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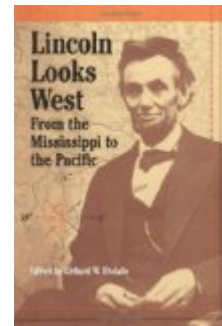
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Richard W. Etulain, ed. *Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010. xi + 262 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8093-2961-8.

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Area of Opportunity

Lincoln Looks West, edited by Richard W. Etulain, rediscovers Abraham Lincoln's relationships with persons and places west of the Mississippi. The introductory essay and nine contributions are based on original research—with six essays being previously published—and examine an infrequently explored dimension of Lincoln's political career: the history of his ties to the American West. The individual contributions, all from historians, address Lincoln's career as an Illinois congressman and his opposition to the Mexican War of 1846 (chap. 1), his relationship with the Whigs and the antislavery politics of the 1850s (chap. 2), and his longstanding friendship with the pugnacious and politically ambitious Dr. Anson Henry (chap. 7). They study Lincoln and his patronage in the U.S. territories as a whole (chap. 4) and in the New Mexico (chap. 5) and Washington (chap. 6) territories in particular. And they examine his views with respect to the admission of Nevada as a state and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment (chap. 3), to his relationships with the Mormons (chap. 8) and with different Indians (chap. 9).

Etulain's introductory essay offers a helpful and persuasive overview of the relationship between Lincoln's political career and the many facets of the trans-Mississippi West. Etulain describes three phases of Lincoln's connections with the West. The first consists of Lincoln the lawyer and young politician, who at once supported Whig policies with respect to internal improvements and avoided defining himself as a man of the West, since being a westerner carried ambivalent mean-

ing for Lincoln. The second phase is of Lincoln as a congressman who opposed the westward expansion of slavery, but who was also a staunch advocate of internal improvements, consistent with his membership in the Whig Party and his support of nation-building. So Lincoln supported the Wilmot Proviso against the expansion of slavery in the newly acquired Mexican Cession, but voted against a congressional resolution that would have prevented the United States from changing its borders after the Mexican War. In the third phase of Lincoln's relationship with the West, as U.S. president, he pushed for the construction of the transcontinental railroad, the passage of the Homestead Act, the establishment of land-grant colleges for agricultural education, and (ultimately unsuccessful) Civil War military campaigns in Texas and New Mexico Territory. As president, Lincoln also appointed officials to governing positions in the eleven western territories and had to settle difficult issues with Mormons and Indians alike. Since the four most important aspects of western development associated with Lincoln—the transcontinental railroad, the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land Grant College Act, and the role of the West during the Civil War—do not get stand-alone chapters in *Lincoln Looks West*, the editor commendably integrates these topics into his introduction. Etulain's bibliographic essay, which concludes the volume, provides the reader with further sources for scholarship on Lincoln and the West.

Mark E. Neely Jr.'s chapter, "Lincoln and the Mexican War: An Argument by Analogy," reexamines the young

congressman's opposition to the Mexican War and explores how Whigs in neighboring Indiana voted, Caleb B. Smith, Richard W. Thompson, Elisha Embree, and George C. Dunn, in particular. Whereas Smith and Thompson both opposed the war and came from safe Whig districts, Embree and Dunn, who were both not from safe Whig districts, initially danced around the issue and only later came out to condemn the war unequivocally. Lincoln, who was also not from a safe district, followed a similar path. He did not weigh in on the annexation of Texas, did not cast aspersions on President James Knox Polk's motives for going for war, and did not publicly express anti-expansionist sentiments until the fall of 1848 and then only before a (highly partisan) Massachusetts audience. Embree, Dunn, and Lincoln would later all vote against the resolution that the United States not add new territory as a result of the Mexican War. Neely, in short, shows how Lincoln's behavior as a congressman with respect to U.S. expansion in the 1840s was, for a western Whig, hardly an aberration.

In "Lincoln, the West, and the Antislavery Politics of the 1850s," Michael S. Green traces the evolution of Lincoln's thought in the next period of his life, during the six years between leaving Congress and running for the presidency. Green finds that Lincoln, repeatedly prodded by events over those years such as the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Dred Scott* decision, his own debates with Stephen Douglas for the Illinois Senate seat, and the continued waffling of Republican Party leaders as the crisis worsened, became more and more outspoken in his views against the expansion of slavery in the territories. And as Lincoln became more assured in and more public with his views, so did his political ambitions rise for himself, the Republican Party, and the United States.

