' or, as he expressed it, it is hard to make a girl love you by slandering her, or to compel a man to vote for one who keeps slandering him. He is far from prepossessing in personal appearance, and his voice is disagreeable, and yet he wins your attention and good will from the start. He indulges in no flowers of rhetoric, no eloquent passages; he is not a wit, a humorist, or a clown; yet, so great a vein of pleasantry and good nature pervades what he says, gliding over a deep current of practical argument, he keeps his hearers in a smiling mood with their mouths open ready to swallow all he says.... His sense of the ludicrous is very keen, and an exhibition of that is the clincher of all his arguments; not the ludicrous acts of persons, but ludicrous ideas. Hence he is never offensive, and steals away willingly into his train of belief persons who were opposed to him. He seems to forget all about himself while talking, and to be entirely engrossed in the welfare of his hearers, trying to convince them that they have only one political course to pursue. He does not try to show off, to amuse those of his own party, but addresses all his arguments in a way to make new converts. For the first half hour his opponents would agree with every word he uttered, and from that point he began to lead them off, little by little, cunningly, till it seemed as if he had got them all into his fold. He displays more shrewdness, more knowledge of the masses of mankind than any public speaker we have heard since long John Wilson [a former U.S. Representative from New Hampshire]…. At the close of his speech, the Band played, and then three times three cheers were given for Lincoln, and three for the Republicans of New Hampshire, and the meeting dissolved."

LINCOLN BOOKS 2020

"The study of Lincoln, today, amounts to little less than a mania…. Of the writing of books there seems to be no end." Even taking into account its somewhat archaic syntax, this sentence could have easily been written yesterday. In fact, it comes from a book by Orrin Henry Pennell titled *Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln*, which was published in 1899–another proof, if we need one, that some things never change. And this year, despite a pandemic and all the disruptions that have followed in its wake, there has been a plethora of new Lincoln books to feed that mania. Again, however, in compiling this list we have been very selective. The list includes only new—or new editions of—adult nonfiction books published in hardcover and/or paperback by traditional publishers (i.e., not independently published) that are largely if not entirely about Lincoln.

As is also usually the case, there were a good number of books released this year that, while not fitting our criteria, may also be of interest to students of Abraham Lincoln's life and times. Among these is *The Presidents vs. the Press: The Endless Battle between the White House and the Media—from the Founding Fathers to Fake News* by LGNY Executive Committee member Harold Holzer (Dutton, 528 pages, hardcover, $29.00), which chronicles the tensions that have existed between these two American institutions throughout our history. Another is *Lincoln and Democratic Statesmanship* edited by Michael P. Zuckert (University Press of Kansas, 312 pages, hardcover, $50.00), a collection of eight essays discussing whether and how Lincoln acted in a statesman-like manner at critical moments in his presidency, in the process examining the difference between a mere politician and a true stateman. There is also Richard Fritzky's *Unfading Light: The Sustaining Insight and Inspiration of Abraham Lincoln* (Hamilton Books, 286 pages, paperback, $24.99), in which forty-five individuals who have devoted much, if not all, of their lives to Lincoln studies, including numerous Lincoln scholars and members of LGNY, discuss their connection to our sixteenth president. Another is *Lincoln Among the Badgers: Rediscovering Sights Associated with Abraham and Mary Lincoln in Wisconsin* by Steven K. Rogstad (Millhouse Press, 400 pages, paperback, $30.00), an illustrated account of Abraham and Mary Lincoln's travels in Wisconsin and the monuments, memorials, and markers that honor them there. Yet another is *Author in Chief: The Untold Story of Our Presidents and the Books They Wrote* by Craig Fehrman (Avid Reader Press/Simon & Schuster, 448 pages, hardcover, $30.00), which provides a behind-the scenes look at books written by America's chief executives both before and after their terms in office, including Abraham Lincoln's *Political Debates between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas*, published during his first campaign for the presidency. Finally, while numerous hardcover and paperback editions of John G. Nicolay and John Hay's ten-volume *Abra-*

Lincoln Book Tower at Ford's Theatre

ham Lincoln: A History (1890) have long been available, ABH Publishing has produced a DVD-ROM edition that includes not only the *History* but also the authors' ten-volume *Complete Works* (1894), which are available together on Amazon under the title *The Nicolay and Hay Lincoln Collection* at the extraordinary price of $19.99.

Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times by David S. Reynolds (Penguin Press, 960 pages, hardcover, $45.00) A magisterial cultural biography that demonstrates how Lincoln was shaped by his times, and how his knowledge and understanding of American culture enabled him to shape those times in return.

