

LINCOLN HOME



Abraham Lincoln came to Springfield on April 15, 1837. Carl Sandburg tells the story of how Lincoln walked into Joshua Speed's store and asked the price of bedclothes. Seventeen dollars was the answer. "Cheap as it is," Lincoln said, "I have not the money to pay, but if you will credit me until Christmas, and my experiment here as a lawyer is a success, I will pay you then. If I fail in that, I will probably never pay at all." Speed took pity on this "gloomy and melancholy" face and offered to share his living quarters above the store. Lincoln accepted, and a friendship was born.

Though Lincoln was a new resident of Springfield, he was not a stranger to the town. Since 1834, Lincoln had represented Sangamon County in the Illinois General Assembly and helped move the capital from Vandalia to Springfield. The prairie city was growing rapidly. A newspaperman wrote in 1839 that Springfield contained "a throng of stores, taverns, and shops . . . and an agreeable assemblage of dwelling houses very neatly painted, most of them white, and situated somewhat retiringly behind tasteful frontyards." For Lincoln, the young lawyer and up-and-coming State legislator, Springfield possessed opportunities which could only enhance his already promising future. Here Lincoln could meet politicians and local leaders from all over the State. One was Stephen A. Douglas, a State senator who would defeat Lincoln in the 1858 election for the U.S. Senate. And here, too, he met Mary Todd.

Mary Todd came from a prominent family. She was born in Lexington, Ky., on December 13, 1818, the daughter of Robert Todd, a banker. The Todds were leading members of the community. They had helped found Lexington and Transylvania University, the first college west of the Appalachians. Mary grew up amidst all the comforts which the times and area offered: she went to a private school which only children of the "best families" attended, and slaves waited on her.

In October 1839, Mary Todd came to Springfield to live with her sister, Elizabeth, the wife of Ninian Wirt Edwards, son of a former governor of Illinois. Here Mary joined the group of single young men and women who often gathered at the Edwards home. Among the young men were Stephen A. Douglas; Edward C. Baker, a future U.S. representative; James Shields, a future U.S. senator from Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri; Lyman Trumbull, a future U.S. senator from Illinois; and Lincoln.

Soon Lincoln and Mary were fast friends. Their relationship waxed and waned as the months passed, but in the fall of 1842, they decided to marry. It was a decision that her sisters found difficult to accept, for Lincoln's background, in their eyes, did not measure up to Mary's.

On the morning of November 4, 1842, Lincoln went to the home of Rev. Charles Dresser, the Episcopal minister and told him, "I want to get hitched tonight." Lincoln and Mary wanted to be married in the minister's home because of her family's opposition. But when they learned that she was determined to go through with the wedding, the Edwards insisted that the wedding must take place in their home. That evening Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln stood before Rev. Charles Dresser and repeated their vows.

Their first year together, the Lincolns lived in a hotel boarding house, the Globe Tavern. Here their first child, Robert Todd Lincoln, was born on August 1, 1843. The noisy, crowded conditions in the Globe did not make a homelike environment, so the Lincolns moved and spent the winter in a rented three-room cottage at 214 South Fourth St. The next spring, Lincoln bought Rev. Dresser's home on the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets for \$1,200 cash and a small lot worth \$300.

They lived on a tight budget. Lincoln himself chopped the wood, carried the water, milked the cow, and did the rest of the chores men did in those days. And to keep the money coming in, Lincoln had to go out and travel the judicial circuit. The Eighth Circuit, in which he practiced, covered 31,073 square kilometers (12,000 square miles) and was sparsely settled with county seats far apart connected by rough roads often in disrepair. Lincoln traveled this circuit on horseback, exposed to the elements, with a volume of the *Revised Statutes*, copies of Blackstone's *Commentaries* and *Chitty On Pleadings*, and an extra shirt and change of underwear in his saddlebags. Lincoln made a name for himself on the circuit, and in 1846 he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Whig. That same year the Lincolns' second son, Edward Baker, was born.

