

Title of Session: SS Forum - Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers

Moderator: Karen Needles

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Room: Social Studies Forum Group

BJB2: Welcome, everyone, to this exciting discussion.

BJB2: we usually start Tapped In discussions with introductions. Please tell KarenN where you are located and what you teach or hope to teach...and what interests you about the topic

BJB2: I'm in Pennsylvania and teach communication. I love using picture books for lessons

WilliamJo: I am a student teacher in Cleveland Ohio I want to teach social studies I thought this discussion would provide enrichment information for my class

KarenNee: Nathaniel, where are you from?

BJB2: thanks, William

NathanelK: I'm from Indiana. I'm a secondary social studies major at Franklin College

KarenL: I'm Karen Lemmons, library media specialist in Detroit, Michigan.

KarenNee: Mark, where are you from?

JeffC: I'm in Oregon... been an educator for 15 years... on Tapped In Helpdesk and think the parrot is probably pining for the fjords.

MarkAM: I'm from Indiana and I'm a elementary education major from Franklin college

KarenNee: Melody, where are you from?

MelodyG: I'm also an elem education major at Franklin college in Indiana

KarenNee: Kristen, where are you from?

KristinNH: I'm from Indiana and I'm a secondary education major from Franklin College. I have always found history interesting.

KarenNee: Welcome to the Tapped In session tonight.

WilliamJo: Indiana is well represented

KarenNee: Definitely, the land of Lincoln

KarenNee: And that is where it all begins.

KarenNee: I am a history teacher by trade. Taught 15 years in the classroom. In 1999, I moved to Washington, D.C. to work with the Library of Congress's American Memory collections.

KarenNee: I taught teachers from all around the country how to use primary sources effectively in the classroom, and how to use the American Memory collections.

KarenL: I love American Memory collections.

KarenNee: In 2002, the grant ended and so I started my own Historical research company called Documents on Wheels.

KarenNee: In 2002, I launched a massive digital project called the Lincolnarchives Digital project.

KarenNee: We are digitizing all of the federal records at the National Archives that encompass the Lincoln White house years.

KarenNee: Any document that is dated between the years March 4, 1861 and April 15, 1865 are being scanned in full color, transcribed and indexed to make them fully searchable.

KarenNee: I started with the Treasury records because this is the largest record group.

KarenNee: In March of last year, I located a new Grace Bedell letter to Abraham Lincoln in January of 1864

KarenNee: First of all the Lincolnarchives digital project can be found at <http://www.lincolnarchives.us>

KarenNee: We currently have over 2000 documents online now, and more are going online each day.

KarenNee: We are currently scanning approximately 3000 documents every 2 weeks.

KarenNee: Now for Grace Bedell. We have established the Grace Bedell Foundation. The website is at <http://www.gracebedellfoundation.org>

KarenNee: I went out to Kansas in November of 2007, to Delphos, Ks. where Grace settled after the Civil War with her husband George Billings. I walked through her

house, which is currently up for sale. We have talked to the owner of the house, and he is going to work with us so that we can purchase the house and turn it into the Grace Bedell Museum.

KarenNee: You can see her house if you go to the Grace Bedell website.

KarenNee: You can also see the two letters, the first one that she wrote to Lincoln in 1860, which is housed in Detroit at the Public Library, and the second one that I found, which is housed at the National Archives in College Park, Md.

KarenNee: Let me know if I am going too fast. Anyone have any comments or questions?

KarenNee: This project is a grassroots campaign to show children how they can make a difference and let them help create a new historical landmark.

KarenNee: We are asking each child in the U.S. to donate \$1 and also asking them to get at least one adult to donate a \$5 so that Lincoln can help save Grace's house.

KarenNee: We are trying to raise \$30,000, and think that we can accomplish this, but only with your help.

KarenNee: Are you all still with me? It is awful quiet out there!

MarkAM: just taking it all in

WilliamJo: still here

KarenNee: Okay!!!

MelodyG: I'm still here too

KristinNH: me too

KarenL: Karen, I'm curious. Where is the letter in Detroit Public Library?

