Of the seventeen stories in the second chapter, "Disappearing Ghosts," three are examples of the "Vanishing Hitchhiker" tales. There are eighteen entries in the chapter on "Mysterious Events and Haunted Places," forty-two entries for "Presences Sensed by Light, Cold or Sound," and sixteen for "Poltergeists" where stories of The Bell Witch are prominently featured. Chapter Six explores "Communication with the Dead" with eight stories, while the remaining chapters on "Ghosts that Weren't Ghosts," "Ghosts at Educational Institutions," "Death Omens and Superstitions," and "A Collection of Ghost Stories" contain sixty entries under these diverse headings.

The final chapter contains the full rendition of "A ghost story from the Nineteenth Century" regaling the account of supernatural occurrences involving the John Horrell family. This is followed by a bibliography of resources and suggested readings. Throughout the collection there are numerous examples of legend tripping and ostension, as well as black and white photographs of various buildings with ghostly connections in the area.

This is a powerful compilation of reminiscences and oral histories regarding local (and not so local) ghosts past and present from a wide variety of informers of all ages. The oral flavour of the stories bursts from the page, delighting both the ear and the eye, and offering additional delights when revisiting the stories again and again.

Gail de Vos

Edward Steers Jr. *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations Associated with Our Greatest President.* Introduction by Harold Holzer. 2007. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 264 pages. ISBN 978-0-8131-2466-7 (hardback); ISBN 978-0-8131-9241-3 (paperback).

Early in the second half of the twentieth century, living in three different towns within two hundred miles of Lincoln's tomb, I spent 13 of the first 15 years of my life awash in Lincoln legendry. Much of that legendry was institutional and media-supported: tourists

crowded New Salem, the town in central Illinois where Lincoln came of age and (so stories go) first fell in love, and where my father brought my sisters and me when I was six. One of my oldest TV memories is of a speech delivered by Carl Sandburg in 1959 to a joint session of Congress to mark the sesquicentennial of Lincoln's birth: the white-haired poet's words and image were broadcast live across the country and received with a pitch of interest and reverence almost impossible to conceive of today. In subdued contrast, the February 12, 2009 celebration of Lincoln's two hundredth birthday went almost unmarked, this in spite of the fact that a new president, just three weeks into his first term, had begun his campaign in the shadow of the building where Lincoln had begun his, and the further fact that this new president delivered his own worshipful birthday oration, a speech to match Sandburg's, though barely noted in the news.

The Lincoln legendry that I experienced as a boy was by no means confined to such civic sites as the classroom and the rostrum. It was also a matter of everyday conversation, speculation, and wonder. The stories of Lincoln's honesty and work ethic may have been told by our teachers far more often than among us kids, but all of my boyhood friends knew stories of the Dark Lincoln, the Haunted Lincoln. All of us could tell you that the only money found in the pockets of the dead Lincoln was a Confederate five-dollar bill; all of us could tell you about documented and fictional plots to steal Lincoln's body, and about what Lincoln looked like the last time he was dug up, in 1900. And all of us could tell you that Lincoln had a dream shortly before his death in which, following the sound of sobs within the White House, he came upon a room filled with mourners surrounding a body dressed for burial; asking a soldier stationed near the entrance of the room, "Who is dead in the White House?", the dreaming Lincoln heard the man answer, "The President."

Shortly after John F. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, the Doomed Lincoln legendry re-emerged, with new details implying supernatural connections between the two slain presidents. To some of us it seemed beyond coincidence that Lincoln was elected in 1860 and Kennedy in 1960, that both were murdered by a bullet to the back of the head discharged on a Friday with their

wives looking on, that both assassins were killed before they could be brought to trial, that both Presidents were succeeded by southern Democrats named Johnson. These were part of a legendary tradition we shared among ourselves, independent of the book culture of our time. Some of our stories could be historically documented (had we cared to check their veracity) and others could not, but they were all ways through which we sought and explained connections between our local world and the much larger worlds looming beyond it.

