



THE drum roll

399th Regular Meeting Volume 41 Number 1 September 1, 2023



PLEASE NOTE!!!!

The September meeting will be in person at the Arlington Hts. Historical Society on Friday, September 1, 2023, and on ZOOM, at 7:00 P.M. The Arlington Hts. Museum is located at 110 W. Fremont St. in Arlington Hts. This is across the street from the library, just west.

THE TRUE MEANING OF LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURAL

Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, delivered on March 4, 1861, in the midst of the secession crisis, has often been seen as an attempt to conciliate the South. On June 2, David Zarefsky presented a different take on the Address.

Zarefsky began with a little background on the Address, which Lincoln had written before he left Springfield for Washington. (There was a little drama involved; his son Robert, entrusted with carrying the speech, misplaced his valise upon arrival, though it was eventually located.) The President-elect drew from

a number of sources, among them Andrew Jackson's response to the Nullification Crisis, a missive by Daniel Webster, Henry Clay's writings on the Compromise of 1850, and President James Buchanan's Annual Message of 1860. After Lincoln wrote the first draft, his incoming Secretary of State, William Seward, suggested 33 changes, of which Lincoln adopted 19.

Zarefsky pointed out that when Lincoln was inaugurated, seven Southern states had already declared secession, and their view of Lincoln was such that conciliation was out of the question. (For that matter, Northern moderates saw Lincoln as radical.) The remaining eight slave states wouldn't have found much conciliation in the Inaugural either. Rather than an attempt to mollify the South, Lincoln's address was an illustration of his official policy. After a winter of being close-mouthed, Lincoln now proceeded to advance, explain, and defend his position on the crisis.

One of the new President's key points was to paint the secessionists as the aggressors in any potential conflict (hardly a conciliatory move). The Federal government would be acting in self-defense. He made no mentions of forts, arsenals, and other Federal institutions already seized by the nascent rebels;

rather, he pledged to “hold, occupy, and possess” those places still under U.S. control. (In his original draft, Lincoln included “reclaim” along with these three items, but it was seen as too incendiary so he removed it.)

Lincoln did not talk about secession itself as a unified topic – since he denied that it was legal, and was therefore an impossibility, he never would discuss it – but he characterized the reaction to his election (the fear for slavery’s existence) as unwarranted. In support of this, Lincoln quoted from numerous previous speeches of his where he had not denied the right of slavery in slave states. He even mentioned his support of the preliminary 13th Amendment, passed in Congress just that morning, guaranteeing the right of slavery in perpetuity. (Zarefsky noted that Lincoln was conceding a moot point here, since the secession crisis and impending conflict had rendered this amendment null before it even went out to the states.)

But while not directly tackling the secession issue, Lincoln instead dispersed references to its illegitimacy throughout the speech. Lincoln mentioned that he faced a situation different than any of his 15 predecessors; none of them was threatened with the forcible division of the Union. He held that “no government proper, ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination.” Thus, the claim of a right to secession was absurd on its face. He noted that there were two legitimate ways to change those in power: The ballot, and revolution. Answering the claim that the states had created the Federal government, Lincoln demonstrated that the Union was in fact older than the States, harkening back to the Articles of Association in 1774. He used the example of contract law: a contract can only be undone by all parties. And he noted that the “more perfect” Union of the Preamble could hardly be more perfect if unilateral secession was allowed. Being illegal, the Ordinances of Secession already enacted could be ignored. By spreading these points as they appeared organically in the course of the speech, rather than concentrating them as a unified, assailable policy, Lincoln could make his position clear with a minimum of provocation.

Lincoln laid out policies that, in the views of some, might seem conciliatory. He would need to replace Federal officials who had resigned to join the “so-called” Confederacy. It was up to the new President to fill these slots, which he promised to do without placing persons “obnoxious” to those they would

represent. The mail would still be delivered regularly, unless the delivery was resisted. He would hold property still in Federal hands, but (at least initially) would not try to retake those places that had been lost. Slavery would be undisturbed where it already existed (though he was clear that he still stood against its extension). No rights explicitly stated in the Constitution would be violated.

