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## Lincoln's Confidant: The Life of Noah Brooks

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*Lincoln's Confidant: The Life of Noah Brooks*, by Wayne C. Temple, edited by Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis. Knox College Lincoln Studies Center Series. Urbana, Springfield, and Chicago: Knox College Lincoln Studies Center and University of Illinois Press. xvii, 283 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Robert B. Mitchell is an editor with the Washington Post News Service. He is the author of *Congress and the Kind of Frauds: Congress and the Credit Mobilier Scandal at the Dawn of the Gilded Age* (2017) and *Skirmisher: The Life, Times, and Political Career of James B. Weaver* (2008).

When a part-time editorial writer for a newspaper in Dixon, Illinois, met an ambitious politician in the summer of 1856, the encounter proved memorable for both men. Abraham Lincoln, in Dixon campaigning for Republican presidential nominee John C. Frémont, displayed an “irresistible force of logic” (47) that made a profound impression on Noah Brooks. One month later, Brooks talked with Lincoln about Frémont’s remote chances of victory and Republican prospects in 1860. Thus was born the bond between the future president and the newspaperman that forms the heart of Wayne C. Temple’s illuminating biography of Noah Brooks.

That bond was remarkable in part because it wouldn’t be renewed for several years. Looking for a home and career, Brooks migrated from his hometown of Castine, Maine, to Boston and then Illinois before continuing his vagabond ways after his encounter with Lincoln. Fixated, like many Iowans, on the struggle between pro- and anti-slavery forces in Kansas in the years before the Civil War, Brooks moved to the territory in 1857 to support the free-soil movement. In 1859 he relocated to California. Settling in Marysville, Brooks found his calling when he bought a minority interest in the daily *Marysville Appeal* and rallied to Lincoln’s standard in its pages. After the death of his wife and infant son in May 1862, he headed to Washington as a correspondent for the *Sacramento Union*.

Learning of Brooks’s arrival in Washington, and recalling their encounters in Illinois, Lincoln immediately invited Brooks to the White House — “and nothing could have been more gratifying than the cordiality and bonhomie of his greeting when I called,” Brooks recalled (75). Before long he would occasionally be invited to stay overnight with the Lincolns or eat breakfast with the president. Brooks sometimes accompanied Lincoln to the War Department, where the president would read the telegrams that brought the latest news on the war.

Entrée into Lincoln’s inner circle informed Brooks’s reporting, Michael Burlingame notes in the book’s introduction (xiv), but “Lincoln could be assured that their private conversations would not be pub-

lished without his permission," Temple writes (77). Although he shared the president's sense of humor and love for the theater, Brooks recognized that his "close and confiding" friendship with Lincoln did not put him on the same plane as Joshua Speed or Edward Baker (76). But he possessed the confidence of Mary Todd Lincoln, unlike presidential private secretary John G. Nicolay and his assistant, John Hay. That helps to explain why, in 1865, Lincoln picked Brooks to succeed Nicolay, who was on his way to a diplomatic appointment in Paris.

When the tragedy of the assassination intervened, Brooks returned to California and the newspaper business while working as an editor of the literary *Overland Monthly* with writer Bret Harte. Brooks eventually returned east to join the *New York World* and the *New York Times*. When he retired to Castine, he wrote prolifically about Lincoln and a variety of other subjects.

Adapted from Temple's dissertation and edited by Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, *Lincoln's Confidant* is the work of a rigorous scholar. Temple excels at describing the friendship between Lincoln and Brooks, but their relationship during the war fills only three of the book's eleven chapters. The reader is left wanting more about those years and less about some of Brooks's experiences in the decades that followed. (An entire chapter focuses on Brooks's involvement in New York literary and social clubs when a few pages would have sufficed.) Nevertheless, *Lincoln's Confidant* is a valuable contribution to the literature on the sixteenth president and his associates.

*Campaign for Wilson's Creek: The Fight for Missouri Begins*, updated edition, by Jeffrey L. Patrick. Civil War Campaigns and Commanders Series. Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2018. 224 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kenneth L. Lyftogt is a retired lecturer in history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of several books on Iowa and the Civil War.

There is a certain geographical integrity to the Civil War, a war between the states, North against South. That clear division, however, did not apply to the border states and definitely did not apply to Missouri. Civil War scholars who attempt to explain Missouri accept quite a challenge. As the National Park Service librarian at the Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, author Jeffrey L. Patrick is up to the task. His easy familiarity with the complexities of Missouri and of the Battle of Wilson's Creek makes his book a comfortable read.

The Battle of Wilson's Creek, on August 10, 1862, was the defining battle of the war in Missouri, helping to set it on its course as a Union