

Battle of Mill Springs (KY)

Cape May County Civil War Round Table Newsletter October 2015

15 October: Craig Caba will be discussing the J Howard Worth Collection of Civil War Artifacts from Gettysburg as well as anti-slavery efforts in Gettysburg.

Refreshments:

19 November: George French will be presenting a lecture on *The Battle of Falling Waters*. **Refreshments:**

?? December (date for Christmas dinner meeting to be determined)

LIST OF LOCAL EVENTS!!!

Members are encouraged to participate; if you have Civil War garb / uniforms, please feel free to wear it! We would also appreciate members attending helping by handing out flyers as well as telling folks about our group. MAC says we can have people at non-Civil War oriented events too, and some of them are listed herein.

11 Oct: MAC = Special Family Event at end of Victorian Week

16 Oct: Cape May County Historical Museum begins winter hours, tours only by appointment.

12 & 19 Dec: Christmas Open House at the Cape May Historical Society Museum

The County Historical Society and Museum would like us to add that they are looking for volunteers to help with many aspects of their work – from helping in the library, working in the gardens, to acting as tour guides/docents in the museum.

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Minutes of the Business Meeting 17 September 2015

President Runner brought the meeting to order and led us in the Pledge to the flag and asked for a moment of silence in honor of those who risk their lives to keep us safe and maintain our freedom.

Secretary Munson-Siter reminded the audience that 17 – 24 September is Constitution Week, during which we need to remember the importance of that founding document for not only our country but also those who have used it to base their own national constitutions on.

Treasurer Marshall presented his report. Motion made, seconded and approved to accept the report and file for audit.

President Runner reminded the members about how much the County Historical and Genealogical Society has supported the Civil War Round Table. In return, he would like to see more of our members give the Society their support – volunteer to help out, join the Society and encourage friends and family to join. We gave a round of applause for Donna

Metalucci, the current director of the Society, for her efforts on our behalf.

The anniversary of Sharpsburg is 25 October. There will be an anniversary walking tour of the battlefield, including the normally closed to the public area of Lost Lane.

Civil War Weekend at Cold Spring Village was pretty wet. Saturday was completely rained out, and Sunday they held a brief skirmish. Not a lot of people attended due to the weather.

150th for Winchester coming up. Keep an eye out online for there will be lots of events from September thru November in honor of the action's history.

Meeting was adjourned so Tracy Evans could begin the lecture on Lee's Lost Order for the Antietam Campaign.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A Munson-Siter
Secretary, Cape May County Civil War Round Table

Historical Civil War Events in November

1860

November 6 Lincoln elected to Presidency

1861

November 6 Jefferson Davis elected to 6 year term as president of the Confederacy

1862

Nothing of note happened

1863

November 6 Battle of Droop Mountain, WV
November 19 Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address
November 23-25 Battles for Chattanooga, TN (Lookout Mountain & Missionary Ridge)

1864

November 8 Lincoln elected for 2nd term
November 15 Gen. Sherman begins his "March to the Sea"

Civil War Related Events in November 2015

7 **MD** Walking tour, "Slavery and Emancipation in Maryland," meets at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. 10 am. \$25/includes gallery admission. Registration: mdhs.org

7 **MD** Talk, "Chemical Warfare in the Civil War," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick. 2:30 pm. Free with admission. civilwarmed.org

7 **MD** Film, "Andersonville," at the Surratt House Museum in Clinton. 6 pm. Free. surrattmuseum.org

7 **VA** Van tour, "CSS *Albemarle*," leaves the Mariners' Museum in Newport News and covers North Carolina sites related to the Confederate ironclad *Albemarle*. 9 am-6 pm. \$100. marinersmuseum.org/monitorfoundation

7 **VA** Living history walking tour, "Battle of Smithfield," begins at the Isle of Wight Museum, 103 Main St, Smithfield. 2 pm. Free. historicisleofwight.com

7 **VA** Walking tour, "Fort Huger," 17146 Monument Circle, Isle of Wight County near Smithfield. 10 am. Free. historicisleofwight.com

8 **DC-WV-MD** Bus tour, "The Road to Abolition: Harpers Ferry and Antietam," a Smithsonian tour. Leaves 550 C St SW in DC at 8 am. \$180. Details, registration: smithsonianassociates.org (click Civil War).

