

*Getting Right with Lincoln: Correcting Misconceptions about Our Greatest President*, by Edward Steers Jr. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2021. xiii, 198 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Mark E. Steiner is professor of law at South Texas College of Law Houston. He is most recently the author of *Lincoln and Citizenship* (2021).

Edward Steers' latest book is, in some ways, a sequel to his book *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations Associated with Our Greatest President* (2007). Steers is again combatting "myths" about Lincoln, although his sworn enemy here is "the growing trend" of revisionism (151). Presumably, the book's title is a nod to David Donald's famous essay "Getting Right with Lincoln."

The nine chapters cover a wide variety of topics. It isn't clear sometimes why some of these topics are considered misconceptions awaiting correction. One chapter covers the 1928–29 publication of love letters between Lincoln and Ann Rutledge. There hasn't been any doubt that these letters proffered by Wilma Frances Minor in *The Atlantic* in 1928–29 were forgeries since Paul Angle's devastating critique was published in the spring of 1929. Steers adds little to Don E. Fehrenbacher's lecture, *The Minor Affair: An Adventure in Forgery and Detection*, published over forty years ago. Steers also included a chapter about this publishing fiasco in *Lincoln Legends*. With that said, the chapters that work best are the ones in which Steers updates or revisits topics from the earlier book (Ann Rutledge, the Bixby letter). While Steers cautiously approaches the reminiscences gathered by William H. Herndon after Lincoln's death, he sides with those scholars who believe Lincoln was once in love with Rutledge. On some topics where Lincoln scholars differ, Steers surprisingly concludes: "[E]ach side selectively cherry-picks the evidence, and there is plenty of evidence to choose from either side of the question" (54). This seems somewhat cynical and a far cry from battling the "wrong side of revisionist history" (xiii).

Other chapters examine the constitutionality of the creation of West Virginia and the Union policy that promoted trade between the North and the Confederacy. These two topics don't seem to be current sources of misconceptions about Lincoln, although the trade policy does figure in some far-fetched Lincoln assassination theories. Steers' brief account of West Virginia's seceding from the seceders is marred only by his failure to cite the definitive 2002 article by Vasan Kesavan and Michael Stokes Paulsen.

Steers' revisionist foes figure more prominently in other chapters. The one on Lincoln's health works best, possibly because of Steers' background as a biomedical researcher. The least successful chapter is the

one on Lincoln and race. Steers is horrified by those who portray Lincoln as a white supremacist or supporter of colonization. He considers the “colonization theme” to be a myth on the same level as claims that “Booth escaped and Edwin Stanton was behind Lincoln’s murder” (110). Steers fails to consider recent scholarship on Lincoln and colonization or colonization generally, which needs to be taken seriously. Steers mocks General Stanley McChrystal for saying Lincoln thought slaves “should go back to Africa” since by the 1850s most of the slave population would have been born in the United States. But Lincoln in 1852 referred to “restoring a captive people to their long-long father-land” and in 1854 he said he wanted to send freed slaves “to Liberia—to their own native land.” Steers correctly insists that “we examine Lincoln’s colonization views critically in their entirety” but fails to do so (110). He doesn’t examine Lincoln’s support of colonization in his 1852 Clay eulogy or his 1862 address before African American leaders.

Steers is incorrect to suggest Lincoln always “stood resolutely against slavery, and for equal rights for blacks”; Lincoln very clearly rejected Black citizenship in his debates with Stephen A. Douglas (122). Lincoln in the 1850s was against slavery, against equal rights for African Americans, and for colonization. These were the mainstream positions for white Northerners. Steers favors the approach that any statement made by Lincoln that supports colonization or seems racist was politically expedient. He doesn’t consider the possibility that Lincoln meant what he said about colonization and subsequently changed his mind on Black citizenship and colonization during the Civil War. In both this book and *Lincoln Legends*, Steers criticizes historians for “flip-flopping” on Ann Rutledge (41). Lincoln also flip-flopped on colonization and Black citizenship. Changing one’s mind doesn’t really seem like a bad thing.

*A Geography of the Hutterites in North America*, by Simon M. Evans. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. xxiii, 320 pp. Figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index, maps. \$65.00 hardback.

Reviewer Carol A. Medlicott is an associate professor of geography at Northern Kentucky University. A historical geographer, her work has been published in *Timeline of the Ohio Historical Society* and *American Communal Studies Quarterly*, and she is the author of *Issachar Bates: A Shaker’s Journey* (2013).

Among Anabaptist sects, Hutterites often represent a conundrum to outsiders. Like other “old order” groups, they tend to adopt distinctive dress and language. But uniquely, Hutterites embrace large scale mechanized agriculture and explicitly practice communal living. Instead of quaint horse-and-buggy transport and oil lamps, their farms comprise