

**Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement,** by Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, University of Missouri Press

Reviewed by Harold Holzer



## Did Lincoln Want to Ship Out Blacks?

**A**braham Lincoln may have been a “Great Emancipator,” but he was a rotten colonizer—or at least a vexingly inconsistent one—ineffective, too devious for his own and the nation’s good, cavalierly racist when it suited him and painfully slow to lose interest in the whole ludicrous notion, if he ever really did. Or so recent scholarship has maintained. This fascinating little book provides the latest fuel for the fire that’s still burning in historical circles about the most controversial and elusive facet of Lincoln’s presidency and philosophy.

What makes this book exceptional is that its authors have turned to an entirely neglected archive—the lode of Lincoln material reposing in British and other European repositories—to argue

that the 16th president pursued secret schemes to resettle large numbers of African Americans longer than previously understood, perhaps as long as a full year after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and he possibly even revived the notion near the time of Appomattox and his assassination.

Phillip Magness and Sebastian Page are not the first scholars to draw similar conclusions. In a significant though controversial recent essay, historian Mark E. Neely dismissed the image of Lincoln as a reluctant colonizer, labeling his philosophical interest as pure and his political efforts in pursuit of it amateurish. But Magness and Page are the first to mine this particular stash of new material, and to consider it amid new scholarship from Neely, Eric Foner et al.

Some readers will undoubtedly be convinced that Lincoln plotted the wholesale resettlement of blacks during and after the midpoint of the war. But others will reasonably question Lincoln’s concurrent public embrace of black recruitment and the rewards that such soldiers would earn—including citizenship and the right to vote, as he made manifest in his final speech. Those who consider this book the final word in the debate cast a guilty verdict at their peril.

The authors are to be saluted for their enterprising and original research. They have made an important contribution to the literature. But the colonization discussion should continue. Nothing has yet convinced me that after 1863, Lincoln truly wanted African Americans to disappear from this country, or that he was doing more than appeasing conservatives and potential interventionists with such diversionary speculation. As Magness and Page themselves point out, Lincoln’s brand of conservatism “defies such easy labeling.”

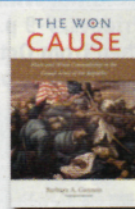
**An 1863 carte de visite shows Columbia holding the Emancipation Proclamation, flanked by slaves wrapped in the U.S. flag.**



## Postwar Quest for Equality Continues

**The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic,** by Barbara A. Gannon, University of North Carolina Press

Reviewed by Gordon Berg



**F**or newly freed African Americans, the Gilded Age was a time of white racism, segregation, disenfranchisement and violence. Some historians have claimed that African-American veterans were marginalized during that period by white comrades in favor of reconciliation with white former foes. But Barbara Gannon argues that “black and white veterans were able to create and sustain an interracial organization...because the northerners who fought and lived remembered African Americans’ service in a war against slavery.” Gannon’s first book is an insightful examination of the ways individual memory and historical fact meld together to create an organization’s and a nation’s public identity.

Gannon has identified 467 integrated GAR posts where white and black veterans shared “a transcendent bond—comradeship—that overcame even the most pernicious social barrier of their era—race based separation.” She studied the GAR using veteran memoirs, black newspapers and local archives, including many from all-black posts. That allowed her to focus “less on how race separated Civil War veterans and more on what brought them together as members of the GAR.”

Unfortunately, Gannon also found that most white veterans, while embracing black comrades, allowed racism to shape their views on people of color in general, making “no connection between freeing slaves in 1865 and protecting their civil rights in 1895.” Thus the struggle for real equality would continue on into a new century.