A Shrine for President Lincoln: An Analysis of Lincoln Museums and Historic Sites, 1865-2015

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A SHRINE FOR PRESIDENT LINCOLN: AN ANALYSIS OF LINCOLN MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES, 1865-2015

by

Thomas D. Mackie Jr.

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

History

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The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze how communities and special interest groups have presented Abraham Lincoln in historic sites and museums with significant Lincoln collections and interpretive themes. Commemoration of Abraham Lincoln began during the murdered president’s funeral trip and extended throughout the later nineteenth century with statues, biographies, Decoration Day oratories, historic sites, special exhibits, and museums. These sites devoted to the 16th president are among the earliest public historic museums and preserved sites. They include galleries, research exhibits, interactive galleries, pioneer villages, outdoor museums, and historic houses. After continued expansion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Lincoln museums and historic sites are so numerous as to constitute a special sub-category identified by its primary biographical content.

Nonetheless, Lincoln’s construction and presentation in museums remains surprisingly underexplored in the fields of both Lincoln Studies and Museum Studies. This dissertation adds to the understanding of both fields by providing a serious exploration of Abraham Lincoln’s place in American public memory, his treatment in American public museums, and the ways in which Lincoln commemoration illustrates the institutional development of American museums and historic sites.
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I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to two scholars who helped me better understand the theme of this dissertation along with the legacy of Abraham Lincoln; Dr. Barry Schwartz, sociology professor of the University of Georgia and the Honorable Frank Williams, retired Supreme Court Justice of Rhode Island and well-recognized independent Lincoln scholar. From the earliest stages of this proposal for this research, both these gentlemen helped with their advice and critiques based on long experience with Lincoln’s historical legacy.

My staff and students at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum (ALLM) at Lincoln Memorial University supported me in sorting the vast vertical files comprising one hundred years of collecting from Lincoln museums and historic sites across the nation. The majority of this research was accomplished with the extensive public history collections at the ALLM. Support of archival staff and volunteers was essential.

I have appreciated the patience of my Dissertation Committee over the years to review early drafts and support me with very useful suggestions.

Very importantly, I must acknowledge my wife Laura. Her editorial support was vital to the completion of this manuscript.

Thomas D. Mackie Jr.
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CHAPTER I
HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHODOLOGY

Managing a museum in East Tennessee devoted to Abraham Lincoln created the stimulus for this study. What was a Lincoln museum within a university dedicated to Abraham Lincoln doing in the Appalachian region of Tennessee? That question opened a host of studies on public memory of the Civil War and the national legacy of Abraham Lincoln. Further investigation uncovered that there were, at best count, seventy Lincoln museums, libraries, historic sites and specialized collections around the United States. No other character in American history has provoked nearly so much discussion, publication, and exhibit installation as Abraham Lincoln. It has become obvious that no single historian, museum, or state can claim to own all of Lincoln. This study reinforces that realization throughout.

Despite the great number of related museums and the extensive publications in all areas of Lincoln studies, the connections between Lincoln studies and the growth of history museums in the United States are not well understood; though both have been studied separately, they are rarely linked. No large-scale history yet exists of this category of museums, although many collectors in specialized areas have published articles and monographs on various relic collections and public artworks. Lincoln guidebooks often mentioned their sponsoring museums and gave limited histories of Lincoln sites such as Lincoln’s New Salem State Park in Illinois. Professional histories from within the museum field have focused only sparsely on special types of history museums, and few have even mentioned any Lincoln sites outside of the National Park System. While few of the seventy Lincoln sites, museums, and research centers listed in Appendix A have been subjects of institutional histories, Abraham Lincoln, as a museum
subject, provides an excellent cross section of all types of history museums and related agencies: historic houses, galleries, parks, historic districts and living history sites. Since the number of Lincoln themed institutions is so large and since their chronological span reaches from the nineteenth-century into the twenty-first, they offer an opportunity to analyze and compare American museums through one subject.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze how communities and special interest groups have presented Abraham Lincoln in historic sites and museums with significant Lincoln collections and interpretive themes. Lincoln’s treatment in the field of public history would be a very broad topic indeed. Limiting inquiries to the narrower area of museum institutions allows this dissertation to address issues and questions that previous scholarship has neglected. This study examines a narrow but influential portion of the American museum movement: those institutions dedicated wholly or in part to Abraham Lincoln. The chronological parameters of this study emphasize the century-and-a-half between 1865 and 2015, encompassing the centennial and the bicentennial anniversaries of Lincoln’s birth. After a brief explanation of terms used throughout this dissertation, this chapter will introduce the unique nature of collecting and commemorating Abraham Lincoln. Researchers must recognize the size and diversity of Lincoln studies in order to understand a dissertation on the museums and collections devoted to him. The following sections will expand the dissertation’s organization, research materials, and methodology. Finally, this chapter will explain the significance of this research within an already crowded field of study.

In order to avoid confusion, the terms discussed in this dissertation need definition according to their use in the context of this work. The term museum includes
historic sites, shrines, outdoor museums, galleries and archives, and university museums. The unifying qualifier is the use of historic collections, including documents, artifacts, archaeological sites, burial sites, and original or reconstructed historic buildings.

Practitioners define *museums* as permanent educational institutions distinguished by the use of tangible objects, created for public use and operated most often as nonprofit agencies. The nonprofit descriptor distinguishes modern history museums from previous history exhibits in carnivals, fairs and dime museums. The content focus on physical history or material culture studies as opposed to archives or libraries unifies modern history museums.¹ This investigation includes only those physical institutions classified as museums using generally accepted definitions supplied in museum studies literature and through agencies such as the American Alliance of Museums or the American Association for State and Local History. Museums can include original relic buildings and structures, or reproductions of those structures. Thus, for the purpose of this study, historic or archaeological sites recognized as supporting a historic Lincoln connection qualify as museums. The category of Lincoln museums also includes indoor galleries with Lincoln art and historic items. All these types of museums are public in that boosters established them for the public benefit rather than for commercial gain, and they are government or non-profit private agencies or educational intuitions managed by a private board or under a university or college.² Some major multi-topic museums such as


Chicago Historical Society, Edison Institute, or the Huntington Library are a part of this community even though Lincoln collections are only a part of their holdings. These sites hold impressive collections of Lincoln objects and art, and their greater size and diversity allow them to address issues beyond the scope of specialized Lincoln studies, such as politics, settlement geography and civic participation. Museums, historic sites, and related agencies are categories within the larger field of public history. The study of public history is not the same as the study of past events, movements, or people. Instead, as defined through the National Council on Public History, “public history describes the many and diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world.”

Many scholars and practitioners call this applied history to distinguish it from that history practiced within academia. Closely related to this term is collective memory. To study collective memory is to explore how a society has remembered, preserved, and commemorated its past and the meanings attached to that past. It defines how various groups in society have chosen to remember their collective pasts and the exploration of which events, places, and people become forgotten and which evolve into public myths and why. Americans have remembered select portions of the past through a wide range of projects, including commemorations, celebrations, media such as radio, movies, Internet, and a wide variety of other public memory activities in publications, along with the visual and performing arts. The world of public history also includes all forms of public and private museums,

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historic sites, and historic preservation activities; these provide the focus of the present study. These institutions have defended, marketed, modified, and sometimes challenged the nation’s collective memory.

Narratives of collective memory in public historical settings often present simple messages or lessons that community boosters expect to promote. Patriotic messages or “boosterish” local histories that concentrate on a narrow selection of events and persons are examples of these types of interpretation. This dissertation uses the term heritage to describe this generally simplistic and upbeat interpretation of the past and reserves the term history for descriptions of methods and interpretation rooted in objective or critical studies of the past. This work does not define heritage as necessarily false or propagandistic, but as a simplified view of the past designed to bolster group identity, rather than to inform critical analysis.5

Lincoln collections existed before there were museums to host them. Boosters and biographers studied and recognized Lincoln in greater detail than other national figures. Preservation of Lincoln’s written words came first. Publications and studies of Lincoln and the Civil War are vast in number. Books are also plentiful on Lincoln’s image in photography, visual arts, and public commemorations.

The particular nature of the historic collections throughout the subcategory of Lincoln museums originated in the unique composition of the collections. The dissemination of these collections into many private holdings began as early as the presidential election of 1860. Lincoln’s tragic assassination ignited the desire among many Americans to acquire or at least relate to mementos of Lincoln, resulting in a

wholesale showing of his belongings across the country at world fairs and expositions. Family and friends of the Lincoln family distributed Lincoln’s possessions as “sacred relics,” eliminating any possibility that they would be unified for study or exhibit at a single site.\(^6\)

The term “relic” consciously creates parallels between historic artifacts from Abraham Lincoln and religious relics in earlier centuries. These are objects valued in their own right for their strong association with Lincoln. Even Lincoln’s ciphering book from 1824-1826 lost no value when his former law partner and biographer William Herndon divided it into twenty parts to distribute to as many Lincoln collectors.\(^7\)

Prominent politicians and celebrities, from the 1860s through the early twentieth century, purchased relics like this along with books and pamphlets from related lectures.

Historians, political spokespersons, boosters, and even friends, family, and associates of Lincoln, mostly in Northern states, promoted his image in a rush of tribute from 1865 into the early twentieth century. During this period, Lincoln’s admirers engaged in public commemorations through pilgrimages, community pageants, and statue dedications. Their motivations ranged from purely commercial or political interests to quasi-religious adoration of the presumed ideals of Abraham Lincoln, or the man himself.

Historic sites and libraries became venues for Lincoln pilgrimages and destinations for

\(^6\) The term relic, or sometimes even sacred relic, often describes personal artifacts belonging to Lincoln. These expressions are common in tour guidebooks, collections catalogues, and published inventories. The Catalogue of New Salem Collection of Pioneer Relics (Springfield, IL: Department of Public Works and Buildings, 1933) is a descriptive inventory that regularly uses the term Lincolniana. The term includes all publications and objects related to Lincoln collecting. Patriotic visitors traveling to several Lincoln sites (shrines) carried out a “pilgrimage,” according to the guidebooks.

the Lincoln popular writers, collectors (mostly of papers, pamphlets and books), and objective historical researchers. Because of the early emphasis upon Lincoln’s words, early museum collections reflected the bibliographical interest in Lincoln.\textsuperscript{8} Academic research that focused on literary sources instead of material sources reinforced this perception. Because of these traditional attachments, Lincoln sites were slower than other biographical museums to adjust to the professionalization of the museum movement and to use objects as research and interpretation tools as in material culture studies.\textsuperscript{9}

A select group of major collectors dominated Lincoln collecting during the nineteenth century. The collectors’ early writings influenced thinking about Lincoln, while their collections formed the basis for many museums and Lincoln libraries around the country. Exclusive groups of Lincoln scholars and collectors developed around major collections and associations. Until the great museum building age of the 1930s and the related growth in tourism, most Lincoln sites remained accessible primarily to local and regional audiences.

This work chronologically organizes the development of Lincoln museums and historic sites. Museums are places where the public’s memory or beliefs should ideally merge with scholarly studies to construct a public message. Each chapter highlights major traits of the developing American public museums and focuses on representative Lincoln sites that best reflect these traits.

\textsuperscript{8} Jackie Hogan, \textit{Lincoln, Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America} (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 117.

\textsuperscript{9} Other presidential sites, such as George Washington’s Mount Vernon and Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, and historic villages Greenfield Village and Colonial Williamsburg, are major examples of historic sites that focused on the use of objects to tell stories of the past.
Chapter Two is titled “Lincoln Remembrance and Collecting in the Nineteenth Century: The Creation of Lincoln Museums.” Even before Lincoln’s assassination, collecting mementos of the elections and Civil War had become commonplace. The precursors of Lincoln museums appear in this latter half of the nineteenth century through World Fairs, community heritage pageants, and the commercial dime museum. Though not nationally universal, special commemorations of Lincoln’s life and presidency grew slowly to a great industry by the 1890s.

Chapter Three, “The Lincoln Centennial and Early Twentieth Century,” focuses on celebrations surrounding Lincoln’s 100th birthday in 1909. During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, auto tourism appeared in the American landscape and historic preservation started to gain fledging public support. The era marked a point of greater national acceptance of the Lincoln legacy, evidenced by the distribution of museums and preserved sites devoted to this legacy.

Chapter Four, “Growth and Support of National Lincolnland, 1920-1945,” highlights the expansion of the idea of the frontier as essential in American identity and a major growth in public expressions of patriotism. A great irony in this age was the adoption of Lincoln’s legacy by the Democratic Party under Franklin D. Roosevelt. The public exhibition of Lincoln’s image developed a more non-partisan facade.

Chapter Five is “Post-War Lincoln Museums, 1946-1976.” These years encompassed vast economic growth and the great age of the family vacation. Only a few additional Lincoln museums appeared in the commemoration landscape, but those years were the greatest for museum attendance. They were also the greatest times of challenge.
as Civil Rights conflicts removed the automatic heroism status of Abraham Lincoln and many other white, male, national political figures.

Advancing this theme to the year 2015 is Chapter Six, “Reclaiming Lincoln: 1976 Through the Civil War Sesquicentennial.” Ironically, this age of the greatest attack on American heroes is yet the greatest age of the establishment of new museums. Modern museums have supported recognition of American figures such as Abraham Lincoln while admitting their flawed human nature.

Chapter Seven provides a summation of the findings of this research. There is a brief space for commentary on current museum conditions and a comparison of Lincoln museums with the general museum field.

The appendices are essential to this narrative as they contain three listings of Lincoln museums and public collections. These first follow an annotated format, and then document chronological and geographical patterns, illustrating the distribution of Lincoln sites in time and space. It also provides important detail for each historic site and museum described in the final section of each chapter.

Secondary resources for this project relied heavily on several major works in Lincoln commemoration and the study of public memory. One of the most valuable studies of Lincoln’s public image and memory is historian Merrill D. Peterson’s *Lincoln in American Memory*. Throughout this work, Peterson discussed the various social issues that influenced the creation of Lincoln myths and popular memory. He showed how public memory often formed in response to the strong and sometimes peculiar personalities that have dominated Lincoln studies. These personalities were very often Lincoln biographers who were both users and creators of major Lincoln collections.
Peterson also illustrated how changes in general historiographical practice have influenced Lincoln studies.\textsuperscript{10}

Even when academic interest in biography as a form of the historian’s art fell from favor, Lincoln sites remained closely tied to the images and stories portrayed in popular Lincoln biographies. The major biographers held a strong place between the general reading public and the museums exhibiting Lincoln collections. Some biographers influenced the programming at historic sites, and the historic sites at times influenced the biographers. Carl Sandburg’s series of biographies on Lincoln were an extremely popular element in public memory of Lincoln. Sandburg influenced both the general public and future historians. Some Lincoln collectors after World War I noticed that the federal government only took an interest in a major Lincoln collection at the house where Lincoln died (Peterson House), after the publication of Carl Sandburg’s \textit{Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years}.\textsuperscript{11} Recent biographers have attempted to answer more nuanced questions that sprang up during the Civil Rights movement and the cynicism of the 1970s. Themes from these biographies that have influenced modern exhibits include the writing of the Emancipation Proclamation and Lincoln’s views regarding slavery.

Complementing Merrell Peterson’s historical study of commemoration is a series of books and articles by Barry Schwartz, who wrote on the same theme from the perspective of a sociologist. As a scholar of collective memory, Schwartz sought deeper

\textsuperscript{10} Merrill D. Peterson, \textit{Lincoln in American Memory} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

social motives causing these behaviors described by Peterson. In his book, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in late Twentieth-Century America*, Schwartz effectively examines how Lincoln’s image in public memory changed in response to social and cultural conditions during the twentieth century. Schwartz’s extensive background in sociology, cultural geography, commemoration, and memory provides deeper insights into how American society reacted to social and political changes and how the study of the changes in Lincoln’s image formed a gauge to measure American civic culture.¹²

Michael Kammen’s *Mystic Chords of Memory* affords a seminal source for the history of the construction of American public memory. Kammen uses Lincoln in several of his illustrations on the history of public commemoration and helps place Lincoln within the larger context of the changing commemorative practice. *Mystic Chords of Memory* does not emphasize the museum or historic preservation movement; rather it provides comparison of Lincoln’s commemoration to other types of cultural efforts to remember national heroes.¹³ Works by Kirk Savage, John Bodnar, and Paul A. Shackel update the study of public memory especially connected with patriotic events and sites.¹⁴

David Lowenthal, in his definitive works *The Past is a Foreign Country* and *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, merges the study of public memory with


¹³ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*.

heritage tourism. These works detail the philosophy of public history and its misuse. Lowenthal debated the ability of historic sites to be historically authentic and reviewed the various positions on authenticity. He criticized many preservation efforts that market a “step back in time” theme. His narrative will help in the analysis of the marketing and interpretative brochures used in this dissertation from the many Lincoln boosters and sites.

The National Park Service (NPS) has posted many online reports of the Lincoln sites it manages. NPS websites contain both the brief internal histories of these Lincoln sites and recent and long-range strategic plans. National Park historians have provided thorough histories of the birthplace and boyhood homes of Lincoln. Some of these histories expose the lack of research, or even interest in research, exemplified by Lincoln sites eager for tourism or patriotic support in the years just before and after the first World War.

Other Lincoln sites have internally published histories, many of which are available at the research library of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum or the Internet Archive. These local histories range in quality from pure propaganda to real efforts at understanding the institution within long-range planning documents. Lincoln’s New Salem has received the most attention from external studies. Literature for New

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16 Internet Archive is a private non-profit entity founded to create “universal access to all knowledge.” The Lincoln collections appear to be primarily from the former Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana and the Library of Congress. Its home page is https://archive.org/.
Salem ranges from the very flattering marketing for tourists to scathing reviews of their professional malfeasance by sociologists and historians.

General histories of museums have become more common in recent years. Some of these new publications touch briefly on Lincoln’s impact in museums, historic preservation, and tourism. A popular book by veteran reporter Andrew Ferguson titled *Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe’s America*, is a testimony by a layperson who clearly admires Lincoln. His pilgrimage along the Lincoln Heritage Trail with his family overflows with failed attempts to revive his childhood memories and bridge the gap between popular impressions and contemporary interpretation at the Lincoln sites. In 2011, sociologist Jackie Hogan published *Lincoln Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America*. Hogan sifted some of the observations made in journalist Ferguson’s *Land of Lincoln* through the academic filter of a sociologist. Hogan devoted two chapters to interpretation themes and a quantitative study of the visitation demographics in several Lincoln sites, including New Salem and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. Hogan attempted to demonstrate a link between interpretive themes and weak visitation by minority visitors. However, her samples were too small to support broader conclusions.

A detailed review of early literature from the young museum profession in America helped build the context of the development of the public museum at various times. Laurence Vail Coleman’s early works, *Historic House Museums* (1933) and

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18 Hogan, *Lincoln Inc.*
Museums in America (1939), narrate the origin of historic house museums, period rooms, and early efforts in historic preservation. His insights from the 1920s through the 1940s demonstrated the process of self-identification that took place in contemporary museums while offering an eyewitness account of the conditions in which he was writing.

The history of Chicago Historical Society provided a suitable illustration of how a major museum interpreted a significant Lincoln collection. After a time with the Illinois State Library, Lincoln scholar Paul Angle became the director of the Chicago Historical Society (CHS) in 1945. His history of the CHS gives an insider’s view of Lincoln studies in Illinois and the central place the Lincoln collection had in the exhibit schedule and visitor expectations. Historian Catherine M. Lewis updated the CHS story with a brief work titled The Changing Face of Public History: the Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum, which narrated the history of that museum’s interpretation through the 1990s.

A very rich and unused source of primary documents for Lincoln related public history activities and museums rests in the vertical files of old Lincoln collections like those at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum (ALLM) at Lincoln Memorial University (LMU). The majority of primary source material in this dissertation came from this collection. From 1910 through the 1960s, curators and professors managing the “Lincolniana” collection maintained files of activities at other Lincoln historic sites, libraries, and archives. For decades LMU staff or students collected notices of any

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Lincoln-related item throughout the United States in newspapers and magazines. Past students and faculty made some of these into scrapbooks and others remained in file cabinets. In 2014, the ALLM staff began organizing this research material as a special project. It contains about fifteen linear yards of file records, correspondence, clippings, brochures and other ephemera. Several hundred letters and memos from past curators and university administrators concerning donations of collections and correspondence with national collectors provide abundant sources for identifying the locations of major collections, before they became part of the growing museum community. Thousands of brochures, handouts, collection catalogues, and ephemeral materials from early Lincoln Museum events and exhibits and preservation projects fill these files.

Even the three dimensional collection supports the study of Lincoln’s public image. In the 150 years since his death, Lincoln sites and groups sponsored commemorative artworks and souvenirs for historic sites or commemorative events. The commemorative collections at the ALLM contain extensive holdings: several thousand small statues, gifts, relics, toys, and ephemera from across the nation from 1860 through the Civil War Sesquicentennial. Friends, alumni, students, and faculty at Lincoln Memorial University have collected many items as they traveled on their own Lincoln pilgrimages in the early twentieth century. Lincoln biographers including Ida Tarbell, Paul Angle, Allen Nevins, James Randall, and Carl Sandburg have left correspondence and sometimes research notes to this historiographical collection.

21 The term “Lincolniana” is an expression very commonly used in Lincoln literature and among collectors. It includes the entire range of Lincoln material culture associated with his life, his family, or his career, as well as commemorative art and publications.
Another useful resource at the ALLM, the McMurtry Collection, contains three document boxes of correspondence and legal forms from the development of the Lincoln Heritage Highway in Kentucky and research notes and manuscripts from the 1920s through 1940s. The pamphlet collection boasts a collection of over 20 linear yards of program brochures and official reports from the Lincoln Centennial and Sesquicentennial from various state and national agencies. A full range of reports and promotional literature is also available for the Civil War commemorations, which often followed Lincoln events and included much of the same heritage leadership.

Various rare publications not available at the ALLM are accessible through online periodical services for major papers, particularly Internet Archives. This independent non-profit agency is devoted to assembling a digital library for the use of scholars and amateur researchers, especially those unable to travel to distant archives. These have allowed easy access to private publications digitized by Lincoln libraries around the country. These included the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield Illinois. As with the souvenirs and commemorative art, these materials contain little useful information for a biographical or historical understanding of Lincoln. However, they can reveal much about the cultural environment and the particular perception of Lincoln that seemed very important at those times and to particular audiences. The resources in this project contain newspaper articles featuring the debates, impressions, and conditions during the first years for the Lincoln birthplace, homestead, and tomb as well as interviews with the key early Lincoln collectors. Primary sources on Lincoln sites from recent years are very accessible through secondary publications and web based sources. The National Park
Service has conveniently posted their strategic plans and site histories online. Collectors have valued their visitor guidebooks and publications for decades.\textsuperscript{22}

Earlier guidebooks, brochures, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings and other ephemera appear to fill all Lincoln collections. These sources became vertical files at many libraries. The quality of these sources varies greatly due to institutional interests and habits of the original collectors.

From the 1920s on, tourists relied on a sub-category of travel literature, known as guidebooks, to conduct tourists traveling by automobile to historic sites all along the Lincoln trails. The recent guidebook \textit{In Lincoln’s Footsteps: A Historical Guide to the Lincoln Sites in Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky}, follows this long tradition and repeats an often-used title.\textsuperscript{23} The guidebooks commonly used the voice of a senior traveler helping those seeking to explore “Lincolnland” by providing travel directions and suggested routes to historical sites. Other contemporary examples include \textit{Following in Lincoln’s Footsteps} by Ralph Gary, and \textit{Lincoln’s Land: The History of Abraham Lincoln’s Coles County Farm} by Kurt W. Peterson. Guidebooks are available in large numbers from 1930 through the present.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} See “Discovery History” \textit{National Park Histories} (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 2015), \url{http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/park_histories/index.htm}. See also Ferguson, \textit{Land of Lincoln}.

  \item \textsuperscript{23} Don Davenport, \textit{In Lincoln’s Footsteps: A Historical Guide to the Lincoln Sites in Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky} (Black Earth, WI: Trails Books, 2002).

  \item \textsuperscript{24} Kurt W. Peterson, \textit{Lincoln’s Land: The History of Abraham Lincoln’s Coles County Farm} (Inverness, IL: Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Historical Farm, LLC, 2008); Ralph Gary, \textit{Following in Lincoln’s Footsteps: A Complete Annotated Reference to Hundreds of Historical Sites Visited by Abraham Lincoln} (New York: Carroll and Graf Publications, 2001).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The term “Lincolnland” locates geographic clusters of Lincoln sites and collections in regions where Lincoln or his family lived. There are various Lincolnlands around the nation. Washington DC has a number of related sites devoted to the sixteenth president, as do each of the states in which Lincoln resided: Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. Other sites in California, New York, and Tennessee claim marginal connection to Lincolnland because of major collections. Guidebooks often resulted from the sponsorship of various museums scheming to locate their site on a traveler’s map connecting the dots of Lincoln’s stops.

This travel literature came in a wide range of styles and costs. Publishers focused on encouraging tourists not to miss any of the sites listed in their books. Illinois published a number of routes to all parks and sites with a special emphasis on Lincoln sites. Some of the examples are brochures of pamphlet size or small colored booklets. Others are lavishly illustrated architectural tours of America. These very collectable books featured many homes by theme or geography. Lincoln sites were always included prominently. Lincoln sites were unique in the number of available publications. The old vertical files and pamphlet collections at the ALLM have many such examples. Merging these materials with the museum’s brochures, tourist maps, tickets, catalogues, and postcards provided a rich picture into past images of Lincoln, historic preservation, and Lincoln public interpretation.

Wherever possible this work has also made use of direct observation of operations and exhibitions at different Lincoln sites to evaluate current trends. At the time of this writing (2016), the author has worked in a Lincoln museum for ten years and annually attended Lincoln exhibitions in Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Washington DC. Exhibit
catalogues, guidebooks, and reviews provide recent witnesses to Lincoln interpretation. Direct observations allowed the author to mark the differences with past interpretations and research. As with all Lincoln sites, a major question is the use of current research and findings in the exhibitions or programs hosted at the historic site or museum. Opportunity is also available to observe differences between current historic Lincoln sites and museums that have Lincoln as only part of their total interpretive offerings. The author took photographs from recent museum and historic site visits to illustrate current conditions (2009-2015).

Three major Lincoln journals are also available for study. These are the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* in Springfield, (both its past journal from the Centennial celebration and the recent academic series), the *Lincoln Lore* from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the *Lincoln Herald* from Lincoln Memorial University. Dating back into the very early twentieth century, these journals have covered national events concerning Lincoln celebration and collecting for over one hundred years. Their target audiences were not the academic audiences. Lincoln collectors and hobbyists who expected to visit Lincoln sites subscribed to these newsletters. Although the updates on collections throughout the United States were of interest to serious researchers, most readers were educated amateurs.

The methodology for this project merges several related areas of established research and practice: material culture studies, cultural geography, public history, memory studies, and Lincoln studies. There is also a conscious consideration of biographical sources from both academic and popular writers, representing the evolution of efforts to present serious and scholarly ideas to a general audience. Past writers have
featured works on Lincoln’s life and even on the artwork and commemoration practiced throughout the United States.

The author reviewed museum literature from an insider’s perspective as a thirty-year practitioner and explored the origins of the modern American museum. Long-term access to research and primary sources at a major archive and ten years immersed in Lincoln studies provided a special perspective into this subject. The research revealed a paradigm connecting the public museums with other cultural movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Lincoln museums were among the earliest public museums designed with an honest merger of commercial tourism and patriotic fervor. Many Lincoln exhibits and sites combined the reverence of the public statue with the family friendly but overtly profit driven dime museum.

Limiting the focus has been especially important in avoiding overcrowded areas of Lincoln studies. Civil War commemoration, though very closely related, has been only lightly touched. Spaces of public commemoration such as Lincoln monuments and statues will not receive emphasis, since other writers have dealt with these so completely in other sources. This study is significant because it explores Lincoln museums as a unique category of Lincoln commemoration. Abraham Lincoln is significant not only for his direct influences as the Civil War president but also for his inspiration to the public since his assassination. Museums, which host research collections and interpret Lincoln for recreational visitors, merit serious study just as the Lincoln statues and collectables.

The exclusive Lincoln theme allowed comparisons with the larger portion of the museum world, since presenting Lincoln materials has provided meaningful work for a full cross section in all areas of public history. Although Lincoln’s possessions were
scattered into dozens of collections, millions of tourists made great efforts to visit the many related sites and galleries on their family vacations. Even before that twentieth-century practice became common, Lincoln admirers traveled to many rural sites, patriotic pageants, and pilgrimages along rediscovered routes taken by Lincoln in his pre-presidential years. The expanded early twentieth-century admiration of Lincoln parallels the growth of tourism, public history, and historic preservation. Few topics are so rich in museums, libraries, historic sites, roadside stops, and monuments as those surrounding Lincoln’s life and writings.

Although Lincoln took charge of his own image in his lifetime, after his death he became what America needed at different times. He was and even today remains a quintessential American icon. The places he lived, visited, and worked became shrines at which to meditate on what it meant to be an American. His grave and birthplace assume unusual importance in American identity. They are places that Americans have used and continue to use as a mirror to see themselves as they want to be seen, and sometimes as places to contest that image. The sheer number of Lincoln-related museums rank Lincoln as a major feature in the American landscape. As cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky noted, Lincoln’s image grew from the most controversial president to occupy “the loftiest chamber of the American pantheon.”

Placing the study of Lincoln’s commemoration alongside a history of the American museum and historic preservation creates a joining of previously unconnected subjects. Abraham Lincoln can provide a serious exploration of both American public

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memory and the American public museum as an institution. The recognition and presentation of Lincoln in museums provides a surprisingly underexplored element in both Lincoln and museum studies.
CHAPTER II
LINCOLN REMEMBRANCE AND COLLECTING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE CREATION OF LINCOLN MUSEUMS

This chapter of the study of Lincoln museums will identify four characteristics of nineteenth-century Lincoln commemoration and collecting that came to define Lincoln museums before the twentieth-century. The first was the jarring shock of Lincoln’s assassination and the exaggerated commemorative response engendered by his death.

Second, the fragmented nature of the collections resulted from a practice of private preservation of objects as independent relics, rather than as complete groups of artifacts. This prevented the formation of a single, definitive collection. This fragmentation also extended to objects of associative value. Lincoln’s words held greater social value than any gathering of his possessions. Original documents and transcribed collections of his speeches were the prime collectable items even before his assassination.

(See Figure 1)

Figure 1. This is the front piece of an 1864 publication of Lincoln’s writings from his early years as well as during his administration. Later collections followed this pattern, established while Lincoln was alive. From the collections at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, cited hereafter as ALLM.
Third, tension existed between the national versus the local images of Lincoln. Nationally, Lincoln became an icon of American civil religion, depicted through major biographers at shrines. The earliest museums and historic sites devoted to the sixteenth president, however, represented local interpretations, beginning with fairs, pageants, and pilgrimages.

Finally, the form of exhibits and operations reflected the populist influence of the dime museum institution. This observation suggests an alternative to the elite cabinets of curiosities that often receive credit as the ancestor of all modern museums. The chapter concludes with major examples of Lincoln exhibits, museums and historic sites that represent these key points.

