

“...I too, am a Kentuckian.”

Abraham Lincoln, 1861

President Abraham Lincoln’s family carved out a home in the challenging and humble backwoods of Kentucky in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The region likely shaped his character and helped make him the man he would become.

The National Park Service commemorates Abraham Lincoln’s early life and humble beginnings at Boyhood Home and Birthplace Units at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site in present day LaRue County, Kentucky. Often overlooked are the Lincoln family’s early roots in the Mill Creek area of Hardin County. Today this area is known as Radcliff/Ft. Knox. This brochure will highlight sites in this area connected to the Lincoln family.



Detail from John Filson’s 1784 map of Kentucky
Library of Congress

Mill Creek, a tributary of the Salt River, appears labeled and correctly drawn on the first map of Kentucky published by John Filson in 1784. This is the area that would become home to the Lincolns.

Long before the establishment of Ft. Knox, settlers would converge on the old Mill Creek Baptist Church, est. 1783, for mutual protection from Indian raids. Initially located in the Mill Creek Cemetery (now known as the Lincoln Memorial Cemetery at Ft. Knox) overlooking Mill Creek,

today the congregation meets in a modern edifice on South Jones Street in Radcliff.

In 1782, Captain Abraham Lincoln (the president’s grandfather) brought his wife, three sons and two daughters, through the Cumberland Gap into the future state of Kentucky. Four years later Captain Lincoln was shot and killed by an Indian. This act was witnessed by his youngest son, Thomas, who survived the attack. Soon after, the widowed Bathsheba Lincoln and her children moved to Washington County.

Thomas Lincoln, who was to become the father of the future president, was an industrious farmer and cabinet maker. He worked in Hardin County as early as 1796.

① In 1803, Thomas purchased a 238 acre farm which he paid cash and owned until October 1814. The farm is located near the southern boundary of present day Radcliff/Ft. Knox on Battle Training Road, approximately 2 ½ miles from Dixie Highway (31W). Thomas brought his mother, his sister, and her husband to live here.



Lincoln Memorial Cemetery on Ft. Knox
Visitation is allowed on Memorial Day

② The Lincoln Memorial Cemetery gets its name from Abraham Lincoln’s grandmother, Bathsheba Lincoln. She was the first of the family buried in that consecrated ground. Nancy Brumfield, aunt of the president, her husband, William Brumfield, and

their daughter, Mary Crume, complete the three generations of Lincoln’s buried side by side. Several generations of a family buried together indicates long time residence in the area.



Mantel built by Thomas Lincoln, located in the Leaders Club at Ft. Knox

③ The Lincoln Mantel in the Lincoln Room of the Ft. Knox Leader’s Club showcases Thomas’ talents as a craftsman. It was originally constructed for the Hardin Thomas home, located approximately 5 miles south of the Mill Creek farm. The house was later moved to Freeman Lake Park in Elizabethtown, where it is now known as the Lincoln Heritage House. The mantel was purchased by Major William Radcliffe for installation at Camp Knox in 1919. It was installed in its present location at Ft. Knox in the 1930s.

④ In the early spring of 1806, Thomas Lincoln took a flatboat loaded with produce from West Point, Kentucky to New Orleans, Louisiana. The trip, requiring about sixty days, was profitable and enabled him to finalize plans for his marriage to Nancy Hanks, future mother of President Lincoln, on June 12 of that year. A historical marker in West Point makes note of this event.

Thomas and Nancy had their first child, a daughter named Sarah, in 1807. They moved to a farm on Nolin Creek, near Hodgenville. There, on February 12, 1809, their son Abraham was born. Their third child died in infancy. Thomas purchased another farm nearby, the Knob Creek farm. This would be the first home Abraham could recall from his youth.

After falling victim to Kentucky’s chaotic land laws and partially due to his views on slavery, Thomas decided to move to Indiana, where he could claim clear title to his land. When Abraham was seven years old, Thomas Lincoln left the Knob Creek farm to make a home in Perry County (now Spencer County), Indiana.



Kentucky Historic Marker in Vine Grove,
“Route of Lincolns”

⑤ When the family moved west in the autumn of 1816, little Abe and his sister Sarah may have looked out the back of the wagon and waved goodbye to Granny Bathsheba and the Brumfields as they traveled over a pioneer road that passed through present day Radcliff and Vine Grove. A Kentucky historical marker is located in downtown Vine Grove.

