

# 2017 JEWELL MAINSTAGE PLAY GUIDE



PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD SETTING

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE 2018 JEWELL MAINSTAGE SEASON ARE NOW AVAILABLE

## A CIVIL WAR



## CHRISTMAS

An American Musical Celebration

by Paula Vogel  
Music by Daryl Waters  
Directed by Karen Lund & Faith Bennett Russell  
Nov 22 - Dec 30

# WELCOME

*It's a bitterly cold Christmas Eve on the banks of the Potomac River where the lives of abolitionists, assassins, soldiers, enslaved and free are woven together in an American tapestry. In their darkest hour, when peace seems impossible, the promise of Christmas breaks through despair in this musical celebration of compassion and hope by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel.*

The Civil War was inarguably one of the darkest periods in American history. The nation was ripped apart in four years of bloody conflict, State vs State, American vs American, brother vs brother. At stake was no less than the preservation of the Union and the freedom of millions of Americans.

Yet, throughout these trying times there were still areas of common ground; people yearning for peace, hoping for the safety of their loved-ones, praying to repair what had become broken. As the night turns dark and winter's chill is in the air, the exhausted combatants find a breath of hope as the peace of Christmas shines warmly within their hearts. The darkness of fear is banished, if only for a moment, by the hope for peace, which for some of the characters in the story "may be sweeter than peace itself."

As the play unfolds, we are introduced to figures of American history such as Grant, Lee, Sherman and Abraham Lincoln, as well as countless lesser known but, in many cases, nevertheless historical characters seeking adventure, freedom and hope.

When times get dark, where do you find hope?

**Josh Krupke**

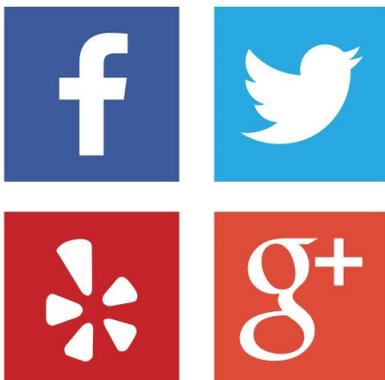
*Marketing and Development Associate*  
Taproot Theatre Company

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### What did you think?

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Let us and your friends know  
if you liked the show!



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to find us on your favorite  
social media websites.

*Be sure to tag us when  
you post about us!*

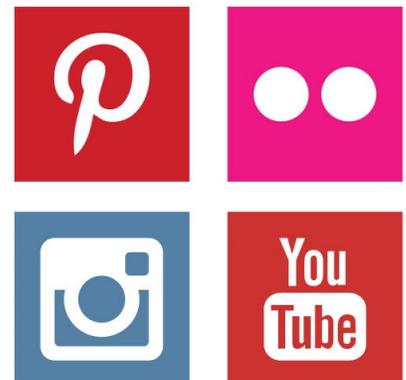
**TAPROOT THEATRE**  
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*Professional theatre in  
a neighborhood setting*

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### See behind the curtain!

See what inspires and delights  
us behind the scenes here at  
Taproot Theatre.





### JEWELL MAINSTAGE

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Seattle, WA 98103

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A Play Guide published by  
Taproot Theatre Company

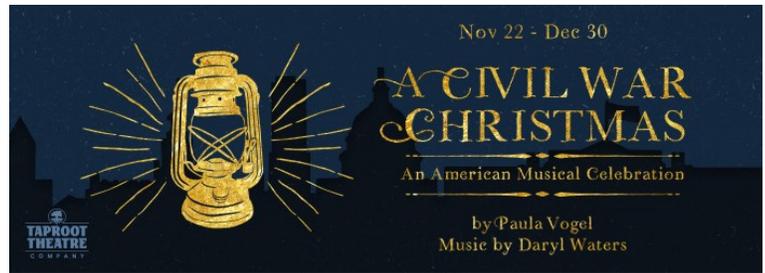
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Play Guides are produced by the Marketing Department at Taproot Theatre Company.

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This play guide may be updated periodically with new information. Last update 9.12.2017



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## Paula Vogel



**Paula Vogel** has written *How I Learned to Drive* (Pulitzer Prize, New York Drama Critics Award, Obie Award, Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and many more.) Other plays include *A Civil War Christmas*, *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *The Mineola Twins*, *Hot 'n' Throbbin'*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Desdemona*, *And Baby Makes Seven*, and *The Oldest Profession*.

Her plays have been produced by Second Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, the Vineyard Theatre, Roundabout, and Circle Repertory Company. Her plays have been produced regionally all over the country at the Center Stage, Intiman, Trinity Repertory, Woolly Mammoth, Huntington Theatre, Magic Theatre, The Goodman Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theatre Berkeley Repertory, and Alley Theatres to name a few. Harrogate Theatre and the Donmar Theatre have produced her work in England.

Her plays have been produced in Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand as well as translated and produced in Italy, Germany, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, Romania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Canada, Portugal, France, Greece, Japanese, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and other countries.

John Simon once remarked that Paula Vogel had more awards than a “black sofa collects lint.” Some of these include Induction into the Theatre Hall of Fame, Thornton Wilder Award, Lifetime Achievement from the Dramatists Guild, the William Inge Award, the Elliott Norton Award, two Obies, a Susan Smith Blackburn Award, the PEN/Laura Pels Award, a TCG residency award, a Guggenheim, a Pew Charitable Trust Award, and fellowships and residencies at Sundance Theatre Lab, Hedgebrook, The Rockefeller Center’s Bellagio Center, Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Bunting.

But she is particularly proud of her Thirtini Award from 13P, and honored by three Awards in her name: the Paula Vogel Award for playwrights given by The Vineyard, the Paula Vogel Award from the American College Theatre Festival, and the Paula Vogel mentorship program, curated by Quiara Hudes and Young Playwrights of Philadelphia.

<http://paulavogelplaywright.com/about/>

In ***A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration***, playwright Paula Vogel attempts to bring many real historical characters to life. As you watch the performance, take special note of characters like President Abraham Lincoln, First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, assassin John Wilkes Booth, and Generals Grant, Sherman, and Lee.

**In what ways are the portrayals of these characters similar to or different from what you would expect?**

# Synopsis

***Please Note: This section contains spoilers and important plot points.***

***Skip this page if you wish to be surprised during the play.***

Amidst the sounds of war, a song emerges. The Chorus welcomes the audience and takes on various characters as they tell the story.

At a Union supply depot near the Potomac River, a free black man, Union officer Decatur Bronson works at an anvil. Through a flashback, the chorus tells us that Bronson's wife, Rose had been captured by retreating Confederates. He knows that it is unlikely she has survived. He makes a vow to himself to never again take prisoners. He looks up to the North Star and prays that Rose will follow the star and find him again.

South of the river, newly emancipated Hannah and her young daughter Jessa are following the North Star towards freedom. When Hannah and Jessa reach a river crossing and are blocked by a sentry, Hannah sneaks Jessa into a passing cart and tells her to meet her at the President's House. Meanwhile, Raz, a 13 year old Virginian boy, and his horse, Silver, set out to find and join the confederacy.

At the White House, Lincoln remembers the gift he purchased for his wife is still at their summer cabin. He decides to ride out that very night to retrieve it. However, Ward Lamon, Lincoln's security chief, insists that Lincoln must have a full escort at all times, despite Lincoln's protests. Lincoln's plan to ride to the cabin is passed around at a party, eventually being told to a small time clerk who happens to live at the same boarding house as John Wilkes Booth. When Booth hears of the Lincoln's plans, he plots to kidnap the President. Eventually, Lincoln is able to slip away.

Out on Pennsylvania Ave, First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln and a former slave, and now respected dress maker, Elizabeth Keckley, are out shopping. Mary Todd laments the recent deaths of her son Willie and Keckley's son George. The ghost of George appears to Keckley, but she ignores it. (George's ghost appears to Keckley several times throughout the play, each time causing her to remember times with him and of her former enslavement.) Keckley mentions that she has reserved a Christmas tree (a rare thing to find at that time) for the Cox House Children's Home. Mary Todd decides to get a tree as a gift for Lincoln as well.