14 **VA** Lecture, "Civil War Photographs from the George Eastman House Collection," at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. 2 pm. Free. 703-591-0560.

14 **MD** Talk, "US Marines in the Civil War," at the USS *Constellation* in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. 2 pm. Free with admission. shipscompany.org

14-15 **VA** Civil War Show at the Richmond International Raceway, 600 Laburnum Ave, Richmond. 9 am-5 pm Saturday, 9 am-3 pm Sunday. \$8/adult. mkshows.com

19 **PA** Anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, memorial at the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. nps.gov/gett

20 **PA** "An Evening with the Painting," an "after-hours" experience with the Gettysburg Cyclorama at the Gettysburg NMP visitor center. 4:30 and 6:30 pm. \$20/adult. gettysburgfoundation.org/18

21 **DC-VA** Bus tour, "Civil War Battles at Kelly's Ford and Bristoe Station," a Smithsonian tour with Ed Bearss. Leaves 550 C St SW in DC at 7:45 am. \$190. Details, registration: smithsonianassociates.org (click Civil War).

21 **DC** Living history tour, "Courage! The Civil War in Washington," meets at 1001 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington. 11 am. \$15/adult. historictrolls.com/civil-war-tour.html

21 **VA** Walking tour, "Confederate Countermines," beyond the Crater at the Petersburg National Battlefield (Stop 5, Eastern Front). 1 pm. Free with park admission. nps.gov/pete

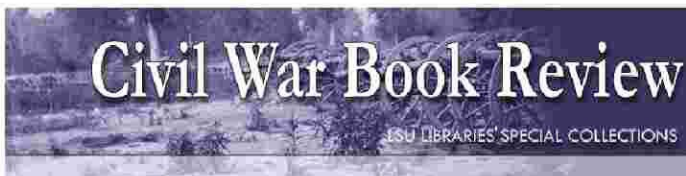
21 **VA** Living history, “Thanksgiving in the Trenches,” popular annual lantern program explores aspects of life during the siege at the Petersburg National Battlefield (Stop 3 Eastern Front). 5:30 and 6:45 pm. Free. Reservations required: 804-732-3531 extension 202. nps.gov/pete

21 **PA** Annual Remembrance Day Parade in Gettysburg. Begins 1 pm. suvchw.org

21 **PA** Illumination at the Soldier’s National Cemetery in Gettysburg. Luminaries on the graves 5:30-9:30 pm. Free. nps.gov/gett

22 **VA** Lecture, “Happy Birthday, Benjamin Huger!” celebrates the Confederate general, at the Isle of Wight Museum, 103 Main St, Smithfield. 2 pm. Free. historicsisleofwight.com

22 **VA** Living history, “Artillery Demonstration,” at the Petersburg National Battlefield visitor center. 1:30 and 4:30 pm. Camp, other demonstrations 1-4:30 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/pete



Lee’s Lost Dispatch and Other Civil War Controversies. By Phillip Leigh. Illustrated, photos, maps, notes, bibliography, index, 224 pp., 2015, Westholme, www.westholmepublishing.com, \$18.95 softcover.

Phillip Leigh has produced a thoughtful, thought-provoking and enjoyable book addressing some of the Civil War’s puzzles, scandals, mysteries and “what-if” subjects. It is a delightful “must-read” book.

Leigh makes the following assertions and discusses them in brief and interesting detail:

- The Confederates’ biggest mistake was misplaying its King Cotton advantage.
- The Union’s greatest error was its failure to promptly and massively manufacture breech-loading single-shot and repeating rifles – a failure attributable to Abraham Lincoln, Simon Cameron, Edwin Stanton, Ulysses S. Grant and the Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War.
- Opportunities were missed to possibly prevent the war – one of them being Union failure to more effectively reinforce Fort Sumter in January 1860.

- Union Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase creatively financed the war by explosively increasing revenues and deficit spending – and perhaps personally benefitted from his financial maneuverings.

