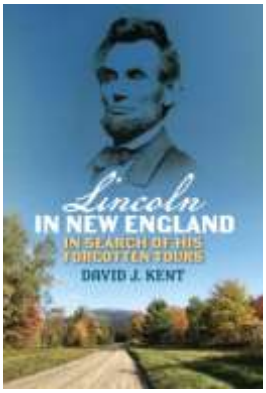
Book Reviews by Dr. Tom Peet

(Editor's note: Dr. Peet has chosen to follow the same format used by David J. Kent in his reviews for this publication. One review will come from recently released literature, usually something from the current year or the previous year. The other review will examine an older but worthwhile read—a classic Lincoln tome or one of the more obscure books.)

Recently Released



Kent, David. *Lincoln in New England: In Search of His Forgotten Tours*. Essex, CT: Globe Pequot, 2026: 263 pp.

David Kent is one of my very favorite Lincoln authors. His *Lincoln: The Man Who Saved America* and *Lincoln: The Fire of Genius* are at the top of their class. The first made Lincoln accessible to readers of all ages without oversimplifying or being condescending and remains the book that I recommend as the best introduction to Lincoln in print. The second looked at Lincoln through the eyes of a capable scientist, which yielded a dramatic new perspective. Lincoln's Discoveries and Inventions Lecture, rather than being a failure as claimed by his friends and many historians, was in fact a confirmation of Lincoln's insights and myriad contributions, whether they be a farmer, boatman, surveyor, politician, lawyer, lecturer, inventor, or president, as evidence of his commitment to the science and technology that would make America's modernization possible.

With *Lincoln in New England: In Search of His Forgotten Tours*, Kent has written yet another fascinating and unique Lincoln book. I was one of the first to pre-order it, months before it became available on Amazon. To his credit, Kent is unafraid to lean upon local experts and historians for their insight and guidance along Lincoln's lesser-known New England journeys, and readers benefit from his humility and inquisitiveness. This is a book of multiple aspects: autobiography, biography, travel guide, travelogue, political commentary, political education, art tour, art exploration, contemporary writers, contemporary political figures, Lincoln sculpture, Lincoln sculptors, genealogy, homes of distant Lincoln relatives, and "you are there" visits to homes and halls where Lincoln stayed, ate, and spoke. It is in the end a beautifully woven tapestry that is the first book to thoroughly examine *both* of Lincoln's speaking tours to New England.

Lincoln's first political campaign in Massachusetts took place in 1848 and was an attempt to unify the fracturing Whig party behind their slave-holding candidate, Zachary Taylor. This tour has largely been forgotten, even by the cities and towns that he visited, and is barely mentioned by many historians, if at all. Carl Sandburg's account of Lincoln's 1848 trip, for example, is barely three pages and completely ignores the critical political lessons that Lincoln certainly learned about abolitionists, Free Soilers, Cotton Whigs, and Conscience Whigs, lessons that Kent examines in detail as he visits and describes each stop as it exists today. Often, only a plaque marks a building where Lincoln spoke or a hall that no longer exists. Frequently nothing does.

Kent's prose is always interesting and can be downright witty, as with his reference to the "influential writers radiating out from Concord, where the spirit of the American Revolution still emanated strongly. These included such tripartite-monikered luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and John Greenleaf Whittier, not to mention Nathaniel Hawthorne, who somehow did not get the memo about being known by three names." (p 79) That one made me laugh out loud.

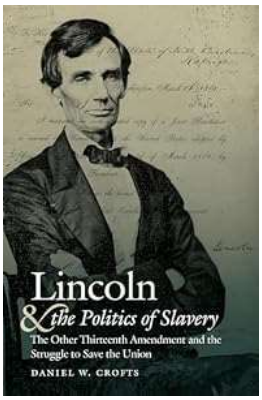
Lincoln's second tour of 11 cities in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut after his Cooper Union Address in New York City on February 27, 1860, is much better known thanks to Harold Holzer's landmark work, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*. Kent does not go into great detail about the Cooper Union speech itself—nor does he need to—because it is so well documented in Holzer's book. Where Holzer was a bit light in his description of Lincoln's visit to the 11 cities subsequent to his Cooper Union Address, Kent more than fills in the gaps. As he did with Lincoln's 1848 trip to New England, Kent provides a map with all stops carefully charted, a very useful tool for those (like me) who might like to travel in Lincoln's footsteps. Each stop is both described as it was in 1860 and as it exists now (supplemented with many illustrations and photos). Where possible, Kent provides details of Lincoln's speeches, noting how his Cooper Union Address evolved during the trip along with his realization that he was a viable presidential candidate. Kent also notes what additional sites current visitors might wish to visit in each city that are interesting and off the beaten path.

