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# Abraham Lincoln as Great Father: A Look at Federal Indian Policy, 1861–1865

*Thomas A. Britten*

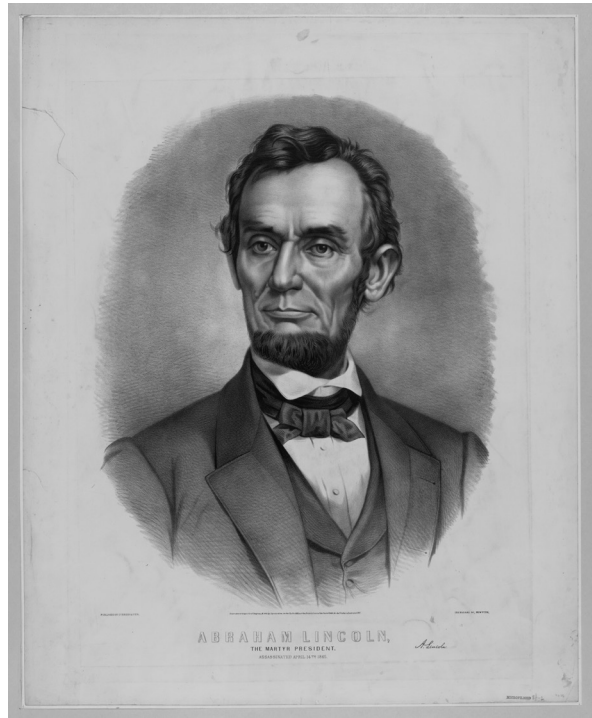
In light of Lincoln's exceptional leadership during the nation's four-year Civil War ordeal, it is unsurprising that Americans today generally regard Abraham Lincoln as the most effective and influential president in United States history. Indeed, at a recent International Lincoln Center conference, one speaker suggested that pollsters revise their annual rankings of "best presidents" and simply name Lincoln a "national god" so that other chief executives have a chance at the top spot.<sup>1</sup> Yet some of Lincoln's contemporaries criticized him as a tyrant who routinely subverted civil liberties and as bloodthirsty for demanding that his generals pursue an aggressive strategy to kill Confederates and destroy their armies. Public opinion underwent a transformation of sorts following his assassination in April, 1865: Lincoln was thereafter widely depicted as a martyr, the nation's savior, and a compassionate and fair-minded leader.<sup>2</sup> As the savior of the Union and symbol of the sturdy pioneer and American democracy, Lincoln continues to be the subject of innumerable biographies, novels, poems, essays, movies, and works of art.

Although scholars too have left few stones unturned regarding Lincoln's life and legacy, the Indian policy of the "Great Emancipator" has been handled sparingly. Newly freed African Americans looked to the president as "Father Abraham," but the nation's 340,000 Native Americans called him simply the "Great Father," using the paternalistic appellation kings and presidents employed to reinforce their governments' often-precarious hegemony over "primitive" Native peoples. For the first three centuries of European and Native coexistence, dignitaries representing European states, and

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**FIGURE 1.** Abraham Lincoln, The Martyr President—Assassinated April 14th 1865. Currier & Ives lithograph portrait, 1865. Image from the Library of Congress.



subsequently the new United States, all negotiated hundreds of treaties with sovereign Indian nations, many of which agreements promised money, goods, and services in exchange for enormous cessions of land. Consequently, policymakers' significant objectives included fulfilling the government's treaty (or trust) responsibilities while at the same time they devised new ways to expand their control over Indian lands. As this article will explore, what was the direction and nature of Indian policy during Lincoln's administration? How faithful was Lincoln in fulfilling the nation's trust responsibilities to Native Americans given the Civil War's incredible demands on his time and energy? In short, what kind of "father" was he?

Some scholars believe that two often-told stories about Lincoln's pre-presidential years hold clues to understanding his attitudes with respect to American Indians. The first involved the murder in May 1786 of his grandfather, also named Abraham. According to Lincoln family legend, the elder Abraham Lincoln was putting in a crop of corn with his sons, Josiah, Mordecai, and Thomas (the future president's father), when they came under attack by a small war party of Indians, possibly Shawnees. In the initial volley, the forty-two-year-old Abraham fell and Mordecai shot and killed one of the assailants. Their father's death led to the family's subsequent poverty and Mordecai became a fierce Indian hater for the rest of his life. In an 1854 letter to his relative Jesse Lincoln, Lincoln wrote that the story of his grandfather's death and his uncle Mordecai's lifelong hatred of Native Americans in response was "the legend more

strongly than all others imprinted upon my mind and memory.” Just how that memory influenced Lincoln’s subsequent Indian policies, however, is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty. While it may have given him “a personal and family reason for bitterness toward Indians,” it is equally plausible that the family narrative of Mordecai’s pluck and courage in driving off the attackers left a largely positive image in Lincoln family history of an otherwise tragic event.<sup>3</sup>

The second tale features Lincoln and a Native American and allegedly took place in 1832 toward the end of the Black Hawk War, when Lincoln was a captain in the Illinois militia. Lincoln did not experience any combat (save battles with mosquitos), but years after the conflict a story surfaced that Lincoln had saved the life of an elderly Indian man who had wandered into camp seeking refuge. Most of Lincoln’s men viewed Native Americans as savages and barbarians and had volunteered in hopes of fighting and killing Indians. For them, the unexpected appearance of the elderly Native, whom the story refers to as a “warrior,” was a stroke of luck that provided them a final chance to spill Indian blood as the war was ending. Before they could act, Lincoln intervened: stepping between his men and the old man, the tall thin captain declared, “Men, this cannot be done. He must not be shot and killed by us.” Furthermore, he said, if they thought he was a coward for stopping them, they were welcome to test that theory.<sup>4</sup>

The Black Hawk War anecdote is an impressive story of personal courage in the face of daunting peer pressure that, if true, reveals elements of Lincoln’s moral character—his commitment to justice, for instance, and his rejection of malice toward Native Americans. To adherents of the mythologized Lincoln, the Black Hawk War anecdote would have provided a useful counterweight to the story of the killing of Lincoln’s grandfather and their subsequent poverty: while Lincoln had every reason to harbor negative attitudes about Native Americans, this story evidences that his legendary sense of justice and magnanimity were clearly present nearly three decades before the start of his presidency. Therefore, if the Lincoln administration’s Indian policies proved detrimental to Native interests, it could not be because of latent anti-Indian attitudes on the part of Lincoln as Great Father.

