

Burlingame named to UIS Lincoln Studies post

By **PETE SHERMAN**

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted May 26, 2009 @ 11:30 PM

Last update May 27, 2009 @ 11:10 AM

Abraham Lincoln scholar Michael Burlingame, whose new two-volume biography of Lincoln is considered one of the most definitive to date, is joining the faculty of the University of Illinois at Springfield this fall.

Burlingame, 67, has been named the Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at UIS. He replaces Phillip Paludan, who died in 2007.

The appointment was reported internally at UIS Tuesday. The school will formally announce Burlingame's hiring today.

"Having Michael here in Springfield further enhances the university's claim of being a force in Lincoln studies," said state historian Tom Schwartz at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. "There's no denying he's made major contributions to the field."

"Professor Burlingame has outlined an ambitious research agenda, including a new look at Lincoln and the Civil War, as well as several editorial projects," said UIS Chancellor Richard Ringeisen in a news release. "His presence at this university will strengthen our academic prowess and hasten our efforts to become one of the best small public liberal arts universities in the nation."

Burlingame retired from Connecticut College several years ago to work on the Lincoln biography, which ultimately came in at 2,000 pages.

Burlingame was at the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College in Galesburg in October when he heard about the search to replace Paludan at UIS.

"I retired in 2001 not because I was disenchanted with teaching. I just needed to get the book done," Burlingame said. "A fellow who was aware of the Lynn chair suggested I'd be the ideal candidate."

Burlingame, who will be a full professor in UIS's history department, will receive an annual salary of \$100,000 under a five-year renewable contract, according to UIS spokeswoman Cheryl Peck. The figure includes a \$25,000 increment for serving as the Lynn chair.

Burlingame will receive an additional \$30,000 for research-related needs, including travel, organizing symposiums, hiring research assistants and for library purchases.

Burlingame said he will teach one class per semester at UIS. However, because he's scheduled through the end of this year with speaking engagements, he'll double up with two classes when he begins teaching at UIS during the spring semester.

Like Paludan, Burlingame will sponsor an annual Lincoln symposium that coincides with the anniversary of Lincoln's death in April.

"My plan is to offer a (graduate-level) seminar on Lincoln and a survey of the Civil War and Reconstruction," Burlingame said.

While at Connecticut College, Burlingame taught a course on the writer Eugene O'Neill in O'Neill's summer cottage in New London. Burlingame said he'd like to do something similar here by holding a class at the historic Iles House, a block south of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site.

Among the research projects Burlingame plans to pursue in Springfield is a book about Lincoln's newspaper writings. Burlingame said he believes Lincoln wrote at least 200 editorials, many anonymously or pseudonymously, for such publications as the Illinois State Journal, a predecessor to The State Journal-Register.

Burlingame also is hunting down long-forgotten source material about Lincoln in 19th-century newspapers and in unpublished notes of earlier Lincoln biographers.

"Most historians who write about Lincoln quote the New York newspapers. But people would meet with Lincoln and then report back to their hometown papers," he said. "There's just an endless amount of material. Springfield is the ideal place to do research."

Burlingame also is known for taking more of a psychological look at the 16th president and is among several historians who tend to be critical about Lincoln's wife Mary. However, in his new biography, Burlingame said, he was a little more sympathetic toward her.

Schwartz said Burlingame will carry on in the tradition of Paludan, also a respected historian who was the first person to hold the Lynn chair.

"One of Phillip Paludan's quips to his students was 'Don't believe everything you think.' I think Michael will be carrying on in that tradition, challenging students' preconceived ideas about Lincoln and the Civil War era," Schwartz said. "Given UIS and its audience, Michael has that kind of personality that works well with students. He's a funny guy, an engaging speaker and very challenging."

Burlingame said he plans to move to Springfield in August and will rent an apartment downtown, near the Lincoln library and museum.

Pete Sherman can be reached at 788-1539.

Michael Burlingame

Age: 67

Education: Bachelor's degree, Princeton, 1964; doctorate, Johns Hopkins, 1971

Career: History professor, Connecticut College, 1968-2001 (retired); Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at UIS beginning this fall.

Books: "Abraham Lincoln: A Life," 2 volumes, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008; "The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln," University of Illinois Press, 1994; editor of numerous historical volumes.

Other honors: Non-resident fellow, The Lehrman Institute, 2001-2007; Woodrow Wilson Fellow, 1964-65; Fulbright Scholar, 1966-67; Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellow, 1967-68.

Website: www.michaelburlingame.com

The Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies

The chair was established in 2000 when Richard Vaden and his family donated \$1.25 million to UIS in honor of then-chancellor Naomi Lynn and her husband Robert. Lynn retired in 2001 after 10 years as chancellor.

Phillip Paludan was the first historian to hold the chair, from 2001 to his death in 2007. Michael Burlingame is the second.

Copyright © 2009 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons license, except where noted.