



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1545

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

November, 1966

HODGENVILLE, KENTUCKY How It Fits Into The Lincoln Story

Abraham Lincoln, in preparing his autobiographical sketches for presidential campaign purposes in 1860, often gave the approximate location of his Kentucky birthplace as Hardin County. However, he was cognizant in 1860 that the precise locality on the South Fork of the Nolin River was in the "recently formed [March, 1843] county of Larue." To have been more explicit, although he could not pin-point the site as we can today, he would have had to state that his birthplace was between the forks of the Nolin River, three miles from the North fork and one mile from the South fork, and three miles from Robert Hodgen's mill site at the old Gum Spring.

Hodgen's mill was built perhaps as early as the year 1789. Hodgen also was the proprietor of an "ordinary" or tavern in which many notables were entertained, including the French botanist, Michaux, in January 1797, and the royal travelers, exiled Prince Louis Phillippe and his brothers in April 1797. Hodgen died in 1810, and soon after the settlement that had sprung up near his tavern was named for him.

The name of the town was incorrectly spelled "Hogginsville" by Lincoln in his letter to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., of May 28, 1860. The county seat town, which did not exist when the Thomas Lincolns resided in Kentucky, was not founded until February 9, 1818.

The founding of Hodgenville was accomplished by the favorable action of the Hardin County Court, meeting in Elizabethtown, upon the petition of the proprietors and the surveyed plat which was ordered to be recorded in the county's records by Samuel Haycraft, Jr., the Court Clerk. The petition follows:

"To The Honorable the Justices of Hardin County Court, The undersigned, Isaac and John Hodgen, executors of the last will and testament of Robert Hodgen, late of said County, deceased and Sarah Hodgen relict of the

same, now in possession of the home plantation of said deceased beg leave respectfully to represent:

That it having been heretofore repeatedly suggested to them by the good people of the vicinity, that, it would inure to their benefit as well as to that of the under-

signed and the other heirs of said decedant, to procure the establishment of a town on said plantation, they the undersigned, have caused, agreeably to law, notification to be made in the Bardstown Repository, of an intention, on the part of the undersigned, to make application to your Honorable body for that purpose during the present February term: — as reference being made to said publication, herewith offered will more fully appear. The town above mentioned to be contained within the limits following (Viz.). Beginning at the South west corner of said [plantation] house thence running North 83° East 12 poles 12 ft., thence South 7° East 63 poles 13½ ft., thence South 83° West 63 poles 13½ ft., thence North 7° West 70 poles 8 ft., thence North 83° East 49 poles 1½ ft., thence South 7° East 12 poles 12 ft. to the Beginning Containing 27½ acres, as in the plan of said contemplated town, hereto annexed will more fully appear.

We the undersigned do further pray your Honorable Body, that Joseph Kirkpatrick Senior, William Brown, William Cessna, Samuel Hodgen and Abraham Enlow be appointed trustees of said town dated this 7th February 1818.

John Hodgen
Sarah Hodgen"

The original petition, tied as a folder with yellow ribbon, contains a partially mutilated plat of (76) lots. The lots measure 105 feet square and the streets are 60 feet wide. Some of the streets bear the names of Main, Cross and Water. (See plat)

Until the formation of the new County of Larue (named for John La Rue), Hodgenville's growth was slow. The



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

An early photograph (Circa 1909) of the Larue County Court House situated near the center of the Public Square in Hodgenville, Kentucky. It was built in 1843-44 and razed in 1966.