- Chase’s daughter Kate and millionaire Rhode Island senator William Sprague became the Camelot couple of their day, but their marriage crashed as a result of Salmon Chase’s presidential ambitions, William Sprague’s trading with the enemy, and Kate’s infidelities.

- William T. Sherman, in November 1864, was responsible for the unnecessary destruction of most private dwellings in Atlanta, Cassville, Rome, Big Shanty, Marietta and other Georgia towns.

- George “Rock of Chickamauga” Thomas would have been a better choice than Sherman to lead the Union armies in the 1864 Atlanta Campaign, but Grant selected Sherman for several erroneous reasons.

- Union spies may have been responsible for the Spring Hill, Tenn., fiasco, in which John Bell Hood’s army allowed John Schofield’s trapped 23,000-man command to march unmolested past them on the night preceding the Battle of Franklin.

- The loss of a copy of Robert E. Lee’s famous Special Order 191 during the Maryland (Antietam) campaign remains a mystery, but there are several possible explanations.

- After Vicksburg’s fall, Florida became important to the Confederacy because of its cattle industry, but states’ rights, a railroad owner’s financial interests, and the cattlemen’s desire to resume profitable sales to Cuba combined to impede the movement of beef to hungry Confederate soldiers and civilians.

Many will question some of these contentions, but Leigh’s success is in making readers think about, or rethink, these issues. I highly recommend this book for Civil War buffs with inquiring minds.

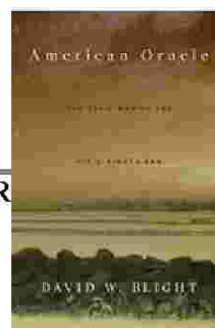
Ed Bonekemper, *Civil War News* Book Review Editor, is the author of five Civil War books and a nationwide Civil War Round Table speaker. This fall Regnery History will publish his sixth book, *The Myth of the Lost Cause: Why the South Fought the Civil War and Why the North Won*.

American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era

By David W. Blight

(December 2011 *Civil War News*)

<http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=20> Illustrated, photos, appendix, notes, bibliography, 314 pp., 2011,



*Belknap Press of Harvard University,
www.hup.harvard.edu, \$27.95.*

With the sesquicentennial of the Civil War now upon us, Americans, even 150 years later, still struggle over the meaning of the conflict: Was it a war to end slavery and reunite the nation or a conflict over states' rights? Perhaps there will never be an answer that satisfies all parties.

Now renowned author and professor David W. Blight, the writer of the thought-provoking *Race and Reunion*, has returned with a superb study of how Americans remembered the Civil War during the Centennial, just 50 years ago in the midst of the Civil Rights struggle.

Blight focuses on four writers whose books were highlights of the period: Robert Penn Warren, Bruce Catton, Edmund Wilson and James Baldwin. Each produced lasting studies that influenced a generation of historians and buffs through a combination of magnificent prose and deep research.

However, the works of the era, produced as the nation underwent the greatest upheaval since the Civil War, often ignored the salient issue of why men fought the war in the first place: slavery.

The issue "lurked like an unexploded grenade in a rubbish heap," as Warren wrote. Even the Federally sponsored centennial commission was unwilling to squarely address the issue; it allowed Southern delegates to relegate Northern black representatives to second-class status in the still-segregated South.

James Baldwin, the only black writer chronicled by Blight, wrote a searing counterargument to those who painted a picture of national progress. The nation had, in his opinion, done nothing in the last century to progress from the situation in 1877; in fact, all of the gains earned by blacks because of the war had been erased through Jim Crow legislation and mandated segregation.

Few of the works were as long-lasting, or had such impact, as those of Catton. His gripping trilogy on the Army of the Potomac, from the first paragraph about old men who had seen and done everything worthy in life during their youths to the surrender at Appomattox, captured the nation's attention. Even 60 years later, Catton's work continues to be published and mold upcoming Civil War historians.

Blight's essay on Catton is his most important. Using Catton's papers and books, Blight studies how the author,

an Oberlin College dropout, became the nation's foremost historian of the period. Through his beautiful prose and the work of a mysterious researcher, Catton produced a moving body of literature that seemed to bridge the divide between North and South and could be enjoyed by all Americans.