As Raz and Silver reach the Potomac, Bronson is busy shoeing a mule. Silver smells the mule and is immediately attracted, loudly announcing their presence. Raz attempts to silence his horse as Bronson begins searching for the intruding party. Chester Saunders enters to bring Bronson coffee and Bronson, startled, nearly shoots him. After the commotion, they discuss many things over coffee.

Mary Todd finds that Mr. Wormley's shop has a Christmas tree and tells the clerks she must have it. The Wormley clerks, realizing who she is, give it to her, even though, unbeknownst to Mary Todd, it is the same tree promised to Keckley. As Mary Todd rushes back to the White House to decorate, she is gripped with emotion and decides to visit an army hospital instead. Back at the shop, Mr. Wormley, sends his the clerks out to get the tree back.

Hannah, having reached the White House, is let in by an African American steward named Walker Lewis. She tells him what happened to Jessa and asks for help finding her. Meanwhile, as Booth and the conspirators watch, Lincoln happens across Jessa and asks her where she lives. Jessa thinks he is a slave-catcher and runs away. Just then, the Wormley clerks ride by. When the conspirators see the clerks, they mistake them for Union officers and they also run away. When the clerks get to the White House, they convince the Sergeant-at-Arms to give them the tree by telling him they are Union officers and have orders directly from the First Lady. Walker tells the clerks to also take Hannah to the Cox House as he suspects if anyone found Jessa they would take her there.

Raz is captured by Bronson and Saunders. Bronson sends Saunders away, telling him he will let Raz go since he has promised himself he will not take prisoners. Once Saunders is gone, Bronson points his rifle at Raz's head. At the same time, Keckley wakes up from a dream about George and walks out into the alley where she finds Jessa asleep in a crate. As Bronson takes aim, Raz closes his eyes and whispers "Mama." Simultaneously, at Keckley's place, Jessa opens her eyes and whispers "Mama." Bronson looks down and sees that Raz is merely a child. He lowers his gun and invites Raz to supper, deciding that if he is his guest he is not his prisoner. Lincoln gives Mary Todd the gift he retrieved and the Lincoln's share a toast. Keckley brings Jessa to Hannah and sets up the tree in the Cox house where Jessa adds the star on top. The Chorus sings.

## SETTING/PLACE

In a novel or a short story the setting is usually established by the author's description indicating time and place. At most theatrical productions the program will briefly list the setting and time period of the play, but after that it's up to the set designer to create a visual representation of the location that the story is set. A good set designer will create a set that gives the audience clues about the story even before the actors come on stage.

**What can you guess about the setting (location and/or time period) of this play by looking at the set design below?**

Set Design by  
Mark Lund.



Taproot Theatre 2017  
m. lund - designer

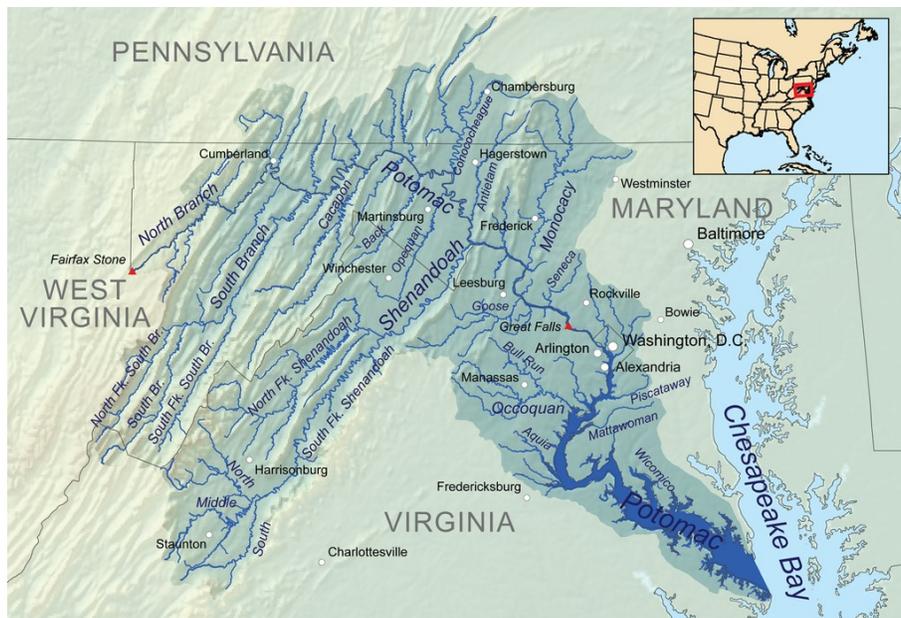


## SETTING/PLACE

### The Potomac River

The Potomac River, which is located in Maryland with Virginia on its southern shore, extends 383 miles from the Appalachian Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay and served as the geographical boundary between the states of Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. From the colonial period until well in to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it was an important navigation route and helped facilitate exploration inland from the coast. During the American Civil War (1861-1865), the Potomac traced the border between the Union and the Confederacy and lent its name to the most important Union army, the Army of the Potomac. Through the war, the river functioned largely as it always had—as an avenue for transport.

[https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Potomac\\_River\\_During\\_the\\_Civil\\_War#start\\_entry](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Potomac_River_During_the_Civil_War#start_entry)



*This map shows an overview of the Potomac River. Notice where Washington D.C. is on the map.*

### National Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children (Cox House)

On the 31st of January 1863 an association of [white] ladies was formed for the purpose of founding an asylum for the freed orphans and destitute aged women. Two weeks later the charter granted them by Congress was approved by the President.

In June they were put in possession by the order of the Secretary of War Edward Stanton a house and grounds on the heights of Georgetown of 80 acres. (the owner of Burleith, Richard Smith Cox, had taken his family and slaves to Richmond. Because he had left a loyal district to join the Confederate government, his property was confiscated by the Secretary of War, and turned over to Dr. Breed.) Within the first year 13 died at the home. Most inmates of the home were children. Cox was pardoned in June, 1866. On December 7, 1866 the evicted orphans moved to a new building being constructed for it by the Freedmen's Bureau on Eighth Street extended.

<http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsonnationalassociationforthereliefofdestitutecoloredwomenandchildren.html>

*Note: The Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children is different from the relief association founded by Mrs. Keckley with the help of the black community. That organization was the Contraband Relief Association "CRA".*

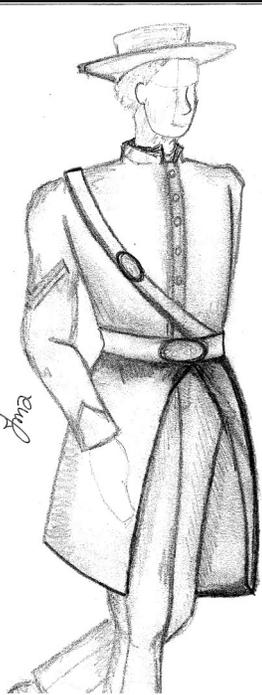
# COSTUMES

**Authors of novels or short stories** will often include character descriptions as part of the story. In a play, the costume designer is responsible for creating the first impression of a character. As soon as an actor walks out on stage you can guess something about their character.