Earl S. Pomeroy, in a contribution first published in 1943, "Lincoln, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Admission of Nevada," complicates the narrative that Lincoln wanted to admit Nevada as a state in 1864 so as to ensure the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in Congress. The writer Charles Anderson Dana, assistant secretary of war in the Lincoln administration and later editor of the *New York Sun*, promoted this narrative of Nevada's admission in a story he wrote for *McClure's* in 1898. But Pomeroy shows not only that Dana almost certainly mixed up the years in his article (1864 and 1865), but also that Lincoln was not as strong an advocate of Nevada's admission as a state as we have been led to think. Lincoln was similarly equivocal with respect to the initiatives at the time to admit Nebraska (later admitted in 1867) and Colorado (eventually admitted in 1876),

given the mixed motives and internal divisions that characterized the Republicans in Congress.

Vincent G. Tegeder's contribution, "Lincoln and the Territorial Patronage: The Ascendancy of Radicals in the West," reviews President Lincoln's Republican appointees to the territories: governors, judges, and surveyors general, or, if the portfolio of the office included territorial responsibilities, cabinet positions. Most of Lincoln's appointees were Radical Republicans, who battled Moderates over the slavery question (or over "antislavery" positions, more accurately), the railroads, mining and other commercial issues, and other policy questions. Tegeder shows how the Radicals gained the upper hand in the territories, with Lincoln's appointment of "favorable governors in every one of the territories" (p. 131). These persons were thereby well positioned to promote Republican political and economic goals in the territories and new states for years to come.

Deren Earl Kellogg, in "Lincoln's New Mexico Patronage: Saving the Far Southwest for the Union," argues convincingly that the history of Lincoln's appointees to the New Mexico Territory of New Mexico, Arizona, and the 1853 Gadsden Purchase (the area west of the Rio Grande River, east of the Colorado River, and south of the Gila River) constituted an exception to his Republican record of territorial appointments. Indeed, the appointment of a Democrat, Dr. Henry Connelly, as governor; of Miguel Antonio Otero, who was identified with the Democrats, as territorial secretary (the second highest territorial official); and of the Democrat Kirby Benedict as the chief justice of the territorial supreme court, among others, revealed Lincoln's sensitivity to the unique conditions of New Mexico. The territory had a miniscule proportion of English-speaking whites out of a total non-Indian population of fifty-seven thousand; its own officials and leaders were sympathetic to slavery and the South; it was the only territory outside of Indian Country that bordered a seceding state; and President Jefferson Davis was apparently interested in extending the Confederacy's influence in New Mexico and the Far Southwest. In view of these complicating factors, Lincoln sought to appoint officials acceptable to the residents of New Mexico so long as they were clearly Union men, despite the resistance of Radical Republicans (who succeeded in rejecting Otero's appointment). The overall record of Lincoln's patronage in New Mexico reveals that it most resembled the pattern of patronage in the border states rather than that of the other western territories, such as Colorado Territory. Kellogg suggests that Lincoln was more attentive to and far shrewder with respect

to New Mexico Territory than most historians have appreciated.

In contrast, Washington Territory was in no danger of joining the South or supporting slavery, and far removed from any real or anticipated Civil War campaigns. In “The Tribe of Abraham: Lincoln and the Washington Territory,” Robert W. Johannsen shows how President Lincoln, free of the constraints that bound him in New Mexico, could reward his political friends with endorsements and appointments irrespective of the wishes of the Washington residents or of conflicts between the local politicians and Lincoln’s “imported” men (p. 165). Lincoln endorsed his close friend Edward D. Baker to be the senator from Oregon (admitted as a state in 1859), although Baker, a Republican, had to support popular sovereignty—anathema to Lincoln—to get elected. As Lincoln’s close friend and senator from Oregon, Baker almost certainly influenced Lincoln’s choice of other officials appointed to the Pacific Northwest, among them Dr. Anson Henry, Lincoln’s personal physician from Springfield and perhaps closest friend, as surveyor general, and William H. Wallace, as governor of Washington. Not only did the locals object to Lincoln’s “tribe” (p. 165), as they called these men, but Henry also succeeded in creating a new territory, encompassing several mining areas, out of areas of eastern Washington (Idaho Territory), where Wallace took over as governor and Henry’s son-in-law was appointed to the territorial supreme court. Lincoln’s oversight of Washington Territory and patronage scarcely differed from that of his predecessors, Johannsen finds, even though local residents had expected a lot more from their president.

