

REDISCOVERING CIVIL WAR CLASSICS: Lincoln Books That Should Get Reprinted

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Feature Essay

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Madden, David *REDISCOVERING CIVIL WAR CLASSICS: Lincoln Books That Should Get Reprinted.*

A good many books on Lincoln are out of print, lost in the Land of Lincoln. A book out of print, especially a very rare one, is a little like a tree prone in the forest that nobody heard fall.

Having given reasons in my last column for recommending to publishers that *Lincoln Under Enemy Fire* be reprinted, I decided to devote this column to the recommendations of three major Lincoln institutions: the venerable Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee; the two year old Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library; and the justly famous Lincoln Bookshop in Chicago.

Ever since I discovered it in my own backyard at Cumberland Gap (I was raised in Knoxville) in 1960, I have been moved to call attention to the Lincoln library and museum at every opportunity and this is only one of them. As late as a visit in the 1990's, I discovered an elderly docent making data entries with a number three pencil in a Tarzan notebook (my memory may be a little faulty on the details). Appalled, I turned to my little brother, who looks like Fred Thompson, to appeal to Fred Thompson for a computer. I expect it is by now outmoded and cannibalized for parts. Go to <http://www.lmunet.edu/museum/programs/index.html> and you will enjoy a very up-to-date web site that describes the Lincoln Library and Museum thus:

From its earliest days, LMU began to receive and put on display Civil War and Abraham Lincoln memorabilia. In 1929, a room in Duke Hall of Citizenship was dedicated to house the growing collection. The Lincoln Room served as a showcase for the collection until the early 1970s.

In 1973, University President H. Y. Livesay and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees Dr. Frank G. Rankin shared their dream of a permanent facility to house the Lincoln Collection. Colonel Harland Sanders, a

trustee, responded by providing \$500,000 to construct the library and museum. The Board of Trustees secured another \$500,000, and on December 31, 1974, the University completed the building's fundraising campaign.

The Lincoln Room was retired and a few months later, groundbreaking for the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum was held. The facility was completed in 1977. Today, the museum sees an average of 14,000 visitors per year.

Thomas Mackie, the recently appointed director, and his staff provided me with the following recommendations for reprint. The notations are his:

Bancroft, George, ed. *Our Martyr President, Abraham Lincoln/Voices From the Pulpit of New York and Brooklyn*. (New York: Tibbals and Whiting) 1865.

A great collection of sermons on Lincoln dealing with his assassination and the desire for revenge on the South. It gives a great depiction of the sectional hatred of the Radical Republicans and their use of Lincoln's murder for their purposes.

Oldroyd, Osborn H., *To the American People, these Literary Immortelles to Abraham Lincoln the President*. (Chicago: W. B. Conkey), 1882.

Oldroyd, Osborn H. *Lincoln's campaign: Or, the political revolution of 1860*. 1896.

As a public historian I am interested in Oldroyd's efforts to honor Lincoln during the 19th century and create an early biography museum. These items collected are often very interesting but unfortunately undocumented.

Randall, J. G. & R. N. Current. *Mr. Lincoln*. (New York: Dodd, Mead & company) 1957.

Some of his works on Lincoln have been reprinted but I do not believe this one volume edition has made it in a new life.

Tarbell, Ida M., *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*. (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co.) Vols. 1 & 2, 1900.

The great muckraker against Standard Oil did several magazine articles on Lincoln based on extensive oral interviews with family and friends of the

President's family. Her work shows her skills as a reporter and talents using oral history to reconstruct Lincoln's young life and ancestry.

Whitney, Henry C. *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln. With Sketches of Generals Grant, Sherman and McClellan, Judge Davis, Leonard Swett, and Other Contemporaries*. Illustrated. Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1892. viii, 601 pp. Reprinted 2001 by The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd. ISBN 1-58477-115-1. Cloth. \$110. (Recommended for reprint because the price is too high. DM)

Fascinating first hand account of Lincoln's life on the Eighth Circuit from 1854 to 1861, as told by one of his colleagues who traveled the circuit and tried cases with him. Whitney also accompanied Lincoln during his campaign, the debates with Douglas, and the events prior to his nomination. He reminisces about these events here in an easy style that shows the warmth of his friendship with Lincoln and illuminates the man behind the scenes in his portrayal of Lincoln as a politician, Lincoln and slavery, Lincoln and labor, Lincoln as President.

Williams, Kenneth P. *Lincoln Finds A General: A Military Study of the Civil War*. New York: 1949-1959. 5 vol. set. (The unfinished fifth volume was published posthumously. Volume one is reprinted but not the five-volume set. DM)

That ends Thomas Mackie's list of recommendations.

Given the mission of this regular column—to inspire folks to discover or rediscover and reread key books and to persuade publishers to reprint them (with good success over the past 12 years)—want to quote an Amazon customer's comment on Mackie's last choice.