**Are they old or young? Are they rich or poor?  
Are they from another time period or dressed in modern clothes?**

**Is the character a horse?**

**Costume Design by  
Jocelyn Fowler.**



Decatur Bronson

Decatur Bronson  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017

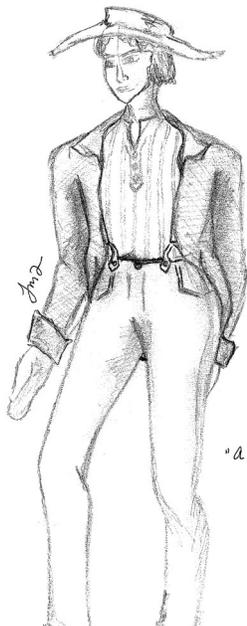


Rose

Rose  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017

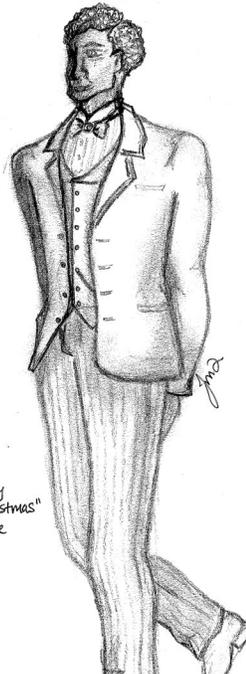


Jessa  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017



Razz

Razz  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017



Jim Winkley  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017



Silver

Silver  
"A Civil War Christmas"  
Taproot Theatre  
Winter 2017

## Timeline of the Civil War

- November 6, 1860** - Abraham Lincoln, who had declared "Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free..." is elected president.
- December 20, 1860** - South Carolina secedes from the Union. Followed soon by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.
- February 9, 1861** - The Confederate States of America is formed with Jefferson Davis as president.
- March 4, 1861** - Abraham Lincoln is sworn in as 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America.
- April 12, 1861** - At 4:30 a.m. Confederates open fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The Civil War begins.
- April 15, 1861** - President Lincoln issues a Proclamation calling for 75,000 militiamen.
- April 17, 1861** - Virginia secedes from the Union, followed soon by Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina, thus forming an eleven state Confederacy with a population of 9 million, including nearly 4 million slaves.
- May 1861** - Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory and James Townsend (African Americans) escape from work on a Confederate fortification and turn themselves in to Union General Benjamin Butler, who declares them to be "contraband." For almost a year many Union officers return slaves to their rebel masters.
- July 21, 1861** - The Union Army suffers a defeat at Bull Run, 25 miles southwest of Washington DC. Confederate Gen. Thomas J. Jackson earns the nickname "Stonewall," as his brigade resists Union attacks.
- Summer & Fall 1861** - Black men who offer to fight for the union are rejected. The federal government tells them that the contest is a white man's war. Northern black leaders insist that the war must be a war against slavery.
- February 6, 1862** - Union victory for Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Tennessee, capturing Fort Henry.
- February 20, 1862** - President Lincoln's beloved eleven-year-old son, Willie, dies from fever.
- April 6/7, 1862** - Battle of Shiloh. Confederate surprise attack on Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's troops at Shiloh on the Tennessee River results in a bitter struggle with 13,000 Union killed or wounded and 10,000 Confederates, more men than in all previous American wars combined.
- June 1862** - Congress prohibits slavery in the Western territories.
- August 1862** - Lincoln meets with several black leaders in the White House and unsuccessfully urges them to lead colonization efforts to Africa or Central America.
- September 17, 1862** - Battle of Antietam. The bloodiest day in U.S. military history as Gen. Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Armies are stopped at Antietam in Maryland by Gen. George B. McClellan and numerically superior Union forces. By nightfall 26,000 men are dead, wounded, or missing. Lee then withdraws to Virginia.
- January 1, 1863** - President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in territories held by Confederates and emphasizes the enlisting of black soldiers in the Union Army.
- March 3, 1863** - The U.S. Congress enacts a military draft, affecting male citizens aged 20 to 45, but also exempts those who pay \$300 or provide a substitute.
- March 1863** - General Lorenzo Thomas goes to Mississippi Valley to recruit black soldiers. The War Department establishes the American Freedman's Inquiry Commission.
- May 1863** - The War Department establishes the Bureau of United States Colored Troops.
- May 10, 1863** - The South suffers a huge blow as Stonewall Jackson dies from his wounds.
- June 3, 1863** - Gen. Lee with 75,000 Confederates launches his second invasion of the North, heading into Pennsylvania in a campaign that will soon lead to Gettysburg.
- July 1-3, 1863** - Battle of Gettysburg. The tide of war turns against the South as the Confederates are defeated at the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.
- July 13-16, 1863** - Anti-draft riots in New York City include arson and the murder of blacks by poor immigrant whites.



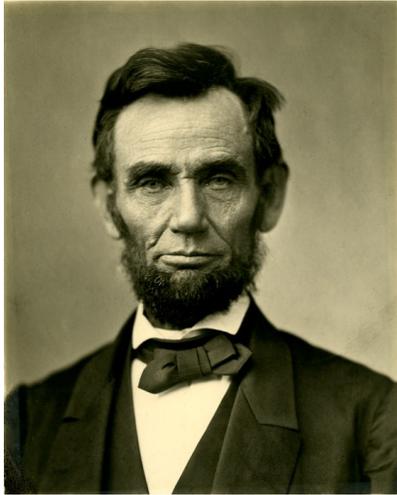
**Map of the United and Confederate States of America**  
 Union = Green  
 Confederate = Orange  
 Union States with legal slavery = Dark Green

# Timeline of the Civil War

- July 18, 1863** - Black soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment under Col. Robert G. Shaw assault fortified Rebels at Fort Wagner, South Carolina. Col. Shaw and half of the 600 men in the regiment are killed.
- August 10, 1863** - Lincoln meets with abolitionist Frederick Douglass who pushes for equal pay for black soldiers.
- November 19, 1863** - Lincoln delivers the Gettysburg Address, dedicating the battlefield as a National Cemetery.
- March 1864** - Black leaders from Louisiana meet with President Lincoln and press for their rights.
- March 9, 1864** - President Lincoln appoints Gen. Grant to command all of the armies of the United States. Gen. Willaim T. Sherman succeeds Grant as commander in the west.
- May 1864** - The American Freedman's Inquiry Commission issues a final report that is supportive of black rights.
- August 29, 1864** - Democrats nominate Gen. George B. McClellan for president to run against President Lincoln.
- September 2, 1864** - Atlanta is captured by Sherman's Army. The victory greatly helps Lincoln's bid for re-election.
- October 1864** - Northern black leaders meet in Syracuse, New York. They protest strongly against any retreat from racial progress by Lincoln or the Republican Party, and they demand equal rights. Maryland ends slavery in that state.
- November 8, 1864** - Abraham Lincoln is re-elected, defeating Democrat George B. McClellan.
- November 15, 1864** - After destroying Atlanta's warehouses and railroad facilities, Sherman, begins a March to the Sea.
- December 21, 1864** - Sherman reaches Savannah, Georgia. Sherman then telegraphs Lincoln, offering him Savannah as a Christmas present.
- Christmas Eve, 1864 - Our play takes place.**
- January 31, 1865** - The U.S. Congress approves the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, to abolish slavery. The amendment is then submitted to the states for ratification.
- January 1865** - General Sherman issues his Special Field Order Number 15, allowing forty thousand freed people to occupy farms in the designated areas along the southeastern coast. Missouri ends slavery there.
- March 25, 1865** - The last offensive for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia begins with an attack on the center of Grant's forces at Petersburg. Four hours later the attack is broken.
- April 2, 1865** - Grant's forces begin a general advance and break through Lee's lines at Petersburg. The Confederate Capital, Richmond, Virginia, is evacuated. The next day, Union troops enter and raise the Stars and Stripes.
- April 9, 1865** - Gen. Robert E. Lee surrenders his Confederate Army to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at the village of Appomattox Court House in Virginia.
- April 14, 1865** - The Stars and Stripes is ceremoniously raised over Fort Sumter. That night, Lincoln and his wife Mary see the play "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theater. At 10:13 p.m., during the third act of the play, John Wilkes Booth shoots the president in the head. Doctors attend to the president in the theater then move him to a house across the street. He never regains consciousness.
- April 15, 1865** - President Abraham Lincoln dies at 7:22 in the morning. Vice President Andrew Johnson assumes the presidency. Freed black met with white hostility throughout the defeated South.
- April 26, 1865** - John Wilkes Booth is shot and killed in a tobacco barn in Virginia.
- June 19, 1865** - West of the Mississippi River, many slaves receive official word for the first time that they are free. By this time Northern black communities have organized nine state branches under the National Rights League.
- October 1865** - Black farmers protest against President Johnson's decision to return the lands covered by Sherman's Special Field Order Number 15 to their formerly rebellious white owners.
- Throughout 1865** - the U.S. Army and Freedmen's Bureau tries to suppress the general mistreatment of the freed people and liberate some illegally enslaved blacks.
- December 6, 1865** - The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, is finally ratified. Slavery is abolished.