68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61
69	40	39	38	37	36	35	34
70	41	20	19	18	17	34	57
71	42	12	11	10	9	33	55
72	43	11		8		32	57
114	21	1		7		31	56
115	22	5	6	7	5	30	55
116	23	15	10	15	16	29	54
		14	15	26	17	28	53
		17	15	19	18	27	52

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The original surveyed plat of Hodgenville, Kentucky, submitted by the town Commissioners to the Hardin County, Kentucky Court February 9, 1818.

town was first designated as a Post Office on December 7, 1826. The present population of greater Hodgenville is 2900. The area of greatest interest is the Public Square. Here was built (1843-44) the County Court House, which preserves among its records all the land transactions after the year 1843 relative to Thomas Lincoln's Sinking Spring (the President's birthplace) and Knob Creek farms. These land records have been invaluable to the National Park Service in establishing the boundaries of the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Site.

The old court house, used as a barracks by Union Soldiers during the early years of the Civil War, was partially burned by guerrillas (supposedly Quantrill's) on February 21, 1865. Rebuilt (probably on the original walls), it was burned out again in 1891. Again rebuilt, it remained until razed in 1966. A new and modern court house, located on a different site, was completed in January, 1965. It is a three-story structure of twenty-two rooms. The antiquated and limited facilities of the old court house necessitated its removal, and it was razed to give way to improved traffic control and to augment the town's present parking facilities.

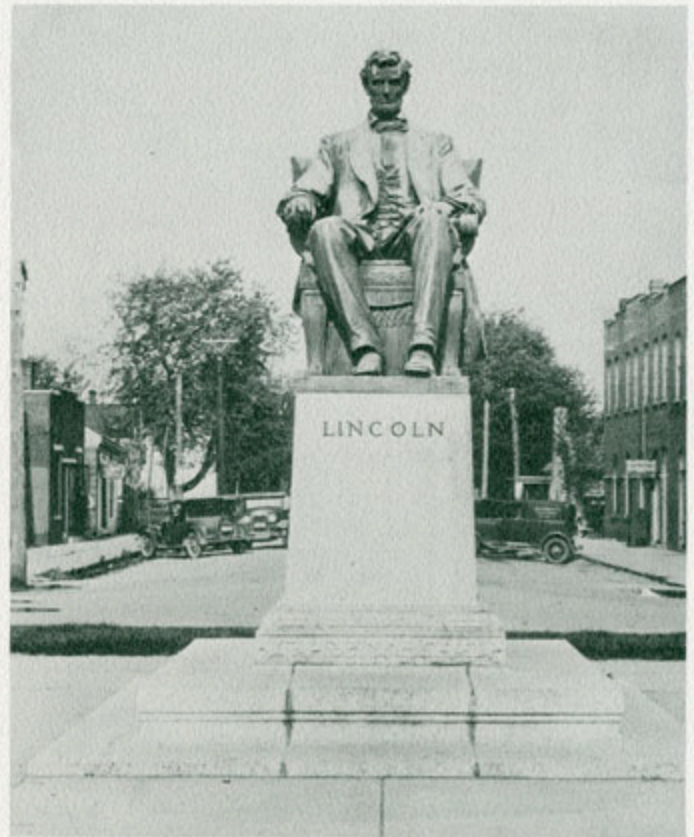
Hodgenville's Public Square had nothing to commend it to the traveler or historically minded visitor until the year 1909 when Adolph A. Weinman's heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln was erected in the center of the area. Even after the statue's dedication on May 31, 1909, the square in the immediate vicinity of the sculptured monument presented a rather bleak and uninteresting appearance. Fortunately, this condition was successfully remedied by the Ladies Lincoln League which set up an organization of seventeen charter members with the avowed purpose to beautify the Public Square. Funds were raised in 1909 to pave the streets, and to put concrete walks and a grass plot around the Lincoln monument. Four light standards with large globes were erected; and Robert Lincoln, the President's son, contributed one thousand dollars toward this work.

In 1917 the League began to gather books for the establishment of a Lincoln Library. A fund was also started for the erection of a library building. The drive was successful and an attractive library building was erected (dedicated February 12, 1935), which today con-

tains a sizable collection of Lincolniana. Many of the books are from the library of Jenkins Lloyd Jones and were donated by his son, Richard Lloyd Jones. Both men, it will be remembered, were members of the Board of Trustees of the Lincoln Farm Association and were instrumental in helping to preserve for the public a portion of the original Thomas Lincoln farm, and for bringing about the erection of the memorial building to house the traditional Lincoln birthplace cabin.