The first session of the 30th Congress was to convene on December 6, 1847. In October the Lincolns rented their house for \$90 a year to Cornelius Ludlum, and they left for Washington via Lexington, Ky., where they visited the Todds. After an arduous stagecoach and railroad trip, the Lincolns arrived in the Nation's Capital.

Though Lincoln was active as a new member of Congress, his colleagues generally appraised him as a droll Westerner of average talents. Lincoln's opposition to the Mexican War which had broken out in May 1846 soon made him unpopular with his constituents. In Illinois the patriotic fervor and hunger for new lands dispelled any doubts that the people may have had about the American cause. Lincoln's "spot" resolutions asking President James Polk to admit that the "spot" where American blood was first shed was Mexican territory and his anti-administration speeches created surprised resentment at home and earned him the nickname "Spotty Lincoln." Illinois Democrats called Lincoln a disgrace.

The war debates also raised the issue of slavery. Whether these newly won territories should be open to slavery was perhaps the most serious question before the 30th Congress. The debates over the Wilmot Proviso showed Lincoln the explosiveness and divisiveness of the slavery question.

In May 1849, the second session of the 30th Congress ended and Lincoln returned home, happy to be reunited with his friends and family, who had stayed in Washington only a short time. Feeling that he had no future in politics, Lincoln took to the dusty roads of the Eighth Circuit to regain the friends and clients who had slipped away while he was in Congress. Lincoln was offered the governorship of the new Oregon Territory, but he declined it.

The first year home from Congress proved to be emotionally hard for the Lincolns, for Mary's father

and maternal grandmother, both strong constant figures in her life, died. One of Mary's brothers contested her father's will and Lincoln served as the lawyer for Mary and her three sisters in Springfield. The details of the litigation only added to her personal grief. In mid-December their son, Eddie, became ill, apparently with consumption. The Lincolns nursed Eddie for 52 days. On the morning of February 1, 1850, he died. Mary, already worn out from the agony of the past year, collapsed in grief and shock when she heard the news. Soon, however, the Lincolns were heartened by the expected birth of their third son, William Wallace, who was born December 17, 1850. A fourth son, "Tad," was born April 4, 1853.

The Lincolns loved their children and indulged them greatly. Mary paraded their accomplishments before visitors, gave them elaborate birthday parties and often joined in their games, throwing dignity to the wind. Lincoln often took the two youngest to his law office and let them run wild while he worked. William Herndon, a law partner and biographer of Lincoln, frequently grew so mad that he wanted to throw the boys out the window. He dared not say anything, for he knew that Lincoln would side with the boys.

PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

In the spring of 1854 Lincoln returned to politics. The spur was Sen. Stephen Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act which repealed the Missouri Compromise that prohibited slavery above the 29th parallel, Missouri's southern border. Lincoln and many of his fellow Whigs opposed the new law and in the upcoming elections that fall sought to bolster their strength in the Congress and the State legislatures. Consequently, Lincoln's reputation grew.

In 1855, Lincoln ran for the U.S. Senate but lost. One year later, at the first Republican national convention in Philadelphia, the Illinois delegation nominated him for vice president. He lost again but more and more people were beginning to recognize his name.

In 1858 Senator Douglas came up for reelection. On June 16, the State Republican Convention nominated Lincoln for the seat. In his acceptance speech at the State Capitol, Lincoln set the tone of the campaign when he said, "'A house divided against itself cannot stand!' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

On the advice of his managers, Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of 7 debates during the fall of 1858. Douglas was reluctant, but finally accepted. The famous Lincoln-Douglas debates ensued. These debates helped make Lincoln a national figure. His logic, moral fervor, spare and elegant language, and skillful debating techniques diminished Douglas' reputation. Douglas found himself backed into a corner before he realized what had happened. Douglas lost the debates but won the election.