The unique intensity of Lincoln commemoration and collecting is traceable to April 1865 and his unexpected assassination at the end of a four-year war. Reaction to Lincoln’s death and the great presidential funeral shaped the way that American society felt about the controversial president and changed how society treated many other historic commemorations. Reaction to the carnage of war followed by the murder of the President exposed a need for public commemorations and memorials. Collecting items related to Lincoln’s death was a way of participating in the national experience.

The initial grief demonstrated in 1865 over the losses of the War and the assassination developed during the following generation into sentiments that became more permanent. The change in attitude toward Lincoln was tremendous. Barry Schwartz, citing Lincoln biographers Don Fehrenbacher and David Donald, noted that there was a major change between his reputation during his lifetime and his adoration
after his assassination.26 The Civil War president was much more popular dead than alive, and that popularity grew in the decades after his death. A great mythic image of Abraham Lincoln took shape for an audience that encompassed more than Republican partisans. Through statues, publications, and private and public exhibitions, Lincoln belonged to a much larger group of Americans than those who had voted for him in the elections.

The experience of the American Civil War demanded public remembrances. Barry Schwartz and Michael Kammen attributed the nation’s explosive growth of monument building in the late nineteenth-century at least in part to the emotional times and public reaction to Lincoln’s assassination. According to Schwartz, “The scope and intensity of Lincoln’s funeral rites were out of all proportion to what people actually believed about Lincoln.” Instead, mourning practices were ritualized, dutiful, public expressions of grief. Schwartz termed these mourning rituals “surface acting” and claimed they occurred even in the absence of real grief or affection for the late President. “Public mourning,” Schwartz argues, “whose function is the affirmation of unity requires no assumptions about the superior merit of the deceased.”27 Historian and specialist in Lincoln studies, David Donald, believed that Lincoln became a national symbol and hero only after his assassination. “Only in death did Lincoln win universal applause. He was now (at his death) a hero in a sacred cause, this holy blissful martyr, this savior of his country.”28


Two recent historians have added to a fuller understanding of the public reactions toward Lincoln’s assassination. Martha Hodes’ book, *Mourning Lincoln*, is a study of private diaries and letters illustrating complex feelings of Southerners and other Confederate sympathizers. Many were indeed giving Lincoln just “surface acting,” evidenced by glee at Lincoln’s death shown in their private writings. Historian Caroline E. Janney, in *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, highlighted how the former Confederates continued resistance to a Northern interpretation of the Civil War and Lincoln’s commemoration through a set of claims and understandings of the past called the “lost cause.”

Even when the news of the assassination was recent, some observers, including newspaper editor Horace Greeley, noted that posterity would look on Lincoln much more kindly than did his contemporaries. The emotional relief of the war’s end had drastically improved Lincoln’s public image in northern states. At the apex of Lincoln’s fame and the celebration at war’s end, an assassin suddenly killed the President of the United States, who occupied a central place in all this conflict. He was the first President to suffer this fate, and the whole nation became aware of the tragedy at nearly the same time.

Schwartz argued that the funeral and community commemorations were a time “for ritual acts of national affirmation and national communion.” Public mourning

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31 Ibid.
rituals began as both a civic duty and a personal catharsis for the first generation. Those who were inwardly gleeful at Lincoln’s death nevertheless at least gave proper evidence of public mourning. Supporters whom historian Martha Hodes labeled “mourners” created diary and journal entries expressing deep, complex emotions tied to grief for public and personal losses. Though many diarists left notes claiming everyone else was also grieving, personal diaries demonstrated that the grief over Lincoln’s death was not nationally consistent. Some opponents of Lincoln’s war policies were very pleased at president’s death though they could not publicly show this.  

Lincoln’s political supporters and friends, including thousands of African-Americans, fostered the original myth making through public grieving, and their emotions soon spread to others. As an example, a young woman in Canandaigua, New York, expressed her grief and described the display of the public expressions of anger and grief in her diary from April 15. “News came this morning that our dear president, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated yesterday, on the day appointed for thanksgiving for Union victories. I have felt sick over it all day and so has everyone that I have seen…tears flow plenteously.” She made six entries in her diary over the next two weeks on various aspects of Lincoln’s funeral and details of the mourning in her community. She even described in detail the crape bordered mourning badges many people wore around town.

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32 Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 346.


35 Ibid.
An intimate Victorian death tradition created another special class of Lincoln collectable in later museums. Hair samples of the former President became popular relics in exhibits and private collections. Early collectors appear to have valued them. According to research through the Abraham Lincoln Association, attending physicians clipped enough to account for the extensive number of extant hair samples. According to diary records at Lincoln’s autopsy, “Mrs. Lincoln sent in a messenger with a request for a lock of hair. Dr. Stone clipped one from the region of the wound and sent it to her. I extended my hand to him in mute appeal, and received a lock stained with blood, and other surgeons present also received one.”

It may be Lincoln’s head had a bald spot by the time of the first funeral.

The great Lincoln funeral had greater social impact because of the local services in the eastern United States. Twelve cities hosted special stops for the funeral train after the Washington D.C. funeral. Victorian death traditions dictated the proper form of grief shown to the fallen—even an enemy. Mourners felt impelled by a sense of duty to be present at the funeral, express sorrow (fainting was encouraged), wear somber clothing and mourning ribbons, and to behave as though the deceased had been beloved by all. Those who did not follow appropriate mourning rites risked exclusion from polite company or public office. Soldiers and civilians across the nation needed to be careful of any negative commentary on Lincoln’s character or any praise for the assassin, John

36 Charles S. Taft, quoted in David C. Mearns, “Exquisite Collector, or the Scalping of Abraham Lincoln,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 52, no.1 (Spring 1959), 49. This quote is from the account of Dr. Charles S. Taft who attended Lincoln’s post-mortem examination.


Wilkes Booth, on pain of prosecution.³⁹ Schwartz suggests that participants at the funeral experienced unity as the “ritual of mourning his death created solidarity.”⁴⁰ They were Americans together mourning a fallen president, and any attack on Lincoln’s name met with a stern rebuke. His memory had become sacred even in Democratic cities. Lincoln’s memory, “now intertwined with the offended dignity of his office,” Schwartz argued, “was more sacred than Lincoln himself.”⁴¹

In speeches by some of Lincoln’s political supporters, the expressions about his virtues bordered on idolatry. Even the radical abolitionist reformer Horace Greeley, who never claimed Lincoln’s friendship, commented publicly, “The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. So the blood of the noble martyr to the cause of freedom will be the seed that will fructify to the great blessing of this nation.”⁴²

Lincoln’s public funerals allowed mourners space and public time to grieve him one last time or to salute the train as it passed their town. After a major funeral and viewing in Washington, the planners solemnly returned Lincoln’s body to Springfield along nearly the same route as that of his inaugural journey. At each major stop, residents swarmed to the spaces established for viewing Lincoln’s body. Communities all along the train route constructed displays and tableaux to express public solidarity and salute the train as it passed. Once Lincoln’s friends had him interred in the Springfield cemetery,

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⁴⁰ Schwartz, Forge of National Memory, 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., 37.

⁴² Horace Greeley, quoted in Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, 27.
the National Lincoln Monument Association of Illinois planned the largest tomb of any American president.\(^{43}\)

Lincoln collections represented a form of “object fetishism.”\(^{44}\) Objects in Lincoln museums were not part of the biographical research in the nineteenth-century but were elements displayed alongside the more valuable books, pamphlets, and papers. For several decades, scholars have used the expression “Civil Religion” to express devotion to objects in national history. Unlike earlier messianism as taught by the Puritans, the ideal of a civil religion came from public reactions to the suffering of the American Civil War. Historian Harry S. Stout attached great significance to the need to justify the number of dead as the origin of American Civil Religion. “Only as casualties rose to unimaginable levels did it dawn on some people that something mystically religious was taking place, a sort of massive sacrifice on the national altar. The Civil War taught Americans that they really were a Union, and it absolutely required a baptism of blood to unveil transcendent dimensions of that union.”\(^{45}\) This social, cultural phenomenon of a perceived public reaction of grief steered directly to Abraham Lincoln’s commemoration. The images of Lincoln the savior of the Union and the Civil War as crucible to the nation formed an American civil religion. Civil religion carved its domain not exclusively within either state or church agencies, but in both.

\(^{43}\) Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 3-35.


Lincoln’s image, as well as symbols of mourning, commonly graced memorial activities replayed each year in commemoration. Starting in the late 1880s and continuing throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, there was a noticeable increase in public images, markers, coins, medallions, ephemeral images and exhibits featuring Lincoln.\textsuperscript{46} Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky, noting the large number of Lincoln statues and memorials, argued, “the arrival of Abraham Lincoln” brought about “the full peopling of the loftiest chamber of the American pantheon. . . . Lincoln iconography proliferated on every likely surface; the buildings and places associated with the man became shrines.”\textsuperscript{47} Many of these shrines for public commemoration and private visits became museums and research institutions years later.

Closely connected with Lincoln commemoration were remembrances of the Civil War. After the Civil War thousands of veterans made trips back to see old battlefields where they had served, and attended the dedications of statues to Abraham Lincoln and military generals renowned after the War. The apparent need to return to these important places associated with the Civil War extended to other Americans associated with this conflict. Commemoration of the recent war through memorials to the thousands of dead became common landscape features in both North and South.

The Northern Civil War generation set the pattern for the next generation, who followed their elders in observing the early rituals and perhaps read more into them than mere cultural expectations. This next generation expanded the mythic image even further.


These children lived on through the Gilded Age and World War I, revering Lincoln as the primary American icon. Those for whom the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination were a childhood memory made Lincoln their national hero. They initiated the practice of traveling to places where Lincoln had lived or made famous appearances.

The nineteenth-century closed with Lincoln collections scattered around the nation with no unified place to interpret the 16th President, and with conflicting ideas on how best to support Lincoln preservation. The preserved log houses of the birthplace and other Lincoln homes served to consolidate expectations associating Lincoln with the frontier. There are few regional limitations on Abraham Lincoln’s national legacy. Almost any site graced with hosting a speech by Abraham Lincoln, or connected with a close family member, provided a related historic site or monument. Other agencies claimed rights to a portion of this president’s fame simply by hosting a major research or exhibition collection. Thus, Lincoln’s stories diffused across the nation along with everything this president ever owned or used.

Reviews of museum collections, exhibit catalogues, and auction inventories provide evidence that the habit of distributing pieces of an artifact did not seem to reduce the contemporary value of the item. It was practiced by Lincoln collectors and apparently even by the Lincoln family. Collectors consistently placed a high value on natural relics from Lincoln sites or items like walking canes made from wood acquired from the historic grounds.

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49 As an excellent overview into collecting, Lincoln, and commemoration see Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory.
Private collections acquired by either devoted friends or historians exerted a great influence on the origin and nature of Lincoln museums. The first great collectors of the post-Civil War years began their collections before Lincoln became president. Lincoln’s last law partner, William Herndon, was not personally a collector, but was involved in gathering materials for his biography of Lincoln and relics of his former partner’s life. He distributed many items he acquired to the first groups of collectors. Lincoln’s eldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln, was one of the first serious collectors of Lincoln’s legacy. He preserved and organized the entire collection of his father’s presidential papers and saved them for the Library of Congress. Osborn Oldroyd from Ohio was also a serious collector from the 1860 campaign onward. His massive holdings of artifacts, art and papers formed the core of the Lincoln collection of the National Park Service. Three other colleagues, William V. Spencer, Andrew Boyd, and Charles H. Hart complete the group of Lincoln contemporaries who were collecting before the Civil War ended and set the patterns for future collectors. Not only did they collect large libraries and relics, they published bibliographies of Lincoln materials that supported future collecting.

During the latter nineteenth-century a group of collectors, referred to as the “big five,” established massive collections that continued the gathering and scattering of Lincoln’s possessions around the United States. These five acquisitive devotees of Lincoln were Daniel Fish, William Lambert, Charles McLellan, Joseph Oakleaf, and

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Judd Stewart.\textsuperscript{52} With the exception of Judd Stewart, who was born just after the Civil War, they had personal memories of the Civil War, and some had direct connection with the late President.\textsuperscript{53}

Lincoln’s great skill with words was a factor that directed his early commemoration. His words were politically priceless. Political campaign materials and his official biographies were valuable collectibles even during Lincoln’s presidential administration. Before 1870, biographies and photographs were in virtually all Lincoln collections. Many people collected his speeches and sayings. After 1860, Lincoln supporters made some notable efforts at collecting objects or relics. Lincoln gave special gifts to supporters that became prized possessions after the assassination. Collectors often sought pieces of clothing, accessories, handkerchiefs, or hair samples.\textsuperscript{54}

The first documented Lincoln relics were the fence rails used in the 1860 presidential race. Lincoln’s campaigners in Illinois, particularly his cousin Denis Hanks, acquired fence rails that he helped split years earlier for use in the Wide Awake parades across the nation. The old fence rails of the Wide Awake Campaign took on an additional influence when they were acquired by relic hunters for years afterward—arriving in many public Lincoln collections.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{53} At their deaths, their collections dispersed further. Daniel Fish’s collection went to the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne Indiana; William Lambert’s collection scattered irretrievably through auction; Charles McLellan’s holdings went to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island; Joseph Oakleaf’s went to Indiana University and the Judd Stewart collection formed the core of the Lincoln holdings at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

\textsuperscript{54} Hodes, Mourning Lincoln, 231-232; Mearns, “Exquisite Collector,” 45-51.
Visitation to sites associated with Lincoln and the Civil War began early and grew increasingly popular from the time of Lincoln’s death into the twentieth century. There was a seeming incongruity between Lincoln’s iconic national appeal and the local nature of the museums dedicated to him. Early biographies and public commemorative artwork diffused throughout the nation, at least in the Northern and Western states, from the time of the funeral through the late nineteenth century. Published photographs, lithographs, statues, and biographies portrayed a mythic American hero. The historic preservation efforts, museums, and exhibits, however, displayed a strong partisan flavor that emphasized local importance because of the sites’ influence on Lincoln. The Tomb and Lincoln Home in Springfield, as well as the New Salem State Park and the Indiana boyhood sites, had managing boards and research dominated by local boosters or oral history originating from those locals. The national icon Lincoln did not receive expression locally at historic sites and exhibits because it was the local residents’ personal memory that dominated those institutions.

Abraham Lincoln became a common theme at fairs, traveling exhibits and public monuments. *See America First*, a series of national promotions of American natural and cultural sites, made Lincoln sites more accessible at just about the time the first permanent Lincoln museums opened in the 1870s and 1880s. This nationalist promotion

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56 Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln*, 231-233. Historian Martha Hodes claimed that traveling to sites of the recent Civil War and Lincoln assassination as well as collecting relics of these events allowed mourners to participate in these events.

of American tourism, according to public historian John F. Sears, originated through a need to create a national identity as separate from Europeans. Railroads responded to and promoted this trend by investing in vacation spots, in hopes that increased domestic holidays would mean corresponding increases in ridership. Promotions also helped to commodify the past through tourism as a means to generate patriotism. Promoters cited both patriotism and profit in seeking financial support for historic preservation and monuments.

According to historian Cindy S. Aron, tourism is distinct from the larger category of vacations. Tourism focuses on visiting natural, cultural, and historic sites, while a vacation or holiday also includes any travel for recreation or health purposes. As a practice, tourism allowed middle-class Americans to merge their patriotism with recreation. The experiences at natural or historical sites benefited the whole person. Many believed that visiting historic sites helped new immigrants become better Americans. Lincoln monuments and subsequently museums grew from this early tourism, which was already maturing by the late-nineteenth century.

Grassroots museums provided a new outlet for public participation in local and state heritage just as many Americans were beginning to express interest in their community or national history through commemorative pageants. According to the 1914 edition of A Handbook of American Pageants by Ralph Davol, modern American pageants originated with the 1888 centennial celebration at Marietta, Ohio. The Marietta

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58 Sears, Sacred Places, 4.

exhibit included a “relic tent” of local artifacts alongside national or exotic items, including a “one-hundred-year-old rolling pin, a piece of Plymouth Rock, an Indian necklace, a fragment of a battle flag from Bull Run, and a model of a Honolulu surf boat.”

Event leaders selected the objects for emotional appeal, not for rational study. Similar, apparently random displays of associative items appeared in public Lincoln exhibitions. Old tools and clothing items distantly connected with the Lincoln family appeared alongside building relics, random letters or documents signed by Lincoln, commemorative art pieces, and Lincoln photographs. This pattern was typical of all early Lincoln exhibitions surveyed in this research.

Pageants were public outdoor spectacles based on historical and cultural narratives. Promoters and consultants did not consider pageants as plays in the traditional sense, but rather as “visible manifestation[s] of the community soul” that “should not be simply a sensational exhibition.” Promoters made it clear that the purpose of pageants was deeper than the mere entertainment value of drama. They were emotionally deeper and participatory rather than spectator activities. For one promoter, the task of pageants was to “allow people to participate in their own entertainment, not merely see professional actors,” and provide the “community’s consciousness” to be “expressed in visible form.”

Many pageant promoters and visitors believed that the contemporary life of industry and business was “grievously marred by most of our modern mechanical

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62 Ibid., 17.
The community pageant brought back a pastoral and romantic view of life. Lincoln’s life became part of this form of commemoration in the nineteenth-century and expanded into the early twentieth century. In later years, this practice evolved into living history.

Like pageants, modern pilgrimages developed for patriotic reasons, not merely for profit. These ideals were very dominant in Lincoln sites. Michael Kammen traced the modern rebirth of pilgrimages to the 1890s, when more Americans “found themselves encouraged by newly formed preservation associations and educational foundations to make Pilgrimages to historical sites, such as Jamestown and Mount Vernon in Virginia, or Independence Hall in Philadelphia.” In 1894, for example, the American society for the Extension of University Teaching associated with the University of Pennsylvania, planned a ten-day ‘historical pilgrimage’ along George Washington’s ‘itinerary to historic spots in the North’ one hundred years earlier.” 64 Boosters in community chamber of commerce agencies or in the railroad industry developed and marketed heritage routes to connect the many new museums and preserved sites. This began what geographer Wilbur Zelinsky called a “museumization of the past.” 65 These modern pilgrimages were the foundation for the heritage tourism that followed. 66

Lincoln sites claimed their full share of pilgrimage tourism. One of the most noteworthy points about the origins of American history museums is that Lincoln sites

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64 Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 201.


and exhibits appeared long before most other historical destinations. In the 1870s and 1880s, while public history museums were still very rare, Lincoln exhibits slowly grew in the American landscape. Americans made pilgrimages to sites of Lincoln’s youth or to his newly finished tomb to continue the mourning practices. Sites like the abandoned grounds of New Salem and the Lincoln’s Sinking Springs Farm in Kentucky attracted visitors—to the surprise of locals. Residents near these sites quickly discovered that visitors or pilgrims would also pay to have a guide or for amenities. Some residents set up their own displays to cater to Lincoln pilgrims. Any collection of miscellaneous objects of Lincoln’s life, his family, or his administration became an economic asset.

Early biographers Josiah Holland, William Herndon, and Ida Tarbell traveled the routes Abraham Lincoln frequented to acquire reminiscences of anyone who may have known Abraham Lincoln the lawyer or Lincoln the youth. They helped draw pilgrims’ attention to these sites by illustrating them in their biographies.

Unlike the major antebellum museums or historical societies managed by a select membership of like-minded, affluent associates, institutions focusing on Lincoln or the Civil War were attractive to the public because the content spoke to a wide segment of non-elite visitors. So-called “dime museums” focused on relics or associative objects with emotional content to attract paying customers. Middle-class Americans demonstrated a deep desire for Civil War or Lincoln relics with connections to the recent historical events. If a tourist could not collect relics personally, a visit to the public museum might meet that need for physical contact with important events and people.

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Proprietors of the museums added other features such as dining and entertainment with music and drama for the whole family.

Dime museums, such as the American Museum of P. T. Barnum, used historic objects more than the traditional historical societies or even the Smithsonian Institution. The middle and working classes took a greater interest in associative historic items displayed by the competitive dime museums. Owners of these museums were entrepreneurs who, unlike the affluent owners of the great cabinets of curiosity and historical societies, needed to charge admissions to afford their collections. The dime museums, though marketed as educational, often followed loose definitions of accuracy. It often did not matter that the objects were not original, only that the customers thought that they were.68

Socially, those who ran these populist Lincoln museums felt the sting of criticisms by some contemporaries who considered them “full of worthless and trashy articles,” the type of collections only “made by schoolboys.”69 Criticisms of Lincoln exhibits, like those at his tomb or at the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois, reflected the unmet expectations of the reporters of the 1880s and 1890s. Instead of experiencing the reverential Mount Vernon, rich with material objects, they saw a populist, civil religious shrine and a cluttered gallery of miscellaneous objects, art works, and ephemeral material. Public museums that focused on history or local material culture were completely unlike the elegant historical societies or great collecting museums of the major American cities.

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69 Bruggeman, Here, George Washington Was Born, 43.
On the other hand, educated amateur scholars of the American Victorian age supported material culture studies. They saw objects as the greatest assets in new research. Unlike universities that taught only established knowledge, museums were places of new learning. Historian Steven Conn argued that this progressive view of museums lasted only thirty years from its 1870s high point.70 These are the years during which several of the first Lincoln museums came into existence and the years when the largest related collections formed.

Laurence Vail Coleman, one of the early observers of the American public museum believed that the modern American public museum started in the 1870s with patriotic celebrations and displays, particularly those at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. What he meant by a museum for the public originated in the desire for inspiration and education. Public museums would resemble dime museums but without the “freak shows” those venues commonly featured. Lincoln museums also differed from dime museums in that they typically began with trustee ownerships rather than with a single owner model as the commercially driven dime museums had.71 Efforts at creating popular Lincoln museums for tourists resembled dime museums, because dime museums were the most common operational model during the late nineteenth century.

Historian Jennifer Bridge demonstrated that the image of dime museums fit with Civil War and Lincoln relics.72 She explained how boosters brought the Civil War

70 For a review of a history of the American Museum movement separate from the theme of popular museums or Lincoln collections, see Steven Conn, Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1920 (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 14-17.


72 The nineteenth-century panoramas and cyclorama exhibits on the Civil War were popular and encouraged dime museums to take on the theme to increase visitation. See Jennifer R. Bridge, “Tourist
exhibits to the public along with Lincoln relics. Civil War commemoration and collecting generated substantial conflict in the public. The relocation of the infamous Civil War-era Libby prison from Richmond, Virginia to Chicago in 1889, generated debate, although it was financially successful. Public commentators in both the North and the South condemned this project “as a ghastly circus exhibition” or an undue shame on the South. Some veterans opposed to these early museums of Civil War relics did not want to remember this place. 73

One of the greatest and earliest exhibits of Lincoln materials opened in 1887 at the Chicago Opera House Building, in Chicago, Illinois under the support of Lincoln’s former law partner William Herndon. As a sponsor of the Lincoln Memorial exhibit, William Herndon testified that president Lincoln had owned or used all the objects displayed. 74 The catalogue of the Lincoln Memorial Collection of Chicago contained over two hundred objects, papers, and images connected directly with Abraham Lincoln. Like later museums and private collections, this exhibit featured relics made from associated buildings as well as artifacts and commemorative artwork. There was the expected 25-cent admission fee. 75 In 1896, Ida Tarbell published an article on Lincoln’s law years, which featured a photograph of his chair and bookcase/desk combination formerly from

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73 Bridge, “Tourist Attractions,” 159-166.

74 Samuel B. Munson, ed., Lincoln Memorial Collection of Chicago (Chicago, IL: Lincoln Memorial Collection, 1887), 1.

this exhibition. (See Figure 2) Collector William H. Lambert owned these artifacts at the
time.76

Unfortunately, this exhibit never evolved into a permanent museum. If this
collection had remained unified, it would likely have matched the other great presidential
collections now within the National Archives system. This was the last time so wide a

Figure 2. This bookcase and chair from Lincoln's Springfield home was in the Lincoln Memorial
Exhibit in Chicago (ALLM).77

selection of possessions and papers, owned and used by Lincoln, was ever seen in a
single place. About six years after the exhibition, the entire collection formed part of a
major antique sale in in Philadelphia in December of 1894.78 A review of the inventory
provided indications that the items passed over the years into the hands of several private


78 Stan. V. Henkels, *The Valuable Collection of Autographs and Historical Papers Collected by
the Hon. Jas. T. Mitchell of the Supreme Court of Penna.; Also, The Entire Lincoln Memorial Collection of
Chicago, Ill., at One Time the Personal Property of Abraham Lincoln* (Philadelphia, PA, 1894),
https://archive.org/details/valuablecollecti00stan.
collectors, the National Park Service, Illinois State Library (Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum), Indiana State Museum, Huntington Library, and the Chicago Historical Society.  

Local boosters established the first long-term public Lincoln museum, as an afterthought, in his monumental tomb. The Monument Association started a collection with the purchase of Lincoln’s surveying equipment from his New Salem years. This was on display for many years in the Memorial Hall at the Lincoln tomb before moving to its present home in Lincoln’s New Salem Historic Park (see Figure 3). Local resident John Carroll Power was the first custodian of this new tomb. He charged twenty-five cents for each visitor and gave tours of the hall with its growing collection of “relics.”

![Lincoln's survey tools on display at the Memorial Hall, Lincoln tomb (ALLM).](image)

Figure 3. Lincoln's survey tools on display at the Memorial Hall, Lincoln tomb (ALLM).

Power, like subsequent custodians, used the fees to manage the tomb’s maintenance, pay his custodian’s stipend, and purchase more artifacts for the collection. His role as custodian made him a local, self-proclaimed Lincoln expert. He provided tours to visitors at the Memorial Hall and stories of Lincoln’s life in this area. He

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79 Munson, *Lincoln Memorial Collection*.


published brochures of all the Lincoln sites in Springfield. Power became known for his
tours and his varied collections were discussed a number of times by visiting reporters.\textsuperscript{82}

The Memorial Hall exhibit set a pattern for other permanent Lincoln museums by
featuring both the desire to commemorate Lincoln’s influence in a reverential fashion and
to make a profit. These twin motives for preservation and exhibition appeared in all the
earliest Lincoln museums throughout the nation. Unlike the endowed historical
societies, the Memorial Hall resembled the dime museum because of the need to gain
revenue from visitors and the constant desire to increase the numbers of visitors to
preserve the site.\textsuperscript{83} This hard-luck institution suffered from poor construction, colorful
custodians, and even more colorful criticisms. The tomb required reconstruction and
redesign several times. Despite the physical problems, the commemoration of Lincoln’s
burial was vitally important to the Lincoln memorials. Even the rock on which Lincoln’s
coffin rested in the waiting vault before the tomb was constructed was preserved and
mounted in a special memorial bell tower. (Figure 4).

\textsuperscript{82} Hill, “The Lincoln Landscape,” 14-15.
\textsuperscript{83} Dennett, \textit{Weird and Wonderful}, 1-3.
Figure 4. Memorial behind the Lincoln tomb, built in 1900. (Photograph by author)

Although many groups and individuals used the tomb as a gathering place for pilgrimages, private meditations, or other memorial ceremonies, it was not without its critics. A number of reporters touring the tomb aggressively criticized the display of relics in the Memorial Hall, particularly that they considered the admission fee unpatriotic. An out-of-state journalist from the Washington Post wrote of his offense that Power charged fees to visitors. He blamed this “shocking indecency” not on the custodian but on the “the general ignorance of the population” and the “contemptible meanness of whatever body of legislatures may be responsible for it.”

Another reporter commented through the Chicago Tribune in 1886 that the tomb had become a “money making show.” (See Figure 5) It was so offensive to this reporter that he claimed that this “place has been turned into a dime museum, except that the admission fee is twenty five cents

instead of a dime”; the only defense the monument trustees gave was that “it costs money to keep up the monument.”

Figure 5. Interior of Memorial Hall and the exhibit some reporters found as offensive as a dime museum (ALLM).

Around 1900 E. S. Nadal, a writer for *Scribner’s Magazine*, attended the state fair and collected Lincoln stories from older residents of Springfield. At the end of this visit, the reporter made the pilgrimage to visit the Lincoln Home and the Tomb. Apparently, the museum there also fell short of Nadal’s expectations. He claimed that the “task of rising a fitting memorial might be left to the fullness of time and to some more ideal and perfect age, if such there is to be.” One can only imagine what the response would have been had this journalist known that the body of the president was still residing in a shallow grave under the tomb structure in order to hide the embarrassment of the attempted theft of his body a few years earlier.

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Power defended the private support of the tomb. He noticed that a small minority of Illinois residents visited the tomb and that the majority should not be “taxed to pay for the others’ sight-seeing.” Power and the local boosters faced criticism not only from urban reporters, but also from nationally recognized, patriotic, activist groups such as the Sons of the Revolution and the Grand Army of the Republic, which used this facility for celebrations. Their public opposition to the dime museum format and “disgraceful conditions” embarrassed state politicians into accepting fiscal responsibility for the monument.

The second Lincoln museum, at the family home in Springfield, Illinois, shared a connection with the first serious Lincoln collector, Osborn Oldroyd. Though Oldroyd was not a wealthy person, he dedicated his life to developing a collection to commemorate Lincoln, continuing his collecting and writing on Lincoln to the point of moving to Springfield, Illinois, to work, edging closer with each of several moves to the Lincoln home place. In 1883, he rented the house from Robert Todd Lincoln. He brought his growing collection of “Lincolniana” to exhibit in the front room and parlor of the old Lincoln homestead. Photographs of the house reveal a room seriously cluttered by later twentieth-century standards. This site, the second Lincoln museum and first preserved historic site, was popular with tourist pilgrims visiting a number of Lincoln related sites but apparently was not as popular as the tomb. (See figure 6)

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89 “To End a Disgrace: Illinois will be Asked to Care for the Lincoln Tomb,” The Chicago Daily Tribune, December 18, 1894, 9.
The Lincoln Home also received a degree of criticism paralleling that directed at the Lincoln Memorial Association. On October 25, 1887, the *New York Times* reprinted a very critical review from the *Chicago News* from the prior week. A visiting reporter published these features just after the homestead became state property. He was relieved that the “house was getting a coat of paint nearly the color of the original as possible . . .” and “the alleged collection of Lincoln relics is shown the visitor without the former ten-cent fee.”