Although he wrote from a decidedly Northern viewpoint, Catton chose to all but ignore the central issue of the war, slavery, and instead focused on battlefield tactics and politics.

American Oracle is a book that is both appropriate and needed. A master at reconstructing how Americans remembered the Civil War, David Blight has once again written a study that all those interested in the war should read.

He tells how the war's central issue has continually been pushed aside in order to recreate a clean version of the past but now needs to be brought to the front and center. This is a great book.

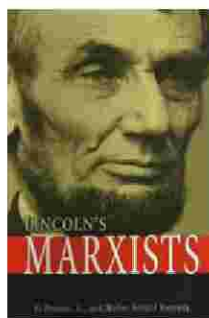
Reviewer: Robert Grandchamp, who recently completed a history of the 103rd Field Artillery and is working on several projects, including a biography of Col. Edward Cross, and the Siege and Capture of Harpers Ferry. He lives in Rockingham, N.H.

Lincoln's Marxists

Al Benson Jr. and Walter Donald Kennedy

(December 2011 Civil War News)

<http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=20>*Photos, notes, appendices, bibliography, index, 288 pp., 2011, Pelican, www.pelicanpub.com, \$24.95.*



Between the two hard covers of Lincoln's Marxists are assembled nearly as many absurdities as have ever appeared in one book about the Civil War without the intention to commit comedy.

Reduced to a single sentence, the authors' fundamental argument is this: "The election of Lincoln and the destruction of thirteen sovereign states of these United States were accomplished with the assistance of European communists and socialists."

Ergo, Abraham Lincoln and the Union were agents of communism and socialism, and, as such, were part of a grand and ongoing conspiracy of foreigners, Jews and atheists to undermine and destroy Christianity and liberty in America. If you are not laughing by this point, you should be — or crying.

I wish I could say that Lincoln's Marxists is merely an example of spectacularly bad reasoning — in this case, guilt-by-association — since it is true that an indeterminate number of German communists and socialists fought on the Union side in the Civil War. True, but also irrelevant.

An indeterminate number of drunks fought in the Union armies too — in fact, they were ultimately commanded by a recovering alcoholic — without that making Lincoln an inebriate or part of a conspiracy to drown the nation in Demon Rum. And the Confederacy was hardly a free-labor arrangement, was it?

In this case, however, the association of Lincoln and the Union with “communists and socialists” is so tenuous and so devoid of real content that it would have beggared the imagination of Joe McCarthy.

The authors even anticipate their own folly when they insert a pre-emptive wince at the plain statement of their views: “we are not attempting to prove that either the Republican Party or Lincoln was at heart socialist or communist.” But no sooner have they awarded themselves this indulgence, than they feel free to get down to the real delights of historical fantasy.

Here are four of their eureka's:

1. Lincoln had a lot in common with Karl Marx: “Lincoln was more than ready in the 1860s to implement in the United States what Marx had given his blessing to in Europe in 1848: centralism, collectivism, and socialism.”

This will come as a genuine surprise to anyone who has studied the internal history of the Confederacy, which nationalized industries, imposed an internal passport system on its citizens, and instituted centralized national conscription for the first time in American history.

Ah, the authors add, here is the proof: Lincoln “soon enacted Marx's ‘Heavy, progressive or graduated income tax.’” But students of Civil War-era finance must respond: the income tax introduced in 1863 by the U.S. government had only two gradations — it was, for all practical purposes, a flat tax — a 3% bracket for all incomes under \$10,000 per annum and then a 5% bracket for those over that limit.

By contrast, the Confederate government, which also levied a tax on incomes, established steeply progressive rates, beginning with 5% on incomes from \$500 to \$1,500 per annum, rising to 10% for incomes from \$1,500 to \$5,000, then 12.5% for incomes from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and finally 15% for those over \$10,000.

