



THE STUMP

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MUSIC ON DEBATE SQUARE

The tradition in Downtown Freeport continues with an exciting, jam-packed season of Music on Debate Square sponsored by The Lincoln Douglas Society. Six Thursdays throughout the summer, Debate Square, next to Union Dairy, will electrify the downtown area starting at 6:30. Bring a lawn chair, blanket, some money for ice cream and maybe a Lincoln for a goodwill offering and your summer will be set.

Dates and Performers:

June 20	Kendra Swanson
June 27	Ukelele Express 815
July 11	HCC Big Band with Bill Petersen
July 18	vanFunk
Aug. 1	Southpaw Stance
Aug. 8	John Hartman Jazz Alliance

ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM

Join us on **Tuesday, August 27th at 5:00 pm at the Freeport Public Library** for the Lincoln-Douglas Society's Annual Membership meeting.

Immediately following the meeting will be a program featuring a screening of the film "The Day Lincoln was Shot" (1998) followed by a Q&A about the film. Alan Wenzel and Ed Finch, hosts of the popular Select Pix Series at the Lindo Theatre, will lead the program.

See a review of the book upon which the film was based on page 2 of this issue.

PRETZEL LITERARY FAIR

The popular **Pretzel City Author's Fair** will be held on **Saturday, August 24th in Debate Square**. From 10 am to 2 pm visitors will be able to peruse and purchase books by local authors, and have their books signed by the author.

Freeport Public Library is co-sponsoring the event, along with the Lincoln-Douglas Society.

Music will be provided from 11 am to 1 pm by musicians from the Freeport High School Orchestra. As in the past years, the Freeport NJROTC Cadets will provide logistical support for the event. In case of inclement weather, the event will move inside Freeport Public Library.

GIVE A LINCOLN FOR DEBATE SQUARE

Again this summer, the Lincoln-Douglas Society will partner with Union Dairy to offer the very well received "Give a Lincoln for Debate Square." Coupons sell for \$5.00 (a Lincoln) and can be redeemed at Union Dairy for a single scop ice cream cone. The Society keeps a portion of the \$5 to be used to help cover costs in the maintenance of Debate Square. Coupons were sent to members and friends, and there will be coupons for sale at all of the Music on Debate Square events.

THE DAY LINCOLN WAS SHOT

A Review by Alan Wenzel

Although several films about Abraham Lincoln contained scenes involving Lincoln's assassination and death, one of the few movies to devote its entire story to the events of the day on which he was killed was the 1998 made for television movie, "The Day Lincoln Was Shot."



The Turner Network Television's original movie was based on Jim Bishop's 1954 best seller of the same title. Bishop was not a trained historian but turned his fascination with Lincoln's assassination into an interesting hour-by-hour account of the last 24 hours of Lincoln's life beginning on 7:00 a.m., April 14, 1865, and ending at 7:22 a.m. on April 15, 1865. Acknowledging that he took

some 'journalistic liberties' as he wrote the book, Bishop nevertheless filled his account with interesting facts and accounts of the events surrounding that fateful day.

Critics of TNT's film adaptation of the book generally praised the acting of Lance Henriksen as Lincoln and Donna Murphy as Mary Todd Lincoln. Rob Morrow, as John Wilkes Booth, presents a more nuanced depiction of Booth's motivations and psychological state of mind than Bishop does in his book and hence provides a very memorable performance as the story's villain.

The movie is filled with interesting back stories, such as Booth's original intent to kidnap Lincoln and exchange him for Confederate prisoners. And yet, professional historians note that although accurate in many respects, the film does contain various historical lapses. Gary Crowder of *Cineaste*, notes that the film glosses over important issues with which Lincoln wrestled in his closing hours, spends too much time on Booth's affair with a Senator's daughter, and embellishes Booth practicing his 'sic semper tyrannis' line in front of a mirror hours before the assassination.

Despite its occasional stumbles, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, is an interesting and compelling version of the nation's first presidential assassination.

This film be the center of the Annual Program of the Society commemorating the anniversary on Freeport's Lincoln-Douglas Debate. *See Page 1 for details.*

The Lincoln-Douglas Society / PO Box 58, Freeport, IL 61032-0058

President: Nicole Bauer / Vice-President: Tim Connors / Treasurer: Mindy Borgmann / Secretary: Ed Finch // Board Members: Carole Dickerson, Mary Hartman, Ashley Huffines, Scott Leiser, Mickey Martin, Todd McKenna, Sally Noble, Michael Perry, Connie Sorn, and Alan Wenzel. Ex Officio Members: Honorable Jodi Miler, Freeport Mayor, and Nicole Haas, Greater Freeport Partnership

An American Marriage

Reviewed by Carole Dickerson

“Isn’t it Pretty to think So” ----Ernest Hemmingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Much as I would like to think that Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln’s courtship was romantic, their marriage a love match, and their life together a successful partnership between two like-minded, ambitious people, preeminent Lincoln scholar Michael Burlingame lays bare a different story in his 2021 book, *An American Marriage: The Untold Story of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd*.

