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# COOK-WITTER REPORT

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## Dr. Wayne C. Temple: An Archive within the Archives

When the phone rings on Dr. Wayne C. Temple's desk at the Illinois State Archives in Springfield, it could be England, Canada, New York, or who-knows-where on the line. It might be a documentary filmmaker wanting to interview him about Abraham Lincoln, an historian looking for guidance in writing a Lincoln book, or an Illinois land surveyor looking for land boundaries.

Temple opens the drawer in his desk and pulls out business cards from people who've contacted him: there are some big names, like respected author and historian Catherine Clinton who's working on a book about Mary Lincoln. People call Temple with questions about the sixteenth president because he has researched Lincoln for nearly 60 years and authored 600 articles and eight books, most about Lincoln.

"In the world of Lincoln scholarship, Wayne Temple is unique and irreplaceable," says the eminent Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer, who has authored or co-authored 23 books and numerous articles about Lincoln. "No one has ploughed more un-charted fields, mined more untapped veins, and harvested more dormant crops than this indefatigable researcher. Students and scholars have reaped the profits of his tireless work ever since. But Wayne is more than tireless -- he is also generous. He has been kind enough to read my recent works in manuscript form, as I know he has done for others. There is a refrain in the Lincoln world which I echo with thanks, and that is: 'I can't count how many

errors Wayne Temple caught and saved me from!' I second that, with much gratitude and admiration."

"Doc," as Temple is informally known, is the Chief Deputy Director of the Illinois State Archives, which is under the Illinois Secretary of State. (He's the longest-serving employee in the Secretary of State's office; he started working there in June, 1964.)

"Dr. Temple is an institution here at the Archives, says Archives Director, Dave Joens. "While he has been described, correctly, as the greatest living Lincoln historian, his knowledge isn't only confined to Lincoln. He is an expert on surveying, on Illinois history, and on the holdings of the Illinois State Archives, often utilizing all three skills for a single project. What is best about Dr. Temple, however, is that he is always willing to share his knowledge and will answer anybody's questions or requests."

Temple started studying Lincoln in college. After he served in World War II (installing communications networks for General Dwight Eisenhower), he finished his degree at the University of Illinois, where he had the re-

nowned Lincoln historian J.G. Randall as his history professor. When Temple graduated, Randall asked him to be his research assistant. "I worked with him four years and helped him with three books," Temple says. "So, since 1949, Lincoln has been my field."

"There's never an end to finding new things about Lincoln," he says. "Lincoln's probably the most honest politician that ever sat in the White House.

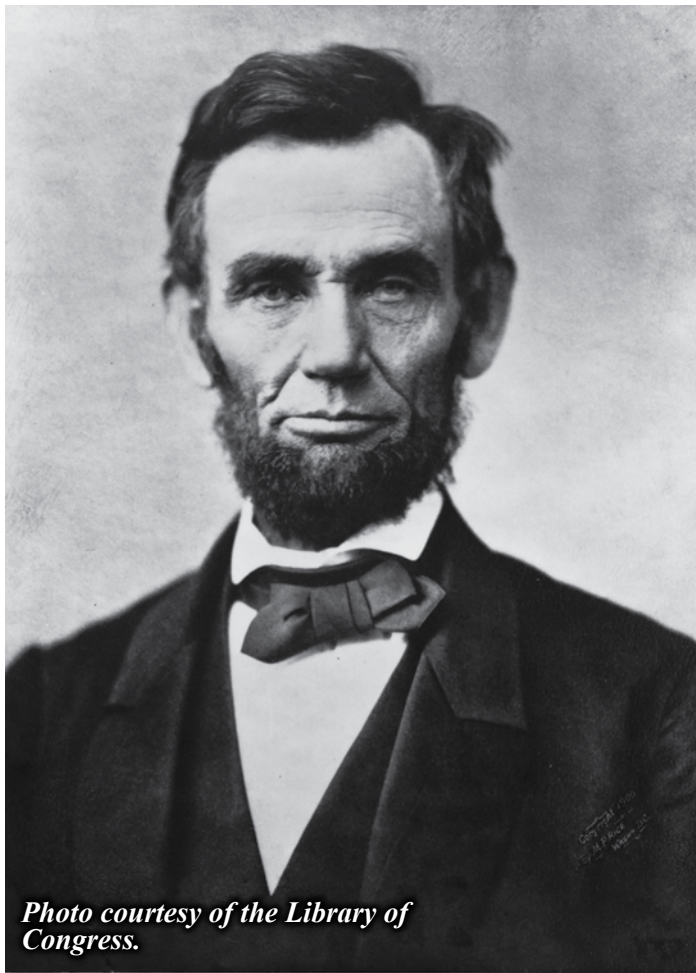


*Dr. Wayne C. Temple - Photo courtesy of the Secretary of State's office.*

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**Dr. Wayne C. Temple...**

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*Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

He couldn't get elected today -- he's too honest. He really is. He was a very moral person and it's fascinating because you can't really get inside his mind. There are still things we can't be sure about (regarding Lincoln). He would ask you all sorts of questions about your feelings and things, but if you asked him, he never told you hardly anything. (He was) very shut-mouthed."