This past summer Hodgenville, largely through the promotional (including financial) efforts of Joel Ray Sprowles, sponsored a new historical drama about the Sixteenth President and the Civil War entitled "Mister Lincoln." Written by a Larue Countian, Don Patterson, the play was premiered on Monday evening, July 11th and was staged in a new 540 seat amphitheater (Mondays through Fridays until September 2nd.). The amphitheater is located at the Lincoln Village Park two and one-half miles south of Hodgenville on Highway 31-E. The stage is 36 x 32 feet. The side scenery and other equipment extending almost one hundred feet faces toward the audience.

The play starts about midway in Lincoln's first presidential term and continues until his assassination. The drama stresses the idea "that freedom has responsibilities which one must work to obtain and hold." The play was directed by the author. There are twelve scenes in the drama, including the White House during the second inauguration, Lee's surrender at Appamattox, a Union camp, a Confederate camp, slave quarters, battlefield



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

An early photograph of the heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln by Adolph Alexander Weinman in the public square at Hodgenville, Kentucky. This statue was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 31, 1909. The statue was erected from an appropriation of \$2,500 by the State of Kentucky, \$10,000 by the Congress of the United States, and supplemented by private subscriptions to the amount of several hundred dollars. Robert Lincoln declared the sculpture a "noble statue of his father."

The statue has become a focal point of interest for many notable visitors such as Robert Lincoln, Henry Watterson, William Howard Taft (1911), Woodrow Wilson (1916), David Lloyd George (1923), Queen Marie of Roumania (1926), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1936), Madame Pandit of India (12 or 15 years ago), and Dwight D. Eisenhower (1954).

scenes and Ford's Theatre where the President was assassinated. Local talent from Hodgenville and neighboring towns made up the cast of about twenty players. The production requires about an hour and three-quarters to present. There is every expectation that this play will again be presented during the summer of 1967.

The Lincoln name is conspicuous in Hodgenville. A roving reporter of the *Kansas City Times* in an article published a few years ago made the following comments:

"The town's business runs pretty strongly to the Lincoln name though there is no proof that the name is used for family reasons. It's business again. They all do it—from the Lincoln National Bank on down the scale to the Lincoln tavern. When you drive into town you are impressed by the way the Lincoln name dominates the commercial life. In the middle of the plaza in the business district a huge bronze statue of the martyred President seems to dwarf every other object near it. Almost every piece of printed matter you pick up, whether a restaurant menu or business card, carries the Lincoln reminder in some form, and everywhere one goes he is confronted with printed directions as to how to get to the farm on which the President was born, or to another farm on which he lived until he left the state with his parents in 1816.

"The town is full of resident Lincoln 'experts', some of them men and women who have contributed much to the authentic history of the President's family."

The citizens of Hodgenville are becoming interested in their history. For the past two years the town has been having a week long February 12th observance which is both patriotic and commercial, called "Lincoln Days." This celebration is usually climaxed with a parade of floats, the high school band which is nationally known, a color guard and firing squad from Fort Knox, saddle clubs and displays for which awards are given. Then,

too, in 1963 a County Historical Society was organized and the members have made genealogy charts, cemetery census records, and erected historical markers. Plans are now underway to celebrate on February 9, 1968 the sesqui-centennial of Hodgenville. Perhaps at this time there will be considerable attention given to the 158th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

The Birthplace Memorial

Editor's Note: In connection with the lead article of this issue of *Lincoln Lore* it is appropriate to devote some space to "The Birthplace Memorial" which is the real reason why so many notable people have visited Hodgenville, Kentucky. Excerpts from *Lincoln Lore* "The Birthplace Memorial" (No. 826) February 5, 1945 and "Eisenhower Visits The Kentucky Lincoln Country" (1307), April 26, 1954 follow:

"It is a noteworthy fact that three presidents participated in the ceremonies associated with the memorial project. Theodore Roosevelt was present at the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial, on February 12, 1909; William Howard Taft was the distinguished guest at the dedication of the building, on November 9, 1911; and Woodrow Wilson received on behalf of the United States government the memorial structure, contents and surrounding acres on September 4, 1916.