Lincoln continued to give speeches, many in support of the Republican party, throughout the Midwest. In October of 1859 he was invited to speak in the East. His speech to the Young Men's Central Republican Union of New York City at Cooper Union on February 27, 1860, brought him to the attention of influential Republicans in

the Northeast. He exhorted his audience to compromise readily if the occasion arose but not to shrink from their opposition to the extension of slavery. "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it," were the words Lincoln left ringing in their ears.

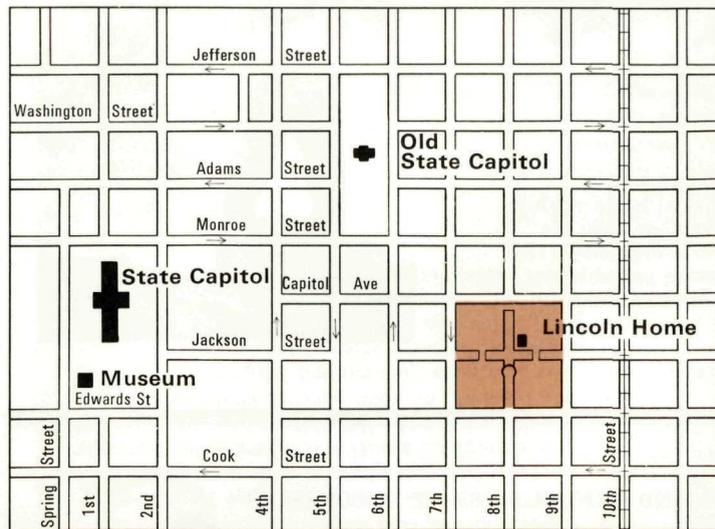
At the 1860 Republican convention in Chicago, William H. Seward of New York, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, and Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania were the leading contenders for the party's presidential nomination. But Lincoln was a new man and had few opponents. Through the political astuteness of his managers and his own shrewd politicking he got the nomination on May 16, 1860. Hannibal Hamlin of Maine was selected as his running mate. Lincoln learned of the nominations by telegram in Springfield. Beaming, he shook hands all around and went home to tell Mary the news. That night Springfield went wild.

In the general election, Lincoln faced Stephen Douglas, John Breckinridge, and John Bell. Lincoln spent most of the election day at his office and then went to vote around mid-afternoon. Before the night was over, the outcome of the balloting was certain. Lincoln took only 40 percent of the popular vote, but he received a clear majority of the electoral vote.

On January 27, 1861, Lincoln announced that he would depart for Washington on February 11 and asked for the "utmost privacy" during the rest of his stay in Springfield. Much had to be done before the departure. The house on Eighth Street, with all its memories, had to be vacated and some household articles sold. Lucian Tilton, president of the Great Western Railroad, bought most of the furniture. In 1869 Tilton moved to Chicago and 2 years later the Great Chicago Fire destroyed his home and most of the Lincoln furniture. Many personal possessions were packed for use in the White House. Lincoln himself roped the trunks and put a card on each one labeled "A. Lincoln, White House, Washington, D.C."

