

LINCOLN LORE

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ANGLE'S LIST OF PERMANENT BOOKS

Angle, Paul M., *A Shelf of Lincoln Books: A critical selective bibliography of Lincolniana*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1946. \$3.00.

Paul M. Angle's *A Shelf of Lincoln Books* makes available in a more convenient form much of his valuable data entitled "Basic Lincolniana" contributed in 1936 to the Abraham Lincoln Association Bulletins and now supplemented by additional notes on "permanent" books appearing since that date. A careful and critical analysis of each book selected is presented in what he terms "a selective, critical bibliography."

The eighty-one books chosen have been written by sixty different authors whose names appear in the following list. If more than one book has been contributed the number produced is designated by a numeral.

Angle (3), Arnold, Ballard, Baringer (2), Barton (5), Basler (2), Beveridge, Brooks, Browne, Bryan, Carman & Luthin, Carpenter, Charnwood, Daugherty, Dennett, DeWitt, Dodge, Eisenschiml, Evans, Herndon & Weik, Hertz (2), Holland, Howells, Keckley, Lamon, Learned, Lewis, Waldo Lincoln, Lorant, Luthin, McCarthy, McClure, Meserve, Monaghan (2), Newton, Helen Nicolay, John J. Nicolay, Nicolay & Hay (3), Petersen, Phillips, Potter, Pratt (3), Randall (2), Reep, Rice, Sandburg (2), Sandburg & Angle, Shaw, Sparks, Stephenson, Sterne, Tarbell (2), Thomas (2), Townsend (2), Tracy, Warren, Weik, Whitney, Williams, Wilson (2), Woldman.

The enviable position which Mr. Angle occupies in the field of Lincoln bibliography makes his selection of "permanent" writings, not only of interest from the view point of the student but also tremendously important in the sales promotional program of dealers in both new and rare Lincoln books. On the jacket of Angle's monograph the publishers have paraphrased the first two paragraphs of the introduction in these words:

"Sorting through the enormous bulk of Lincoln literature Paul M. Angle has winnowed the permanent from the inconsequential, discarded those Lincoln books that were little better than worthless when published as well as many others which once seemed satisfactory but now have lost their value, and has omitted the works of those who have written about Lincoln with 'little equipment for the task except interest in the subject.'"

Mr. Angle has divided the entire field of Lincolniana into two classes—the "permanent" and the "inconsequential." Are not both of these terms too exacting in a field where transitions from the former to the latter are continually taking place? The author states that many books "good enough in their time have lost much of the value they once possessed." Will not this conclusion at some future date be applicable to many of the books which we now designate as "permanent?" A very fine illustration of this position is offered by the secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association. He states that the association now has in process "an edition of the complete writings of Abraham Lincoln, fully annotated and prepared in accordance with modern scholarly standards." Special emphasis is placed on the fact that it is to be a "definitive" work. Will not the accomplishment of this task relegate to the realm of the "inconsequential" all seven of the books listed under "Writings and Speeches" now regarded by Mr. Angle as "permanent?" It appears as if the two Nicolay and Hoy Complete Works already has become obsolete with the appearance of the "Gettysburg Edition" which not only duplicated everything in the two volume work but contributed 518 additional items as well. A four volume work by Rufus Rockwell Wilson which will contain all Lincoln material in Tracy, Angle and Hertz will make those volumes "inconsequential." The first volume will be out in October.

With respect to the Sterne and Basler volumes, Mr. Angle states that "for the scholar, Basler's compilation is

clearly superior to Sterne's." The Basler book will not be published until Fall, but when it does come out, Sterne's book will lose much of the value it now possesses.

Although but a decade has past, many of the "permanent" books in Mr. Angle's "Basic Lincolniana" already have become obsolete by reason of more adequate treatment of similar subject matter. Both the Fish and Oakleaf bibliographies have been discarded for Monaghan. The studies of Lincoln as a lawyer by both Hill and Richards have been superseded by Woldman. The Lea and Hutchinson as well as the Learned ancestral studies have been eliminated by the Barton genealogy, although Mr. Angle has elected to retain the Learned in his list of permanent books for a season.

The fine old Meserve publication of 100 original Lincoln photographs limited to a hundred copies and seldom changing hands in recent years for less than one hundred dollars, according to Angle's classification has lost its permanency. With the publishing of the Lorant volume and its numerous corrections of Meserve's errors—although Lorant made a few errors himself,—and the supplementing of much finer prints than appeared in Meserve, a tremendous contribution was made to a general interest in Lincoln photographs. Mr. Angle has attempted to revive the original Meserve supremacy in the field of pictures by nominating a later edition of the Meserve prints but this publication although including an introduction by Carl Sandburg has come too late. It is but little more than a duplication of the last few pages of Lorant.

The well-known position of this reviewer towards the questionable value of the Herndon miscellany of reminiscences folk lore, and traditions, naturally would invite his remonstrance against the inclusion of five volumes featuring the Herndon sources. If Lamon, Herndon & Weik, Newton, Weik, and also Hertz *Hidden Lincoln* are to enjoy almost equal distinction, as far as number of titles are concerned, with Nicolay & Hay, Tracy, Angle, Hertz (2 vol.), Sterne and Basler in the field of documentary Lincolniana, then the emphasis of the traditional against the factual will not contribute to what might be considered a well balanced shelf of source material.

Mr. Angle states that the *Hidden Lincoln* by Hertz contains "the most important of the source materials on which the Herndon-Weik biography of Lincoln was based." With Weik guided by Herndon as interpreter of these sources it would seem that these two books would be sufficient in this field of observation. The Lamon, Newton, and Weik *The Real Lincoln* volumes contribute little additional factual information unless one believes that Herndon's anti-slavery attitude as portrayed by Newton greatly influenced Lincoln.

Three titles on Mrs. Lincoln (Evans, Keckley, and Sandburg) would seem to be an over emphasis on this phase of the Lincoln story. The Keckley book was written anonymously and but 127 of the 371 pages deal with data relevant to the actual Lincoln story. With all due respect for the historical contributions made by Mr. Sandburg and Mr. Angle, most Lincoln students and especially the casual reader would prefer some other Mary Lincoln book to their joint publication if it were thought necessary to supplement the Evans story.

The placing of the Petersen book in this very exclusive compilation seems strange when some other scientific works relating to Lincoln's health and behavior failed to make the grade. But there is no intention however, on the part of this reviewer to submit substitutes or additions for any of Mr. Angle's selections. After all criticisms, including the comments appearing in this review, are considered, one must come to the conclusion that "*A Shelf of Lincoln Books*" by Paul M. Angle is an excellent compilation of outstanding publications in the field of Lincolniana as we view it today.