NathanelK: me too

JeffC: I'm still looking for the parrot.

WilliamJo: is the state of Kansas doing anything to help?

KarenL wonders if Michigan is doing anything, too.

KarenNee: I am not sure, but if you go to the Grace Bedell website, there is a link to the letter, so you can make copies of it to use in the classroom?

JeffC: One would think that the building could be a national monument.

KarenNee: The Historical Society will work with us once the house is purchased. They don't have the funds to take care of another landmark. We are in the process of getting non-profit status.

KarenNee: Yes, once we get the house purchased, we will begin the paperwork for the Historical building.

KristinNH: That would be wonderful

KarenNee: I will be going to Wisconsin on Monday to do a presentation on the project and to get the Wisconsin teachers started in the project.

KarenNee: So those of you who are in Michigan, can be my disciples and get the project started there as well.

MarkAM: have you gone to a bunch of states or just a few?

MelodyG: do teachers seem enthusiastic to help with the project?

KarenNee: We are just getting started. It has only been a few months since I was in Delphos. I am hoping to get the children of New York State involved, since Grace came from New York.

KarenNee: Yes, the teachers have been really excited and we are beginning to get checks from classrooms that are already collecting money.

MelodyG: that's great

KarenNee: Grace's life is full of excitement once she gets to Kansas. She lived in a sod house from 1870 till 1881 when she moved into the house in Delphos.

WilliamJo: have u tried anything like the Lincoln corporation I know they have a Lincoln museum in Fort Wayne Indiana

MarkAM: you might want to look into Illinois and Kentucky since Lincoln has some history there

KarenNee: Hate to tell you this, but the Lincoln museum in Ft. Wayne, Indiana is closing its doors in June.

KarenL: Karen, I'll see what I can do in Detroit. Perhaps work with the Public Library to raise awareness.

KarenNee: Yes, Karen that would be perfect.

KarenNee: If you send me your address, I can send you some Grace Bedell bookmarks that you can give folk who give donations.

JeffC: My guess is that although they could probably get corporate sponsorship, they're more interested in making this a grass roots project based oriented thing where kids can get involved and actively save the building.

KarenNee: We are also encouraging students to enter the Grace Bedell "Save Grace's House" contest. They need to design a poster that we will use for the campaign. We will put all of the entries on the website, and the public can vote the winner. The winner will receive a \$50 savings bond.

BJB2: <http://www.gracebedellfoundation.org/>

WilliamJo: can I ask what type of condition is the house currently in

MarkAM: is the contest open to all ages or is it designed for a certain age group

KarenNee: The house needs some work on the inside. It is a 2 story house with very narrow stairs that go up to the second floor. This is typical of late 19th century and early 20th century houses. We want to put in an elevator to replace the stairs.

KarenNee: The contest is open to all ages of students.

MarkAM: is all of that information on the Grace Bedel website

KarenNee: We would like to make each room a different theme, and include the pioneer life in Delphos during Grace's life as well.

KarenNee: We are in the process of putting the rules for the contest online.

JeffC: here are some pics: http://gracebedell.lincolnarchives.us/grace_house.htm

KarenNee: What is really kind of creepy or 6 degrees of separation, is the fact that 20 miles up the road in Concordia, Ks. a man by the name of Boston Corbett, who shot and killed John Wilkes Booth lived.

LauriR: I live right by where Booth was shot and killed

KarenNee: And Grace and George Billings knew Wild Bill Hickok. He visited them at their home.

KarenL: She was a librarian, too. Wow!

KarenNee: Anne Morgan, a wife and mother, was kidnapped by the Indians and George Armstrong Custer rescued her a few years later. She was treated horribly by the citizens of Delphos once she was rescued. She was pregnant and delivered a child, part Indian.

KarenNee: Yes, Grace was the first librarian in Delphos, Ks.

MarkAM: sounds like she was a busy person

KarenNee: Grace was described as a woman willing to try anything. She was very public minded, and both she and George started many of the foundations of Delphos.