2. Marx endorsed Lincoln: Yes, he did, in a memorial from the International Working Men's Association presented to the U.S. legation in London in November 1864. On the other hand, Prince Albert intervened on behalf of the U.S. during the Trent Affair, and the King of Siam offered to assist Lincoln by

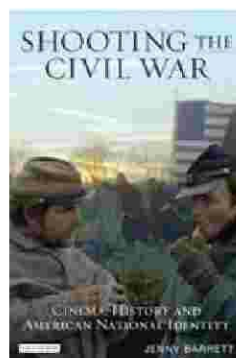
dispatching a war elephant to aid the Union armies, without any of that meaning that Lincoln was a closet monarchist.

By the same token, the Confederacy was endorsed by Otto von Bismarck and Emperor Napoleon III, which by the authors' logic makes the Confederacy the friend of dictatorship.

3. Hitler endorsed Lincoln: All right, the authors concede, not in so many words, but certainly in similarity of purpose. Because Hitler believed in a 1000-year Reich, and Lincoln believed that the Union was “perpetual,” therefore, Lincoln believed the same as Hitler.

Even worse, “Lincoln's men moved from suppression of rebellion to nothing less than Nazi-like acts of genocide.” Of course, the authors add, “we are not suggesting that Lincoln was an early Nazi or that Hitler based his total philosophy on Lincoln's ideas.” — except when we are: “Yet there is a shocking similarity between the views of these two men.”

4. Lincoln was an unbeliever: Because Carl Sandburg says that Lincoln admired Robert Owen, this becomes proof that Lincoln was an Owenite socialist and therefore a non-Christian. It is true that Lincoln never joined a church or embraced any form of religious confession. But the man who composed the Second Inaugural and introduced the phrase “under God” into our national usage was certainly not an “unbeliever.”



The one virtue of this book is the introduction it affords to the galaxy of German radicals and refugees from the failed German Revolutions of 1848 who emigrated to the United States, and who did indeed fight in large numbers on the side of the Union.

It has been the unthinking habit of many historians to treat Louis Blenker, Joseph Weydemeyer, Franz Sigel, Carl Hecker, Edward Salomon, Friedrich Kapp, Karl Heinzen, Peter Osterhaus, August Willich and Carl Schurz — all of whom appear in this book in luridly red colors — as frowsy-haired idealists with poly-syllabic philosophies and Sergeant Schultz accents. They were anything but, and some of them were indeed confidantes of Marx and Engels.

But it takes truly Olympic jump-to-conclusions to assume, as the authors do, that these few radicals somehow seized control of the Republican Party in 1860, infected the party platform in 1860, and got Lincoln elected as the first American socialist president.

Lincoln, after all, was the president who made his fortune as a lawyer evicting squatters from railroad land, presided over the largest privatization scheme in American history (the

Homestead Act), and affirmed that he wanted no laws that would keep a man from getting rich.

The authors, I am sure, are wounded by what they see in the America in which they live, and in their pain they turn in vicious circles, seeking whom to blame. I think there are better nominees for them to consider; I also think there are better authorities for them to appeal to than crackpots of the order of Rousas J. Rushdoony, Thomas Di Lorenzo and Donald Livingston.

Above all, I think there is something satisfying in contemplating a president and a cause that struck the shackles of slavery from four million of their fellow Americans. The Marxists, I am relieved to say, have much more to worry about from the example of Abraham Lincoln than we do.

Reviewer: Allen C. Guelzo, who is the Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era and director of Civil War Era Studies at Gettysburg College.

Shooting the Civil War: Cinema, History and American National Identity

By Jenny Barrett

(December 2011 *Civil War News*)

<http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=20>Photographs, charts, notes, appendix, bibliography, index, 220 pp., 2009, I.B. Tauris, www.ibtauris.com, \$29.00 softcover.

There seems to be no shortage of Civil War films. To date, 700 have been made — ranging from the 1915 silent movie “The Birth of a Nation” to the more recent “Gods and Generals” and “Cold Mountain.” They naturally reflect a wide range of cinemagraphic treatments of this country’s mid-19th century crucible.

As a result, they all possess obstacles to an understanding of the complexities of the war itself. Recognizing this inherent problem of using film, an art form, to reflect the historical reality of the war, Jenny Barrett has taken a different approach.