Dramaturg Note: *I edited and combined two different timelines to create this one. One was a military history entitled "A Brief Timeline of the Civil War" and the other was civil rights history entitled "An African American Timeline of the Civil War". It occurred to me that this is an example of the way that the story of the Civil War is skewed in our history books. If the Civil War is just about military battles that are over and done with then it is not relevant to our world today. But the Civil War is about a battle for racial equality that is still being fought, so it is VERY relevant to our world today.*

# Abraham Lincoln



**Abraham Lincoln**  
(1809—1865)

“When Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860, seven slave states left the Union to form the Confederate States of America, and four more joined when hostilities began between the North and South. A bloody civil war then engulfed the nation as Lincoln vowed to preserve the Union, enforce the laws of the United States, and end the secession. The war lasted for more than four years with a staggering loss of more than 600,000 Americans dead. Midway through the war, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves within the Confederacy and changed the war from a battle to preserve the Union into a battle for freedom. He was the first Republican President, and Union victory ended forever the claim that state sovereignty superseded federal authority. Killed by an assassin’s bullet less than a week after the surrender of Confederate forces, Lincoln left the nation a more perfect Union and thereby earned the admiration of most Americans as the country’s greatest President.

Born dirt-poor in a log cabin in Kentucky in 1809, Lincoln grew up in frontier Kentucky and Indiana, where he was largely self-educated, with a taste for jokes, hard work, and books. He served for a time as a soldier in the Black Hawk War, taught himself law, and held a seat in the Illinois state legislature as a Whig politician in the 1830s and 1840s. From state politics, he moved to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1847, where he voiced his opposition to the U.S. war with Mexico. In the mid-1850s, Lincoln left the

Whig Party to join the new Republican Party. In 1858, he went up against one of the most popular politicians in the nation, Senator Stephen Douglas, in a contest for the U.S. Senate. Lincoln lost that election, but his spectacular performance against Douglas in a series of nationally covered debates made him a contender for the 1860 Republican presidential nomination.

In the 1860 campaign for President, Lincoln firmly expressed his opposition to slavery and his determination to limit the expansion of slavery westward into the new territories acquired from Mexico in 1850. His election victory created a crisis for the nation, as many southern Democrats feared that it would just be a matter of time before Lincoln would move to kill slavery in the South. Rather than face a future in which black people might become free citizens, much of the white South supported secession. This reasoning was based in part upon the doctrine of states’ rights, which placed ultimate sovereignty with the states.

Lincoln vowed to preserve the Union even if it meant war. He eventually raised an army and navy of nearly 3 million northern men to face a southern army of over 2 million soldiers. In battles fought from Virginia to California (but mainly in Virginia, in the Mississippi River Valley, and along the border states) a great civil war tore the United States apart. In pursuing victory, Lincoln assumed extralegal powers over the press, declared martial law in areas where no military action justified it, quelled draft riots with armed soldiers, and drafted soldiers to fight for the Union cause. No President in history had ever exerted so much executive authority, but he did so not for personal power but in order to preserve the Union. In 1864, as an example of his limited personal ambitions, Lincoln refused to call off national elections, preferring to hold the election even if he lost the vote rather than destroy the democratic basis upon which he rested his authority. With the electoral support of Union soldiers, many of whom were given short leaves to return home to vote, and thanks to the spectacular victory of Union troops in General Sherman’s capture of Atlanta, Lincoln was decisively reelected.

What started as a war to preserve the Union and vindicate democracy became a battle for freedom and a war to end slavery when Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1863. Although the Proclamation did not free all slaves in the nation—indeed, no slaves outside of the Confederacy were affected by the Proclamation—it was an important symbolic gesture that identified the Union with freedom and the death of slavery. As part of the Proclamation, Lincoln also urged black males to join the Union forces as soldiers and sailors. By the end of the war, nearly two hundred thousand African Americans had fought for the Union cause, and Lincoln referred to them as indispensable in ensuring Union victory.

While the war raged, Lincoln also suffered great personal anguish over the death of his beloved son and the depressed mental condition of his wife, Mary. The pain of war and personal loss affected him deeply, and he often expressed his anguish by turning to humor and by speaking eloquently about the meaning of the great war which

# The Emancipation Proclamation

raged across the land. His Gettysburg Address, delivered after the Battle of Gettysburg, as well as his second inaugural in 1865, are acknowledged to be among the great orations in American history.

Almost all historians judge Lincoln as the greatest President in American history because of the way he exercised leadership during the war and because of the impact of that leadership on the moral and political character of the nation. He conceived of his presidential role as unique under the Constitution in times of crisis. Lincoln was convinced that within the branches of government, the presidency alone was empowered not only to uphold the Constitution, but also to preserve, protect, and defend it. In the end, however, Lincoln is measured by his most lasting accomplishments: the preservation of the Union, the vindication of democracy, and the death of slavery—accomplishments achieved by acting "with malice towards none" in the pursuit of a more perfect and equal union."

<https://millercenter.org/president/lincoln/life-in-brief>

## The Emancipation Proclamation

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, announcing, "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Initially, the Civil War between North and South was fought by the North to prevent the secession of the Southern states and preserve the Union. Even though sectional conflicts over slavery had been a major cause of the war, ending slavery was not a goal of the war. That changed on September 22, 1862, when President Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which stated that slaves in those states or parts of states still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863, would be declared free. One hundred days later, with the rebellion unabated, President issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Lincoln's bold step to change the goals of the war was a military measure and came just a few days after the Union's victory in the Battle of Antietam. With this Proclamation he hoped to inspire all blacks, and slaves in the Confederacy in particular, to support the Union cause and to keep England and France from giving political recognition and military aid to the Confederacy. Because it was a military measure, however, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the Union, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It also expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy that had already come under Union control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union military victory.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it did fundamentally transform the character of the war. After January 1, 1863, every advance of Federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

From the first days of the Civil War, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty. The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for freedom. It added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. As a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

***Dramaturg Note:** The Emancipation Proclamation didn't end slavery in the U.S. (that wouldn't happen until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.) But it did change the story of the war. From that moment on the advance of the Union armies (regardless of the personal feelings of their commanders) would expand freedom for enslaved African-Americans. It didn't in any way solve the million and one problems of a culture built on white supremacy, but it made it impossible for the country to go back to any of the old slave state/free state compromises after the war. It didn't really accomplish much in January 1863, but it started something.*

# Mary Todd Lincoln



**Mary Todd Lincoln**  
(1818 –1882)

Daughter of a wealthy and prosperous family, Mary Todd did not have need for employment. With her father's close friendship to Kentucky political leader Henry Clay of the Whig Party, Mary Todd developed a voracious interest in politics and political issues. While she was trained in the social graces common to her class and time, the level of education she received was unusual. She studied widely and deeply a variety of subjects including the works of Victor Hugo, Shakespeare and astronomy. According to legend, her maternal grandmother aided slaves seeking freedom through the Underground Railroad and Mary Todd's later support of abolition is believed to have originated with the influence of this grandmother.

