



Lincoln Boyhood Home at Knob Creek



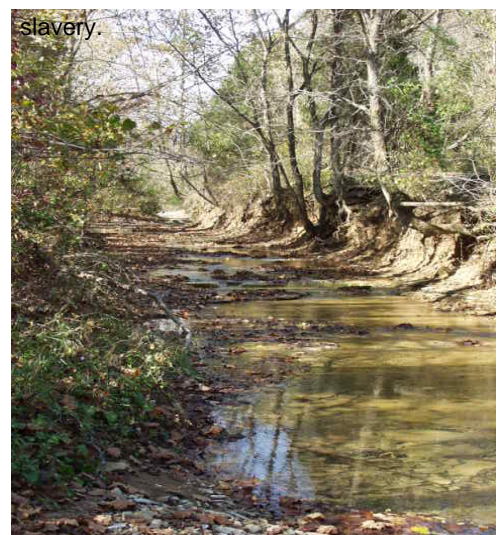
The first field at Lincoln Boyhood Home at Knob Creek

Recollections of Knob Creek

In his 1860 campaign autobiography, Abraham Lincoln wrote, “I was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My earliest recollection, however is of the Knob Creek place.” Lincoln recounted events from his boyhood years spent in the beautiful farm valley. Some memories stood out more than others: like the time he recalled planting pumpkin seeds in the fertile bottomland of Knob Creek only to see the labors of his small hands washed away by a flash flood. He recalled falling into the waters of the same stream and almost drowning before being pulled to safety by his friend, Austin Gollaher. He remembered his baby brother, Thomas, dying from an unknown illness and being laid to rest in the Redmon family cemetery on a hill overlooking the valley.

Life at Knob Creek Farm

The family left their Sinking Spring Farm due to an unstable land title. Abraham Lincoln’s father, Thomas, leased 30 acres at Knob Creek from George Lindsey, a local farmer. Three fields lay between the surrounding knobs. These fields provided fertile land for corn crops, and the trees on the hills supplied wood for their cabin’s fire. Nancy Lincoln probably found berries and herbs to supplement the family’s diet. The daily struggles for survival on the Kentucky frontier helped to shape the character and attitudes of Abraham Lincoln’s adulthood. It was while living at Knob Creek that young Abraham’s curious, ambitious mind was first stimulated. He and his older sister, Sarah, walked two miles to the little “blab school” at Athertonville in order to learn “readin’, writin’, and cipherin’ to the rule of three.” It was also at Knob Creek that Abraham witnessed the cruel practice of human ownership,



Knob Creek

Slavery in Kentucky

Many of the Lincolns’ neighbors were farmers and leaseholders like themselves. Slavery was not as prevalent on such small landholdings as on farms of the deep South. However, some neighbors did own slaves. As a young boy, Lincoln may have seen slaves taken down the road in front of the family cabin. The Lincoln family moved their church membership to a Separate Baptist congregation over

their disapproval of slave ownership. Later in his life Lincoln would write how his family had “removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana...partly on account of slavery...” These events so affected him that while he was President he would write to A.G. Hodges, the editor of Frankfort’s *Commonwealth*, “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel.”

Knob Creek after the Lincolns

In 1815, Thomas Lincoln lost his legal pursuit to regain the Sinking Spring Farm. Meanwhile, the Lincolns and nine of their neighbors were facing eviction as the result of a lawsuit brought by a group asserting a prior claim to 10,000 acres of the Knob Creek valley. In the winter of 1816, the small family packed their belongings, said good-bye to friends and left Knob Creek—the only Kentucky home Lincoln could remember.

The rural nature of Knob Creek continued. The farm passed through several families' hands. Automobiles became affordable and the Federal Road Aid Act of 1916 improved Kentucky highways. Tourism flourished and people began visiting LaRue County and the birthplace memorial. The Lincoln Trail was established as a way for travelers to follow the same route the Lincoln family took through Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois.

Hattie Howell Howard was one of many people in the area seeking to both memorialize Lincoln and create a career in tourism. In 1928, Hattie and her husband Chester purchased the Knob Creek property. In 1931, they moved logs from a cabin, which once belonged to the Gollaher family, onto the site. They constructed an adjacent building to supply refreshments and gas to travelers. For many years live entertainment and dancing was enjoyed by tourists and locals alike at the tavern. The

Boyhood Home became a successful tourist site and began to garner recognition for its significance in Lincoln's life. The Boy Scouts began using the site as a stopping point on their Lincoln Heritage Trail hike from Elizabethtown to Hodgenville. However, it became apparent to the Howard family that more had to be done to ensure the long-term future of the Boyhood Home site.



Tavern at Boyhood Home

A Secure Future

A group of Howard family members successfully worked toward having the site listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. A friends group formed to secure long term preservation of the Lincoln Boyhood Home at Knob Creek. Members of the community worked with local, state and national

organizations to have the Knob Creek site donated to the federal government. Congress authorized the acquisition of the site on November 6, 1998, and the National Park Service officially assumed management on November 6, 2001.

Visiting Knob Creek Today

Today's visitor has the chance to walk in the boyhood footsteps of America's 16th President. The Lincoln Boyhood Home at Knob Creek has a diversity of plants, wildlife and topography to stimulate the senses. National Park Service personnel plant a garden each spring that is representative of what the Lincolns might have planted. Knob Creek offers wonderful opportunities for bird watching and other wildlife viewing. A nature trail is maintained along the pristine waters of Knob Creek. A hiking trail offers the chance to hike to the top of the adjacent knob where an overlook allows a magnificent view of the surrounding valley. Interpretive talks are held during the summer.

When visiting, the National Park Service asks you to take measures to protect yourself and the park's resources. Please do not enter areas or buildings that are closed to the public. Use caution when entering or leaving the parking area. Stay alert for poison ivy, ticks and venomous snakes. Slippery rocks and unstable banks may be present along the stream. Help us protect wildlife, plants, cultural or natural features by preserving them for future generations. Picnicking is allowed in designated areas. Open fires are not permitted.

For questions, comments or additional information, contact park headquarters:
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