His evaluation of the collection was especially interesting. The reporter appeared to expect a shrine experience, but he wanted more than the shrine. He clearly wanted to see items Lincoln owned, perhaps like the tours Washington’s Mount Vernon provided. He complained that the “collection, as a gallery of pictures of Lincoln, is noteworthy, but as a collection of anything which Lincoln ever owned or preferred it is a flat failure.” The reporter continued to describe an unrelated grouping of images, paintings, sheet music, plaster busts, books, and a rail made into a cane. “There are glass

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cases of campaign ribbons and cards, a case of Lincoln medallions, a case of Lincoln medals, two cabinets of sheet music, fourteen plaster busts of Lincoln, the eagle which rested on the Lincoln catafalque from Washington to Springfield, a case of historical books of Lincoln and his time.” He continued, listing scraps of paper, and disgustedly noted that the only personal items were relics from past homes: “a settee, a cradle, two hair sofas, a rocking chair, an office chair and a stove. There is nothing valuable in the collection-nothing which Lincoln prized.”91 What this reporter could not have yet known was that of all the various Lincoln collections, with the exception of the Lincoln Memorial Exhibit in Chicago (c. 1888), this collection from Osborn Oldroyd might have become the largest grouping of personal items from this iconic president up to that time.92

According to Oldroyd, his persistent collecting activities throughout the Springfield area displeased Robert Todd Lincoln. The president’s son mostly opposed collecting “those things which only bespoke the lowly estate of the Lincoln family in its early days.”93 Oldroyd claimed that this attitude of Robert Todd Lincoln became controversial among President Lincoln’s fans, because by the late nineteenth-century many people began to see value in the frontier or rural experience of Lincoln and other American families. In any case, Oldroyd occupied the Lincoln house until 1893 when Illinois elected its first Democratic governor in nearly fifty years. The new administration gave Oldroyd only two weeks to vacate the home to make it available for


93 Ibid., 3.
a political appointee. Oldroyd elected to take his entire significant collection with him, including furniture from the Springfield home, when he relocated to Washington D.C. After Oldroyd’s departure, the Lincoln Homestead saw few improvements. It appeared to be the least attended of all the Lincoln sites at the turn of the century. The short-sightedness of Illinois politicians lost the state a major collection that remains the foundation of the Lincoln Museum in Ford’s Theatre over one hundred years later.

The Lincoln home and the Memorial Hall were rare institutions in the late nineteenth century. Oldroyd and his friends often puzzled why so few people were interested in his relic collection of Lincoln. They were attempting an American History museum and that was not yet a feature of the landscape. Americans did commemorate their history, as demonstrated in 1826 at the Jubilee and at the 1876 Centennial. Americans even had many museums and historical societies but not a public museum devoted to national, human (not natural) history or national themes. The institution most similar to Springfield’s was the commercial dime museum represented by Barnum’s American Museum or Boston’s Eden Musee. Historical and pioneer societies had study collections but not open exhibits, and they did not often invite the public; catering instead to a selection of members who paid annual memberships for the privilege of attending activities and exhibits. Some required genealogical proofs for access to the collections.

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Power and Oldroyd were unconsciously replicating the Peale museum of Philadelphia with its nationalist themes and open paid admission policy. Their techniques of exhibition were very unorganized and uninformed by any themes taught at the Smithsonian Institution. Other Lincoln sites that came later also followed this model, a combination of private enterprise with a portion of public funds or in-kind support. Boosters of Lincoln sites were early to request state and federal support for their public sites because of their general good for all. Audiences attending Lincoln sites or traveling on a pilgrimage to several related sites were a mixed group, because Lincoln’s legacy was expanding by the 1890s. Thus, the Lincoln image began increasing almost thirty-five years after the Civil War. Even some southern veterans, and Confederate sympathizers, to a limited extent, softened on their attitude toward Lincoln.97

Leadership of Lincoln sites and Lincoln collectors strongly favored the selection of artifacts with an emphasis on their numinous qualities as opposed to historically accurate or artistically valuable qualities. The consistent use of the terms “relics” and “shrine” for Lincoln artifacts and sites reinforced this image.98

Another example of the mixed motivations of patriotism and commercialism is the moving of Ann Rutledge’s body from its original burial in the Old Concord Cemetery Burial Ground to Petersburg, Illinois in 1890. Ann Rutledge, long a character in early Lincoln stories, became famous because of William Herndon’s speech on Abraham

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Lincoln’s pioneer years, claiming that Ann was Lincoln’s only love.99 The original burial ground was isolated in 1890 from any road and nearly inaccessible, except by hiking or horseback. Samuel Montgomery was a civic leader, merchant, and promoter in Petersburg. His long-term project to exhume and rebury Ann Rutledge stemmed strongly from the desire to sell grave lots as well as from his lifelong interest in Lincoln’s early years in the abandoned New Salem site. Montgomery worked with Rutledge relatives to remove Ann’s body to the new cemetery in Petersburg, claiming most of Petersburg supported the move. Montgomery argued that visitors would have access to this grave, the only artifact connected to the famous Lincoln story. The local Petersburg Observer article supported Montgomery, because the “grave will be properly cared for and the old story of the plighted love of the martyred President will often be repeated to the visitors.”100 With effective advertising, the Oakland Cemetery would also experience an increase in prestige and market value. (See Figure 7)

![Relocated grave of Ann Rutledge in Petersburg IL. 1960's postcard (ALLM).](image)

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Later historical features and memoirs about this action were not flattering toward Montgomery. Some even questioned whether he moved the correct body.\textsuperscript{101} Residents increasingly believed his commercial motivation outweighed all others and regretted supporting the move. In later years, visitors and residents began to appreciate the value of the original site at the Old Concord Burial Ground and even placed a new marker on the original site of Ann Rutledge’s grave.

Petersburg was the only town near the abandoned ruins of New Salem, where Lincoln had lived. The descendants of the former citizens of New Salem living in Petersburg became the leaders in the restoration movement and the rebuilding of New Salem into one of the first reconstructed communities in the United States.\textsuperscript{102}

During the nineteenth century, New Salem served to interpret Lincoln’s difficult growth out of the frontier. Serious pilgrims found little to direct their attention to the famous former occupants of the long abandoned town. A writer for a Chautauqua newspaper displayed disenchantment as she described the lack of any reference points at New Salem. The writer was conscious of what happened here but felt depressed over its current condition. Abraham Lincoln “here assisted in building the noted flatboat which he helped to float down the river to New Orleans; here he was assistant in the village grocery, where he spent leisure moments studying his borrowed books; and here he was postmaster. The place is now but a dilapidated ruin, scarcely a vestige remaining of the


\textsuperscript{102} Thomas P. Reed to John W. Starr, 12 September 1918. Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, (ALLM)
well-known village of fifty or sixty years ago." The writer continued to describe two
trees, an elm and a sycamore, that grew together in the ruins of Lincoln’s old store. To
the writer the two trees seemed a fitting symbol of the post-Civil War reunion of two
parts of the nation growing together from a site connected with Lincoln’s life.
Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, this
undeveloped site would provoke interested pilgrims. Many visitors and local boosters
voiced dreams of reconstructing New Salem to the way Lincoln would have known it.

After the assassination, many Republicans were mourning Lincoln at his home in
Springfield, Illinois; few mourners looked to Lincoln’s Indiana family homestead in
Spencer County. The campaign biographies of 1860 and 1864 had seemed to ignore the
Lincoln years in Indiana. Kentucky was his birthplace and his colorful wife’s home, and
Illinois was his political base. The political biographers forgot Indiana.

Only after the President’s assassination did Lincoln’s teen years in Indiana appeal
to the curious. A National Park Service history asserted that the first group of visitors to
the Lincoln site came in April of 1865 to have their picture taken in front of the “Lincoln
cabin.” Like many other Lincoln sites, its legitimacy was questionable. This cabin was
only partially a Lincoln structure. Thomas and Abraham Lincoln started building it in
1830 but left it for the next owners to complete, when the family departed Indiana for
Illinois. Even in this limited context, the cabin had enough Lincoln connections to

105 Mike Capps and Jane Ammeson, Images of America: Indiana’s Lincolnland (Charleston, SC:
Arcadia, 2008), 72.
create interest in Lincoln pilgrimages. The cabin was not preserved, and a small railroad station town surrounded the area.

Nancy Hanks Lincoln’s gravesite gave Indiana its first long-term Lincoln historic site; it is arguably the first historic site in the nation to undergo preservation for Lincoln’s memory. William Herndon visited in September of 1865 and took special care to locate the gravesite of his former law partner’s birth mother. Although the grave was missing its original marker, local residents, some of whom had been there since Lincoln’s residency, helped locate the original site.\(^\text{106}\) Beginning in 1869, the first of several well-meaning local business groups attempted to preserve the gravesite and commemorate Lincoln’s mother. Each time a group or donor cleaned up the gravesite and installed a marker, local ambivalence regarding preservation, and resulting neglect, caused the site to fall into serious disrepair.\(^\text{107}\) Even after the wealthy carriage maker, Peter Studebaker, donated a marker and set up a fund to maintain the grave, local residents responsible for maintenance neglected it again.\(^\text{108}\)

Regional boosters in Indiana were among the first Lincoln promoters to advance the idea of asking for state or federal funds through Senator Charles Fairbanks to support the grave’s preservation. Indiana’s governor James A. Mount rejected the idea as a violation of their state sovereignty. There were even discussions of moving Mrs. Lincoln’s body from rural Spencer County to Indianapolis, where it would be closer to the state power and therefore better maintained. The recent public removal of the


\(^{107}\) Ibid., 9-11.

\(^{108}\) Capps and Ammeson, *Images of America*, 73.
remains of Ann Rutledge’s body to the more populated Petersburg, Illinois, cemetery provided stimulus to repeat the practice for Lincoln’s mother. In 1897, the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial Association (NHLMA) was founded to raise funds and maintain the gravesite privately. Once again, private enterprise efforts failed. After three years, the group had raised only $56.52. Major donations from a few affluent supporters, including Robert Todd Lincoln who gave $1,000 to maintain his grandmother’s grave, kept the project alive. In 1902 the state agreed to pay for the purchase of the sixteen acres around the grave and deeded the property to the NHLMA with a warning that if they failed to maintain the property, it would be returned to the state. The NHLMA installed an additional marker made from surplus stone from the Lincoln tomb in front of the gravesite. By 1906, the committee again failed to fulfill its promises or even to maintain the site. The State of Indiana dissolved the NHLMA, acquired the gravesite, and improved the facilities. The approach of the centennial of Lincoln’s birth in 1909 increased public interest to preserve the gravesite.

Kentucky, for the most part, did not join the Lincoln commemoration until after Illinois, Indiana, and Washington, D.C. Its status as a neutral state in the Civil War and the fact that Kentuckians developed stronger Confederate sympathies after the war provided infertile ground for public Lincoln commemorations. Kentucky’s adoption of a


111 O’Bright, Abraham Lincoln’s Home, 14.

112 Capps and Ammeson, Images of America, 75.

113 Ibid., 14-15.
Confederate “Lost Cause” identity by the late nineteenth-century meant that local politics kept Lincoln commemoration to a minimum.\textsuperscript{114} Greater interest by native Kentuckians came long after the centennial of Lincoln’s birth. Thus, for years, the commemoration and preservation efforts that did occur, such as those at Lincoln’s birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky, were the result of demands from outside the local community.\textsuperscript{115} 

Kentucky residents were ambivalent about Lincoln in the later nineteenth century. The 1890s witnessed the first major national efforts to recognize Lincoln at a commemoration site, his birthplace. The means to do so was not through a group of community or state elite but through a small, devoted team of boosters determined to make money from Lincoln’s growing fame. The site was marked in public knowledge, after nineteenth-century pilgrims of Lincoln’s legacy gained help from locals to show them to Lincoln’s birthplace. From the time of the president’s death, individuals came to this extremely remote region to visit a site of civil religion and take a relic from the grounds. It has always been a key stop for travelers on a secular Via Dolorosa to all major sites associated with the martyred president.\textsuperscript{116} 

The first effort to preserve Lincoln’s birthplace for the larger public closely resembled the populist tactics of the proprietors of dime museums and fairs. Although not an actual museum at first, this effort to preserve a historic site and locate an object to

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\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 175.
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\textsuperscript{116} Marshall, \textit{Confederate Kentucky}, 176.
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represent Lincoln as a son of the frontier placed the Lincoln birthplace as Kentucky’s first Lincoln museum site.  

National Park Service research claims that the first attempt to develop a Mount Vernon-like commemoration here came from a Major S. P. Gross, when he attempted to purchase Lincoln’s birthplace farm in 1894. Alfred W. Dennett succeeded in purchasing the 110 acres of the farm, Sinking Springs, for an investment in the growing tourism business. He claimed locals told him that neighbors dismantled the Lincoln cabin years ago and used the logs to make a nearby home. In September 1895, the Washington National Tribune reported that Dennett ordered

“the old cabin in which the great President first saw the light reconstructed out of its original logs…The old cabin will be restored as near as possible to the exact condition it was in when the home of Thomas Lincoln and his wife, Nancy…the work will be done in time for the reception of visitors from the National encampment (Grand Army of the Republic).”

There was a reconstructed cabin at the location noted by some locals as the home place, but whether or not it was Thomas Lincoln’s cabin has always been a matter for debate. Most scholars assume that it could not be the actual cabin occupied by Thomas Lincoln and his family. Dennett instructed his agent in Kentucky, Rev. James Bigham, to “build a log cabin on the Lincoln farm…with identical logs that were in the original

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120 Blythe et al., *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace*, 28-29.
Bigham purchased and photographed a cabin from a nearby farm. It became widely accepted that this was the actual cabin in which Lincoln was born. At its grand opening, fewer than 100 of the more than 5,000 Grand Army of the Republic participants attended. The low attendance was apparently due to the cost of admission and transportation from the Encampment headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky. A 1949 National Park research report blamed the opening’s failure on “Reverend Bingham’s exorbitant admission charge and his amateur promotional ineptitude.” Dennett’s activity continued after this less than successful opening. In 1897, a youth magazine honored Dennett for his desire to “convert [the Sinking Springs] into a national park, a sort of patriotic Mecca, as has been done at Mount Vernon.”

Later that year, Dennett attempted to recoup his losses by sending the Lincoln cabin and another he purchased from the Jefferson Davis birthplace on tour. Exhibited together at the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exhibition in Nashville, they formed a display connecting the leaders of the Civil War. It was not a serious patriotic exhibition in a

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122 Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, 177.

123 Blythe et al., Abraham Lincoln Birthplace, 29.


special venue, merely joining the assortment of sideshow displays located on the “Vanity Fair.” Dennett later moved the cabin to other fairs and exhibitions, including the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo, New York. Workers managing the exhibit of the two cabins mixed the logs when in storage at New York’s Long Island. Dennett lost title to the Sinking Springs farm in 1906, and, forgotten for the time being, the logs remained in storage at Coney Island.126

Unlike in Kentucky, local civic leaders led the charge into historic preservation in Washington D.C. Community boosters in the District of Columbia sponsored a populist movement to purchase and preserve the Peterson House where Lincoln had died. Osborn H. Oldroyd, recently discharged from his position at Springfield, Illinois, began renting this house in 1894 to display his collection, but could not make a living on the admissions revenue. Although in 1897 a Texas congressman introduced a bill to Congress for the purchase of the Peterson house, the majority in Congress were not ready to make this type of direct support toward historic preservation or cultural and arts activities.127

A portable example of an early Lincoln museum further demonstrated the populist origins of Lincoln museums. Collectors always considered artifacts of the Lincoln assassination and funeral among the most precious of historic relics. During the latter nineteenth-century and into the twentieth-century, this historic railcar traveled to various cities as a roving exhibition or perhaps a pilgrimage in reverse. Instead of bringing visitors to the relics, developers brought the relic to the pilgrims.128 Tourism boosters and


128Snow, *America’s Most Sacred Relic. “*
commercial interests worked to encourage patriotic emotions, while creating opportunities for commercial exploitation. The twin motives of patriotism and profit merged to sponsor the attempts at this uncommon form of museum. (See figure 8)

Figure 8. Post card image of the Lincoln Funeral Car (ALLM).

The only early exception found to the populist origin of Lincoln Museums or public collections was at the Chicago Historical Society (CHS). The CHS was the first large-scale museum to maintain a permanent Lincoln collection as part of the whole institution. The Museum’s position early in Illinois history placed it in a prime position to collect significant items from the Lincoln administration. The CHS, founded in 1857, comprised a “select group of members from Chicago’s social and political leadership.”\(^{129}\) The society’s leadership selected special officials for honorary memberships. In January of 1860, CHS trustees awarded President-elect Abraham Lincoln an honorary membership in the Chicago Historical Society.\(^{130}\) A few key Lincoln items rested prominently in displays shortly after the Civil War. In Paul Angle’s history of the


\(^{130}\) Ibid., 32.
Chicago Historical Society, he recorded an 1868 description of an exhibit hall featuring Civil War relics and two Lincoln items. It contained an original handwritten copy of the Emancipation Proclamation made by Lincoln himself and one of many ornamental walking canes made from a fence rail used in the 1860 Republican presidential campaign.\textsuperscript{131} The early development of Lincoln exhibitions at the CHS demonstrates that such promotion by the prominent and influential existed in the nineteenth century, although it was far from typical.

In review, to understand why Lincoln museums and specialized collections exist the way they do and why particular historic sites became established, the researcher must go back to the beginning of Lincoln collecting and shrine building. There were Lincoln collectors actively hording relics as far back as the 1860 presidential election. A new wave of collecting Lincoln relics, writings and related items began the evening of the President’s assassination. Those who experienced the events started the collections and recognized many historic sites. More commemoration would follow later, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the geographic centers of Lincoln commemoration and growth of new museums appeared within four locations tourism boosters called “Lincolnland”: Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Washington D.C. The first shrines, public pilgrimages and relic acquisition begun during this period formed a well-established pattern by the time of the 1909 Lincoln Centennial.

\textsuperscript{131} Angle, \textit{The Chicago Historical Society}, 55.
The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a much greater acceptance of Lincoln as the iconic American political leader. The Civil War generation was dying out. The next generation was adjusting to new technologies in communication and transportation and adapting to vast numbers of new immigrants coming to America. There were still lingering regional disputes remaining after Reconstruction. The post War generation needed Lincoln to again inspire national unity and identity. The centennial of his birth provided a very visible rallying point for a new age of Americans.

Public demands for a national celebration to commemorate the Lincoln birth centennial in 1909, reflected the growing importance of Lincoln in American memory. Lincoln exhibits at national expositions further evidenced his increasing reputation. During these years the idea of public funding for cultural and heritage work was too progressive for many politicians, but its acceptance was growing. Paralleling this growing importance were movements to make Americans more mobile through the new automobile and improved roads. Major Lincoln historic sites of the twentieth century also document the Lincoln images Americans wanted to remember.

Lincoln’s public fame had ascended quickly in pro-Union regions after his assassination. His partisan supporters and friends first encouraged reverence of


Lincoln. Lincoln historian Allen Guelzo claimed that Lincoln’s great fame climaxed at the centennial of his birth, even bypassing the fame of the founding fathers—including George Washington—“as the central icon of American democracy.”

America’s national culture, dominated by Northern interests, demonstrated a selective loyalty to Lincoln’s legacy by building monuments, shrines, and museums. His more general acceptance grew alongside national reconciliation efforts and sentiments. Thomas Dixon’s 1905 novel, The Clansman, and its movie version, The Birth of a Nation, released in 1915, reflected growing popularity with the Civil War and a limited acceptance of Abraham Lincoln. This movie promoted a contradiction by favoring Lincoln’s attitude toward the South, while hiding the real conflicts over slavery that Lincoln had bluntly claimed as the cause of the Civil War. This view was popular despite very strong condemnation by African American activists as well as many Union and Confederate veterans. This image of Lincoln reflected an exaggerated humility and kindness while ignoring his determination to pursue hard war and emancipation.

Historian, John Barr, wrote in his Loathing Lincoln that many southern historians, journalists and public personalities started blaming the radical Republicans and abolitionists, rather than Lincoln, for the causes of the hard war and reconstruction.

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136 Ibid.

This softer Lincoln image became much more palatable as the Centennial approached and a politically defined personality infused the new historic sites and monuments.

Less than fifty years after his assassination, Lincoln had become an important object of public memory, even in a limited fashion in areas of the former Confederacy. Though some historians have noted the reluctant nature of the commemoration, Southern leaders and Confederate veterans spoke well of Lincoln and used his death as a way to address the many losses during the Civil War. Supporters considered him humble, self-sacrificing, and self-made. He was heroic in his dealings with the challenges of the Civil War, yet human enough to inspire others to imitation.

The New York Times to call for national recognition of Lincoln’s birth anniversary in 1905. Congress ignored the various public calls for a national commission to organize and plan Lincoln’s birth Centennial. Despite federal ambivalence, the commemoration continued under state agencies, heritage groups, and major magazines. The lack of a nationally sponsored effort toward Lincoln commemoration troubled at least some of Lincoln’s devotees. An editor with the The Magazine of History, published in New York, commented that the Lincoln Centennial failed to reflect Lincoln’s real importance to his generation. He compared the 1909 Centennial to the 1832 Centennial of George Washington’s birth and found the Lincoln commemorations lacking national, emotional participation. The editor felt that his generation either “dislikes to give vent to its emotional tendencies or it does not hold Lincoln in the same degree of affection with

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139 Davis, The Image of Lincoln, 177.

140 Ibid.
which Washington at a corresponding anniversary was held.”  

This editor measured commemorative success by the level of emotional reactions as well as the numbers of attendees at events.

Despite disappointments over the lack of national participation, state and local governments and media corporations, such as the New York Times and Colliers, kept the commemoration very active. Events included statue dedications, publications, special exhibits and preservation of historic sites.

New Lincoln exhibitions opened in various locations around the country, featuring temporary shrines of Lincoln memorabilia, relics, and art. A new history museum opened at the College of the City of New York on Friday, February 12, 1909, with a special exhibit celebrating the birth of Lincoln. The exhibit included loaned artifacts such as “memorial plaques, busts, both of plaster and bronze; medals, tokens, souvenirs, campaign songs, funeral marches, biographies, manuscripts of eulogies by President Cleveland, President McKinley, and President-Elect Taft.”

New York Lincoln collector Frederick Hill Meserve supported this project with a loan of “Lincoln manuscripts” from his extensive private collection. On the 12th, the exhibit opened for an impressive twelve hours, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. On that same day, the college

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141 “How They Did It in 1832, at Washington’s Centenary,” The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries 9, no. 3 (March 1908): 115.


144 Ibid.
celebrated the Centennial with group exercises in the “Great Hall.” Being associated with a major New York school, the event attracted prominent politicians and hosted music performers from the Metropolitan Opera House.145

Instead of marking a climax of Lincoln commemoration with a sudden decline thereafter, the Centennial ignited continuing public interest in Lincoln and his life. Several historic sites and museums opened around 1910, and shared in the tourism growth experienced in the first two decades of the twentieth century.146

At the same time, national fairs and expositions became venues to bring historic sites to larger audiences. The efforts to exploit the birth cabin and the log home of the Lincoln family in Illinois came before major restoration projects and historic preservation efforts. Illinois often used Lincoln as a state image. In 1905, Illinois boosters went so far as to replicate the entire Lincoln Springfield home for the World’s Fair. The Lewis and Clark Exposition that year in Portland, Oregon hosted an international exposition, which featured custom-built exhibit halls. The Illinois delegation, through the Illinois Historical Society and the Illinois Historical Library, designed the full-sized replica to represent Illinois at this exposition. The Illinois Historical Library managed the house and staffed it with guides talking about Abraham Lincoln.147

145 “Exhibit of the City of New York,” 2.


At the dawn of the twentieth century, public museums and historic sites were just entering a time of increasing growth. There was also a budding tendency within private historical societies to develop a more public focus. Traditionally, historical societies were private groups of amateur and professional scholars making minimal use of exhibits or preserved sites and lacking connection with a vacationing public. A select group of interested parties supported historical societies. However, these societies responded to the movement to serve a wider range of audiences and began to focus energies on public programming.\footnote{Laurence Vail Coleman, \textit{The Museum in America: A Critical Study} (Washington D.C.: The American Association of Museums, 1939), 16-23. See also Coleman’s \textit{Historic House Museums} (Washington DC: The American Association of Museums, 1933).}

The Lincoln Centennial literature in 1909 showed the completion of a few Lincoln museum projects already underway, and several new sites devoted to public exhibition of Lincoln materials or preservation of Lincoln historic structures. Permanent museum growth required longer-term investments and commitments than the pageants and fairs popularized in the pre-World War I or Progressive Age. Arguably, progressive ideals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave great support to the museum and public history communities, but museum growth required greater political will.\footnote{Clifford L. Lord ed., \textit{Keepers of the Past} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 6-7.} Unfortunately, many Americans felt very ambivalent about public funding of any cultural, artistic or historic preservation activities, even those dedicated to Lincoln. Many members of the Progressive political movement favored this type of public support, but the Progressives declined after World War I. Their political course faded before public funding was considered a means to ensure historical and natural preservation.\footnote{Laurence Vail Coleman, \textit{The Museum in America: A Critical Study} (Washington D.C.: The American Association of Museums, 1939), 16-23. See also Coleman’s \textit{Historic House Museums} (Washington DC: The American Association of Museums, 1933).}
Opposition to public funding for related services including museums and historic preservation was common but not always consistent. Some expectation for public funding to support historical agencies came surprisingly early in a few parts of the United States. Some early state historical societies secured direct or indirect support from state legislatures. The Massachusetts Historical Society (1794) and Ohio Historical Society (1821) received state benefits because of their expected “public benefits” such as their role in education, record preservation, and research.151

Despite the negative reactions to public funding, many society leaders still believed that the historic sites and museums carried a valuable message. Civic leaders devoted to various reforms sought to inculcate a sense of national history or heritage, especially in new immigrants and in the expanding labor force. They considered a shared past essential to a shared loyalty to America. 152

At the turn of the twentieth century, the progressive movement in education gave museums and historic sites their greatest reason to exist. Some leading educators and museum leaders were placing gallery museums and their related historic house museums and sites into the center of new progressive education techniques. Progressive educators promoted museums as a new place for public education and enlightenment. Museum and library innovator John Cotton Dana argued that a good museum “attracts, entertains, arouses curiosity, leads to questioning and thus promotes learning.”153 Smithsonian

150 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 259-266.


administrator G. Brown Goode proudly claimed that museums “meet a need which is felt by every intelligent community and furnishes that which cannot be supplied by any other agency.” They are essential to “great centers of civilization” and by their nature are valuable for public influence because they are “more closely in touch with the masses than the university and learned society.”

Federal and state support for roads was an indirect means through which museums and historic preservation projects gained public support in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Good Roads Movement, a “second era of internal improvements” changed transportation geography throughout the United States. The movement was a series of efforts to promote public interest and government funding for all-weather surfaced roads that intersected the United States. Initiated by bicycle supporters, the Good Roads Movement exploded after automobile ownership began to increase in the early twentieth century. Better roads to support the technological innovations in the automotive industry gave tourists freedom to explore a wider range of sites. Historic preservation and local tourism took advantage of this new opportunity.

Two of these special roads became closely associated with Abraham Lincoln: the Lincoln Highway and Lincoln Central Road. In 1912, Carl G. Fisher, owner of the

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Indianapolis Motor Speedway, began seriously planning a means to encourage automobile travel across the United States. This idea began as the blandly named Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway. Fisher was able to secure support from major investors and business magnates, although Henry Ford argued that this type of project should be tax-supported, not private. Henry B. Joy of Packard Motors provided a small pledge with the suggestion to gain support of Congress. Joy also advised Fisher to name the road after his hero Abraham Lincoln. Henry Joy joined Fisher in the Lincoln Highway Association and on September 14, 1913 made a public announcement for the future coast-to-coast auto highway.\footnote{Drake Hokanson, \textit{The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America} (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988), 9-11.} The route of the Lincoln Highway expanded Lincoln tourism into Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Fort Wayne, Indiana and northern Illinois.

The Lincoln Central Road booster project in Kentucky gained public support for historic preservation and tourism. Part of the national Good Roads Movement, this named trail was originally the Bardstown and Louisville Turnpike, operated as a toll road from 1833 until 1898. A private/public cooperative venture of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the newly formed Central Lincoln Road Association made this a free, hard-surfaced route from Bardstown, Kentucky, to the Lincoln Birthplace near Hodgenville. The expanded and surfaced route increased accessibility to Lincoln’s birthplace and to other tourism sites such as Mammoth Cave and the Old Kentucky Home. This project not only appealed to the growing number of motoring enthusiasts but to patriotic nationalism and regional pride. A promotional pamphlet for the Central Lincoln Road made this claim in 1915:

\begin{quote}
This splendid enterprise should and will appeal to the patriotism of the people of the State and the communities through which the road passes. No more
fitting way can the people commemorate the life and works of Lincoln than by reclaiming and building a model road from Louisville to the Lincoln Home, Mammoth Cave and on down into Dixie.\(^{158}\)

These dedicated heritage road projects and historic preservation sites grew into an interconnected community merging in the promotion of Lincoln tourism. One of the earliest examples of this kind of collaboration began in the years before World War I and shortly after the Centennial of Lincoln’s birth. In 1913 historian, Dr. Charles Manfred Thompson of the University of Illinois published a report called *The Lincoln Way*. It was a summary of his research and that of local historians to document the 1830 route the Lincolns took from Indiana to Illinois.\(^{159}\)

Thompson augmented his initial report in 1915 with more complete documentation of the historic routes, and with the expectation that researchers in Indiana and Kentucky would respond with related projects in their states. The long-range vision of Thompson and his booster committee was to have the states connect all their “Lincoln Ways” on a national pilgrimage trail.\(^{160}\) Repeated comments in guidebooks and promotional literature assumed a public value of Lincoln’s legacy for Americans. It contained the messages of endurance, patriotism, and hope of success communicated tangibly at each site, making Lincoln the great symbol for a defined idea of the American Dream.

\(^{158}\) Central Lincoln Road to the Lincoln Home Park via Bardstown. (Bardstown, KY: Bardstown Commercial Club, 1915).

\(^{159}\) “Historical Activities in the Old Northwest and Eastern Canada, 1913-1914,” *The Mississippi Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (June 1914): 91.

With the public’s greater access to personal travel, as opposed to point-to-point railroad service, historic preservation projects increased dramatically to meet the travel interests. The beginnings of public museums, including the Lincoln museums of this period, developed from a wide variety of public heritage activities sponsored by communities and progressive leaders promoting a shared heritage.

One of the most innovative proposals for any type of museum arose from the well-known Unitarian minister Jenkin Lloyd Jones’s frustration with local and state ambivalence for caring for Lincoln’s birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. He wrote a short article, originally published in 1904 in *Unity Magazine*, which was reprinted for distribution at the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial service in February 1917.\(^{161}\) Jones wrote a brief outline for a living history museum and research center at Hodgenville. Jones expected this site to become the national Lincoln memorial. He argued that the building of such a project was national in scope, not local or regional, because Lincoln was important to everyone. However, the funding should come from the nickels of every schoolchild in the nation, a “nickel a child, from Florida to Oregon.”\(^{162}\) What he recommended was a complete living history experience; staffing the birth cabin with costumed guides, serving guests period food. Jenkins described restored forests and the preservation of historic landscapes including plants, fences, and old breeds of cattle. He envisioned concession stands and souvenirs “produced by diligent hand of the women who are still to be found by the thousands in the mountain regions and back woods of


\(^{162}\) Ibid., 5.
Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas.” Museum facilities named after Lincoln’s parents would exhibit pioneer collections focusing on the roles of both genders. The facility would also house a research library and classrooms. A second building Jenkins described was even more progressive—a museum devoted exclusively to the experience and material culture of African Americans. He wanted their American experience “told from the earliest slave ships, up to the Emancipation Proclamation and beyond.”

Jones’s very forward looking and expensive ideas were not fulfilled, but they were not entirely lost either, because his son Richard Lloyd Jones convinced his employer at Collier’s Weekly to purchase the farm as a commemoration for Lincoln. Richard Lloyd Jones then helped form the Lincoln Farm Association in 1906 that planned and fundraised for the development of a shrine at the Birthplace. The Hodgenville community was also slowly developing its own commemoration, which included a nationally recognized statue; however, the Birthplace at the Sinking Springs Farm was consistently more popular.