Abraham Lincoln: A Western Legacy by Richard W. Etulain (South Dakota Historical Society Press, 198 pages, paperback, $14.95) A book focusing on how, having grown up on the frontier and been a part of its political development, as president Lincoln enacted policies that changed the landscape of the American West and helped lay the foundation for its politics and identity.

Every Drop of Blood: Hatred and Healing at Abraham Lincoln's Second Inauguration by Edward Achorn (Atlantic Monthly Press, 336 pages, hardcover, $27.00) A portrait of Washington, DC, the events, and people who set those events in motion in the weeks leading up to Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, generally considered to be the greatest such speech in the nation's history.

Lincoln and the American Founding by Lucas E. Morel (Southern Illinois University Press, 160 pages, hardcover, $24.95) The latest addition to SIU's Concise Lincoln Library, a study of Lincoln's connection to America's founding through discussions of the founders themselves (particularly Washington), the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, slavery, and the question of original intent.

The Lincoln Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill America's Sixteenth President and Why It Failed by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch (Flatiron Books, 416 pages, hardcover, $29.99) A popular retelling of the story of the Baltimore Plot, a plan to assassinate the president-elect while en route to Washington, DC for his inauguration in 1861, and how it was foiled by Allan Pinkerton and others.

Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington by Ted Widmer (Simon and Schuster, 624 pages, hardcover, $27.00) Winner of this year's LGNY Award of Achievement, the story of Lincoln's trip from Springfield to Washington, DC for his inauguration during which, the author argues, the president-elect discovered an inner strength as he prepared to deal with, as he put it, "a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."

Lincoln Takes Command: The Campaign to Seize Norfolk and the Destruction of the CSS Virginia by Steve Norder (Savas Beatie, 408 pages**,** hardcover, $32.95) A study of the week of May 5-12, 1862, during which Lincoln sailed to Fort Monroe in Hampton Roads, VA and essentially took control of the Peninsula Campaign, the success of which provided him with both more understanding of and more confidence in his ability to function effectively as commander-in-chief.

Lincoln's First Crisis: Abraham Lincoln, His Rivals, and the Beginning of the Civil War by William Bruce Johnson (Stackpole Books, 448 pages, hardcover, $29.95) A detailed discussion of the events leading up to and surrounding the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, including the argument that William Seward was essentially responsible for the crisis because, with Winfield Scott's assistance, he undermined Lincoln's plan.

Lincoln's Lie: A True Civil War Caper Through Fake News, Wall Street, and the White House by Elizabeth Mitchell (Counterpoint, 320 pages, hardcover, $26.00) A novelistic account of a little-known event in 1864—a false newspaper story about a call for additional conscripts —that illuminates Lincoln's sometimes difficult relationship with the press and its role in the Civil War.

Lincoln's Wartime Tours from Washington, DC by John W. Schildt (History Press, 128 pages, paperback, $21.99) An overview of the nineteen trips Lincoln made from Washington between 1862 and 1865, the majority of them to Virginia, but including others to Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Opposing Lincoln: Clement L. Vallandigham, Presidential Power, and the Legal Battle over Dissent in Wartime by Thomas C. Mackey (University Press of Kansas, 200 pages, hardcover/paperback, $55.00/$24.95) A study of Vallandigham's opposition to Lincoln and his administration as well as a discussion of Lincoln's use of force, suspension of habeas corpus, and statements on presidential power in wartime.

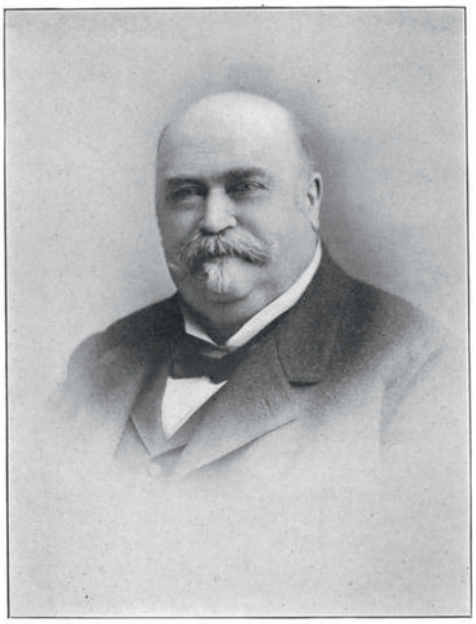
The Petersen House, the Oldroyd Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died by Alan E. Hunter (America Through Time, 160 pages, paperback, $24.99) A visual history of the 1849 Greek Revival row house on Tenth Street NW that for many years contained the only museum devoted to Lincoln in the nation's capital and now forms part of the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

