



LINCARNATIONS

“Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all”

ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



Taking Care of Business

See inside for a letter from our president, Stan Wernz.

Once again our Webmaster, Dean Dorrell, requests that you check your information on the website. Remember that your description is limited to 100 words, so please submit an edited version if it is longer than that. Any remaining descriptions longer than 100 words will be edited soon. Submit additions or changes to abe@honest-abe.com.

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ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

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Greetings, ALP Members!

Circumstances during the past few months have provided me ample time for reflection. In reviewing the ALP membership list and other associated items, (I noted that) Father Time is taking his toll on our membership. Some who have passed I never met; others I saw only once or twice. Some were mentors for me. Some of those whom I never met I came to know through other ALP members and conversations at our conferences. Many of you who receive this issue of *Lincarnations* fall into the category of “never met.” I would like to change that.

This makes me ponder: Are you a member who has put off attending a conference, hoping for a better time? If so, perhaps the time is “now” for you to make a special effort to join us? We have been blessed with dedicated hosts and hostesses who have put together informative, educational, and inspirational programs for our enjoyment. This year is no exception. Our hostess has worked diligently to assure your coming to Freeport will be well worth the investment in time and travel.

Important things happen at our conferences. A big event is that we hold the ALP Annual Business Meeting. This meeting is a requirement found in our constitution. Important decisions are made that affect the future of this association, especially as it is related to our ALP Board and our officers. Board members are elected to three-year terms, allowing for development of institutional memory and consistency in our work. Association officers are elected by the membership from those who have been elected to the Board.

The following members are currently on the ALP Board: Robert Broski, John Cooper (first vice president), Murray Cox (treasurer), Larry Elliott (second vice president), John King, Susan Miller (MTL chair), Homer Sewell, Stan Wernz (president), and Sue Wright (secretary). The terms of Larry Elliott, Sue Wright and Stan Wernz expire at this year’s April conference. A slate of candidates will be submitted for the positions. (There are no term limits; incumbents may choose to run again for office.) There will be opportunity for nominations from the floor.

Another item of business is the selection of our conference site. Next year we will be hosted by Homer Sewell near Atlanta, Georgia. At our business meeting, we will choose the site for our 2020 conference. If you would like to host the conference, contact Joe Woodard (vwoodard@eiu.edu) or Laura Keyes (Keyes97@aol.com).

More importantly, come join us and help us choose the next ALP Board, officers, and conference site.

See you in Freeport!

Stan

The Great White Cake Debate



Joan and Susan



Almonds and Sugar



Nutmeg

Submitted by Susan Miller, Kentucky

The Mary Todd Lincoln House in Lexington, Ky., offers several special programs throughout the year. Joan Howard and I attended “The Great White Cake Debate” event on Nov. 2. It was a hands-on program featuring the vanilla almond cake said to be Abraham Lincoln’s favorite.

We were given aprons upon arrival at Christ Church Cathedral fellowship hall. All the participants had the opportunity to try their hand at pulverizing sugar cubes (period sugar came in six-inch cones), crushing almonds, grating nutmeg, and whipping egg whites.

Once the preparation of the ingredients was completed, we gathered in the institutional-sized kitchen. Chef Tom Yates explained the two historical recipes we were baking -- Mrs. Lincoln’s White Cake Recipe (version circa 1845) and the 1844 Almond Cake found in Eliza Leslie’s cookbook “Directions for Cookery.” He guided the group in mixing all of the ingredients. After both cakes were put in the oven, we retreated to the fellowship hall.

Vicky Middleswarth, a historical interpreter at the Mary Todd Lincoln House, presented her research concerning the white almond cake that was said to be Mr. Lincoln’s favorite dessert.

We know that the Todds were frequent customers of Mathurin Giron, a French confectioner who started his business in Lexington in 1814. The Marquis de Lafayette visited Lexington in 1825 on his grand American tour. Refreshments at a ball in his honor included “a large castellated cake surmounted by an American flag and decorated with appropriate devices,” made by Giron.

