

THE LITTLE GIANT



A NEWSLETTER of the STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS ASSOCIATION

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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 invidious, 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
(continued on page 2)

STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS: On the Occasion of the 127th Anniversary of His Death

The following are excerpts from a speech given by
Dr. Robert W. Johannsen
at the annual luncheon of the
Stephen A. Douglas Association on
June 4, 1988

Stephen A. Douglas' death, in the Tremont Hotel here in Chicago, one-hundred and twenty-seven years ago, was an event of national significance. It was not unexpected, for he had been ill for weeks, and almost daily bulletins of his worsening condition had been carried in the nation's press. Still, when the end came, it came with stunning effect. "Another fearful calamity has befallen the nation," commented one newspaper, comparing the loss of Douglas to the loss of Fort Sumter just seven weeks before.

As the news spread, the nation was plunged into mourning. In towns and villages from one end of the country to the other, the flags were lowered to half-mast, buildings were draped in black, church bells tolled, and cannon were fired, every half-hour for twenty-four hours in some places. In the nation's capital, where Douglas had lived

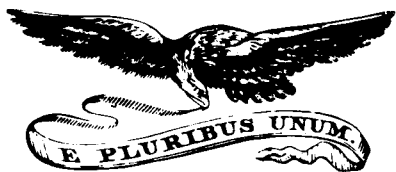
for much of his last eighteen years, the news added to an atmosphere already heavy with gloom. . . .

In Chicago, the sorrow was all the deeper for the city claimed Douglas as one of its own. It was in Chicago that Douglas had established his residence and it was there, on land overlooking Lake Michigan, that he planned to make a permanent home following his retirement from politics. "Never did a great city put on more rapidly and thoroughly the symbols of grief," declared the *Chicago Tribune*, . . . "and never was grief more frank and thorough. It pervaded all classes, and visited all sections of the city. Along the business fronts of . . . [the] principal streets, the brick and marble donned the emblems of mourning. Festoons, wreaths, and pendants in black and white intertwined, American flags at half-mast and heavily draped, . . . [and] bordered with black—all told of a city in mourning for her illustrious dead." . . .

Illinois' Republican governor, Richard Yates, assisted by the state's Re-
(continued on page 2)

Douglas, as a patriot, . . . had subordinated party considerations to the interests of the country.





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COMMENTARY (from page 1)

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.

SPEECH (from page 1)

publican senator, Lyman Trumbull, took the lead in urging that Douglas' remains not be taken out of the state to be buried. "Illinoisans," Yates insisted, "claim a common interest in his fame, and are unwilling that one whose life has been so closely identified with the interests of the State, should in death be separated from it." . . . The site selected for Douglas' tomb was the same acre and a half on which he and his wife had planned to build their home, on a breezy knoll "at the southeast corner of Cottage Grove, on the lake shore," with a "fine view" of the city of Chicago which, it was said, could "never be obstructed by buildings." . . .

Douglas' death, it was reported, was viewed by the Lincoln administration as a "national calamity." When the news reached Washington, all the government buildings were ordered draped in mourning. Secretary of War Simon Cameron issued a statement announcing the death of a "great statesman in this hour of peril" and eulogized Douglas as a patriot who had subordinated party considerations to the interests of the country. Cameron ordered all army units to drape their colors in black.

One voice of sorrow and condolence, however, was missing—that of the President of the United States. Immediately after Douglas breathed his last, the report of his death was telegraphed to Lincoln. It was Lincoln, no doubt, who ordered the White House to be draped in mourning. On the day of Douglas' funeral, June 7th, Lincoln received no visitors, out of respect, it was said, to Douglas' memory. But no sentiment was ever uttered, no statement issued, that revealed Lincoln's feelings toward the man he had opposed politically for so many years.

There is a certain irony in Lincoln's silence, for Stephen A. Douglas had played a more important role in the development of Lincoln's career than any one has ever recognized. His influence on the shaping of Lincoln's attitudes toward slavery and the south was enormous, for virtually every major speech, every important pronounce-

ment, made by Lincoln between 1854 and 1860 was made in response to a previous statement by Douglas . . . [it was] Douglas who quite literally enabled Lincoln to build a reputation as an antislavery leader. . . .

All his life, Douglas held an almost-mystical veneration of the Union. . . . Hailed in the early 1850s as a leader of America's exuberant nationalism, he would within a few years be plunged into anxiety and despair as he watched his country slip slowly but surely into the abyss of disunion. . . . As a Presidential candidate [in 1860], Douglas flouted tradition in order to carry the issue of the Union directly to the people. With the split in the Democratic party, he believed, the country was "in greater danger—in more absolute peril" than it had ever been in all its history. . . . Throughout the South—Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama—he sounded his warning against secession. Even after the votes were cast and counted, Douglas continued to urge southerners to accept the result and bide their time. . . .

