

In the bicentennial year of Lincoln's birth, Hoosiers seeking to learn about the impact of their state on this formidable president will find this book enjoyable. Bartelt never offers his own argument about that impact, but readers will come away with their own conclusions from their encounters with the primary sources.

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Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency

By William C. Harris

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007. Pp. xii, 412. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$34.95.)

One trend in Lincoln scholarship over the last fifteen years has been an increased interest in the pre-presidential Lincoln. The most obvious example is the massive Lincoln Legal Papers project that collected and digitized nearly 100,000 documents, which were published in 2000 in a DVD-set, and are now available on the web. Scholars such as Michael Burlingame, Kenneth J. Winkle, and Douglas L. Wilson have added considerably to our knowledge of Lincoln before Washington.

Like these scholars, William C. Harris is also interested in the pre-presidential Lincoln. While he is indebted to their work, he has a different focus. Harris is interested in Lincoln's "remarkable political rise from obscurity to his inauguration as president" (p. 3). Here, he is on ground that, surprisingly, is not well-trod. The last books to examine Lincoln's political career in Illinois in such

detail were Don E. Fehrenbacher's *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850s* (1962) and Paul F. Simon, *Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness: The Illinois Legislative Years* (1965). Two-score-and-two years later, Harris's well-written and well-researched book fills a gap in Lincoln scholarship.

In looking at Lincoln's rise in politics, Harris stresses Lincoln's brand of conservatism. Harris concludes that Lincoln's conservatism was "rooted in his background as a Henry Clay Whig, his close association with border state rural people, his cautious nature, and the racial and political realities he faced in central Illinois" (p. 2). This conservatism was evident in Lincoln's 1838 address on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," where he sounded a common Whig theme of reverence for law and the Constitution.

Early on in his political career, however, Lincoln also evidenced his

antislavery principles. In the Lincoln-Stone Protest of 1837, Lincoln and his fellow Whig said slavery was “founded on both injustice and bad policy.” There, Lincoln parted company with many “conservative” Whigs who were more than willing to accommodate Southern slavery. Harris could have done a better job here of explaining Lincoln’s brand of antislavery conservatism.

Harris devotes two chapters on the 1858 senate campaign, with one chapter focusing on the political and social context of the campaign, and the other on the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Lincoln sought statewide office in a state where the overwhelming majority of voters believed in white supremacy. Lincoln managed, however, to both share the racism of white Illinoisans and to simultaneously base his opposition to slavery upon moral grounds. When compared to most white Illinoisans, Lincoln’s racial prejudice appears mild; when compared to Douglas, Lincoln looks downright egalitarian.

Despite his loss, Lincoln’s failed senate campaign established him as a viable candidate for president. In the last five chapters, Harris covers the 1860 campaign, Lincoln’s election, and subsequent “secession winter.” He does a good job describing how Lincoln ended up as the Republican nominee at the Chicago convention, and provides vivid details of the pres-

idential election in various Northern states. Harris concludes that Lincoln should not be criticized for failing to support compromise efforts during the winter of 1860-1861. It is “highly unlikely” that Lincoln’s support for concessions “would have checked secession in the lower South, prevented the formation of the Confederate States, or headed off an armed clash between the two sides” (p. 294). Harris does not defend Lincoln’s refusal to issue a statement reassuring Southerners after his election. While such a statement would not have mollified the lower South, it could have “had a salutary effect” on the upper and border South and calmed Northerners (p. 295).

Whether intended or not, Harris’s excellent study serves as a fine complement to Philip Shaw Paludan’s *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (1994), which also was published by the University Press of Kansas. In this age of declining budgets for university presses, the University Press of Kansas is to be applauded for including fourteen well-chosen illustrations.

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