



THE LITTLE GIANT

A NEWSLETTER of the STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION

Volume VII, Number 1, April 1995



SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 1995



Commemoration of the
182nd Anniversary of the Birth of
Senator Stephen A. Douglas and the
Twentieth Anniversary of the
Stephen A. Douglas Association
Chicago, Illinois



3:30 p.m.

Ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb
636 East 35th Street

Wreath-laying and comments by
C. Robert Douglas, President of the
Stephen A. Douglas Association



4:30 p.m.

Cocktails and Dinner

Prairie Restaurant
in the Hyatt on Printers Row
Burnham Room
500 South Dearborn Street



Address by

Dr. John Y. Simon

"Stephen A. Douglas and the Union"



Cost for program and dinner:

\$25 per person



Public parking is available across the
street from the restaurant



Please return the enclosed reservation form, with remittance, or call the Douglas Association offices (312-41-1860) by Wednesday, April 19.



JOHN Y. SIMON, FIRST DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION SPEAKER, TO ADDRESS 20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER ON SUNDAY, APRIL 23

by Barbara Hughett

PROFESSOR John Y. Simon, who spoke at the very first annual meeting (a luncheon) of the Stephen A. Douglas Association on April 23, 1975, will return to address the 20th Anniversary Dinner on Sunday, April 23, 1995. His topic will be "Stephen A. Douglas and the Union."

The firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, fulfilled Senator Stephen A. Douglas's prediction of the consequences of the election of a Republican president. Nonetheless, Douglas gave immediate and enthusiastic support to the war for the Union. Only through the cooperation of Democrats and Republicans could the United States survive. Douglas's patriotic words inspired many Democrats to follow his example, but not all were convinced.

Within two weeks of the outbreak of the Civil War, Douglas delivered a celebrated oration to the Illinois legislature, with dramatic effects upon the Democrats of the state. Yet not all Democrats followed Douglas. In his address to the Association, Professor Simon proposes to examine the division of that party into War and Peace Democrats and to discuss factors which influenced some to accept, others to reject, Stephen A. Douglas's final service to the Union.

A native of Highland Park, Illinois, John Y. Simon earned his bachelor's degree at Swarthmore College, and his masters and doctoral degrees at Harvard University. In the summers during his

undergraduate years, he worked as a stockboy in the book shop of Ralph G. Newman, current chairman of the board of the Douglas Association. Simon claims that he learned more working for Mr. Newman than he did in all his years of graduate school.

John Simon taught at Ohio State University, began editing *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* in 1962, and in 1964 moved to Southern Illinois University, in Carbondale, where he is professor of history as well as editor of the *Grant Papers*. The first volume of the *Papers* appeared in 1967, and nineteen more have been published since then. Simon's *Grant* project is noted both for its prodigious output and for its quality. He is the dean of documentary editors, a

founder of the Association for Documentary Editing, and a spokesperson for the craft before groups ranging from committees of the United States Congress to interested students.

In addition to his diligence as an editor, he is also a prolific writer. More than fifty of his articles have appeared in professional journals. He is the author of *General Grant with a Rejoinder from Mark Twain* (1966), and the editor of *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant* (1975; reprinted

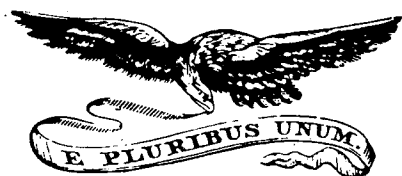
1988). He is the coeditor of *Ulysses S. Grant: Essays and Documents* (1981) and *The Continuing Civil War: Essays in Honor of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago* (1992).

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Dr. John Y. Simon

THE LITTLE GIANT



THE STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION

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"I am not for the
dissolution of the Union
under any
circumstances."

