

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • KENTUCKY

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U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



Here on a raw frontier farm of rolling land, in a cabin by the Sinking Spring, was born the man whose strides carried him awkwardly, yet majestically, over a path which began in common Kentucky clay and ended in immortality.

THE LINCOLN FAMILY

At the close of the Revolution, the Lincoln family moved to the frontier region of Kentucky, which was then the outpost of pioneer advance into the American wilderness and, until 1794, a bloody battleground for scattered settlements and isolated families within its borders. Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the 16th President and the man for whom he was named, moved from Virginia across the mountains into Kentucky sometime between 1782 and 1784. Here he was killed by an Indian from ambush about 1786. Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's son and the father of the future President, was then about 10 years old.

Thomas Lincoln was good-natured and honest, but he always seemed to be retreating before the approach of the comforts and advantages of a developing community, as if they represented something foreign to his rustic nature. About 1800 he settled in Elizabethtown and during the next few years was a hard-working and industrious member of the community, acquiring a reputation as a carpenter. On June 12, 1806, he married Nancy Hanks. The couple made their home in Elizabethtown, where their first child, Sarah, was born in 1807.

On December 12, 1808, Thomas Lincoln bought for \$200 in cash the 300-acre Sinking Spring farm, a few miles south of Hodgen's Mill. He, his wife, and their infant daughter moved into a one-room cabin near the large limestone spring of cool water for which the place was named. It was in this cabin that Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809.

The Lincolns lived about 2-1/2 years at the Sinking Spring farm, which eventually was lost to them because of a defective land title. Before midsummer 1811 they moved to a farm on Knob Creek, about 10 miles to the northeast. They lived there only a few years, and in November or December 1816, Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky and made a new home in the wilderness settlement of Little Pigeon Creek, about 16 miles north of the Ohio River, in Indiana. On October 5, 1818, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died and was buried in an unmarked grave in a little clearing in the deep woods.

The image of Abraham Lincoln's mother is blurred and uncertain. One historian has said of her, "dim as the dream of a shifting mirage, her face and figure waver through the mists of time and rumor." Although her physical features left no definite impression upon the minds of those who years later tried to recall her image, there was almost unanimous agreement concerning her mental and spiritual attributes. That she possessed a fine native intelligence, courage, and a morality above reproach, and that she was kind and affectionate, seem reasonably certain.

THE BIRTHPLACE CABIN

From 1861 to the present, the history of the log cabin now displayed within the memorial building is fairly clear, but its history prior to 1861 is a matter of controversy and doubt. Nor is there conclusive evidence concerning the specific location of the original cabin. Certain testimony indicates that it stood on top of the knoll where the memorial building stands; still other that it was below the knoll, a short distance from the Sinking Spring and about on a level with it.

Dr. George Rodman was the first individual to become interested in preserving the cabin. In March 1861 he bought a log cabin standing on the birthplace farm and moved it a little over a mile to the north and reerected it on his own farm. Here it remained until 1894, when it was purchased by a representative of A. W. Dennett of New York and returned to the Lincoln farm, where Dennett had purchased 110 acres of land. Several times during the years that followed, the cabin was dismantled, the logs being carefully marked, and taken to various expositions around the country.

The Lincoln Farm Association, formed in 1904 to raise funds to purchase the birthplace, bought the cabin in 1906 and sent it to Louisville, where it was eventually put in storage. In 1909 it was returned temporarily to the birthplace farm for the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial building by President Theodore Roosevelt. Upon completion of this structure in 1911, the cabin was taken on the last of its travels back to the site of its origin and reerected within the memorial building.

Designed by John Russell Pope, the building was built of Connecticut pink granite and Tennessee marble by the Association between 1909 and 1911 through funds raised by popular subscription. More than 100,000 citizens, many of them school children, contributed to this fund.



THE TRADITIONAL BIRTHPLACE CABIN

THE PARK

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site comprises 116 acres of land, nearly 100 acres of which were part of the original Thomas Lincoln farm. The land, as well as the memorial building, was deeded to the United States on April 16, 1916. At the site are the memorial building housing the traditional birthplace cabin, the Sinking Spring, and the ancient boundary oak which was a landmark at the time of Abraham Lincoln's birth. First established in 1916 as a National Park, the area became a National Historic Site on September 8, 1959.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The Abraham Lincoln birthplace is about 3 miles south of Hodgenville, Ky., on U.S. 31E-Ky. 61. The site is open daily, except December 25. Uniformed interpreters are on hand to give information and directions. Picnicking and camping are not permitted within the site, but tables and camping accommodations are available nearby.