Rather than being conciliatory, this stance represented an attempt to slow the situation somewhat; perhaps cooler heads would prevail. (Zarefsky pointed out that dispersion of the secession issue was part of this “slowdown.”) Lincoln even specifically called for measured consideration of the situation, stating that “Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time.”

In his peroration, Lincoln made it perfectly clear upon whom the onus of this situation rested: the declared secessionists. “In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors.” Lincoln did soften this a little in his final paragraph, where he reached out to the common ground between the sections, hoping that the “better angels of our nature” would prevail.

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank David Zarefsky for this thought-provoking analysis of Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address.

Pat McCormick

Presentation for September 1, 2023

Old Abe – Live War Eagle

The bald eagle, Old Abe, was the mascot of the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Without a doubt, Old Abe was the most popular mascot from the Civil War. There were many others such as “Old Douglas,” the dromedary camel of the 43rd Mississippi, but none could compare to Old Abe.

Old Abe served in the Union Army for three years and participated in many battles and campaigns including Island Number 10, Corinth, Vicksburg, and the Red River Campaign. During these battles, Old Abe would sit on his perch which was right next to the regimental colors and squawk/cheer encouragement to the

troops. Old Abe's "legend" grew with exploits such as flying reconnaissance over enemy positions, dropping projectiles on Confederate soldiers, and attacking enemy soldiers. Like many legends, none of these were true. If you visit the famous Battle of Atlanta Cyclorama, you will notice Old Abe, the famous bald eagle, soaring over the field. Well, the Old Abe and the 8th Wisconsin was far from the Battle of Atlanta. However, Old Abe was an inspiration to the men of the 8th Wisconsin and was widely respected by soldiers in the Union Army.

Old Abe was so well liked that his image appears on numerous monuments such as the Wisconsin monument at Vicksburg. Various companies used Old Abe's image as a symbol for their products. Today, Old Abe's image is on the insignia of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division.

Jerry Allen is a retired pension actuary currently living in Cary, IL. He has been a life-long amateur historian with main interest in the American Civil War. His interests include portraying Major General George H. Thomas and his great grandfather, Captain John K. Allen of the 78th Illinois Regiment. He has given presentations on Wisconsin Regiments, the Dakota Uprising of 1862, Jerry is a current and past president of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table. For over 25 years he has been making presentations to history groups along with living history performances.

Thanks to Charlie Banks for storing our large collection of books which we have sold to a book store in Park Ridge. Due to storage problems, we cannot accept any more books for now.

Speaker lineup

- Sept. 1, 2023: Jerry Allen: Old Abe the War Eagle
- Oct. 6, 2023: Bruce Allardice: "Loose Lips"--
Military Secrecy During the Civil War
- Nov. 3, 2023: Rob Girardi TBA
- Dec. 1, 2023: Dave Powell TBA
- Jan. 5, 2024: Larry Hewitt Port Hudson
- Feb. 2, 2024: Dennis Doyle TBA
- Mar. 1, 2024: Steve Alban: The Election of 1860
- Apr. 5, 2024: Leslie Goddard TBA
- May 3, 2024: Jon Sebastian TBA
- June 7, 2024: Diana Dretske: The 96th Illinois



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Appointed Positions

Newsletter Editor	Jerry Rodosky gjrodosky@gmail.com 847-420-1639
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Upcoming Events

At this time, we are not charging dues for the 2023-2024 year.

We hope you had a great summer!!!!!!

Join Zoom Meeting on Friday, Sept. 1, 2023, at 7 PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81433758155?pwd=S1FqVjJ1WmZsTTd1VlJNRCtLcjJLdz09>



OLD ABE

Please include the link to our website: <http://www.northernilcwr.org/>

We will follow up with our monthly discussion information soon.