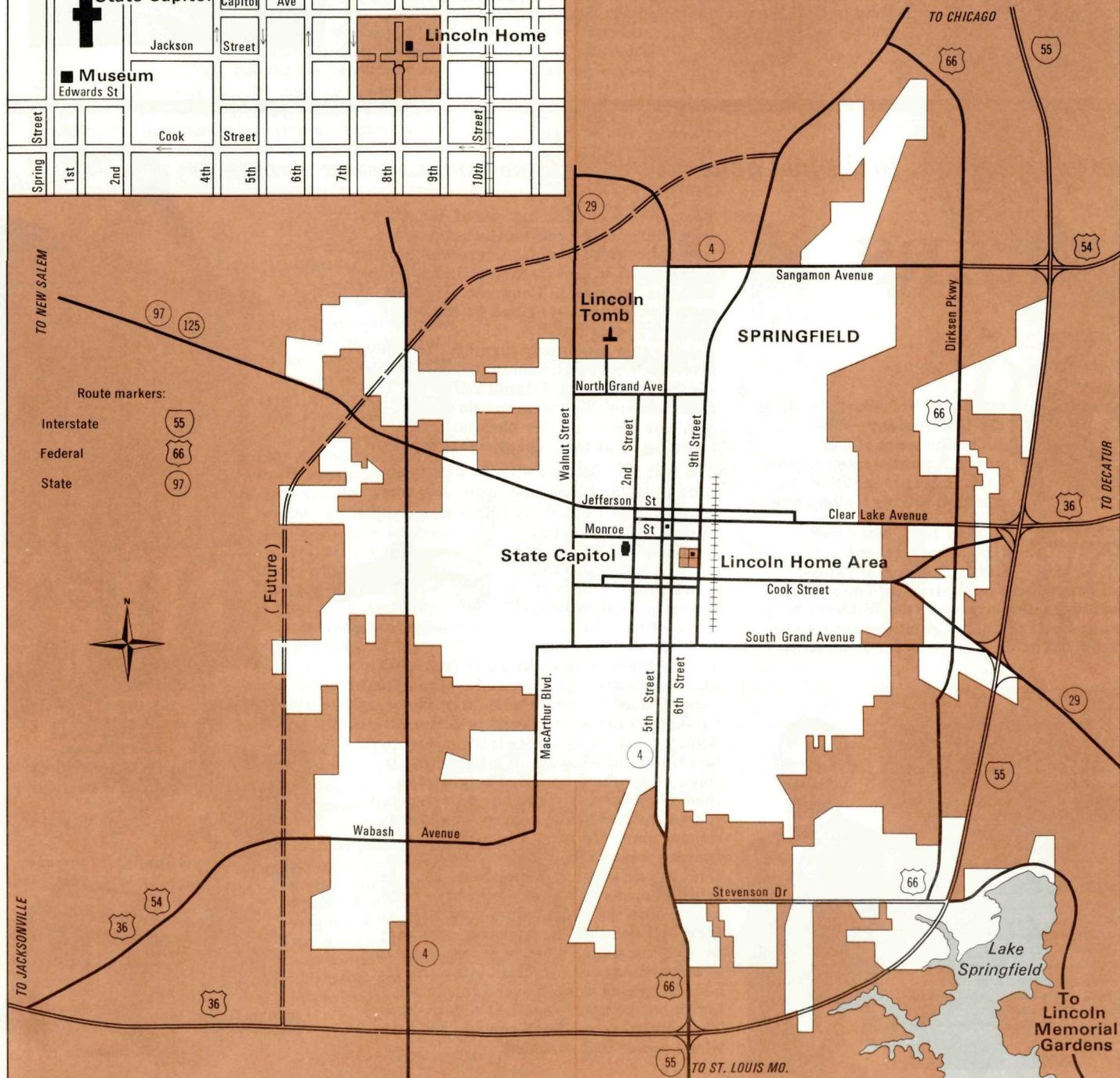
And Lincoln also needed some privacy to think about the awesome job that lay ahead of him. Already six States had left the Union and another, Texas, would join them before he left Springfield. Grave times faced him.

On the rainswept morning of February 11, 1861, Lincoln stood on the Springfield train platform. In a voice trembling with emotion he addressed the crowd. *My Friends: no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everything for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.*



YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SAFETY AND THAT OF YOUR CHILDREN.

You are in a 19th-century environment preserved or restored as near to the original condition as possible. Uneven and slippery boardwalks and steep, narrow staircases are uncommon today, but a century ago, they were part of the day-to-day scene. Remember while you are in the area that safety precautions over a century ago were not what they are today. Such considerations will make your visit a safe one and will also help you understand a vanished way of life.