Perhaps because of Lincoln mythologizing and related emphasis on the president’s adept management of the Union war effort, scholarly interest in the Lincoln administration’s Indian policies lay dormant for a century after the president’s death. During the late 1960s and 1970s, however, the rise of the modern Indian rights movement sparked renewed interest in American Indian histories and cultures, which in turn fostered the emergence of Native American studies programs at colleges and universities across the country. During this time historians Harry Kelsey, Edmund Danziger, Jr., and David A. Nichols provided the initial, most frequently cited studies of Lincoln-era Indian policies.<sup>5</sup> Two articles written by Kelsey in 1971 and 1974 depict the president and Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Parsons Dole as inexperienced with Indian-related issues, but nonetheless well-intentioned and attentive to what they perceived as the government’s moral obligation to care for them. According to Kelsey, the Lincoln administration strove to reform the Indian Bureau’s many abuses and inefficiencies, but powerful western land interests and their allies in Congress stymied their efforts. While by no means perfect, “any summary of the

accomplishments of Lincoln's Indian policy," Kelsey maintains, "would have to conclude that Indian gains exceeded Indian losses."<sup>6</sup>

Danziger's fine book *Indians and Bureaucrats: Administering the Reservation Policy during the Civil War* (1974) ignores Lincoln altogether. "President Lincoln exerted minimal influence on Indian affairs during his presidency," Danziger maintains, and "deferred questions of Indian policy and administration to appropriate congressional committees or to the Office of Indian Affairs." Danziger focuses his attention on the administrative problems facing superintendencies and agencies in the West, particularly those dealing with the Cheyenne and Dakota Sioux.<sup>7</sup> Nichols's *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (1978) makes a much sharper critique of Lincoln's role as Great Father. Lincoln was a traditional assimilationist, a proponent of concentrating Indians on reservations, an advocate of Indian removal, albeit voluntary, an abuser of the patronage system, and an inept manager of the government's response to the Confederacy's recruitment of Native American auxiliaries in Indian Territory. Nichols argues that had Lincoln exercised decisive leadership, the subsequent humanitarian crisis that unfolded among Cherokee and Creek refugees in Kansas might have been avoided, or at least ameliorated. Like Kelsey and Danziger, Nichols acknowledges that Lincoln and Commissioner Dole knew little about Indian affairs and had few personal interactions with Native Americans prior to taking office. Federal Indian policy was never Lincoln's first concern, Nichols asserts, but rather a "nagging problem," periodically breaking into his consciousness and demanding men and supplies as well as his time and energy.<sup>8</sup>

After summarizing many salient points these historians made some forty years ago, this article will expand the discussion in some respects and offer new perspectives in overlooked areas. The Lincoln administration is certainly responsible for the Indian policies advanced during the Civil War years, but it is unclear just how much time and energy Lincoln himself invested in his role as Great Father. In addition to uncertainty about his direct engagement in Indian policy matters, Lincoln was a most complex individual whose personal beliefs about race relations and his specific attitudes about Native Americans and their position in mid-nineteenth-century America remain shrouded in conflicting scholarly opinion.<sup>9</sup> The primary sources consulted include Lincoln's annual messages to Congress, the online collection of Lincoln's papers at the Library of Congress, the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1861 to 1865, and the William P. Dole papers at the Huntington Library. They provide only glimpses into Lincoln's contributions, however, and even less about Lincoln's personal attitudes regarding Native Americans.

In the context of Lincoln-era Indian policies, what, if anything, was novel or different under Lincoln? Kelsey's argument that "Indian gains exceeded Indian losses" during Lincoln's tenure as Great Father, in particular, requires evaluation in this larger context.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln was, of course, responsible for the policies advanced under his administration even if, as Danziger concludes, he exerted "minimal influence on Indian affairs during his presidency."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, because Lincoln's policies were, for the most part, consistent with those of his predecessors and shared many of the same goals, federal Indian policies under Lincoln were often reactionary, poorly envisioned, and

contradictory, suggesting a lack of seriousness, inadequate planning, and/or ignorance of Native American histories and cultures. While some Lincoln-era Indian policies were certainly well intentioned, they did irreparable damage to Native American societies and severely diminished the Indian land base.

The major thrust of federal Indian policy during the first half of the nineteenth century was directed toward assimilating the First Americans and converting them to a non-migratory, agrarian lifestyle. If, as Thomas Jefferson hoped, Native peoples could be convinced to abandon the hunt and to take up the plow, their land requirements would diminish and they would presumably be open to selling what they did not need. When Native peoples balked at the prospect of abandoning their traditional homelands, cultures, and subsistence activities, removal became the government's solution to its increasingly dysfunctional and exploitive relationship with Native peoples, or what policymakers increasingly referred to as the "Indian Problem." Ignoring Supreme Court decisions in the 1830s that upheld at least a degree of Indian sovereignty and land rights, the US government ordered the military to oversee the horrific process that displaced tens of thousands of Indians living east of the Mississippi to allegedly vacant lands west of the river. Federal officials apparently believed that Native Americans residing in the vaguely defined "Indian Country" west of the Mississippi River would have a respite from subsequent removals, but this was not the case. A new era of aggressive settlement and colonization was ushered in with newly acquired lands in the Southwest, followed closely by the discovery of gold in California and the decision to organize the Kansas and Nebraska Territories.

In the decade preceding the Civil War, to clear the way for white settlers federal officials negotiated dozens of treaties with tribes residing on the Central Plains and the Southwest, some of them only recently removed from the east. Writing in 1856, Commissioner of Indian Affairs George W. Manypenny separated the treaties into three classes: those of peace and friendship, those that acquired Indian lands and then divided those lands among individual tribal members as a means of weakening tribal cohesiveness and organization, and those that colonized tribal communities on reservations. In general, antebellum treaties provided for permanent reservations with clearly defined boundaries together with agricultural implements and supplies, which were intended to encourage the Indians to adopt farming, manual labor, and the goal of self-sufficiency.<sup>12</sup>

The Lincoln administration's Indian policies were largely in keeping with these precedents. Like Jefferson, Lincoln believed that embracing agriculture was the key to Indian self-sufficiency and upward mobility. At a meeting with Plains Native dignitaries in March 1863, Lincoln instructed his aides to bring in a globe and had Professor Joseph Henry from the Smithsonian give them a lecture on world geography. White men controlled large portions of the globe and vastly outnumbered their red brethren, Lincoln argued, because they cultivated the earth and depended upon its products rather than wild game for their subsistence. A second reason why whites outnumbered Indians, Lincoln continued, was that whites were less prone to violence. Although engulfed in a horrific civil war, Lincoln admitted, the white race was not "so much disposed to fight and kill one another as our red brethren." Before departing

the meeting, Lincoln offered some final advice: "I can see no way in which your race is to become as numerous and prosperous as the white race except by living as they do, by cultivation of the earth."<sup>13</sup> Such a prescription, however, was at odds with the burgeoning industrial economy of the United States; Lincoln may have reasoned that transforming Native Americans into farmers would be far easier than converting them into urban-dwelling factory workers.