KarenNee: Yes, she was. I actually talked to a resident of Delphos, who remembered her when he was a child. He visited her just to see her parrot! There were two parrots in Delphos, but the parents would not allow the children to see the other one because it swore.

KarenNee: Then you are just down the road from me Lauri. I live in College Park, Md.

JeffC: The link to the elusive parrot heats up!

LauriR: Oh wow! Yep, I'm in King George.

KarenNee: There is only a sign in the middle of Rt 301 that talks about the Garret farm where Booth was shot.

LauriR: Yes. I am in the process of helping someone develop a lesson plan that follows Booth's path after he shot the president

KarenNee: And to top it off Jeff, I got a donation from a woman in Salina, Ks. who also used to live in Delphos and saw Grace's parrot.

WilliamJo: where are most of the donations coming from?

KarenNee: Lauri, I have the two letters that John Wilkes Booth wrote right before he shot Lincoln. One is to his mother, the other is "To Whom it May Concern"

JeffC: links to the letters Karen?

KarenNee: So far, most of the donations have come from Kansas. The local papers have done a wonderful job doing articles about the project.

LauriR: OMG! Are the letters online?

KarenNee: If you send me an email, I will get you a copy of the letters. (John Wilkes Booth letters)

LauriR: That is so wonderful. I will send you a message now

JeffC: found the text: <http://www.freerepublic.com/forum/a3967bb851ddd.htm>

KarenNee: Yes, Asa, John Wilkes Booth's sister contacted the U.S. Marshal from the Eastern District of Penn. to let him know that Booth had left some papers at her apartment in Philadelphia shortly before he shot Lincoln.

KarenNee: The "To Whom It May Concern" letter was then printed in the Philadelphia Enquirer.

KarenNee: Grace Bedell is a fascinating person, and the fact that she is a girl gives the female population in the classroom something to be proud of.

KristinNH: I agree

KarenNee: So, any questions?

WilliamJo: is there more biographical information on her?

LauriR: I may have missed this earlier, but did Lincoln reply to Grace?

WilliamJo: I am having trouble getting around the site

KarenNee: I am working with her relatives in Salina to get more information on her.

KarenNee: Unfortunately, I don't think that Lincoln saw the second letter. John Hay, his secretary, was out of town at the time the letter came, and the other office workers, just forwarded the letter straight to the Treasury department.

WilliamJo: is there any proof that Lincoln grew the beard in response to her letter

LauriR: Did she get any standard "blah, blah" from the Treasury Dept or no response?

KarenNee: Yes, in fact, after Lincoln was elected, on his way to Washington, he stopped in Westfield, N.Y. and called Grace to the train platform. He scratched his whiskers and said "See Grace, I grew these just for you!"

KarenNee: No response to her letter Lauri.

MelodyG: wow, that's neat

LauriR: That's Washington for ya! ;)

WilliamJo: that is cool

KarenNee: Yes.

KarenL: Pretty cool!

LauriR: Is there any pics of Grace with Lincoln?

KarenNee: The letter just went into the file with the hundreds of other letters seeking appointments and situations.

KarenNee: I have been unable to find any.

LauriR: Too bad. Was her family well off?

KarenNee: Yes, when you look at the 1860 census, her father, who worked with Stoveworks, made about \$2000 that year. That was pretty good money for that time.

LauriR: That is good? Did all the children go to school?

LauriR: Sorry, I meant "that is good!!"

KarenNee: Yes, Norman Bedell believed that education was very important.

LauriR: Do you know how high she went in school?

KarenNee: I am going to guess that it was about the same as high school. She went to a school until she was about 16. That is where she met George, who was one of the teachers there.

LauriR: Not bad. Any idea what she did during the war?

LauriR: during the war (I can't type)

KarenNee: In July of 1861, she and her family moved back to Albion, N.Y. and that is where she lived until she went out to Kansas in 1870.

BrettW: Is that where she died?

KarenNee: When you read the second letter, she is seeking a position to help her parents out financially.

KarenNee: She died in Delphos, Kans. on Nov. 2, 1936, just two days before her birthday.

