



# LINCARNATIONS

"Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all"

## Taking Care of Business

It has been pointed out to the publisher that the pictures on the left of this page are rather outdated. I intend to leave Dan Bassuk's picture as a part of it. Let me know your thoughts on the rest of this.

Also, a reminder that the ALP board has voted to limit your information on the website (<http://www.lincoln-presenters.org>) to 100 words or less. Please send your edited description to [abe@honest-abe.com](mailto:abe@honest-abe.com) as soon as possible. Otherwise, it will be edited for you.

### Inside this issue:

Letter from Stan Wernz	2
Shredding Lincoln	3-5
Memories of a Lincoln Presenter	6-7
Membership Mailbag	7
ALP Excellence Award/Conference Site Selection	8



**ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS**

266 Compton Ridge Drive  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45215

October 2016

Greetings, ALP Members!

With this letter you will be receiving the registration materials for our ALP Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, on April 20-23, 2017. Susan Miller, our conference host, and her committee, have been working diligently for many months to assure we have another outstanding conference. If you have never visited Lexington, Kentucky, you won't want to miss this opportunity for a primer of what that city has to offer. From your readings and study of Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln, you likely have a whetted appetite to see the Todd Home and the Henry Clay Home. The 2017 Conference Committee agenda will provide an opportunity for you to see both, plus so much more!

Last year, you may recall, I wrote about John Cooper, our membership chairperson, working earnestly to correct and update the membership data. Not all his attempts were successful, but we have a much-improved directory of information. Keeping it current requires your help. If you have an email address and are not regularly receiving information from me, please provide John ([fourscore7yearsago@yahoo.com](mailto:fourscore7yearsago@yahoo.com)) and me ([Lincolnwernzs@peoplepc.com](mailto:Lincolnwernzs@peoplepc.com)) with your corrected email information. The same is true for current U.S. postal delivery addresses. If you have moved, let us know your new mailing address. If you change your email address, please send the new address to John and me. Only in this way can we keep our data current.

Over the last several months we have had inquiries from persons interested in filming documentaries. One was related to Robert Burns and Lincoln's interest in Burns' writings. Unfortunately, my inquiry to the membership resulted in limited response. Given that the timeframe was so short (they wanted to film in mid-October), our responses could not provide them with much help.

A second inquiry was made about a documentary on the ALP. Information from the inquiry to members about appearances was forwarded to the producers/directors. They were also put in touch with Susan Miller in an effort to get them to our 2017 conference. As of this writing, that project is going forward. They plan to film at some events where ALP members will be, and they intend to join us in Lexington next April.

Both of these inquiries stress the need for your leadership to have your directory information. When the requests for help were made, an initial response was needed within 48 hours. As you can see, notices to the membership also need rapid responses in order for your leadership to best serve you.

Wishing you a bright and prosperous New Year, and hopeful to see you in Lexington, I remain, your humble servant,

Stan



## "Shredding Lincoln: Abe's Files in Peril"

By Bruce Rushton

June 8, 2016

*(This story is the product of a collaboration with Illinois Issues.*

*Illinois Issues is produced in Springfield by NPR Illinois. Used by permission.)*

The world had always known about Grace Bedell, an 11-year-old girl who had urged Abraham Lincoln, months before he became president, to grow a beard, on the grounds that he would be more electable. "All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be president," the little girl wrote. The letter has long been famous — Lincoln, who'd written back asking Bedell whether a beard might not be labeled "a piece of silly affectation," stopped at the girl's hometown en route from Springfield to the nation's capital. Now whiskered, the president-elect called the girl out of the crowd for a face-to-face visit that included a kiss. There's a statue in Bedell's hometown of Westfield, New York, that commemorates the moment. What wasn't known, until 2007, is that Bedell wrote a second letter to Lincoln in 1864. It was never answered or acknowledged by the president — there's no evidence that Lincoln ever saw it. Her family had fallen on hard times, Bedell explained in the letter written four years after the president had kissed her. Please, she asked, could I get a position with the Treasury Department? Karen Needles, who found the letter at the national archives in Washington, D.C., while working for the Papers of Abraham Lincoln Project based in Springfield, says that she only has time to glance while looking through Lincoln records. Otherwise, she would never get anything done. But the very first lines of Bedell's letter rang out. "Do you remember before your election receiving a letter from a little girl residing at Westfield in Chautauqua Co. advising the wearing of whiskers as an improvement to your face?" Bedell began in her written plea for a job "I stand up in my chair, and I'm doing this jig," Needles recalls. It's the sort of celebration that some scholars and lovers of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln Project fear might be less likely in the future.