The Lincoln administration was likewise a proponent of a critical step in detribalization and assimilation: allotment, the policy whereby reservation lands were divided among Native residents who would henceforth become individual property holders. Efforts to break up tribal landholdings had roots stretching back to the colonial era, but the first significant occurrence was after the War of 1812, when Andrew Jackson negotiated a treaty with the Creeks that included individual allotments. During the 1820s to the 1830s, several treaties included allotment provisions, with some assigning individual land for Indians who agreed to remove beyond the Mississippi River and others for Indians who chose to remain in the east. During the 1840s to the 1850s, government interest in allotment intensified as politicians, missionaries, and reformers came to believe that the so-called "allotment of land in severalty" was the only way to "civilize" and "save" the First Americans. Western land speculators and their friends in Congress, meanwhile, supported allotment since it promised them access to "surplus" reservation lands that remained after the allotment process was complete.<sup>14</sup>

The Lincoln administration's espousal of allotment, therefore, was hardly original or unexpected. Any policy designed to civilize Indians and "induce them to adopt the customs of civilization," Commissioner Dole argued in his annual report in 1863, "must of necessity embrace . . . the ideas of self-reliance and individual effort and, as an encouragement of those ideas, the acquisition and ownership of property in severalty."<sup>15</sup> Between 1861 and 1865, Dole and his associates negotiated treaties containing allotment provisions with the Potawatomi, the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Kickapoo, the Klamath, the Chippewa, and the Omaha. The allotment process was not always mandatory, however, nor was it imposed blanket fashion on an entire tribe without regard to the disposition of the prospective allottees.<sup>16</sup> Instead, Dole suggested, the government should promote allotment as a special mark of favor and approbation by the Great Father and as a reward for an individual's good conduct, industriousness, and willingness to abandon tribal customs and engage in "the more rational pursuits of civilization."<sup>17</sup> In some cases, those allottees that the federal government deemed "sufficiently intelligent and prudent to control their affairs and interests" might receive full title to their lands.<sup>18</sup> This policy was grounded in Dole's belief that the example of Native Americans who sought individual land ownership would convince Native opponents of the policy to recognize their error and request allotments for themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Yet property ownership and farming could become transformative for Native Americans only if they applied the requisite labor to make their lands productive. To ensure that upcoming generations of Indian children would be ready to do this, the Lincoln administration promoted the establishment of manual labor schools, preferably off-reservation, as the "main hope for permanent good to the Indians." Establishing day schools on the reservations had proven problematic. According to Dole, attendance

at these schools was irregular and Indian parents exerted little influence to encourage their children to “appreciate the dignity and real independence of labor.” In a June 9, 1862 letter to Indian Service employee Elijah White, Dole discussed the administration’s desire for Indians to become farmers and to be educated, matters he described as “very absorbing.” The best schools for Indian children, according to Dole, were the labor schools and “the more labor the better” since book learning was “useless to an Indian if he has not the habits of industry with it.” The ideal school, in Dole’s opinion, would be “a farm with a farmer whose heart is in it to teach the boys to work only mixing enough books with it for a change and to make it of interest caring very little except that they should be taught to be self-sustaining.”<sup>20</sup>

While Commissioner Dole pondered the transformative nature of farm work and education on Indian children, critics of the government’s management of Indian affairs demanded a very different, but equally difficult, transformation to occur. Nineteenth-century critics of government inefficiency, waste, and corruption were quick to point an accusing finger at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)—an Interior Department agency notorious for its gross mismanagement of reservations and the thievery of its employees. Lincoln’s election and the promise of a new Republican administration gave reform activists cause for hope, especially if the American people united in a “vigorous and earnest effort to secure the appointment of good and true men” who would be “thorough reformers.”<sup>21</sup> Such hope proved illusory. Like every administration since that of Andrew Jackson, President Lincoln viewed public offices as a fund to reward friends, relatives, and the most-deserving party workers, and the patronage or “spoils” system flourished during the Lincoln presidency.<sup>22</sup> Equally troubling to reformers who sought qualified and dedicated individuals to serve in the BIA was that wartime pressures prevented Lincoln from investing the time necessary to ascertain whether the persons appointed were those best fitted for the job through talent and experience.

Upon taking office, Lincoln quickly discovered that the BIA was a bountiful source of patronage, and he spent considerable time parceling out the spoils. Adhering to the custom of allowing frontier Congressional delegations to determine the nominees for positions in their state, he sent instructions to Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith requesting that he forward blank appointments for all BIA positions to the Republican congressional delegations in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Consequently, Lincoln’s appointees in the trans-Mississippi West included an assortment of “misguided leaders, political hacks, or downright crooks.”<sup>23</sup> Awarding Indian bureau jobs to loyal partisans may have been politically convenient, but ignorance of Indian cultures and traditions, combined with the willingness of at least some appointees to supplement their meager fifteen hundred dollar annual salaries by fleecing the people they were supposed to protect compounded the dysfunctional relationship that existed between the government and its Native “wards.”

During Lincoln’s time in office, the endemic corruption continued. Politicians, reservation agents, and traders, the so-called Indian Ring, continued to exploit tribes that received cash annuities from the federal government, while officials in the nation’s capital purchased poor quality supplies, charged the Indians for premium quality, and then pocketed the difference. Corruption—if not serious conflicts of interest—reached



into the executive branch as well. Commissioner Dole, Secretary of the Interior John P. Usher, and President Lincoln's personal secretary John G. Nicolay all speculated in Indian lands in Kansas.<sup>24</sup> An 1864 editorial likened the BIA to a "huge machine for enriching a lot of partisan officials who desire to make the most of their four years' lease of power."<sup>25</sup> By the end of Lincoln's first term, criticisms leveled against his administration's mismanagement of Indian affairs intensified.

In addition to the customary reports of graft and corruption, in November 1864 came alarming news of the Third Volunteer Regiment's massacre of more than 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians encamped at Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado. The massacre brought the ineffectiveness of federal Indian policy into the public view and intensified demands for reform. In response, Congress passed a joint resolution on March 3, 1865 to conduct an inquiry into the condition of the tribes. Chaired by Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin, the joint special committee's report detailed the amounts and varieties of Indian Service corruption and recommended reforms such as the creation of boards of inspection to serve as watchdogs on the activities of reservation agents and superintendents.<sup>26</sup>

Both President Lincoln and Commissioner Dole were of course aware of the government's troubled relationship with Native peoples, the pressing need to reform the Indian Service, and the powerful interests arrayed against meaningful change. For example, on November 20, 1862, Lincoln received a memorial signed by eighteen Episcopal bishops requesting that he appoint a special commission to devise "a more perfect system for the Administration of Indian Affairs" that would "redress wrongs" and "preserve the honor of the government."<sup>27</sup> Consumed by the task of overseeing the Union war effort, the most the president could do was to acknowledge the need for change and promise to do something once the conflict had ended.<sup>28</sup> On December 1, Lincoln sent his second annual message to Congress, which included a somewhat ambiguous call for a "remodeling" of the nation's entire Indian system.<sup>29</sup>

