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Past scholars have tended to focus on Abraham Lincoln's racial attitudes toward African Americans in terms of slavery and emancipation. While some have examined Lincoln's well-known encounters with Native Americans, such as the 1832 Black Hawk War, in *Lincoln and Native Americans* Michael S. Green also investigates how his early years and his family's experiences before his birth influenced his actions and attitudes toward indigenous peoples. Lincoln's thoughts and actions toward Native Americans, Green argues, should be viewed in the context of his time, and to do otherwise would be unjust. This book covers two centuries of the Lincoln family's history with Native Americans, from the arrival of Lincoln's colonial ancestors, through his consequential life, to the aftermath of the Civil War.

Green, a historian of the American West and nineteenth-century politics, compellingly argues that Lincoln's association with Native Americans was complicated, and he tells his story both topically and chronologically. The first three chapters move chronologically through the interactions that Lincoln, his ancestors, reformers, and policymakers had with Native Americans, with a focus on how they shaped or reflected Lincoln's views concerning America's Native peoples. The concluding three chapters examine the significant issues involving Native Americans during Lincoln's presidency.

Readers quickly understand that Lincoln's contradictions in thoughts and actions toward Native Americans persisted throughout his life. Green explains that the Shawnee killed Lincoln's grandfather and tried to kidnap his father while the two were working to clear the family farm. This event greatly changed the trajectory of his ancestors' lives, and Green contends it could have caused Lincoln to develop a deep-seated hatred toward Native Americans. However, Lincoln did not demonstrate the animosity toward Native Americans prevalent among most white citizens of his day. Although Lincoln did not see any combat in the Black Hawk War, he nevertheless benefited from his military service by developing a promising political network. Green argues that as Lincoln became more involved in politics after the Black Hawk War, his mindset toward Native American issues tended to be one of indifference as well as political concern. For example, Green points out that the California Indians experienced a genocide during Lincoln's presidency that resulted from the president's unwillingness or inability to persuade Californians to support Native American reforms and congregating them on reservations. Yet, when he could have been anti-Indian, Green argues, Lincoln chose to eschew opportunit-
ies to overtly sway political favor his way by expressing negative thoughts concerning Native Americans. However, he did use the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an easy means to award supporters and thus continued the corrupt practice of previous administrations. In ending this section, Green analyzes Lincoln’s attitudes and efforts that affected any measures of enacting law and transforming the Bureau of Indian Affairs that would positively influence Native American lives. For example, Green offers such insights as Lincoln cautiously supporting Native American policy reform by offering it for consideration in his 1862 annual message to Congress but taking no further measures to ensure Congress considered his proposal. Instead, Green states that Lincoln showed disregard for Native Americans by prioritizing his Reconstruction plan over a more wholehearted focus on policy reform that would improve Native American lives.

After establishing Lincoln’s pattern of inconsistencies in thoughts and actions concerning Native Americans, Green highlights specific Native American issues that arose during Lincoln’s presidency. One problem the president encountered was what to do with Native American refugees in Kansas who suffered from starvation and the cold as the United States and the Confederacy fought over Indian Territory during the Civil War. Green explains that Lincoln tended to encourage others to act before he intervened, and he actively tried to avoid getting involved in local disagreements like the refugee crisis. However, Lincoln did eventually try to help the refugees by authorizing an expedition to offer aid. Green argues that Lincoln’s handling of the 1862 Dakota Uprising is subject to debate. Nearly three hundred Dakota men stood trial after the conflict, and against the wishes of Minnesotans and fellow Republicans who wanted more executions, Lincoln commuted 264 Dakota and sentenced 38 based on the facts presented to him. This action proved to be both the largest commutation and largest execution in American history. Green further explains that Lincoln sought to advance the Republican free labor ideology, and therefore, acquiring control over western lands proved vital to him. With officials often ignoring Lincoln’s orders regarding Native American affairs, this led to such tragedies as the Sand Creek Massacre, an event eloquently described in Ari Kelman’s *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (2013).

A respected scholar of nineteenth-century politics, Green exhibits deep passion for uncovering Lincoln’s thoughts and actions toward Native Americans during a period of American political and social turmoil. In constructing his account, he used various primary and secondary sources, including government documents, newspaper articles, and books. Some noteworthy government documents used were the annual reports of the commissioner of Indian Affairs and an 1867 Special Joint Committee report focused on the Indian Tribes’ condition. Although Lincoln is the focus of the book, he occasionally fades into the background of the story Green tells. Green acknowledges this is problematic, but contends it is necessary to examine events that occurred far from Washington, D. C., as well as the actions of Lincoln’s representatives who did not communicate with him.

Nevertheless, *Lincoln and Native Americans* accomplishes Green’s goal of demonstrating that Lincoln had a complex view of and relationship with Native Americans. After all, Green contends that even though the president prioritized winning the Civil War, saving the Union, and ending slavery over Native American issues, Lincoln was much better at Indian affairs than his numerous contemporaries, including those who served as president before and after his tenure. Those interested in Lincoln, Native Americans, and Civil War history should read this well-written book.
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