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Lincoln Scholars Available for Comments

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Lincoln Scholars Available for Comments

BLOOMINGTON, ILL. – With the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln approaching, several Illinois Wesleyan University scholars will be available to speak to the media. Central to the “Land of Lincoln,” Bloomington was a main stop on the president’s circuit when he was a traveling lawyer.

To speak with any of the following scholars, please contact the Illinois Wesleyan Office of University Communications, (309) 556-3181.

Robert Bray

Robert Bray has been researching Abraham Lincoln for decades. He is currently finishing a book to be titled *Reading with Lincoln*, which will explore the books Lincoln read throughout his lifetime, and the influence the literature had on his life and politics; and is the author of the award-winning *Peter Cartwright, Legendary Frontier Preacher* (University of Illinois Press, 2005), which focused on the life of Cartwright, a dynamic frontier preacher known for his scathing political battle with Lincoln.

The R. Forrest Colwell Chair of English at Illinois Wesleyan University, Bray is a member of the Abraham Lincoln Association, which works to preserve the history of Lincoln and promote his ideals. He has co-written the in-production play, *Lincoln’s in Town!*, which imagines the context of one of Lincoln’s famed “lost speeches.”

A member of the English faculty at Illinois Wesleyan for 38 years, Bray earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago. Listed among *Who’s Who in America* in 1994, Bray has served on the board of directors for the Illinois Humanities Council, and been honored with many fellowships and grants, including those from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

James Simeone

James Simeone has studied Lincoln as a politician. A professor of political science at Illinois Wesleyan, Simeone is scheduled to deliver his paper “Abraham Lincoln and the Public Lands Issue in Illinois,” at the 2009 Illinois History Symposium this March. He has written

extensively on American democracy in the 1820s to the 1850s, and can offer insight into the irony of Lincoln as a member of the Whig Party in the 1850s (which became the Republican Party), and how that strengthened him as a politician in a turbulent time. His entry on the Lincoln-Douglass debates will be published this year in the *Encyclopedia of United States Political Historical Society*. He is also the author *The Bottomland Republic: Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

A member of the Illinois Wesleyan faculty since 1992, Simeone has a doctorate from the University of Chicago. He was the former editor of the *Illinois Political Science Review*, a member of the Society of Historians of the Early Republic and the American Political Science Association.

Robert S. Eckley

Retired Illinois Wesleyan University President Robert S. Eckley is continuing his scholarship on Lincoln and his connection to the Bloomington area. The recipient of the Logan Hay Award – the highest honor from the Abraham Lincoln Association (ALA) – Eckley is completing his book on Leonard Swett, a Bloomington lawyer who was a friend and colleague of Abraham Lincoln.

An economist who received a doctorate from Harvard University, Eckley served as president of Illinois Wesleyan from 1968 to 1986, and is currently an emeritus member of the Illinois Wesleyan Board of Trustees. He was awarded an honorary Illinois Wesleyan degree of humane letters in 1988. After his retirement, Eckley was a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.

For more information, please contact the Illinois Wesleyan Office of University Communications, (309) 556-3181.