Commissioner Dole provided the specifics. First, he endorsed the concentration of Indians on reservations and the allotment of their lands, policies that he believed constituted "the best method yet devised for their reclamation and advancement in civilization." Second, Dole proposed a policy that, when enacted nearly a century later, carried the dreaded appellation "termination": the cessation of the federal government's trust responsibilities to Native Americans. Dole believed that many tribal communities were ready for this severance of "the peculiar relations existing between them and the federal government [and when] their relations to the general government should be identical with those of the citizens of the various States."<sup>30</sup> In Article III of the 1862 Treaty with the Kickapoos, for example, Indian allottees deemed competent to receive title to their lands would "cease to be members of said tribe, and shall become citizens of the United States" and their lands "subject to levy, taxation, and sale, in like manner with the property of other citizens."<sup>31</sup>

These profoundly significant declarations ignored a fundamental legal question: if treaties were the law of the land, how could the government terminate its treaty obligations to sovereign Indian nations? Also needing clarification were practical considerations that were equally troubling. What evidence was there that tribes could

cope socially and economically if the federal government stopped fulfilling its obligations to them? Were states prepared to accept, protect, and care for Native Americans as full citizens? Dole likely never considered the potentially devastating consequences of termination, and it is possible that the commissioner was merely voicing a long-term goal rather than introducing a policy. Unfortunately, when Congress did enact termination legislation in the late 1940s to the 1960s, the consequences were indeed devastating for the many tribes that lacked the minimum essential resources necessary for them to flourish independently of the trust relationship—some two generations after William Dole had declared their readiness.

As Commissioner Dole looked forward to the time when all tribes would be ready for termination, his concentration policies continued, but with a new twist. As his 1862 report characterizes the overall situation, white settlements surrounded many reservations and subjected their Indian neighbors to “wrongs, insults, and petty annoyances . . . exceedingly onerous and hard to be borne.” Instead of providing Native Americans with an example of a moral and advanced civilization, whiskey peddlers, gamblers, and the “worst classes” of white people were leading them into a life of idleness, beggary, and depravity. Since Indians were believed to be especially prone to adopting the vices of civilization rather than its virtues and advantages, they were, according to Dole, becoming “vagrant[s] of the worst species, and a most intolerable nuisance to the settlements.” The solution was obvious, at least to Dole. In his annual reports of 1863 and 1864, he declared that the most “efficient remedy for these evils” was concentrating the various tribes on three to five large reservations set far apart from white settlements. Doing so, he insisted, would be more economical, simple in its operation, and of “inestimable value” to the Indians.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, President Lincoln was a longtime proponent of freed slaves being deported to colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, or Latin America because he was convinced that whites and African Americans could not coexist peacefully in the United States.<sup>33</sup> According to historian Kenneth O’Reilly, Lincoln hoped that African American colonization outside of the United States might “spare future generations racial agony” and “promote racial harmony by removing the source of irritation.”<sup>34</sup> The administration’s Indian policies reflected similar concerns. “The white and the red man cannot occupy territory in common,” Commissioner Dole declared in November 1864, “and it follows that a policy . . . must provide for each race a separate abiding space.”<sup>35</sup> Since Indians were “native” Americans and therefore inappropriate candidates for deportation, concentrating them on remote reservations in the nation’s interior, in Lincoln’s mind, could serve the same end.

The racial assumptions used to justify the segregation and internal or external colonization of both African Americans and Native Americans were also similar. Generally speaking, the argument that close association between the races would invariably lead to conflict depended upon the belief that blacks and Indians were physically, morally, and intellectually inferior to whites.<sup>36</sup> Given the demographic, technological, and racial superiority of the white majority, this racist logic held that the most likely result of close association would be the extermination or expulsion of the perceived weaker races, although optimists held out the possibility that a small number of Indians might

be assimilated. The “humanitarian” solution to this dilemma, consequently, was to keep the races apart—pending a lessening of racial tensions or substantial advancements in African American and Native American intellect, morality, and culture.<sup>37</sup>

Scholars continue to debate to what extent racism or political expediency motivated Lincoln’s support for colonization. However, few have connected Lincoln’s support for concentrating Native Americans on reservations to his advocacy of African American colonization, although the two movements performed similar functions. As David Nichols observes, concentration and colonization provided a means of getting rid of two bothersome problems without actually solving them. Although Lincoln never explicitly acknowledged that his administration’s advocacy of geographically segregating both African Americans and Native Americans from white society amounted to a consistent policy, nonetheless the arguments in favor of geographical separation—to serve the needs of white expansion, protect the minority group, resolve the problem, and prevent racial friction—reveal his deep pessimism in regard to white attitudes about race.<sup>38</sup>

Growing acceptance of African American military service and recognition of the potential postwar economic impact of their labor, however, may have contributed to an evolution of Lincoln’s attitudes regarding colonization. By the end of 1862, he had determined that emancipation, even in the face of white prejudice, was necessary to save the union. Unfortunately for Native Americans, a similar evolution did not occur in Lincoln’s Indian policies. Because Native peoples could be dismissed as demographically insignificant and peripheral to the war effort, and also because they represented an obstacle to westward expansion while espousing claims of sovereignty seemingly at odds with the ongoing effort to maintain the union, Native Americans would have to await a century before cultural pluralism and self-determination could bring about substantial changes in Indian affairs.<sup>39</sup>

The inconsistency and uneven implementation of federal Indian policy in United States history are the predictable byproducts of the government’s disinterest in, inattention to, and ignorance of Native Americans. When federal officials did act, they were reacting to events they did not fully understand and often without considering the long-term consequences. During the antebellum period, Lincoln’s predecessors had advanced the treaty system, education, agriculture, assimilation, removal (at first voluntary and then mandatory), and the reservation system as “solutions” or “new directions” that would correct the dysfunctional relationship between Natives and non-Natives. Lincoln’s Indian policy was no different. On the one hand, Lincoln sought the assimilation of Native Americans and an end to the special relationship (or the “peculiar relation,” as Dole termed it) that existed between tribes and the federal government. On the other hand, Lincoln viewed treaty-making as the best way (or perhaps a necessary expedient) to ensure that the federal government would acknowledge and protect Indian lands and rights. Even though treaty-making acknowledged the sovereignty of Indian nations by definition, the Lincoln administration pursued assimilation and treaty-making simultaneously, seemingly unaware of the contradiction. In fact, the Lincoln administration sought to expand the treaty system while at the same time

predicting that Indians would come under state jurisdiction and that their rights would “become identical with those of the citizens of the various States.”<sup>40</sup>

During his time in office, Lincoln supported expanding the treaty system to tribes residing in the Southwest that had come under United States jurisdiction after the war with Mexico a decade earlier. Critics of this policy argued that Spain and Mexico had allegedly failed to recognize Indian land titles in the region and this automatically relieved the United States from doing so.<sup>41</sup> Lincoln and Dole disagreed; from their perspective, Indians had a moral if not a legal right to land since the government’s long-standing policy was to concentrate Native peoples on reservations where they could be transformed into farmers. The most sensible policy, therefore, was to negotiate treaties and use the proceeds from the sale of ceded lands to assist them while they made this difficult transition. Any delay in adopting some “efficient policy,” Commissioner Dole warned, threatened national security—either from “dangerous combinations” of indigenous tribes (Dole’s 1862 annual report specifically mentions an unlikely Apache-Sioux alliance) and/or from an expanded alliance between Indians and the Confederate States of America. In a significant departure from precedent, the Lincoln administration further argued that the federal government was obliged to assist even non-treaty Indians, who as the nation’s wards were entitled to protection and guardianship.<sup>42</sup>