Kent wraps up the New England portion of his tour at Hildene, Robert Lincoln's home in Manchester, Vermont, and what a wonderful visit that turned out to be. He carefully documents his tour of the entire house, which included "at least one area not usually open to visitors." (p. 213) The house was filled with memorabilia. Outside the house, Kent was able to tour Robert Lincoln's personal Pullman car, the *Sunbeam*, which was built for him in 1903 when he was president of the Pullman Company.

In his thoughtful epilogue, Kent documents important lessons that Lincoln learned from his trips to New England: First, the candidate matters. "Fremont had won New England . . . but not Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, or California, all states crucial to a Republican win in 1860. Counting votes and evaluating public sentiments, Lincoln assessed that the presumptive Republican nominee, William H. Seward, was unlikely to win all these states." Second, party divisions matter. "No longer Conscience versus Cotton, the new Republican Party captured the main northern Whig factions as well as the antislavery portions of the Free Soilers, Democrats, and Know Nothings, shedding former Whigs in the South to the Democrats." Finally, party unity was critical. "Understanding that the Republican candidate would have to win based solely on Northern votes, Lincoln worked hard to dispel internal splitting along regional priorities." (pp.

238-239) However, David Kent didn't, nor did he need to remind his readers of the greatest lesson of history: Abraham Lincoln still matters. And so does this book. Highly recommended.

Classic Literature

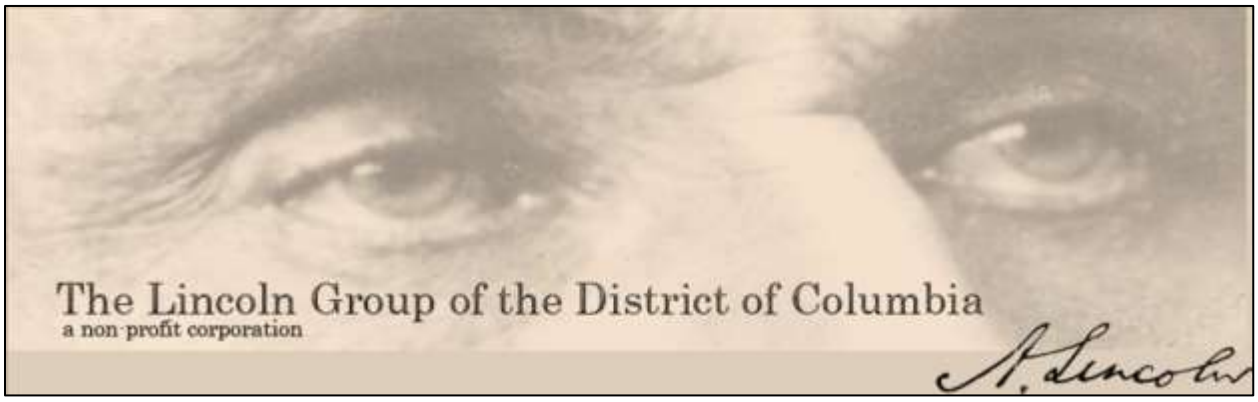


Crofts, Daniel. *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016; 368 pp.

Daniel Crofts began his book talks of *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery* by asking participants if they had seen Stephen Spielberg's masterpiece *Lincoln* (which, in 2016, would have only been four years ago). He then proceeded to inform his audience that his book wasn't about *that* 13th Amendment but another one that was never ratified. I am embarrassed to note that my former home state of Ohio was one of only six states to ratify the original 13th Amendment of 1861, which would have perpetuated slavery in the states where it existed and was unamendable. Maryland, Kentucky, Rhode Island, Illinois, and Virginia were the other states that ratified *this* 13th Amendment. Lincoln, in fact, approved it—he said so in his First Inaugural Address—hoping that the amendment would defuse the tension over slavery, preserve the Union, and avoid a disastrous civil war. Lincoln (working behind the scenes), William H. Seward, and Thomas Corwin (a congressman from Ohio) masterminded its passage in Congress just before Lincoln's inauguration. Crofts takes on "feel-good folklore" to ascertain what really happened, arguing that even Abraham Lincoln had unrealistic notions of what the Founding Fathers intended concerning slavery (his Cooper Union speech being confirmation of this viewpoint in Crofts' mind). Lincoln, Crofts asserts, did not enter office intending to end slavery and free the slaves despite myths to the contrary that suggest that's exactly what "The Great Emancipator" planned. That would have split the party, which was unified on the narrow platform of preventing slavery in the territories.

The great achievement of the Founders, argues Crofts, was that of creating a strong federal government (that unfortunately placed Southern slaveholders on a superior footing than the more populous North thanks to the 3/5 Compromise). The deliberately ambiguous language of the Constitution, which never mentioned slaves or slavery (enabling both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln to argue that it was an anti-slavery document and William Lloyd Garrison to burn it as a "covenant with death, and an agreement with hell") that operationally favored the South. The 1860 presidential election was the first corrective to the unequal power wielded by the South, and the South overreacted, misled by leaders who knew better. Sound familiar? The

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