Lincoln was particularly shut-mouthed about his religious views. Temple spent 30 years studying them, which resulted in his book, "Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet" (Mayhaven Publishing, 1995). The Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago says it is one of the 157 must-read Lincoln books -- out of approximately 15,000 written about the sixteenth president.

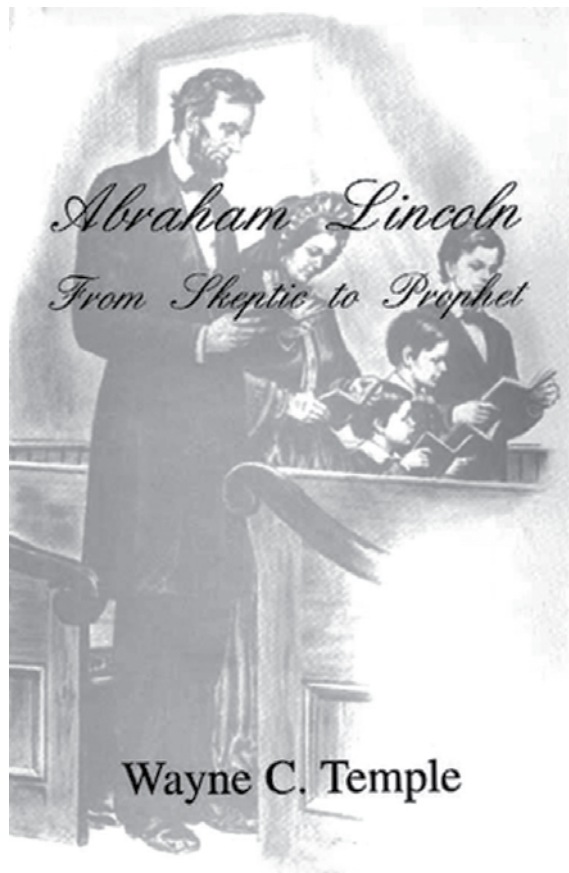
Still, Lincoln's true religious philosophy remains a puzzle to Temple. "I can tell you what he said, I can tell you what he did. But how did he really feel?" Temple says with frustration. "I found

that Lincoln became very, very religious, but not to any one denomination. He talked only to God, cared nothing for the Virgin Mary or Christ. He thought of Christ as a great philosopher and a teacher, but that's as far as he would say... I would like to get inside his mind and know what he really did feel."

While so many aspects of Lincoln are interesting, Temple thinks his most fascinating characteristics are "his fairness and forgiving spirit," he says. "Whenever a court martial case would come before Lincoln, (for him) to sign off on the death sentence for a soldier, he'd always find some excuse (not to), except in the case of rape of women."

One time, however, he didn't forgive a man. "There was a ship captain who had been caught... during the war and he was smuggling slaves in from Africa," Temple explains. "He was sentenced to be hanged. They appealed to Lincoln, thinking he never let anybody hang. And Lincoln wrote the man back, 'Prepare to meet your maker on the regular date.' Slave trading -- that was it, anathema to him, and rape of women."

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**Dr. Wayne C. Temple...**

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Some modern writers have presented negative views of Lincoln, accusing him of a variety of faults. They're either misinterpreting the facts or using Lincoln for their own purposes, Temple says: "The people that write about him today, write about him in their own image. Ministers write about him and make him their denomination, but Lincoln just wasn't like that. We tend to write about him in our own image, which is not the way it should be."

Besides Lincoln's true religious views, there's one more thing Temple really wants to know about: where did Lincoln stay when he was a legis-

lator in Vandalia? "It's a very minor thing," Temple admits, chuckling. "The strange thing is, I know his roommate... but I don't know in what private boarding house he stayed, I would love to know that! I might find it someday. Family letters turn up now and then. You never know what's going to happen."

Temple just published a new book about Lincoln (see the article below) -- "Lincoln's Travels on the River Queen During the Last Days of His Life" (Mayhaven Publishing, 2008). But it should come as no surprise, that he has ideas for more.

"I've enjoyed myself and there are still things I want to do."



