realistic personality who distinguished himself in a variety of activities, e.g., his involvement in the development of one of the oldest Catholic newspapers, in spearheading the development of Catholic education on all levels in his diocese, in urging the founding of the oldest hospital in Western Pennsylvania, and in his affiliations with various religious congregations which he brought to the Diocese of Pittsburgh to satisfy the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Beyond these levels of his active ministry, Bishop Michael O’Connor is clearly portrayed in this book as a nineteenth-century personality expressing a twentieth-century mentality.

Because this volume is exceptionally well documented — an extensive compilation of primary source materials is included — the reviewer is tempted to categorize the work in a complimentary manner as being genuinely a “historian’s biography.” At the same time, however, the author’s consistent style and his well-balanced presentation of facts, enriched by his sensitivity towards human interest elements make this biography an appealing reading experience for the general public as well.

Appearing occasionally throughout the publication, the graphics and illustrations created by Marty Wolfson contribute artistically to the overall design and format of this biographical account of Michael O’Connor, First Bishop of Pittsburgh.

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In 1972, Floyd E. Risvold, Minnesota businessman and American history buff, bought a manuscript based on the assassination of President Lincoln. The acquisition changed his daily routine for three years, as he “tried to run a business while seemingly living in the America of the nineteenth century.”

Mrs. Alma Murphy Halff had sold Risvold the manuscript, which had been completed in 1902 by her uncle, Louis Weichmann. He had been chief government witness at the trial of John Wilkes
Booth and his fellow conspirators in 1865.

General Lew Wallace, a member of the military commission that conducted the trial, said of Weichmann's conduct, "I have never seen anything like his steadfastness. There he stood, a young man only twenty-three years of age, strikingly handsome, self-possessed, under the most searching cross-examination I have ever heard. . . . Although the Surratts were his personal friends, he was forced to appear and to testify when subpoenaed. He realized deeply the sanctity of the oath he had taken to tell the truth, and his testimony could not be confused or shaken. . . ." But Louis Weichmann became the trial's scapegoat for the rest of his life when, to the outrage of many, Mrs. Mary Surratt was hanged.

When Weichmann arrived in Washington to work for the War Department, a chance meeting with his former school friend, John Surratt, led to his boarding at his friend's home. He immediately became a puzzled but alert observer of men meeting in this home with John Wilkes Booth as leader. Often the group met in a hotel or restaurant, and Weichmann was invited to come along. Then Booth began to ask Weichmann to mail letters; he used him to run little errands such as sending telegrams or asking men to meet with Booth at his hotel.

Mrs. Mary Surratt treated Weichmann as if he were a son. He made trips with her to Surrattsville, Maryland, her hometown. This was a dangerous ride, for Southern blockade runners were numerous. She always had a plausible excuse: she needed vegetables and fruit, or Mr. Nothey owed her money, or she had to deliver some heavy packages for Mr. Booth to be stored in Joshua Logan's inn. (Booth's excuse for riding to Surrattsville was to "buy land," or to look for promising oil property.) At first, Weichmann believed that Booth really meant what he said; later, he began to doubt.

As time passed, Weichmann noticed that John Surratt and his friends were sorting pistols, knives, and cartridge belts and the like on beds, and attempting to hide them. He also saw Booth holding whispered conversations with these men, who, he later found out, were involved in the assassination of President Lincoln. However, it was too late to notify the police department. He often talked about the Surratts and Booth with Captain D. H. Gleason, a member of the Veterans Reserve Corps, who worked with him in the War Department. Weichmann later wrote, "My only regret in this whole affair is that I did not go to Secretary Stanton and inform him of the occurrence." In fact, his first words, on hearing of the assassination,
were "My God, I see it all."

To recall to readers the people on trial for the assassination and the conspiracy to assassinate President Lincoln, their part will be briefly reviewed.

Michael O’Laughlin was a Confederate soldier who was assigned to kill General Grant, but failed. George A. Atzerodt, who had been hired to ferry Confederate sympathizers across the Potomac, was delegated to kill Vice-President Andrew Johnson, but did not succeed. Lewis Payne, a man of many aliases, was a Confederate soldier who severely wounded Secretary of State Seward, his two sons, William and Augustus, and Mr. Emerick W. Hansell of the State Department. Samuel Arnold withdrew from the group when Booth discarded his original plan to kidnap Lincoln. David Herold, who led Payne to Secretary Seward’s home, accompanied Booth into Maryland. He loyally remained with Booth until captured by Federal cavalrymen in Garrett’s burning barn.