The Lincoln Family in Northern Hardin County



Thomas Lincoln, a Traditional Portrait
Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum
Lincoln Memorial University

In Indiana, the Lincolns cleared the land to make a new home in the wilderness. In 1818, Nancy became ill with the “milk sickness” and died. The following year Thomas returned to Elizabethtown to marry widow Sarah Bush Johnston and brought her and her children back to Indiana. Tragedy struck the family again when Abraham’s sister died in 1828 at the age of 21. The Lincolns moved to Illinois in 1830, where Thomas and Sarah would spend the rest of their life. He passed away on January 17, 1851 and is buried with his wife in Coles County, Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln left home in 1831 to become a successful store clerk, lawyer, and politician. He was elected the United States' 16th President in 1860. During the next four years, he led the nation through one of its most turbulent times, the bloody Civil War. He never forgot his roots or the Kentucky Lincolns on Mill Creek, which he had known as a child.



This map is provided to illustrate the general location of sites identified and numbered in this brochure. Sites 2 and 3 are located on the Ft. Knox Military Reservation and may not be accessible to the general public.

- ① Thomas Lincoln Farm
- ② Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
- ③ Lincoln Mantel
- ④ Thomas Lincoln’s Flatboat Trip historic marker
- ⑤ Route of Lincolns historic marker

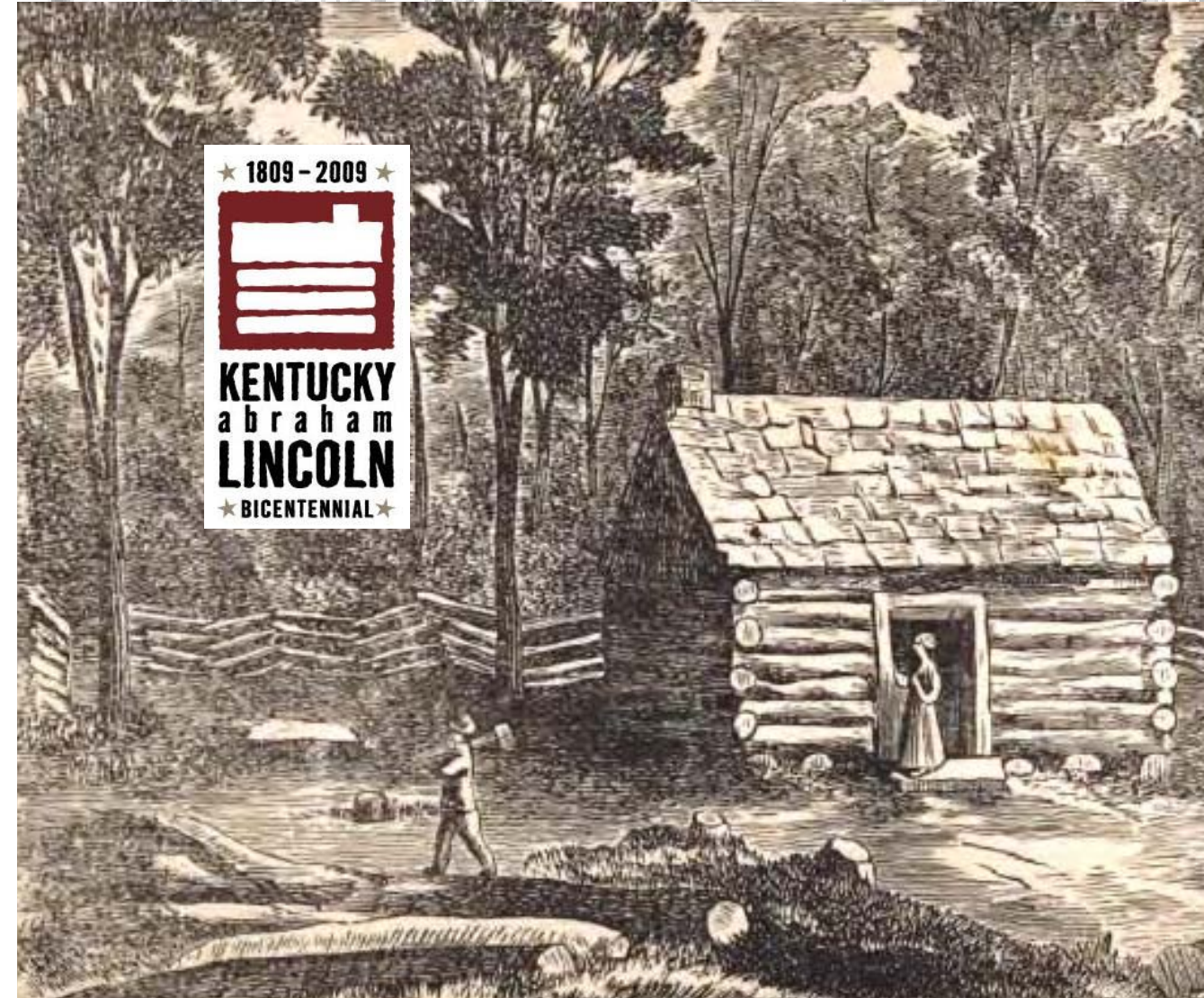
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