THE SPRINGFIELD HOME

The house that Lincoln bought was originally built for Rev. Dresser in the fall of 1839, probably by his brother, Henry. The house was one and one-half stories high in the Greek Revival style. The framing was rough-sawn oak with hand-hewn oak stills. Pine was used for the exterior trim and weather-boarding. The laths were of split hickory. Walnut was used for the interior trim and doors, and the floors were random-width oak. Wooden pegs and hand-wrought nails were used in the construction.

Little change took place until 1856 when Mary began major improvements to the home for the family of growing boys needed more room. She enlarged the home to two full stories. The work was done by Hannan and Ragsdale for \$1,300.

The contractors raised the roof of the front part of the house 3 meters (9 feet). New pine studding was inserted and fastened to the existing rough-sawn oak studding of the original walls. The ceiling of the two half-story bedrooms at the front of the house were then raised to a height of 3.5 meters (11 feet). The ceiling of the three rooms at the rear of the house was raised about 30 centimeters (1 foot) and an entire story containing five bedrooms and a storage room was added above them to make the house a full two stories. Northern pine was used on the interior, and the upstairs woodwork was given an artificial walnut stain to continue the walnut decor of the downstairs. The fireplaces built in the two second-floor bedrooms were false; they served as decorative backgrounds for woodburning stoves.

In June 1850 Lincoln improved the front yard by constructing a brick retaining wall and fence along the front of the lot. In June 1855 he had the brick wall and fence extended along a quarter of the Jackson Street side. These were some of the changes that the Lincolns made to their home at 8th and Jackson during the 17 years they lived in the only home they ever owned.

ADMINISTRATION

The Lincoln Home National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 413 South 8th Street, Springfield, IL 62701, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

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LINCOLN HOME





The traditional birthplace of Abraham Lincoln.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS



The Lincoln family Bible.

Thomas Lincoln

"It is great folly to attempt to make anything out of me or my early life," wrote the candidate to a supporter. "It can all be condensed into a single sentence; and that sentence you will find in Gray's *Elegy*: 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' That's my life and that's all you or anyone else can make out of it."

Abraham Lincoln, elected 16th President of the United States soon after penning these lines, aptly summed up his humble beginnings. He was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin on the Kentucky frontier. His parents—Thomas Lincoln, a carpenter and backwoods farmer, and Nancy Hanks, a shadowy figure of obscure lineage—were hardworking and religious but without schooling. When Abe was 2, his father took his family to another, more fertile farm 10 miles north. This was the Knob Creek place, and the boy long remembered his years here. He swam in the creek with companions, attended A.B.C. schools with his sister Sarah for a few months, and accompanied his father on chores.

In Abe's 7th year, title troubles again drove his father off his farm. Seeking secure land and—his son said later—free soil, Thomas carried his family into the Indiana wilderness and settled near Little Pigeon Creek. Two years later, in 1818, Abe's mother died, a victim of the terrible "milk sickness," and the family sank into a rough existence from which it did not emerge until Thomas remarried.

His new wife was Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children. Cheerful and energetic, she brought a new tone to the Lincoln cabin and raised the boy and his sister as her own.



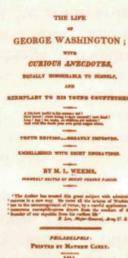
Poisonous snakeroot, whence came the dread "milk sickness."



The gravestone of Nancy H. Lincoln.



Little Pigeon Baptist Church, which the Lincolns attended in Indiana.



A book which greatly moved young Abraham.

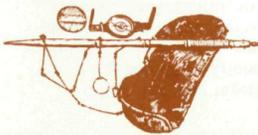


Sarah Bush Lincoln



An Ohio River steamboat, *The General Pike*, in 1818.

Abraham grew up in Indiana. A lanky, good-humored youth, liked by all, he helped his father with the farming, hacked away at the forest with his ax, attended the occasional schools in the community, and read incessantly. Uninterested in labor, he passed long hours in talk. At 16 he worked for a few months on a farm along the Ohio. Three years later he rode a flatboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans and first glimpsed a wider world.



