In the early hours of January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1863—during a midnight worship service at Shiloh Church on Prince Street, which the \textit{New York Times} called “a grand jubilee for the colored people of this city in anticipation of the Emancipation Proclamation” —minister Henry Highland Garnet was in the midst of his sermon when he noticed a bewhiskered white man ambling down the aisle in search of a front-row seat.

Garnet interrupted his talk to announce that someone had entered the church, as he put it, “who has done more to destroy the vile institution of slavery than any man in the country: Horace Greeley.” In response, parishioners leapt from their seats to cheer and chant the \textit{New York Tribune} editor’s name. Then Reverend Garnett noticed that the new arrival was cheering and chanting, too.
Garnet motioned for quiet and sheepishly admitted: The “gentleman right here before me looked so much like Mr. Greeley that I thought it was him, but he clapped just as hard as the rest, and I saw my mistake.” Then he added: “Nobody should be ashamed to look like him.”

Seven months later—during Draft Riots so clearly aimed at people of color that Reverend Garnett’s life and property were saved only when his cool-headed daughter removed his name-plate from their front door—another peculiar event played out just a few blocks from the building we’re gathered in tonight.

A gang of thugs—searching for any black person or sympathizer they could hurt—ran into “Horace Greeley” near his home on 29th Street, and beat him to a pulp. But as it turned out, the victim wasn’t Greeley, either. Another case of mistaken identity.
Who knows? Maybe the victim was the same lookalike who had stumbled into Shiloh Church on New Year’s Day.

I suppose one could interpret these episodes in two ways: Either Greeley wasn’t nearly as well-known as he (and I) thought he was; or, maybe he was so recognizable—with his unique corona of chin whiskers and battered hats—that anyone who came close to replicating his unique affect was subject to high praise from abolitionists; or vicious assault by racists. Greeley was no doubt flattered by both reactions.

19th-century editors were genuine celebrities. They were crusaders, entrepreneurs, power-brokers, and eccentrics. They had enormous influence on politics and politicians. Along the way, they wrote the first draft of Civil War history. And not without constraints. Those who crossed the line between dissent and treason were subject to censorship, shutdown, arrest, and prison.
Mercurial as he was, Greeley never went that far. Beginning back in 1848, he and Lincoln found themselves on the same side of the slavery issue—in the same place, at the same time: the House of Representatives. One would think these two odd-looking, self-made men—both superb writers and—would have become fast friends and lifetime allies in common cause.

Instead, for the next decade-and-a-half, these two freedom warriors kept each other at a wary distance. You know they weren’t close because Greeley later admitted he never heard Lincoln tell a funny story! He may have been the only contemporary who ever admitted that! And the only anti-slavery delegate to the 1860 Republican convention who voted for former slaveholder Edward Bates.
After Lincoln won, Greeley turned up in Springfield, ostensibly to lecture—and waited in his hotel for President-elect Lincoln to call on him. Lincoln waited in his headquarters for Greeley to call on him. And waited. And waited. The press staked out the scene to see who would defer to whom. Of course it was Lincoln who graciously ended the standoff and called on the editor.

In 1862, Greeley pushed Lincoln hard on emancipation—especially after he learned that the President had already drafted a proclamation and awaited only a Union victory so he could announce it from a position of strength. Greeley was setting himself up for credit. Lincoln replied with the most brilliant letter to the editor in American history—but his “paramount object” may have been to scoop Greeley. Lincoln released his reply to another paper—and for exclusive publication on a Saturday, knowing Greeley couldn’t even catch up the next day. The Tribune didn’t publish on Sundays!
Two years later, after working hard to dump Lincoln and then only reluctantly supporting his re-election, Greeley buckled under the strain of wartime defeat and death—and proposed that emancipation itself, for which he’d fought long and hard, be sacrificed in return for peace. Lincoln did not buckle.

It was the last straw. Greeley soon showed up unexpectedly at the White House to inspect the new painting, “First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.” The editor volunteered a suggestion: could the painter make that newspaper in the foreground look more like the Tribune?

The artist responded by hurrying upstairs to tell the President that the nation’s most famous editor was in the mansion. Would he not come downstairs and see him? He knows where I am, Lincoln replied; he’s welcome to come up to see me. Lincoln waited. Greeley waited.
This time neither man blinked. They not only never met that day; they never met again.

Lincoln told his Cabinet that Greeley had become like an old shoe that had rotted away—it could no longer be repaired. Their long dance was over.