On November 4, 1842, at 23 years old, she married lawyer, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). In 1844, they purchased their first and only home at Eight and Jackson Streets in Springfield, IL. They had four sons; Robert Todd Lincoln (1843-1926), Edward Baker Lincoln (1846-1850), William "Willie" Wallace Lincoln (1850-1862), Thomas "Tad" Lincoln (1853-1871)

When Abraham Lincoln served as a Congressman for a two year period, she made the unusual move to relocate to Washington for a time, living with him and their first child in a

boardinghouse. Her primary focus was raising her family, but she nevertheless took an active role in promoting his political career. When he began seeking an appointive position, it was Mary Lincoln who handwrote his solicitation letters to Whig leaders. When he was offered the governorship of the faraway Oregon territory, she successfully advised against his accepting the post since it would remove him from a potential national position.

Her vigorous defense and support of Lincoln's presidential candidacy in 1860 and willingness to speak with reporters prove her eagerness to assume a prominent public role in her husband's presidency. Due to the sectional strife and imminent secession of South Carolina, however, Lincoln's 1861 inaugural was overshadowed by threats on his life. Many of the wealthy southern families who had dominated the social-political life of the capital were leaving and those remaining social leaders, including the outgoing First Lady Harriet Lane had pre-judged the "western" Mrs. Lincoln with a regional bias as unsuited to assume a social leadership role.

With the difficulty of making medical conclusions about Mrs. Lincoln long after she lived, precise assessment of what mental and physical problems she may have suffered is impossible. She did manifest behavior that suggests severe depression, anxiety and paranoia, migraine headaches, even possibly diabetes. Certainly all of her ills were exacerbated by a series of tragic circumstances during her White House tenure: the trauma of Civil War, including the allegiance of much of her family to the Confederacy and their death or injury in battle; an 1863 accident which threw her from a carriage and knocked her unconscious; the accusations by northerners that she was sympathetic to the Confederacy and the ostracizing of her as a "traitor" by southerners; the sudden death of her son Willie in 1862; and, of course, the assassination of her husband as she sat beside him in the Ford's Theater.

During the war, she worked as a volunteer nurse in the Union hospitals, offered intelligence she had learned as well as her own advice to the President on military personnel, recommended minor military appointments to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, toured Union Army camps and reviewed troops with her husband. She was largely successful in her objective of using entertaining as a means of raising Union morale. It is difficult to assess the influence she had on the President, if any, but there is no record of his asking her to stop her flow of advice, recommendations and observations to him. She was not successful in her efforts to oust Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, Secretary of State William Seward, General George McClellan and General Ulysses Grant. Numerous abolitionists, however, attested to her core value of full emancipation of African-American slaves and her influence on the President to see this not only in political but human terms as well. She considered the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 to be a personal victory. Two public causes in which Mary Lincoln became involved attested to her genuine support of the Union Army and the freedom of slaves: the Sanitary Commission fairs, which raised private donations to supplement the federal funds for soldier supplies, like blankets and the Contraband Relief Association, which also raised private donations, for the housing, employment, clothing and medical care of recently freed slaves, an organization in which she became involved as a result of her friendship with her dressmaker, former slave Elizabeth Keckley.

Dramaturg Note: *This is edited from the entry for Mary Todd Lincoln in the "National First Ladies Library."*

# Elizabeth Keckley



**Elizabeth Keckley  
(1818—1907)**

Elizabeth Hobbs was born into slavery on the Col. Armistead Burwell farm in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, in 1818 to Agnes and George Pleasant Hobbs (although her biographer Jennifer Fleischner asserts that Col. Burwell was in fact Hobbs's father). Agnes and George had an "abroad" marriage meaning that except for one brief period when George resided on the Burwell property, the family lived apart. George Hobbs was parted from his family permanently when his master relocated west.

When Elizabeth was fourteen, she was sent to live with her master's eldest son, the Reverend Robert Burwell, and his wife in North Carolina. During this time she endured whippings and beatings from the village schoolmaster, a Mr. Bingham, ostensibly to subdue her "stubborn pride," as she later wrote. At age twenty, Elizabeth became pregnant as the result of a rape, and her only child, George, was born in 1839. After the birth of her son, 21-year-old Elizabeth was sent back to Virginia to live with her master's daughter, Ann Burwell Garland, and Ann's husband, Hugh. From Virginia, she accompanied the Garland family when it moved west to St. Louis in 1847. There she began work as a seamstress and dressmaker, skills she had learned from her mother. Her work helped support the entire Garland family.

Hobbs's reputation as a skilled dressmaker grew quickly and her patrons soon included some of St. Louis's most elite citizens. While in St. Louis, Elizabeth became reacquainted with James Keckley, whom she had known in Virginia, and consented to marry him on the condition that Hugh Garland allowed her to purchase her freedom. Although not yet free, Elizabeth Hobbs married James Keckley in 1852 but only after Garland agreed to a purchase price of \$1200.

On August 10, 1855, with money borrowed from some of her wealthy patrons, Elizabeth Keckley secured her freedom and that of her son. The marriage union, however, proved unhappy. James Keckley had misrepresented himself as free, and in 1860, Elizabeth left her husband and settled in Washington, D.C. All of the money she borrowed was repaid in full by that point.

In Washington, D.C., Keckley built a successful dressmaking career becoming acquainted with Mary Lincoln, whom Keckley met on President Lincoln's first day in office. Her work for and friendship with Mary Lincoln permitted her a unique view of events during this era which she chronicled in *Behind the Scenes* (1868). Keckley also became a prominent figure in D.C.'s free black community, helping to found and serving as president of the Contraband Relief Association, which later became the Ladies' Freedmen and Soldier's Relief Association. In the aftermath of Lincoln's assassination, Keckley stayed with the first lady for a time, but the publication of her book, in which she revealed private details about life inside the White House, was controversial and strained her relationship with Mary Lincoln. The negative reaction to the book in D.C.'s white community also affected Keckley's ability to earn a living. Finally, in 1892 at the age of 74, she took a faculty position at Wilberforce University in Ohio as head of the Department of Sewing and Domestic Science Arts.

Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley died in May of 1907 while living at the National Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children in Washington, D.C. Keckley's son, George, preceded her in death, dying in 1861 while serving in the Union army.

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/keckley-elizabeth-hobbs-1818-1907>



***A purple velvet gown designed and made by Keckley and worn by Mary Lincoln at her husband's second inauguration can be viewed at the Smithsonian's American History Museum.***

# Additional Historical Characters



## Sgt. Decatur Bronson

The character of Sgt. Bronson in *A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration* is a composite character drawn from facts about the lives of two black Union soldiers who were war heroes in the Civil War, Sgt. James H. Bronson and Sgt. Decatur Dorsey.

The stories of Sgt. Bronson and Sgt. Dorsey are told on the next page.

### THE MEDAL OF HONOR

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force which can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States. Only 3,497 recipients in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard have been awarded this acknowledgement of extraordinary achievement in military service.

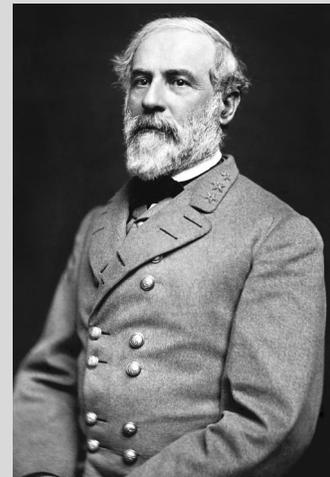
## Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (1822—1885)



- In March 1864, President Lincoln elevated Grant to the rank of lieutenant general, and named him general-in-chief of the Armies of the United States, making his headquarters with the Union Army of the Potomac.
- Was later elected President of the United States, serving from 1869—1877.

## The Generals

## Gen. Robert E Lee (1807—1870)



- Lee was the Commanding General of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.
- A top graduate of the United States Military Academy.
- When Virginia declared its secession from the Union in April 1861, Lee chose to follow his home state, despite his desire for the country to remain intact and an offer of a senior Union command.