Betsy Todd, Mary’s stepmother, would order cakes for special occasions from Giron. Mary frequently went to his shop to look at the iced cakes decorated with garlands of spun sugar roses. She and Monsieur Giron would converse in French. There is a tradition that the Todd family was given the white almond cake recipe and that Mary made the cake for Lincoln.¹

After Mary’s oldest sister Elizabeth moved to Springfield, Ill., the other three daughters of Robert Todd’s first family followed -- one by one -- and married. Elizabeth is said to have made an almond “Courting Cake,” apologizing that the cake was a little dry. Elizabeth also made Mary’s wedding cake.²

After her marriage to Lincoln, Mary purchased Eliza Leslie’s cookbook “Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches” in 1846. More than likely, Mary cooked for Lincoln and her boys. Records show that she also bought 307 pounds of cone, granulated and powdered sugar in 1859; in addition, Mary purchased “vannella” at the pharmacy. We also know that Lincoln wrote checks made to Watson’s Confectionary for macaroons. The Lincolns purchased

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macaroon pyramids (macaroon cookies stacked in a pyramid and covered with caramelized sugar drizzle) from local confectioners when they had big parties.³

The Lincolns hired girls to help cook and clean in the Springfield house. Chaney, one of Betsy Todd's slaves, gave Mary several recipes for her Kentucky favorite foods that she taught her cooks to prepare.

There are stories that Mary Lincoln baked the white cake in the Executive Mansion. One White House staff member said that Mary put on an apron and baked her famous Almond Cake. More than likely she wouldn't have had time to do that. The recipe is a part of the culinary history of Kentucky and has been printed in "Godey's Lady's Book," newspapers, and cookbooks.

This Almond Cake became a symbol of Lincoln after his assassination and was found on inaugural and military banquet menus in the 1870s. This recipe is adapted from the book "A Culinary History of Kentucky."

In 1949, Marion Flexner relates the story of the Todds being given the Lafayette cake recipe from Monsieur Giron. There is the recipe in her book, "Out of Kentucky Kitchens," for Mary Todd's White Cake. In 1956, there is an Election Cake attributed to Mary Lincoln included in a culinary pamphlet, *Dromedary Presents Famous Cake Mixes Inspired by Treasured Historic Receipts Used in the Homes of the Most Famous Women in American History*. A 1957 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* included a short article, "Abe Lincoln's Favorite Cake," with a photograph of Florence McMurtry, the wife of John McMurtry, a Lincoln scholar who lived in Lexington. She was preparing the white cake while her family looked on. The story credits Lincoln with declaring the cake "the best in Kentucky."

At the close of the program, we tasted both cakes. They tasted like a good pound cake. One was somewhat dry and the other moist. Both were dense and not too sweet. The freshly ground blanched almonds gave the cakes an elegant taste. The 1844 cake had a distinct flavor of rose water. Our cake tasting was topped off with fresh whipped cream and dark cherries and not the traditional icing. YUM.

¹McCreary, *Lincoln's Table*, 2008, pages 73-75.

²Helm, *The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln*.

³Pratt, *Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*, 1948, pages 91-92.

<https://archive.org/stream/directionsforco00leslgoog#page/n261/mode/2up/search/334>
Eliza Leslie, "Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches" (1844) – Internet Archive.

<https://archive.org/details/confectioneryofm00doty>
William Kavanaugh Doty, "The Confectionery of Monsieur Giron" (1915)

<https://archive.org/details/truestoryofmaryw00helm>
Katherine Helm, "The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln" (1928)

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln2/5250244.0001.001?view=toc>
Harry Pratt, "Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln" (1943)

Lincoln and Evolution

Submitted by Murray Cox, Indiana

Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were both born on the same day, and because of that, you may have been asked (as I have) if Lincoln read Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection, or "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" (as the full title goes), and if so, what he thought of it. My initial reaction has been that since Darwin's book was published in 1859, Lincoln may well have had other things on his mind, so had no time to delve into it.