Lincoln's surveying equipment.

In 1830 the Lincolns moved once more. Lured by reports of rich black soil, they piled all their goods into wagons and set out for Illinois. Soon they reached a spot on the banks of Sangamon River, a few miles from Decatur. Abraham was now 21, free to come and go as he chose, but he stayed with his family for a year, breaking ground, splitting rails, and planting corn. After another trip down the Mississippi, he drifted into New Salem, a thriving village.

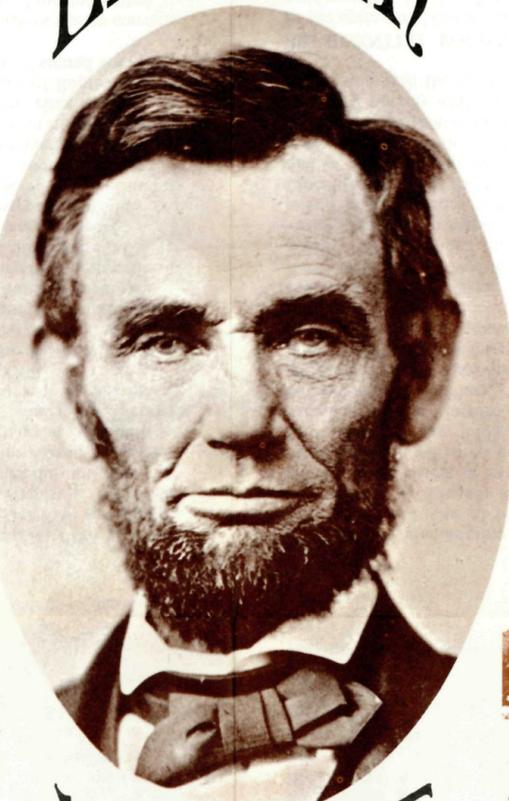
For a while he clerked in Offutt's store. When it failed, he grasped at a new opportunity. Encouraged by his friends he ran for the State legislature, advocating a variety of public improvements. Though he lost the election, he carried his own neighborhood by 277 votes to 7, a source of great pride for many years after.



A page from A.'s sum book, assembled in Indiana. it. A plat made in 1866.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN



1809-1865

EARLY POLITICAL CAREER



The Statehouse at Springfield.



Springfield, the new State capital. Licensed an attorney the year before, he formed a partnership with the able John T. Stuart and soon dipped into local politics. After marrying Mary Todd, a Kentucky belle, in 1842, he settled down in earnest to the law.

From 1847-49 Lincoln served in Congress. He worked hard in office, but his opposition to the Mexican War proved notably unpopular back home, and he was passed over for re-nomination. Sadly he returned to Springfield, and resumed his law practice. Honest, shrewd, and effective before juries, he soon rose to the first rank of the Illinois bar. Over the next 5 years Lincoln devoted much time to studying the American past and the looming issue of slavery.



Lincoln's most celebrated law case: the defense of young "Duff" Armstrong in 1858.



A handbill for a political meeting held during the Lincoln-Douglas debates.



The home in Springfield.

Early in 1860 Lincoln journeyed east to lecture in New York City. He called for the exclusion of slavery from the territories, deplored efforts to destroy the Union, and urged friendship toward the South. The speech was a triumph, and the number of his supporters grew. When his rivals proved weak in the national convention, Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency on the third ballot.



A political rally at the Lincoln home in August 1860.



A poster for the 1860 campaign.

From his doorstep in Springfield Lincoln ran a quiet campaign, receiving delegations and political leaders while avoiding speeches and stumping. In November 1860 the Nation voted. Lincoln won a large electoral majority (180 votes to 123 for his three opponents), but he polled less than half of the popular vote. The South voted almost solidly against him.