### Grants in Jeopardy

Turmoil has hit the papers project that is tracking down and digitizing every document ever written or read by the Great Emancipator. An investigation by the office of the inspector general launched last fall has, so far, uncovered nothing. After being placed on administrative leave in April, Daniel Stowell, the project's longtime director, was reinstated this week. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency that employs Stowell refuses to say why he was placed on leave, even though the agency has previously released documents showing the basis for disciplinary action against an agency employee.

State funding has been slashed while the staff has been cut from a dozen to seven, with one of the five lost positions being in Washington, D.C., where Bedell's second letter to Lincoln was discovered. The governor's office has blamed the budget impasse. Meanwhile, grant money is being withheld due to questions about the project and its future. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, a private organization that helped organize observances of Lincoln's 200th birthday in 2009, is withholding a \$25,000 gift out of concern for the project's prospects. The foundation's gift is supposed to leverage additional money from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which last summer announced a \$400,000 grant to the papers project, with \$300,000 contingent on matching funds from private donors. "We want a strong signal from the state that these investigations are going to be completed without any problems and leadership established on a permanent basis," (said) Harold Holzer, a Lincoln scholar who chairs the bicentennial foundation. "The foundation decided to just hold up on issuing the check until we were certain that the project would continue and the money would not simply go to pay debts or things like that.... Show us the money, right? Then we'll show you ours." Holzer's group isn't alone in its concerns. Last month, the National Historical Records and Publications Commission, which had provided annual grants of more than \$96,800 in 2014 and 2015, postponed action on a grant application for this year. The commission could reconsider the application at its next meeting in November, says Keith Donohue, commission spokesman, who confirms that Stowell's status prompted the commission to postpone action. "There's an issue with the project director, whether the project director will remain," Donohue said. "Until the organization makes that decision, the commission decided to postpone the decision. We're hoping we get an answer back from them before November." The project's plummet from crown jewel to unfunded and under investigation is nothing short of stunning. "This is the most important documentary project about Lincoln that exists," says Matthew Pinsker, a history professor at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. "I can't think of anything more important for anyone who cares about Lincoln. ... I've talked to many scholars. All of us seem worried. None of us know for sure what's happening." The papers project, Holzer says, is vital. "As a historian, I'm very concerned that what promised to be the crucial and essential resource for Lincoln in the future is being threatened," Holzer says. "That all of this work and all of this fundraising is going to fail to produce the product that everybody had expected. ... It would be a disaster if the material wasn't produced and posted as promised." Chris Wills, IHPA spokesman, said

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

that Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation has raised \$100,000 to use as matching funds for federal grants and that the governor is "committed" to funding the program. A plan to publish documents that have not yet been put online should be finished within weeks, he wrote in an emailed response to questions from Illinois Times. "The importance of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln is clear to everyone," Wills wrote. "Decisions about the project's operations have always been based on how to best use taxpayers' money to achieve the project's goals."

### Grants and Praise

Formed in 1985 under the administration of Gov. Jim Thompson, and before the internet existed, the papers project, now headquartered at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, began as an attempt to compile every legal document Lincoln wrote or read during his career as a lawyer. It seemed a monumental challenge.

