

*Lincoln's Autocrat: The Life of Edwin Stanton.* By WILLIAM MARVEL. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 611 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.)

Civil War scholar William Marvel has authored a lengthy and extensive biography of Lincoln's shrewd and flamboyant secretary of war. Chronologically and topically arranged, this meticulously researched work, which is the first study to appear about Stanton in over fifty-three years, depicts him as an aggressive, erudite, and imperious lawyer. Marvel also shows that Stanton developed effective leadership skills during the presidency of the Pennsylvanian James Buchanan. The author cogently explains how this moderate Democrat gradually embraced the cause of the Radical Republicans.

The first two chapters concentrate on Stanton's early career in eastern Ohio. Born on December 19, 1814, to Lucy Norman and the physician David Stanton, Edwin was privately tutored and then attended the town's "Old Academy." After his father's unexpected passing, Edwin entered the workforce. By 1831, the serious and diligent Stanton attended Kenyon College, exhibiting interests in history, political science, and debate. After his apprenticeship in the Steubenville law office of Benjamin Tappan, Stanton became his partner. He married Mary Lamson on December 31, 1836.

The next four chapters illustrate his success as a lawyer and his interest in politics. He achieved victories in civil and criminal cases in Steubenville and Cadiz, Ohio, where he became Harrison County's prosecuting attorney. In 1844, he supported James Polk for the presidency. Moving to Pittsburgh after his wife's death, he entered the practice of Charles Shaler. Stanton won a major victory in the *Pennsylvania v. Wheeling and Belmont Bridge* case in 1850, demonstrating that this company violated the interstate commerce clause. Stanton also vindicated the patent rights to Cyrus McCormick's reaper. In 1856, he married Ellen Hutchinson, whose family wealth would enhance his career. Of particular interest is a section about Stanton's meticulous legal work with California land claims during Buchanan's presidency.

The seventh chapter especially describes Stanton's ties to the Buchanan administration. Stanton denounced the Dred Scott decision, thus revealing his moderate antislavery stance. Succeeding his friend Jeremiah Black as attorney general in late 1860, he admonished Buchanan to repudiate Southern secessionist activities. Lincoln appointed Stanton to serve as secretary of war in early 1862.

The next eight chapters explore Stanton's activities during the Civil War. In 1862, he convinced Lincoln to remove George McClellan as commander in chief of Union armies and became McClellan's enemy. That September, he also exerted pressure on the president to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. That same year, Stanton ordered additional troops to General Ulysses S. Grant to enable a Union victory at Vicksburg. Marvel maintains that the autocratic Stanton exerted enor-

mous influence upon Lincoln in 1864 to appoint Grant as Union commander in chief. There also are detailed accounts about Stanton's dislike of General William T. Sherman and of other Union generals, about his imperious control of the war department, and about his excessive and abusive use of military tribunals.

The last four chapters reveal much about Stanton during Reconstruction. Marvel depicts Stanton's grief after the 1865 assassination of Lincoln and his swift actions in thwarting other Confederate conspirators. Marvel presents cogent explanations for Stanton's aggressive activities as a Radical Republican, for his defense of the Reconstruction Acts, and for his support of the impeachment efforts against President Andrew Johnson, who had attempted to dismiss him as war secretary. After being appointed to the Supreme Court under President Grant, the fatigued Stanton, who had suffered from asthma, died on December 24, 1869.

This biography is an illuminating study. Marvel has consulted government sources, memoirs, and autobiographies to reveal that Stanton was a cunning and effective leader. Massively detailed and gracefully written, this biography well might have had subtitles in each chapter and might have contained a glossary. This revisionist study perceives Stanton quite differently from the biography by Benjamin Thomas and Harold Hyman. Marvel's work will prove to be controversial to some scholars, but ultimately it will be recognized as a significant study of this prominent Civil War leader.

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*City in a Park: A History of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park System.* By JAMES MCCLELLAND and LYNN MILLER. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015. 375 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$39.50.)

This is a chatty and lavishly illustrated volume that will enhance anyone's coffee table. In chapters that combine a historic overview with focused accounts of such topics as recreational activities, transportation, historic houses, and public art, the authors offer helpful information about Philadelphia's incomparable park system. The three final chapters in particular provide a detailed account of the reorganization of park administration following disestablishment of the Fairmount Park Commission (FPC), as well as a survey of current sustainability and improvement projects. A list of parks in the appendix is especially useful.

Unfortunately, the book does not fulfill the promise of its title. Imprecise statements and factual errors intrude, as in the introduction—Penn's plan of Philadelphia was published in 1683, not 1688 (1). Other examples include the following: the Schuylkill is still a source for the city's water supply; Lemon Hill came "on the market" in 1843, not 1844, and the city did not buy it from an "absentee