"Much has been written about the lifetime journey of Abraham Lincoln from the log cabin to the White House, but little emphasis has been placed on the fact that presidents of three successive administrations journeyed from the White House to this Kentucky log cabin to participate in ceremonies connected with the memorial project.

The Cornerstone

"The centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth was one of the most widely observed anniversaries of any American historical character. Nearly every newspaper printed



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

David Lloyd George, the former English Prime Minister, stood before the statue of Abraham Lincoln at Hodgenville, Kentucky, on October 21, 1923. *The New York World* reported the visit:

"At Hodgenville Lloyd George was met by several hundred Kentuckians, all of characteristic pre-revolutionary American stock, who still live in a sparsely settled region and who habitually refer in conversation to the great President as 'Abe.'

"Proceeding to the public square the former Premier stopped in front of the old Courthouse to inspect the monument of Lincoln by A. A. Weinman and was received by citizens and school children, the latter singing 'God Save the King' as the distinguished visitor stood before them bare headed."

a special centennial edition. The outstanding celebration by far was the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial building at Hodgenville with an address by President Theodore Roosevelt, who concluded his address with the often quoted characterization of Lincoln, "The mightiest of the mighty men who mastered the mighty days."

"While the speaking was going on, the cornerstone was suspended in the grasp of a derrick. Upon a signal from the President, the huge stone was lowered to its correct position and the first trowel of mortar was applied by him.

"The program of the occasion was as follows:

Invocation — E. L. Powell, Minister First Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

Address on behalf of the United States of America — President Theodore Roosevelt.

Address on behalf of the State of Kentucky — Governor Augustus Wilson.

Address on behalf of Lincoln Farm Association — Governor Joseph Folk, President of Association.

Address on behalf of Federal Army — General James Grant Wilson.

Address on behalf of Confederate Army — General Luke E. Wright.

The Dedication

"While Theodore Roosevelt visited the cabin site on a most significant anniversary, his successor, William Howard Taft, made the pilgrimage on a day of no significance whatever, with respect to the history of the Lincoln family. It was just another day apparently set apart as a convenient time for the president to make the appointment. The address of President Taft on this occasion was a much more scholarly effort than the oratorical declamation by Roosevelt, and his characterization of Lincoln included this statement:

"The lucidity and clearness of his thought manifested itself in the simplicity, directness and clearness of his style. He had imagination and loved poetry. He had the rhythm of language, and though purely self-educated, these circumstances developed a power of literary expression that the world, and especially the literary world, has come fully to recognize and enjoy."

"The principle speakers on this dedication occasion were:

William Howard Taft — President of the United States.

Joseph W. Folk — Ex-Governor of Missouri.

Augustus E. Wilson — Governor of Kentucky.

William A. Borah — Senator from Idaho.

Gen. John C. Black — Washington, D. C.

Henry Watterson — Louisville, Kentucky.

"The invocation was offered by Rabbi Enlow and the benediction by Bishop Bryne.

The Acceptance

"The day that President Woodrow Wilson accepted the Lincoln Memorial on behalf of the government was a significant one; it was Labor Day, 1916. His address was brief but as might be expected, couched in the language of a brilliant educator and one-time university president. One can clip out almost any paragraph in his speech and have a significant tribute. Here is one at random which refers to the log cabin boy:

"This little hut was the cradle of one of the great sons of men, a man of singular, delightful, vital genius who presently emerged upon the great stage of the Nation's history, gaunt, shy, ungainly, but dominant and majestic. A natural ruler of men."