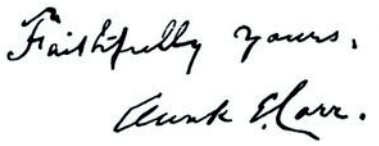
Summoned to Glory: The Audacious Life of Abraham Lincoln by Richard Striner (Rowman & Littlefield, 560 pages, hardcover, $35.00) A reinterpretation of Lincoln's life arguing that instead of the moderate, passive, or even conservative temperament that many biographers have attributed to him, Lincoln was a man always willing to take bold risks.

What Really Happened: The Lincoln Assassination by Robert Hutchinson (Regnery History, 256 pages, hardcover, $27.99) A popularly-written narrative of the Lincoln assassination that purports to "separate the myths and urban legends from the bare facts established by historians."

The Zealot and the Emancipator: John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and the Struggle for American Freedom by H. W. Brands (Doubleday, 448 pages, hardcover, $30.00) An explication and evaluation of the two men's radically different approaches to the issue of slavery, one violent and the other cautious and political.

by Rob Kaplan





When a committee was formed in 1863 to oversee the development of a military cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, one of its members was Clark E. Carr, an attorney from Galesburg, Illinois. As such, he was also one of the select group of individuals seated on the platform on November 19th for the dedication ceremonies. More than forty years later, as he wrote in his book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: An Address*, published in 1906, "The members of the Commission who had charge of the Gettysburg National Cemetery…had all, at that time, except myself, either entered upon or passed middle life, while I was but twenty-seven years old, and I now know of no other survivor than myself." On January 25, 1906, in a speech to the Illinois State Historical Society in Springfield, he shared his memory of that day with his audience. Today it provides a timely reminder, especially in contentious times, that as long as American patriots remember, and repeat, the words Lincoln spoke that day, the nation will continue.

"On a bright November afternoon of long ago, when the autumn leaves were tinged with a thousand hues of beauty, upon an eminence in the midst of a great plain bounded by lofty mountains, I saw a vast concourse of men and women. I saw among them illustrious warriors, gifted poets, and profound statesmen. I saw ambassadors of mighty empires, governors of great commonwealths, ministers of cabinets, men of high position and power. I saw above their heads, upon every hand, a starry banner, drooping under the weight of somber drapery. I saw men and women standing among new-made graves, overwhelmed with grief which they vainly endeavored to conceal. I knew that I was in the midst of a people bowing under great affliction of a land stricken with sorrow. I knew that the tide of destruction and death had not ceased to ebb and flow, but that at that moment the fate of my country was trembling in the balance, her only hope in the fortitude and valor of her sons, who were baring their breasts to storms of shot and shell only a few miles away.

"I saw standing in the midst of that mighty assembly a man of majestic yet benignant mien, of features worn and haggard, but beaming with purity, with patriotism, and with hope. Every eye was directed towards him, and, as men looked into his calm, sad, earnest face, they recognized the great President, the foremost man of the world, not only in position and power but in all the noblest attributes of humanity. When he essayed to speak, such solemn silence reigned as when, within consecrated walls, men and women feel themselves in the presence of Deity. Each sentence, slowly and earnestly pronounced, as its full import was apprehended, sank into every patriotic heart, gave a strange lustre to every face, and nerved every arm. In those utterances, the abstract, the condensation, the summing up of American patriotism, were contained the hopes, the aspirations, the stern resolves, the consecration upon the alter of humanity, of a great people.

"From the hour of that solemn dedication the final triumph of the loyal hosts was assured. As the Christian day by day voices the sacred prayer given him by his Savior, so the American Patriot will continue to cherish those sublime sentiments and inspired words. While the Republic lives he will continue to repeat them, and while, realizing all their solemn significance, he continues to repeat them, *the Republic will live*."

Lincoln at Gettysburg

AWARD COMMITTEE: A special thanks to our dedicated members who served on the 2020 award committee:
Rob Kaplan, Chair / Steve Aronson / Anthony Czarnecki

The Wide Awake Bulletin is the annual newsletter of The Lincoln Group of New York. We welcome your feedback, letters, and comments. Please direct correspondence to Rob Kaplan, Editor, *The Wide Awake Bulletin*, 399 Furnace Dock Road, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567 - robkaplan@optonline.net. For more information about the Lincoln Group of New York visit our website at www.lincolngroupny.org.