However, in the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Volume 32, Number 2 (Summer 2011), James Lander has a piece titled "Herndon's 'Auction List' and Lincoln's Interest in Science." In that article, there is mention of two works: "The Annual of Science" and "The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation" that were "specifically mentioned elsewhere by Herndon as greatly interesting Lincoln." Lincoln and Herndon both at one time owned a copy of "The Vestiges," which was first published in London in 1844, having been written and published by Robert Chambers (although first published anonymously).

The article states the book argued for progressive "development," rejecting the idea of "special creations," or more than one creation. According to the article, Herndon said "'The Vestiges' interested Lincoln so much that he read it through," and added that "the book's doctrine of development or evolution... interested him greatly, and he was deeply impressed with the notion of so-called 'universal law'-evolution." (The author here notes that the term "evolution" was probably not in common use at that time, and Lincoln and Herndon more likely used the term "development.")

Another article by James Lander appeared in a later edition of the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, this time in Volume 36, Number 1 (Winter 2015). This writing deals in greater length with the issue of creation theory, and mentions that Lincoln may have used knowledge of the book, "Types of Mankind," in the 1855 DeWitt County case *Dungey v. Spencer*. Dungey was a man of Portuguese descent who was married to Spencer's sister. After an apparent disagreement between brothers-in-law, Spencer claimed Dungey, who had darker skin, was part Negro, and was thus married, holding land, and living illegally in Illinois. "Types of Mankind" was first published in 1844. That book challenged the idea that there was one creation, as told in Genesis, but instead theorized that there were separate creations, explaining the difference in plants, animals and humans in the different parts of the world. It is believed that Lincoln borrowed "Types of Mankind" from fellow attorney Clifton Moore, perhaps prior to the Dungey case. Whether or not he made use of it in *Dungey v. Spencer* is not the issue here; rather, mention is made to support the claim that Lincoln was aware of the book and its theory. It is also possible he had an introduction to the idea of "special creations" since a review of "Types of Mankind" appeared in the July 1854 issue of *Westminster Review*, which Herndon subscribed to and kept in the office.

There is also a book regarding Lincoln's knowledge of this subject, also written by Mr. Lander, titled "Lincoln & Darwin: Shared Visions of Race, Science, and Religion." While it offers an interesting parallel of the ideas of both men, as the title suggests, it goes into greater detail and deals mostly with the various creation theories present at Darwin's time, citing how some of those were welcomed by pro-slavery forces on the theory that the African was an inferior member of the species of man.

I myself am willing to accept that Lincoln was at least familiar with the idea of what is now referred to evolution, and this will greatly influence how I will answer any future questions on this subject.

“Our Members Take the Floor...”

Your fellow ALP members would like to know what have been some of your biggest challenges while making your presentations and how you handled those challenges. An unruly audience member, perhaps? An unexpected/difficult question that you weren't sure (and still don't know) how to answer? Or, maybe, you experienced some unfortunate issues related to the business side of a presentation that you're willing to share.



Leslie Goddard of Illinois sent the following: In response to your question about unruly audience members, I've got a doozy of a story.

A local library hired me to present for several assisted-living facilities in their town. Most of them went well, but at one I had my worst experience ever. The library did not inform me, nor did anyone there when I arrived, that about half the residents of the facility did not speak English, only Russian. The staff member who introduced made no mention that the presentation would be in English.

About 10 minutes into my performance, an elderly woman started calling out "no English" and pointing to her ears to indicate she couldn't understand me. I did not want to stop the performance so I continued, assuming that one of the three staff members in the room would help her, or that she would leave.

About 20 minutes in, that woman, now joined by about five others around her, started calling out "no English" again. Several began to clap and say "OK, the end." Again, no response from the staff members in the room.

Flabbergasted at what was happening, I decided not to halt the program (out of courtesy to the half of the audience who did speak English and because getting momentum back once you've paused a program is nearly impossible). I immediately cut huge chunks from my script, finished as quickly as I could and left. There was little else I could do.


I was furious -- furious! -- at the staff members for not telling the audience that the presentation would be in English -- and even more furious that none of them stepped in to assist when it happened.