Shooting the Civil War embraces the premise that it is more productive to compare Civil War films to each other than to some “objective” historical image of the war. To that end, Barrett looks at movies about the war through the prism of one of three movie genres: the pure war film, the domestic melodrama and the Civil War Western.

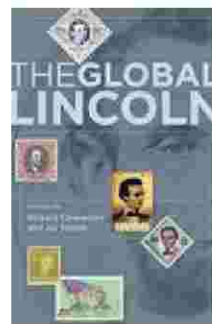
Her objective is to compare them to one another and to question what is being “said” about the United States as a nation and not to judge or read them according to an “external referent,” the war itself.

Believing that there is no such thing as a Civil War genre, Barrett has conceptualized this interesting book along the lines described above and analyzes four films within each category. Thus, within the domestic melodrama genre, Barrett compares “So Red the Rose” (1935), “Gone With the Wind” (1939), “Friendly Persuasion” (1956) and “Ride With the Devil” (1999) to each other rather than to some predetermined historical reality of the war. In separate chapters, she examines at length the classic “Birth of a Nation,” the problematic “Gods and Generals” and “Cold Mountain.”

The result, at least for this reader, is an engaging and instructive approach to assessing a diverse and, in many ways, odd collection of films produced over the span of a century.

Barrett’s conclusion, for example, after studying “The Drummer of the 8th” (1913), “The Red Badge of Courage” (1951), “The Horse Soldiers” (1959) and “Glory” (1989) — the four films examined in the war category — deals not with what is presented, but what is not.

“What is missing from these combat films,” she writes, “is a considered exploration of the political motivations behind the Civil War.... Instead, the two armies of the Civil War must be seen to fight a war that somehow just happened, like an uncontrollable and unavoidable force.”



One of Barrett’s insightful and general observations, looking across all three genres, is that “slavery is regularly given only passing mention or is ignored.”

In “Gods and Generals,” for example, Barrett observes that “slavery is sanitized.” Since a part of her purpose here is to

determine what these films say about the United States as a society, the author discerns, quoting Benedict Anderson, that “If slavery is forgotten, the nation that is imagined is one free of guilt.”

And because slavery is so sublimated to other themes in the films considered, “Glory” being an obvious exception, Barrett notes that no Civil War film yet made has had a central black character who survives the war, fathers the children of the future, and “stands as a representative of the whole American nation, not only its ethnic population.”

Taking the approach that she has, Barrett offers a set of interesting conclusions that would not have been reached had she taken a different approach. The real Civil War, she argues, has been largely forgotten in the cinema and replaced by a myth of the birth of the nation, an era to which the white American viewer can turn to satisfy a “quest for personal roots.”

Likewise, Civil War films have imagined an ahistorical, blameless and thoroughly honorable American national identity

wherein “the American white ancestor was brave, thoroughly masculine and ready to die for the nation.”

In short, Barrett asserts, by ignoring the historical Civil War and replacing it with a largely mythic version, the celluloid Civil War presents a past that never was.

To that end, she considers “Cold Mountain” to be an anomaly among Civil War films. That film, she writes, “allows the possibility that the American Civil War did not purge the nation of its flaws, that not every American ancestor is truly worthy or honourable.”

Shooting the Civil War is a refreshing look at the celluloid war that offers useful insights into the industry that produces this genre of film and the society that watches those films.

Reviewer: Dwight Pitcaithley, who is a professor at New Mexico State University. He retired as chief historian in 2005 after a 30-year career with the National Park Service.

The Global Lincoln

Edited by Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton

(December 2011 Civil War News)

<http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=20>

Illustrated, photos, notes, index, 344 pp., 2011, Oxford, www.oup.com, \$29.95.

The shot that killed Abraham Lincoln also martyred him. Nearly immediately after his death, Lincoln’s enormous achievements began to receive international recognition. As the closing decades of the 19th century saw increased American attention to Lincoln’s legacy, so too did his perceived saintly stature advance throughout the world.

Lincoln came to represent, in a single person, the great founding principles of the American republic.

In Western Europe particularly he was the embodiment of the enlightenment ideas of liberalists Locke, Hume, Smith and others. Worldwide, the perception of Lincoln’s genius in saving the American Union, his republicanism, his humanitarian politics and actions as “The Great Emancipator” and, above all, his persistent advocacy of popular government, made him a hero to those striving themselves for self-government.