# Additional Historical Characters

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant James H. Bronson, 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Troops

Born ca. 1840 and raised in Black Lick, Indiana County, Pennsylvania, living on a farm. It is believed that Bronson was free at the time of his birth. Though some accounts label him as a former slave, there doesn't seem to be any historical record of him being one or of him having specifically achieved his freedom. By 1860 he had moved to Ohio and listed his occupation as a barber. Bronson enlisted in the Army on August 3, 1863, joining as a private into Company D of the 5th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment.



By September 1864, Bronson had risen to the level of Sergeant. According to Charles Hanna's book *African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor*, he is one of 13 African American soldiers who earned the Medal of Honor at the battle of New Market Heights on September 29, 1864.

From Hanna's book: "As the last of the white officers in Company D were shot down Sergeant James H. Bronson took command of the company and rallied his men. Then Sergeant Bronson, placing himself in the front of the line, led his men forward against the Confederate works. The black soldiers, angry at the losses they had endured, surged over the abatis and the palisades. They took the rifle pits in hand-to-hand combat."

After the war Bronson returned to Ohio and continued working as a barber. He died in 1884.

The book "African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor" by Charles Hanna

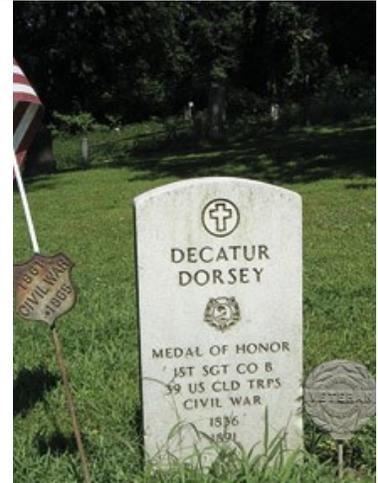
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_H.\\_Bronson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_H._Bronson)

<https://sites.google.com/a/kent.edu/genealogy-local-history-2015/jessica-fij/james-h-bronson>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_H.\\_Bronson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_H._Bronson)

## Sergeant Decatur Dorsey, 39<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Troops

Born a slave in Maryland in 1836, Decatur took the name Dorsey from the surname of his owners who ran a large tobacco plantation. When the Federal government established a military draft in 1863, it did so with a provision that allowed slaves to be named in the place of their owners. Some accounts differ as to whether or not Dorsey had achieved his freedom prior to joining the army.



Dorsey enrolled in the army on March 22, 1864, joining Company B of the 39th United States Colored Infantry, and was promoted to corporal in less than two months. He received the Medal of Honor in November of 1865 for his actions at the Battle of the Crater, part of the Siege of Petersburg, Virginia in July 1864.

After using explosives to try to break up Confederate defenses, attacking Union soldiers found themselves trapped in a crater caused by the explosion. Dorsey's division, which had been held in reserve, was then ordered to reinforce the attack. Dorsey, serving as the 39th Regiment's color bearer, moved ahead of his unit during the advance and planted the flag on the Confederate fortifications. When the regiment was forced to pull back, he retrieved the flag and rallied his fellow soldiers for a second attack. In this second assault, the men of the 39th breached the Confederate works and engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the defenders. They captured two hundred prisoners and two flags before being pushed back again and ordered to withdraw.

After the war Dorsey settled in Hoboken, New Jersey. He died in 1891.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decatur\\_Dorsey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decatur_Dorsey)

# Black Union Soldiers



**Sgt. Henry Stewart, Company E, 54th Massachusetts Infantry (the 54<sup>th</sup> Mas. was the first colored regiment to form in 1863)**

***"Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship."*** Frederick Douglass

The issues of emancipation and military service were intertwined from the onset of the Civil War. News from Fort Sumter set off a rush by free black men to enlist in U.S. military units. They were turned away, however, because a Federal law dating from 1792 barred Negroes from bearing arms for the U.S. army (although they had served in the American Revolution and in the War of 1812). In Boston disappointed would-be volunteers met and passed a resolution requesting that the Government modify its laws to permit their enlistment.

The Lincoln administration wrestled with the idea of authorizing the recruitment of black troops, concerned that such a move would prompt the border states (five Union states along the Confederate border where slavery remained legal) to secede. When Gen. John C. Frémont in Missouri and Gen. David Hunter in South Carolina issued proclamations that emancipated slaves in their military regions and permitted them to enlist, their superiors sternly revoked their orders. By mid-1862, however, the escalating number of former slaves (contrabands), the declining number of white volunteers and the increasingly pressing personnel needs of the Union Army pushed the Government into reconsidering the ban.

As a result, on July 17, 1862, Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act, freeing slaves who had masters in the Confederate Army. Two days later, slavery was abolished in the territories of the United States, and on July 22 President presented the preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet. After the Union Army turned back Lee's first invasion of the North at Antietam, MD, and the Emancipation Proclamation was subsequently announced, black recruitment was pursued in earnest. Volunteers from South Carolina, Tennessee, and Massachusetts filled the first authorized black regiments. Recruitment was slow until black leaders such as Frederick Douglass encouraged black men to become soldiers to ensure eventual full citizenship. Volunteers began to respond, and in May 1863 the Government established the Bureau of Colored Troops to manage the burgeoning numbers of black soldiers.

By the end of the Civil War, roughly 179,000 black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy. Nearly 40,000 black soldiers died over the course of the war—30,000 of infection or disease. Black soldiers served in artillery and infantry and performed all noncombat support functions that sustain an army, as well. Black carpenters, chaplains, cooks, guards, laborers, nurses, scouts, spies, steamboat pilots, surgeons, and teamsters also contributed to the war cause. There were nearly 80 black commissioned officers. Black women, who could not formally join the Army, nonetheless served as nurses, spies, and scouts, the most famous being Harriet Tubman, who scouted for the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers.

Because of prejudice against them, black units were not used in combat as extensively as they might have been. Nevertheless, the soldiers served with distinction in a number of battles. Black infantrymen fought gallantly at Milliken's Bend, LA; Port Hudson, LA; Petersburg, VA; and Nashville, TN. The July 1863 assault on Fort Wagner, SC, in which the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers lost two-thirds of their officers and half of their troops, was memorably dramatized in the film *Glory*. By war's end, 16 black soldiers had been awarded the Medal of Honor for their valor.

In addition to the perils of war faced by all Civil War soldiers, black soldiers faced additional problems stemming from racial prejudice. Racial discrimination was prevalent even in the North, and discriminatory practices permeated the U.S. military. Segregated units were formed with black enlisted men and typically commanded by white officers and

# Black Union Soldiers

black noncommissioned officers. The 54th Massachusetts was commanded by Robert Shaw and the 1st South Carolina by Thomas Wentworth Higginson—both white. Black soldiers were initially paid \$10 per month from which \$3 was automatically deducted for clothing, resulting in a net pay of \$7. In contrast, white soldiers received \$13 per month from which no clothing allowance was drawn. In June 1864 Congress granted equal pay to the U.S. Colored Troops and made the action retroactive. Black soldiers received the same rations and supplies. In addition, they received comparable medical care.

The black troops, however, faced greater peril than white troops when captured by the Confederate Army. In 1863 the Confederate Congress threatened to punish severely officers of black troops and to enslave black soldiers. As a result, President Lincoln issued General Order 233, threatening reprisal on Confederate prisoners of war (POWs) for any mistreatment of black troops. Although the threat generally restrained the Confederates, black captives were typically treated more harshly than white captives. In perhaps the most heinous known example of abuse, Confederate soldiers shot to death black Union soldiers captured at the Fort Pillow, TN, in 1864. Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest (future founder of the Ku Klux Klan) witnessed the massacre and did nothing to stop it.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war>



## Music

Music plays a central role in *A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration*

**In what ways does the music change the meaning of the story?**

**What do the songs tell you about the characters that are singing them?**

**Are there any songs that your family sings during the holidays that have special meaning to you?**

**What makes those songs important?**

Music by Daryl Waters  
Musical Direction by Edd Key

### All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight

With the Union and Confederate armies encamped along both sides of the Potomac, the “pickets” or sentries were within firing range of each other as they patrolled the outside of the camps. Even if there wasn’t a major battle happening a picket soldier would sometimes be shot during the night. The newspaper at the times regularly reported headlines with war bulletins like “All Quiet Along the Potomac.” This song tells the story of the death of a sentry soldier as he is patrolling on an otherwise “quiet night.” The death isn’t important enough to be reported in the newspapers.

