Harrison proved more successful in separating Indians from their lands. By promising various kinds of payment, overriding traditional forms of tribal government, appointing chiefs at will, bribing, pitting tribes and members of tribes against each other, distributing alcohol to induce drunkenness, and creating tribal reservations, Harrison, according to Owens, ushered in the origins of American Indian policy. Such methods, however, had long been a staple of treaty and land negotiations and did not originate with Harrison. He was, of course, only following the orders of President Thomas Jefferson, who, despite lofty pronouncements of good will toward tribal peoples, practiced a brutal policy of tribal land acquisition. Jefferson rationalized these contradictory views with the belief that only by forcing the practice of agriculture—and hence civilization—on Indians could they be saved from racial extinction. In reality, as Owens correctly points out, most of the eastern tribes south of the Great Lakes were primarily farmers and only secondarily hunters. Despite being critical of the policy, the means under which land acquisition was carried out, and the suffering these caused to tribal people, Owens still claims that Harrison, given the political and economic realities of the time, probably acted as fairly as possible. A greater understanding by Owens of Midwestern Indian cultures—especially their social, political, and economic structures—would have made native concerns and suffering more explicit. A fuller account of the effects of dislocation, land loss, and changing economics on tribal politics, factions, and social organizations (kinship, clans, and bands) would have made for a richer work. Still, this book is a very useful addition to early Indiana history.


Stephen A. Douglas and the Dilemmas of Democratic Equality
By James L. Huston


James L. Huston’s book presents an intriguing reinterpretation of the life of Illinois’ famous antebellum senator. Huston uses Douglas’s life to shed light on America’s path from its pre-revolutionary heritage of “hereditary preferment and inequality” to a future based on the then-revolutionary
axioms of human equality (p. vii). This transition, experienced most dramatically in the first half of the nineteenth century, posed difficult dilemmas: which Americans were equal, in what ways were they equal, and how would their equality be maintained? In no small measure, writes Huston, these dilemmas shaped the politics of antebellum America and the life of Douglas.

Huston contends that Douglas's impressive leadership in building the Illinois Democratic Party in the 1830s reflected his strong commitment to a more egalitarian society. The Democrats stood for the equal rights of the people against the special privileges enjoyed by elites. In order to acquire the political power to press for such rights, however, the Democrats needed to create a party organization to express the people's will. This was Douglas's great contribution as an early partisan political leader in Illinois, and his reward was political preferment and influence.

But the politics of egalitarianism quickly became more divisive. As an advocate of commercial development, Douglas differed from those in his party who believed that the promotion of commerce exacerbated class divisions and imperiled democracy. Hence he supported many commercial enterprises—including those that required government support, such as the building of the Illinois Central Railroad in the early 1850s—as long as they promised widespread social benefits. However, Douglas did realize that commercial growth generated sharp disparities in wealth and income. The solution that he and the Democratic Party endorsed in the 1840s was national expansion, which promised cheap land for poor and rich farmers alike. Yet Manifest Destiny likewise challenged egalitarian ideals, primarily because despised non-white inhabitants lived in lands coveted by Americans. Douglas, like almost all Democrats, advocated the expulsion or subordination of such peoples upon acquisition of their territory. Ironically, the Democrats' promotion of equality among white Americans both justified and promoted wider inequality.

National expansion also raised the thorny issue of slavery, which profoundly challenged the Democrats' creed of equality. The Mexican-American War left the United States with a vast domain to settle. Most Southerners desired to plant slavery in the new territories, believing they had a constitutional right to do so; anti-slavery northerners implacably opposed them. This division threatened to rend the Union. Douglas's solution, embodied in the Compromise of 1850, enabled territorial settlers to regulate slavery under the doctrine of popular sovereignty. But popular sovereignty was something of a conundrum. On the one hand it reflected egalitarian ideals, because the people's will decided slavery's fate. On the other, it subsequently legitimized the right of some humans to enslave others in a nation whose
democracy rested on the presumption of equality. Douglas resolved the dilemma by maintaining that non-white races were “utterly incapable of governing themselves” (p. 85). Although northern Democrats, persuaded by this reasoning, considered popular sovereignty a reasonable sectional compromise, most southerners demanded that the federal government protect territorial slavery. Ultimately, Lincoln's election impelled southerners to abandon a Union that they believed disregarded their rights. Ironically, secession thus illustrated the most fundamental dilemma arising from the political creed of equality. Perceiving secession as a destruction of democracy rather than a defense of liberty, Douglas supported the Republicans’ effort to maintain the Union by force.


On the Brink
The Great Lakes in the 21st Century
By Dave Dempsey

Dave Dempsey reviews the environmental history of the Great Lakes for the last 200 years of their 10,000-year life. In this brief period human occupation of the region has multiplied many times, creating untold problems and making it an open question if humans will ever be compatible with this environment. Although Dempsey reviews the history of the lakes, the real focus of his book is a plea for their preservation. His final thought is that people must force the responsibility for the preservation of the Great Lakes on their governments.

The book starts with a prologue detailing people’s love for the Great Lakes. Virtually everyone in the region enjoys recreation on the lakes. Examples of this recreation abound, as do examples of appreciation for lake commerce and for the endless sports opportunities that the lakes provide.

Dempsey argues that initial awareness of environmental trouble may have been prompted by the decline of local fish populations—fish that had been providing sustenance for humans for thousands of years. People responded to the problems caused by overfishing by introducing “better” fish, but this has resulted in almost continuous unanticipated change in the ecosystem. In the meantime, industry—stimulated by