The Birthplace was popular, in part because the historic site possessed an iconic log house. In Lincoln’s lifetime, the log cabin or house symbolized the frontier experiences voters expected of their leaders, a symbol of struggle and poverty endured. By the turn of the twentieth century, it had developed into a mythic image reflecting potential greatness. The log cabin and the image of the hardworking poor, claimed

163 Jones, A Neglected Shrine, 4.
164 Ibid., 5.
166 Ibid., 30.
historian John Bodnar, gave the Lincoln image the ability to unify a divided country long after the Civil War. His image seemed to “mediate the interests of ordinary people in pioneers and the interests of cultural leaders in national loyalty.” Instead of classical motifs, the frontier image of log structures provided this physical expression of Lincoln and his America. The logs became a type of relic of American identity. Even portions of log houses such as the alleged Lincoln birth cabin were saved as mementos of Abraham Lincoln and his historic legacy.

Local and national promoters salvaged Lincoln’s birthplace and other log structures for promotional use in commemorating Lincoln, in accordance with selected messages. The early preservation of Lincoln sites at the turn of the twentieth century focused on a series of log buildings and pioneer sites reflecting on Lincoln’s frontier heritage. The first of these was the Lincoln Birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. This site was a true blending of marble shrine and museum. The fact that the original Lincoln home was long missing by the 1860 election did not stop some entrepreneurs from recycling a cabin and claiming its authenticity at circuses and public shows across the nation. The new owner, Robert Collier, was unlike the past owner because he was more interested in honoring the slain president’s memory than in making money. (Figure 9) Unlike at other Lincoln sites, Robert Collier was able to secure an impressive list of supporters to serve on the Association’s Board of Directors.168

167 John Bodnar, Remaking America, 35.

This board maintained a small minimum donation to encourage widespread public support. Major politicians came for miles to the laying of the cornerstone to the monument. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and President Theodore Roosevelt were prominent at this major event. At the dedication speech, President Roosevelt pointed out the value of the log cabin to the memory of Lincoln. “The log cabin in which Lincoln was born, and which originally stood on the very spot where the Memorial is now being erected, will be housed within these granite walls, to be kept for all time as a national relic.”

Current scholars dealing with this site, including National Park historians, reject any actual connection between this cabin in the Lincoln Memorial and the Lincoln family’s residency at Hodgenville. There was serious conflict over the cabin’s

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authenticity even at the time of its installation. Despite this drawback, once community boosters and supporters seriously began to plan for a site to commemorate Lincoln’s centennial, the Lincoln Farm Association insisted the Lincoln “birth cabin” be installed in the Memorial designed by John Russell Pope.

This same cabin that the entrepreneur Alfred Dennett had attempted to exploit across the nation in the 1890s was to be the central artifact of the memorial building. Just prior to installation, it was discovered by the architect to be too large to fit in the exhibit space, so it was cut down in size. Remnants of this cabin are found in many private and public collections. (See Figure 10)

![Figure 10. Portion of alleged birth cabin cut to allow the cabin to fit in the monument (ALLM).](image)

Although Robert Collier was more selfless in the activity, he was no better than Dennett at judging historical accuracy or showing an interest in ensuring his monument had real relics. Prior to the monument’s cornerstone dedication, the Lincoln Farm Association ordered an investigation as to the logs’ authenticity. The reports came back skeptical about the logs’ history. Collier refused to change his mind. He retorted to a reporter that:
Many more witnesses could be testifying substantially to the facts, but this would be merely cumulative and we close the testimony with the submission of the facts to the public, believing that the American people will not be so unreasonable or critical as to demand more conclusive evidence of the birthplace of this great American.¹⁷⁰

At the cornerstone ceremony, the Lincoln Farm Association had the roaming cabin reassembled on the shrine’s undeveloped grounds. It was the focal point for the patriotic messages for the all the political dignitaries. Years later Louis Warren, the well-known Lincoln specialist at the Lincoln Life Company, wrote a booklet for the park and defended the log structure’s validity:

There are many valuable relics associated with Abraham Lincoln which have been appraised as priceless. None of them, however, can be compared with the log cabin in which Lincoln was born. Its location in the original environment gives it a historical setting, which allows one to appreciate the conditions surrounding the family of Thomas Lincoln at the time of Abraham Lincoln’s birth.¹⁷¹

Warren based much of his research career on Lincoln’s early years and had developed a national reputation in this field. He continued to narrate a story of the cabin’s provenance from the time of the Lincolns through its use as a circus display by Alfred Dennett. The pioneer image grew to include the private lodges and shops of built logs to maintain the rustic symbolism of the frontier. Special souvenirs, made locally, supported this pioneer image and profited the local gift shops. (See Figure 11)


Many supporters considered that the great value of the Lincoln birthplace was the emotional reunion it provided veterans with their former enemies. Public addresses at various dedications often assumed that the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky felt honored to host this memorial to Lincoln’s birth near Hodgenville at the birthplace.\textsuperscript{172}

On September 4, 1916, just prior to the United States’ entry into the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson formally took possession Lincoln birthplace and memorial. The federal government managed it through the War Department, like several battlefield sites preserved from the Civil War. All the historic sites preserved by the War Department would eventually become a special part of the National Park Service in the 1930s. President Wilson announced, “No more significant memorial could have been presented to the Nation than this.”\textsuperscript{173} This significant event helped start federal support

for historic sites beyond the few battlefields in federal care. Lincoln and the Civil War provided the only commemoration that could overcome the national aversion to public support for history.

The next regular museum or historic site directly focused on the early family history and Lincoln’s parentage. This site appeared in Central Kentucky, where the Lincoln family had resided since the 1780s. Researchers and community boosters revived the Marriage Cabin of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln from oblivion in 1911. Older local residents claimed to remember Tom Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. The log house’s first public recognition came in 1874, when former schoolteacher Mrs. C. S. Vewter published a letter stating, “In the year 1859, I went to Springfield, KY, to teach and was in that neighborhood when we received notice of the nomination for the Presidency. . . . A farmer remarked that he should not be surprised if he were not the son of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, who were married at the home of Uncle Frank Berry.” By 1911, the Berry family had died out leaving a decaying log house. The new owners of the property and a member of the Harrodsburg Historical Society took an interest in the house and saved it in a way many log houses were saved; it was disassembled and moved to property owned by the Historical Society. The cabin and marriage bonds were very important in that they countered the often-repeated slur by Democrats that Lincoln was

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born out of wedlock.\textsuperscript{175} In 1913 community boosters found the cabin a new home on the grounds of “Old Fort Hill” in Harrodsburg, Kentucky (Figure 12).

Lincoln’s birthplace shrine, and later the sites of his childhood in Kentucky and his boyhood in Indiana gained some fame; but an even greater public interest was shown in his first adult home at the failed village of New Salem, Illinois. The recreation of an entire early nineteenth-century community launched the public and professional imaginations. It changed both the ways in which scholars viewed Lincoln and the degree to which outdoor museums could influence public views of history. This site was the second outdoor museum in the United States and the first to attempt to recreate an actual community. This gave many visitors their first experience of the illusion of time travel.

New Salem, Lincoln’s first home after leaving his family, had been long abandoned by residents before the 1860s.\textsuperscript{176} This short-lived commercial center was

\textsuperscript{175} Coleman, “A Preacher and a Shrine,” 7-8.

\textsuperscript{176} Peterson, \textit{Lincoln in American Memory}, 266.
platted in 1829 and abandoned by 1847. Lincoln lived there between 1831 and 1837, during a boom period. Starting in 1906 with support from William Randolph Hearst, the Old Salem Chautauqua League acquired the property formerly occupied by New Salem for future preservation. The centennial of Lincoln’s birth was approaching fast and its developers hoped this could be a place to commemorate Lincoln’s rise to his early fame. The village had consisted of log buildings and it qualified as a pioneer site for Illinois. It could feature the most popular components to attract pilgrims and early tourists from Chicago. Most importantly, it could provide a historic location for pageants featuring the life of Lincoln. In 1918 Thomas P. Reep, who became the principle researcher, wrote a brief history in a promotional letter to a Lincoln collector describing the purpose for reconstructing the whole village. He was pleased with their pageant and the visitors who came to this rural place in Illinois. Reep wrote that:

…many people from the East principally, came every year to visit this spot and to stand where Lincoln had spent the formative years of his life, and came away disappointed, because there was nothing there from which they could gain any idea of the old town and its [environments]. To remedy this, The Old Salem Lincoln League was organized, incorporated, and at once set about marking the sites of the different buildings and the roads and streets. Then their vision grew and it appeared to them that the greatest monument that could be built.

Reep’s plans followed common public entertainment interests of the early twentieth century, which included a growing interest in seeing other places and times in moving pictures. Significantly, this early event introduced participation in a form of public historic reenactments that eventually evolved into living history. To avoid claims

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177 Thomas P. Reep to John W. Starr. 12 September1918, ALLM.

of exaggerating this position, it is necessary to note that the historic village at the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts, started using costumed guides a few years before New Salem’s 1917 pageant.\textsuperscript{179} However, New Salem’s large attendance exposed its unique programming to tens of thousands of visitors, beginning in 1917.

Lincoln’s New Salem began as a location to provide an authentic backdrop for historical pageants, but it did not become a park until 1919. The setting was used for generations of programs, guidebook photos, and movies depicting major events in Lincoln’s life during his six years as a young resident. Perhaps, more than any other historic site, New Salem promoted this frontier Lincoln and exposed many American visitors to an early form of living history.

In conjunction with these preserved locations, public interest in Lincoln led to a large number of museum galleries, libraries, and archives. The major collections accumulated during the late nineteenth-century found homes in urban and rural museums and historical societies in the early twentieth century. Such museums and libraries as the Chicago Historical Society, Library of Congress, Illinois Historical Society, Lincoln Life Insurance Company Foundation at Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Huntington Library in Los Angeles and at a scattering of Universities and public libraries became regional centers of Lincoln research. These institutions became the research centers for academic and amateur historians. Their larger, more accessible collections attracted professional scholars to attempt a study of Abraham Lincoln.

Several Lincoln museums, collections and museums stretched the concept of Lincolnland beyond the geographical regions where Lincoln lived. One small university

established a research library focusing on Lincoln and the Civil War within a former Confederate state. Founded in 1897 through efforts of retired general and reformer Oliver Otis Howard, Lincoln Memorial University of Harrogate, Tennessee, developed a major research collection that later became a museum. The organizing documents of the University included a mandated a “Lincoln Collection in the future.” Its location in the unionist section of East Tennessee was Howard’s reconciliationist response to the historic pro-unionism of the upland south and his claim of President Lincoln’s request to return to the region and “do the justice they deserve.” Lincoln Memorial University, along with similar collections in areas outside Lincolnland, documents the extent of Lincoln’s image.

Other museums also accumulated artifacts scattered by collectors of the previous century. In 1914, for example, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania inherited a major collection of objects associated with Lincoln’s life. A newspaper reporter gushed about this new public collection:

What is regarded as one of the most important collations of relics associated with Abraham Lincoln has just been presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. . . . Now that the wonderful collection of Lincolnia of the late Major William H. Lambert has been dispersed, the Vanuxem-Potter collection is said to be one of the largest and most important in private hands.

Nearly every newspaper article introducing a newly exhibited, private Lincoln collection claimed that it was one of the largest private Lincoln collections. Somehow, each collection earned the superlative of the largest Lincoln collection in private hands.

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181 Ibid., 54; Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 143.

The private nature and competitiveness of early collectors consistently appeared in their exaggerated descriptions.

The private management of the Lincoln museums continued to provide messages about Lincoln based mostly on public expectations. The Civil War regions did not completely fade away, but Lincoln became more accepted as the War faded into a more distant past. Early biographers had set the tone for the messages and the collectors established the pattern and distribution of original collections and research libraries. At the leading edge of the early American public museum movement, Lincoln sites provide insights into the development of that movement. Pilgrims became tourists, pageants started to become living history programs, special patriotic displays became museums, and shrines became historic house museums.
CHAPTER IV
GROWTH AND SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL LINCOLNLAND, 1920–1945

Lincoln-based museums and historic sites throughout the United States witnessed their largest growth during the twenty-five years after the First World War.¹⁸³ (See Appendix B.) There would be other ages of growth; but these years between the early 1920s and the end of the Second World War would influence the entire American museum community, not only with new numbers but also with new forms of operations and funding. Sites dedicated to Lincoln often led the way in becoming modern professional museums characterized by strong research facilities and collaborative programming.

Several national factors encouraged growth in Lincoln museums as well as in historic preservation and museums in general. The first major influence in the period from the 1920s through 1945 was expanded federal and state support for all forms of heritage and cultural sites and collections. This public support attended expectations of a new professionalization in museums and historic preservation. Second, America experienced an expansion in tourism as automobile ownership increased. Local entrepreneurs saw the chance for profit and took advantage of the increasing number of visitors by meeting their travel needs for food and lodging as well as attractions.¹⁸⁴ Third, tourism, especially heritage tourism, served a social function many political and

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¹⁸³ See Appendix B. There were 21 Lincoln sites/museums founded during the years of this chapter, the greatest number of new Lincoln sites ever within a 25-year period. See also Marjorie Schwarzer, Riches, Rivals and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2006).

social leaders envisioned in the post First World War years: the teaching of civics and patriotism by the use of the past. The last sections of this chapter illustrate how several new or rebuilt Lincoln sites and museums established during this period represented these new social, economic and political conditions.

This age witnessed changes in state and federal policies concerning public funding of cultural and arts organizations and functions. The National Park Service expanded into historic preservation and introduced a professionalization of historic sites. Professionals from other fields including architecture and anthropology began working at historic sites, bringing their professional practices with them. Some academic historians became public historians through National Park Service (NPS) work. The NPS provided new training in the skills of historic preservation, public exhibits and presentation to non-academic audiences. Once potential public funding became available through state and federal sources, private museums began to emulate NPS standards in historic preservation and research to compete for these funds.

Prior to 1920, Progressives had espoused a political position that favored public monetary support for museums and historic preservation. This view was represented in both major parties by the examples of Theodore Roosevelt for the Republicans and Woodrow Wilson for the Democrats. At last, the calls for support began to bear results leading to action.

The federal government experienced and supported an unprecedented expansion of museums starting before the 1930s. Most often, the federal government used indirect funding through agencies that managed grants to museum communities, and direct support for a special category of museum, a national historic park or site. During the
Great Depression, voters increasingly viewed the poor condition of historic sites as a major national crisis requiring federal interference. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, the administration began to use national heritage to bring encouragement in the midst of the Depression. The progressive reform efforts from the previous generation provided a precedent for managing current hardships. According to sociologist Barry Schwartz, “The Progressive Era, from which Lincoln emerged as a national idol, provided a basis for New Deal reforms.” Progressive leaders saw Lincoln as a nationalist who supported federal level improvements for the good of all Americans.

Some evidence for Lincoln’s influence in New Deal reforms comes from the use of Lincoln’s name in the Roosevelt administration. Historian Michael Kammen noticed that many Americans in the 1930s had separated party politics from many portions of American history and allowed Lincoln to stand in for Democratic policies. The Democratic leadership deliberately associated Lincoln’s legacy with their partisan agendas thereby “depoliticizing American party history” for many Americans, 186 This was not really a depoliticizing of Lincoln but an abduction of Lincoln’s image and legacy for an opposing party. Before World War II, many people had forgotten what party Lincoln belonged to and associated all of America’s historic leadership with their own party or group. Franklin D. Roosevelt made an address at Gettysburg for the 75th Anniversary and dedication of the Eternal Light Peace Memorial. At the Lincoln


Birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky, boosters used Lincoln for the same bipartisan commemoration.\textsuperscript{187}

The federal government under the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration finally added the much-sought-after federal funding for historic preservation and related projects such as highway markers. The several new Lincoln sites during this era, and improvements to existing ones, came at the optimum cultural time to take advantage of all these agencies in promoting heritage tourism. The larger number of tourists attending Lincoln and Civil War commemorations supported the expanding number of historic sites and museums.

Federal funding also provided essential support for the development of specialized skills merging historical research and public communication needed at historic sites and museums. Under New Deal programs, many community-level historic preservation projects had access to professional talent not available without outside funding sources. The Roosevelt administration’s jobs programs provided work for artists, writers, historians, and related skilled workers that provided great benefit to many museums and historic preservation projects. Through the Great Depression skilled workers, almost as much as unskilled, needed outside support to remain employed in their professions. New museums at this time benefited greatly from federal and community works programs.\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{187} Kammen, \textit{Mystic Chords of Memory}, 452.

\textsuperscript{188} William F. McDonald, \textit{Federal Relief Administration and the Arts} (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 417.
Very important to many projects was the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), which provided labor for all the major parks and outdoor museums, including Lincoln’s New Salem, Lincoln Pioneer Village, and Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. This program supported young unemployed men throughout the nation, teaching skills and providing temporary financial support. They built roads and visitor support facilities, fought forest fires and planted trees in deforested areas.

Along with a growing interest in a history for the public and the increase in government funding for public museums, a new profession with specialized knowledge began to take shape. From 1908 to the mid-1930s, the number of universities providing some courses in museum studies grew from one to seventeen.

The most dominant museum professionalization influence in managing Lincoln sites came in time from the National Park Service. The National Park System (NPS) boasted of a distant connection to the late President. President Lincoln signed the first park into existence before the park system even existed. In 1864, Lincoln signed an act giving a large tract of land encompassing the Yosemite Valley and the Big Tree Grove to California for public recreational use. The federal government repeated this executive pattern in 1916 to establish the NPS. The NPS acquired and managed a large number of historic sites in the 1930s, beginning with the George Washington National Birthplace


Monument and Colonial National Monument,\textsuperscript{193} and including several battlefield sites formerly belonging to the War Department.\textsuperscript{194}

The NPS would not start working with Lincoln sites until after the 1933 reorganization of the government and the merger of all battlefield and historic sites.\textsuperscript{195} In June of 1933, President Roosevelt’s executive order approved the move of all historic parks managed by the federal government through the War Department and Forestry Service to the National Park Service.\textsuperscript{196} The War Department had managed these sites minimally through their upkeep maintenance and simple tourist facilities. Under National Park Service management, the parks grew in preservation, historic reconstruction, and heritage interpretation activities. Due to their size and the national significance of the properties involved in the National Park Service, operational practices and historical training influenced the nation’s private museum practices.

The NPS’s techniques of museum education adopted a special definition for the term “interpretation” to refer to any educational presentation or service provided to visitors. A very early historian hired for the park service exemplified the special role of interpretation in the NPS program. In 1936, B. Floyd Flickinger presented the Park’s central priorities:

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If no other activities were ever contemplated or attempted, our first obligation, in accepting the custody of an historic site is preservation. However, our program considers preservation as only a means to an end. The second phase is physical development. . . . The third and most important phase is interpretation, and preservation and development are valuable in proportion to their contribution to this phase.\footnote{B. Floyd Flickinger, quoted in Barry Mackintosh, “National Park Service Moves”, 52.}

Over time, this hierarchy of purposes of historic sites would begin influencing the growing number of Lincoln sites around the country.

During the 1920s, Americans became better able to take advantage of the growth and improvements in historic sites. They increasingly adopted automobiles over railroads for personal travel, making modern tourism possible for the middle class. While railroads had begun the democratization of vacation travel, the family car brought this component of the American Dream to fruition. With its accompanying infrastructure of support facilities, such as tourist lodging and road systems, it would be very difficult to overestimate the auto’s impact on American tourism. All forms of heritage tourism owed much of their expansion to the automobile’s popularity and its ability to allow easier access to rural museums and historic sites. Rail-based tourism remained a viable choice for travel, but automobile tourism rapidly supplanted it.

Automobiles allowed self-directed touring much more than trains.\footnote{Thomas Weiss, “Tourism in America Before World War II,” \textit{The Journal of Economic History} 64, no. 2 (June 2004): 312, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3874776.pdf?acceptTC=true.} The ability to travel on personal time rather than with crowds on a public schedule was the repeated supporting argument for the use of a family auto over public transportation. The flexibility of auto traffic and the national investments to support this type of traveler allowed ambitious vacationers to access formerly isolated rural historic sites.
By 1921, there were nine million automobiles on American roads. Public demand for better roads impelled federal action in road construction and maintenance. Even rural areas like LaRue County, Kentucky (Lincoln’s birthplace) experienced greatly increased numbers of tourists. Technological improvements in automobile production allowed more rural and middle-class families to purchase an automobile and to travel longer distances. The vast expansion of industrial jobs created new sources of income and leisure time not available to traditional agricultural workers. Lincoln commemoration continued its boom and overlapped with the expansion of autos and the growth of an urban middle class.199

Heritage tourism represented a more active endeavor than traditional resorts, and allowed opportunities for local businesses to realize profits from distant visitors. Instead of staying at one campground or hotel, heritage tourists moved from place to place, seeking and participating in new experiences. Tourists spawned a specialized industry that evolved to meet their growing numbers and expectations.200 Starting in 1921, public auto camps began replacing casual camping along roads. The camps contained services focused on auto travel and families.201 Some communities hosted visitors in licensed private homes, and by the 1930s tourist cabins and motels began to appear near major


201 Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 79-83.
parks and on major roads. Builders designed these institutions for automobile access with a focus on keeping the visitors’ cars near where they were sleeping.\textsuperscript{202}

Boosters and entrepreneurs in those communities with historic sites, parks and museums, started other businesses catering to mobile tourists. Hotels traditionally did not cater to families, but other agencies developed that did. The hotel restaurant gave way to more public diners and cafes associated with historic and natural sites and highways. Auto camps allowed the travelers to provide for themselves and cook outdoors.\textsuperscript{203}

Civil War battlefields and Lincoln sites were prime players in the new growth of heritage tourism after 1920. Increased ease of access strongly affected Lincoln tourism, since many of the sites associated with Lincoln’s young years were located well away from traditional urban transportation. Beyond the flexibility promoted in automobile and highway literature, heritage tourism represented the revival of a pioneer spirit. The automobile was a means to revive the person’s independent spirit; Marguerite Shaffer writes that some travel promoters even proudly claimed that automobile tourists became better Americans.\textsuperscript{204}

The tourism expressions “Land of Lincoln” and “Lincolnland” continued evolving and expanding during these years as marketing terms to promote heritage tourism focusing on Abraham Lincoln and his family and associates. Lincoln boosters, historians, and regional entrepreneurs in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois marketed their regions as having had a major influence on Abraham Lincoln’s life and values. The

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\textsuperscript{202} Belasco, Americans on the Road, 151-155.
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\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 129-140.
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\textsuperscript{204} Marguerite S. Shaffer, See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2001), 153.
\end{flushright}
different stories or messages highlighting that portion of Lincolnland graced highway
signs, tourism guidebooks, highway maps, and other promotional literature. Anything
related to Abraham Lincoln had potential to be a national attraction and Lincoln could
boost the local economy.

The heritage route publications constituted a special genre of Lincoln literature,
the guidebook. In the Lincoln Highway *Official Road Guide*, the editors published
advertisements for auto garages, filling stations, and hotels all along the route.\textsuperscript{205} The
guidebooks form a connection with Lincoln research, popular messages about Lincoln,
and historic preservation. Guidebooks to Lincoln sites were often prepared by an
“authority” such as Louis Warren of the Lincoln Foundation in Fort Wayne,\textsuperscript{206} or one of
the major writers such as Benjamin P. Thomas.\textsuperscript{207} These books and pamphlets not only
provided directions to various Lincoln sites, they provided the messages desired for
tourist audiences. The abundance of log images directly supported the mythic poverty of
Lincoln’s birth. His humble origin contrasted with Lincoln’s impressive life achievement.
The greater the status distinction between the log cabin and the White House the better.
In a cross section of guidebooks from the teens through the mid-twentieth century,
illustrations of this log cabin relic image dominated Lincoln sites. Key themes included
Lincoln’s frontier background, speaking skills, humility, and his self-made image. These
books provided a bridge between visitors and the historical sites and museums. The
guidebooks catered to the messages desired by the visitors. From decade to decade, they

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{207} Benjamin P. Thomas, *Lincoln’s New Salem* (Springfield, IL: The Abraham Lincoln Association, 1934).
\end{itemize}
remained consistent, and were narrative texts to all of Lincolnland. The four main regions of Lincolnland had evolved with particular stories and claims to being the most significant in forming President Lincoln’s personality or successes. These local stories were profitable for regional entrepreneurs. Each region had primary and secondary sites and interconnecting heritage routes that added to the national story of Abraham Lincoln. That overarching expectation of profit was an example of the American dream of self-improvement. (See figure 13)

![Figure 13. Postcard titled "Log Cabin to the White House." (ALLM)](image)

Sites of interest were patriotic and historic and provided deep meanings. Indeed, the behavior of tourists from the early twentieth century strongly resembled that of religious pilgrims. Several observers have noted the similarities between ancient religious pilgrimages and modern heritage tourism. Boy Scouts and other private groups hosted a special Lincoln Pilgrimage badge for their members to earn which continues to the present. Many tourists and guidebooks used religious language to express the
experience at the sites of American history. Family and group road trips to Lincoln or other patriotic sites were very similar to ancient pilgrimages to religious shrines.208

The types of messages remained unchanged from the late nineteenth century: the log cabin and the self-made man rising to success from poverty continued to dominate the museums’ interpretative themes. Historic sites and exhibits often minimized controversial presidential policies and partisan conflicts. Museums were purveyors of patriotism and supporters saw them as places of learning for all citizens.

American patriotism also referenced the natural sites as part of our national heritage. Motivations for tourists visiting these historic and natural sites went beyond economic promotion. It was a deep-seated reverence for American history and national heroes that enticed some people onto secular pilgrimages, as seen in previous chapters. Tourists planned experiences that would instill appreciation for a shared national past or a progressive view of the past that argued for a consistent improvement toward greater freedoms. The quasi-religious nature of these excursions revealed itself in the promotional literature, which consistently used the word “pilgrim” for “tourist” and “relic” for “artifact.” Historian Herbert Butterfield labeled this reverent view of the past “whig history”. This type of historical study consciously or unconsciously excluded any “troublesome element in the complexity” of historical study.209 “Whig historians” believed the past must always have clear lessons for current issues. With Abraham

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Lincoln as the content, this whiggish attitude resulted in an often-repeated expression “What would Lincoln do?”

The politically ambitious Abraham Lincoln had been his own marketing specialist in his early career, and he personally believed in the ideal of the “self-made man.” Since voter expectations in antebellum America were not tolerant of political elitism, candidates downplayed advantaged status where it did occur. The politically astute Lincoln created a careful image of his impoverished childhood in the backcountry, an image reinforced by many early biographers. Only later biographers noted that Lincoln’s rare and powerful ambition and talent had something to do with his success. Although Lincoln’s rise to the presidency was not a miraculous accident of fate, early interpretations of Lincoln ignored his professional successes in Springfield and hard-won personal education. Popular movies such as *The Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) continued to promote a very false, passive image popular throughout the early to mid-twentieth century.

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210 See a contemporary example in the political pamphlet by Lester P. Barlow, *What Would Lincoln Do?: A Call for Political Revolution Through the Ballot* (n.p.: Non-partisan League Publishing Company, 1931). This is one of many examples of this expression appearing in various political speeches throughout the early years of the twentieth-century.


The most prominently advertised location for Lincolnland was within central Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln spent most of his adult years and where he developed his political base. In the early 1930s, the Illinois state government initiated a very strong tourism marketing campaign to make Illinois “The Lincoln Country.” Governor Henry Horner’s support for Lincoln tourism was evident in state road maps, guidebooks, and a series of state park brochures. All the state marketing items seemed to have some focus on Lincoln.

Between 1928 and 1938, the state government at Springfield, Illinois, provided three editions of a small guidebook for visitors to the capital city. Titled *Historic Places in Springfield*, the “handbook for tourists” highlighted twenty sites in town, including many connected with Abraham Lincoln. The first edition provided a miniature city directory of businesses supporting traveling visitors including motels, hotels, restaurants, and filling stations. Several examples in the archives at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum bear the stamp of H. W. Fay, custodian of the Lincoln Tomb, and his gallery or local shops in Springfield likely distributed them. (See Figure 14) Large numbers of brochures and guidebooks from 1921 through the early 1940s gave credit to H. W. Fay for photographs and images of Lincoln objects.

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Illinois was the first place boosters promoted the image of Lincoln through historic exhibits and related services. Illinois’s Lincolnland, which encompassed the city of Springfield, the old Illinois 8th Circuit Court District, New Salem, and scattered historic sites and buildings, grew into a targeted tourism region from the 1930s on. Brochures and road maps included accompanying souvenir or novelty maps to generate anticipation to visit every highlighted point on a Lincoln trail. These well-illustrated travel guides pointed the way to “Lincoln shrines” along arranged highways and introduced interpretative themes that the visitor might expect at the sites promoted. During the 1930s and 1940s, the state began installing historic highway markers networking with the many Illinois travel brochures distributed around the nation.
By 1920, there were several established Lincoln sites and museums in Springfield and in the surrounding counties (See figure 15). Despite the importance of Springfield as Lincoln’s home and the place where he built his national political career, an even more venerated setting was a historic site about twelve miles away where a young Abraham Lincoln spent his first six years on his own. Lincoln’s New Salem State Park, established earlier in the century, grew much larger in the 1930s with state and federal support and new efforts at professional research. New Salem was important to the public because it represented the mythic image of the American frontier, and Lincoln’s connection with that myth.

A large guidebook titled *In the Lincoln Country* by Rexford Newcomb took substantial space to guide visitors through New Salem in 1928. Newcomb directed drivers from Springfield to “Old Salem State Park” along an “oiled road.” The only buildings restored at that time were the Offutt Store, Rutledge Tavern, and Onstott Cooper Shop. Drivers parked at the Stone Museum to see relics of Lincoln’s life and the nearby-restored buildings. Newcomb took great care to point out that the Offutt Store was “restored on its original site” and to indicate which other items were original from Lincoln’s time.

From the time New Salem first opened as a park, organizers such as Thomas P. Reep had planned to reconstruct the entire village to its 1830s appearance. The first five buildings used in the Illinois Bicentennial pageant were only a beginning.

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218 Ibid., 92.