A second example of inconsistent policy-making in the Lincoln administration was the decision to pursue concentration. Ostensibly, this would protect Native Americans from being corrupted by the vices so prevalent among certain frontier populations (such as whiskey peddlers, gamblers, swindlers, and prostitutes), while simultaneously promoting legislation designed to expedite white settlement and expansion across the West. True to his Whig principles, Lincoln supported the construction of transcontinental railroads as a means of connecting California to the east and of opening the prairies and plains to settlers. Settlement would, in turn, promote the exploitation of western mineral wealth to finance the government.<sup>43</sup>

In pursuit of such goals, on May 20, 1862 Lincoln signed the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act two weeks later. By the end of the Civil War the Homestead Act brought an estimated 15,000 homesteaders to the West. The Pacific Railway Act authorized the construction of transcontinental railroads to transport countless more settlers to exploit the West’s bountiful resources. The precise amount of territory tribes lost in the wake of these policies is difficult to measure, but likely was in the millions of acres. Keeping reservations sufficiently “isolated” from white settlement, meanwhile, became all but impossible.<sup>44</sup> Just three years after Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dennis N. Cooley reported, “the large emigration to western Territories, caused by the development of the great mineral wealth of those regions, is fast circumscribing the range of the Indians and driving them from their ancient hunting grounds.”<sup>45</sup> In 1867, Acting Commissioner Charles E. Mix painted an even bleaker picture. The Native American population, he warned, was diminishing year after year. Only a short time ago they numbered a half million or more but today “barely 300,000 remain. Poverty, disease, wars, and other causes are fast sweeping them from among the living, and soon, as a race, they must become extinct.”<sup>46</sup>

Another Lincoln-era Indian policy initiative linked treaty-making with removal. In hopes of saving “even the remnant of these decaying tribes,” in May 1862 Senator James R. Doolittle declared, “We must gather them somewhere on large reservations.” A close friend and supporter of President Lincoln, Doolittle chaired the Senate’s Committee on Indian Affairs and was also a vocal proponent of colonizing African Americans outside the country. However, in removing Native Americans the “somewhere” he had in mind was Indian Territory. At the start of the Civil War, Confederate agents successfully recruited (or cajoled) members of the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes” to form auxiliary units to fight for the Confederacy. Their perceived “disloyalty” to the Union provided policymakers with an opening. In March 1863, Congress authorized the president to rescind treaties with any tribes “in an actual state of hostility to the government of the United States.”<sup>47</sup>

With the treaty obligations out of the way, the federal government could appropriate their lands and then open new reservations for tribes residing east of the Rocky Mountains. On September 12, 1862, Cherokee Chief John Ross met with the president to explain that his people had had no choice but to ally with the Confederacy since the federal government had failed to protect the Cherokees when the war commenced. Lincoln promised a careful investigation of Ross’s charges, but if he did, he never announced the results. Instead, the president dispatched William Dole to Kansas to negotiate new removal treaties. The tribes (Sacs and Foxes, Creeks, Osages, Shawnees) appeared interested, Dole reported during the summer of 1863, and awaited the end of the Civil War and restoration of peace in the Indian Territory before proceeding.<sup>48</sup>

The final and most-studied episode during Lincoln’s tenure as Great Father was a tragic affair that forever marred his legacy among Native Americans: his role in the aftermath of the Dakota War of 1862. The president was under considerable pressure in the summer of 1862. Lincoln and his wife Mary still mourned the loss of their eleven-year-old son Willie earlier that year. The prospects of saving the union appeared bleak as well. The army’s Peninsular Campaign had failed to capture Richmond, and General John Pope, commander of the Union’s Army of Virginia, was defeated at the Second Battle of Bull Run. In the midst of these setbacks, word arrived in Washington that the Dakota (or Santee) Sioux were attacking settlements and massacring men, women, and children in southern Minnesota. Was this part of some deeply laid plan, a Confederate conspiracy to expand the battlefield and force Lincoln to divert troops from the east? Was it the opening salvo in a long dreaded pan-Indian alliance seeking to take advantage of the government’s preoccupation with the Civil War?

In fact, the origins of the Dakota War lay not with Confederate agents or western Indian alliances, but rather in hunger and frustration. When the federal government failed to make its promised annuity payments to the Dakotas, the Indians faced starvation. Despite making a fortune selling supplies to the Dakotas at inflated prices, white traders refused to extend credit. One infamously declared that if the Indians were hungry, they should eat grass. The individuals responsible for handling such matters and implementing the government’s treaty responsibilities included Clark W. Thompson, superintendent of the Indian Bureau’s Northern Department, and the agent stationed at the Lower Sioux Agency, Thomas J. Galbraith. Thompson was a

bank and railroad speculator who knew virtually nothing about Native Americans, but he was a good friend of Minnesota's Republican Senator Morton Wilkinson. Like Superintendent Thompson, Indian Agent Galbraith was a lawyer and Republican operative who had little experience working with Indians and owed his appointment to the patronage system.<sup>49</sup>

During the first two weeks in August, tensions mounted as Dakotas demanded rations and Galbraith stalled for time. He hoped that once the government's annuity payment arrived the Dakotas' could pay their debts to traders and a new line of credit could be established. In the meantime, both traders and Indians would have to wait. In a meeting with Galbraith and military officials, Mdewakanton Dakota leader Little Crow (Taoyateduta) asked the agent to assist his people to get food. "When men are hungry," he warned, "they help themselves." The Dakota War started approximately a week later and lasted six weeks. Galbraith's refusal to issue rations and, subsequently, his leadership of a militia to put down the uprising, certainly cast doubt on his fidelity to the Indian people he was supposed to be serving, but two congressional investigations later exonerated Galbraith from allegations that his conduct precipitated the uprising.<sup>50</sup>

General John Pope, whom Lincoln had reassigned following the Second Bull Run battle, declared that the conflict was over in early October 1862. Casualty estimates vary, but the number of Indian deaths was approximately one hundred fifty and that of whites between five hundred and one thousand. In late September, Pope had already formed a tribunal or commission of five military officers to try Dakotas allegedly involved in the massacre of civilians. The hearings began on September 28 and the same day the commission tried sixteen men. Five weeks later, the commission completed its work having conducted 392 trials, including an astounding forty in one day. An eyewitness reported that Dakota defendants had no counsel, the commission apparently trusting that "the innocent would make their innocence appear." As it turned out, few Dakotas were able to accomplish this feat to the commission's satisfaction and on November 7, Pope telegraphed President Lincoln the names of 303 condemned Dakotas.<sup>51</sup>

The Great Father was under heavy pressure to authorize the executions. The white citizens of Minnesota were clamoring for revenge and the state's leaders threatened mob violence if justice was not meted out to the condemned Dakotas. Commissioner Dole, on the other hand, urged caution. While sympathetic to the white victims and their families, he urged the president to punish only the Dakota leaders. Imposing punishment on all those involved in the uprising, he cautioned, would "beget a bitter feeling of revenge" that would "never be extinguished."<sup>52</sup> Bishop Henry Whipple of Minnesota urged caution for different reasons: the government had mishandled the crisis from the beginning and any rush to judgment would likely ensnare innocent Dakotas. "Punishment loses its lesson," he declared, "when it is the vengeance of a mob."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, as Lincoln and his aides reviewed the trial transcripts, they were shocked at the appalling lack of evidence and the haste with which the trials were carried out. Lincoln concluded that the people of Minnesota desired not justice, but vengeance.