Once I was home and had settled down, I sent off a letter to the library informing them of what had happened and with recommendations should they ever want to work with this assisted-living home again. I have continued to warn other presenters to never present for that facility.

About a year later, I was talking to another presenter (this one a magician) who started telling me about the time he presented a program at an assisted-living facility where half the audience only spoke Russian. Yep, same facility.


This really was an isolated incident, and I have never encountered it at any other assisted-living home. But if I ever arrive somewhere and notice that many resi-

dents are speaking a language other than English, I will absolutely announce at the beginning "Today's program is in ENGLISH. If you don't understand English, please feel free to leave."

 **Garry Rissman of New York** recalled, that dressed as Lincoln rehearsing in "Emancipated Glory" over the last few weeks, he "was yelled at by two ignorant individuals on separate occasions in or near the subway system who accused Lincoln of being a slave holder.

"I told them that he was not, but they did not want to listen despite me telling them that I am a 'Living Historian' from the ALP.

"I downloaded the info about the 12 presidents who did own slaves. Next time I will read out loud their names from my cell phones contact list," Rissman said.

 **Stanley Wernz of Ohio** wrote: "Many years ago, I was presenting to a group of third and fourth graders in a private school setting. I ended my 35-minute monologue in the usual way, "And what questions do you have?"

Very quickly a little girl raised her hand and when acknowledged stated, "I understand Booth saved your life!" I said, "Do you mean assassinated me?" Her immediate reply was "No, saved. I know the difference." I thought for a moment, as I didn't want to discourage her and we weren't thinking on the same page. After a moment I said, "I don't recall that particular time, but I keep a diary to help me refresh my memory. Put your name and the statement on a piece of paper. I will consult my diary and get back to you with what I find."

After several efforts at finding anything like her statement, I was about to give up. I decided to give research one more effort. I learned I needed to think outside the box -- go to the Booth Family. And there it was, Robert Lincoln (oldest son of the President) apparently fell from the platform or was falling from the platform at a train station.

A fellow grabbed him, saving Robert from injury or perhaps death in the accident. The fellow who grabbed Robert was Edwin Booth, older brother of John. In the account I found Robert indicated he recognized the face, but didn't know the name of this swift-acting gentlemen. To Robert's inquiry about who he was, the man replied, "I am Edwin Booth. I'm on my way to Philadelphia to play Hamlet."

I wrote to the teacher contact at that school, and included the little girl's name from her note. The teacher phoned me to express appreciation for the answer, and then said, "You can't imagine the number of times a speaker gets stumped with one of our student's questions, promises to write or phone, but doesn't follow through. Your reply 'made the day' for our students!"

Association of Lincoln Presenters

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Conference Reminder

All members of the Association of Lincoln Presenters should have received registration materials for this year's ALP Conference, scheduled to take place **April 19-22 in Freeport, Illinois**. If you did not receive these materials, or if your copies have been misplaced, the information can be found on the ALP website at

http://www.lincolnpresenters.net/next_convention.html.

Please Note: ALP members were asked to register by March 1; however, those still interested in attending the conference should contact Laura Keyes (Keyes97@aol.com or [815-494-4313](tel:815-494-4313)). **Late registrations will be accepted until March 16.** For questions/concerns, please contact Laura Keyes at [815-494-4313](tel:815-494-4313).

Future Conference Site Selection

Proposals for future conference sites are presented at the annual business meeting, with conference sites chosen two years in advance of a conference. Thus, when the Association of Lincoln Presenters meets in Freeport in April 2018, we will choose the site of our 2020 conference. (The organization will meet in the Atlanta, Ga., area for its 2019 conference.)

Each annual conference must have a sponsoring ALP member (a.k.a. host/hostess) who has primary responsibility for arrangements and programming. Would-be hosts are encouraged to contact either one of the members of the Future Site Committee – Laura Keyes (Keyes97@aol.com; 815-494-4313) or Joe Woodard (ywoodard@eiu.edu; 217-932-5378) – for information and/or advice. You will be placed on the agenda to present for your site.