

Charles B. Strozier. *Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln: The Enduring Friendship of Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. xxv + 307 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-17132-8.

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Abraham Lincoln remains one of the most analyzed figures in American history. Most analyses focus on various aspects of Lincoln's presidency, including his support of the colonization movement. Charles B. Strozier, with the assistance of Wayne Soini, provides a refreshing and captivating historical analysis of Lincoln's life long before his ascendance to the national political stage. Instead, Strozier's primary focus is on both the private and public relationship between Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed. Soini and Strozier's analysis illustrates how Lincoln and Speed's antebellum connection shaped the future president.

To be clear, *Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln* is not a biography but an investigation of the link between these men during their formative years. It also examines the various individuals that they interacted with as young men. Included in that social network was William Herndon, an associate and later self-appointed Lincoln biographer. Herndon plays a vital role in Strozier's study, given his preoccupation with Lincoln's sexuality. His biography suggested that Lincoln had possibly contracted syphilis from a prostitute and noted that he shared a bed regularly with Speed, something Lincoln also did with other men. For Herndon, those scintillating tales were facts, but Strozier urges readers to remain cautious about accept-

ing Herndon's stories. Strozier states, "anything Herndon writes about Lincoln before his direct experience with him is open to question" (p. xii). Some modern Americans, including AIDS activist and playwright Larry Kramer, chose to take Herndon's work at face value and wrote about Speed and Lincoln's sexual intimacies in graphic detail. Kramer's claims frustrate Strozier since there is little evidence to bolster them. Strozier argues that Speed and Lincoln were close friends sharing intimate correspondences and living spaces but that this was typical for the time.

By applying a combined approach of historical and psychoanalytical methods, Strozier provides a detailed study of white masculinity and the partisan politics of prominent Americans, slaveholders and nonslaveholders, before and during the Civil War. Strozier accomplishes this by relying on numerous personal correspondences, census data, and testimony to shed light on the antebellum life of Abraham Lincoln. In many ways, Speed helped Lincoln to understand manhood as both men navigated their lives together. Speed even shared details of the consummation of his marriage to Fanny Henning after Lincoln prodded him for specifics. When Lincoln dealt with depression over the sudden death of his first fiancée, Ann Rutledge, or his failed first

engagement to Mary Ann Todd, it was Speed who emotionally supported his friend. Both men, as Strozier repeatedly states, needed each other as these bachelors sought to establish relationships with women.

Speed's influence on Lincoln's life also included nurturing his friend's intellectual endeavors and political pursuits. Speed's store in Springfield, Illinois, became a de facto political training ground as young men, including Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, sparred over local and national issues before becoming politicians. Speed remained important to Lincoln, even though Speed continued to own slaves. The president hoped that appointing Speed to a cabinet position might dissuade Kentucky, Speed's home state, from leaving the Union. Lincoln even sent an early draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to Speed for his opinion before sharing it with his cabinet. Thus, Speed was more than just a friend; he nurtured Lincoln's talents and helped the president with Civil War policies.

Strozier's monograph is a valuable resource for those seeking to understand the complexity of Abraham Lincoln, not only as a president but as a man. For historians, this work not only provides a study of white masculinity but expertly explores Lincoln's life before he became president. As Strozier makes clear, the Abraham Lincoln who appeared in Illinois in 1858 to debate Stephen Douglas was not entirely a self-made man. Instead, he benefited from a relationship with Joshua Speed, his friend and confidant, who was integral in molding Lincoln. Strozier's clearly written prose and, at times, attention to salacious topics will grab the attention of non-academics. In short, *Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln* is a must-read for Civil War scholars and enthusiasts.

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