

LINCOLN LORE

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THE LINCOLN BOOK OF THE YEAR—1948

The number of cloth bound books on Abraham Lincoln was somewhat less these past twelve months than in former years, but the importance of the volumes certainly will not suffer by comparison with those appearing during other similar periods of time. The superior quality of the books gave the Lincoln National Life Foundation Advisory Committee, consisting of eighteen leading students of Abraham Lincoln, a difficult task to select what might be termed "The Lincoln Book of the Year." Two of the members of the advisory committee, Dr. Jones and Mr. Cramer*, were contributors themselves to the annual installment of Lincoln writings.

First choice of the committee fell on David Donald's remarkable biography *Lincoln's Herndon*, a title transposed from *Herndon's Lincoln*. Not only did Mr. Donald draw a much more accurate portrait of Herndon, than Herndon did of Lincoln, but the relationship of these two law partners was more clearly set forth. The fact that Lincoln Lore No. 1015, under the caption "Biographizing William Herndon," presented an extended review of this book, will necessitate but a brief comment in the compilation arranged for this issue.

The second choice of the committee was David Mearns' two volume compilation of excerpts from *The Lincoln Papers*. (See Lincoln Lore No. 1020). It is to be regretted that some reviewers have not as yet sensed the value of Robert Lincoln's contribution to the Library of Congress. They apparently are under the impression that only sources which sprout sensational episodes are of real value. This comment from *Time* magazine book page for December 20 is in point: "*The Lincoln Papers* by David C. Mearns, were chiefly valuable as proof that Son Robert Todd Lincoln had inaccountably been sitting on a hoard of material that was primarily of interest only to the footnoters." If by "footnoters" the reviewer refers to objective historians over against novelists and feature writers, the statement may be correct. The point *Time* seems to have missed completely, however, is that heretofore our major Lincoln sources have supplied what might be termed the results of a one way communication—letters written by Lincoln. Since the opening of the Lincoln Papers, letters written to Lincoln are available, making a cause and effect approach to Lincoln's life. If the supplemental sources, providing a two way correspondence is footnote stuff, then we will be better informed in the future about the facts of Lincoln history if we depend on the small type notes at the bottom of the page rather than peruse some superficial deductions in the text proper.

Cramer, John H.* Lincoln Under Enemy Fire

Here is a literary effort which offers a fine example of how an efficient research historian can exhaust the details of an incident of but a few moments duration and write a book about it. The fact that Abraham Lincoln was the only President of the United States who was actually under gunfire while serving as the chief executive, gives the episode considerable historical importance, when one considers that modern wars are directed from a central office.

*Deceased.

Donald, David

Lincoln's Herndon

Some books are published prematurely and would have served a better purpose if their appearance could have been delayed. The subject matter in the Donald book should have been available to Lincoln students fifty years ago. However, the compensation of having a modern historian perform the task of presenting Herndon may have been worth the waiting. This book will take a prominent place among the outstanding biographies of less prominent men such as Herndon.

Hesseltine, William B. Lincoln and the War Governors

The emphasis placed in recent years on the functions of the state in our American form of government has made the discussion by Prof. Hesseltine a timely one indeed. Reaching back into the unsettled era of the rebellion he has attempted to place the governors in their proper category in the conduct of the war as well as in the building of a political party.

Jones, Edgar DeWitt

Lincoln and the Preachers

There are many books on Lincoln's Religion under such captions as *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, *Lincoln Man of God*, *Lincoln the Christian*, and kindred subjects. This book by Dr. Jones is different in that it does not attempt to circumscribe Lincoln in specific religious areas, but reveals a series of interesting companionships which Lincoln enjoyed with men of the cloth.

Mearns, David C.

The Lincoln Papers

You might say that the veteran students of Lincoln have waited a quarter of a century for this book and the other volumes to follow, while those who were intrigued by the opening of the Lincoln Papers at Washington in June 1947 have had their wishes granted within a period of fifteen months. This is the first installment of what we anticipate may be an extended compilation reaching into several volumes.

Riddle, Donald W.

Lincoln Runs for Congress

One by one certain monographs contribute to the overall picture of Abraham Lincoln. The book by Donald W. Riddle covers a period of three years in Lincoln's life just previous to his congressional term. The author states the work is not intended to represent a chapter in a Lincoln biography, but more especially "the report of an episode in western history."

Scott, Adrian

Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers

A play based on the letter Grace Bedell wrote to Abraham Lincoln and the reply she received. Five characters are required to present the play and it is divided into two scenes.

Wilson, Rufus Rockwell

Uncollected Works of A. L.

When Mr. Wilson first announced his intention of supplementing the Nicolay and Hay Works with a series of volumes which would pick up every fragment of known writings and speeches of Lincoln not appearing in the compilation by Lincoln's secretaries, it seemed as if his project was almost insurmountable. However, the publication of Volume Two, a 900 page volume, gives indication that Mr. Wilson intends to push the volumes through to their final consummation. A tremendous task has been undertaken and the second volume gives further evidence of the tremendous amount of Lincoln data unknown to Nicolay and Hay or at least unused by them.