LauriR: So her Dad lost his money during the war?

KarenNee: You can find her death certificate on the website.

KarenNee: Grace claimed in the letter that her father had lost most of his property during the war.

LauriR: Do we know what happened to her siblings?

KarenNee: One of the cool things on the website is the \$10 note that she signed as a promo for the Bank of Delphos.

BrettW: that is pretty neat

KarenNee: She and George had only one son, named Harlan. He, in turn, got married and had two boys. I have been communicating with the great grandson who lives in Salina, and runs a Pizza restaurant.

WilliamJo: what age is the book Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers aimed at?

LauriR: But she had 5 other brothers and sisters

KarenNee: If you go to the Lincolnarchives website and click on Lincoln sightings, you can select Delphos, Ks. and see some of the items in the museum, the statue in town square and the house.

KarenNee: Yes, the Bedell family was big. I really don't know what happened with the other children.

KarenNee: The Karen Winnick book is aimed at elementary and middle school students. For high school students I would use the actual letters.

LauriR: Do you have any diaries of Grace's?

KarenNee: No, I have not been able to locate any of Grace's things. One of the things that she did after moving to Delphos, was to type copies of the letter that she wrote to Lincoln, autograph it and send it out. She got so many requests for this. Her fame followed her to Delphos.

JeffC: You might want to put some updates on the Grace Bedell Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Bedell

KarenNee: Thanks Jeff. I will do that.

LauriR: She was a smart woman!

KarenNee: Extremely.

LauriR: I'm glad she had the foresight to do that

KarenNee: I know that the economy is really tough right now. But we are even willing to collect Lincoln pennies. Those are always laying around and you would be surprised how they can add up quickly. If you were to get one of those large water bottles and put it in the classroom, or at the local library, I think you would be amazed at how many people would donate their change.

JeffC: Thanks for this session. I subbed for a social studies teacher a week ago who was doing Reconstruction... I think he might be interested in the project... I'll forward the transcript to him.

LauriR: You are 50% to your goal?

BJB2 looks at the clock on the wall.

KarenNee: See if your local bank would be willing to let your classroom set up a "Save Grace's House" donation bottle!

KarenNee: No, we have raised about \$700 so far, but I don't think that is bad for the short time we have been working at it.

WilliamJo: I'll see what my school will let me do

LauriR: Thanks Karen! This was great. I hope we can all help out somehow

KarenNee: Thanks so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule.

LauriR: This was great (see I can't type!!!!)

WilliamJo: thank you Karen

MelodyG: I agree, it was very interesting

KarenNee: Keep an eye on the Lincolnarchives digital project.

KarenNee: We are adding the Ambrose Burnside papers online now.

KarenNee: And we have some slavery payrolls online as well.

LauriR: Admiral!

MarkAM: so is this officially over now?

BJB2: Thanks, KarenN for leading this discussion!

LauriR: They kept slavery payrolls?!?!

KarenNee: It is 9 p.m Is there anything that I can answer for you Mark?

JeffC: Nothing to stop people from continuing the conversation Mark, if you want.

JeffC: slavery payrolls?

MarkAM: no I thought this was great, I just didn't know how long it lasted

WilliamJo: good night all

KarenL: Karen, this was great! Thanks for the information. Goodnight, everyone!

KarenNee: Yes, the slavery payrolls are from the confiscated Confederate records that were captured. These list the names of slaves that were used for labor by the Confederates.

KarenNee: Good night William.

LauriR: oh! I get it. You're getting those up now?

KarenNee: Yes, we also have the George Sanders papers, and the Clement Clay papers online.

LauriR: I am so there. Okay, I'll be quiet now so everybody can get a move on :o)
THANKS!!

KarenNee: If you go to a couple of the special features, Lincoln and the Constitution, and Lincoln and Slavery, which can be found under Special features in the Navigation menu, it will take you to resources that deal with those topics.

LauriR: Night Karen! Night Jeff! Night BJ

KarenNee: Night Lauri

BJB2 waves goodnight

BJB2: Thanks everyone!