

Lincoln and the Immigrant

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Bigelow, Bruce. "Lincoln and the Immigrant." *The Annals of Iowa* 75 (2016), 171-172.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12285>

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Reconstruction Republicans demonstrated their “environmental view of citizenship” in their treatment of southern freedpeople and western Indians. Both groups, Dean’s agrarians held, should learn to “farm the soil in soil-enhancing ways” and follow the agricultural path that would transform them into civilized Victorian Christians. This civilizing project stalled in the South because the “violent opposition” of southern whites blocked land redistribution and failed in the West because the Indians preferred “to maintain a hunting-and-gathering lifestyle” rather than take up farming (136). In Dean’s view, Reconstruction ended not with the withdrawal of federal troops from the South in 1877 but with the 1887 Dawes Act, a kind of Indian homestead act that allotted reservation land into private ownership in order to coerce native peoples into habits of cultivation.

The strength of this book is that it brings together several subfields of history—environmental, agricultural, and the history of the Civil War and of native peoples—all understood through the lens of agrarian fundamentalism. While some specialists in each subfield may quibble with details, this approach generates fascinating insights and should spark new lines of inquiry. Dean’s sources are almost all national in scope; how would this analysis look at the local level? If republicanism led to nature parks on a grand scale, did it also contribute to the appreciation of nature in cities and towns? How did the project of civilizing southern freedpeople and western natives play out in the sermons and newspapers of midwestern communities where those republican farmers already lived? To what extent did race play a role in defining the paired opposites of “barbarism” and “civilization?” Overall, *An Agrarian Republic* is a well-written, important book for specialists and general readers alike and should spark renewed interest in nineteenth-century midwestern agrarian values and practices.

Lincoln and the Immigrant, by Jason H. Silverman. Concise Lincoln Library. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015. 159 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Bruce Bigelow is professor of geography at Butler University. He is the author of “Who Voted for Lincoln in Indiana? The Voting Behavior of Ethno-Religious Groups in the Presidential Elections of 1860 and 1864” (*Journal of the Indiana Academy of Social Sciences*, 2005).

Jason Silverman has provided a succinct overview of Abraham Lincoln’s views and relationships with immigrants from his years as a young adult in Springfield to his term as president. Historiographically, Silverman has not actually broken new ground so much as he has gath-

ered into one book threads of arguments that can be found in other books on Lincoln that focus on matters other than immigration. Eric Foner's study of Lincoln and emancipation, for example, touches a bit on these issues, as do nearly all the major biographies, such as those by David Donald and Michael Burlingame. This is no criticism of Silverman, for he has done exactly what the editors of the Concise Lincoln Library series want from their authors: brief, accessible overviews of subjects related to Lincoln that give general readers solidly researched information on topics related to Lincoln. No other book focuses exclusively on Lincoln and immigration.

Lincoln came to Springfield in 1837 and remained there until he was president-elect in 1861. In 1860 Springfield's population was 50 percent foreign born, with Germans and Irish each constituting about 20 percent of the population, along with smaller communities of Swedes, Portuguese, and Jews. Lincoln was especially close to Germans in Springfield and the state of Illinois while serving in the state legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives as well as while running for senator and president. He took German-language lessons and bought a German-language newspaper. He also had close personal and political links to Swedes, Portuguese, and Jews. The *New York Herald*, a national Democratic paper, claimed that "in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Wisconsin [Lincoln's] victory [in 1860] was due to the large accessions he received from the Germans" (84).

Lincoln's relations with Irish Catholics were quite the opposite. They were staunch Democrats, and Lincoln feared that they voted fraudulently. However, unlike a number of other Republican former Whigs, he categorically rejected the nativist Know Nothings. The issue of nativism was a problem for Republicans, including those in all of the midwestern states because of the region's significant minority population of foreign-born residents.

As president, Lincoln rewarded the immigrant communities who supported him, especially the Germans. Franz Sigel and Carl Schurz became "political generals," and 12 other German leaders became diplomats in foreign consulates. Lincoln even befriended the Irish archbishop of New York, John Hughes, by appointing him emissary to the Vatican, France, and England so that they would not support the Confederacy. He also appointed the first Jewish chaplain of the U.S. Army and rescinded General U. S. Grant's banning of Jewish merchants from access to the army because they were "war profiteers."

Silverman concludes that Lincoln believed in equality of opportunity for all residents of the United States because of his devotion to the Declaration of Independence as the nation's foundational text.