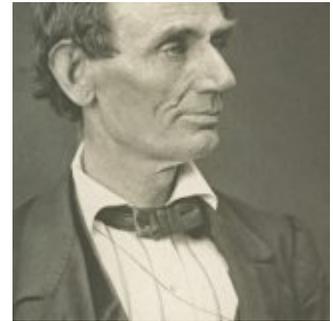




**Harold Holzer.** *Abraham Lincoln Portrayed in the Collections of the Indiana Historical Society.* Catalog of collections compiled by Emily Castle and Barbara Quigley. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2006. x + 253 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87195-201-1.

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## Lincoln the Icon

This handsome volume is one of the first of what will likely be many books published on specific Lincoln collections in the years surrounding the 2009 bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth. A few years ago, the Indiana Historical Society held a relatively small number of Lincoln manuscripts and images. The Society's simultaneous acquisition of the Jack L. Smith Lincoln Graphics Collection and the Daniel R. Weinberg Lincoln Conspirators Collection in 2003 dramatically expanded its Lincoln materials. This volume offers brief descriptions of each item in these two collections as well as the Society's other Lincoln manuscript and visual holdings.

Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art draws on his own extensive research on Lincoln images to provide an excellent introduction to the significance of popular prints in nineteenth-century politics. Holzer makes a convincing case for the importance of mass-produced prints to the 1860 campaign. These prints introduced the nation to the relatively unknown lawyer from Illinois who became the sixteenth president. He also explains the chaos that ensued for printmakers when President-elect Lincoln decided to grow a beard and provides humorous examples of beards imposed on earlier campaign images. Finally, Holzer asserts that, "in the end, nothing Lincoln did in life ever inspired—or financially benefited—American printmakers more than his death" (p. 38). Lincoln's assassination in 1865 created an unprecedented opportunity for printmakers to create images that commemorated the mar-

tyred president.

The Jack L. Smith Lincoln Graphics Collection consists of 685 graphical items and an additional 67 statues, plaques, and busts. Smith, a businessman from South Bend, Indiana, began collecting Lincoln images in 1959, eventually compiling the "largest, deepest, most diverse and beautiful private collection in the world," according to Daniel Weinberg (p. viii). Holzer characterizes Smith's extensive collection of lithographs, engravings, photographs, and other prints as "one of the best and most comprehensive collections of Lincoln iconography in existence" (p. 3). Descriptions of the items in this collection fill more than half of the book. Color images of more than 125 of the items are interspersed among the descriptive entries.

The Daniel R. Weinberg Lincoln Conspirators Collection consists of rare photographs, newspapers, artifacts, and prints related to the apprehension, trial, and execution of conspirators in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the attempted assassination of Secretary of State William H. Seward. The collection also includes books and pamphlets about the assassination and its aftermath. Weinberg is the owner of the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop in Chicago and has bought and sold historical manuscripts and artifacts since 1971.

The Indiana Historical Society also acquired in 2003 an original glass plate negative of a photograph of Abraham Lincoln. Alexander Gardner took the photograph at

his studio in Washington, D.C. in November 1863, a few days before Lincoln delivered his address on the dedication of a cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It is an iconic image of Lincoln looking directly at the camera. The heavy lines in his face are clearly visible, and Daniel Chester French used the image as the model for his sculpture in the Lincoln Memorial.

Unfortunately, several significant factual errors appear in the item descriptions that more thorough research could have avoided. For example, a photograph of mourners outside the Cook County Courthouse in Chicago, Illinois, on pp. 113 and 115 is misidentified as the state capitol building in Springfield, Illinois. The error is due in part to a note on the back of the photograph that declares that the building is the “Old State House” in Springfield, but a brief examination of one of the books on Lincoln’s long funeral procession would have revealed the error.

The identification of H. W. Fay as the “artist” for a photograph of Lincoln is also perplexing. Herbert Wells Fay was born in 1859 and served from 1921 to 1948 as the custodian of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois. Fay collected thousands of historical photographs, and he apparently copyrighted a photograph of Lincoln in 1894. The original photograph, however, was taken by photographer Christopher S. German in Springfield on January 13, 1861, when Fay was not quite two years old. The description of the portrait acknowledges that German took the photograph, but it calls into question the catalogers’ definition of “artist,” which is not explained.

The final section describes a few dozen Lincoln-related images and approximately one hundred manuscript items by, to, and about Lincoln in the collections of the Indiana Historical Society. Among the manuscript documents written by Lincoln is a “Bill to Foreclose Mortgage” in the case of *Trotter v. Thomas*. The entry for this document declares that “The document speaks of the case involving an Illinois circuit court’s orator, George Trotter. Jesse B. Thomas Jr. is the defendant to the bill of clemency who had two promissory notes in writing” (p. 242). This entry unfortunately fails to understand the nineteenth-century legal system. George Trotter is simply the plaintiff who is trying to recover the debt Thomas owed him on two promissory notes by

foreclosing on a mortgage that secured the promissory notes. The type of legal action is a “bill in chancery,” not a “bill of clemency,” and the case took place in the Sangamon County Circuit Court in 1840. Lincoln won this case for his client Trotter, who received a judgment of \$792.75. All of this information is available through the publications of the Lincoln Legal Papers.

Although *Abraham Lincoln Portrayed in the Collections of the Indiana Historical Society* offers a comprehensive listing of the items in the Society’s collections, the purpose and audience of this volume remains somewhat puzzling. There are illustrations of less than 20 percent of the items from the Jack Smith Collection and even fewer from the other collections. All of the images and their descriptions from the Smith and Weinberg collections are available for research through an online database at [http://www.indianahistory.org/library/digital\\_image/digitalpics.html](http://www.indianahistory.org/library/digital_image/digitalpics.html). Serious researchers are more likely to use that resource. Although Holzer’s introduction provides an excellent overview of the political and commemorative importance of prints in the nineteenth century, students of these topics can find Holzer’s observations in print elsewhere in several books and articles. Finally, without the illustrations, the entries themselves read much like a card catalog, with information about the artist and publisher and a brief description of the image.

As other institutions plan publications based on their Lincoln collections, they should consider the successes and shortcomings of this volume. The strength of this volume is that it brings together brief descriptions of more than one thousand items in the collections of the Indiana Historical Society that relate to Abraham Lincoln. Full-page illustrations grace several pages, but perhaps smaller images of all of the items would have served the researcher better. More careful research about both prints and manuscripts and a clear explanation of terms could have eliminated unnecessary errors and confusion. An index to artists, photographers, subjects, and names would enhance the utility of the volume as a reference work. As a coffee table sampler of the visual riches of the Smith Collection, this book largely succeeds, but it leaves much to be desired as a reference guide to the riches housed in the Indiana Historical Society’s collections.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-indiana>

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