Paul M. Zall profiles Henry in “Dr. Anson G. Henry (1804-1865): Lincoln’s Junkyard Dog,” where he writes of the long, close history between the two men and between Henry and Mary Todd. (Henry died just months after Lincoln, in July 1865.) Zall discloses that Henry medicated Lincoln for his depression with “large doses of brandy” and narcotics (p. 178). In turn, Henry, who could not earn enough from his physician’s income to support his wife and five children, repeatedly turned to Lincoln for help. Henry took his family out to Oregon, and once there, Lincoln appointed him surveyor general in Washington Territory. Thanks to his close relationship with the president, Henry became firmly established in Washington Territory. As Lincoln’s man on the ground in the Pacific Northwest, the ever-outspoken and politically minded Henry (who at one point caned the editor of the *Puget Sound Herald*) was in a position to help Republicans organize and to serve Republican interests in

the region.

Lincoln’s longstanding relationship with the Mormons represented an entirely different administrative style on the part of President Lincoln, as Larry Schweikart points out in “The Mormon Connection: Lincoln, the Saints, and the Crisis of Equality.” Rather than appointing close friends or political allies as Utah territorial officials, Lincoln appointed Republicans with whom he was less acquainted to be governors and judges. When the Mormons protested his appointments, moreover, Lincoln backed down. He recalled one of his appointed Utah governors, Stephen S. Harding, and one of the judges. Instead of trying to assert the power of the U.S. government through his territorial appointees and the federal army—given Lincoln’s long and often difficult dealings with the Mormons, dating back to when the Latter-Day Saints were in Nauvoo, Illinois, under Joseph Smith—Lincoln accepted Brigham Young’s leadership. As Lincoln told Young via an intermediary, “if he will let me alone, I will let him alone” (p. 197). Lincoln thus accepted the theocratic rule of the Latter-Day Saints in Utah as well as the corollary that the Mormon doctrine would be determined by the revelations of the church president—whatever the religious, social, and political consequences might be. Schweikart points out that whereas the Mormons believed in equality among the faithful, they accepted the master-servant relationship and slavery, which led them to sympathize with the South. And whereas President Lincoln rejected popular sovereignty and the primacy of states’ rights, he accepted the authority of Young and Mormon hierarchy in Utah.

President Lincoln’s relationship with the Indians further displayed the practicality and flexibility of the mature politician. David A. Nichols, in “Lincoln and the Indians,” reviews two arenas of conflict between Lincoln and the Indians: whether the U.S. government should retake Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) during the Civil War and how the Lincoln U.S. government should respond to the Sioux uprising in Minnesota. But for some time Lincoln was unable to settle a dispute over who was to lead the “Lane Expedition,” named for Senator James H. Lane of Kansas, to march down from Kansas and retake Indian Territory from the Confederacy. He also avoided making a firm decision on the controversy over whether or not the Lane Expedition should include Indian troops. Lincoln eventually capitulated to his friend Senator Lane and others in Kansas by removing five thousand Indians from their titled property on choice lands in the state and relocating them to Indian Territory. In Minnesota, the Sioux War of August 1862 went

