

Lincoln in Indiana

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Book Reviews and Notices

Lincoln in Indiana, by Brian R. Dirck. Concise Lincoln Library. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. ix, 132 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Bruce Bigelow is professor of geography at Butler University. His publications focus on Indiana during the Civil War, especially politics, and also on the Midwest as a culture region.

The purpose of the Concise Lincoln Library series is to present lucid narratives for general readers about Lincoln based on recent research. Brian Dirck does a superb job in this regard, recounting Lincoln's upbringing in southern Indiana near the Ohio River from 1816, when he was seven, to 1830, when he became an adult legally. In the first book dealing exclusively with Lincoln's formative era written by a professional historian, Dirck describes the geographical, social, and political context of Lincoln's upbringing. His main source is the Herndon-Weik collection of interviews compiled in 1865 and 1866.

In chapter one, "Beginnings," Dirck follows the Lincoln family—father Thomas, mother Nancy Hanks, older sister Sarah, Abraham, and cousin Dennis Hanks—as they crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky to Indiana in 1816, the year that the "wild region" of dense forests, dangerous wildlife, and Native Americans became a state. The Lincolns moved because the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 made the land north of the river free soil that had been surveyed by a grid system that made the sale of land orderly and unambiguous.

In chapter two, "Roots," the author traces the ancestry of the Lincoln and Hanks families from Virginia to Kentucky. A major event in the Lincoln family was the murder of Abraham's grandfather by a Native American in 1786; in the Hanks family, there was the illegitimacy of mother Nancy and cousin Dennis. Dirck also discusses the demands of family farming on the frontier, including the removal of the forest, the construction of housing, and disease that took the life of Abraham's mother and sister.

In chapter three, "Mothers," Dirck focuses on the arrival of Lincoln's widowed stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston, from Kentucky along with three children to create a blended family. Dirck employs the concept of "Republican motherhood" to praise Abraham's two mothers for introducing him to books and encouraging his education. However, Lincoln only had about one year of formal public education.

In chapter four, "Father and Son," Dirck emphasizes the tension between Abraham and Thomas. The father provided well materially for his large family by farming and carpentry, but there was always the threat of failure and the county poorhouse. Thomas did not drink or gamble and was a member of a Calvinist Baptist church. Even so, Thomas was perceived as a "piddler" and was only semiliterate. Abraham, on the other hand, disliked manual labor, read constantly, did not participate in organized religion, and disliked having to turn over his wages to his father until he reached adulthood.

Chapter five, "Growing," emphasizes the alienation of father and son. The son created partial separation from the father by working in small businesses in nearby Ohio River towns and even took a long journey to New Orleans with another teenaged boy during which Abraham became disgusted with slavery upon seeing slaves in chains.

In chapter six, "Leaving," we see Abraham helping his family move to the central Illinois prairie in 1830 to farm richer soil. After the move, Lincoln quickly divorced himself from the family by moving to the Springfield region in order to ascend to the professional urban class. His example embodied the opportunity for success for ambitious white men in the urbanizing antebellum Midwest. The 1787 Ordinance made a great difference in Lincoln's life and for many other midwesterners.

Lincoln's Greatest Case: The River, the Bridge, and the Making of America, by Brian McGinty. New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., a division of W. W. Norton & Co., 2015. 260 pp. Illustrations, timeline, notes, bibliography, index. \$26.95 hardcover, \$15.95 paperback.

Reviewer Marvin Bergman has been the editor of the *Annals of Iowa* since 1987. He edited the *Iowa History Reader* (1996 and 2008) and coedited *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* (2008).

The legal case *Hurd et al. v. The Railroad Bridge Company*, better known as the *Effie Afton* case, is the subject of a paragraph or so in many histories of related topics, such as railroads, steamboats, Abraham Lincoln, and regional economic development in the Midwest. Here, in fewer than 200 pages of text, the case gets a detailed treatment and is thoroughly set in its context, with its ramifications also spelled out.

For context, readers are treated to accounts of such topics as steamboats and steamboating on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, the development of railroads and Lincoln's advocacy of that development, the history of bridge building going back to Roman times and beyond, the history of Rock Island (which includes Dred Scott's residence there as well as a brief account of the Black Hawk War, in which Lincoln