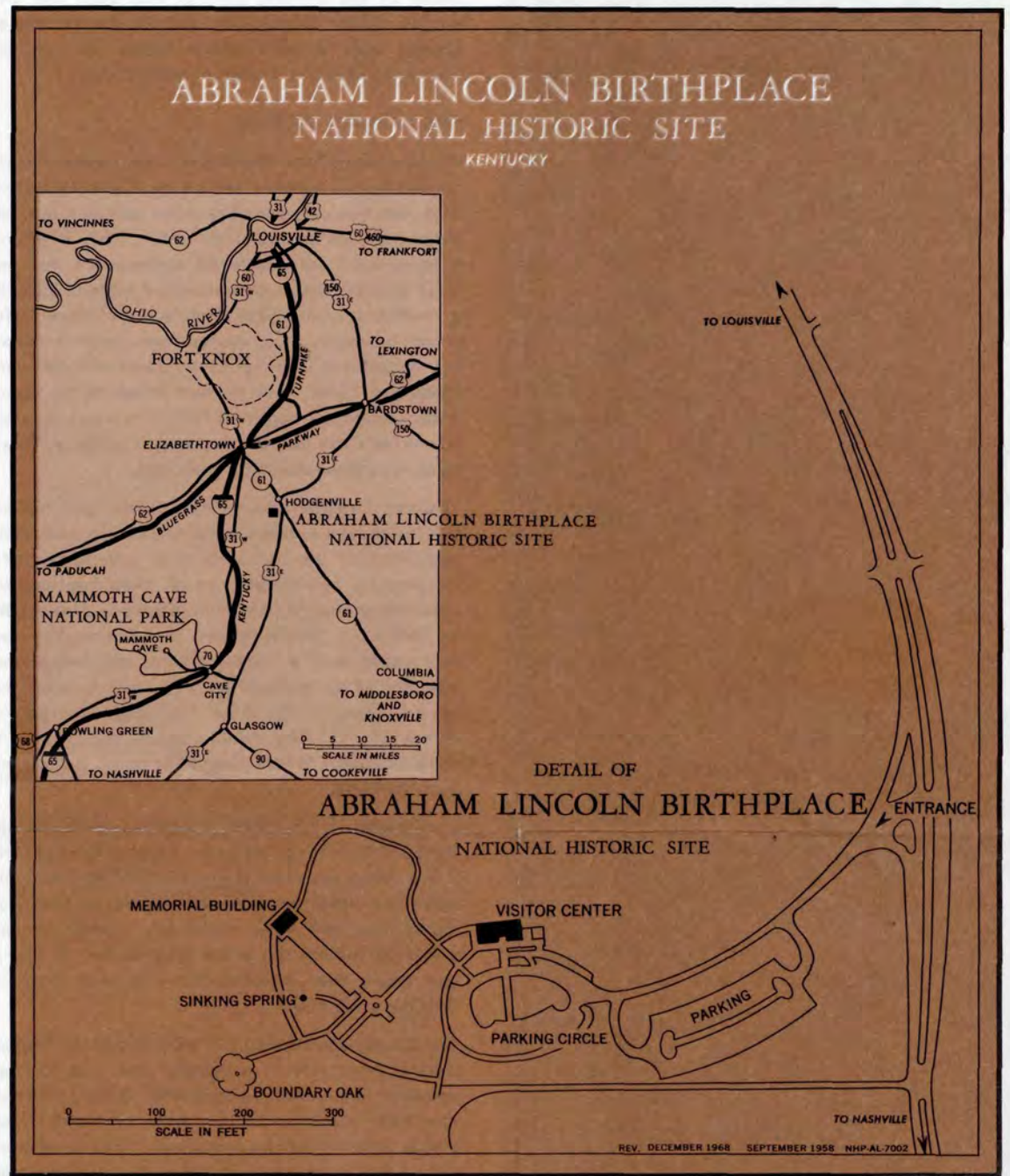
We suggest you begin your tour at the visitor center, where an audiovisual program and exhibits depict Abraham Lincoln's background and early environment in pioneer America. Among the exhibits is the original Bible of Thomas Lincoln.

A short walk from the visitor center brings you into contact with features of the land known by the Lincoln family. The giant white oak that served as a marker for the earliest surveys of this area and the Sinking Spring survive as mute witnesses to the infancy of Abraham Lincoln.

The cabin, preserved inside the memorial building since 1911, is on or near its original location.

ADMINISTRATION

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Route 1, Hodgenville, Ky. 42748, is in immediate charge.



THE BOUNDARY OAK



THE SINKING SPRING



THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL BUILDING