219 Thomas P. Reep to John W. Starr Jr., 12 September 1918, (ALLM).
state boosters rebuilt the entire Lincoln’s New Salem Park in the 1930s as part of the federally supported preservations programs. Many guidebooks, brochures, and news accounts after the early 1930s mentioned the support from the state and federal governments as the means by which this large reconstruction could take place. Special reference was common during the latter 1930s when the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) worked at the park. In November 1932, the outgoing Illinois Governor Emmerson (See Figure 16) commemorated the cornerstone dedication of the reconstructed Lincoln-Berry store. Emmerson’s successor, Governor Horner, also a Lincoln researcher and collector, increased public support for this reconstruction.220

![Figure 16. Reconstruction of Lincoln-Berry Store at Lincoln's New Salem State Park. (Author's photograph)](image)

Although this was a major move forward in outdoor museums, substantial local political issues and timing hampered the research and reconstruction.221 Several local

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histories of the early 1930s show that New Salem’s reconstruction activities generated disputes among the state engineers, architects and local historians. Later archaeologists have exposed these past conflicts as centering on the actual location of the Rutledge Tavern. Early twentieth-century local historian Thomas P. Reep and several former residents disagreed over the tavern’s location with other former New Salem witnesses and Illinois state officials. This caused errors in the survey of the reconstruction site at its very start.222 Joseph Booton with the State Architect’s Office was responsible for managing the project: he failed to use archaeological evidence correctly and was unable to manage the conflicts with the local historians. Archaeologist and researcher Robert Mazrim noted that Booton did not have accessible studies in vernacular architecture available to him, nor enough time to sort out the differences in local memory. Political expectations and conflicts in local memory damaged the accuracy of the reconstruction.223

New Salem, because of its importance to interpreting Lincoln in the early to mid-twentieth century, also influenced the museum field and historic interpretation. This was the second reconstructed community in the United States and a very early effort at a precursor to living history interpretation. Actors from the community performed plays and pageants at New Salem as early as 1917. Carl Sandburg’s best-selling history, Lincoln: The Prairie Years, the proliferation of guidebooks, and the use of reproductions of New Salem as a setting in two major movies, exposed this site to millions of actual and

222 Robert Mazrim, The Sangamo Frontier: History and Archaeology in the Shadow of Lincoln (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 309-315. This information came from a review of the 1930s archaeological excavation, in conjunction with a second excavation in 1997, made just prior to the current reconstruction.

223 Ibid., 181.
potential visitors by mid-twentieth century, thereby coloring Lincoln’s early world to look like an idyllic society of hard working, law-abiding farmers. 224

Meanwhile, in Indiana, the belated desire to promote Lincoln tourism through the image of the pioneer mother came in the mid-1920s. According to Indiana historians, it became politically convenient to embrace a wholesome Lincoln image by preserving Nancy Hanks Lincoln’s grave as a physical reminder of his family. Ironically, desperate politicians seeking to distance themselves from sordid connections finally embraced this wholesome image in enthusiastic support. The Ku Klux Klan, strengthened during the post-World War I age, held a very dominant position in Indiana state government until it was broken by corruption charges. Politicians insisted that Nancy Hanks’ burial site should emphasize the ideals of motherhood, so that they as supporters could distance themselves from the Klan scandal. This position was in conflict with the theme posited by the Indiana Lincoln Union, who wished to emphasize the Hoosier environment as the main source of Lincoln’s greatness. A third group sought a more national and traditional biographical view that would simply honor the pioneer mother of a great individual. 225

Indiana’s governor apparently used the promotion of the state’s Lincoln heritage to help maintain his public image. 226 Governor Ed Jackson’s 1927 Lincoln Birthday Proclamation focused on the image of the “grief-stricken boy and his pioneer mother

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224 Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, 321. The movies were Abe Lincoln in Illinois, and Young Mr. Lincoln. The actual filming was not at Lincoln’s New Salem State Park, but at a mock-up set built to resemble the site.


226 Erekson, Everyone’s History, 106-133;
Nancy Hanks.” In asking for support, he said, “To Indiana belongs the privilege of caring for the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. It is fitting that we should dedicate ourselves to the duty of erecting on the grounds where she lived and died a monument of our appreciation.” Emphasizing the image of “pioneer mother” Nancy Lincoln, allowed the state history boosters to commemorate motherhood and virtue to a public deeply concerned over these issues in their society.

The Southwestern Indiana Historical Society unified research on rural Indiana, especially Lincoln’s frontier life there. Through its best-known project, Lincoln Inquiry, the Society aggressively promoted Indiana’s importance in the Lincoln story and the Indiana frontier’s importance in Lincoln’s personal development. As opposed to being the forgotten years, the Society argued that Lincoln’s years in Indiana were instead his most formative years. The Society’s president John Iglehart consulted scholar Frederick Jackson Turner regarding ways to integrate his famous frontier thesis into the study of Lincoln’s life in early Indiana.

Architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. produced the first plan for a Lincoln shrine that included facilities for parking autos and semi-formal gardens focusing on the Nancy Hanks gravesite. The plan included “recreation of the native forest and undergrowth that

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228 Jackson, *Lincoln Birthday Proclamation*.


230 Ibid., 3-5.

231 Ibid., 27.
surrounded the sites during the fourteen years (1816-1830) that Lincoln lived there.”

The cabin site, which had been located earlier, was preserved and marked with a memorial wall. The visitor area had parking and services along with a memorial hall built in the 1930s with help from the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). As at many other Lincoln and other heritage sites, the labor of the CCC promoted patriotic American preservation efforts. Once the park held formalized memorial spaces, state and national groups joined in pilgrimages to the sites. Boy Scouts added this site to many others across the nation for their trips.

The Indiana interest in Lincoln’s pioneer youth expanded along the Ohio River. Local boosters continued the heritage business in Southwestern Indiana, expanding visitor services and opportunities to promote their community heritage through Lincoln tourism. In addition to the Nancy Hanks grave and cabin site, which later became a National Park, Indiana offered the Lincoln State Park, which included the remnants of the Pigeon Creek community, a log cabin memorial at Rockport called Lincoln Pioneer Village, and finally, Santa Claus, Indiana, which housed a locally significant Lincoln collection. Lincolnland in Indiana formed a special tourist culture region.

During the active museum growth years of the 1930s, a memorial to Abraham Lincoln and his pioneer neighbors opened in Rockport, Indiana, on July 4, 1935. The new Lincoln shrine, Lincoln Pioneer Village, was located in Rockport’s City Park. The *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* for December 1935 announced Lincoln Pioneer Village.

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233 Capps and Ammeson, *Images of America.*
Village as among the “outstanding historical projects in the state of Indiana.”234 The shrine was a four-acre tract enclosed within a stockade, which began with eleven log buildings. These were symbolic replicas of houses, stores, and churches connected with Abraham Lincoln and his family.235 A short feature in the *Journal-Every Evening* from Wilmington, Delaware, claimed that Lincoln Pioneer Village reconstructed the “community as it was in the days of Lincoln’s boyhood,” having been “faithfully reproduced, with cabins, stockade, primitive furniture, and an oxcart.”236 A 1930s promotional brochure described the site with sixteen log cabins in the village and each filled with many interesting pioneers relics.” Boosters and reporters made repeated claims to the authenticity of this log shrine to Lincoln’s pioneer neighbors. The use of recycled house and barn logs from other early nineteenth century structures met a definition of authenticity based on the claim that they were part of the fabric of the community at the time of Lincoln.237 (See figure 17)

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235 Ibid.

236 “New Memorial Raised for Lincoln in Indiana,” *Journal-Every Evening* (Wilmington, DE), June 20, 1935, (ALLM).

237 Bess V. Ehrmann, “*Spencer County, Indiana, Known as the “Lincoln County”*” (Rockport, IN: Spencer County Historical Society, c. 1935).
Figure 17. Original gatehouse for Lincoln Pioneer Village in Rockport Indiana (Photograph by the author).

Constructed as a commemoration to Lincoln’s youth and Indiana influences in 1936, Lincoln Pioneer Village had no original buildings; instead of emphasizing Lincoln’s biography, it highlighted the pioneer population that surrounded the youthful Abraham Lincoln. Brochures and newspaper clippings promoted both the site in Rockport and a nearby historic site on the Ohio River containing a monument dedicated to the teenage Abraham Lincoln, who left for New Orleans with a flatboat of goods to sell there.

In 1940, local teacher and booster Bess V. Ehrmann wrote an article giving tribute to this memorial, saying that it was “unlike any other ever built to honor him. It is a pioneer village of the type known by Lincoln when he lived in southern Indiana.”

Theatrically interpreting Lincoln’s boyhood while giving a written tour of the village, Ehrmann encouraged readers to join the thousands of others to view with her “the boy Lincoln stretched out in front of the fireplace, reading some book which he had borrowed

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238 Bess V. Ehrmann, “Lasting Memorial Honors Lincoln’s Boyhood,” *The Indianapolis Sunday Star* (Indianapolis, IN), February 11, 1940.
while other members of this happy family are seated around the fireplace with its blazing log fire.”

In Kentucky, local history boosters promoted Lincoln’s parents and grandparents. The Lincoln Homestead near Springfield, Kentucky, was a prime example. (See Figure 18) This site also illustrated new system of federal support and the traditional need for log shrines officially remembering Abraham Lincoln.

![Lincoln Homestead State Park](image)

Figure 18. Replica and original log houses are on display at Lincoln Homestead State Park in Springfield Kentucky. (Photograph by the author)

Originally dedicated in 1934, the park was set up on or near the site of the Lincoln home where Abraham Lincoln’s grandmother kept house and raised his father Thomas after her husband died in a conflict with Native Americans. The park was a cooperative venture between Springfield, Kentucky, and the Historical Society, reinforced with federal and state cash and in-kind support. The city donated the original five acres to the Commonwealth in 1934. In November 1938, a Kentucky reporter from Louisville noted that this site was a “stepchild” of Kentucky’s park system, and claimed the “shrine” was neglected. The Commonwealth found itself criticized for not having a usable road leading from the main road to the park. Disappointed pilgrims who had visited the birthplace in

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239 Ehrmann, “Lasting Memorial,”
Hodgenville asked the Commonwealth “why we have neglected so long to erect suitable roads?” The reporter blamed party politics for the neglect, but the same article also noted that on the day he toured the site he witnessed a large visitation but with no cars from Kentucky.240 This evidence supports the thesis of historian Anne E. Marshall, that Kentucky became more pro-Confederate in the half-century after the War than it was during the conflict.241 The state’s interest in Lincoln commemoration appeared to be marginal at most. Lincoln Homestead State Park remains a fascinating but little-known site on the national Lincoln pilgrimages.

Lincoln sites, like the others, realized that tourists brought with them a need for places to eat and sleep. Many visitors also desired to bring back a “relic” with them, for which they would pay. This growing need interested community boosters in historic preservation as a form of economic development as much as national pride. Pragmatic and patriotic community boosters saw this as an opportunity both to commemorate Lincoln and to gain an income from visitors as well. These twin motives drove modern heritage tourism. A large number of community boosters used both patriotism and profit to argue for the preservation of a potential Lincoln site and to invest in tourism services near such sites.

This area gives an example of a symbiotic relationship between commercial and historic sites. Hodgenville, Kentucky contained two Lincoln sites: the birthplace and young boyhood home at Knob Creek. Hodgenville’s larger nearby neighbor,


Elizabethtown, Kentucky, had no extant historic site and only minor connections with the Lincoln family. The 1923 city directory, Facts about Elizabethtown, documented community booster efforts to capture visitor revenue providing services to tourists attending nearby historic sites.242 The directory, distributed at local and regional railroad stations, clearly guided potential visitors through the regional road system and highlighted places to visit and to obtain travel services. It provided directions and times to well-known Lincoln sites in Hodgenville and surrounding areas. The directory then advertised the services not available in Hodgenville such as hotels, tourist houses, and restaurants, while also clearly highlighting new services for auto care. By the early 1920s, local businesses had invested substantial capital into hospitality industry services for large numbers of customers, and they appeared to expect this visitation to continue to grow.

Automobile tourism reached this area of rural Kentucky by the early 1920s and directly influenced the local visitation.243 By 1927, the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace counted over 20,000 visitors annually.244 Local residents invested in filling stations, campgrounds, and souvenir stands to provide hospitality services. Most durable of these private tourism projects was the Nancy Lincoln Inn and tourist cabins next to the Park. (Figure 19)


244 Ibid.
Entrepreneur James Richard Howell opened The Nancy Lincoln Inn in 1928 on property adjacent to the Park. The Lincoln researcher, newspaper editor, and former minister Louis Warren supported the growth of the park and attached inn. Warren encouraged and published many pamphlets, tourism brochures, and books on Lincoln in his early years. The publications further encouraged distant tourists to explore this area of Lincoln’s life. The heritage tourism publishing business mixed with the automobile market and growing interest in historic preservation. Lincoln’s commemoration conveniently fit all these areas of interest.

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246 Sculle, “The Lincoln Landscape,” 66-78.
Research by historian Keith A. Sculle brought out the sensitive way Howell constructed the Inn and tourist cabins. They were made of chestnut logs (which were becoming rare) and situated to add a convenient space for food and lodging without intruding on the memorial. Souvenirs sold there became collectables years later. A common item was the ceramic whisky jug. Many who purchased this commemorative missed the irony at the birthplace of a national hero known as a non-drinker. The popular image of frontier life required this minor point of inaccuracy. According to Sculle, the Park was able to work with its entrepreneurial neighbor, although each used the landscape very differently. The Park focused on preserving the landscape’s natural environment, while Howell focused on hospitality and comfort facilities to help tourists enjoy a historic experience. Each sought to influence the tourist’s experience in different ways.247 Howell seemed to base his decisions upon the old dime museum model of family entertainment. He sought to improve the experience with special or even contrived facilities such as log buildings, frontier icons, and creature comforts.

The sister of James Richard Howell, Hattie Howell Howard, worked with her husband to acquire her own Lincoln site. In his second in a series of articles on Lincoln landscapes, Keith A. Sculle interpreted this family partnership in Lincoln tourism. The Knob Creek Farm was located near the Birthplace at Sinking Creek. (See Figure 20)

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At first no preservation agency was interested in this boyhood home. Listings and
guidebooks of Lincoln sites and museums often omitted the Knob Creek farm, perhaps
due to the higher public interest in historic birthplaces as compared to other types of
association sites. This 228-acre farm was the home of Thomas Lincoln and his family
from 1811 through 1816. The same family managed the Knob Creek Farm from 1928
through 2002. The Lincoln Tavern served tourists and locals in a wide range of capacities
including that of a rural nightclub. Installed in 1932, the log home belonged to the
Gollaher family nearby. Though there was little connection directly with the Lincoln
family, early research into this log house by boosters, and more recent studies by the
National Park Service, have claimed that it was in the region when their family lived
here.

In any listing of sites within Lincolnlnd, the District of Columbia deserves
prominent recognition. Developments of Lincoln sites in Washington, D. C. during the

248 Lucy Lawliss and Susan Hitchcock, eds., Abraham Lincoln Birthplace Unit, Abraham Lincoln

years between 1920 and 1945 include the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, and Congressional purchase of the Peterson House and the Oldroyd collection. Although the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. was dedicated in 1922 and dominates all other Lincoln monuments, it was not adapted as a museum until the 1990s. However due to the size of its commemoration and connection to federal funding on the Mall space, it was very influential in setting an attitude of acceptance of federal support for museums, cultural institutions, and arts projects. The powerful image of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War made the support of the Lincoln Memorial possible, and the finished project inspired other related efforts.

After the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, the government witnessed an increased lobbying effort for a similar congressional commitment to purchase and preserve the Oldroyd collection. After leaving Springfield, Illinois in 1893, Oldroyd had moved into the Peterson House (the house where Lincoln died), across from Ford’s Theater. He had set up his museum in the Peterson House and had remained there until the 1920s. Congressional action to purchase the extensive collection of Osborn H. Oldroyd took years, as it required the federal government to begin oversight of the collection. Oldroyd and his supporters were involved for many years in political debate and public harangues with the government to promote the public purchase and support of the collection. An early museum brochure published by the National Park Service claimed “For many years Congress seemed to have intended to take over the Oldroyd collection of Lincolnniana and make provision for preserving it and the historic building

which houses it.”

After years of debate, Congress finally purchased the Oldroyd collection in 1926. (See figure 21)

Figure 21. The Peterson House, the House Where Lincoln Died. The Peterson House is the central townhouse in this photograph. Osborn Oldroyd opened his second museum in this house. (Author’s photograph)

Prior to the 1940s, national celebrations and fairs continued to feature major Lincoln exhibits or pavilions, even in areas not directly associated with Lincoln’s life. A major example occurred in Philadelphia in 1926. Philadelphia hosted the Sesquicentennial of Independence with multiple events celebrating many different historic events and ethnic groups. The Illinois State Historic Library collaborated with Harvard and Brown Universities as well as the Library of Congress, Chicago Historical Society and a large selection of private collectors and local Illinois historical societies to offer a Lincoln commemoration at this exhibition. With the exception of the large

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252 Kammen. Mystic Chords of Memory, 425.

253 Illinois: Pictorial and Manuscript Life of Lincoln (Springfield, IL: Schnapp and Barns Printers, 1926). This is an exhibit catalogue published to guide visitors through the Lincoln Exhibit in the Illinois Building.
number of documents and rare books, the inventory of this display resembled the selection of items featured in Osborn Oldroyd’s exhibits and at the Memorial Hall in the Lincoln Tomb. This is an early collaborative project demonstrating continued national interest in Lincoln’s life.

Heritage pilgrimages also continued to be popular throughout the early twentieth century, and even increased in scope. Historian Merrill D. Peterson argues that this period was the zenith of the commemoration of Lincoln. During the Great Depression, Lincoln sites across the nation united to promote one of the largest and most extensive heritage pilgrimages in all of U.S. history. The year 1937 marked the Tercentenary of the Lincoln family in America, and this event prompted a Lincoln Shrine Trail pilgrimage. The area covered in this Tercentenary pilgrimage started in New England, where the Lincolns first landed, and continued through sites in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. The Lincoln Life Insurance Foundation, owner of an extensive research library and archives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, sponsored this great interstate pilgrimage.

Louis Warren, director of the Lincoln Life Foundation organized many national and regional pilgrimages including this great cross-country pilgrimage. His protégé, Lincoln historian R. Gerald McMurtry, promoted many other sites in Kentucky, and Lincoln Memorial University with its monuments and rapidly growing Lincoln Library and archival collection. The name of the pilgrimage was the “Lincoln Shrine Trail.” The Trail comprised four sections: Colonial Pilgrimage, Wilderness Pilgrimage, Prairie Pilgrimage and Capitol Pilgrimage. The pilgrims registered after completing one section.

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and earned a certificate for completion of all four. The tours were open to the public and promoted locally. The national pilgrims joined the local celebrations as a part of their national itinerary. The correspondence between McMurtry and Warren exhibited some concern over the individual programs and the hospitality planned at each major stop on the Lincoln Shrine Trail. Each stop where the Lincoln family lived used its historic sites and museums associated with Lincoln to provide relevant programs. The host communities provided venues for gathering community dinners and reserved lodging space for an unknown group of Lincoln pilgrims. Special speakers traveled with the pilgrims, keeping a running narrative on the history of the Lincoln family, connecting the stories with the many historic sites and encouraging their future preservation.

In the area of Lincoln research, the Historical Research Foundation of the Lincoln Life Insurance Company exercised heavy influence starting in the 1930s. Lincoln Life Insurance owned a substantial archives and memorabilia collection on Lincoln, and in 1928, hired Louis Warren as curator. In 1931, the Foundation dedicated its new Lincoln Museum and Library at the company headquarters in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Historic sites, even well outside of the traditional Lincolnland, assembled large collections for research and exhibition. For example, the Huntington Library in San Moreno, California started its extensive collection in 1922 with the vast holdings of collector Judd Stewart. The Huntington has collaborated with other major Lincoln collections since that time. Another of these major museums was the Edison Institute

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(Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum) in Dearborn, Michigan. This collection of Americana also contains furniture and a courthouse in which Lincoln practiced law. Henry Ford’s Edison Institute was an expression of his nostalgia as well as a desire to teach American history through objects. Museum historian, Steven Conn, discovered that “The principal of [Henry Ford’s] historical enterprise was that objects more powerfully conveyed historical meaning than words.” Henry Ford’s distrust of academic history did not preclude his interest in history. He believed objects were easier for everyone to explore. An early history of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village declares that even the most “unimaginative visitor” could reconstruct the world of early America through real objects and buildings.

The Chicago Historical Society (CHS) held Lincoln collections of impressive size and scope. The CHS has the honor of having had President Lincoln as a member at one time, and its extensive Lincoln holdings were very popular among Chicago residents and tourists to the city. During the 1920s and 1930s, the society evolved from a private institute into a public museum, whose mission was public education and enlightenment. It used Lincoln and its extensive collection to reach a city and regional audience with themes of American history. In 1932, the Society opened a new building inviting a wider range of visitors, and developed a national standing with museumgoers and Lincoln

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258 The Edison Institute is presently (2016) known as The Henry Ford. Early in its history, this museum acquired the Logan County Courthouse and the rocking chair in which Lincoln was sitting when John Wilkes Booth shot him. It displayed them prominently within the Greenfield Village portion of the Institute.


scholars. It also used two techniques of gallery interpretation seen earlier in natural history museums and dime museums: period rooms and dioramas. The CHS sponsored its own Lincoln Hall using artisans from the Museum Extension Program jointly funded through the Federal Art Project and the Illinois Department of Education. The Chicago Historical Society, with a crew of Lincoln scholars, designed and constructed twenty famous scenes from Lincoln’s life in dioramas. Many looked like stages seen before in various pageants, plays, and movies of Lincoln’s life (See figure 22). This was a special merger of academic and amateur scholars, museum interpretation, and specialized artisans under the funding support of a federal grants program. It was a harbinger of the large-scale collaboration that would characterize museum projects of the late twentieth century, through agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services and National Endowment for the Humanities.

Figure 22. Detail of Lincoln on a steamboat, witnessing slaves being transported south. Originally installed at the CHS, this diorama now is on display at the ALLM. (Author’s photograph)


262 *Lincoln Dioramas* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 1942), 8.
Before the National Park System could make its mark for professionalization on the Lincoln sites they acquired, their pattern had been set locally. Many significant sites had come from the age of the dime museums and patriotic pilgrimages. Heritage tourists of the period between 1920 and 1945 retained much of their parents’ culture concerning visitation to patriotic sites and museums. Their practices were like those of earlier pilgrimages. Federal professionalization did not yet change the interpretation at the early Lincoln sites during these years.

The growth of Lincoln commemoration between the world wars accompanied easier access to rural sites. The patriotic message of Lincoln’s rise from the log cabin to marble halls was an essential myth in much of America. Social and economic expansion gave more mobility to ever-larger portions of the American populace, which also encouraged more federal support to preserve even more places of profitable patriotism. This was but the beginning of heritage tourism; but this twenty-five year period was the time of the greatest growth in Lincoln sites.
CHAPTER V
POST-WAR LINCOLN MUSEUMS, 1946-1976

The year 1946 heralded the beginning of economic affluence and an expanded consumerism after the welcome end of a long global war, rationing, and years of depression. Aptly called the “Consumer Republic” by historian Lizabeth Cohen, the immediate post-World War II era witnessed massive economic growth. This brought increased ability for many American families to experience the luxuries of a disposable income and free time.\textsuperscript{263} During this time Americans not only desired to purchase houses and goods not available earlier, they also felt the need to connect with a national identity through American history.\textsuperscript{264}

Several factors are featured in this chapter. First, family vacations became a common practice for many middle class families. Second, living history developed into a widespread technique during these years, particularly in the 1970’s. Third, the thirty years from 1946 to 1976 witnessed the professionalization of American public museums. Fourth, because there were considerable social and political conflicts experienced throughout the nation, politicians hoped commemorating the American past would heal the divisions. Commemorations of a patriotic past, however, did not have the hoped-for unifying effects. Fifth, the Lincoln Sesquicentennial led into a controversial Civil War Centennial, and this period concluded with a commercialized bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution. This chapter concludes with some examples of Lincoln sites representing these various conditions. At least sixteen new historic sites and galleries


\textsuperscript{264} Susan Sessions Rugh, \textit{Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations}. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 5-7.
opened to interpret Abraham Lincoln or some member of his family. The National Park Service expanded or built four sites, one in each state where Abraham Lincoln resided, plus Washington, D. C., and became the national leader in museum professionalism in programing as well as preservation.

Once war production ended and manufacturers retooled for a peacetime market, auto ownership approximately tripled. Economic expansion gave greater wealth and free time to a larger number of people in the work force, and young families started a new tradition: the family vacation. Many companies offered paid vacations and shorter workweeks, which increased opportunities for growing families to travel. Sophisticated marketing encouraged this family travel. Automobiles became integral to American life by 1950.265 At the same time, the auto tourism industry, focusing on heritage, developed wayside exhibits and newly opened historic sites, along with filling stations, campgrounds, and motels.

One of the great tourism feats in the mid-twentieth century was the Lincoln Heritage Trail, a new and well-advertised heritage route connecting many Lincoln-related sites and supportive tourism services in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. Though heritage routes connecting historic Lincoln-related sites and other tourism features were not new, this system had the advantage of starting during what Susan Rugh called “the golden age of American family vacations.”266 The interstate highway system, initiated in 1954, opened vast areas to more vacationers. Millions traveled on the new 1,600 miles of interstates by 1956 and then followed a published Lincoln Heritage Trail guide for


266 Rugh, Are We There Yet?, 2.
Lincoln sites on this family pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{267} Post-war vacationers used this tourism route throughout the thirty-year period covered by this chapter. Lincoln collector and amateur historian Lloyd Ostendorf published this map on the back of a children’s illustrated biography of Lincoln originally published in the late 1950s. This same image of the Lincoln map was repeated innumerable times in tourist literature through the 1960s and early 1970s. The map was the most recent of several efforts to make commercial connections between established Lincoln sites and other tourism features in this area called Lincolnland (See figure 23).

![Figure 23. Back cover of Abraham Lincoln: The Boy and the Man by Lloyd Ostendorf. The Lincoln Memorial Highway on this map was the core area of Lincolnland.](image)

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, sites interpreting Lincoln’s youth were among the rural museums that enjoyed a sudden upsurge in visitation. In the political atmosphere of the Cold War, parents, teachers, and civic leaders expected children to learn patriotism. Tourism marketing promoted automobile travel to museums and historic sites as “America’s schoolhouse on wheels.”\textsuperscript{268} A Ford advertisement from 1959

\textsuperscript{267} Rugh, Are We There Yet?, 18.
pictured a suburban family in the classic station wagon driving through a gauntlet of historic characters and sites. The advertisement featured pioneer, Civil War and Revolutionary War images. While historian Michael Kammen described this type of patriotic tourism as evolving during the post-World War I era, the post-World War II years exaggerated those patriotic forces and made patriotic themes nearly universally expected. From the years just after the First World War, until late in the Cold War Americans expected museums to be educational and always to encourage pride in country.

“Living history” became increasingly popular during this period. Volunteers or staff would portray people living in a historic building, and interact with visitors as if from the selected time period. Academic historian Herbert Keller, who encouraged the professional practice of living history in his work with agriculture museums in the 1940s, admitted that the inspiration for his practice was a childhood visit to Lincoln’s New Salem. He wanted visitors to feel transported into “another world.” Keller promoted the practice of isolating historic sites from modern intrusions to create a historical context. He pointed to the reconstructed New Salem site’s houses, fences, roads, and landscape as elements that helped to provide space where visitors could experience immersive history.

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269 Rugh, Are We There Yet?, 23.


272 Ibid.
As early as the 1890s, historic sites had guides dressed in period costume in pageants; Lincoln’s New Salem in Illinois and the Essex Institute in Massachusetts used similar techniques before 1920. This new version of living history, however, incorporated scholarly studies of social history to interpret common people. Along with a growing interest in social history, modern living history practice became widespread during the Civil War Centennial. By 1978, living history specialist and historian Jay Anderson estimated there were 650 museums, parks and historic sites throughout North America where living history played some role.\textsuperscript{273} These sites focused on rural and local culture as well as on the common people of the regions. Living history emanated from and remained closely related to folk and ethnic museums. In 1970, the Association for Living History Farms and Agriculture Museums originated at Sturbridge Village in western Massachusetts. Other established sites such as Colonial Williamsburg and Plymouth Plantation initiated new living history programs around the mid-1970s. At the same time, the National Park Service began to present living history programs at their sites to enhance visitor appreciation of a distant past.\textsuperscript{274}

Tourism hit a high point during the thirty years after the Second World War, and Lincoln museums adapted in two ways to the rise in their own popularity. Most members of the Lincoln commemoration community remained closer to the traditional public museum of the early twentieth century. Most of these private agencies, if not part of a large library or university, were dependent on revenue generated through sales and


\textsuperscript{274} Anderson, \textit{Time Machines}, 37-41.
admissions, and they often ignored historical accuracy in favor of the comforting presentation of time-honored heritage. The boosters who managed them were community sponsors and entrepreneurs seeking success through serving the growing numbers of family vacationers traveling around the country. Unfortunately, for both Lincoln sites and other types of museums, their expectation of continuous growth ended in the late 1970s with increasing cultural cynicism concerning all American heroes.275

On the other hand, major sites attached to the National Park Service worked to professionalize their programs, exhibits, and preservation efforts. They formed a closer relationship with academic historians, standardized public education through specialized interpretation techniques, and worked to incorporate solid historical research into their interpretations. During this professionalization, federal and state governments became more willing to fund some elements of museum restoration and exhibition through grants and special federal purchases.

In order to create a more consistent educational profile and compete with other heritage media, the National Park Service was the first to standardize museum education. The National Park staff developed a special form of public education designed for recreational audiences, naming this education “heritage interpretation.” A veteran national park employee, Freeman Tilden, published the original field guide to instruct rangers on the techniques to engage recreational audiences. First published in 1957, *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been the single most commonly cited or used reference book at national and state parks. The book insists that parks (including historic sites and museums) provide not just information but interpretation. Tilden wrote, “information (or

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education) as such is not interpretation. Interpretation is inspiration based on information. But they are entirely different things.\textsuperscript{276} 

Museum and preservation professionalization exemplified in the National Park Service of the mid-twentieth century carried into private operations as public funding became available. Private museum projects benefited from two major and controversial federal acts in 1966: the National Museum Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. In the Preservation Act, Congress declared, “preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans.”\textsuperscript{277} Many museums grew or became established after these acts through support from both public and private funding.

As a result of this increased support, and carrying through the heritage revival of the mid-1970s, American museums in general and Lincoln museums in particular began changing exhibit themes in response to scholarship from academic historical studies and availability of federal and state funding. The National Park Service led the way in professionalization, but private Lincoln sites tended to follow reluctantly, still influenced by their traditional roots in dime museums and community boosters management. Many sites, even major ones in the 1960s, often expected to install displays with a maximum number of artifacts, without consideration of their contexts. The National Park Service’s practice of using exhibits and museum programs to tell a more sophisticated story


supported by academic publications slowly influenced other museums and changed visitor expectations of their museum visits. These stories included details about motivation and reactions. Museums began to use historic detail to create a deeper narrative.  

The years between 1946 and 1976 were a time of conflict, disillusionment, and change. Throughout this period, changing cultural attitudes extended to evolving views about American heritage and a revisiting of interpretation at historic sites and museums. The new field of social history left growing numbers of people skeptical of traditional patriotic messages. The political battles attached to the Lincoln Birth Sesquicentennial (1959) and the Civil War Centennial (1961–1965) demonstrated the lack of progress in civil rights for African Americans.  

As the sesquicentennial year of Lincoln’s birth approached, Congress established a Commission to organize the celebration of Lincoln’s life nationwide. A 1957 resolution by President Eisenhower declared that the purpose for this celebration was to honor Lincoln for his ability to clarify the American ideal of freedom, which became an “inspiration for movements toward free and responsible government the world over.” The Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission included political appointees at state and national levels and a few Lincoln scholars and museum directors. This commission established three major objectives:  

1. To stimulate Lincoln observances throughout the year by public and private bodies at home, and abroad, if possible.

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2. To encourage and to undertake itself contributions of lasting value, such as the preparation and completion of additional Lincoln historical works.  
3. To emphasize the contribution of Lincoln’s thought, ideals, and actions to the United States and the world.  

The Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission then adopted the slogan, “Lincoln: Symbol of the Free Man.” The *Handbook of Information*, also published by the Commission, selected highly favorable quotes from close friends of Lincoln that indicated how the students and teachers were to think of him. Most of this pamphlet was a positive review of Lincoln’s political life and his moral character traits.

The official handbook for the Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission published the official reason to commemorate the 16th president. “If a reason for celebrating the life of Abraham Lincoln needs recording, it is this: he was truly a great man. He influenced the course of history. His wisdom and innate faith in his countrymen enabled him, as President of the United States, to lead the nation safely through the horrors of a Civil War.” Leaders invoked Lincoln’s name to encourage reconciliation in what was once again a time of sectional strife. In order to carry out their commemoration, the Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission prepared school materials for teaching Lincoln, manuals instructing civic groups about hosting Lincoln essay contests, and recognition for contributions to the “field of Lincolniana.” The Commission published bulletins and newsletters to help coordinate and market various private Lincoln commemorations.

Finally, they undertook an extension of the four-volume *Lincoln Day by Day*, originally

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280 *Abraham Lincoln Sesquicentennial, 1959-1960*, XIV.

281 Ibid., IX.


283 Ibid., 1.
published by the Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield, Illinois.\textsuperscript{284} Merrill D. Peterson referred to this more complete, five-volume series as the only major Lincoln publication to come out of the Lincoln Sesquicentennial.\textsuperscript{285} \textit{Lincoln Day by Day} provided all the various museums and historic sites with an authoritative reference on Lincoln’s whereabouts at various times. It was particularly valuable in interpreting his political activities during his return to politics in the 1850s. It also refuted many local history rumors of mythical visits by Abraham Lincoln to some prominent Republican’s home.

The Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission continued many of the sacred Lincoln myths through its selection of quotes and biographies. Even Lincoln’s reproduced autobiography presented the factual details of his background with carefully-crafted emphasis on his childhood poverty, which he used to promote the political myth of his own rags-to-riches ascent.\textsuperscript{286} Josiah Holland’s 1866 biography, recommended in this pamphlet, rarely surfaces in contemporary listings (2016) because of its deliberate slanting of Lincoln’s known religious life and views. It is also telling that the first quote in this handbook, published during the emotional and divisive Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, is Lincoln’s letter revoking General Hunter’s Emancipation order: “You cannot if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partisan politics.”\textsuperscript{287}

\textsuperscript{284} \textit{Lincoln Sesquicentennial, 1809-1959}, 40.


\textsuperscript{287} Abraham Lincoln, quoted in \textit{Lincoln Sesquicentennial, 1809-1959}, 1.
This quote appears as a timely bit of historical reuse of Lincoln’s legal thinking, encouraging readers to promote social changes, not with great single acts but with patient, less partisan measures. Other quotes and speeches, carefully selected, form an image of a comfortably religious, law-abiding political conservative. In the effort to avoid Civil Rights conflicts throughout the country, there was a subtle discouragement of radical remarks that might remind American citizens that all was not well.

The Final Report for the Lincoln Sesquicentennial confirmed the Commission’s support of numerous patriotic educational and celebratory functions. Elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities developed Lincoln programs with specialized literature sponsored by private interests. A national program for elementary students told the story of Lincoln’s life through his travels by train. The Association of American Railroads sponsored a 16-page booklet that included widely distributed teacher’s lessons.

Following very closely on the ending of the Lincoln Sesquicentennial was the Civil War Centennial. Though representing related themes, the two planning groups had very different members. The Civil War Centennial, according to historian Robert Cook, began with an ideal of a celebration of national unity, but became a quagmire of extreme disunity. The formation of the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC) coincided with a period of outrage against the racial segregation and abuse that had plagued the United States from the beginning. It became clear that racial justice for African Americans had failed to materialize during the previous century. The confrontational

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black freedom movement of the post Second World War years would not allow the public to celebrate a comfortable past that ignored ongoing racial inequality.

President Eisenhower had signed the CWCC into law on September 7, 1957. Two weeks after the signing, Arkansas governor Orval E. Faubus moved to obstruct court-ordered school desegregation in Little Rock. The resultant uproar pulled the Commission apart as badly as the rest of the nation. Historian C. Vann Woodward saw a real danger of political upheaval because of race relations. He wrote:

“we are. . . presently approaching the centenary of the Civil War. Simultaneously we are approaching the climax of a new sectional crisis—a crisis that divides the country along . . . the old sectional lines. . . . It would be an ironic, not to say tragic, coincidence if the celebration of the anniversary took place in the midst of a crisis reminiscent of the one celebrated.”

The commemorations did not continue long without more social unrest and serious conflict. Charleston, South Carolina hosted the fourth CWCC national meeting in conjunction with a reenactment of the attack on Fort Sumter in April of 1961. The conflict between segregationists and their opponents nearly ended the commemoration by the middle of its first year. The goal of a patriotic pageant to commemorate the nation’s unity and progress failed at this point.

Historian John Bodnar saw the Civil War Centennial and the American Revolution Bicentennial celebrations as “. . . separated by a decade of disunity and dissension . . .” but with organizers of both commemorations desperately seeking a public

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290 Cook, Troubled Commemoration, 249.

attitude of patriotism and national unity.\textsuperscript{292} Neither celebration delivered everything that its organizers hoped for, but the American Revolution Bicentennial did seem to come closer to its goals. Efforts of the American Revolution Bicentennial Association to encourage decentralized and local celebrations proved more successful than the Civil War celebrations racked with dissent during the early and mid-1960s. Controversy was less apparent in the diverse celebrations around 1976.\textsuperscript{293}

The Bicentennial year of 1976 marked the last great commemoration in the post-World War II era.\textsuperscript{294} Lincoln commemoration became more problematic, due in part to the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent national embarrassments that shook Americans’ confidence and their reverence for national heroes. Throughout the 1970s, global and national crises rattled traditional patriotic beliefs. The Vietnam conflict, Watergate scandal, and oil embargo dominated political speech and news.

Despite the national upheavals, specialized celebrations and museum institutions grew during the 1970s. Communities could start their own museums and parks celebrating their own stories. Museums specializing in African-American culture and history grew out of this age. Cities such as Philadelphia used the new bicentennial funds available to start museums on the African-American experience, thereby expanding the narratives told to the public.\textsuperscript{295}


\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 233-235.

\textsuperscript{294} Rugh, \textit{Are We There Yet?}, 42.

The Library of Congress (LOC) hosted a special exhibit on Lincoln during the Lincoln Sesquicentennial, unimaginatively titled “Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1959.” The catalogue listed all the items in the exhibition and featured an introduction by Carl Sandburg. Throughout celebrations of both the Lincoln Sesquicentennial and Civil War Centennial, Sandburg was in constant attendance due to his public popularity and connection with Lincoln study by the public. LOC staff wrote the catalogue, with Sandburg contributing a brief introduction essay. The exhibit presented four progressive subjects: The Formative years, Early Political Career, Years of Strife and The Worldwide Lincoln. The exhibit focused on 2-dimensional items such as letters, documents, rare books, lithographs and photographs. The final section, Worldwide Lincoln, featured only letters of condolence by world leaders. No objects were on display except for framed artwork and rare bound Lincoln biographies.

Like many local interpretations, this federal exhibit interpreted Lincoln primarily as the self-made-man. The mythic images of frontier equality and the self-made person were used often during the Cold War years, because they contrasted well with socialism and communism. The exhibit’s limited depth could also be due in part to the lack of sufficient objects in any one museum, rather than to historical habit. Museums had not yet developed the extensive practice of a nationwide loan system employed in the later twentieth century.

The Civil War Centennial provided a better environment for new museums in the Lincoln world. The National Park Service led in the acquisition and development of historical sites. In addition to the Lincoln Homestead in Springfield, the National Park

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Service restored the infamous Ford’s Theater, rescuing it from varying uses and disuse since the tragic night when it was the scene of Lincoln’s assassination.

From the late 1860’s the federal government had owned the theater once it became obvious that Ford could not ever use it again for fear of public reaction. The Peterson house and the extensive Oldroyd collection were already part of the NPS. The Theater allowed the NPS to install a new Lincoln Museum on the lower level. With its growing influence, the NPS was able to acquire iconic objects formerly in other museums and private collections. Prime items included the Derringer pistol used by John Wilkes Booth to murder the President, furniture from the President’s box and the lithograph of Washington that hung there that same night. Only after many years of promotion did the federal government, through the National Park Service, restore the theater section and open it to the public for the first time since April of 1865.

The Illinois State Park System reopened the entire Lincoln Homestead in Springfield, Illinois, for the first time in sixty-five years. It would become a unit in the National Park system in 1971, and undergo major professional restoration informed by new research based on updated archaeology. The Lincoln boyhood home in the rural, southern Indiana village of Lincoln City became part of the National Park Service in 1962. The original memorial and historic sites were expanded with education facilities and a living history program.

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Three Lincoln sites especially benefited from federal interest in heritage tourism during this post-World War II growth. The National Park Service (NPS) initiated a ten-year, nationwide facilities update and improvement program called Mission 66. From 1956 through 1966, Mission 66 focused federal support across the whole park service to improve the expanding need for visitor amenities and interpretative programs. The Indiana boyhood home (renamed the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial), Ford’s Theater in Washington D.C., and the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial all benefited.

Unlike the newer sites in Indiana and Washington D.C., the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial had been operating much earlier under several agencies prior to the National Park Service. Under NPS administration, the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial in Hodgenville, Kentucky began exchanging its log cabin rustic image for modern architecture and visitor comforts in the late 1950s. The modern visitor center supported more guests even as it began changing the mythic frontier image of past facilities. This was a modern building designed to complement the landscape but not to replicate historic architecture.

The Lincoln Birthplace is one historic site that relied on heritage images from its inception. The original generation of boosters and influential amateur historians such as Louis Warren at the Lincoln Life Insurance Company demanded a loyalty to the cabin’s authenticity. However, newer guide books such as Living Past of America by Cornelius Vanderbilt, J, reviewed historic museums based on architectural merit and known qualities. The Lincoln birthplace received the ambivalent defense that “no one can say definitely that this is the actual cabin in which was born. But there does seem to be some

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evidence to support the belief that it is in fact the original.” Another guidebook from the late 1950s loaded on the elements of heritage with a complete list of undocumented uses for which the cabin was supposedly recycled. The strongest language is reserved for the symbolic contrast between the marble walls of the outer monument and the “traditional cabin” resting inside it. The authors proclaimed, “The interior of the log cabin is rough and unfinished, in the traditional manner of humble pioneer folk.” As in other Lincoln exhibits, the contrast between his birthplace and presidency must demonstrate progress, even at the risk of exaggeration.

The Ford’s Theater was one of the last facilities completed under the National Park Service’s Mission 66 program. The plan was to reconstruct Ford’s Theater to its appearance on the night of April 14, 1865. Ford’s Theater had been only partially reconstructed in the 1930s with no effort to rebuild the theater. Under Mission 66 funding, the NPS installed a new Lincoln Museum with “modern exhibits of contemporary design in the basement.” Although Ford’s Theater was part of the Mission 66 program, its restoration was not completed until 1968. It allowed the NPS to expand the Lincoln Museum and to rebuild the theater again for its original purpose (See Figure 24).


Congress was more willing to accept the funding for NPS facilities by the late 1950s due to the already growing revenue generated from heritage tourism, and the noticeable public interest in the upcoming Civil War Centennial. The NPS benefited the museum field through newer professional research and preservation standards in historic interpretation and museums. This influence continued to modify the national Lincoln sites controlled by, or professionally connected to, the National Park Service.

In Washington D.C., public remembrance of Lincoln had always centered on Ford’s Theater and the Lincoln assassination. By the Lincoln Sesquicentennial in 1959, the theater had still not been restored. The only exhibition for the assassination during this time was an American flag flying from a third story window nearest the presidential box.\textsuperscript{304} Although this building became a prominent assassination artifact, no funds were made available to even start working on the restoration of the theater. In 1956, the National Park Service completed an architectural report of the theater’s history to start

designing a new exhibition focusing on the assassination and Booth’s movements that
night. The rapidly growing number of visitors to the house and Lincoln museum could
only imagine the theater space from a large-scale diorama on exhibit.

In 1963, the Department of the Interior released a report by National Capital
Region Historian George J. Olszewski based on the 1956 research notes. This formalized
plan called for the complete reconstruction of the “Old Ford’s Theater” back to its 1865
appearance. The drawings clearly showed that there would be a considerable amount of
new material added.\footnote{Olszewski, \textit{Historic Structures Report}, 137.} Olszewski’s report made it clear that the past alterations were
substantial, and any effort to take the structure back to its appearance the night of
Lincoln’s assassination would seriously violate the older standard of authenticity based
on original materials. Moreover, it would change the appearance from the way visitors
had experienced it for over seventy years. According to the Historic Structures Report,
The National Park System would “completely restore Ford’s Theater to its original
appearance as of the night of April 14, 1865.”\footnote{Ibid., 1.} The national significance of the historic
assassination overruled the usual policy of maintaining historic materials. The updated
and remodeled facility would also include a new Lincoln Museum with modern exhibits
and restore the Star Saloon and north wing of the theater to their original appearance.
The report emphasized the need for proper staffing and visitor services. Olszewski
reported, “Under this program, outmoded and inadequate facilities will be replaced with
physical improvements adequate to meet the heavy demands of increased visitation.”\footnote{Olszewski, \textit{Historic Structures Report}, 1.}

\footnote{Olszewski, \textit{Historic Structures Report}, 137.}
\footnote{Ibid., 1.}
\footnote{Olszewski, \textit{Historic Structures Report}, 1.}
Originally estimated to cost $2,000,000, the remodeling of this structure included a completely renovated and useable stage area as it looked in 1865, and the presidential box where Booth shot Lincoln. Museum professional standards were supported too, with space for offices, artifact storage for items not on display, and work space.\(^{308}\) That careful division of space displayed a much more serious effort at professionalization than other Lincoln sites have shown throughout the US.

Unfortunately, many artifacts associated with the assassination had been scattered across the nation years earlier. Most of the furnishings from the Peterson House, including the bed where Lincoln died, were at the Chicago Historical Society. The rocking chair Lincoln sat in that night was acquired by Henry Ford for his museum in Dearborn, Michigan. The Library of Congress owned the materials found in the President’s pockets that night. Various historical societies owned all or portions of flags taken from the box. The National Park Service had acquired the clothing Lincoln wore that night, but the ebony and silver walking cane that went with this evening attire was owned by Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. After such an extensive and costly restoration of the building, it would still be nearly devoid of associated items.

The restoration, completed in 1968, opened the theatre for the first time in over one hundred years. Shortly after opening the restored theater the Friends of Ford’s Theater hosted the first three plays. These three plays were presented on alternating nights: John Brown’s Body, a new play based on events of the Civil War era, and two plays popular in Lincoln’s day, Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*, and Oliver Goldsmith’s *She Stoops*
to Conquer. The public access to participation in living history by attending a drama at the Ford Theater, along with a new gallery and the restored theatre itself, created a very interactive museum. It reflected the old dime museums, with multiple facilities, activities and programs for the whole family. However, this institution used a strong presence of trained historians, and instead of private entrepreneurship, public ownership and maintenance of the site.

The National Park further professionalized museums and historic preservation when they acquired Lincoln sites formerly managed by state and private agencies. The Lincoln home at Springfield, which was the second site in the nation devoted to Lincoln, had functioned privately and as a state park since the late 1880s. During the era approaching the Revolution Bicentennial, this site became part of the growing number of historical sites with the National Park Service. At Springfield, Illinois, in August of 1971, President Richard Nixon signed a law authorizing the National Park Service through the Secretary of Interior to acquire any property attached or surrounding the Lincoln Homestead, thereby making the only home owned by Abraham Lincoln a national park. To add significance to this event, President Nixon signed this act in the restored Old State House on the desk where President-elect Lincoln drafted his first inaugural address.\[310\]

This commemorative use of historic objects and sites marked an updated example of the use of Lincoln historic sites and artifacts for current political activities. The public influence of the National Park Service helped create the perception of the Lincoln home’s historical importance by gathering the scattered Lincoln collections to their original


home. Illinois congressional representative Paul Findlay, local NPS superintendent Al Banton, and public historian Wayne C. Temple were able to collect several pieces of furniture formerly belonging to the Lincolns, and return them to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. The NPS staff emphasized the importance of using objects to show that the past was very different from the present. Both Ford’s Theater and the Springfield home underwent changes from their more recent appearances in order to fit the NPS’s definition of historical accuracy.

During the 1960s, another major site in Lincolnland came under the National Park’s professional care. In February of 1962, the State of Indiana turned over the monuments and shrines of Lincoln’s boyhood to the federal government through the National Park Service. The Lincoln Boyhood National Park expanded the memorial building to include space for interpretation services, and installed a reproduction of the Lincoln cabin in 1968, for use as a living history museum. Park staff placed this replica in a small grove near the site of the original cabin, in an area formerly occupied by the town of Lincoln City, Indiana. Slowly, as the state and federal parks developed the reconstructed historic landscape, they purchased and removed buildings from Lincoln City to expand the commemoration area. By the late 1960s, the entire town had been demolished to make room to reproduce the farmland around the Lincoln homestead (See figure 25).

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311 Ibid, 237.
312 Capps and Ammeson, Images of America, 118-127.
Unlike the reproduced log houses of earlier twentieth century museums, this reproduction incorporated academic research into folk houses of early nineteenth century Indiana. The corner notching replicated known forms and used archaeological materials found on site in early twentieth century for added clues to the house’s appearance. Plaster and periodic whitewash finished the interior of this replica house, as was normally the case for permanent log homes in the early nineteenth century. The finished log surface provides a material interpretation that counters the myth of frontier roughness. Most log shrines to Lincoln or other pioneer log houses leave interior walls bare. Visitors expected them to look that way, and assumed that bare-walled cabins were a more accurate portrayal of a frontier cabin than cabins with plastered walls. Builders at Lincoln’s nearby Lincoln’s Pioneer Village at Rockport, Indiana never finished the interior spaces or used research to gain correct details on the houses’ fenestration, historic shape, or configuration. These institutions would remain log shrines devoted to an

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emotional image, while later outdoor museums worked to interpret a much more historically accurate environment.

In 1960, the Lincoln Library-Museum in Fort Wayne opened a new facility with a full-time museum as part of the foundation. Having served since the late 1920s as a research institute, it now became a public museum, although looking much like a library with displays. During the 1970s, the museum growth nationwide was substantial. Two established academic archives with large Lincoln collections established full time museums: Lincoln College at Lincoln, Illinois, and Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee. These have been the only two academic collections to evolve into public Lincoln museums within the academic community. (See Appendix A)

There is a traditional category of quasi-museum common among Lincoln museums. These were private agencies that operated without any intention of becoming actual museums, but because of the presence of Lincoln-associated items or documents, these agencies have galleries devoted to some aspect of Lincoln’s life. Holiday World, formerly known as Christmas World in Santa Claus, Indiana displayed a Lincoln commemorative collection with strong connections to Southern Indiana. Donated by local booster and Lincoln collector O. V. Brown, the exhibit was on display from 1949 until the end of the 2013 visitation season. The theme of Brown’s exhibit focused on a wide range of twenty-four occupations and activities in Abraham Lincoln’s life. Each

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314 “The Lincoln-Museum,” Lincoln Lore no. 1474 (December 1960). The Lincoln Life Insurance Foundation director was R. Gerald McMurtry who was also the founding director of the Lincoln Room at Lincoln Memorial University.
section was illustrated with antiques from the community connected with the Lincoln family or relevant items.  

Another example was the Dean House near the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois. It became a private gallery exhibiting Lincoln’s life in Springfield. Created by local publisher Hugh Garvey in July of 1955, its close proximity to the Lincoln home fostered a symbiotic relationship with the historic site. Garvey marketed his site as the Abraham Lincoln Museum, replacing the long-closed Memorial Hall at the tomb. The exhibits featured documents, photography, artwork, wax figures and dioramas. In spite of resistance from neighbors, Garvey operated his Abraham Lincoln Museum for nearly 30 years. It served as the only gallery exhibition in the city for most of that time. Not until the 1970s, after the National Park took over management of the Lincoln home and began to expand federal management to the entire neighborhood, did other spaces become available for relevant exhibits (See figure 26).

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During the Centennial of the Battle of Gettysburg, the American Civil War Wax Museum opened at the edge of the National Park to provide a popular exhibit. Containing about 300 life-sized wax figures, each diorama was part of a series of exhibits telling the story of the causes and history of the Civil War through the President’s assassination. The exhibit’s story line culminated with the Lincoln address at the National Cemetery dedication. The battle was interpreted in sound and light focusing on various points on a large-scale diorama. At its conclusion, a stage arose out of the floor with Lincoln and the delegates at the Gettysburg dedication. The animatronic Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg address in a fashion very similar to the contemporary Lincoln exhibit at Disneyland, California. The theme was that Gettysburg was the real turning point of the War and that this address was the most important speech ever delivered by an American president. This exhibit was open for fifty years, beginning at the middle of the Civil War Sesquicentennial. (See figure 27).
Lincoln’s New Salem State Park was as much a commercial venture as it was a memorial to the young Abraham Lincoln. The Park’s management and volunteers often demonstrated a weak commitment to historical accuracy. The highly anachronistic historic image New Salem used to market its Wagon Wheel Inn is further evidence of the site’s confused interpretation. The brochure in figure 28 shows a drawing of the historic site with two characters that look like they are from a TV western. The images depicting the heritage of Lincoln’s New Salem are vaguely western and similar to many other images from television and movies. These symbols of American past would be familiar to families of the early 1940s through 1950s. The Park’s management continued to promote an historic image familiar to Americans in the early cinematic age rather than the more foreign but accurate image of the American frontier of the 1830s.
Another popular image of the American past was the steamboat. Private entrepreneurs in the region exploited this mythical image and used it as an added
attraction to visitors coming to Lincoln’s New Salem State Park (See figure 29). During most of the post-World War II years to the 1990s, visitors to the New Salem area had the option of reliving Lincoln’s famous steamboat ride up the Sangamon to New Salem. Though the Talisman only made one trip to New Salem, this image became prominent at Lincoln’s New Salem State Park. This family business along with the Wagon Wheel Inn provided added visitor activities to Lincoln pilgrims to the Springfield and Petersburg area.

Other private sites promoted the religious life that many people wished Abraham Lincoln had. The Pigeon Creek Baptist Church where Lincoln grew up in Spencer County, Indiana was preserved in part for its Lincoln connection, but has no special relics except the grave of Lincoln’s sister Sarah in the churchyard. The old light Presbyterian churches in Springfield, Illinois, and Washington, D. C. have preserved pews purchased by the Lincoln family. These two churches preserved the Lincoln connection alongside their current religious activities. This is a special irony because most of the Springfield clergy would not vote for their local politician Lincoln in the presidential election because of his religious skepticism.

The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church provides weekly building tours, because of their connection with both Abraham Lincoln and former U.S. Senate Chaplain Peter Marshall (See Figure 30).
The current church facility (2016) is not the same one Lincoln attended during his administration, but this church has preserved the pew the Lincolns purchased, along with assorted Civil War and Lincoln related relics, and several original documents including an autograph draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.\textsuperscript{317} This congregation has used this artifact, since its acquisition in 1951, as the inspiration for their support of many local social missions to the poor and marginalized. The historical relics retained motivational value into the late twentieth Century.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, Lincoln’s image in public history suffered along with the images of other personalities in America’s patriotic past. The entertainment industry portrayed Lincoln in more controversial ways than it had in the earlier half of the century, but museums worked to reclaim Lincoln through a deeper message meeting the contemporary doubts in his goodness or greatness. The museum field interpreted Lincoln during this time, when professionalization and funding were growing but skepticism of the public was also growing. Five diagnostic themes reflect the conditions and circumstances in this period, leading from the later 1970s through the Lincoln Bicentennial and Civil War Sesquicentennial.

First, Lincoln’s interpretation grew more complex when historians, filmmakers and artists began to study Lincoln commemoration itself as an isolated subject of interest. Second, public museums in America entered an age of decline. Third, federal funding became available through competitive grants judged on peer-reviewed professional standards. The new funding and professionalization led to the American Association of Museums (AAM) accreditation program, designed to encourage nationally accepted museum quality standards. Fourth, Lincoln museums changed in response to the changing conditions. Lincoln sites grew in number and diversity. Finally, the celebration of the Lincoln Birth Bicentennial and Civil War Sesquicentennial brought the history of Lincoln museums and their connection to the modern museum movement to the current (2016) age.
Public history, the expression of the American past generated and consumed by non-academic audiences, began to portray the Civil War president both negatively and positively based on social and political interests. A more complex Lincoln was expressed in Gore Vidal’s historical novel *Lincoln*, which became a television miniseries in 1988. The novel *Lincoln* exemplified a negative side of Lincoln’s personality, portraying the Civil War President as merely concerned over union and his own personal greatness. It reduced the entire slave issue to only a distant motivator. Historians Richard Nelson Current and Mark Neely, Jr. responded to Gore Vidal’s selective use of sources and negatively slanted interpretation. Current declared the book “fictional history rather than historical fiction.” Neely added to this a condemnation of Gore’s refusal to acknowledge Lincoln’s past attacks on slavery. Most Lincoln museums, however, continued to present a positive image to the public.

After the mid-1970s, many Americans experienced waning interest in Lincoln. Many political issues of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal, combined to weaken patriotic beliefs. The popular, heroic image of Abraham Lincoln suffered, along with the images of other traditional American heroes. This general pattern continued until the approach of the

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319 Ibid., 255-256.

320 Ibid. Mark Neely Jr. at this time was the director of the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Lincoln birth bicentennial, when more nuanced interpretations of Lincoln and related studies seemed to restore a little of the public image lost in the later twentieth century.\textsuperscript{322}

Social conditions in America were changing. In his second book on Lincoln commemoration, Barry Schwartz did not directly blame the unpopular war in Vietnam, the Civil Rights upheaval, or political scandal for the disillusionment toward traditional American heroes in what he called the “post-heroic era.” However, Schwartz emphasized that because of all these joined conditions, Americans ceased to agree on what Lincoln stood for, and manipulated his reputation to attack those with whom they disagreed.\textsuperscript{323} Lincoln was no longer a symbol of unity or a revered image to the cynical generation that reached maturity in the 1970s. Schwartz noted that the age of shrines that unquestionably venerated Lincoln had ended, and although some Americans continued to use Lincoln’s image to illustrate their ideal American, the previous feelings of “deep reverence” were gone.\textsuperscript{324}

Historian Merrill D. Peterson also made this observation in his long-term study of Lincoln recognition in \textit{Lincoln in American Memory}.\textsuperscript{325} Peterson noted that although scholars still published on Lincoln, the age of his veneration seemed to have passed. Americans ignored Lincoln’s birthday and used his image humorously in advertising. Even the Lincoln Memorial was showing a decline in visitation.\textsuperscript{326}

\textsuperscript{322} Schwartz, \textit{Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era}; Barr, \textit{Loathing Lincoln}.

\textsuperscript{323} Schwartz, \textit{Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era}, 200-201.


\textsuperscript{325} Merrill D. Peterson, \textit{Lincoln in American Memory} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
R. Gerald McMurtry, lifelong Lincoln scholar and director of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, discussed his observation that African Americans began turning away from an interest in the Emancipation Proclamation and Lincoln’s traditional image as emancipator. McMurtry noticed African American visitors obviously ignoring the original signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation or verbally declaring opposition to honoring the document. He had this artifact removed to avoid further controversy in the galleries of his museum.327

The revival of an anti-Lincoln attitude evolved from social upheaval and Civil Rights debates of the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Arthur Zilversmit summarized this social conflict’s influence in all historical projects that focused on Lincoln. “In the 1960s, when race was an overriding concern, our search for self-definition through looking at our roots led to a heated controversy over the real meaning of Abraham Lincoln.”328 Before the 1960s, many Americans had revered Lincoln as a prominent, later-generation Founding Father and the Great Emancipator. However, this position came with a serious dichotomy. Many African-Americans who had honored his memory came to reject him because of the failed dream of equality. Activist and scholar Lerone Bennett, Jr., for example, challenged the authenticity of Lincoln’s anti-slavery reputation because of his slowness in addressing the issue and his comments in the 1858 debates with Steven Douglas. Bennett argued, “if Lincoln pointed the way to racial justice, why,
in over one hundred years had we neglected to follow his path.” Bennett added a harsher charge that Americans were indeed following Lincoln’s path, but that Lincoln’s path was the “embodiment of the American racist tradition.”

Arthur Zilversmit’s brief historiographical study of the academic and public history responses to this national anti-Lincoln literature included a review of a conflict between polarized views of Lincoln. In his article titled “Lincoln and the Problem of Race: A Decade of Interpretations,” Zilversmit traced the attempts to counter negative attitudes toward President Lincoln and reviewed them in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, and Watergate. This article traced the issue from Bennett’s 1968 article in *Ebony* until the early 1980s, when Lincoln scholars had finally constructed an answer to Bennett’s charges. Zilversmit noted that popular and professional history existed in parallel realms in American society. This illuminated the need for a broader and deeper interpretation of Lincoln than had been undertaken prior to the Civil Rights controversy. There was often a great tension between popular and academic history, as well as between those who felt America had often failed to live up to its ideals and those who preferred the traditional narrative’s simplistic patriotic themes. Museums connected with the Lincoln community made the needed interpretative adjustments slowly, reflecting the public’s debate over the real Lincoln legacy.

The bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976 showed some promise for a reversal of the negative trends. Many communities attempted to create local museums in

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331 Ibid.
order to tap into what seemed to be an unlimited heritage tourism market. By the later twentieth century, heritage tourism had become a major player in the economic life of the nation. By the late 1980s and 1990s, the professional literature for museums anticipated the growing tourism market as a means to encourage museums and historic preservation. Promoters of this movement understood the public interest in legitimate historic sites and objects. They suggested that heritage tourism should receive funding and large-scale marketing similar to that provided in support of other types of commercial tourism. Many community supporters viewed historic preservation and large museums as economic opportunities.

The positive image of a growing heritage tourism market continued in popular and professional literature and museum conferences into the early 1990s. The museum community had been growing throughout the mid to later twentieth century. During the twenty years from 1970 to 1990, American communities established at least 3,200 new museums and expanded even more. This growth only lasted a brief time, to the apparent surprise of many museum boosters and professionals.

As the youngest of the baby boom generation entered adulthood, the growth in museums ended. The mid-1970s marked the high point in museum attendance nationwide. A long growth of interest in heritage tourism, museums, and historic sites culminated in the early 1970s. By the late 1970s, the decline or leveling in attendance

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had started at many sites. Changes in American culture coming out of the 1960s and 1970s only reached the museum community at the end of this period.\textsuperscript{335}

Recent quantitative research suggests that the age of the family vacation and the constantly expanding market for nationalist heritage began a long-term decline as early as the late 1970s after continuous expansion since 1945.\textsuperscript{336} The time that many museum planners had hoped would be a chance for constant growth was in fact the beginning of slow declines. It may be that the museum profession was late to notice the changes in American culture because the earlier part of the century had been so rich in museum growth.

Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky’s research affirmed this declining attendance. Through his sampling of National Park Service sites and Mount Vernon, he noticed that after a high point in the 1960s, visitation at museum and heritage sites leveled off and in many instances declined nationwide. Even the “banner year” of 1976 fell short of projections and did not stem the general decline.\textsuperscript{337} Zelinsky noted the decline of attendance even at the Lincoln tomb in Springfield, Illinois. In his study period, the Tomb lost visitation from a peak in 1968 of 756,432 down to 296,056 in 1982. The drop was notably significant, but what caused the declines remained unclear.\textsuperscript{338}

\footnotetext{335}{Jackie Hogan, \textit{Lincoln, Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America} (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011); Schwartz, \textit{Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era}.}

\footnotetext{336}{Susan Sessions Rugh, \textit{Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations} (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 2.}


\footnotetext{338}{Ibid., 100-101.}
In attempting to locate the cause of this decline, sociologists Barry Schwartz and Jackie Hogan investigated several major Lincoln sites that suffered declines in visitation and a shrinking percentage of potential visitors from 1970 to 2000. There was a marked decline in visitation at The Lincoln Birthplace, Boyhood Home in Indiana, New Salem State Park, the Springfield Home, and Lincoln Tomb. The demonstrably fewer visitors at many national and local sites were a great concern to museums, according to museum veteran Cary Carson. Even large sites such as Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, and Monticello no longer commanded the numbers in the twenty-first century that they did in the mid-1970s. The decline was not well understood through objective research, but appeared linked to the changing visitor expectations and population demographics. There was also more competition in the United States from increasing numbers of other group entertainments available.

Historian Susan Sessions Rugh helped define this change in her creatively named book *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations*. Rugh commented that the American family vacation, promoted in the 1940s through 1970s, “began to disappear as the baby boomers grew up.” Rugh went on claiming that the size and types of households changed and American workers seemed to have less time for vacations. It lost its status as a national activity.

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341 Rugh, *Are We There Yet?* 181.
Recent prescriptive literature generated through commercial research groups working with major museums and cultural agencies reinforces this theory. The Museum Audience Research blog claimed a National Endowment for the Humanities survey documented the waning in visitation by 2013. The analysis blamed the 8 million-visitor decline from the “peak” (c. 1975), on fewer young, educated whites who are attending. Older generations have been attending at the same rate, but younger visitors are not joining them.  

The decline has been very hard to measure as few sites actually collected or shared consistent data publicly. However, completed research regarding museum visitation confirmed the worst fears for some, but offered some hope, too. Carson noted that history museums were appearing “dead last” in family vacation interest surveys. This was a drastic change from the mid-twentieth century. However, a different but not very expensive operations change had made many sites much more interesting and engaging. Carson reported that the use of storytelling drew people into the historic sites and museums. This activity offered a return to the roots of the early public museum. The expansion of storytelling improved visitor engagement, but it did not cure the demographic shift. To attract visitors, a museum’s story could not just provide details, but must answer the great question of why this site or these artifacts were important. The message must answer the pressing question: So what? This is the same question pioneer National Park interpreter Freeman Tilden taught in his book *Interpreting our Heritage* in

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342 Rugh, *Are We There Yet?*, 182.


344 Ibid.
The interpreter wraps the visitors’ experiences in a story.\textsuperscript{345} The well-crafted stories allowed visitors to relate to the historic site and perhaps envision themselves there in the past.

The roots of professional standards in the museum field lead back to the Smithsonian Institution of the 1890s and the American Association of Museums. In the 1920s and 1930s, the American Association of Museums published a series of museum studies texts by Laurence Vail Coleman. The many subsequent calls for updated national conservation and education standards went unanswered in most museums until 1976 when the 94\textsuperscript{th} Congress passed an update to the Museum Services Act.

The Museum Services Act established the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) as an independent federal agency working in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution and American Association of Museums. The IMS coordinated with the already established National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. IMS used competitive grant programs to reward progressive museums that became more educational and inclusive. The legislation stated that the IMS’s purpose was to improve the professional quality of American museums. Grant reviewers encouraged museums to invest in the professional skills of paid and volunteer staff and match their museums to national standards. To encourage greater public support, the IMS also made grants to help museums create cooperative associations for public projects and funded specialized programs for underserved audiences. Through the extremely useful General Operating Support Grant, the IMS funded hard-to-raise administrative

costs for conserving and preserving collections.\footnote{Museum Services Act of 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-462, 90 Stat. 1975 (1976).\; https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-90/pdf/STATUTE-90-Pg1971.pdf.} For the first time since the Franklin Roosevelt administration, rural museums, like many sites in Lincolnland, were able to gain funding to expand programs, gain access to professional literature, and hire a growing number of public historians trained in museum work.

By the early 1990s, the American Association of Museums had rewritten ethics statements for museums establishing the nature of the museums’ public trust and the status of historic, artistic and cultural collections. Many museum leaders hoped that the public recognition of their unique ethics would encourage trust and future donations and active participation. Museum professionals wanted to avoid public confusion between for-profit museums and non-profit museums through the adoption of ethic codes and standard practices.

The movement to professionalize came at this time when museums were on the increase across the United States. Lincoln museums followed this trend with nine new Lincoln sites joining the ranks of American museums during the 1970s. These included sites in Illinois, Kentucky, and even in Delaware, Maryland and Tennessee. (See Appendix B) Each of these new sites relied on the Lincoln name to target regional audiences. In 1977, a long-established collection and research center at Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) became a public museum for the first time, under the support of Colonel Harlan David Sanders. LMU’s Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum (ALLM) and the Lincoln Museum at Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois were the only two Lincoln museums managed within institutions of higher education. Most
university collections exist as research centers only and not as public museums (see Appendix A).

Lincoln sites began their new age of professionalization in the 1990s and into the Lincoln Bicentennial decade with the establishment of several new national museums and major remaking of some old ones. This progress in museum operations reflects the overall changes that took place in American museums. Professional influence drove some institutions to create exhibits to portray Lincoln with greater complexity, particularly dealing with the controversy within his administration, for example, or the policy of total war. These efforts have taken place mostly in larger museums with multi-subject collections. The Illinois State Historical Society, The Chicago Historical Society and the Huntington Library in California provide excellent examples of exhibition teams working to eschew simple heritage messages and provide legitimate controversy for their guests.

In 1979, the Illinois State Historical Society joined with the Chicago Public Library to build a joint exhibit on Lincoln’s life told through an extensive collection of documents. The catalogue of this exhibition preserves 107 text labels and descriptions of the documents. The added text, highlighted by original documents, helped visitors see Lincoln as a long-term professional politician as well as a very successful attorney. This collection presented a more complex image of an Abraham Lincoln, who worked hard to reach the political heights he did. Joint museum exhibits combined special assets to make this a major event. The extensive collections owned by the Illinois Historical Society could reach a larger audience in Chicago, and the historic Grand Army of the
Republic Memorial Hall of the Chicago Public Library provided a historically appropriate environment for this exhibition.\textsuperscript{347}

The Chicago Historical Society (CHS) had hosted arguably the earliest Lincoln exhibit when it displayed a signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War. Though the CHS became one of the largest holders of Lincoln materials, the administration made massive changes during the mid to late 1970s to the museum’s mission and collection goals. The new mission to become a true city museum required a reduction of Lincoln exhibitions and the integration of Lincoln into the history of Chicago. A new exhibit that interpreted the history of Chicago replaced the Chicago museum’s disassembled Memorial Hall exhibit. Under the leadership of Harold Skramstad, who came to the Museum in 1974, the CHS made many innovations in exhibit design and planning as well as in research goals in order to reach diverse, urban audiences. The new exhibit replacing all of the commemorative galleries bore the title, \textit{Chicago: Creating New Traditions.}\textsuperscript{348} This change was also a sign of national changes to follow by the time of the Bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth in 2009. The CHS did not completely abandon Lincoln. He remained a part of Chicago’s larger history, merged with a complex, urban narrative. Lincoln remained a theme limited to temporary exhibits in conjunction with other agencies, to support national and regional celebrations.

The Huntington Library in San Marino, California designed a major exhibit with multiple partners supported by both private and public funding. This site marked a strong


effort to abandon the traditional reverential images of Lincoln rejected in the 1960s and 1970s and merged several different collections together into a “blockbuster” format—a temporary exhibit with extreme popular appeal. The purpose of a blockbuster exhibit was to increase gate traffic into the museum under the belief that once a guest visits the museum for the special exhibit they will return for other events and exhibits. For example, science and natural history museums often used dinosaur themes to create high attraction. This format was also quite expensive and required greater funding, and often partners who helped to fund or supply added artifacts.

The Huntington Library is a collection-based research institution and library, but like a museum, it focuses on communicating with guests through exhibits to introduce new themes to inspire visitors to deeper understandings. The Huntington Library had extensive exhibition space for temporary projects covering a wide range of subjects. The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America was a traveling project that also shared time at the Chicago Historical Society. This grant-funded project encouraged the blurring of lines between types of agencies in the museum and education communities. Federal funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supported collaborative projects between libraries and museums to make the greatest impact on a region. The merged museum and library collections allowed the exhibit committee greater latitude to create object-centric exhibitions and to display a more complex image of a very human Abraham Lincoln. The format of the blockbuster allowed the museums to market their sites for a focused time and to widen their related projects to include

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349 The IMLS was formed in 1996 as a merger between the Institute of Museum Services and the Library Programs Office, formerly part of the Department of Education.
symposia, publications, and special events. This joint exhibit also illustrated how academic and public history could merge their efforts for projects to give the public access to current research ideas and special, rarely seen collections of primary sources. *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* at the Huntington Library lasted from 1993 to 1994 and represented a major effort to promote Lincoln to the current skeptical age. (See Figure 31).

![Figure 31. Special exhibit-based publications and souvenirs from the Huntington Library. (Author’s Photograph)](image)

This was a new tactic to expand potential crowds and address larger themes. It also demonstrated the various types of public and private funding available in the late twentieth century for arts and humanities for agencies able to make a strong case for public support. The two major agencies sponsoring this joint exhibit, the Huntington Library in Los Angeles and the Illinois State Historical Library, funded their portions of this exhibition. The prime public funds came through the National Endowment for the Humanities. Private funding came from several major corporations, including Bank of
America and Nestlé of USA. This exhibit project illustrated the triad system of museum funding established since the mid-twentieth century, which included various public and private institutions, major private individuals, and federal and state support through an arts and humanities agency.

Advertisements and announcements throughout the project claimed it was the “largest exhibition of original Lincoln materials ever mounted.” The next year, *The Last Best Hope on Earth* came to the Chicago Historical Society, which expanded the show with their major holdings from the Lincoln household. The larger the exhibit, the easier it was for marketing people to attract crowds to this exhibition.

Successful travel exhibits begin with text and graphics, and rely on historical specialists who draft the core themes. Afterwards, educators or interpreters and exhibit designers mold the material into a product that will draw a response from a public. The academic reviews for this new exhibit were not universally positive. Rita Roberts of Scripps College criticized its curators for ignoring Lincoln’s political actions and speeches, his colonization promotion, and African American involvement in the Civil War as soldiers and in sabotaging the Southern cause. However, expectations of academic historians have not always blended well with museum visitors’ expectations.

The national celebration of the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth provided audiences and venues for historians and publics to participate in discussions, celebrations and reenactments of Lincoln’s life. Starting at the beginning of the new millennium, many national museums and Lincoln specialists began to plan how to use this moment to reintroduce Lincoln to new generations of students and museum visitors.

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Some exhibits dealt directly with traditional attacks on Lincoln’s controversial actions and legacy in American history. A traveling exhibit by the National Constitution Center and American Library Association used only text and pictures from archives to explain the complex relationship between Lincoln’s policies and the United States Constitution. *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War* was an exhibit composed exclusively of graphics. The designers, working on this project at the end of the Lincoln Bicentennial, used the Civil War Sesquicentennial to open the debate over Lincoln’s influence in America’s long-term change. The question asked visitors to decide: “Was he a calculating politician willing to accommodate slavery, or a principled leader justly celebrated as the Great Emancipator?”

(See Figure 32)

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Historical images of Abraham Lincoln in art provided inspiration and foundational material for artistic commemoration, creating new topics for joint and individual museums during the Lincoln Bicentennial. *Portraying Lincoln: Man of Many Faces* was a joint art exhibition exploring the image of Lincoln rather than his history. The exhibit catalogue stated this “is the first major museum exhibition to demonstrate through the visual arts the multiplicity of responses that the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln have engendered.”

Harold Holzer has published several books relating to the artistic image of Lincoln. These included a photographic study titled *The Lincoln Family*, and a study of public art called *Changing Image*. Numerous published books highlighted the many outdoor Lincoln sculptures. Lincoln collectors and curators received referencing help with two volumes on Lincoln art and collectables: *Abraham Lincoln: The Image of His Greatness* in 2009 and *Abraham Lincoln: Beyond the American Icon* in 2012. Despite the heroic titles, the encyclopedic collections identified thousands of varying types of collectables made to commemorate Lincoln. These types of items have become more common in museum exhibits.

Beginning in 2007, in preparation for the Bicentennial, the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) built a blockbuster exhibit. The KHS accessed several Lincoln collections to bring together a large grouping of original artifacts from several other Kentucky institutions, private collectors, and the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum (ALLM). Extensive media was provided by merging efforts with Kentucky Education Television (KET) and their documentary “I Too Am a Kentuckian.” Curators of the exhibit, titled

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“Kentucky’s Abraham Lincoln,” used the most common mythic images of Lincoln and “unpacked” them for visitors. The various historic images Americans used to describe Lincoln were exhibited and explained. These included frontier settler, self-made man, and political leader, savior of the Union, emancipator, and martyr. This exhibit went beyond Lincoln’s life and told of how Americans remembered Lincoln, especially in Kentucky, since his assassination.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky also hosted national celebrations at the Lincoln Birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Various symposia hosted at colleges, universities, and museums focused on reaching a bigger audience of educated but amateur historians. These same groups also hosted several teacher in-service workshops during 2007 and 2008, to prepare instructors to teach related lessons from updated secondary sources, and to provide teachers with new primary sources.

The Lincoln bicentennial boosters in Illinois, who still claimed their state as the Land of Lincoln, received strong support through the opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) in 2005. Although the Illinois Historical Society and State Library housed one of the finest Lincoln library and artifact collections in the nation, this agency had never been able to develop a major presidential library and archives until this time. The grand opening included many state and national dignitaries, such as President George W. Bush. Dan Guillory, English Professor emeritus from Millikin University, commented that this museum meant many things to different visitors and could be “treated as a church, a video game, a library or a classroom.”

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provided an example of museums seeking to attract different visitors through non-traditional exhibit forms.

Logan County, just north of Springfield, competed for Lincoln heritage attention during the Bicentennial using other local heritage features. Logan County’s theme associated Lincoln heritage with old Route 66 leading from Chicago and running from north-east to southwest. Lincoln-related sites such as Lincoln Heritage Museum of Lincoln College and a reconstructed Logan County courthouse shared tourism space with auto-related nostalgia.

The State of Indiana became very newsworthy during the Lincoln Bicentennial for the closure of one of the oldest and best known Lincoln museums and research centers, the Lincoln Library and Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The corporate foundation that owned the collection forced the Lincoln museum to close at the very point it expected to receive the greatest attention. The Lincoln Library and Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, had remained a major research site in Lincoln studies from its public opening in 1928 through the end of the twentieth century. From 1992 to 1995, the museum’s parent company, Lincoln Financial Group, supported a major, $6,000,000 expansion of its museum and archival facility. This expansion increased the nature, size, and ability of the new Lincoln Museum to reach more visitors. The September 1995 Lincoln Lore announced the opening of the new 30,000 square foot museum facility.

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355 The Lincoln Financial Group formally called the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, purchased research materials and artifacts throughout the early twentieth century to form this significant collection. A separate non-profit arm of the Lincoln Financial Group, the Lincoln Financial Foundation owned the collections for the corporation.
Apparently, the Lincoln Financial Group expected the new facility to attract many more visitors and become self-sustaining.\textsuperscript{356} The Lincoln Library and Museum status changed from its position within the Lincoln Financial Foundation to an independent non-profit corporation. In hindsight, it appears that the purpose of moving the operations of the Lincoln collection to a private firm that could fundraise independently was the corporation’s first step toward disentangling itself from the museum and research center. The collections remained under the ownership of the Lincoln Financial Group, while the Lincoln Library and Museum boasted its new interactive exhibition and facility. Thirteen years after the facility opening, and just a year before the Lincoln Bicentennial, The Lincoln Financial Foundation, which still owned the collection, decided to close the Library and Museum on June 30, 2008. A news release from March 3, 2008, publicly claimed that the Foundation was “proactively pursuing a solution that benefits historical education and scholarship and exposes the collection to the largest possible audience.”\textsuperscript{357} Although the new museum drew about 40,000 visitors annually, it was not enough to maintain corporate interest.

The former C.E.O. of Lincoln National Corporation explained at the Indiana Association of Historians meeting in 2009 that the decision to close came after the headquarters of the company moved from Fort Wayne to Philadelphia. The corporation decided not to sell but to donate the entire collection as a single entity to an appropriate site.\textsuperscript{358} The reaction was extensive and very vocal. At least 40 museums and alliances of

\textsuperscript{356} Joan L. Flinspach, “To Our Guests,” \textit{The Lincoln Lore} no. 1842 (September 1995): 3; Don Davenport, “Lincoln Sites in Indiana,” \textit{Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History} 3, no. 3 (Summer 1991), 27.

museums competed for this collection. Major national museums such as the Smithsonian Institution, Chicago Historical Society, National Park Service, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum competed with many smaller agencies for the attention of the Lincoln Financial Foundation.

The collection moved to a partnership of the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne and the Indiana State Museum in Indianapolis. This arrangement took advantage of the access and professional support available. Allen County Public Library had a previous partnership with Internet Archive with the capacity to digitize millions of pages of manuscripts per month. Objects and art pieces went to the Indiana State Museum, because of their new facility and because they had the ability to use the collection to develop major exhibitions every three years. Instead of creating fewer, more extensive collections, this closure led to further diffusion of Lincoln materials.

Writer Ron Elliott and photographer John W. Snell published an illustrated guidebook for the Lincoln Bicentennial commemoration. Titled *Through the Eyes of Lincoln: A Modern Photographic Journey*, this book featured color photographs of historic sites, monuments, and documents. As in the past era of Lincoln tourism guidebooks, these writers attempted to tell a brief biography through images of attractively portrayed Lincoln sites. Like a literary version of the blockbuster exhibit composed of multiple Lincoln collections, *Through the Eyes of Lincoln* combined various

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359 Ibid., 323-325.

sites together to make a stronger image for each age of Lincoln’s life. The birthplace chapter focused primarily on the Sinking Spring farm, but also included the Lincoln Homestead State Park and the Knob Creek Farm. The narrative admitted continuing interest in the family history of Abraham Lincoln and the past interest in his birth conditions. Sites on Lincoln’s ancestry and the Marriage Temple at Harrodsburg still defended the marriage of Lincoln’s parents prior to his birth, thereby documenting his “legitimacy” in the world of American heritage.

Current historians of the Civil War era such as James Horton, Ronald White, and James McPherson have credited Lincoln with new strength by trusting that Lincoln’s own words reflected his true beliefs. These writers claim that though he may have been conservative, his actions became revolutionary. Lincoln’s impressive ability to change and grow has drawn modern praise. Current commemoration provides Lincoln with more room to be human and acknowledges the limitations of his age.361

Three new museums opened in the twenty years leading to the Lincoln Birth Bicentennial. Each represented a different means to allow their visitors to explore Lincoln in ways not available even in the mid-twentieth century. The first of these three museums occurred because of long-term public interest in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C. This monument’s original purpose did not include a museum. Its designer, Henry Bacon, was strongly opposed to any museum use of this structure.362

361 When the PBS documentary Looking for Lincoln came out in 2009, historians James O. Horton and David Blight repeated a belief that Lincoln had changed during the Civil War. That ability to change was the legacy they were willing to commemorate. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/featured/watch-looking-for-lincoln/290/ . For a brief historiographical essay on Lincoln interpretation see Kevin Fields, “Historical Trends and Interpretations”, (part II), Lincoln Herald 107, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 11-30.
The Monument’s central location and Lincoln content provided a powerful backdrop for generations of activists to protest a wide range of issues, especially related to civil rights. In the early 1990s, at the instigation of a high school class, the National Park Service (NPS) transformed the lower level into a small museum space. The NPS designed and installed a series of brief exhibits titled *Lincoln’s Living Legacy*. This exhibit, installed in 1994, interpreted the background of the Lincoln Memorial and how it was been used by many groups to protest for their rights in American Society. This exhibit and its interpretative film also became the center of the culture wars between groups demanding control over public interpretation of major characters in American history\(^{363}\) (See Figure 33).

![Exhibition titled *Lincoln's Living Legacy* in the Lincoln Memorial. (Author's photograph)](image)

Figure 33. Exhibition titled *Lincoln's Living Legacy* in the Lincoln Memorial. (Author's photograph)

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\(^{363}\) Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism*, 132-139.
The second of the three museums opened in 2005. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) was such a large project that it could not escape notice. One of the claims of the new Presidential Library and Museum was that its emphasis had changed. According to its interim director Thomas Schwartz, “the era of a heroic Lincoln is over.” The decline in all forms of heroism during the latter half of the twentieth century made it impossible to maintain the unquestioned unblemished image in new exhibits. While not drastically changing the traditional image, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) used highly advanced and interactive exhibit techniques strongly influenced by current public entertainment ideas to promote an image that was both traditional yet very entertaining. The coined expression “edutainment” became the vehicle to reach a young audience raised in a post-heroic age. Following in the commercial habit of using superlatives to market itself, the ALPLM announced that it was “the center of gravity for all things Lincoln.” With over seventy Lincoln museums, research collections, and historic sites, any center of Lincoln programming had to share the spotlight with many other centers. Many museum and tourism reviewers were glad to see that the large Lincoln collections in Illinois at the State Historical Society and Library finally had a major home and exhibits worthy of a national museum. The new museum opened to great expectations, but professional reviews of this exhibit were mixed. A number of Illinois-based scholars were very supportive of the engaging exhibits, while some reviewers questioned the use of extensive technology without exhibiting the original materials belonging to Abraham Lincoln or his family. Lincoln historian John Y.


365 Ibid, 246.
Simon called this museum “six flags over Lincoln” because of the Disneyesque special effects. The accusation was somewhat accurate, as the exhibit designers, BRC Imagination Arts, had worked for Disney in the past, as well as for other major museums and government agencies. Reviews for *Journal of American History* and *Public Historian* came out in favor of the exhibit’s techniques and efforts to teach a serious subject to a new generation acclimated to digital technology. Historian Keith Erickson reviewed this museum while a doctoral candidate at Indiana University, taking his young children and observing them as they interacted with the materials. He praised the museum, because it “engulfs its visitors in a sophisticated, twenty-first century rendition of Lincoln’s world.” During the review, Erickson noted that the “glitziest productions” were not located in the galleries, but segregated to special theaters. This allowed visitors to tour galleries without the drama programs, which were based on special themes and stories. Exhibit designers relegated original objects to a “Treasure Gallery” and displayed in a form that removed them from historical contexts. Museums, unlike theme parks, cannot afford constantly upgraded technology exhibits. Unless museums exist as unique institutions, they will appear as poor cousins to commercial parks and

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368 Ibid., 94.

369 Ibid., 96.

370 Myron Marty, “The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum,” *The Public Historian* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 187. Several reviewers noted this particular format, which was also noted personally in November of 2008 during a professional trip to Springfield, Illinois.
displays. Their themes and stories should spin around physical remnants of the past and artifacts interpreted within their historical and social contexts as much as possible.

The third museum goes furthest to help its public see the iconic Lincoln in a much more complex light. The President’s Cottage at Old Soldiers’ Home is one of few museums to overcome the downward curve in attendance through innovative programming. It has demonstrated regularly increasing attendance by emphasizing dynamic storytelling formats, increasing personal contact with visitors, and creating opportunities to visit the museums for a wide range of public events and activities. This museum, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was a historic site in Washington, D.C., which functioned as a retreat for Lincoln. Its interpretation touched the president’s policies and personal life. As a very recent institution, opened to the public in 2008, the Soldiers Home has almost no collections. Using a combination of current audio-visual technology and sparsely furnished spaces in the historic house, guides tell stories of the Lincolns’ life here and the development of the Emancipation Proclamation. The director of the Soldiers Home, Erin Mast, wrote that each interpretation space focused “around one of Lincoln’s influential ideas or around an action that inspired or resulted from one of Lincoln’s ideas.”

371 Interview with Erin C. Mast, director of President Lincoln’s Cottage, (February 10, 2014).

372 Erin C. Mast, “Furnished With Ideas: A New Model of Historic House Interpretation,” in Museums of Ideas Commitment and Conflict (Edinburgh, Scotland: Museum Etc., 2011): 210. Some information was also furnished in an interview with Erin Carlton Mast, Executive Director of President Lincoln’ Cottage, February 10, 2014. See also President Lincoln’s Cottage Brochure, (A National Trust Historic Site)
The Soldier’s Home is a historic house “furnished with ideas.”\textsuperscript{373} (See figure 34) A temporary exhibition on display in 2013-2014 titled “Can You Walk Away?” was about current international slavery. This exhibit began in the historic space of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and related the slave question Lincoln faced to current international slavery. This type of exhibit attempted to challenge visitors’ views rather than to provide the comfort of a mythic, patriotic past. The house and rooms are the artifacts, which immerse the visitor in the story.

More museums in the twenty-first century have joined groups and associations, to improve public visibility and lower similar expenses such as advertising. Lincoln bicentennial commemorations in the Commonwealth of Kentucky gave a rebirth to the most recent Lincoln trail, the Kentucky Lincoln Heritage Trail Alliance. As far back as

\textsuperscript{373} ”Furnished with Ideas,” 212.
1913, Lincoln sites attempted to connect with each other through the bonds of tourism and share a published and marked trail. Starting in April of 2009 the Kentucky Lincoln Sites Committee, which originated as a Lincoln Bicentennial agency, evolved into the Kentucky Lincoln Heritage Trail Alliance. They were successful in networking diverse types of museums and historic sites with the state and national celebrations of the Lincoln Bicentennial. In 2009, the committee began to change their mission to continue as a partnership. The Alliance took the outline left over from the Heritage Trail of the early 1960s, which still had a few extant signs. In 2013 and 2014, the Alliance published their first tourism map locating all Lincoln sites in and bordering Kentucky. At the same time, the Alliance formed an education project to extend the story of Lincoln to include his family connections in Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia.

The commemorations and associations of other Lincoln sites, founded during the Lincoln bicentennial, expanded during the Civil War Sesquicentennial and new sites were added to an expanded tourism’s Lincolnland. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission evolved into a granting foundation after 2009 and by 2011 began supporting major commemorations with Civil War and Lincoln themes.

Using the historic venue of the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C., a consortium of regional museums and heritage groups, called the Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance, developed a Sesquicentennial opening symposium. The Willard Intercontinental Hotel hosted this event, in part because it was the first place the Lincoln family lived after

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374 Warren Greer, Meeting Minutes; Kentucky Lincoln Sites Meeting, April 7, 2009.

375 Ibid.

376 Warren Greer, Kentucky Lincoln Heritage Trail Alliance; Education Planning Session Minutes. (Richmond KY: Richmond Tourism Office), May 21, 2014.
moving to Washington, D.C., but its primary significance was its location for the February, 1861 Washington Peace Convention called to avoid a civil war.\textsuperscript{377}

The symposium featured several well-known Civil War and Lincoln scholars inside and outside of academia. All the featured speakers had also been regular presenters at Lincoln events during the recent Bicentennial. Historian James I. Robinson, Jr. was the lead presenter, who besides introducing the theme also discussed the changed nature of commemoration between the Centennial in the 1960s and the Sesquicentennial. It was an introspective look into the changing nature of public history and the national politics that often crashed into public memory. Robinson was an especially appropriate choice to discuss this theme, as he was the former executive director of the National Civil War Centennial Commission from 1961 through the end of the Commemoration.\textsuperscript{378}

Compared to the Civil War commemorations of the 1960s, exhibits and programs of the Civil War Sesquicentennial featured Lincoln much more commonly in his presidential role as policy maker. Historian Caroline Janney reinforced this observation with her comparison of 100th and 150\textsuperscript{th} Civil War commemorations. In addition, she claimed that the public “debates surrounding the war’s cause, legacy, and meaning remained so infused with tension that the sesquicentennial was commemorated without a national commission.”\textsuperscript{379} The 1960s Civil Rights upheaval did not prevent a national


\textsuperscript{379} Caroline E. Janney, Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 308.
recognition of the Civil War. In the twenty-first century, private and state level agencies were all that were available to maintain the national commemoration of this anniversary.

The Libraries of America provided a national public history program at the beginning of the Sesquicentennial and distributed it to museums and libraries across America. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Library Association developed a decentralized commemorative and educational program for the Sesquicentennial: *Let’s Talk About it: Making Sense of the American Civil War*. With historian Edward L. Ayers as its academic advisor, the American Library Association published an anthology of Civil War documents and unified them with complementary publications to provide to local book clubs. Independent libraries hired regional scholars to lead the book discussions, which often accompanied traveling exhibits provided by a regional museum. Changes in Constitutional interpretation and national identity received emphasis over the military campaigns and leaders. Lincoln and his policies and political thinking remained a strong focus for this program and many others like it.

Those opposed to Lincoln reverence have not remained silent. Anti-Lincoln rhetoric continued into the twenty-first century. Historian John McKee Barr, who published *Loathing Lincoln: An American tradition from the Civil War to the Present*, postulated that the rancor at recent Civil War and Lincoln commemoration was only part of the long history of a large minority of political activists who take issue with Lincoln’s part in American history. To them he was neither the emancipator nor savior, but the tyrant who established American imperialism and killed the old republic.  

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During the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century the museum community has battled to expand audiences and make their sites more meaningful to an increasingly diverse population. Major museums such as the Chicago Historical Society or the Henry Ford only used Lincoln as part of their greater content selection. Some museums work very hard to share elements of future programs and exhibits with other stakeholders, encouraging involvement from people who are not part of the museum staff.

Many museums limited by Lincoln’s life and related content continue struggle to improve attendance. Exhibits and program techniques using advanced technology will only keep visitor attention while the technology is new. Even living history has limits in audience retention and growth. The deeper stories of Lincoln’s struggles and his controversy are the most promising focus for museum futures. However, those issues will place museums within the political battleground of national debate.

Lincoln still represents all the deepest and most divisive issues America has faced in over two centuries. Each political debate or election is a chance to bring Lincoln and his age to the forefront. Museums are not classrooms, yet neither are they pure entertainment. They are a complex middle ground for these divisive issues. Lincoln museums, as much as any other type of American museum, must be free to address complex and nuanced subjects with their publics.

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CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Lincoln’s overriding station in public memory originated directly from his position as the Civil War president. After his death, later generations commemorated Lincoln as the ideal American who, sociologist Jackie Hogan noted, became Americans’ “idealized reflection of ourselves—our beliefs, our agendas, and our distinctive characteristics.”382 Because his reputation became so large, his image and words evolved into a virtual promotional poster of cultural and political traits that Americans admired. These personal traits included honesty, humility, independence, and endurance.