Other considerations may have entered into the president's calculations: how would Europe respond to the execution of more than three hundred Indian prisoners, particularly England and France? Might the executions open the door to Confederate intrigue, or spur creation of the much-dreaded pan-Indian alliance? Seeking an opinion on what should be done with the condemned Sioux, on December 1 Lincoln wrote to Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt, asking "Whether if I should conclude to execute only a part of them, must I myself designate which [ones], or could I leave the designation to some officer on the ground?" Holt's answered that Lincoln would have to decide the matter on his own.<sup>54</sup>

After reviewing the evidence, Lincoln divided the individual cases into two groups: those who had participated in "massacres" and those who had participated in "battles." On December 6 the president ordered that only those thirty-nine that had apparently participated in massacres be executed. Of these, one received a last-minute reprieve. At 10:30 am on December 26, 1862, thirty-eight Sioux were simultaneously hanged on a large, square scaffold erected on the main street in Mankato. Afterwards, military officials loaded the bodies into four army wagons and a burial detail interred them near town in a thirty-by-twelve foot grave dug in a sandbar. At least one Sioux, Chaska, was apparently included by mistake. Although Chaska had saved the lives of white captives during the uprising and Lincoln had not approved his execution, he was hanged nevertheless.<sup>55</sup>

The remaining 260 prisoners served three-year sentences at Camp Kearney near Davenport, Iowa. Their families, some 1,658 women, children, and old men, spent a freezing, disease-ridden winter at Fort Snelling. In April 1863, military officials oversaw their removal to a new reservation at Crow Creek in South Dakota. Congress, meanwhile, passed legislation that annulled all treaty obligations to the Dakota and required that they forfeit their lands in Minnesota. Seizing the opportunity to gain access to additional Indian lands and to further advance the ethnic cleansing of their state, Minnesota settlers successfully petitioned Congress to pass new legislation expelling the Winnebagos even though they had not taken part in the uprising.<sup>56</sup>

How Lincoln countenanced such actions is unclear. The Civil War was reaching its tipping point around this time and the president's attention was likely focused on the events taking place in Virginia and Mississippi. Lincoln did nothing to alleviate the suffering of the Dakota prisoners incarcerated at Fort Snelling, and he authorized army punitive expeditions against Indian groups that had nothing to do with the Dakota conflict.<sup>57</sup> While he served the cause of justice by greatly reducing the number of Indians he permitted to be hanged, Lincoln still sanctioned, as David A. Nichols notes, "one of the largest mass executions in American history."<sup>58</sup> For the Dakota Sioux, Lincoln's "humanitarianism" was little more than a macabre joke. To this day, the Santee people commemorate the lives of the thirty-eight men executed on the orders of the Great Father in 1862.<sup>59</sup>

Forty years ago, historian Harry Kelsey argued that Lincoln's "most lasting accomplishment" in Indian affairs was to insist that the federal government "accept a moral premise for its relations with the Indian tribes."<sup>60</sup> President Lincoln no doubt believed that the government had an obligation to do this, but life's vicissitudes have a way of

altering one's priorities. For Lincoln, the tragic events in Minnesota during the autumn of 1862 proved how difficult it was (and still is) to live up to such high ideals. His Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Dole wrote that the "object of all our efforts in behalf of the Indian should be the improvement of his condition . . . to increase his intelligence, promote his happiness, and finally effect his civilization." But even he was not convinced that the administration's policies, or at least their implementation, had achieved these goals. In a private letter to a veteran of the Indian Service dated June 9, 1862, Dole admitted, "the government is wasting its money to a very great extent by our current Indian policy and yet I can't see how to change the law very much—the law is so much better than the practice."<sup>61</sup>

While rightly acclaimed for his steadfast leadership during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's Indian policy reflected how little he knew about Native Americans, the low priority he attached to Indian affairs, and the all-consuming attention he focused on the Civil War. As we have seen, Lincoln's assimilationist Indian policy was in keeping with historic precedent and tradition. He became a strong advocate of concentrating or colonizing tribes on reservations, yet his simultaneous support for the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act ensured that reservations would never be safe from outside influences and pressures. Neither Lincoln's endorsement of allotment nor his extensive use of Indian Service positions to reward political supporters were positive legacies. Although Lincoln's desire to expand the treaty system may very well have been motivated by humanitarian impulses, the government had repeatedly shown that Indian treaties, while often convenient, were most certainly not treated as the law of the land. Furthermore, his administration's support for terminating the federal government's special relationship with tribes and treating Native Americans as they would citizens of states was inconsistent with the continuation of the treaty system, much less its expansion.

In a recent poll in which the presidents were ranked by political scientists, Abraham Lincoln placed first.<sup>62</sup> The top luminaries also included seven Great Fathers who were, from a Native American perspective, disasters: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman, and Thomas Jefferson. All were assimilationists, some were treaty breakers, others were expansionists and Indian-removal enthusiasts, and three were proponents of terminating the government's trust relationship to tribes. President Lincoln was all of the above. Clearly, to perform poorly as a Great Father does not unduly tarnish a president's legacy. To be fair, Abraham Lincoln was operating within a horrifically challenging historical context and it may be disingenuous to cast stones at the man who saved the Union. On the other hand, one cannot blame the nation's Native American population for viewing Lincoln through a very different lens: the preservation of the Union allowed the attention of northerners and southerners to shift to the West, which meant a more rapid dissolution of Native homelands. Clearly, Abraham Lincoln was an atypical president whose courage and sacrifice held the Union together during the greatest conflict in American history. As the Great Father to the nation's long-suffering Native Americans, however, Lincoln was disappointingly typical of the broader society in which he lived.



