

THE STUMP

Publication of the Lincoln-Douglas Society

NUMBER 28

SUMMER 2022

The Lincoln-Douglas Society was founded in 1929 for the purpose of perpetuating the memory of the 1858 debates between Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln during their race for the United States Senate.

THE STUMP

is an annual publication of the Lincoln-Douglas Society, P.O. Box 58 / Freeport, IL 61032

"Stump"

The use of the word "stump" as a metaphor for a platform for political discourse goes back to the earliest days of American history. Just as Douglas argued his political ideas "from every stump in Illinois," the Lincoln-Douglas Society seeks to share information and ideas about one of the key events in our history.

MUSIC AT DEBATE SQUARE

The Lincoln-Douglas Society's popular "Music at Debate Square" series will continue this summer with five Thursday evenings of free music. **All programs begin at 6:30 p.m.**

The **Highland Community College Jazz Band** with **Bill Petersen** will kick-off this year's series on **July 14**.

July 21 will bring **Kendra Beth Swanson Masters** back with her lively mix of original folk songs.

August 4 **The Pretzel City Strummers** will make their second appearance in the series.

August 11 will feature **Southpaw Stance**, as the ever popular rock band will be returning.

August 18 the **Jazz Alliance** with **John Hartman** will make their premier appearance in the series.

All of the programs are **free**, but a free-will offering will be taken up for the benefit of the musicians.

Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets.

Tim Connors is the manager of the series and will serve as MC.

2nd ANNUAL PRETEL LITERARY FAIR

Saturday, August 27, 10 am to 2 pm the Lincoln-Douglas Society and the Freeport Public Library will host the **2nd Annual Pretzel Literary Fair** in Debate Square.

This event will provide the opportunity for local authors to meet their readers, and for readers to find new local authors and their works.

Any author or illustrator wishing to reserve a spot should contact **Dianne Ludwig** at 815-656-2470 or email her at dludwig@freeportpubliclibrary.org to obtain an application form. There is no fee for exhibitors. Deadline for applications of August 1.

Admission to the event is free. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held inside Freeport Public Library.

ANNUAL PROGRAM & MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Dr. Sabryna Cornish, Assistant Professor of Journalism at North Central College, Naperville, will be the guest speaker at this year's annual ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas Debate. Her program will focus on Ethics in Social Media.

Dr. Cornish's lecture will be held on **Thursday, August 25th at 6:00 pm** in the large meeting room of Freeport Public Library. The event is open to the public free of charge.

The Annual Meeting of the Membership of the Lincoln-Douglas Society will be held at **5:30 pm on Thursday, August 25th**. Election of members to the Board of Directors will be held at that time. Last year we said "thank you" to two retiring Board members: **Jim Shankland** and **Ned Furst**.

ABE: ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN HIS TIMES

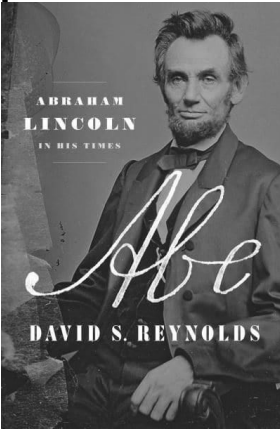
—a review by Carole Dickerson

I like big books, and I cannot lie. *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times*, at over a thousand pages, is a whopper.

I've been recommending this 2020 Lincoln biography by cultural historian David S. Reynolds for the last two years. I even took a copy to a Lincoln-Douglas Society board meeting without finding any heavy lifters, pun intended.

Despite my lack of luck with its promotion, *Abe* has met with considerable acclaim. It was selected as one of the Top Ten Books of the Year by both *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*, and was a *New York Times Book Review* Editors' Choice.

Civil War scholar James McPherson writes, "David Reynolds's splendid biography is chock-full of information and insights about Lincoln that disproves the adage that nothing new can be said about this iconic American."



How to stand out among the 16,000+ books that have been written about Lincoln? Browsing Springfield's Abraham Lincoln Museum Gift Shop, I saw children's books, young adult books, a stickers book, a coloring book, bestsellers including *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Killer* and Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, plus a staggering number of books by Lincoln scholars, several of whom have appeared in Freeport courtesy of the Lincoln Douglas Society's Richard Sokup Lecture Series.

Among the existing Lincoln biographies, however, David Reynolds maintains there is no "full-scale cultural biography," hence the impetus for *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times*. Rather than a narrative chronology of Lincoln's life, *Abe* offers something different.

Instead, it focusses individual chapters on a range of social, intellectual, and artistic aspects — both the elevated and the everyday — prevalent in nineteenth-century America that bring both Lincoln and his times to life. The more the reader learns about some largely forgotten aspects of nineteenth-century American culture, including those of the American frontier, the fuller picture of Lincoln's beliefs, his likes and dislikes, emerges.

Much of popular culture is ephemeral stuff, influential at the time and soon forgotten with the passage of time: find a teenager today who can tell you who Groucho Marx is. The Pro-Lincoln Wide Awakes youth movement, Phineas T. Barnum, Tom Thumb, table-thumping spiritualism, tightrope walker Charles Blondin, pseudonymous humorist Petroleum V. Nasby: these are a few of the phenomena Reynolds believes crucial to an understanding of Lincoln and proceeds to illustrate their importance in relation to our sixteenth president.