Freeport, August 27, 1858

APRIL 23—TWENTY YEARS AGO THE ORIGINS OF THE STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION

by Barbara Hughett

IT was because Richard J. Daley, mayor of Chicago (1955-76), admired the life and deeds of the Little Giant that the Stephen A. Douglas Association came into existence. There is much to commend in the accomplishments of Senator Douglas. His public career extended from 1835, when he was elected to the position of state's attorney by the Illinois legislature, to his death in 1861, while serving as a United States senator. In the intervening years, he served his country in many capacities. He is probably best remembered, though, for his debates with Abraham Lincoln during the campaign for the United States Senate in the election of 1858 (which Douglas won).

Stephen Arnold Douglas was a resident of Chicago for the last fourteen years of his life. His tomb is an Illinois State Historic Site, maintained by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. It is located in a beautiful little park at the eastern extremity of 35th Street in Chicago. Just east and below the tomb are the Illinois Central tracks and Lake Michigan. It was in this area, once part of the Douglas estate, *Oakenwald*, that Camp Douglas, the United States Army recruiting camp and prison for captured Confederate soldiers, was located.

Mayor Daley shared his admiration for Douglas with his friend Ralph G. Newman, who was president of the board of directors of the Chicago Public Library. It had become a custom for the two men to visit the tomb on the anniversaries of Douglas's birth on April 23 and his death on June 3.

On April 23, 1975, Mayor Daley announced the formation of the Stephen A. Douglas Association at a luncheon honoring the memory of Senator Douglas. Mr. Newman acted as master of ceremonies for the occasion, and the assembled guests heard an address by Dr. John Y. Simon, of the history department of Southern Illinois University. Professor Simon opened his address with this observation: "At SIU, I teach a course in 'Illinois History: From Father Marquette to Mayor Daley.' Now, at last, I've met one of them."

John Y. Simon (continued from page 1)

His many awards include the Distinguished Service Award of the Association for Documentary Editing (1983) and the 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. He is a very popular speaker on the lecture circuit, and is currently at work on volumes 21 and 22 of the *Grant Papers*.

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Volume 1, Number 1, October 1989

A COMMENTARY ON THE STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION

by Ralph G. Newman,
Chairman, Board of Directors

EIGHTY-ONE years ago, in the introduction to his superb book, *Stephen A. Douglas: A Study in American Politics*, Allen Johnson, then professor of history at Bowdoin College and later the first editor of the *Dictionary of American Biography*, wrote:

"To describe the career of a man who is now chiefly remembered as the rival of Abraham Lincoln, must seem to many minds a superfluous, if not individious, undertaking. The present generation is prone to forget that when the rivals met in joint debate . . . on the prairies of Illinois, it was Senator Douglas and not Mr. Lincoln, who was the cynosure of all observing eyes. Time has steadily lessened the prestige of the great Democratic leader, and just as steadily enhanced the fame of his Republican opponent."

The Stephen A. Douglas Association came into existence, not because of a lack of appreciation and admiration for the life and philosophy of Abraham Lincoln, but because of our great interest in the period of American history in which so many remarkable personalities lived and had such a lasting effect on its posterity. We wanted to study the great drama, not merely through the life of one great person, but by viewing other important individuals who peopled the stage of the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century in the United States.

Old-fashioned history too often tried to insist that if there be a hero, there must be an anti-hero. The essence of a great democracy is the existence and toleration of differing opinions. The American Civil War demonstrated, in a bloody and costly manner, the terrible consequences which resulted when an attempt was made to solve differences by force.

Bruce Catton once commented that the Civil War did not divide us; it came because we were already divided. In some mystical and wonderful manner it united us by providing us, North and South, with a common memory. It is to Stephen A. Douglas, who was devoted to a united nation with this common memory, that we dedicate our efforts.

“TO DIE IN CHICAGO: CONFEDERATES AT CAMP DOUGLAS”

A summary by George D. Levy, of his address at the 1994 annual meeting of the Stephen A. Douglas Association, April 23, 1994.