Excellent analysis of beginning of Civil War and McClellan's rise/beginning of his fall. Williams's book is an easily readable, yet thorough analysis of the political and military goings-on just prior to the fall of Fort Sumter through Antietam. It makes one anxious to read the complete set of *Lincoln Finds a General*. Obviously no fan of McClellan, Kenneth Williams makes an eloquent case against "the redoubtable McC" and gives a clear picture of the difficulties he made for Lincoln by his hesitancy and obtuseness. In this volume, Williams paves the way for other volumes illustrating the further trials of Lincoln in his search for a military man who could help him save the nation--one who was not

overawed by Bobby Lee. One can imagine his thankfulness and relief when he found Grant: "I can't spare this man--he fights!" As a Civil War buff of 40 years, I was enchanted by this book and have spent over 10 years searching for the complete set--I found it once in an antique book store in Columbia, SC for \$350 (first edition set of the complete original volumes) at a time when that seemed a fortune to me. I wish I had gotten that set, as I have never seen it again, but I have re-read this little volume so many times that it is greatly worn--proof of its readability and texture. A real treat for any Civil War buff.

Mr. Mackie's list reached me as I was reading Andrew Ferguson's *Land of Lincoln*, in which he tells us that every night in his motel while revisiting the Lincoln Heritage Trail, he read Ida Tarbell's *In the Footsteps of the Lincolns* (1924). He inspired me to order it. It is indeed a splendid-looking book to hold in hand and inspiring (in the best sense) to read in this first year of commemorations leading into Lincoln's Bicentennial in 2009.

James M. Cornelius, Curator, Lincoln Collection [a.k.a. Lincoln Curator] Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, put his list in the form of a narrative:

I am much less a Civil War expert than a Lincoln librarian and fan. The pressing need is for Mark E. Neely's *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* to be reprinted. McGraw-Hill 1982; Da Capo pbk. 1983, both hard to find. Dr. Neely probably does not have the energy or time to update it, either. Frank Williams has been assembling something like it, but we do not know what shape that might take. From a previous life I know that the owner of Plenum Press / Da Capo is a very tight-fisted sonofagun, but perhaps the company has passed into other fists by now. McGraw-Hill ought to be alerted, and probably has been, so perhaps Dr. Neely holds rights? Univ. of Nebraska Press has done good work in reprinting rather old Lincoln titles. So too Southern Illinois Univ. Press, and a few from White Mane, www.confederatereprint.com, and even a couple from U. of Illinois. Perhaps post-1924 books are off limits to most people, but the D.C. Durman or the F. L. Bullard works, both 1951/1952 I think, on *Lincoln in Sculpture*, would be much appreciated. Updating is perhaps what they really need. Albert Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln: 1809-1858* was reprinted about 1970, and fished I think about a decade ago. Fiche is useless.

Do the Gutenberg or the Google online projects make reprinting unnecessary? I don't think so, since fiche was nearly useless, and although many more people have a laptop than have a fiche reader, the era is still not upon us,

and never will be really, when real readers want to look at long books on a screen. Does this help? I don't really have a top ten. We have enough difficulty keeping up with new publications from the scores of publishers in the field. One more: Robert V. Bruce, *Lincoln and the Tools of War*, 1956, pbk, 1986.

I hope I have a strong reason (even a weak one) to show up on the streets of Chicago fairly soon, so I can satisfy my desire to visit the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop. Established in 1938, it serves the needs of collectors and scholars, professional historians and independent writers, dedicated first edition hunters and casual history enthusiasts.

When I called to request their choices of out-of-print Lincoln books that they would most like to see come back into print, Daniel Weinberg, the owner, a member of the Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, and his assistants Thomas Trescott and Sylvia Castle, readily responded.

Here are the ALBS choices:

Ben Purley Poore, editor, *Conspiracy Trial of the Murder of the President*

Senator Paul Simon, *Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness*

Don Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Text and Context*

Harry Carman and Reinhold Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage*

Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Intimate Memories of Lincoln*

Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Lincoln Among His Friends*

Donald Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership*

Ichabod Coddington, *A Republican Manual for the Campaign*

John Nicolay & John Hay, *Lincoln: A History*

Harold Hyman, *A More Perfect Union*

Wayne Riddle, *Congressman Abraham Lincoln*

In addition, says Daniel Weinberg, it is the conviction of the ALBS that the following should be completely redone: Ostendorf, *Lincoln's Photographs*, and Neely, *The Lincoln Encyclopedia*.

"Also," says Ms. Castle, "I, personally, would like to see Ostendorf, *The Photographs of Mary Lincoln*, redone, especially in light of Donna McCreary's solid research into the costumes, jewelry and other adornments worn by Mary Lincoln in the images. Using the lens of Victorian fashion trends, her book, *Fashionable First Lady*, makes a solid and great case that some of Ostendorf's dates are just plain wrong!"

Mr. Trescott, Ms. Castle, and Mr. Weinberg are excellent examples of the ideal role of rare book dealers, that they operate not only from high standards buying and selling but also out of convictions that give them a position of leadership among the experts who write the books they sell.

Other nominations from other institutions and individuals are welcome as inspirations for this column throughout the Lincoln Bicentennial commemoration years, 2008 and 2009. My email is dmadden@lsu.edu.

Each of us has his/her own Lincoln Heritage Trail. Reprinted, these books can guide and nourish us on our way.

Novelist-historian David Madden is a member of the advisory committee for the federal Lincoln commission in Washington and chair of the Louisiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, located in the office of the Secretary of State, which is also the location of the national Civil War Sesquicentennial Initiative, for which he is chair. Founding director of the United States Civil War Center and creator of the Civil War Book Review, he is LSU's Robert Penn Warren Professor of Creative Writing.