Archival records from Lincoln's lawyering days had been destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire. Thieves had scavenged courthouses, swiping untold numbers of documents. William Hemdon, Lincoln's former law partner, had given documents away as gifts. There was a widespread assumption that undiscovered documents either didn't exist, could never be found or were of no consequence, writes Allen C. Guelzo, a history professor at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, in a review of a 1,434-page, four-volume collection of transcribed Lincoln legal papers published in 2008 by the papers project. "The singular achievement of the 'Lincoln legals' (papers project) was its refusal to accept the prevailing judgment that little of Lincoln's legal paperwork had survived, or if it had, that it would tell no interesting tales," Guelzo wrote eight years ago. Thanks in part to the project, enough light has been shed on Lincoln's legal career to know that he was a workaday attorney, mainly concerned with civil matters, who largely handled cases having to do with property, debt collection and railroads. Combing courthouses, the project's employees compiled 96,000 documents that included records from 5,600 cases. They found such treasures as documents from an 1855 defamation case in which Lincoln represented a DeWitt County client who had sued a brother-in-law on the grounds that he was not, contrary to his relative's claim, a Negro. Lincoln won. The case is infamous for Lincoln extending his arm in the direction of the table where defense attorney C.H. Moore sat, watching, while Lincoln denied that the plaintiff, a man who claimed Portuguese descent, was black. "I say my client may be a Moor, but he is not a Negro," Lincoln intoned. In 2000, when Stowell took over, researchers set sights even higher, deciding to collect every document that Lincoln had ever written or read and put it all online, and so the Lincoln Legal Papers Project dropped "legal" from its name and cast its net beyond courthouses, finding such treasures as the Bedell letter and a report from the first doctor to treat the stricken president at Ford's Theater, obviously not something that Lincoln had written or read, but worthwhile nonetheless. The project spent years identifying likely repositories before researchers hit the road in 2005, combing the nation for Lincoln documents. "We would travel for two weeks at a time, and we would hit all the repositories," recalls John Lupton, former associate director for the project who now works as executive director for the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission. "We would ask, 'Do you know of anyone in the area who might have a Lincoln document?' We ended up finding a lot just by asking people on the ground." Stowell's outfit seemed a bright spot amid a storm of dysfunction at the presidential library and museum, where the museum's director in recent years was locked in a power struggle with the director of IHPA, which oversees the institution where five directors, both permanent and interim, have worked since opening day in 2005. A sixth is scheduled to start work this summer. While attendance, funding and staffing at the museum and library fell off over the years, the papers project, thanks largely to grants, enjoyed a stable staff and budget. Last August, the papers project was lauded by politicians when the National Endowment for the Humanities announced the \$400,000 grant, substantially larger than previous NEH grants of \$200,000 and \$250,000. "The Papers of Abraham Lincoln has played an integral role in providing Illinois visitors and residents alike the opportunity to experience the magic of Lincoln's legacy," U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin said at the time. Less than a month later, the papers project was under investigation and in crisis. Its supporters say they can't understand why. "I study complicated things, and this is too complicated for me to figure out," Pinsker says.

Kathryn Harris, retired director of the presidential library who is now president of the Abraham Lincoln Association, says that she has no answers. "I'm not sure what's broken, and I don't know who decided it was broken," Harris says.

### "It was Crazy"

As much as anything, the spiral of the papers project is a story of palace intrigue rooted in a power struggle between former ALPLM director Eileen Mackevich, who resigned last fall, and former IHPA director Amy Martin, who was terminated by the agency's board one month after Mackevich's resignation. Created the same year that IHPA was formed, the papers project is somewhat a standalone, a partnership between IHPA, which provides space at ALPLM and the director's salary, the University of Illinois Springfield that supplies researchers and the Abraham Lincoln

