

Lincoln Home

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Historic Site



Interpretation of the 1860 Lincoln Home Photographs



When Abraham Lincoln became the 1860 Republican presidential nominee the nation wanted to learn more about the frontier lawyer who was about to become their president. Reporters, artists, and photographers came to Springfield to gather information about Lincoln, his family, and his hometown.

Years later, three photographs that were produced during the summer of 1860 would become valuable tools for interpretation and restoration of the Lincoln home. One of the photographs, (LIHO- 001) is reproduced on the back of the Lincoln Home tour ticket which provides an opportunity for comparison of the historic image of the Lincoln Home with the Lincoln Home that we can visit today.

Whipple Photographs

Two of the photographs were taken by Boston photographer John Adams Whipple. They feature Lincoln and his two youngest boys in the front yard and include neighbors standing on the front walk. Whipple set up his camera in the front yard of the Corneau house making the Corneau fence visible in the foreground. These photographs are the basis for the Corneau fence style. Photograph 3 (LIHO- 003) is commonly referred to as the "Rally Photograph." On August 8, 1860, participants in a Republican rally stopped in front of the Lincoln Home for a photograph on their way to the rally. The Rally photograph will be discussed in a subsequent bulletin.



Photograph 1 (LIHO- 001) clearly shows Abraham Lincoln and his son Willie standing behind the fence. A close look reveals that the youngest son Tad is peaking from behind the corner post. The identity of the people in front on the walkway is not known.



Photograph 2 (LIHO- 002) again shows Abraham Lincoln and his son Willie, but in this version Tad is more visibly seated next to the corner post. The blurry image in front, with only the feet clearly visible, is that of the Lincoln boys' playmate, Isaac Diller. Diller recalled that "I ran across the street from my aunt's house to get in a free picture with the Lincolns, but I turned my head at the wrong moment to look at a farm wagon. Only the stripes on my socks and my boots showed up." (From *Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose*, by Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, 1985, pp. 56- 59)

Whipple Photograph Interpretive Details



Some of the information about the Lincoln Home that can be learned from the photographs includes:

1. Use of the shutters; note that some are open and some are closed.
2. Venetian blinds are visible in the corner guest bedroom.
3. The small elm tree that appears in the photograph is one that Lincoln may have planted himself.
4. One of two backyard apple trees is visible.
8. The back porch latticework is visible.
9. It is apparent that a missing section of the decorative railing on the back porch roof was missing in 1860. That piece has never been replaced.
10. Mr. Lincoln was not known as “Mr. Fixit.”
11. A portion of the neighboring Carrigan House is visible.
12. The streets were made of dirt.
13. The streets were much deeper than they are today.
14. The walkways had ramps that extended over the street “gutters.”