While *An American Marriage* is the most recent book I’ve read about the Lincolns, *Love is Eternal* by Irving Stone is almost certainly the first one. It had been years since I thought of Irving Stone, a midcentury bestselling author of fictionalized biographies. On a dark and stormy night on February 3, 2016, however, the Alan and Ed Film Club was showing *Lust for Life*, based on Stone’s novel about Vincent Van Gogh, and Ed said a word or two about Stone’s “bio-histories,” as the author referred to his not-inconsiderable output of historical novels. In addition to *Lust for Life*, some of Stone’s equally popular titles included *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Michelangelo), *Passions of the Mind* (Sigmund Freud), *The President’s Lady* (Andrew and Rachel Jackson), and *Love is Eternal* (Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln).

In 1954 a nine-year old Carole was happily devouring historical novels. Chapter Four of *Love is Eternal*, describes Mary “soaking in the hot water of the round tub . . . She rubbed the Windsor soap on her slender hips and stomach and leaned back against the circular rim” Lincoln comes in from his own bath wearing a robe. This is about as steamy as things get despite Mary having earlier expressed her pleasure that love is corporeal as well as eternal.

Imaginary scenes, lame dialog, and cloying names aside – in *Passions of the Mind*, for example, Sigmund Freud becomes “Sig” - I hesitate to dismiss Stone’s fictional biographies as mere pot-boilers because of the massive amount of research he put into each of his books. He would immerse himself in his subjects, spending years on investigation before starting his treatment of any of the historical personages. He was drawn to characters he saw as having been misunderstood or treated unfairly, and history has not been kind to Mary Lincoln.

Despite his independent research, Stone concurred with writer Ruth Randall that contemporary sources such as those interviewed by Lincoln’s law partner, William Herndon, unfairly maligned Mary. Randall contributed two chapters to her husband James’s four-volume biography of Lincoln (1945) and published a sympathetic, influential biography of her own about Mary in 1953.

Michael Burlingame would be quick to point out that twenty-first century historians now have a wealth of digitized information unavailable to the likes of Stone and Randall. The digitization of historical materials enabled Burlingame to search contemporary sources, including not only massive amounts of printed material, e.g., books, newspapers, and official records, but also unpublished diaries and memoirs. Needless to say of a scholar of his standing, he also revisited and reevaluated long-standing standard sources like Herndon.

Burlingame’s investigation of the Lincoln marriage and how it affected the Lincoln presidency doesn’t support the story Irving Stone presented in *Love is Eternal*, much less Randall’s defensive take on Mary. It required something of a psycho-historian to analyze their relationship, but to summarize Burlingame: Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd both had unhappy childhoods that left her needy and him withdrawn; her with an ungovernable temper, him abnormally emotionally reserved. Neither were terrible people, but they were terribly unsuited to each other and had a terrible marriage. While Burlingame insists Mary Todd Lincoln is more to be pitied than censured – she had a hard life, and Lincoln was far from an ideal husband – she *did* behave badly. They were tragically mismatched. *An American Marriage* is researched, documented, persuasive, and relatively short at 310 pages. It just isn’t pretty. However much I might wish Abraham and Mary had the comfort of a happy marriage, no amount of thinking will make it so. Ernest Hemingway knew that, and so must we.

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DEBATE SQUARE WAYSIDES

In 2023, the Lincoln-Douglas Society revised one and added another of the “wayside” signs in Debate Square. With the sponsorship of **Mickey Martin**, the wayside on the south side of the statues “Lincoln and Douglas in Debate, 1858,” was redesigned. That wayside tells the story of the creation of the two statues, the donors, and the events surrounding their dedication.

A second sign was added to the north of the statues which tells of the history of celebrations of the Freeport Debate. It includes images from the 1958 Centennial Celebration, as well as the 2008 Sesquicentennial events. Part of the 2008 events included the dedication of the expanded version of Debate Square that continues to draw visitors on a regular basis.

There are fourteen other waysides located in Debate Square, each helps tell the history of the 1858 Debates and the political turmoil of that time. Those waysides were installed in 2008 and are now well past their warranted 10-year life expectancy. The Society is developing plans to have new waysides manufactured, but the average price per waysides is over \$500.

A NOTE OF THANKS

The Lincoln-Douglas Society gratefully acknowledges the tremendous support it receives from **Union Dairy**. Throughout the summer months the staff of Union Dairy regularly empties the trash cans in Debate Square, saving the Society a great deal of money.