A. L. in 1847.



Mary Todd Lincoln

Lincoln spent 6 important years in New Salem. Defeated for office, he turned to storekeeping, then was appointed postmaster, became a surveyor, and plunged into law studies. In 1834 he was elected to the legislature as a Whig, where he denounced slavery as "founded on both injustice and bad policy" but opposed the spread of abolition societies.

Three years later Lincoln moved to

Springfield, the new State capital. Licensed an attorney the year before, he formed a partnership with the able John T. Stuart and soon dipped into local politics. After marrying Mary Todd, a Kentucky belle, in 1842, he settled down in earnest to the law. From 1847-49 Lincoln served in Congress. He worked hard in office, but his opposition to the Mexican War proved notably unpopular back home, and he was passed over for re-nomination. Sadly he returned to Springfield, and resumed his law practice. Honest, shrewd, and effective before juries, he soon rose to the first rank of the Illinois bar. Over the next 5 years Lincoln devoted much time to studying the American past and the looming issue of slavery. Roused by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, he emerged from political retirement to grapple with Stephen A. Douglas, who advocated in Congress doctrines that would allow the introduction of slavery into the western territories. Their first skirmish came in 1854. Arguing that slavery should be restrained to its present domain, Lincoln marshaled history and logic to counter Douglas' theory of "popular sovereignty." It was the first great speech of his career. Two years later, another address, this time to a State Convention of the new Republican party, again brought him wide attention. He was now enough of a national figure to be seriously considered for the Republican vice-presidential nomination. In 1858 Lincoln challenged Douglas



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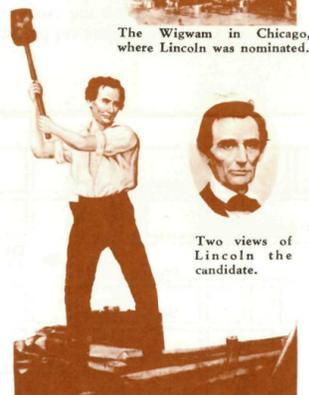


A political rally at the Lincoln home in August 1860.

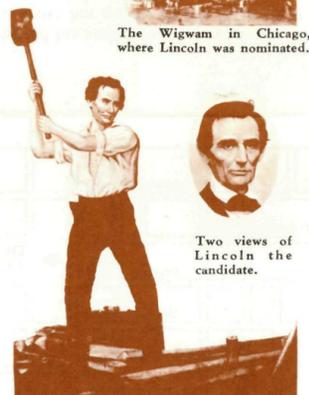


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The Wigwam in Chicago, where Lincoln was nominated.



Two views of Lincoln the candidate.

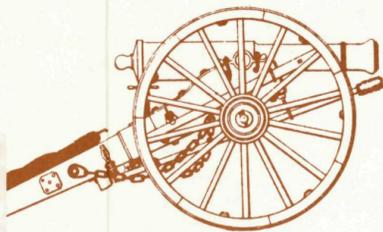
"The fiery trials through which we pass will light us down, to honor or dishonor, to the last generation." SECOND ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

THE WAR YEARS

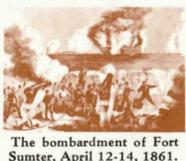
The first inaugural, beneath the unfinished Capitol dome.



Lincoln's Cabinet. At right is Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.



A 1864 political cartoon, pointing toward the task of reunion.



The bombardment of Fort Sumter, April 12-14, 1861.



Lincoln confers with McClellan, just after the battle of Antietam.



Gettysburg, 1863: "The world can never forget what they did here."