LIFE at Camp Douglas was fairly congenial before the prisoners arrived. Barracks were new, the camp was new, and life was new to the young volunteers of 1861. The camp was disrupted when the first prisoners arrived on February 20, 1862, when the camp was only five months old. They were sick, shivering, exhausted, and poorly clothed. These Confederate prisoners from Fort Donelson resembled the shattered Germans at Stalingrad in 1942 who were marched across the frozen Volga, never to be seen again.

Indeed, they were foreigners in an alien land. Contrary to Civil War romanticism, the Blue and the Gray did not feel as though they were brothers or even fellow countrymen at Camp Douglas. Ironically, there was no prison at Camp Douglas, so the troops in training and the prisoners lived in adjoining barracks inside the fence. The place was soon awash with visitors consisting of friends and family of the prisoners, as well as newspaper reporters. The Confederates were talked and written about to the extent that they became celebrities. One businessman set up a tower across from the camp where visitors could look down at the prisoners for a ten-cent fee.

Colonel James A. Mulligan took command of Camp Douglas on February 26, 1862. Some prisoners thought he was arrogant, and referred to him as “His Excellency.” There was not much he could do but watch the prisoners die of every disease imaginable.

Both loyalists and Confederate sympathizers in Chicago formed relief committees to aid the beleaguered prisoners with food, clothing, and medicines. Perhaps most appreciated was the cough syrup, at about forty proof. By the time Mulligan left for the front on June 14, 1862, the prison’s reputation as a death camp was firmly established.

Colonel Joseph Tucker, who took command on June 14, 1862, was as unlike Mulligan as an officer could be. Tucker was a businessman and a banker whose experience did not prepare him to cope with the festering problems at Camp Douglas. Latrines were overflowing, garbage littered the grounds, and barracks were falling apart and infested with vermin. There were 8,000 prisoners on hand by the end of June, 1862. Many were housed in dilapidated cavalry barracks. The site at 31st Street and Cottage Grove was a serious mistake, as the sandy subsurface became a swamp one day and a dust bowl the

next. Dr. Bellows of the U.S Sanitary Commission declared that “nothing but fire can cleanse it.” The exchange of prisoners in September 1862, was all that stopped the carnage at the camp.

No sooner were the Confederates out the gate at Camp Douglas than a new batch of prisoners came in, only they wore blue—about 8,000 paroled prisoners of war from Harpers Ferry. Under the exchange agreement, these troops could not go back into active service until they were exchanged for a like number of Confederate prisoners in Northern hands. They clamored to go home on furlough, or at least go into Chicago, but their commanding officer refused. General Daniel Tyler had replaced Colonel Tucker at Camp Douglas around September 30, 1862. He aimed to instill some pride and skill in the men with drill and guard duty, but they did not see it that way.

The result of Tyler’s discipline was a mutiny of immense consequence. Barracks and fences were burned, and some men escaped into the city. Tyler called in regular army troops to put down the rebellion. To appease the men, the army fired Tyler in November 1862, and placed a paroled colonel named Daniel Cameron in charge. Cameron was successful in placating the men until they were exchanged around December 11, 1862.

The Christmas of 1862 was as cold and bitter as the one before. Camp

Douglas was empty of prisoners, and only the remaining troops huddled around the stoves and fires. Before long, however, more destitute prisoners would be flung inside the stockade. It was in no shape to accept very many after the devastation inflicted by the parolees, but before long about 3,800 prisoners from the fighting at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Fort Hindeman, Arkansas, would be on hand. They were sicker and weaker than even the Fort Donelson prisoners. The new Camp Douglas commander, General Jacob Ammen, had his first look at them around January 28, 1863.