*(Continued on page 5)*



Association, a private group that provides financial support. According to Mackevich, Martin and Nadine O'Leary, then chief of staff and now interim director of ALPLM, wanted more authority over the papers project. Martin could not be reached for comment. O'Leary declined an interview request. "Stowell had a system predating Amy's arrival where the people who were on the staff of the papers were actually employees of UIS," Mackevich says. "That irritated Amy and Nadine up the kazoo because they weren't their employees." Stowell, according to Mackevich, may have had another strike against him. "They viewed him as my crony," said Mackevich, who was clashing, sometimes openly, with Martin over who had authority to make decisions at the presidential library and museum. "Stowell was a major part of what I thought was important in the library's work." Last September, less than three weeks after the National Endowment for the Humanities announced the \$400,000 federal grant, Stowell met with Martin. Mackevich was in the room. "It was crazy," Mackevich says. "First, she announced that Stowell can no longer report to me and I'm no longer in charge of anything as far as the papers." Mackevich recalls that Martin said that there was a concern about money being misused. "And I said to her at the time: 'What kind of misuse of funds? I have read all of the expenditures. They are turned in to me before they are turned in to you, Amy, and I saw no misuse of funds,'" Mackevich recalls. "If you don't like the way we're doing it, I understand there's new rules and a new governor. We can change the system to conform." But Martin stood firm, according to Mackevich and a memo Stowell wrote and gave to backers of the project. The project's funds were frozen, the inspector general was launching an investigation, the state would not renew a contract with UIS to provide researchers and Stowell was not to apply for grants or speak with the media, Martin told Stowell, according to the memo. There was, Stowell wrote in his memo, a concern that the papers project had been spending money without Martin's authorization or knowledge. "There never has been and is not now any intention to hide any expenditure," Stowell wrote in his memo. "I welcome an Office of the Inspector General examination of our expenditures, but as that process takes place, all of my colleagues will lose their jobs."

The memo reverberated, with project supporters worrying that this was an existential crisis. There were mixed signals from IHPA, which first said last fall that the state would not apply for a National Historical Records and Publications Commission grant, then reversed itself, saying that the state would, in fact, seek the federal grant that's now in limbo due to concerns about Stowell's status. The governor's office refused to renew a contract with UIS to provide researchers for the project, prompting layoffs. Joseph Beyer, a top adviser to Gov. Bruce Rauner, told an ALPLM advisory board that the governor couldn't renew the \$243,000 contract because the General Assembly hadn't approved a balanced budget. Wills now says that the papers project, rather than continue as a unit of IHPA, is being made part of the ALPLM, which is under the historic preservation agency. The move, Wills wrote in his response to questions, reflects a desire to "remove any communications barriers" as well as provide the project with financial and administrative support. That Stowell could have engaged in misconduct that merited an inspector general's probe stuns the project's supporters. "Daniel Stowell has a great reputation," Pinsker says. "Scholars respect him enormously. He's done an incredible job of leading the project. Like many people, I'm worried that he's become a victim of bureaucratic politics and the budget crunch." Harris is skeptical that Stowell has done anything wrong. "Hell no, and you can quote me on that," Harris said. "My gut, my heart, tells me no. Daniel's character is not of that nature, the Daniel that I know, and I've known Daniel since he started at the project. ... Daniel wrote grants to God and the world to get money to keep the program going because state funding was not adequate to continue the staff that he had." Regardless of whether there had been any impropriety, damage had been done. Woes surrounding the papers project hit national radar this spring via a critical story, then editorial, in the New York Times. "Someone – Gov. Bruce Rauner, perhaps – had better cut through the mess soon enough to guarantee the continued operation of the long-running, nationally respected project before Illinois becomes the Land of Lost Lincolnia," the Times editorial board intoned in March. "(T)he state's political leaders should summon their inner Lincoln and find ways to fully restore the project as a continuing lesson on the nation's ever fractious political history." Part of healing and restoring the project's finances is removing any whiff of scandal, Mackevich says. Donors don't want to hear about investigations and directors being placed on paid leave, she said. "I think that in the world of grants and in the world of competition for grants, people want to have as squeaky-clean a record as they can," Mackevich said. "Even though this was a great academic project of the library, the fact that there are so many questions at this point will arouse people's suspicions." Contact Bruce Rushton at [brushton@illinoistimes.com](mailto:brushton@illinoistimes.com).

Full story can be found at <http://illinoistimes.com/article-17303-shredding-lincoln.html>

Related Story: <http://illinoistimes.com/article-17484-welcome-to-springfield.html>



## Memories of a Lincoln Presenter

*Submitted by B.F. McClerren (Charleston, Ill.)*

When Vicki Woodard, via her husband, Joe, requested that I provide some copy for the next issue of Lincarnations, I knew she was scraping the bottom of a barrel. I will offer up a few splinters.