## NOTES

1. William "Jack" C. Davis, "The Age of Lincoln—A Global Legacy," 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Abraham Lincoln lecture presented October 23, 2015, International Lincoln Center, Louisiana State University at Shreveport, *Abraham Lincoln Abroad* 27 (2016), 3-12, <https://internationallincolnassociation.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/ala1115-jan-2016.pdf>; Phillip Shaw Paludan, "Lincoln and Negro Slavery: I Haven't Got Time for the Pain," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 27, no. 2 (2006), 3-4, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.2629860.0027.203>.
2. For a discussion of this "transformation," see William Hanchett, "Abraham Lincoln and Father Abraham," *The North American Review* 251, no. 2 (March 1966): 10-13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25116343>.
3. William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 36; Letter from Abraham Lincoln to Jesse Lincoln, April 1, 1854, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 2, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 218; "Kentucky's Abraham Lincoln," Kentucky Historical Society Website, [http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/Moments08RS/01\\_web\\_leg\\_moments.htm](http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/Moments08RS/01_web_leg_moments.htm).
4. "Abraham Lincoln: Lincoln as Storekeeper and Soldier in the Black Hawk War," ed. Ida M. Tarbell, *McClure's Magazine* 6, no. 2 (January 1896), 130-32; Brian R. Dirck, *Abraham Lincoln and White America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 15; Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 36-37.
5. Harry Kelsey, "William P. Dole and Mr. Lincoln's Indian Policy," *Journal of the West* 10 (July 1971), and "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," *Lincoln Herald* 77 (Fall 1975); Edmund Danziger, Jr., *Indians and Bureaucrats: Administering the Reservation Policy during the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), and "The Other Civil War: Lincoln and the Indians," *Minnesota History* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 2-15.
6. Kelsey, "William P. Dole and Mr. Lincoln's Indian Policy"; "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 146-47.
7. Danziger, *Indians and Bureaucrats*, x, 14-15.
8. Kelsey, "William P. Dole and Mr. Lincoln's Indian Policy," 484-85; Nichols, "The Other Civil War," 3-4. For additional information regarding Lincoln's Civil War Indian policies in the Indian Territory, see Gary E. Moulton, "John Ross and W. P. Dole: A Case Study of Lincoln's Indian Policy," *Journal of the West* 12 (July 1973): 414-23. According to Brian R. Dirck, *Abraham Lincoln and White America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 142, Native Americans were "background noise during the Lincoln administration."
9. Mark Neely, Jr. writes "it remains difficult to describe Lincoln's Indian policy because he made so few statements on the problem and because he took little direct action in Indian Affairs." See Richard W. Etulain, *Lincoln and Oregon Country Politics in the Civil War Era* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013), 104.
10. Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 146.
11. Danziger, *Indians and Bureaucrats*, x, 14-15.
12. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1856* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1856), 20. For a broad survey of federal Indian policy, see Francis P. Prucha, *The Great White Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).
13. Michael Lind, *What Lincoln Believed: The Values and Connections of America's Greatest President* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 55-56; Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 142-43; Albert Rhodes, "A Reminiscence of Abraham Lincoln," *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* (November 1876), 8. According to eyewitness Albert Rhodes, Lincoln

argued that tilling the soil was the only way that Indians could secure horses and carriages. The Indians present appeared to be disappointed at this suggestion.

14. Howard W. Paulson, "The Allotment of Land in Severalty to the Dakota Indians before the Dawes Act," *South Dakota History* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1971), 132–34, <http://www.sdshspress.com/index.php?&id=621&action=950>.

15. Kelsey, "William P. Dole and Mr. Lincoln's Indian Policy," 489.

16. For example, the treaties with the Pottawatomie (1861) and the Kickapoo (1862) called for allotment only for those tribal members who desired individual land holdings. See *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties II (Treaties)*, ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1904), 824–28, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/pot0824.htm>, 835–39, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/kic0835.htm>.

17. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1863), 6–7.

18. The treaties with the Kickapoo (1862) and with the Chippewa of Saginaw, Swan Creek, and Black River (1864) provided so-called "competency clauses." See *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties II*, 835–39, 868–71.

19. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1861* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1861), 11–12.

20. William P. Dole to Elijah White, June 9, 1862, William P. Dole Papers, 1861–1901, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (hereafter cited as Dole Papers); Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1864), 7.

21. A letter to the editor of *The Independent* signed "W" [citation corrected here] skewered the BIA's reservation agents and superintendents as "corrupt partisans—drinking, profane, unprincipled, whose object was to fill their pockets with plunder by any knavery that offered success against their ignorant, helpless victims." "The New Administration—The Indians," *The Independent* . . . *Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts* 13, no. 639 (February 28, 1861), 3.

22. According to historians Harry Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln made the "most sweeping removal of federal officeholders up to that time in American history" and utilized patronage for purely political ends. Harry Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 6, 75–76, 331–34. William P. Dole's appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs may have been part of an election year bargain by which Lincoln obtained Indiana's twenty-six delegates at the 1860 Republican convention. Once in office, Dole secured choice Indian Service positions for his cousin and brother-in-law. See "Indian War," *New Albany Daily Ledger* (September 7, 1864), 1.

23. Richard W. Etulain, "Abraham Lincoln: Political Founding Father of the American West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 21; Carman and Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage*, 75–76, 331–34; Nichols, "The Other Civil War," 3–4; Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 21; Danziger, *Indians and Bureaucrats*, 15. Harry Kelsey conversely argues that Lincoln worked closely with William Dole to see that adequate and honest men were selected for service at Indian agencies. See Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 140.

24. Indian agent Henry W. De Puy makes additional charges against Dole and demands his resignation. See "Indian War," *New Albany Daily Ledger* (September 7, 1864), 1. De Puy himself stood accused of embezzlement.

25. "The Indian and the Government," *The Round Table: A Weekly Record of the Notable, the Useful and the Tasteful* 1, no. 11 (February 27, 1864): 166.

26. By this time, of course, Lincoln was dead and Usher and Dole had resigned—Usher in May 1865 and Dole in July two months later. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 8, 11, 21; C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight Over Federal Indian Policy after the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 55; Donald Chaput, “Generals, Indian Agents, Politicians: The Doolittle Survey of 1865,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (July 1972): 270–72, 281–82, doi 10.2307/967424; Harry Kelsey, “The Doolittle Report of 1867: Its Preparation and Shortcomings,” *Arizona and the West* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 107–08, 111, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40168425>.

27. Henry M. Rice to Abraham Lincoln, November 20, 1862, *American Memory Project*, The Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mal/mal1/196/1963400/001.jpg>.

28. Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment*, 53; Etulain, *Lincoln and Oregon Country Politics*, 103–04.

29. Abraham Lincoln, “Second Annual Message,” December 1, 1862 and “Third Annual Message,” December 8, 1863, University of California, The American Presidency Project, Messages and Papers of the Presidents Collection, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29503>, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29504>.

30. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1862* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1863), 169–70.

31. “The Treaty with the Kickapoo, 1862,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* II, 835–39.

32. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1862*, 129–30. Critics of Dole’s policy argued that Native Americans could not be expected to advance in civilization while in isolation; see “The Indians and the Government,” 166. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863*, 6; Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864*, 5. General John Pope, meanwhile, argued that the administration of Indian affairs be transferred to the army and that the government authorize the construction of large military posts in border regions. See “The Indian War in the West,” *Dubuque Democratic Herald* (September 6, 1864), 2. Two Lincoln-era treaties with the Klamath and Omaha included stipulations that barred whites from residing on reservations; see *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* II.