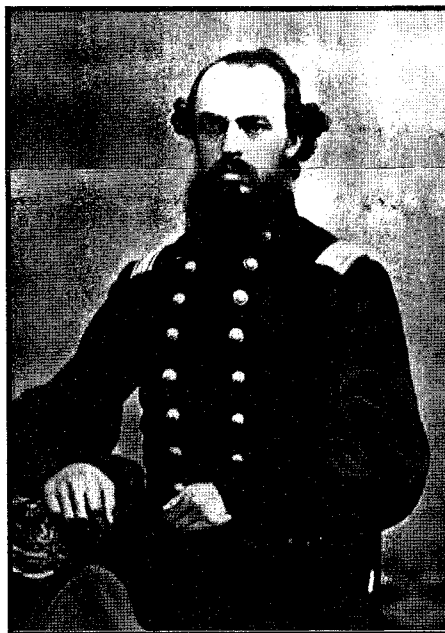
The barracks were set on the frozen ground, making them difficult to heat. The hydrants were frozen, so water was in short supply. Inside the barracks was a tangle of ragged clothing and equipment hanging from the rafters, with doors and windows stuffed with rags to help keep out the frigid air. A pile of coal and two stoves in each barrack kept them alive. Conditions resulted in the highest death rate in the camp’s history, some 700 lives by the end of March 1863.

General Ammen felt that he had no choice but to concentrate on security, because Camp Douglas was not designed as a prison. Since preventing escapes was given the highest priority, these prisoners became famous for carrying smallpox with them from Camp Douglas, thanks to an indifferent post surgeon. No doubt more would have died had exchanges not suddenly resumed in April 1863.

Camp Douglas was exhausted. Almost 12,000 prisoners had gone through by now, plus about 25,000 troops in training. This motley assemblage of crumbling barracks, falling fences, and stinking latrines was to become a permanent prison. No longer would recruits be in training at Camp Douglas.

The city waited to see what was going to happen at what is now King Drive and East 33rd Street. What happened was the arrival of Morgan’s raiders on August 18, 1863, along with the unfortunate officer who was to rule over them. Colonel Charles V. DeLand, 1st Michigan Sharpshooters, never wanted the job. He just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He had guarded the first shipment of Morgan’s men to Camp Douglas, and thus innocently became the ranking officer at camp and its commander. The next seven months would be the most trying

(continued on page 4)



Charles V. DeLand,
Brevet Brigadier-General, Volunteers

GEORGE D. LEVY (from page 3) of his life. The raiders quickly discovered that nothing stood between themselves and freedom except the soft sandy soil under their barracks.

A record 100 escapes on December 3, 1863, was only one of the disasters. DeLand retaliated by stripping the floors from the barracks, leaving the prisoners to live and die in the worst filth and cold imaginable. He did not hesitate to use torture and the dreaded "White Oak" dungeon to control the situation. In the meantime he was charged by his superiors with the responsibility of rebuilding the barracks and setting up a high stockade. He also had the job of installing a running water sewer system with flush toilets, which was probably the first and only such system in any prison camp. In addition, he was required to erect additional hospitals for the prison and garrison. As a reward for his efforts, DeLand was fired on December 13, 1863. General William Ward Orme, a favorite of President Lincoln, succeeded to the command.

Like General Ammen, Orme had previous experience in prison administration as Federal Inspector of Prisons. His first task was not to manage the camp, but to investigate the beef scandal that had broken out there. Both the troops and the prisoners were receiving inferior beef, which was also in short supply. Orme proved that the Camp Douglas contractors had sublet the beef contracts to others, and Orme blamed these subcontractors. No doubt his report was influenced by the fact that the boss over the original contractors was Ninian Edwards, President Lincoln's brother-in-law.

Orme decided about December 20, 1863, to build a separate prison at Camp Douglas. Amazingly, all of this time the prisoners were housed in White Oak Square, from where they had easy access to other parts of the camp and often lived side by side with the garrison, making it easier to bribe the guards and escape. Orme began moving them to a new place in the western end of the camp, which became known as "Prisoners Square." Meanwhile he was discouraged and depressed by conditions at camp and was already planning to resign and return to the field.