There were other principals in the conspiracy. John Surratt gave up the routine of office work for blockade running for the South. To quote Weichmann, "Surratt was often riding about on sleek and well-fed horses, and girded around the waist with a brace of well-loaded revolvers." Always elegantly dressed, Surratt was the only member of the conspiracy to escape after the assassination; he became a soldier in the papal Zouaves. When his part in the assassination was disclosed by a friend, Surratt fled across Italy, was pursued to Alexandria, Egypt, then was returned to the United States for trial. Dr. Samuel A. Mudd set Booth’s leg after his jump from the president’s box in Ford’s Theater and his long dash into Maryland. Edward Spangler, a scene shifter at Ford’s Theater, helped prepare Lincoln’s box for the assassination and aided in Booth’s escape.

Since there was still fighting in the South, the federal government decided upon a military court for the assassins. Washington, as seat of military operations, was still vulnerable. A military court asserted its right to try the nine conspirators by a military commission. The trials began on May 9, 1865. Three hundred forty witnesses were called before trials were completed. On June 29-30, 1865, the commission met to consider evidence presented against each of the accusers, and sentences of hanging were pronounced upon David E. Herold, Lewis Payne, George A. Atzerodt, and Mary E. Surratt. Many people violently disagreed with Mrs. Surratt’s sentence, and Weichmann later found it almost impossible to secure employment in government agencies, despite letters of recommendation from in-
fluential officials. Sentenced to hard labor for life were Michael O’Laughlin, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, and Samuel Arnold. Arnold received a sentence of hard labor for six years in the prison on the Dry Tortugas, off the Florida coast.

John Wilkes Booth was shot when he tried to escape from Garrett’s burning barn, much to the chagrin of the commission, which had especially wanted to bring him to trial. Booth’s death was ignominious; he was wrapped and tied in a blanket, carried by boat to Washington, where his body was identified. He was buried at night in a secret grave near the old United States Arsenal. In February 1869, his body was reinterred in the Booth family plot in Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland, without an epitaph.

In his diary he wrote, “I can never repent it, though we hated to kill. Our country owed all her troubles to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment.”

A question enters the reader’s mind: did Weichmann turn state’s evidence simply to save his own life, as many of his contemporaries believed, and was he actually a member of the conspiracy? His whole environment and upbringing would be against betrayal of friends. His happy, studious Catholic preparatory and college years, his pride in his friends, his willingness to help people, his regular church attendance, and his oath on his deathbed that he was innocent, all are to his credit.

There is other valuable material in Weichmann’s book. The story of the trial is followed in an appendix by a collection of additional source material from newspapers and letters. The first entry is a group of clippings about Weichmann’s life in Indiana. Because he found it difficult to hold a position for any length of time after the trial, he decided to follow his brother, Father Weichmann, to Anderson, Indiana, in 1886. There he founded a highly successful business school, managing it until his last illness in 1902. His funeral was conducted at St. Mary’s Church, with Father Weichmann celebrating the mass.

The Rockville lecture given by John Surratt at Rockville, Maryland, on the conspiracy and assassination of President Lincoln, was attended by Weichmann. During the lecture, Surratt denounced Weichmann and implicated him in the plot. Many newspapers criticized Surratt’s lecture for flippancy, and for silence on the role played by his mother in the plot.

The next entry in the appendix is a valuable collection of twenty-three letters between Weichmann and Almarin Cooley Richards, a man
who defended him against the accusation made by John Surratt when Surratt was interviewed by Hanson Hiss for a *Washington Post* article. The appreciative Weichmann asked for Richards's Florida address, and the correspondence began. The result: valuable insights on the trials of the conspirators, from 1898 through 1901. Richards had been superintendent of metropolitan police in Washington from 1861 through 1864, and had been present at Ford's Theater on April 14.

Finally, there is Surratt's interview with Hanson Hiss in the *Washington Post*, April 3, 1898. It contains nothing new about the trial, and may be considered to be a warmed-over version of his notes from the Rockville lecture.

Floyd Risvold's editing of this great mass of material is painstaking. He has given readers of Lincolniana access to an account of the conspiracy hitherto known but to few people. Weichmann's writing has fine narrative and descriptive power with excellent use of detail. It also creates a picture of a young man eager to lead a useful, happy life, but whose opportunity to do so was lost on April 14, 1865.

*Pittsburgh*  
Florence C. McLaughlin


*Pennsylvania's Black History* is a frustrating book. If it were not for the subject, the scope of the work, and the general tone of the writing, it would not be so frustrating. Then, one could simply put down the book and forget it. But the subject is timely, important, and interesting. This work is needed, and Blockson has made an attempt to be encyclopedic in his presentation. His style of writing is simple, adequate, and sometimes compelling; but having decided that this work is worth reading, the frustration grows out of its terrible organization.

Blockson has arranged his material in perhaps the worst possible manner for holding a reader's attention. He has broken the state down into groups of counties. Within this geographical arrangement are alphabetical entries, first of places and then of persons connected with black achievements in the state. But, in such an organization, there are no themes, no threads to hold the material together. Each brief item stands by itself, resulting in an extremely disjointed presen-