- The poem “The Picket Guard” was published anonymously in *Harper’s Weekly*, 1861. It was very popular and was set to music in 1864. The public response to the song was so strong that both the Union and the Confederate army officials made regulations against shooting pickets.
- Authorship of the poem has been disputed, but scholars generally agree that the original author was Ethelinda Elliot Beers, a poet from Goshen, New York.

### Silent Night

The Christmas carol “Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!” was heard for the first time in a village church in Oberndorf, Austria in 1818. Assistant pastor Father Joseph Mohr (lyrics) and the choir director Franz Xaver Gruber (music) composed the song and performed it together at the Christmas Eve mass, accompanied by Father Mohr’s guitar. Playing a guitar during Mass was rather unusual in that time period. There is lots of speculation about why that choice was made, but nobody is really sure. One legend claims that the song was a last minute composition because the church organ was broken.

- Today “Silent Night” is sung as a Christmas Carol all over the world. The tune and the lyrics have altered slightly over the years.
- It is interesting to note that “Silent Night” was composed by two men who had lived through war. The nation of Austria was heavily involved in the Napoleonic Wars from 1805-1815.

### I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) wrote the poem “Christmas Bells” on December 25, 1864. The original poem had seven stanzas and seems to have been prompted by his reflections on both the national strife of the Civil War and his family’s personal sorrow. Wadsworth’s wife died as a result of a fire in 1861. His oldest son Charles (a Union soldier) was severely wounded during the winter of 1863 and after a long, slow recovery was honorably discharged in Feb 1864.

- In 1872, John Baptiste Calkin took out the two stanzas in Longfellow’s poem that directly referenced the Civil War and set the words to music as the carol we now know as “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”

### I’m a Good Ol’ Rebel

In the book *Point Lookout Prison Camp for Confederates* (page 101), Edwin Beitzell says, “According to Herbert Quick, who printed an account of *The Good Old Rebel* in *Colliers* for April 14, 1914, its author was Major James Randolph, a Virginian and a member of General J.E.B. Stuart’s staff. Sung to the tune of Joe Bowers, a favorite of the forty-niners, it traveled beyond the Confederacy.” The lyrics of the song rail against U.S. Reconstruction policies, so it was probably written after the war.

# Music

## Follow the Drinking Gourd

*Follow the Drinking Gourd* was first published in 1928 by the Texas Folklore Society. It was "discovered" by H.B. Parks, a white amateur folklorist. Parks claims that he heard this song from three unrelated sources (N. Carolina, Kentucky and Texas) and that the meaning was explained to him by the singers. According to him, An Underground Railroad operative, known as Peg Leg Joe, moved from plantation to plantation just north of the Mobile, Alabama area working as a journeyman laborer. This work was a front for Joe's true task: teaching slaves the *Drinking Gourd* song which was coded map marking an escape route. There is a lot of speculation about Parks' reliability. It has never been proven that this song was actually a pre-Civil War folk song and there's no historical record of a Peg Leg Joe.

- In 1947, a white folk singer, Lee Hays published a version of *Drinking Gourd* with a slightly different melody and lyrics. This version was the first to add "the old man is a-waiting for to carry you to freedom." The original lyrics fitting the original tune read, "the ol' man say, follow the drinking gourd" or "the ol' man waits, follow the drinking gourd." Researcher, Joel Bresler comments that, "*The chorus now conformed to the Underground Railroad mythology of the time, where whites played a pre-eminent role and slave initiative counted for a distant second. Today one could argue that [African Americans] who made it to and past the Ohio [river] had already carried themselves to freedom and didn't need an old man to do it for them.*"
- Although *Drinking Gourd's* history as a pre-Civil war era song could be questioned, there is no doubt that it has played a significant role as an American folk song. The song flourished in the 1950's and 1960's as part of The Civil Rights Movement and the American folk revival movement. It has appeared in over 200 recordings and dozens of song books.
- Researcher, Joel Bresler proposes a theory that H.B. Parks really did hear versions of this song in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but that the song had developed as an African-American folk song *after* the Civil War—perhaps a re-telling of a journey taken north. <http://www.followthedrinkinggourd.org/index.htm>

## Marching Through Georgia

Henry Clay Work (1832-1884) was a popular song writer of his time. He composed "Marching Through Georgia" in 1865 as a tribute to Sherman's March to the Sea. It became an instant hit as a Northern victory song and was almost universally hated in the South. General Sherman himself grew to dislike the song because it was played at every public event that he attended.

- A 2015 opinion article in the New York Times gives some history about the songs of Henry Clay Work which "used the tropes of black minstrelsy" with subtle abolitionist messages in an attempt to sway Northern public opinion in favor of emancipation. The "coming of Jubilee" was a biblical reference often found in Work's song. His hit "Marching Through Georgia" initially defined Sherman's march as a crusade for freedom, but the pro-Confederate narrative that was promoted after the Civil War redefined the march as a villainous act and a Southern tragedy.

## God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

The text to this Victorian Christmas carol was first published in 1833: both tune and words are anonymous, but they may have their origins among the 16th-century Waits bands that travelled round London singing in taverns. A "wait" was an English town watchman or public musician who sounded the hours of the night. In the 15th and 16th centuries waits developed into bands of itinerant musicians who paraded the streets at night at Christmas time. From the early 16th century, London and all the chief boroughs had their corporation waits.

- Some modern singers insert a comma into the first line of this song making the carolers' greeting, "God rest ye, Merry Gentlemen." But scholars say that the original version of the carol put the comma later in the line changing the greeting to, "God rest ye merry, Gentlemen." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/3674117/The-story-behind-the-carol-God-rest-you-merry-gentlemen.html>

# Music

## What Child is This?

The lyrics of this carol are credited to a Victorian hymn writer, William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898). Dix was born in Bristol England and made his living as the manager of a marine insurance company in Glasgow. He had a gift for poetry and wrote over 40 hymns and poems during his lifetime. *The Manager Throne* was a poem he wrote in 1865. In 1871, the verses this poem were modified and set to the tune of a well-known English folk song “Greensleeves” (circa 16<sup>th</sup> century) to become the carol that we know today.

## Maryland, My Maryland

*Maryland, My Maryland* is Maryland’s official state song. The lyrics are taken from a poem written by Confederate James Ryder Randall in 1861 which called for Maryland to “throw off the tyrant chains” of the North and secede from the Union. By 1862 the words had been set to the tune of an old German folk melody (the same tune as *O Tannenbaum*) and the song rapidly became a popular Confederate anthem. The Maryland General Assembly moved to adopt *Maryland, My Maryland* as the official state song on April 29, 1939.

- Several unsuccessful attempts have been made to change Maryland’s state song, but none of the proposed bills were passed by the Maryland General Assembly. In 2016, a bill to change the lyrics of the song did get passed in the Maryland Senate, but it as of now it has not yet passed their House of Delegates. In August of 2017 (immediately following the events in Charlottesville) the University of Maryland announced that it was suspending the playing of *Maryland, My Maryland* at all U-MD sporting events, citing the need to “evaluate if [the song] is consistent with the values of our institution at this time.” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/08/28/marylands-state-song-has-pro-confederate-lyrics-now-u-md-s-marching-band-isnt-playing-it/?utm\\_term=.fd6f67451179](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/08/28/marylands-state-song-has-pro-confederate-lyrics-now-u-md-s-marching-band-isnt-playing-it/?utm_term=.fd6f67451179)

## The Holly and the Ivy

The Holly and the Ivy is a traditional British Christmas carol. No one knows its exact origin. The words and lyrics that we sing today were first published in a collection of folk-songs in 1911, but the lyrics are listed other collections of folk-songs and poems printed in the 1800s and those collections date the song from the early 1700s.