The Emancipation, as the plain people saw it.

citadel of Vicksburg, splitting the Confederacy. When he broke the siege of Chattanooga 2 months later, a grateful Lincoln brought him east to command all the Union armies. In May 1864, while another Union force set out across Georgia, Grant advanced southward, bent on destroying Lee's army. Lee fought desperately in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania. Casualties mounted, and quick victory seemed as far away as ever.

bright spot. But at Fredericksburg in late 1862 and at Chancellorsville in the spring of 1863 the North again suffered large-scale and critical defeats. This was Lincoln's darkest hour. After Antietam, he had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring free all slaves in rebel territory, but words could not substitute for victories. Now Lee was marching northward again. In July the armies clashed at Gettysburg, and Lee retreated with bloody losses. As the North rejoiced, more good news came from the West. Stubby, quiet-spoken Ulysses S. Grant captured the strategic

"The whole physiognomy is as coarse a one as you would meet anywhere in the length and breadth of the States; but without, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely sagacity, that seems weighted with rich results of village experience. A great deal of native sense; no bookish cultivation, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, sly—at least, endowed with a sort of tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would impel him, I think, to take an antagonist in flank, rather than to make a bull-run at him right in front."
—Nathaniel Hawthorne



1864



McLean House, Appomattox, Va.

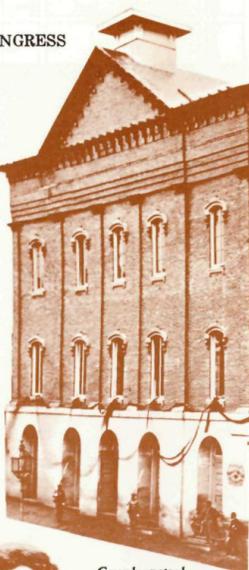


Ulysses S. Grant

The summer of 1864 was one of Lincoln's most difficult. Peace negotiations were begun, but fell through. There was discord in the Cabinet, and in August Lincoln broke with the Radicals in Congress. He soon came to believe that he had no chance of winning reelection. Yet the tide was slowly turning. Two days after the Democrats nominated McClellan for the Presidency, Atlanta fell to W. T. Sherman and Northern morale soared. Lincoln won the November election easily, carrying 22 of the 25 participating States. The war was fast drawing to a close as Lincoln began his second term. Lee was bottled up at Petersburg; Sherman's swath of destruction had badly crippled the South; slavery was dead. Lincoln's concern now was the reconciliation of the two sections. In his inaugural address he described the war as a visitation from God—and he pleaded for peace without malice.



The assassin's weapon.



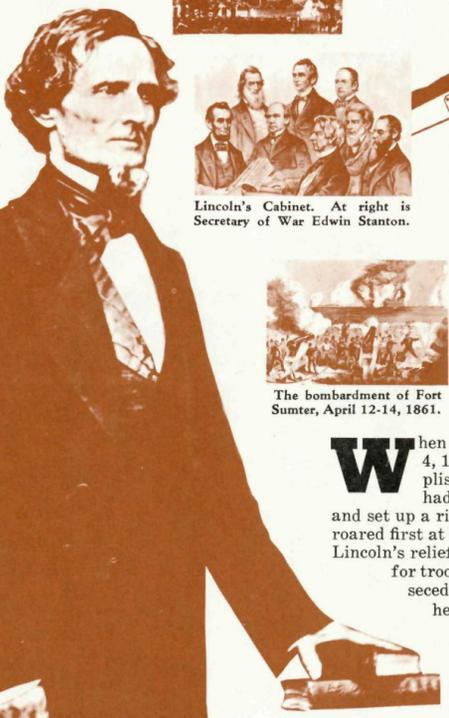
Guards patrol outside a creped Ford's Theatre, where Lincoln was shot.



April 10, 1865



A people's tribute.



Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America.

When Lincoln took office on March 4, 1861, secession was an accomplished fact. The lower South had withdrawn from the Union and set up a rival government. The guns roared first at Fort Sumter, turning back Lincoln's relief expedition. Both sides called for troops, more Southern States seceded, and the Nation plunged headlong into civil war.

The fighting went badly at first for the North. Plagued by poor generalship, the Federal army in the East was roundly trounced in 1861 and through most of 1862. George B. McClellan's repulse of Robert E. Lee at Antietam Creek was the solitary