“Lincoln lost his nationality in death,” said Welshman David Lloyd George, World War I Prime Minister of Britain, to whom Lincoln was a personal hero.

These are the themes explored in *The Global Lincoln*. In the summer of 2009, the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University in England, in partnership with the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, convened a conference of leading scholars to explore Lincoln’s international legacy.

This book collects the papers submitted by principal conference participants. Seventeen essays examine the influence of Lincoln’s legacy in regions spanning the geographic and political globe, from Britain and Western Europe to East Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Despite this “global” approach, several of these essays should attract the American history enthusiast. Harold Holzer’s prolific authorship is known well to students of Lincoln; his essay on the international images of Lincoln, both literal and literary, is informative and entertaining as always.

Lawrence Goldman outlines comprehensively the British perspective of the era. Goldman observes that British responses to Lincoln cannot be separated from their responses to the war itself. He concludes puckishly that any study of the subject should, “... proceed with caution, as Lincoln did throughout his career.”

More subjectively, Adam I.P. Smith interprets Lincoln in the dreams of English imagination. And acclaimed Welsh historian Kenneth O. Morgan’s description of the appeal to radical Welsh of a dirt-poor, log cabin-born Lincoln is an exceptional narrative in itself. It seems all Welsh of the time were radical, dirt-poor and cabin-born!

For an American reader having roots in the Wales of the early 1800s, Baron Morgan’s treatise is alone worth the price of this book.

Perhaps curiously for a book devoted to a global, i.e., ex-America, examination of Lincoln’s legacy, Yale’s David Blight devotes his essay to the American South of the postwar era. Acknowledging this seeming paradox, the editors explain that the seceded states considered themselves an independent power for four years.

They were conquered by force of arms and were occupied and governed as a defeated power afterward. Blight concludes that this was Lincoln’s legacy for “Southrons,” engendering a hatred of him during the war and resentment of what he represented decades after.

Excellence of these essays is thus high and uniform. Given the authors’ credentials, scholarship should be unquestioned.

Yet, to an American ear there is a singular dissonance in this mostly adulatory chorus. In the keynote leading essay, editors and conference conveners Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton pointedly emphasize that “Central to Lincoln’s appeal abroad was his reputation as the archetypal self-made man.”

The observation is assuredly correct, but the “self-made” motif is not further developed by them. And, while the theme is echoed generally by others among the authors, it is only sotto voce, as if from a reluctant, intellectual distance.

A reader is inescapably left with the question: Well, just exactly what does “self-made” mean to these authors? Deferential references to Lincoln’s impoverished, frontier upbringing, self-education and “Rail Splitter” industriousness do not suffice.

Lincoln’s rise to political prominence and the presidency was made possible in large part because he possessed substantial personal wealth. His “self-made” affluence was enabled by the economic opportunity available to individuals in 19th century America.

By the time of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Abraham Lincoln was a rich railroad lawyer. And he achieved his wealth, with concomitant social and political status, neither by inheritance nor entitlement, but by dint of his own hands and head.

Unique among the nations of the world, America in Lincoln’s time was a land of virtually unlimited economic opportunity — opportunity assured by America’s Constitution. Men born into the class system of England, or into the still-feudalistic, corrupt monarchies of continental Europe, could not aspire to anything like the opportunity afforded to free Americans of the early 19th century. Why this can’t be emphasized in a book about Lincoln is a puzzlement indeed.

Despite the above comments and other minor disappointments, The Global Lincoln is an excellent book. While the collected essays may not be central to an understanding of Lincoln’s place in American history, the reader will benefit nevertheless from international perspectives interpreted by some of the best historians of our age.

Cape May County Civil War Round Table
c/o

Reviewer: James MacDonald, a retired U. S. Coast Guard officer living in the Pacific Northwest. As all of his great-grandfathers were Ohio veterans of the Union Army, MacDonald considers himself a survivor of the Civil War.



This stamp honoring the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Shiloh was issued April 7, 1962 in Shiloh, Tennessee.