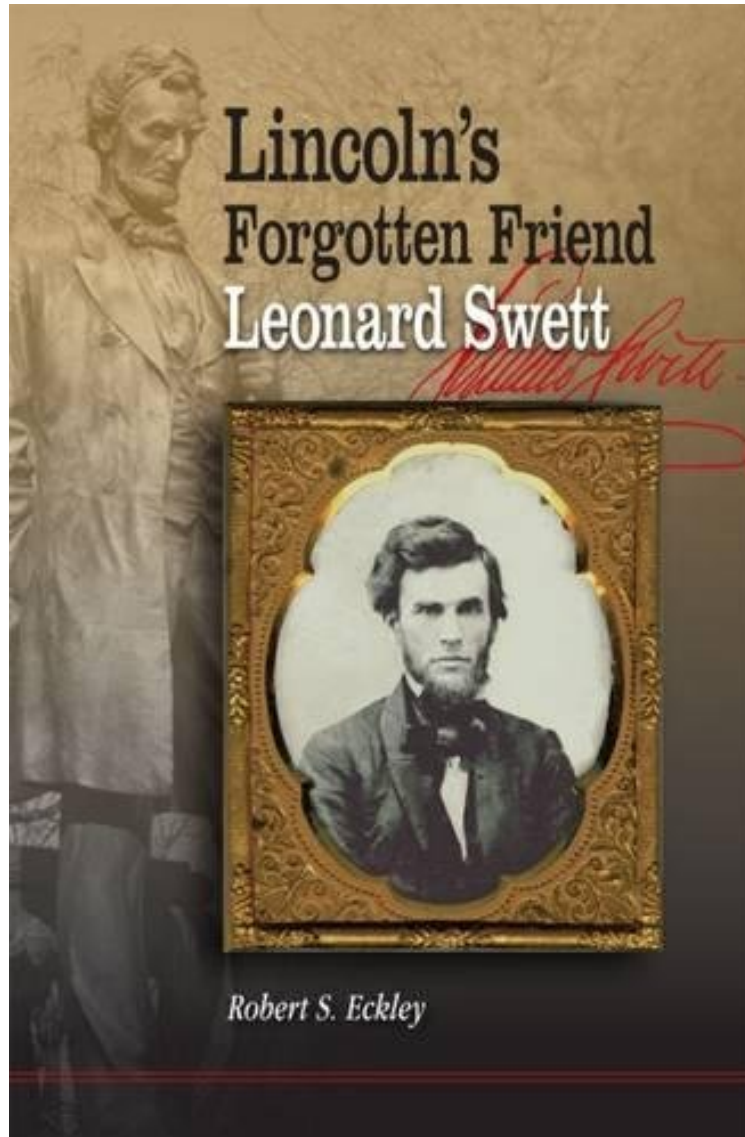


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Lincoln's Forgotten Friend, Leonard Swett

Robert S. Eckley

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Robert S. Eckley : Lincoln's Forgotten Friend, Leonard Swett before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lincoln's Forgotten Friend, Leonard Swett:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Life with Lincoln in Central Illinois By William Escoube Swett was a contemporary and friend of Abraham Lincoln. As young lawyers, they followed the judicial circuit in central Illinois, picking up cases in county seats. Before the advent of official districts attorneys, this included prosecution as well as defense assignments, so that circuit riders often found themselves in opposition one day as prosecutor or defense

attorneys, and the next day have their roles reversed in another case. Lincoln developed a corps of friends and admirers who supported him in county, state and national elections, with or without hope of political appointments. Swett, in particular, would abandon his law practice at the sound of a political trumpet, and only in late middle age settled down to make money at the bar in Chicago. In the twenty-first century, it can be hard to visualize the vibrancy and opportunity of county/small town politics in Lincoln's time, as well as the constant health and financial insecurity of life in Currier Ives country.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Lincoln's Forgotten Friend Leonard Swett By Jay Dresser At last, the story about one of the three Maine men close to Lincoln has been told, thanks to Bob Eckley. Leonard Swett, Eli Washburne, and Hannibal Hamlin all with western Maine roots were close friends and advisers to Lincoln. This book is full of historical detail and flows extremely well. The Wigwam chapter is a delight. I am delighted to be acknowledged in this important piece of American history. Jay Dresser 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A worthy biography By Terry Esvelt Leonard Swett may not be completely forgotten, but he is probably known only to Lincoln aficionados. Swett was almost 17 years younger than Lincoln and became acquainted with him while riding the famed Eighth Circuit district court in Illinois with Lincoln and David Davis (later a U.S. Supreme Court Justice) in the late 1840s and 1850s. Swett became an active supporter of Lincoln's two Senate campaigns in 1854 and 1858, and was Davis' chief lieutenant in managing Lincoln's nomination at the 1860 Republican Presidential nominating convention. Swett provided useful advice to Lincoln throughout Lincoln's campaigns and during his presidency, though Swett himself noted that Lincoln rarely, if ever asked for opinions. . . . As a politician and as President, he arrived at all his conclusions from his own reflections." Swett aspired to political success himself, but despite his superb oratorical skills, that success largely eluded him. He was only elected once to a two-year term in the State legislature, but was defeated in races for a State Senate seat, for Governor in 1860 and for the U.S. Congress in 1862. Thereafter, he mostly confined himself to his legal career, where he did achieve significant success largely as a defense attorney. He is credited with helping to originate the insanity defense. Though he hoped for some kind of political appointment by Lincoln during his presidency, he was disappointed in that aspiration (as did many. He did receive an assignment to negotiate disputed claims to the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine in California, but that turned out to be something of a disaster. It may be stretching it a bit to label Swett as Lincoln's friend, as Lincoln did not acquire close friends during his life, with the exception of Joshua Speed. It may be enough to characterize Leonard Swett as a close associate and trusted adviser. Robert Eckley does a fine job of constructing the life of Swett, largely using letters, legal case reports, newspaper articles and other contemporary sources. To gain an understanding and appreciation for Leonard Swett's relationship with and influence on Lincoln, this is an excellent source. It isn't a gripping story, but does credit to the material.

In 1849, while traveling as an attorney on the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln befriended Leonard Swett (1825-1889), a fellow attorney sixteen years his junior. Despite this age difference, the two men built an enduring friendship that continued until Lincoln's assassination in 1865. Until now, no historian has explored Swett's life or his remarkable relationship with the sixteenth president. In this welcome volume, Robert S. Eckley provides the first biography of Swett, crafting an intimate portrait of his experiences as a loyal member of Lincoln's inner circle. Eckley chronicles Swett's early life and the part he played in Lincoln's political campaigns, including his role as an essential member of the team behind Lincoln's two nominations and elections for the presidency. Swett counseled Lincoln during the formation of his cabinet and served as an unofficial advisor and sounding board during Lincoln's time in office. Throughout his life, Swett wrote a great deal on Lincoln, and planned to write a biography about him, but Swett's death preempted the project. His eloquent and interesting writings about Lincoln are described and reproduced in this volume, some for the first time. With *Lincoln's Forgotten Friend*, Eckley removes Swett from the shadows of history and sheds new light on Lincoln's personal relationships and their valuable contributions to his career. Superior Achievement from the Illinois State Historical Society, 2013