One thing is certain: like many editors of his day, Greeley lusted above all to be a politician—running for office and losing each time...a far cry from his New York rival Henry Raymond, founder of the *New York Times*, who in 1864 capped off a long political career by chairing the Republican National Committee and running successfully for Congress from Manhattan—while continuing to edit his paper.

In turn, Lincoln, like many politicians, dabbled in newspaper writing. And publishing.
A year before running for president, he bought a German-language weekly to make sure Germans had a paper committed to—well, to Lincoln.

I shouldn’t be frivolous. The relationship between press and politics was no laughing matter.

Lincoln preferred newspapermen who were less independent, more loyal to the party, and to him, than Horace Greeley—men like John Wein Forney, an opportunist who launched the Washington Chronicle, made it an Administration mouthpiece, and in return enjoyed open access to the White House.

There Forney found Lincoln late one June night in 1864, “ghastly pale with dark rings round his cavernous eyes”—despondent over news of the latest casualties from the Wilderness.
“Let me read you this,” the President suddenly blurted out. What followed next came from *Macbeth*—Shakespeare, whose birthday happens to be this very day: “Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player / That struts his hour upon the stage/ And then is heard no more; It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

As romantic as we find Lincoln’s affinity for Shakespeare, he spent at least as much time devouring newspapers, and embracing, opposing, using, and discarding newspapermen. It’s a tale signifying something: his extraordinary sensitivity to public opinion, and his exceptional mastery of the means to move it—albeit in media that seem antique today, but seemed just as breathtakingly fast and uncontrollable as some of us today find twitter and instagram.

I dare say, had he enjoyed the chance, Lincoln would have tweeted, too.
He was that attuned to getting his message out. And that successful at doing so. That you think my effort to unravel this complex story has been somewhat successful, too, is an extraordinary honor for which I’m truly grateful.

I used to joke that I’d give my left arm to earn a Lincoln Prize. I didn’t realize how close I would come. Tomorrow, after my fourth shoulder surgery in a year, I’ll be especially grateful for tonight. I’m going to give the Saint Gaudens bronze a big hug when I get rid of my latest sling.

Thank you Dick Gilder and Lew Lehrman, not only for your generosity, but for stimulating so much Lincoln scholarship but for everything you, Jim Basker, Lesley Herrmann and everyone at the GLI does to promote education.
And thank you to the Board of Gettysburg College, where I’ve spent so much time over the decades studying, speaking, opening exhibits, and of course periodically renewing my 30-year friendship with LP cofounder Gabor Boritt and his family.

It’s been a great honor to do research as a Roger Hertog Fellow at the New-York Historical Society. I’m deeply appreciative to Roger and the Society’s CEO, Louise Mirrer.

I’m grateful to the Lincoln Prize jury: Joan Waugh, Lucas Morel, and the Chairman—the Meryl Streep of the Lincoln Prize—Allen Guelzo. [I was at lunch with Craig Symonds a few weeks ago, and we laughed, “Isn’t this amazing? This is the probably the first time there have been so many Lincoln Prize winners at this café.” And then we quickly added, “unless Allen Guelzo dined here alone.”]
Speaking of Craig: Thank you, my friend, for your close reading of this book in its formative stages, and for all your support and encouragement.

Of the finalists, all of whose books I’ve read and celebrate with you tonight, I must single out Jonathan White—a rising star—who helpfully read the manuscript as well. Some stars shine brightly for eons. One of them, Jim McPherson, took time to provide an essential reading, too. Thank you Jim.

I’m proud to work with my friend, the country’s finest book editor, the incomparable Alice Mayhew. I thank everyone at S&S, including Stuart Roberts and Maureen Cole…and of course my wonderful agent of more than 20 years, Geri Thoma. All are here tonight. As is my longtime assistant, Kraig Smith, who just got back from his honeymoon: the only period in the last ten years he hasn’t been around to help out.
Please let me close with just a few words of thanks for my family. First, to my daughter Meg, who helped take care of me last year—made me soup and made me laugh—as did my daughter Remy, who also proofread the galleys; thank goodness, because, believe me, it’s hard to see typos when you’re on Percocet!

Most of all, my gratitude goes to Edith, who has spent a whole year nursing, feeding, dressing, and putting up with me—which I suppose is what she’s been doing for the other 43 years, too. Really, you don’t know what love and trust really are until your wife is standing over you three times a day holding an intravenous injection. She’s much more than I deserve, the best prize of my life, and Edith, I love you. Last but not least, a shout out to Charles, the light of our lives, who may care more about Oz books than Lincoln books—but hope springs eternal. Many thanks.

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