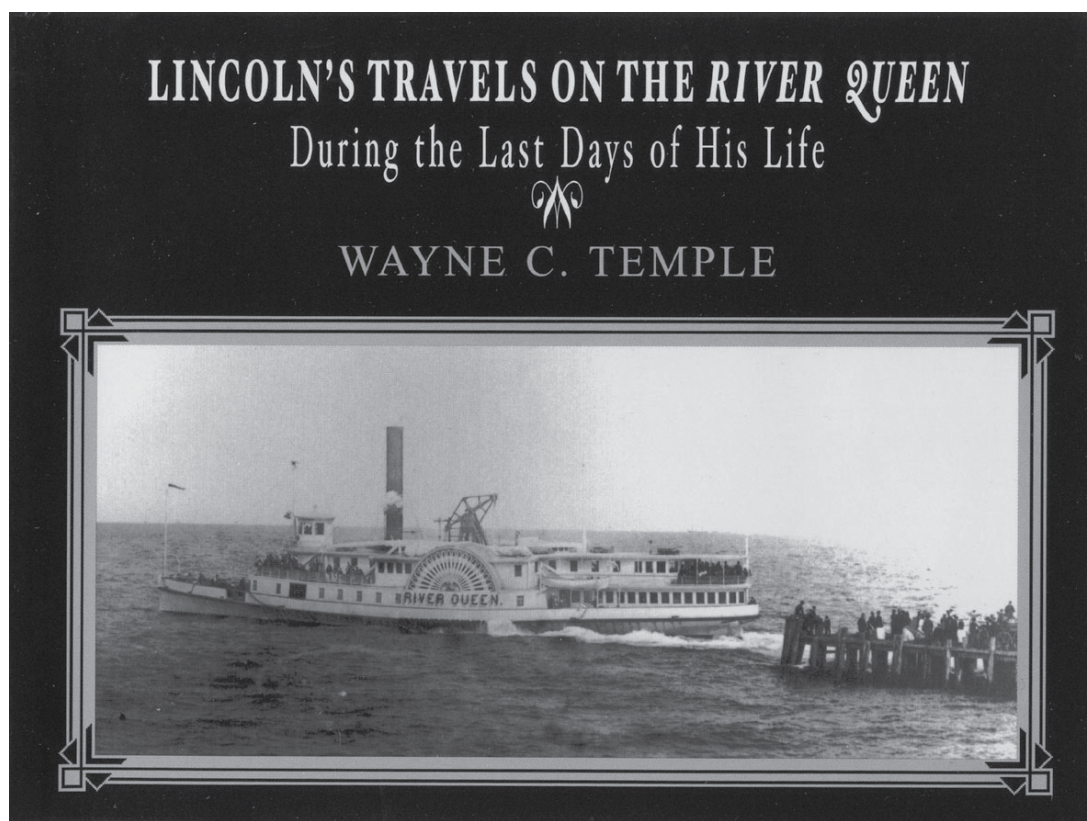
## Temple's New Book Details Lincoln's Last Voyage

In February, Dr. Wayne C. Temple's newest book about Abraham Lincoln, "Lincoln's Travels on the River Queen during the Last Days of His Life," was published (by Mayhaven Publishing). The 101-page hardback details the 18-day journey Lincoln took to the southern battlefronts in the Civil War's waning days. He traveled to the south via this side-wheeler steamboat. It was his second and final voyage on the so-called "president's yacht." Union and Confederate leaders met aboard it to request terms for the south's surrender.

"I've always wondered about the River Queen," Temple says. "It had such an impact on the latter days of Lincoln's life and nothing was known about it.

I think Lincoln must have spent some of the happiest days of his presidency aboard the River Queen. He knew the end (of the war) was really in sight." The trip also gave Lincoln an opportunity to see his oldest son, Robert, who was serving with Grant in the south.

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### Temple's New Book...

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"The ship was fascinating to me because of the many sights she had seen and the many presidents she served after Lincoln. Nobody had written anything about it and I spent a number of years (researching it)," Temple adds.

He first learned of the River Queen while writing his dissertation on Noah Brooks, a reporter and Lincoln confidante who followed Lincoln to the southern battlefronts. "While Brooks wasn't on the River Queen, he always mentioned her," Temple says. "She was a dispatch boat, one of the fastest around. She'd been launched in March, 1864 as a ferry boat, no doubt. So when the (federal) government decided it needed a swift dispatch boat, it recon-verted her. The River Queen was luxurious."

However, luxury wasn't Lincoln's style, Temple says. When the River Queen's captain asked Lincoln what kind of accommodations he'd like, Lincoln responded "only plain, simple food and ordinary comfort," Temple writes in the book.

People accompanying the president on his last voyage said "Lincoln was relaxed and got to see the soldiers. He did two (troop) reviews

down there, one was the Army of the Potomac and the other was the Army of the James. They could see he was really enjoying himself," Temple says.

After the Confederate Capital of Richmond, Virginia fell to Union forces, Lincoln and his son, Tad, left the River Queen to tour the defeated city. Lincoln walked through the residence of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and sat in his chair, according to Temple.

On April 9, 1865, the River Queen was returning Lincoln and his party to Washington, D.C. when something prophetic happened, which Temple relates in his book. Mary Lincoln had invited her friend, the French attorney and diplomat Adolphe, Marquis de Chambrun, to accompany her and Lincoln on the River Queen. As the ship was passing Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate on the Potomac River, the Marquis de Chambrun commented that Lincoln would make Springfield famous in the same way George Washington made Mount Vernon famous.

Today, we know that's true. Springfield is a Lincoln fan's mecca. Sadly, though, Lincoln would never know the Marquis' prophecy came true. He died from John Wilkes Booth's bullet six days later.



## Transitions

Former state **Representative Ray Christensen** of Morris died April 21. He was a decorated World War II veteran who served as a state lawmaker from 1977 to 1989 and chaired the House Committee on Aging.

On May 13, former state **Representative Larry McKeon** died. A former police officer, Army veteran, and academician, McKeon successfully fought to change Illinois laws that discriminated against a person's sexual orientation. He spent one decade in the Illinois House of Representatives, ending in 2006.