Edward Steers's *Lincoln Legends* participates in a discourse more elite and select than the one I knew as a child, yet it invokes past legendary communities far more intense than any that I have personally experienced. Steers's subtitle—*Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations Associated with Our Greatest President*—clearly announces his approach. This book, like the Snopes legend website, takes a true/false view of legend. "Legend," "myth," and "folklore" appear interchangeably as terms denoting falsehood, as in the opening sentence of the squib on the book's back cover: "The folklore surrounding history's towering figures often overshadows actual scholarship, both in terms of quantity and in terms of prevalence in the public consciousness." Steers speaks of a public Lincoln, and indeed a few of the 14 "myths" that he sets about to dismantle have been matters of broad public interest in recent decades: most notably, stories of a "gay Lincoln" whose attentions to and with his fellow men included sharing beds with at least three of them during his younger years (p. 147). On the basis of such evidence, gay activists, historians, and psychologists have attracted national attention since 1999 with allegations and debates centered on Lincoln's sexuality. But, as Steers points out, it was common in the early nineteenth century for poor boarders of the same sex to occupy the same bed, that all three of Lincoln's bedmates wrote of this bed-sharing practice without suggesting any carnal or romantic interest, that in at least one case there was always at least one other person sleeping in the same room as Lincoln slept double, and that none of the many witnesses of Lincoln's communal sleeping arrangements gave any indication that his bedding practices were intended for or resulted in anything other than sleep.

Aside from the gay Lincoln stories, the great majority of the Lincoln legends that Speers debunks are the special preserve of historians and little heard in the broader world today. Stories about Lincoln's secret paternity, secret baptism, and secret correspondence with Ann Rutledge, as well as his wife's secret life as a Confederate spy: none of these legends holds much purchase in the contemporary world. Yet the real utility and beauty of Steers's book is the evidence he offers for powerful local and oral traditions that flourished in the decades following Lincoln's assassination. Largely because Lincoln died without an opportunity to write an extensive memoir, and because his birth family's history and his early years received scant documentation before his death, his first biographers relied heavily on oral narratives to reconstruct his life. The most persistent (and in the first decade of the twenty-first century, still current) legends surrounding Lincoln's paternity concern a woman named (like Lincoln's mother) Nancy Hanks, said to have lived as a servant in western North Carolina and to have become pregnant by her master, Abraham Enloe. To cover their indiscretion, Enloe paid Thomas Lincoln to marry Nancy Hanks, move to Kentucky, and raise Abraham as their natural son. To back up this story, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians interviewed dozens of North Carolina residents who shared stories about Lincoln's paternity (pp. 20-23). The tales clearly showed the sorts of variations, as well as core consistencies, typical of well-entrenched local legends. Some of the documentation leaves a hint of the stories' popularity and patterns of dissemination: for example, fifteen North Carolinians interviewed by James H. Cathy in the 1890s attested, "for many years, we, the undersigned have heard older people relate the current story that 'Nancy Hanks, the mother of President Lincoln, was reared in Rutherford County,' and that Lincoln was also born here" (p. 23). What we are missing, of course, are the texts themselves and adequate hints of why the narrators told these tales and how they interpreted them. The biographers printed the tales, for the most part, to discredit Lincoln through his parentage, but it is likely that at least some of the narrators told them to assert a close geographic or familial connection to a heroic figure.

In other cases, we do get more information, more texture, even texts. In his gay Lincoln chapter, Steers takes to task a psychologist who cites Lincoln's penchant for off-color humor as evidence of his homosexuality. The psychologist makes much of an incident from Lincoln's frontier youth when two of his neighbors, the Grigsby brothers, married two sisters on the same day. Lincoln composed a satire in which each husband mistakenly sleeps with the other's wife, as well as a poem in which the two grooms' younger brothers marry each other. From Steers we learn that the story was the subject of laughter and storytelling in the neighborhood for years and that the rhyme about male marriage was repeated often enough to be memorized by members of the community (pp. 131-32). Lincoln's satire is poor evidence for his homosexuality, but Steers provides rich evidence of ways in which Lincoln earned the status of a legendary joker more than three decades before becoming president.

Neither Steers's understanding of folklore nor his general approach gives folklorists any reason to read *Lincoln Legends,* but his subject is so richly folkloric that valuable sources emerge nonetheless. Because Steers is a good researcher, he cannot ignore these sources, and he thus presents his readers with paths toward an understanding of how Lincoln legendry has developed, varied, and spread since the early nineteenth century. Beginning with the Steers's sources, a folklorist could, and should, create a rich study.

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