- Holly and ivy were both powerful symbols in the ancient Druid traditions in Britain. The holly was typically associated with masculinity and the ivy with femininity. As Christianity spread through Britain it was a common practice to take ancient pagan symbols like these and reinvent them into Christian symbols. Since the medieval period in Britain, the holly has been associated with Christ. It is likely that in “The Holly and the Ivy” the holly represents Jesus and the ivy represents His mother, the Virgin Mary. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Holly\\_and\\_the\\_Ivy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holly_and_the_Ivy)

## O Tannenbaum

The tune for *O Tannenbaum* is based on an older German folk melody. The first verse of the song was likely written by August Zarnack in 1820 and the second and third verses by Ernst Gebhard Anschutz in 1824 making the song a Christmas carol. Decorating a tree is a German Christmas tradition that became popular in Britain in the mid-1800s when Prince Albert introduced the custom into the royal family’s Christmas celebration. The custom was also growing in popularity in the U.S. during the later 1800s. As this German Christmas tradition spread so did this German carol about a Christmas tree. [https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns\\_and\\_Carols/Notes\\_On\\_Carols/o\\_christmas\\_tree-notes.htm](https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Notes_On_Carols/o_christmas_tree-notes.htm)

# Music

## The Liberty Ball/The Temple of Freedom

This song is set to the tune of an old British folk song. The Hutchinson Family Singers were an American family singing group who were popular in the 1840s. Jesse Hutchinson is credited with setting words to this tune to create the abolitionist song, *The Liberty Ball*. The song's title is probably a reference to a quote from Thomas Jefferson "...this ball of liberty, I believe most piously, is now so well in motion that it will roll round the globe." <http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/union/songs/hutch-exp.html>

- In the election of 1860, the lyrics of "The Liberty Ball" were modified to become a campaign song supporting Lincoln for president. The new version was called "Lincoln and Liberty Too." In the first video below, Ronnie Gilbert sings some verses from Lincoln's campaign song and some of the older abolitionist verses.

## The Yellow Rose of Texas

*The Yellow Rose of Texas* is an American folk-song. Its author is unknown, but the earliest published lyrics that we know of are from a songbook entitled, *Christy's Plantation Melodies. No. 2*, published in Philadelphia in 1853. Christy was the founder of the blackface minstrel group known as the Christy's Minstrels. The original lyrics were sung from the point of view of a black man who had been separated from his lover, a mulatto woman in Texas.

- In the 1960s, a legend began to grow around this song that linked it to Emily D. West, a free mulatto woman from the East Coast who journeyed to Texas in 1835 to work as an indentured servant on the plantation of Colonel James Morgan. According to legend, when the Mexican general Santa Ana's troops marched through Texas, the General kidnapped Emily and it was while he was 'distracted' by her that Sam Houston's troops attacked and caught Santa Ana off guard. West's kidnapping is what inspired her lover (a black man) to compose the song. <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xey01>
- Emily D. West was a real historical figure, and while there is no proof that the story about General Santa Ana is true or that this song was written about her, the song and its legend have become wide spread in Texas folk culture. In the article below, Professor Trudier Harris (University of North Carolina)—writes her own reflection on the implications of this song and its legend that both celebrates black female beauty and mourns the exploitation of the black female body. <http://www.blackpast.org/perspectives/yellow-rose-texas-ironic-origins-state-song>

## Lo, How a Rose is Blooming

This is an English translation of a 16<sup>th</sup> century German Christmas carol that was commonly found in hymnals in the 1800s. The original carol was sung in honor of the Virgin Mary—the spotless "rose" from the lineage of Jesse. Later Protestant translations of the song shifted the words so that the "rose from the lineage of Jesse" referred to Jesus. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Es\\_ist\\_ein\\_Ros\\_entsprungen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Es_ist_ein_Ros_entsprungen)

## There is a Balm in Gilead

A traditional African-American spiritual, the original author of this song is unknown. A version of the chorus is found in a hymn published in 1854, but the song itself is older. It appears that it was a popular revival hymn since a version of it was printed in the *New York Revivalist* of 1868. <https://hymnstudiesblog.wordpress.com/2009/12/19/quotthere-is-a-balm-in-gileadquot/>

- The "balm of Gilead" is a biblical reference to the prophet Jeremiah who mourned for his people: "*Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?*" (Jeremiah 8:21-22)

# POST-SHOW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*The Question:* This musical is built on the idea that Christmas brings hope, that it is a light piercing the darkness — how was that idea shown throughout the play? Can you give a modern day example?

1. What was one thing you learned about this period in American history you hadn't known before?
2. What benefits were there in making this story a musical? Were there any detractors?
3. Write about one of your favorite characters or storylines. What about it intrigued you?

# POST-SHOW REFLECTION

After the show, write a short review of the performance using the space below. Include what you liked and didn't like while identifying the main conflicts of the play and its plot structure.

# TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY

## MISSION STATEMENT

Taproot Theatre Company creates theatre experiences to brighten the spirit, engage the mind and deepen the understanding of the world around us while inspiring imagination, conversation and hope.

## ABOUT US

Taproot Theatre Company was founded in 1976 by six friends, five of them graduates from Seattle Pacific University. From its humble beginnings as a touring group, the company is now Seattle's largest mid-size theatre company. Today Taproot Theatre serves over 150,000 people annually throughout the Pacific Northwest with its Jewell Mainstage season, Isaac Studio Theatre season, Touring programs and Acting Studio.

## STAFF CONTACTS

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## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### In-School Residencies & Workshops

- From drama games to acting classes to putting on a production, Taproot Theatre's residencies can range from several weeks to months, or an entire school year. Whether during the school day or after school as an enrichment program, let Taproot's trained teaching artists introduce a whole new world to your students.
- Our theatre arts professional will visit your classroom for a workshop that will inspire and excite your students. They will develop basic acting skills and explore non-theatre curriculum using theater as a medium.

### Touring Productions

- The Road Company – performing plays for elementary and secondary schools focusing on issues such as bullying prevention, substance abuse, and friendship skills.
- Family oriented productions and improv comedy for churches, clubs, office parties and other groups.

### Camps & Classes

- Taproot Theatre Company's Acting Studio is a year-round instructional program for theatre artists of all ages and experience levels. We are devoted to the wholeness of the artist with the goal of creating a nurturing environment to help each student develop his or her unique gifts.



**NEXT ON THE JEWELL MAINSTAGE:**

**Camping with Henry and Tom**

by Mark St. Germain

Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and President Warren G. Harding have crashed in the woods of Maryland. Inspired by a real event, these titans of history must kill time without killing each other.

**February 7 at 10:30 AM**

Age Recommendation: 16+ (for language)



**COMING SOON TO THE JEWELL MAINSTAGE:**

**Crowns**

By Regina Taylor

Adapted from the book by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry

Forced to leave her home, Yolanda finds herself surrounded by a community of women that transcend place and time to infuse her with stories of faith, fortitude and pride in this gospel musical.

**April 4 at 10:30 AM**

Age Recommendation: 12+



**COMING SOON TO THE JEWELL MAINSTAGE:**

**Lady Windermere's Fan**

By Oscar Wilde

Lady Windermere suspects her husband is having an affair! As rumors swirl and secrets are revealed, the Windermere's lives are upended and threatened to end in disgrace.

**May 30 at 10:30 AM**

Age Recommendation: 12+

Contact Group Sales at 206.781.9708, email [groups@taproottheatre.org](mailto:groups@taproottheatre.org) or visit [taproottheatre.org/midweek-matinees](http://taproottheatre.org/midweek-matinees) for more information or to reserve tickets.