

## Lincoln's Greatest Journey: Sixteen Days that Changed a Presidency, March 24 - April 8, 1865

**Noah Andre Trudeau**

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With thousands of works published on Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, history buffs and “ordinary” readers alike would be forgiven for thinking there’s nothing new under the sun in this area. Enter veteran Civil War historian Noah Andre Trudeau, who in his new book, *Lincoln’s Greatest Journey*, focuses on a little-known episode in this great man’s stormy and tragic presidency.

In the spring of 1865, President Lincoln traveled to City Point, Virginia, at the invitation of General Grant. Partly to get a clearer idea of the war effort in the waning days of the Confederacy, but also to escape the almost unimaginable stress the war had brought to him and his administration, Lincoln spent sixteen days close to the theater of battle, many with the general.

As Trudeau vividly demonstrates, Lincoln emerged from this experience with an acceptance of past mistakes and a renewed focus on the immediate, postwar future. While conducting little in the way of administrative duties, Lincoln “came to understand the fears and uncertainties of a defeated society [and] reset his internal compass to begin to lead the country out of the storm.”

Trudeau’s deep knowledge shines throughout the book as he unearths new information concerning Lincoln’s war-weary state of mind. Drawing on a wealth of primary sources, including a 1910 memoir by Captain John S. Barnes, commander of the escort vessel USS *Bat*, Trudeau captures in compelling detail how this trip led Lincoln toward “an amazing, remarkable transformation whose possibilities would soon be submerged in the turbulent waters of assassination, national vengeance, and a power struggle between branches of government over the nation’s future direction.”

*Lincoln’s Greatest Journey* proves yet again that, more than 150 years later, we have yet to fully understand all the dimensions of the life and thinking of America’s greatest statesman.

LEE POLEVOI (Fall 2016)

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