"Four score and seven years ago" now describes the years that Dorothy and I have been on this earth. We may now be the oldest Abe and Mary couple of the Association of Lincoln Presenters. In 1990, Dan Bassuk had a vision of "linking the Lincolns," and shortly thereafter Jim Hitchcock became the first member of the ALP. I was No. 19.

Dorothy and I were teachers at the time the ALP was organized. At Eastern Illinois University I taught the Lincoln Senior Seminar, and Dorothy was an elementary teacher at Arcola, Ill. We both retired from teaching in 1994.

In 1994, the C-Span re-enactments of the 1858 Lincoln/Douglas debates dramatically changed our lives. Brian Lamb, CEO of C-Span, came to Charleston, Ill., to meet with me and (then) Mayor Dan Coughlin to discuss the possibility of re-enacting the seven debates. Later I was selected to portray Lincoln at Charleston for the fourth debate. That debate gave me national visibility and expanded my bookings, including a tour of schools and civic organizations in Hawaii. While on Oahu, I was sitting on a bench in a mall, and a fellow came up to me and said, "Didn't I see you on C-Span?" There I reached a new awareness of how much Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were changing our lives. We had begun an informative and inspirational mission denied to public school teachers. Our happy life with the Lincolns has spanned 25 years.

Through our presentations, a variety of audiences now feel the soul of Lincoln as he wrestles with questions of God, prayer, liberty, truth and forgiveness. They philosophize with Lincoln the lawyer and politician, weep with Lincoln the war-weary president and grieving father, laugh with Lincoln the storyteller, and hear the heart of Lincoln when he delivers some of his most famous speeches.

With similar facial features, same height, same color of hair and eyes, Dorothy became Mary Lincoln both on and off stage. She realistically presents the life of MTL in Kentucky, Illinois and the White House. Audiences laugh and weep with the much maligned first lady.

Joe suggested that we should share some unusual and/or humorous experiences during our travels with the Lincolns. A few follow.

After a performance we stopped at a Cracker Barrel for dinner and our young waiter enjoyed some stories that I told about Lincoln. When we rose to leave, I placed three dollars (a big tip at that time) on the table. He looked at the tip and said, "I was expecting a picture of Lincoln," meaning a \$5 bill. I said, "Okay. Here is a picture of Lincoln." I picked up my bills and laid down a penny. Later, I gave him the five.

Elementary school children always provide some delightful questions and statements. One little girl asked, "Do you know George Washington?" I replied, "He is my favorite president." While we were waiting to enroll my grandson at our local high school, one of the students commented to Dorothy, "Your husband looks just like George Washington." When Dorothy corrected her identity, she replied, "Oh, I don't know much about history." That could be a sad commentary on both the student and our present educational system.

The kindergarten class did not know that we were coming. When we walked into the room, a girl put her hands over her face and said, "I think I should have stayed home today."

Dorothy was carrying her little dress umbrella and a first grade student asked, "Are you Mary Poppins?"



Church audiences were always very receptive to what Lincoln said about the Bible, God, and particularly Lincoln's Proclamation on Prayer and Fasting. After my performance before a large Baptist church, I was surprised by an older lady who said, "My church does not believe in reincarnation. I do. You are Abraham Lincoln."

We have received only one really negative reaction during our 26 years of travels with the Lincolns. The scene is set in a large elementary/secondary school complex in a southern state. While awaiting the time for my next performance, the principals were conducting me on a tour of the school. It was Lincoln's birthday. One said, "This is Bill's birthday, too; he is our history teacher. Would you come with me to his classroom and wish him a happy birthday?" Bill was standing before his class when I walked into the room. The class sat wide-eyed and silent. I extended my hand to Bill and said, "I have come to wish you a happy birthday." He glowered at me and replied, "I hate Abraham Lincoln more than any man who ever lived." I exited the room. In the hallway, both principals were laughing. I was not. I said, "That encounter did neither of us any good." One said, "Everybody knows that Bill is a certified nut." Actually, he is a Confederate general in a local Civil War organization. I will never forget that experience. As my statistics teacher once said, "The negative instance has a positive force out of all proportion to its numerical value."

