

many IU students like Vahl had experienced on the East Coast. There were, in fact, remnants of the Ku Klux Klan in the area. Former IU President Herman B Wells had made significant efforts in the 1950s to improve the racial climate on campus by eliminating segregation in most university facilities. Wells also emphasized the importance of attracting students of all races from all over the world. And while IU, like much of the rest of the country, was slow to recognize the importance of the civil rights movement, IU students would, by the end of the 1960s, be the first in the country to elect a member of the Black Panther Party as student body president.

As her story relates, after the end of her freshman year, Vahl left Bloomington for the University of California, Berkeley. Had she stayed she might have participated in the student movement that was just beginning and would go on to transform student life at IU. However, she has written an engaging account of her experience at Indiana University, as she perceived it.

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doi: 10.2979/indimagahist.115.1.05



Creating the Land of Lincoln: The History and Constitutions of Illinois, 1778–1870

By Frank Cicero Jr.

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018. Pp. xv, 270. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

American ideas about democracy, individual rights, and economic institutions changed rapidly during the nineteenth century. State constitutions can provide useful information about the way citizens' attitudes shifted regionally and in response to immediate political or cultural pressures. This is precisely what Frank Cicero's *Creating the Land of Lincoln* achieves. As both a lawyer and a historian, Cicero has earned the distinction of not only writing political history but also—as a delegate to the 1970 Illinois state

constitutional convention—shaping it. His experience has served him well: it enables him to understand the political, social, and cultural context that convention delegates often faced as they attempted to craft a charter for their states.

Cicero's project is to show how the Illinois constitution framed the state's progress from a western territory in 1818, governed by southern-leaning politicians, to a modern agricultural, industrial, and educational powerhouse. Cicero's contention that state

constitutions are profoundly important in shaping and reflecting citizens' values is a welcome corrective to the received wisdom that these documents are too confusing or poorly constructed to be of interest to scholars. Cicero's analysis takes into account the individual lives of men like Abraham Lincoln, as well as community histories of the African Americans living and working in Illinois. This approach allows him to use the constitutions as a window into the way Illinoisans understood the politics, society, and fundamental democratic values of their own time.

Cicero has chosen three core themes to frame his narrative: African American rights, the importance of geography, and the role of state constitutions in promoting (or hampering) political progress. His careful analysis of the way state constitutions can occasionally impede legislatures (and, by extension, voters) is one of the book's more significant contributions. Cicero argues that draconian amendment procedures and the hyper-partisan provisions that enshrined political agendas often worked to hobble constitutional change, and sometimes assured the failure of these charters in the popular vote.

Particularly successful here are Cicero's excavations of little-known political scuffles that—seen in their larger context—transformed Illinois history. In 1818, for example, the convention extended the state's northern border, which ensured that Illinois became an economic dynamo and attracted a majority of antislavery voters. By contrast, the conservative

1848 constitution impeded both the development of black rights and the chartering of banks—two problems that led to serious disabilities during the Civil War and went on unresolved with the failed constitutional convention of 1862. Inevitably, those failures triggered radical changes in the state's political alignment during the 1870s.

Cicero's discussion of African American rights is particularly strong and, with his epilogue, provides powerful new insights into the central role of human rights in state constitutions. Because he presents fresh, lively insights into the characters and experiences of Illinois' leading figures and the state's political, demographic, and economic growth, his *Creating the Land of Lincoln* could serve as a blueprint for other state constitutional historians. That said, a deeper engagement with recent works on state constitutional history might have helped readers to flesh out the book's national context.

This is a superbly well-written book; Cicero's beautiful, clear prose should set a standard for historical writing, and could be used as an example for students. He has organized his study chronologically and supplemented it with excellent maps and rare illustrations. This book should be read by anyone interested in Illinois history, in legal and constitutional history, and especially in the intersection of constitutional government with politics and society.

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doi: 10.2979/indimagahist.115.1.06