

Indiana scenes of his boyhood, and they inspired him to [pen] several stanzas of sentimental verse. Kentucky never had any such effect on him" (p. 156). Lincoln viewed himself as a westerner, not a southerner—although as a politician he transcended sectionalism.

The format of this volume precludes a unifying theme beyond the fact that all the essays pertain to Abraham Lincoln. If the reader is seeking an elucidation of Lincoln the man, he would be better served with a recent biography (or, indeed, with Current's *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* [1958]). But this volume serves its purpose. It is a worthy contribution to Lincoln scholarship—an expanding corpus which Current long ago correctly characterized as "unexhausted and inexhaustible" (p. 39).

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The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies By William Hanchett. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Pp. 303. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$18.50.)

As William Hanchett points out in the introduction to this fine book, most Americans have at least a hazy notion of what transpired at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., on April 14, 1865, but very few understand the complex background of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Misconceptions and myths abound. Anyone who has ever taught American history has listened to breathless students unfolding tales of various incredible conspiracies that explain this event. Even scholarly accounts of the assassination have often contained factual errors and questionable hypotheses.

Part of the problem has been the lack of scholarly interest in the assassination. Hanchett shows how amateurs and popularizers have dominated the historiography. The author argues that the assassination was a political act that cannot be explained either by Booth's supposed "madness" or by some deep-laid plot of government officials. Rather Booth and his band of conspirators believed they had reason to hate the "tyrant" Lincoln and acted to defend a long tradition of republican liberty. In this way, Booth's famous cry to the audience at Ford's Theater, "*Sic Semper Tyrannis*," concisely defined the motivation behind the act.

Hanchett's treatment of the charge that Lincoln's death was part of a Confederate conspiracy contains little new information. He gives only brief attention to the attempts by Radical Republicans to implicate Andrew Johnson in the assassination and does not even mention the visits of Benjamin F. Butler and James M.

Ashley to Sanford Conover in the Washington jail and their apparent attempts to suborn perjury among the inmates there.

The book is strongest in dealing with the various conspiracy theories of the assassination. No one can give credence to Otto Eisenschiml's theory about Edwin Stanton's involvement in the assassination after Hanchett's careful dissection of the evidence. More important, he shows how current conspiracy buffs, such as the creators of the *Lincoln Conspiracy* book and movie, have simply invented "sources." But as Hanchett cogently observes, believers in conspiracy theories are seldom deterred by a shortage of evidence. They merely assume that the conspirators destroyed critical information to protect themselves. This very tenacity of belief makes it likely that even this excellent book will probably have little impact on popular notions about Lincoln's assassination.

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Blacks Diamonds: Life and Work in Iowa's Coal Mining Communities, 1895-1925. By Dorothy Schwieder. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1983. Pp. xiii, 203. Tables, illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$18.95.)

Dorothy Schwieder has written the first study of the Iowa coal-mining industry, paying particular attention to the lives of the miners and their families. She surveyed available literature on the industry nationally, the folkways and attitudes of immigrants, and the development of the United Mine Workers Union. To give this material an Iowa cast, she conducted oral interviews with former miners, their wives, and descendants as well as collected social and economic data on three small mining communities. Her major Iowa documentation was state government reports and district union records.

Schwieder clearly defines the importance of her topic: coal mining in the years 1895-1925 was second only to agriculture in contributing to the state economy. The UMW was the largest union ever to operate in the state and disbanded there only in the early 1950s. Because the first miners were of eastern United States and British origin, succeeded after 1890 primarily by Italians and Croatians, the industry introduced ethnic pluralism to the state. Many former miners and their families settled in larger Iowa cities after coal production there peaked in 1917.

Ethnic historians will react to Schwieder's discussion of the Italian-American family. She insists that the Iowa situation confirms the national studies on other topics but concludes that Iowa Italians lived more comfortably and were less alienated from em-