



THE STUMP

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SUMMER 2026

MUSIC ON DEBATE SQUARE

The summer of 2026 kicks off with a schedule filled with great music. Each evening's event starts at 6:30 pm. The Chair of Music On Debate Square (MODS), Tim Connors, has announced the following line-up and dates:

June 25—Kendra Swanson

July 9—HCC Big Band with Bill Petersen

July 16—Ukulele Express 815

July 30—Lobbin Robbins

Aug 6—vanfunk

Aug 13—Southpaw Stance

Aug 20—John Hartman Jazz Alliance

Please bring lawn chairs and/or blankets. A bit of bug spray never hurts, either.

ANNUAL MEETING

Join us on Thursday, August 27th at 5:30 pm at the Freeport Public Library for the Lincoln-Douglas Society's Annual Membership meeting. Immediately following the meeting there will be a program featuring Archaeologist James Meierhoff, Ph. D., University of Illinois Chicago. He will speak on the topic of "Who is Buried at Kellogg's Grove, A Black Hawk War Mystery." The free program is co-sponsored by the Stephenson County Historical Society and the Lincoln-Douglas Society, and the public is invited.



LINCOLN & WASHINGTON: ICONS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

By
Edward Finch, D.A.

“Now he belongs to the ages,” was said by Edwin A. Stanton moments after Abraham Lincoln succumbed to the wounds he received at Fords Theatre. Stanton was Secretary of War at the time, and was among a handful of dignitaries present at the death of the 16th President. Whether Stanton meant to say that Lincoln would become a luminary in the pantheon of American icons, or just someone who would be judged by future historians, is not clear.

What did happen was the elevation of Lincoln to the status of an icon, joining the exclusive company of Washington, Jefferson, and to a lesser extent others of what are known as America’s “Founding Fathers.”

Foremost among the earliest icons of American history was George Washington (1732-1799), first president of the United States. It was fairly common to find reproduction of Washington portraits in many homes, and almost all schools. Perhaps the most popular of the reproduced images was by Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) and is commonly known as the Athenaeum Portrait (1796).



This portrait remained unfinished at Stuart’s death. It depicts Washington in his mid-60s. Those inclined to add meaning to works of art that may or may not have been the artists intent, point to the painting being left unfinished as symbolic of the unfinished nature of American democracy.

The death of Lincoln set a period of deep mourning for citizens of the states which had fought with Lincoln during the Civil War. His rise to the level of an icon of American history began almost before his heart ceased to beat.

It is possible to argue that Lincoln’s rise to a true icon came when artists began depicting Washington and Lincoln together. These images became more and more popular into the 1880s and ‘90s. However, by 1927, when Gutzon Borglum (1867-1941) began the creation of what he titled “The Shrine of Democracy,” Lincoln was

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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, Scott Leiser, Mickey Martin, Todd McKenna, Sally Noble, Michael Perry, Emily Schaub, Connie Sorn, Danario Thomas, Alan Wenzel. Ex Officio Members: Honorable Jodi Miller, Mayor, Nicole Haas, Greater Freeport Partnership

NEW WAYSIDES AT DEBATE SQUARE

A group of Lincoln-Douglas Society Board members and friends installed 10 new wayside signs at Debate Square in Summer 2025 to replace the previous, heavily-weathered ones. The signs were funded by a grant of more than \$11,000 from the 100 Women Who Care of Stephenson County. The previous signs were installed in 2008 as part of the expansion and renovation of Debate Square just prior to the 150th celebrations of the Freeport Debate. The signs were warranted for 10 years and had long since passed that age which made the generous donation extremely timely. The remaining two signs were replaced in 2024 thanks to the generosity of Mickey Martin.



Pictured are: Todd McKenna, Scott Leiser, Alan Wenzel, Dale Johnson, and Brad Boerner.

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among the four United States Presidents depicted. Today it is known as the Mount Rushmore National Monument.

For more than a century, American icons like Washington and Lincoln were seldom depicted in works of parody or satire. In the modern era, where everything and anything can be a target for comedians, the old traditions of avoiding people like Washington and Lincoln have faded away.

Johnny Carson used to quip that “no one does jokes about Lincoln.” But in 1989, Carson did a skit titled “Abe Lincoln: Standup Comedy.” (Available on YouTube.)

Lincoln was subjected to depiction in an alternate world: “Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter” (2012). Based on a 1992 Saturday Night Live skit “Abe Lincoln and His Time Machine,” the film also manages to bring in Stephen A. Douglas as a clerk in a store. That role was portrayed by the actor Alan Tudyk.

Washington has recently taken his lumps. A Saturday Night Live skit depicts General Washington explaining to his troops his vision for the future of their new country.



Hands down the most extreme image of Washington is the 2021 Netflix animated film “America: The Motion Picture.” The R-rated film thoroughly mixes up the chronology of America while trying to satirize almost all of American history.

In today’s world, being hailed as an icon of history makes one a prime target for the grist mills of comedy.

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GIVE A LINCOLN FOR DEBATE SQUARE

This summer Union Dairy and the Lincoln-Douglas Society are teaming up to help raise funds for the maintenance of Debate Square. Soon the Society will mail coupons to all members and friends for purchase. Each coupon is good for a free scoop of ice cream. The Society and Union Dairy will split the proceeds. Coupons also will be sold for \$5 (a Lincoln - isn't that clever!) at all Music on Debate Square events this season.