While falling short of hagiography, Reynolds is clearly admiring as he traces the evolution of Lincoln's thinking regarding slavery. He argues that Lincoln concealed his abiding hatred of slavery out of political necessity and was a closeted progressive who held "an underlying radicalism on race." Some historians believe that had he lived, Lincoln would have transformed the outcome of Reconstruction.

If you are interested in a shorter treatment of Lincoln and enjoy "What If?" history, you might consider John Avlon's latest title, *Lincoln and the Fight for Peace*. Presidential historian Jon Meacham recommends it as "shedding new light on the most tangled questions of our history, not least the tragedy of Reconstruction." Besides, it is only 354 pages.

The Lincoln-Douglas Society

President: Nicole Bauer / **Vice-President:** Tim Connors / **Treasurer:** Mindy Borgmann /

Secretary: Ed Finch // **Board of Directors:** Carole Dickerson,, Mary Hartman, Ashley Huffines, Scott Leiser, Mickey Martin, Todd McKenna, Sally Noble, Michael Perry, Connie Sorn, Danairo Thomas, and Alan Wenzel / **President Emeritus:** Robert Plager

Ex Officio Directors: Honorable Jodi Miller, Mayor of Freeport / Nicole Haas, Greater Freeport Partnership



OLGA GIZE CARLILE

(1927-2021)

From the time the Lincoln-Douglas Society was revitalized in the late 1970s, until her passing, Olga Carlile served on the Society's Board of Directors in addition to being one of the Society's biggest cheerleaders. It is with deep sadness that the Society has faced her passing.

Her career as a journalist placed her in a unique spot to see the value which the work of the Society did for the Freeport community, as well as the importance of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates in American history.

◀ *Olga Carlile riding on a float in 2008 for the 150th anniversary of the Freeport Lincoln-Douglas Debate.* Photo by Dave Washburn, L-D Society Collection

FRANK "NED" FURST

(1939-2021)

It was just last August when Ned Furst stepped down from the L-D Society Board of Directors after many years of service. In May, we had to say our final farewells.

His wise advice based on his years in the business world was a great help to the Society. His love of history was also apparent in all that he did.

It was Ned who suggested the phrase, "the road to the Civil War ran through Freeport" that appears on the opening wayside in Debate Square.

He will be missed.

Photo from the McNess website, a company he headed for many decades. ▶



ENDOWMENT FUND FOR DEBATE SQUARE

Since last fall a dedicated group of present and former Society Board members have been working to develop an endowment fund to provide for the long-term upkeep of Debate Square. While the City of Freeport owns Debate Square, by City Council resolution, the L-D Society has the responsibility of maintaining the site. The committee consists of Mike Perry, Jim Shankland and Alan Wenzel.

According to stats provided by the Greater Freeport Partnership, over 19,000 people visited the site in 2021. The L-D Society is fully committed to providing the best of care for a place which is a treasure of the Freeport community.

Donations marked "Endowment Fund" should be sent to the Society at P.O. Box 58, Freeport, IL 61032.

—continued from page 4 — "Young Mr. Lincoln"

Throughout the movie, Ford depicts Lincoln in physical spaces that are removed and distant from others even as he finds himself in a crowd of people. In Ford's view, Lincoln was a man of the people and yet was set apart from the people with his intellectual and moral superiority. Henry Fonda portrays that aspect of Lincoln very well.

Through a series of stories, anecdotes, and parables, "Young Mr. Lincoln" paints a picture of a young man the audience knows will be destined to become an American hero but is yet unburdened by the forces of history about to descend upon him. In the film's final sequences, as we see Lincoln ascending a hill just as a thunderstorm appears on the horizon, we can't help but be reminded of the difficult times ahead for Lincoln and for the Country.

The Lincoln-Douglas Society
P.O. Box 58
Freeport, IL 61032-0058

**Membership
renewal
form
enclosed.**



“Young Mr. Lincoln”

— a consideration by Alan Wenzel

Director John Ford is best known for his many excellent Westerns that depicted a romanticized view of the American frontier. And yet his idealized view of America extended to many of his other films, including his 1939 biopic, “Young Mr. Lincoln”, starring Henry Fonda.

Written by Lamar Trotti, who received an Academy Award nomination for his screenplay, “Young Mr. Lincoln” offers a mostly fictional account of Lincoln’s early years in New Salem and Springfield, Illinois, before he became involved in public life.

An ardent admirer of Abraham Lincoln, Ford placed Abe in seven of his movies. Ford biographer, Joseph McBride, noted that: ‘Abraham Lincoln was an archetypal figure of justice, a man who dispenses legal wisdom with a priestlike humor, charity, and tolerance and is the forefather of the many folksy, humane judges, and politicians that appear in Ford’s movies.’ As he does in many of his films, in “Young Mr. Lincoln”, Ford examines the elements of heroism, leadership, and democracy and what it means to be an American while recounting important events early in Lincoln’s life.

The film’s central incident is loosely based on an actual criminal trial involving Lincoln in which he successfully defends “Duff” Armstrong against murder charges by citing an important lunar occurrence from an almanac. Other key moments in the movie include Lincoln’s romance with Ann Rutledge, his courtship of Mary Todd, Lincoln’s first exposure to the field of law, and the development of what would become his folksy political style.

Initially reluctant to play the role of Lincoln, Henry Fonda turns in a remarkable performance as the young future President. Through the magic of makeup, costuming, and camera angles, Fonda creates a believable, caring, likeable, and introspective character. His scenes with Pauline Moore, who plays Ann Rutledge, are particularly moving and sentimental.

—continued on page 3—