"The program of the day follows:

Invocation — Dr. Canfield of Centre College.

Address — Gen. John B. Castleman.

Address — Gov. Joseph W. Folk.

Address — Senator John Sharp Williams.

Presentation of the Lincoln Birth-place Farm — Robert J. Collier.

Acceptance on behalf of the United States of America — Newton D. Baker.

Flag Raising Ceremonies.

Address — President Woodrow Wilson.

Benediction — Rev. Shahan.

A Fourth Presidential Pilgrim

"The story of the presidential treks from the White House to the Kentucky log cabin might be called the Roosevelt to Roosevelt pilgrimages. It is not known that President Franklin D. Roosevelt purposely chose

June 14 (1936), Flag Day to visit the birthplace of Lincoln, and inasmuch as he made no address on the occasion it would appear to have been merely a courtesy call to pay a silent tribute to the Emancipator. However, after the visit he was prompted to make a few remarks for publication, among them these words:

"Here we can renew our pledge of fidelity to the faith which Lincoln held in the common man — faith so simply expressed when he said: 'As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.'"

President Eisenhower's Speech at the Lincoln Shrine Near Hodgenville, April 23, 1954

"Senator Cooper, my fellow citizens:

"Long have I looked forward to an opportunity to visit this shrine, which is so truly American. Now, never in my wildest moment, did I picture in my mind this kind of occasion. I saw myself driving up in an ordinary jalopy, and stopping with my family to look and visit this great spot.

"I am truly honored by the courtesy you show me in being here today that I may greet you and bring a word of welcome from your far-off capital, Washington.

"I think I could best express my feelings about Lincoln in this way. In my office in the White House I have sketches of four great Americans on the wall — Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee.

"Abraham Lincoln has always seemed to me to represent all that is best in America in terms of its opportunity and the readiness of Americans always to raise up and exalt these people who live by truth, whose lives are examples of integrity and dedication to our country.

"I would like to speak about two or three characteristics of Lincoln that I think most of us could now remind ourselves, possibly with profit. He was a great leader I would like to remind you of the methods he used in leadership.

"You can find no instances when he stood up in public and excoriated another American. You can find no instance where he reported to have slapped or pounded the table, and struck the pose of pseudodictator, or an arbitrary individual.

"Rather the qualities he shared and exhibited were forbearance in the extreme — patience. Once, he called upon General McClellan, and the President went over to the General's house — a process which I assure you has been reversed long since — and General McClellan decided he did not want to see the President and went to bed.

"Lincoln's friends criticized him severely for allowing a mere general to treat him that way. And he said, 'All I want out of General McClellan is a victory and if to hold his horse will bring it, I will gladly hold his horse.'

"This means one thing: Lincoln's leadership was accomplished through dedication to a single purpose, the preservation of the Union. He understood deeply the great values that unite us all as a people, Georgia with New York and Massachusetts with Texas, California with Florida. He knew that there were divisive influences at work, but he also knew they were transitory in character; they were flaming with heat, but they were made of stuff that would soon burn itself out.

"The true values of America he understood are enduring, and they hold us together. And so he was patient. He was forbearing. He was understanding. And he lives today in our hearts as one of the greatest that the English-speaking race has produced, and as a great leader. Yet never did he fall into the false habit of striking a Napoleonic attitude at any time and under any provocation.

"We remember his words because they still mean for us and still explain to us what this country is:

"The greatest power in God's footstool that has been permitted to exist. A power for good, among ourselves, and in all the world.

"And he — this great Lincoln — was the one who did so much to give us the opportunity to live at a time when that would be so — when America's leadership in the world is necessary to the preservation of freedom and of liberty in that world, just as his presence in the 1860s was necessary to the preservation of liberty and freedom and union of this nation.

(Concluding paragraph continued to December, 1966 issue)