history of the Confederacy than a biography of its president. Disappointingly, too, he handles Davis's life after 1865 in a chapter too brief to be very thorough or illuminating. Despite the efforts of a renowned historian, then, the "sphinx" retains much of his mystery and awaits another biographer's efforts.

Department of History  
Mississippi State University  
Mississippi State, Mississippi  

John F. Marszałek


This book is brought to you by the authors who have master-minded other historical farces into moneymaking operations. Among their credits are "In Search of Noah's Ark," "The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams," and "Chariots of the Gods" (produced by Sellier). Their company, Schick Sunn Classic Books, also published Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster. They have found a formula for producing television scripts (the basis of their books) that raise mystifying questions and tease the audiences with unsubstantiated explanations. They are as close to the truth as the old horror films of the 1940s, such as Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein. But Balsiger and Sellier commit an unforgivable offense by attempting to endow their stories with scholarly attribution. They claim that "the investigation had a highly sophisticated and scientific side" (p. 9). This includes missing persons bureaus, psychological stress evaluators, toxicology tests, and special infrared and ultraviolet photography. To whom and to what these tests were administered, and for what reasons, the authors never say.

The authors' qualifications as objective scholars to undertake a reassessment of the conspiracy against President Lincoln are suspect. They are scriptwriters and producers for Sunn Classic Pictures which they argue "is the second largest family entertainment motion picture company in the world" (p. 319). Balsiger is a graduate of National University (a vocational and business-oriented school), but neither has had the training or experience to be a research scholar.

Their handling of evidence reveals how inadequate they are as scholars. For example, they claim to have used eighteen missing pages
of the "purported Booth diary" (p. 11). But they explain that they obtained only a transcript of the missing pages from the person (unnamed) who now holds the diary. Still they argued they "had the contents evaluated by historical experts" (unnamed) but were unable to acquire copies of the original pages to authenticate the diary. Without determining the veracity of these transcripts, the authors then proceed to use them as the basis of their book. Other problems with evidence exist. Their sources for analyses of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a key figure in the conspiracy they say, include a 1961 article from the Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, a 1905 biography of Stanton, and a 1925 issue of True magazine (see pp. 15-18, footnotes 4-12, p. 303). This could hardly be called objective evidence for scholarly attribution. They also rely heavily on Theodore Roscoe's Web of Conspiracy, another questionable source that received no endorsement by Civil War or Lincoln historians.

These authors are trying to exploit the paranoia and skepticism of the American public which has been aroused by McCarthyism, the Kennedy and King assassinations, and the Watergate crimes. The authors argue that the conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln included power-hungry public officials in Washington who hired the Booth gang, stifled witnesses from presenting testimony, allowed John Wilkes Booth to escape, and, in time, poisoned Colonel LaFayette Baker when he threatened to expose the plot. Booth, the authors claim, escaped to England and India, returned to the United States where he lived quietly and in disguise. Possibly, they say, an Enid, Oklahoma, citizen who died in 1900 and whose body was mummified was the real John Wilkes Booth!

As they weave this story the authors lead the reader through dialogue and evidence which they base on questionable sources. On page 116, for example, they write that Stanton confronted Baker with a document that claimed that Baker was party to the conspiracy. Stanton questioned Baker about this document, but there the dialogue ends. The reader is left with the impression that Stanton was aware of the conspiracy but wished to do nothing about it. The basis for this dialogue is Baker's cipher-coded manuscript, another of those newly-found documents these authors claim to have used. But again they cite no location of this evidence whereby professional historians or critics can check their evidence.

Like other books that have suggested a broad conspiracy that reached into the high levels of government, this book points the finger of guilt at the Radical Republicans, Secretary of War Stanton, and
Colonel LaFayette C. Baker, chief of the secret service. Yet, Civil War historians know that such accusations are preposterous. A close personal relationship existed between Lincoln and his secretary of war. While Stanton had a difficult personality owing in part to his diabetic problems, no one should believe he was Lincoln's Brutus. Similarly the breach between Lincoln and the Radical Republicans has been exaggerated; in reality, their differences were akin to the gulf between President Ford and the Reagan Republicans in 1976. And, surely, no sane person believes the Reaganites contemplated assassination of Gerald Ford. Perhaps the best word on Baker's credibility is Allan Nevins, the renowned Civil War historian, who wrote that Baker was "a notorious fabricator of evidence in trials" and whose word is flimsy (The War for the Union [1971], 8: p. 334).

All in all, this book represents a genuine ignorance of history and the use of evidence. The Lincoln Conspiracy makes for awful history, awful fiction — and, yes, even awful television fare!

Department of History
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, Pennsylvania

W. Wayne Smith


This book is the second part of a two-part documentary history of the Harmony Society in Indiana during the period 1820-1824. The first part covered the period 1814-1819 and was reviewed in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 58 (October 1975). The Indiana Decade is only one part of a much larger work envisioned by Dr. Arndt that will cover the whole history of the Harmony Society from about 1785 to about 1905.

This volume is a continuation of Volume 1 and is not very different from that volume in either format or content. The overall purpose of the work is to tell the history of the Harmony Society through its documents. Although the Harmonists had a fascinating history in the field of technology, manufacturing, town building, farming, and commerce, Dr. Arndt's main interest is their religion. This is quite correct as they were a religious society and everything they did was connected