For five consecutive years during the first two weeks in February, we presented a least three programs per day in Dallas, Texas, and surrounding towns in Arlington, Bedford and Plano. There at schools, churches, Civil War round tables and other civic organizations, we met and remain friends with many wonderful people. Would you believe those Butternuts honor Lincoln? I share only one precious memory. I was an overnight guest in a home where the joy of their lives was four-year-old triplets – two girls and a boy. The father was a realtor and the mother was the curator of a Civil War flag museum. The children positioned themselves, one on each knee and one in the middle. The mother then asked them, "Who was the greatest president?" In unison, they replied, "Jefferson Davis."

Undoubtedly, our collected experiences and those of all the ALP members would fill a book. Since the founding of ALP by Dan Bassuk, the Lincolns have ranged widely over this broad land keeping alive the memory and values of Abraham Lincoln. Under the able and dedicated leadership of Stan Wernz, we have grown in numbers and influence.

The Lincolns have enlarged and blessed our lives, and we are dedicated to the proposition that the world should know them and what they stood for.

May God bless and heal our divided and suffering country, and may God mightily use the members of the ALP.

We continue, walking slowly, in his/her steps.

B.F and Dorothy McClerren

#### Membership Mailbag:

From Murray Cox, Indiana

"During our Vandalia conference, I was asked by someone (I forget now who) if, since I live fairly close to Marion, Ind., I knew why there was a Civil War soldiers cemetery in Marion. It seemed odd to my questioner, since there were no battles or known casualties in this area.

"I recently took the time to look into this, and found that the cemetery was approved by Congress in 1888 at the urging of Indiana Congressional Representative Colonel George W. Steele, as a part of a soldiers home. The first burial took place in May 1890, so it is easy to come to the conclusion that this was a cemetery for Civil War veterans who passed away many years afterwards and not those who were killed in battle.

"The cemetery is now a part of the V.A. Regional Health System, and is officially called the Marion National Cemetery. It is still open for burials."

**Association of Lincoln Presenters**

c/o Dean Dorrell  
801 E. Walnut St.  
Washington, IN 47501  
Phone: 812-254-7315  
E-mail: [abe@honest-abe.com](mailto:abe@honest-abe.com)



---

**ALP Excellence Award/Conference Site Selection**

The ALP Awards Committee has extended the nomination deadline for the 2016 Excellence Award (any category) to Feb. 12, 2017. Award guidelines are located on the ALP website (<http://www.lincolnpresenters.net/awards.html>).

Nominations may be made by contacting any member of the Awards Committee [Homer Sewell (chair, [abeusa16@aol.com](mailto:abeusa16@aol.com)), Vern Risty ([vristy@hotmail.com](mailto:vristy@hotmail.com)), Jim Sayre ([lincolna@dcr.net](mailto:lincolna@dcr.net)), Sharon Wood ([sharon\\_wood@pobox.com](mailto:sharon_wood@pobox.com)) or Joe Woodard ([vwoodard@eiu.edu](mailto:vwoodard@eiu.edu))]. Please remember to specify for what category you are nominating and provide as much information as you can about the work for which you are nominating the member(s).

Additionally, each annual conference of the Association of Lincoln Presenters must have a sponsoring member (a.k.a. host/hostess) who has primary responsibility for arrangements and programming. Proposals for future conference sites are presented at the annual business meeting, with sites chosen two years in advance of a conference. Thus, while we meet at Lexington in 2017, we will choose the site of our 2019 conference.

Would-be hosts are encouraged to contact either one of the members of the Future Site Committee -- Laura Keyes ([Keyes97@aol.com](mailto:Keyes97@aol.com); 815-494-4313) or Joe Woodard ([vwoodard@eiu.edu](mailto:vwoodard@eiu.edu); 217-932-5378). You will be placed on the agenda to present for your site. Contact either committee member for further information and/or advice.