Douglas failed, but in failing he won the esteem and gratitude of many of his countrymen. We will never know what thoughts passed through Lincoln's mind on that early June day in 1861 when he first learned that his long-time adversary had become one of the war's first casualties. I would like to think that he finally came to an appreciation of the man and of his dream for a happy, prosperous, and united America. And I would like to think that Lincoln may even have shared, although silently, the sense of loss that was so movingly expressed by so many people.

The 1989 annual luncheon of the Stephen A. Douglas Association took place on June 3rd (the 128th anniversary of the death of Senator Douglas) at Ditka's City Lights. Dr. Mark E. Neely, Jr. spoke on "Stephen A. Douglas and the Constitution." The luncheon was preceded by ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb. Excerpts from Dr. Neely's address will appear in the next issue of *The Little Giant*, which will be published in early 1990.

Excerpts from "A LETTER TO STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS"

by Maija Devine

In three years I will have lived in the United States, your country, as long as I had lived in my native Korea. Now I dream in your language and communicate more fluently in it than in my native tongue. I eat more hamburgers than bowls of rice. I drive an American-made car and vote for the president of the United States. But as I am about to express my feelings to you, I still see America with a perspective of an outsider. Today I laid a wreath at your tomb to commemorate the 127th anniversary of your death. And I reflected upon what you stood for and how your thoughts and actions helped create a country which I had dreamed of as a young girl and as a citizen have come to love.

As I placed the golden mums at your tomb, your nine-foot, nine-inch bronze statue jutted high into the spotless blue sky. When "God Bless America" filled the air, an airplane whirled by you. During the invocation, the Illinois Central train raced by below your feet—with a speed of lightning, I would think, compared to the speed of horse-drawn buggies of your day. As the 58th New York Infantry fired the 19th century muskets, the American flag flapped against the jagged outlines of the downtown Chicago skyscrapers. Indeed the view from your forty-six-foot pedestal shows the modern world much changed from your time, but I believe many of the principles you upheld have remained the same and sustained the beliefs of the country.

As millions of people in America and abroad do, I also admire Lincoln and participate in countless events which celebrate, commemorate, and preserve his legacy. . . . But today, I had the rare privilege of shifting my attention to you, "the Little Giant." And I wondered if it is right for you to be forever in the shadow of the towering figure of Lincoln. Is the disparity between the amount of adoration Lincoln receives and the pitiful paucity of attention you receive truly reflective of the

impact you had on the formation of America?

As the leader of the Democratic party, you supported legislation for immigrants and pushed for universal suffrage, giving equal voting rights to ethnic groups. Had there not been such openness . . . would America have come to boast today's richness of ethnic diversity and intermingling of cultures? No people on earth embraces the diversity and openness to the extent that Americans do. And I feel welcome here—more than welcome here.

A Nationalist and Expansionist, you spoke for the annexation of lands such as Texas, California, and Mexico. I believe you supported these expansionist efforts out of your desire to see more peoples of the earth live in freedom and democracy rather than out of the desire to enslave them under your control. Lincoln, on the other hand, concentrated on solving domestic problems and did not concern himself with affairs of the world as much as you did. Koreans lost half of their country to Communism that stifles individual freedom. As a child of six, I watched a North Korean soldier pointing a gun at my mother, demanding to know why her six-year old had missed a Communist party indoctrination class. In America, no one points a gun at even criminals for they are presumed innocent until proven guilty. That is freedom. So, I understand and appreciate your fervor for the cause of freedom and democracy.

Lincoln's birth and death are commemorated nationally and internationally. Yet, on your anniversary of death, there are only a handful of attendants—the quixotic few. There are museums dedicated to the preservation of Lincoln's legacy throughout the world. Only one lone monument stands vigil to your name. Elementary students of many foreign countries memorize Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." Yet, I wonder, how many children . . . know who you are. Lincoln's words come alive on the lips of thousands of people throughout the world. Your words are repeated only by a few scholars when they make academic presentations to a select few.

Had the South listened to your urgings not to secede from the North, had the South, thus, avoided the Civil War, and had Lincoln finished his term as a president with only a moderate success (which is a fairly plausible scenario considering his initial lack of support in 1860), Americans today would be looking back at Lincoln and at you much differently. Lincoln would not be such an immortal, shining star of a hero and you a mere shadow of a shadow.

I believe your beliefs and words have been very important in the formation of this great society which immigrants like me are proud to call "home." You did much to cause those things I like best about America: its freedom, diversity, and belief in the common man. You need not be in Lincoln's shadow forever.



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 23, 1990, 11:00 a.m.: Ceremony at the Douglas Tomb, 636 East 35th Street, honoring the 176th anniversary of the birth of Senator Douglas.

June 2, 1990: Annual luncheon of the Stephen A. Douglas Association, commemorating the 129th anniversary of Senator Douglas' death.

The first Sunday of the month, from June through September, 5:00 p.m.: Ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb.