very poorly for the whites at first, given the Indians' strength. The small number of U.S. troops in the territory were unable to prevent the deaths of many dozens of settlers and the flight of thousands of residents from their homes. Worse, Lincoln and his advisers feared a plot linking the Confederate insurrection with the Indian attacks. When U.S. forces finally prevailed, Lincoln had to decide what to do with the hundreds of Indian prisoners, many of whom were charged with "horrible outrages" and to be executed (p. 215). After a careful review of the Indians' files, Lincoln condemned to death just 39 of the 303 Sioux who had been sentenced. But to placate the many angry Minnesotans, he surrendered the Sioux lands, kept the remaining Indians imprisoned, and relocated the Winnebagos—thereby ceding their lands as well—even though the Winnebagos had nothing to do with the war. Lincoln went so far as to compensate Minnesota for the costs of the war and pay damages in excess of 1.3 million dollars. Nichols shows that as much as Lincoln wanted to reform Indian affairs, at the end of the day the president could do little to counter the pressures from Congress, from territorial citizens and persons in the states, and from commercial interests. He was unable to stop the tragedy that was U.S. Indian policy throughout most of the nineteenth century.

In sum—and the above descriptions offer only a brief guide to the content of each chapter—*Lincoln Looks West* has something to offer specialists and nonspecialists alike. If Lincoln turned away from the West as his political fortunes rose—away from the log cabin, away from Illinois, away from the regional interests of the West, and toward Washington DC, the East, and the North—the several essays and Etulain's introduction make it apparent that Lincoln as a congressman, politician, and president could not avoid the West. Taken as a whole, however, the volume falls a little short of its promise "to sketch out the full dimensions of [Lincoln's] connections with the trans-Mississippi American West" (p. ix). *Lincoln Looks West* neglects to examine several key western issues of the time. What was Lincoln's position on whether or not Congress and the courts should honor Hispanic land titles, which were supposed to be fully recognized under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, for instance? Or, what was Lincoln's position on the vast amounts of land that Congress, per the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, granted to the railroads as incentives to build their transcontinental routes? If Lincoln did not favor the railroads as much as Senator Stephen Douglas, what was his position? And why did the people of the territories and new states turn to the Republican

Party, Lincoln, and his allies—if with varying degrees of enthusiasm—given the historic ties of the West with the Democratic Party and the distance between most of the western states and territories and the South? Was it just because of Lincoln's Radical Republican appointees, or were there other factors?

Several essays contain passages that suggest the presence of the shortfall between the "sketching out the full dimensions" of Lincoln's relationship to the West and what the chapters actually deliver. For the introductory essay to conclude that "Lincoln's links with the West ... reveal a good deal about our greatest president and our largest region," and that "among Lincoln's many designations, he deserves to be known as a Man of the West," seems like small beer after nearly sixty pages of text (p. 58). Neely's observation that Lincoln's constituents "simply had not heard" his speeches in Congress opposing the Mexican War similarly reminds us that Lincoln was not much of a westerner (p. 87). Likewise, Kellogg comments mildly that "it would certainly be difficult to argue against the prevailing notion that the federal government assigned relatively little importance to New Mexico in 1861" (p. 149). Johanssen, too, observes that not only was "Lincoln's disposal of the patronage in Washington ... not one of his finer hours," but also the citizens of Washington thought that Lincoln "hardly differed from Franklin Pierce, under whom the territory had been organized" (p. 171). And Schweikart's and Nichols's chapters further suggest that Lincoln did not exert special leadership of any kind with respect to Utah or the Indians; rather, the volume's last two chapters suggest that Lincoln was a shrewd, conscientious, and distracted politician who had neither the opportunity nor the wherewithal to make a significant difference.

Nonetheless, Lincoln's actions as politician and president clearly concerned the predominant issues of the mid-nineteenth-century American West: the expansion of slavery west of the Mississippi and the resulting Civil War; the geographical growth of the United States with the settlement of the boundary with Britain in the Pacific Northwest and the acquisition of almost half of the United States of Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo; the organization of new territories and the annexation of new states into the Union; the development of the transcontinental railroad and, as a result, the rise of a single, national market within a rapidly industrializing America; and the rise and subsequent dominance of the Republican Party. Notwithstanding Lincoln's rejection of the idea of "manifest destiny," Lincoln directly facilitated the development of what John Marshall termed

the “great American empire” and Thomas Jefferson called the “empire of liberty.” The Union that Lincoln saved was very much composed of the West and the South and the North. And to their credit, the contributions in *Lincoln Looks West* provide the reader with insightful per-

spectives of the rich and varied terrain of the West as it relates to Lincoln and the dominant issues of the mid-nineteenth-century United States, terrain that merits further attention.

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