33. Brainerd Dyer, “The Persistence of the Idea of Negro Colonization,” *Pacific Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (March 1943): 58–59, doi 10.2307/3633335.

34. Kenneth O’Reilly, *Nixon’s Piano: Presidents and Racial Politics from Washington to Clinton* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 47–49.

35. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864*, 5.

36. For a discussion of the various racial theories circulating in the United States during the early nineteenth century, see Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776–1865* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

37. Dyer, “The Persistence of the Idea of Negro Colonization,” 62–63. At the annual meeting of the American Colonization Society held in February 1858, participants shared opinions regarding the necessity of colonizing blacks outside the United States. “The properties of the white man and the black, are not the same,” declared participant Rev. Mr. Bowen, and “their social relations cannot be practically identical.” As the population of the North American continent expanded, “there must be a conflict of races, and the free black [wording here has been corrected] will be compelled to flee to the land of his fathers” or be “overwhelmed, and blotted out;” see “Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society,” *The African Repository* 34, no. 2 (February 1858): 43, [https://archive.org/stream/africanrepositor342amer\\_1#page/n21/mode/2up/search/flee](https://archive.org/stream/africanrepositor342amer_1#page/n21/mode/2up/search/flee). Writing three years later, William Dole made essentially the same point regarding Native Americans. “All experience has shown that when the red and white races occupy the same territory, the former is quickly contaminated by

the vices of the latter, rapidly deteriorates in physical and mental power, and very soon becomes well-nigh extinct." The only solution to such a scenario, consequently, was to colonize them on reservations "in seclusion from the immediate vicinity of the whites." *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1861*, 29–30.

38. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 190–92.

39. See Michael Vorenberg, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1993) [AU: please confirm this date change is correct]: 24, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.2629860.0014.204>. Richard Striner asserts, "Lincoln was free of any gut-level bias. There was no racial malice in his soul." See Striner, *Lincoln and Race* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 73; Paludan, "Lincoln and Negro Slavery," 22–23; Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010), 261–63.

40. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1862*, 169–70; Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 140–42.

41. For a discussion of this very complicated question, see *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties IV (Laws)*, pt. VI, "The Doctrine of Indian Right to Occupancy and Possession of Land," comp. and ed. Charles K. Kappler (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1929), 1166–68.

42. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the year 1862*, 169–70; Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 140–44; Kelsey, "William P. Dole and Mr. Lincoln's Indian Policy," 487–88.

43. *Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 26–28.

44. Paul Wallace Gates, "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System," *The American Historical Review* 41, no. 4 (July 1936): 661–62, doi 10.2307/1842606; Etulain, "Abraham Lincoln: Political Founding Father of the American West," 4. According to Dole's *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864*, 46–47, during that year alone the government sold over 104,000 acres of good farm land owned by the Winnebago, Kansa, and Sac and Fox tribes for approximately \$2.00 an acre.

45. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1865* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1865), 55.

46. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1867* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1867), 27.

47. Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 144–45; *Statues at Large* 37<sup>th</sup> cong. 2<sup>nd</sup> session, ch. 135 (1863), 528.

48. Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 144–45; Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863*, 29–30; Brad Agnew, "Indian Territory," in Ralph Y. McGinnis and Calvin N. Smith, *Abraham Lincoln and the Western Territories* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1994), 197.

49. Scott W. Berg, 38 *Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier's End* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 21–31.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Daniel W. Homstad, "Lincoln's Agonizing Decision," *American History* 36, no. 5 (December 2001): 28–31; Charles F. Williams and Rachel T. Van Heel, "Lincoln's Other War: The Dakota Sioux Uprising and Trials of 1862," *Insights on Law & Society* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 24–30.

52. William P. Dole to Caleb B. Smith, November 10, 1862, *American Memory Project*, The Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mal/mal1/194/1947700/001.jpg>. Interestingly, Dole requested that Secretary Caleb Smith deliver his

message to the President. This may reflect Dole's lack of access to Lincoln and further advance the argument that Indian affairs were not an important priority in the administration.

53. "A Voice for the Indian," *German Reformed Messenger* 28 (March 4, 1863), 1.

54. Homstad, "Lincoln's Agonizing Decision," 31–35; "A Voice for the Indian," *German Reformed Messenger* 28, no. 27 (March 4, 1863): 1.

55. Roy Cook, "Abraham Lincoln's Legacy," *California Indian Education*, [http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/educational\\_news/roycook/2009/abraham\\_lincoln\\_legacy.html](http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/educational_news/roycook/2009/abraham_lincoln_legacy.html); "Executions of the Indians in Minnesota," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1863, 3; Williams and Van Heel, "Lincoln's Other War," 28–30; Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 94–128; Dirck, *Abraham Lincoln and Race*, 144–46; Mark A. Lause, *Race and Radicalism in the Union Army* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 109–10; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 242–43.

56. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 94–128; Dirck, *Abraham Lincoln and Race*, 144–46; Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian*, 242–43.

57. During the Civil War years, the Yuki Tribe of California suffered substantial losses due to starvation and attacks by the US military. According to Benjamin Madley, the "Civil War stretched military and financial resources thin and Lincoln's administration devoted little of either to feeding or protecting the Yuki." See Benjamin Madley, "California's Yuki Indians: Defining Genocide in Native American History," *Western Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 326–28.

58. In January 1863, California militiamen under the command of Colonel Patrick Edward Connor attacked a Shoshone encampment at Bear River in southeastern Idaho, killing nearly 300 men, women, and children—the worst massacre committed by American soldiers against Indians. Kass Fleisher maintains the attack occurred "with the silent consent of Abraham Lincoln; see Kass Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), xi. Gary Clayton Anderson argues that federal officials never ordered the attack and sought to prosecute the perpetrators. Lincoln promoted Connor to the rank of Brigadier General of Volunteers on March 30, 1863. See Gary Clayton Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 264. See also William Fox, "Patrick Edward Connor: Father of Utah Mining," MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966, 32.

59. Homstad, "Lincoln's Agonizing Decision," 35–35; Roy Cook, "Abraham Lincoln's Legacy," *California Indian Education*, [http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/educational\\_news/roycook/2009/abraham\\_lincoln\\_legacy.html](http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/educational_news/roycook/2009/abraham_lincoln_legacy.html); Williams and Van Heel, "Lincoln's Other War," 28–30; Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 94–128; Dirck, *Abraham Lincoln and Race*, 144–46; Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian*, 242–43.

60. Kelsey, "Abraham Lincoln and American Indian Policy," 147.

61. Dole to White, June 9, 1862, Dole Papers.

62. Brandon Rottinghaus and Justin Vaughn, "New Ranking of U.S. Presidents Puts Lincoln at No. 1, Obama at 18; Kennedy judged most overrated," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2015. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/16/new-ranking-of-u-s-presidents-puts-lincoln-1-obama-18-kennedy-judged-most-over-rated/>.