Recent honorees, who received a flag in the name of the Stephen A. Douglas Association during ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb, have included: Leroy Whiting, an aide to Mayor Richard M. Daley, who accepted on behalf of the mayor; James McLaughlin, director of St. Joseph's Carondelet Child Center; Othello Ellis, director of the Abraham Lincoln Center; Mark E. Neely, Jr., director of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum; Rebecca W. Henderson, principal of the Stephen A. Douglas School; and State Senator Margaret Smith.



Reading List

Addresses on the Death of Hon.

Stephen A. Douglas, delivered in the Senate and House of Representatives on Tuesday, July 9, 1861. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1861.

Allen, Richard R.: *Lincoln vs. Douglas: The Great Debates Campaign*. Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1967.

Angle, Paul M., editor: *Created Equal? The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*. University of Chicago Press, [1958].

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Carr, Clark E.: *Stephen A. Douglas, his life, public services, patriotism, and speeches*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1909.

Crocker, Lionel G.: *An Analysis of Lincoln and Douglas as Public Speakers and Debaters*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1968.

Gardner, William: *Life of Stephen A. Douglas*. Boston: Roxburgh Press, 1905.

Garner, James W., compiler: *Douglas Centennial Celebration Addresses, 1913*. Springfield: State of Illinois, 1913

Howland, Louis: *Stephen A. Douglas*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920.

Jaffa, Harry V.: *Crisis of the House Divided: An interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates*. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1959.

Johannsen, Robert W.: *The Letters of Stephen A. Douglas*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961.

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Johannsen, Robert W.: *The Frontier, the Union, and Stephen A. Douglas*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Johnson, Allen: *Stephen A. Douglas: A Study in American Politics*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908; De Capo Press, 1970.

McMurtry, R. Gerald: *Lincoln's Friend, Douglas*. Lincoln Day Address. Elsah, Illinois: Principia Corporation, 1946.

Minton, George Fort: *The Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.

Nevins, Allan: *The Ordeal of the Union. I—The Fruits of Manifest Destiny,*

1847-1852. II—A House Dividing, 1852-1857. Two Volumes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947.

Nevins, Allan: *The Emergence of Lincoln. I—Douglas, Buchanan, and Party Chaos, 1857-1859. II—Prologue to Civil War, 1859-1861*. Two volumes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Petersen, William: *Lincoln-Douglas: The Weather as Destiny*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1943.

Sheehan, James W.: *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860.



BOOK REVIEW by C. Robert Douglas

Johannsen, Robert W.: *The Frontier, The Union, and Stephen A. Douglas*. University of Illinois Press. 1989. \$34.95.

Those of us interested in the career of the "Little Giant" will be pleased to note the recent publication of this book, a collection of 15 readable and authoritative essays. The author, Robert W. Johannsen, serves as James G. Randall Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and wrote the definitive biography on this important figure in American politics, *Stephen A. Douglas*, published by Oxford University Press in 1973.

The first four essays discuss the problems encountered in the Pacific Northwest as those areas struggled for self-government as they progressed toward statehood. Douglas occupied an important position in this process, since he was first appointed chairman of the House Committee on Territories in 1845, and to the same position in the Senate two years later. Though the Senate committee was relatively new, Douglas nevertheless felt that it should play a vital and central role in the formulation of national policy for the west.

Several essays relate to Douglas' experiences in the U.S. Senate as he developed his theory of "popular sovereignty" under which those settling in the new Western territories would be permitted to determine if their particu-

Sparks, Edwin Erle, editor: *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*. Volume III, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield: 1908.

Stephens, Frank E.: *Life of Stephen Arnold Douglas*. Springfield: Journal of the State Historical Society, 1923-1924.

Wells, Damon: *Stephen Douglas: The Last Years, 1857-1861*. Austin & London: University of Texas Press, [1971].

Willis, Henry: *Stephen A. Douglas*. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, [1904].

lar area would enter the union as a "free" or "slave" state. Other essays in the collection are concerned with the many clashes between Douglas and Abraham Lincoln as they campaigned for the post of U.S. senator of Illinois in 1858 and again for the presidency in 1860.

A particularly fascinating essay is one entitled "Sandburg and Lincoln" in which the author traces Carl Sandburg's difficult path through the publication of *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*. He then proceeds to review the critical reaction to that work when it appeared in a two-volume set in 1926. Johannsen writes "... *The Prairie Years* was Sandburg's answer to the needs of his time, his reaffirmation of those traditional values that were being eroded by a generation that seemed to have lost contact with its past. What was said of his poetry could be said as well of *The Prairie Years*: he directed "our thinking back to the primitive forces of our land."

In the preface to this collection, Dr. Johannsen states: "These essays do not claim to settle any of the problems of America's mid-nineteenth-century years. So few (if any) problems of the past are ever really settled anyway. Perhaps they will make the pursuit of those vibrant and troubled years a little more interesting to the pursuer." Anyone willing to spend the time to read this group of essays will certainly find the pursuit most interesting and rewarding.