Orme was bothered by the fact that four black Confederate prisoners of war remained at Camp Douglas as the year 1864 began. They should have been released long before under the Emancipation Proclamation. One black had already died, and two others were unaccounted for. It appears that at least one of them, a young black prisoner age

14, had been murdered by guards in September 1863. Orme was successful in securing the release of the remaining blacks by pretending that they were slaves or civilians, and not soldiers.

It was just in time for these poor fellows, as Orme was being eased out of command due to the perception that he was inefficient. Orme resigned on April 29, 1864, and Colonel Benjamin J. Sweet was appointed commander of the district, including Chicago and Camp Douglas. Colonel Sweet would sacrifice more lives than any other commandant.

Under Sweet, the guards were not held accountable for their actions. A reign of terror was about to begin, such as the camp had not seen before. Beatings, torture, and murder became commonplace. Sweet became the first commandant to cut the prisoners' rations, including their precious candles, without orders from his superiors.

Actually, the camp should have been closed because of the smallpox that continued to rage. Added to this was the retaliation against the Confederate prisoners by Washington for the mistreat-

*Almost 27,000 Southerners
had come to know Camp Douglas
between 1862 and 1865.*

ment of Union captives in the South. Federal officers at Camp Douglas saw nothing wrong when a guard killed a prisoner for urinating in the street.

It was the Camp Douglas Conspiracy of 1864 that made Sweet a general. Some keystone-cop Confederate agents had hoped to raise an army of at least 3,000 Confederate sympathizers in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin to capture these states and free the prisoners at Camp Douglas. In the end, only about 25 men showed up for the attack on Camp Douglas, and the Confederates fled the scene. However, Sweet saw the making of his career in the rumors of a conspiracy, and carried on with his own agents, who concocted one plot after another, mainly that the Confederates were going to attack Camp Douglas on election day, November 7, 1864.

On the evening of November 6, Sweet sent patrols into the city and began arresting alleged plotters, much to the surprise of his superiors. They decided to go along with it, as the arrests dealt a blow to Democratic political organizations in the city, as well as other anti-

administration forces. Even a former mayor of Chicago and his wife were sent to Camp Douglas. The former mayor was acquitted by a military court in the Camp Douglas Conspiracy trials of 1865, but his wife was banished to her native Kentucky. Sweet was promoted to Brigadier General on December 23, 1864.

The end of the war in the field was in sight as 1865 began, but the war would continue at Camp Douglas long after the surrender. The death rate continued at a disastrous pace, with 800 prisoners dying before the camp was finally emptied at the end of June 1865. There were now 12,000 prisoners on hand, the largest number at one time since the war began. Sweet had some hard decisions to make. Exchanges of prisoners had begun the first week in February 1865, and he would look bad if all the prisoners preferred to go to the front rather than stay in camp. He offered the oath of allegiance if they did not apply for exchange. The problem was that he had no authority to release anyone taking the oath. As it turned out, three fourths of the prisoners, about 8,000 men, opted out of the war. Of the remainder, only about 2,000 prisoners who chose to go back were able to reach the Confederate army before the surrender.

Amazingly, the rest remained prisoners of war at Camp Douglas long after the Confederate army in the field was paroled. One reason may have been a suspicion that the Camp Douglas prisoners were a threat to the government. More likely it was lack of transportation. The Federal government did not intend to simply shove the men out the gate. Each would be given a train ticket to his home county upon taking the oath of allegiance.

Almost 27,000 Southerners had come to know Camp Douglas since 1862. Some ex-prisoners chose to settle in Chicago, and there was muttering that they were taking the jobs of Union army veterans who had not yet been mustered out of service. Prisoners began leaving camp at the rate of 500 per week in May 1865. By the end of July the camp was empty, except for sick prisoners, and the guards were withdrawn. Camp Douglas was completely dismantled and sold off by the end of the year.



George D. Levy, attorney and professor of business law at Roosevelt University, is the author of To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas, 1862-1865 (1994).