Museums, historic sites and exhibits provide a ready source for understanding the meanings and influence a person or historic event holds in a society. Statues, monuments, and other commemorative structures also mark the landscape with historic images; but museums, historic sites, and related agencies possess a singularly layered message. They are consciously committed to an ongoing educational mission through which they continually reinterpret their subjects for the public. Museums as a place of public memory are unusually powerful because visitors’ emotional response to original objects adds tangible elements to historic stories. Lincoln museums have been especially important to the history of museums because they represent the popularization of museums for the middle class.

This dissertation has traced the history of public museums and historic preservation using Lincoln as the singular content area. Through the one hundred and fifty years since Lincoln’s assassination, the public need to commemorate Lincoln has

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contributed to the growth of all public museums and historic preservation. The following traits document the diagnostic elements used to study Lincoln and public museums, and show the importance of a study paralleling Lincoln commemoration with museum history. The first feature was the scattered nature of Lincoln’s possessions or relics preserved by the first generations of collectors. The second was the influences of nineteenth century commemorative traditions on the birth of public museums in general and Lincoln museums in particular. Thirdly, the Lincoln Centennial encouraged national feelings of patriotism and the desire make a profit from visitors to heritage sites. The fourth feature was the spreading access to automobiles that allowed growing numbers of visitors to see heritage sites in rural areas, where most Lincoln sites were located. The fifth element was the twin features of public funding and professionalization that supported a nationalization of museums and historic sites. Finally, the sixth influential feature studied was the rise and decline of the modern tradition of the family vacation and its influence on Lincoln sites.

Lincoln commemoration began during the murdered president’s funeral trip and extended throughout the later nineteenth century with statues, biographies, and Decoration Day oratories. During this time of early commemoration, two generations of collectors assembled vast holdings of books, pamphlets and relics related to Abraham Lincoln. Several of these collectors eventually donated their holdings to libraries, which became major Lincoln research centers or museums. These centers extended across the nation, well beyond areas where Lincoln lived and worked.

Approaching the end of that century, boosters began commemoration through the preservation of historic sites, special exhibits, and museums. These sites devoted to the
16th president also were among the earliest American public historic museums and preserved sites.

In the nineteenth century popular commemorations in the form of pageants, world fairs, and dime museums exploited public interest in popular topics and historic objects related to recent events. Each of these institutions formed a portion of the genealogy of modern public museums. These popular undertakings featured Lincoln and the Civil War and satisfied the public desire to reflect upon their experiences.

World fairs and expositions created a huge popular market for exciting exhibits and displays available to everyone. Several major fairs, beginning with the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, featured historical exhibits. Later World fairs often featured Lincoln exhibitions with historic log building, artifacts and the famous Lincoln funeral train car. Exhibit designers intended to produce an emotional response in visitors. When they opened local museums, community entrepreneurs attempted to reproduce these emotional experiences in their communities.

Pageants gave whole communities opportunity to express their history. Wearing historic costumes or an ancestor’s clothes, pageant participants marched in emotional processions symbolically reenacting a past event or historic age. These pageants used historically significant venues to increase the emotional appeal of their performances. This public participation branched into the practice of both public reenactments and professional living history. The outdoor historic site, Lincoln’s New Salem, became one of the first to combine historic reconstructions with historic pageants. The resulting merged historic performance influenced thousands of visitors to repeat similar performances in their own communities.
Dime museums were popular middle class amusements in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historic examples of dime museums include P. T. Barnum’s American Museum, Ripley’s Believe It or Not, and Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museums. Most major cities and recreation areas boasted a type of dime museum, often called Eden Musees, where visitors observed wax figures of historic characters, rare artifacts, and entertainments. Marketed to families as an educational experience, dime museums leaned strongly toward entertainment and excitement. They were places of amusement made attractive by their educational claims. Most early Lincoln and Civil War museums contained strong elements of this commercial institution. By using the dime museum format, the serious subject matter of the Civil War and national identity captured the attention and minds of a broad spectrum of “ordinary” Americans.

New Salem also represented another important element in the development of Lincoln museums and a new theme in the American museum movement. It focused on the stories of Lincoln’s growth within the frontier world of Illinois, giving rise to the American pioneer museum genre. Dedicated to displaying admired traits of individuals rather than rare artifacts, pioneer museums espoused a message of progress, independence, and determination. Historian David Lowenthal’s essay on “Pioneer Museums” was one of few analyses of Lincoln sites in the general study of American museums. Lowenthal noted that the pioneer museums, such as Lincoln’s New Salem State Park, Lincoln Homestead State Park, and Lincoln Pioneer Village, were not at all

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like other museums, but were “a unique set of ideas and values expressed in museum form.”

The descendants of a community’s pioneer population desired to preserve the stories of their ancestors more than geographical details or even historical accuracy. Lincoln’s frontier growth was especially important because of his presidency, but a frontier boy’s rise to the presidency also made the frontier even more important to visitors. There is a great opportunity to extend this line of study at other Lincoln sites. In 2014, there were still eight extant outdoor museums based on Lincoln and his youth that interpreted his pioneer world. As a group, these sites illustrate the pioneer myths prevalent in the early twentieth century through the 1950s (see Appendix A).

The mythic Lincoln log cabin became a prime example of the larger pioneer American myth, joining an attempt to explain an American uniqueness. These pioneer Lincoln sites influenced the beginning interest in “living history” as a popular interpretative feature. Lincoln’s Old Salem State Park (later renamed Lincoln’s New Salem) used drama and pageants, similar to much later living history techniques, in the early twentieth century. New Salem was very early in this movement, as only the second reconstructed historic community in the United States. A more definitive analysis of New Salem’s influence on living history practices will require an in-depth look into programs and attendance figures for New Salem from its first opening in 1918. A comparison of New Salem’s programs to those of the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts (the first living history museum in the United States), and the folk museum movement in Europe that began thirty years earlier, may yield valuable insights on the ways these influenced

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386 Ibid., 120-121.
museum practices. Of great interest would be documentation of the living history leaders who visited Lincoln sites years before starting their own museum careers. Other pioneer sites such as Lincoln’s Pioneer Village in Rockport, Indiana, Lincoln Homestead State Park in Kentucky, or relevant other state and national parks should be included in an in-depth examination to determine the level of visitor expectations of living personalities presenting historic programming.

The Centennial of Lincoln’s birth marked the first major increase in Lincoln commemoration, encouraging those born after the Civil War to look to Lincoln as the model American. The dedication of the Lincoln Birth Cabin memorial marked the ability for a national commemorative museum to exist in rural America. Additional preserved locations related to Lincoln’s life encouraged a patriotic attitude and a greater feeling of reconciliation between the aging veterans from both sides of the Civil War.  

After the First World War, Lincoln commemoration and museums exemplified the dual values of patriotism and profit, attended by the newly expanded automobile tourism. Automobile tourism fed a growing desire in American families to use their vacation time to teach American heritage to their children. Further research on this topic might address programming emphases, particularly related to how museums taught the heritage message and the extent to which they provided for visitors other than middle-class families with children.

Highway promoters claimed that new roads would become “pathways to patriotism.” Some roads became monuments to Lincoln such as the coast-to-coast  

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Lincoln Highway. In 1908, members of congress proposed and debated a memorial boulevard between Washington D.C. and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. New roads and the automobile made all forms of historical sites available to the growing number of travelers.

Commercial promotion for family vacations used heritage images along with other attractions to encourage greater travel and exploration. By the 1950s, family vacations grew into an American tradition. Lincoln sites were consistent attractions for the highly mobile pilgrims. Historians have completed a full body of research on recreation and vacations, but museum histories could use more studies of visitation data over time if available. Future studies into museums should integrate more quantitative research into visitation patterns.

Museum projects, even more than statues and monuments, require a long term commitment of people and assets. Once federal and state funding became available in the 1930s, more museums and historic sites stood a chance to open community institutions and preserve their historic sites. Public funding made available through arts and cultural agencies motivated local historical agencies to adopt modern standards. There was a tension between academic expectation for historical narratives and exhibits and the reality of a non-captive audience. When the National Park Service (NPS) began to absorb federal battlefields and other historic sites, the professionalization of the natural sciences and anthropology started influencing the private sector too. The NPS began to

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train academically educated historians to become “real park service men,” able to meet the public with their knowledge of history and the park they were representing.\textsuperscript{390}

Major Lincoln sites were an early part of this movement. The Peterson House (where Lincoln died) and Ford’s Theater were the first of the NPS’s Lincoln acquisitions. Over the next forty years, the NPS implemented standards in research, preservation, and material culture studies at sites in all portions of Lincolnland. The Birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky, the boyhood home in Indiana and the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois all became part of a federal chain of Lincoln sites.

Developing professional standards required the willingness and ability to create exhibits featuring complex messages. Topics such as Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus or total war first appeared in museums influenced by growing professional concerns for a deeper historical narrative. Larger institutions such as the Chicago Historical Society, Smithsonian Institution, and the National Park Service took risks to show the controversial elements in Lincoln’s life and administration. In this way, the use of academic research in museums resembled a “trickle down” system from well-funded sites with academic connections toward smaller and rural sites.

For many years, heritage tourism seemed to be a channel of unlimited museum growth. With small amounts of public money, the growing tourism industry provided an income stream for a rapidly growing number of museums. The years from the end of World War II through the mid-1970s saw constant increases in museum visitation. Changes in family and work patterns along with increases in fuel costs cut the growth

years short and started a steady decline in museum visitation throughout the United States that continues to be a challenge to museum policies (2016).

The sheer number of museums directly and indirectly associated with Lincoln far surpasses any other single historic subject in American museums. This comprehensive cross-section of museum types includes historic house museums, art museums, galleries, research libraries, trailside museums, community museums, living history museums, memorial shrines and burial sites, original structures and reconstructed villages.

As a distinguishable subcategory of the American museum, Lincoln sites began by leading the way in adopting practices that achieved acceptance in the broader museum movement. Lincoln sites, like the other American public museums that grew alongside them, were shaped as much by the commercial dime museums as by the earlier, more elitist cabinets of curiosity. The earliest Lincoln sites also were pioneers in living history, historic preservation, and the development of the historic house museums. Moreover, Lincoln sites were populist institutions, at times closely linked to several national Civil War battlefields and monuments.

Chronologically, Lincoln museums span nearly the whole development of American museums. New Lincoln museums have begun in three centuries, from the nineteenth until the twenty-first. Despite the problems with decreasing visitation, eleven new Lincoln museums formed between 2000 and 2014, including galleries and historic sites (See Appendix B). Other places continue to use Lincoln as a means to prove their site’s importance. For example, in the very rural area of Lecompton, Kansas, community leaders preserved and restored two historic sites from the Territorial years and conflicts of the 1850s. As this conflict helped lead finally to secession and the American Civil
War, the marketing efforts promote this site as the “Civil War Birth Place” and “Where Slavery Began to Die.” Lincoln’s image was prominently printed on the brochure’s front page and on local signs to help market this exclave of Lincolnland in Kansas.

Increasingly, Lincoln’s legacy includes his ability to adapt. This new message exhibited during the celebration of the Lincoln Bicentennial showed that Lincoln continued to change and grow throughout his life. His ability to work compromises with divergent party ideals constituted a prominent theme in Lincoln interpretation during the years from the Lincoln Bicentennial in 2009 through the Civil War Sesquicentennial. Once again, Lincoln became the political ideal, this time in the midst of partisan deadlock in politics. Historic sites like The Old Soldiers Home interpreted Lincoln as the skilled politician and statesman with an interesting, significant meaning for the present. Even the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. became more widely recognized for its importance as a traditional public space to debate key national issues. Its use as a public space says nothing about the historical Lincoln who died in 1865, but much about the Lincoln legacy and how the legacy became important to the generations following the Civil War. Using the Lincoln Memorial and its dominant public space on the Mall, commemorators praised the nation and protesters have demanded that our nation improve its actions to match its idealistic claims. (See Figure 35)

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392 The 1988 miniseries “Lincoln” based on Gore Vidal’s novel and the Steven Spielberg movie Lincoln in 2012 show a more powerful and politically sharp character who demonstrated weaknesses and anger. These traits were not illustrated by popular author Carl Sandburg or in the famous movies in the 1930s and 1940s.

Figure 35. President James Dawson of Lincoln Memorial University lays a wreath at the Lincoln Memorial at the annual Lincoln Birthday commemoration, in 2014. (Author’s Photograph)

As the growing numbers of Lincoln museum projects indicate, no one group can own Lincoln. A substantial number of Americans of various parties and interests still use Lincoln and his historic spaces for political discourse. The origins of Lincoln museums and historic sites illustrate a strong populist interest in commemorating Lincoln through exhibits and preserved structures. Different portions of Lincoln’s character continue to inspire, challenge, or anger each new generation.
Appendix A
Annotated Listing of Lincoln Sites and Museums in the United States
Annotated Listing of Lincoln Sites and Museums in the United States

The agencies are major and minor museums with some Lincoln collections. They are categorized by type and listed alphabetically. Both commercial and public museums are listed but temporary exhibitions and fair displays are not. Historic sites and museums that have closed are listed at the end of this section.

I. Museums, historic sites, and buildings directly related to Lincoln’s life. This includes private agencies, state parks and those museums within the National Park System (see public web page http://www.historynet.com/abraham-lincoln-museums-an-overview.htm).

A. Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site, Hodgenville, Kentucky
   http://www.nps.gov/abl/
   This monument contains a small museum built during the Mission 66 project for the NPS. There are very few artifacts in gallery displays here. The core artifact (Lincoln’s birth cabin) has been demonstrated to be a much later construction. After many years of dispute, it is interpreted as representing the mythic log cabin of Lincoln’s birth, recognizing how important it was to have relics from Lincoln’s underprivileged childhood. 1916

B. Abraham Lincoln’s Boyhood Home at Knob Creek (part of Lincoln Birthplace NHP): http://www.nps.gov/abli/planyourvisit/boyhood-home.htm
   This is located near the birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. This estate has more remaining of the original farm property in agriculture use. The house used for the Lincoln home is not a replica but a local, original log house from the same period. This property and the Birthplace contain early 20th century tourism facilities from local families, creating local tourism economic opportunities. 1931

C. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, Illinois
   http://www.alplm.org/home.html
   The museum has original collections from the Illinois State Library and a variety of major private donors. It was established after 2000 to be the central museum/archives for Lincoln studies outside of the Library of Congress. 2005

D. Bryant Cottage, Bement, Illinois
   http://www.illinois.gov/ihpa/Experience/Sites/Central/Pages/Bryant-Cottage.aspx
   The middle-class house was preserved because of the planning meeting that took place here between Abraham Lincoln and his rival Steven A. Douglas in the Illinois Senate race of 1858. This site opened to the public in 1985.

E. The David Wills House Museum Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
   http://www.davidwillshouse.org/
   Located in a townhouse in downtown Gettysburg, this house has endured many complementary tourism uses until the National Park took ownership.
This National Park Service acquired a small but significant collection of artifacts used by Lincoln during the few days he stayed in Gettysburg, November of 1863. Main Street Gettysburg and the Gettysburg National Military Park jointly manage it. 1945.

F. The Felsenthal Lincoln Collection (City collection), Brownsville, Tennessee http://www.tnvacation.com/vendors/the_felsenthal_lincoln_collection
A private collection of Lincoln books, papers, art, and a few artifacts were made public in recent years. 2009

This institution is a unique composition of public and private agencies to preserve the historic sites and manage the theater for public use. The newest exhibit uses the old Osborn Oldroyd’s collection to interpret Lincoln’s Washington years and the assassination. This exhibit space was designed primarily to manage school tours to the city and theater goers. 1896 and 1968.

H. Forkland Abraham Lincoln Museum, Gravel Switch, Kentucky www.forklandcomctr.org
This small Lincoln exhibit is part of a community heritage center. It was installed during the Lincoln Bicentennial. 2008

This site is very similar to the birthplace and is part of a National Park and Indiana State Park property. The original site of the Lincoln home and the grave of Nancy Hanks are the primary artifacts. 1934

Started by Osborn Oldroyd as the oldest permanent Lincoln museum, the Lincoln Home is still in existence. The significance of this site is that it is the only home owned by Abraham Lincoln and has been used often to interpret and symbolize his pre-presidential career. 1884

Local preservation staff use this restored building to interpret Lincoln’s law career but has few if any artifacts except for the shell of the old commercial building. 1978.

L. Lincoln Legacy Museum, Springfield, Kentucky http://lincolnlegacymuseum.org/SpringfieldKY/
This is a non-collecting museum with exhibits focusing on the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. It maintains a close connection with the Lincoln Homestead State Park also in Washington County, Kentucky. 2013

M. Lincoln Memorial Shrine, Redlands, California
This is a classical shrine building to house Lincoln papers and library. It is mostly dedicated to the original son, who was killed in WWI, although it has a significant Lincoln library and art collection, http://www.lincolnshrine.org. 1932.

This is a private, local museum exhibiting minor Lincoln related items from the region. 1991.

This was the second historic preservation community built in the United States and the first to be built on its historic site. It was also one of the first to use a form of living history to show what life was like in Lincoln pioneer world. 1917.

This is a private museum containing dioramas and Lincoln commemorative art. The building’s only significance is its potential use during Lincoln’s early years as a state legislature. 1972.

Q. President Lincoln’s Cottage at the Old Soldiers Home, Washington D. C. http://www.lincolncottage.org/
This recently restored home is owned and managed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is interpreted unfurnished but restored to its apparent 1860s appearance. 2008.

II. Historic sites with Major Lincoln Family Associations
These are somewhat historic in themselves but their connection to Abraham Lincoln’s friends and family makes them tourist attractions.

This 1815 federal-styled home was owned by Lincoln’s best friend Joshua Speed. The house connects Lincoln to his 1841 visit to Joshua Speed after his break up with Mary Todd in Springfield, Illinois. 1955.

B. Harlan-Lincoln House, Iowa Wesley College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.
This house was built by Senator Harlan, father-in-law to Robert Todd Lincoln. Robert and his wife Mary spent summers here in the 1870s and 1880s. 1940s.

C. Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, Manchester, Vermont.  
http://www.hildene.org/index.html  
This is the family home of Robert Todd Lincoln (the only son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln to survive to adulthood) and his dependents until the 1980’s. 1991.

D. Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum, Coles County Fairground, Charlestown IL (part of the city of Charlestown)  
This was a site of one of the Lincoln/Douglass debates in 1858.

E. Lincoln Heritage House, Freeman Lake Park, Elizabethtown, Kentucky  
The Lincoln Heritage House was associated with Thomas Lincoln (father of Abraham Lincoln) who built portions of the finished woodwork in this house. 1973.

F. Lincoln Homestead Park, Kentucky State Park System, Springfield, Kentucky,  
This museum preserves the sites of some home of Lincoln’s relatives. Replica cabins of Lincoln and Hanks family members provide historic backdrops for Lincoln’s parents and grandparents. 1936.

G. Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, Lerna, Illinois  
The local Shiloh Cemetery is the burial place of Thomas and Sarah Lincoln. The site also owns the Ruben Moore Home State Historic Site and the Sargent Farm (neighbors of Thomas Lincoln). 1930s.

H. Lincoln Marriage Temple at Old Fort Harrod State Park, Harrodsburg, Kentucky,  
This original cabin which was relocated and preserved was where Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married. 1913.

I. Lincoln Pioneer Village, Rockport, Indiana  
This museum contains no original buildings or sites but its location is near area where Lincoln was raised as a boy. Replica buildings and site were designed as monument built from logs to represent Lincoln’s Pioneer origins. The museum contains both Lincoln association and local history items. The
museum facility does contain a few artifacts attributed to the Lincoln family as well as local history. 1935

J. Lincoln’s Virginia Ancestors, series of markers and buildings in Rockbridge and Rockingham Counties Virginia

K. Macon County Historical Museum and Prairie Village, Decatur, Illinois
http://www.mchmdecatur.org/ A grouping of replica and original buildings representing the community where the Lincoln family first resided after moving to Illinois from Indiana. The Courthouse was part of the Lincoln pilgrimages since the early 20th century. 1979.


M. Old State House Capital; Springfield, Illinois, http://www.state.il.us/hpa/hs/old_capitol.htm. The Old State House was Illinoi’s second state capital building where Lincoln practiced law during his entire legal career and where he served as state legislature. 1961.

N. Surratt House Museum; Clinton, Maryland, http://www.surrattmuseum.org/. This was country home of Mary Surratt who was convicted of conspiracy in the Assassination of President Lincoln. 1976.


P. Vandalia State House, Vandalia, Illinois
http://www.illinoishistory.gov/hs/vandalia_statehouse.htm This old Illinois state house was where Lincoln first practiced law and served as delegate for Sangamon County. 1974.
III. National Lincoln Collections within Larger Museum, University and Library Institutions (* indicates only research facilities without a public museum component)

A. *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alrel.html. The most significant collection for the study of Lincoln’s administration and war leadership. The Library of Congress also owns the artifacts found in his pockets the night of his assassination. 1920s.

B. Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Research Library, Buffalo, New York http://buffalohistory.org/. This was formerly the Lincoln Memorial Collection of the Lincoln Birthday Association, 1880s.

C. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois http://www.chicagohs.org. This was one of the first homes to a Lincoln exhibit with a display of if an autograph copy of the Emancipation Proclamation that was destroyed in the Chicago Fire. The CHS also has a bicentennial web page jointly with the Newberry Library with a feature about past exhibits including the set of 20 dioramas on the life of Lincoln, five of which are now at Lincoln Memorial University, http://lincolnat200.org. 1856

The Forbes collection of Lincolniana and replica of the birth cabin originated as a semi-public celebration of Lincoln’s life and the Union. It became part of a major art and history museum. 1924.

E. Greenfield Village/Henry Ford Museum; Dearborn, Michigan http://www.hfmgv.org. The Greenfield Village/Henry Ford Museum owns several major Lincoln items: The rocking chair from Ford’s Theater and several pieces of furniture from the Springfield home parlor are in the museum collections as well as the original Logan County Courthouse where Lincoln practiced law. 1929.

F. Idaho State Historical Society (Lincoln Legacy in the West), Boise, Idaho http://history.idaho.gov/lincoln-legacy.
Until recently, this collection was only a private research collection but became a permanent exhibit in the fall of 2013.

collections/lincoln-collections. Recent acquisitions of several private collections. 2002.


J. Morgan Library and Museum, New York City, http://www.themorgan.org/ This library and art museum houses notable Lincoln archives and research library. 1924

K. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., http://www.archives.gov/index.html Although its primary purpose is research, its high visitation and regular exhibition activities makes this federal agency act like a museum. 1934


M. The Huntington; San Marino, California, http://www.huntington.org/default.aspx The Lincoln collection is not part of their permanent exhibit system. The Huntington hosts major exhibits on a regular schedule and though a research library acts much like a public museum. 1919

N. Plymouth Historical Museum; Plymouth, Michigan, http://www.plymouthhistory.org This extensive collection was from a single gift from collector/educator Welden Petz. 2002

These artifacts are from the Lincoln rail car. c. 1921

Q. Western Reserve Historical Society; Cleveland, Ohio. http://www.wrhs.org/

IV. Major Research Collections in Universities and Libraries.
(* indicates both a museum and research facility specializing in Lincoln related studies.) Most of these sites though not museums do host a special exhibit or display during major commemorations and at those times may invite a general audience.

The research collection was started in 1897 making this one of the oldest extant Lincoln collections. It did not become a museum until 1977.

This collection was originally from the Fort Wayne Lincoln Museum. 2011.


D. Clement C. Maxwell Library, Special Collections-Abraham Lincoln, Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts http://microsites.bridgew.edu/library/collections. c. 1940.


J. Lincoln Collections, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois http://archives.library.illinois.edu/archon/?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=2002 and http://www.library.illinois.edu/ihx/index.html. They have a research archives/library and a “Lincoln ox yoke” claimed to have been made by A. Lincoln while in New Salem. 1890s.

K. *Lincoln Heritage Museum - Lincoln College, Lincoln, Illinois http://museum.lincolncollege.edu/. This museum contains original items and papers from Lincoln’s Springfield years. 1940s.

L. Lincoln Room - Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/exhibits.shtml 1942


N. Houghton Library, Lincoln Room - Harvard College Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou02039 (minimal use for research and exhibit) http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/exhibits/lincoln (on-line exhibit)


V. Other Forms
These agencies do not fit into any category above but show that great collections are not required to support Lincoln tourism.

   This is a prime example of a counter narrative to standard accepted Lincoln historiography. The Bostic Lincoln Center’s mission is to preserve the claimed real birthplace of Abraham Lincoln in North Carolina. Core statement is that Lincoln was really born of Nancy Hanks in an affair with Abraham Enlow in 1806. This particular story is what encouraged the development of the Lincoln Marriage Temple. 2012.

   In the 1990s, the National Park installed an exhibition on Lincoln and the Civil Rights movement on the lower level of the monument.

   Commercial museum with railroad theme and reproduction of Lincoln rail car he rode to Gettysburg in November of 1863. The museum is housed in the rehabilitated and restored railroad station Lincoln used on this visit. c. 1960

D. Mordecai Lincoln House, in Berks County, Pennsylvania,
   This 1733 vernacular house was built by Mordecai Lincoln, an ancestor of Abraham Lincoln who settled in Berks County, Pennsylvania. This house has been restored and mentioned on various pilgrimages and now listed on the National Register of Historic places. The house is not opened yet as a public museum but was first publicly recognized with a historic marker in 1954.

   This church formed with a merger in 1859 under the Rev. Phineas Densmore Gurley, who also ministered to President Lincoln and his family. There is a small but significant collection including documents and the Lincoln pew on display. The original building has been replaced. The church tour contains many Lincoln references.

F. Pike County Historical Society Milford, Pennsylvania http://pikehistorical.org/exhibits/the-lincoln-flag/
   The only item in this Lincoln collection is the flag from the Ford’s Theater said to have been used to support Lincoln’s head. 1954

VI. Lincoln Museums and Historic Sites No Longer in Operation
A. Abraham Lincoln Museum, Springfield, Illinois, 
This was a private commercial agency. This private museum was apparently dispersed as the National Park gained control of the Lincoln Homestead. A wax of Abraham Lincoln from this collection is now on long-display at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum in Harrogate, 1955–1970s

B. Abraham Civil War Wax Museum Complex, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1963 Wax Museum on the Civil War and its causes. It culminates in a 50-dramatic reading of the Gettysburg Address by robotic figure. Most of this institution is a thematic gift shop that gives the entire complex the look of a commercial dime museum. This site was closed in 2013.

C. Lincoln Funeral Car; traveling exhibit and part of Union Pacific RR, when it burned in a prairie fire near Minneapolis Minnesota. It had been a traveling exhibition around the Midwest. 1890s to 1911

D. Lincoln Museum, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, (closed, 2008). This site had been closely related with the Lincoln collections at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate Tennessee. It was absorbed into the Indiana State Museum and Wayne County Public Library (Fort Wayne IN) 1928 - 2010.

E. Lincoln Room at Newark Athletic Club, Newark, New Jersey, (see Lincoln Lore; No. 256, March 5, 1934). This was the displayed collection of private collector Valentine Bjorkman.

F. Lincoln Tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Illinois 
This site formerly housed the earliest Lincoln Museum in the Memorial Hall. http://www.state.il.us/hpa/hs/lincoln_tomb.htm 1874-1930s


I. Weddell House, Cleveland, Ohio, (room where Lincoln stayed on inaugural journey) http://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/247. Lincolniana collection on display in room used by the Lincoln Association of Cleveland.
VII. Official Tourism/Pilgrimage Trails
These trails connect various Lincoln-related sites under a single agency for marketing support and convenience of visitors. Each trail includes multiple cities throughout Illinois.


C. Lincoln Heritage Trail, private site dedicated for travelers following the old tourist trail. This trail was featured in Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe’s America as the old Lincoln trail. This particular system was the fourth developed to connect Lincoln sites for vacationers. http://www.millenniumhwy.net/lincolnheritagegtrail/Lincoln_Heritage_Trail.html

D. Abraham Lincoln Online: This is a source for listings of Lincoln sites and research centers. This was used often for the construction of this annotated listing, http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/sites/sites.htm.
Appendix B

Chronological Listing of Lincoln Museums, Historic Sites, and Archives
Chronological Listing of Active (As of 2015) Lincoln Museums, Historic Sites, and Archives 
Arranged by Decade

1870s
1. Lincoln Tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery; Springfield, Illinois 1874
2. Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial; Lincoln City, Indiana 1879

1880s
2. Lincoln Home National Historic Site; Springfield Illinois 1884

1890s
1. Lincoln Collections, University of Illinois, Champaign IL 1890s
2. Lincoln Funeral Car 1890s

1910s
1. Indiana Historical Society; Indianapolis, Indiana 1912
2. Lincoln Marriage Temple at Old Fort Harrod State Park, Harrodsburg, Kentucky 1913
3. Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site; Hodgenville, Kentucky 1916
4. Lincoln’s New Salem State Park; Petersburg, Illinois 1917
5. Huntington Library San Marion, CA 1919

1920s
1. Union Pacific Railroad Museum; Council Bluffs, Iowa 1921
2. Chicago Historical Society; Chicago, Illinois 1920s
3. MOLLUS (Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States) Museum*; Philadelphia PA 1922
6. Lincoln Museum; Ft. Wayne, Indiana 1928
7. Greenfield Village/Henry Ford Museum; Dearborn, Michigan 1929
8. Chicago Historical Society; Chicago, Illinois 1920s
9. The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY 1924
1930s
1. Abraham Lincoln’s Boyhood Home at Knob Creek (part of Lincoln Birthplace NHP) 1931
2. Lincoln Memorial Shrine; Redlands, California 1932
3. Lincoln Pioneer Village; Rockport, Indiana 1935
4. Forbes House Museum, Milton, Massachusetts 1930s
5. Lincoln Homestead Park, Kentucky State Park System; Springfield, Kentucky 1936
7. Lincoln Room at Newark Athletic Club, Newark, New Jersey 1934
8. Weddell House, Cleveland, Ohio 1934

1940s
1. Stuart Wells Jackson Collection of Lincolniana, Manuscripts and Archives at Yale University Library, Yale University; New Haven Connecticut 1940
2. Lincoln Heritage Museum - Lincoln College; Lincoln, Illinois 1940s
3. Lincoln Room - Lilly Library, Indiana University; Bloomington, Indiana 1942
4. The David Wills House Museum; Gettysburg Pennsylvania 1945

1950s
1. Abraham Lincoln Museum; Springfield Illinois 1955
2. Farmington Historic Plantation; Louisville, Kentucky 1955
4. Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center; Boston University, Boston Massachusetts 1950s
5. Harlan-Lincoln House; Iowa Wesley College 1959

1960s
1. The Lincoln Train Museum; Gettysburg Pennsylvania 1960
2. Old State House Capital; Springfield, Illinois 1961
3. Abraham Civil War Wax Museum Complex, Gettysburg Pennsylvania 1963

1970s
2. Goodstay Center, University of Delaware; Newark, Delaware 1972
3. Lincoln Heritage House; Freeman Lake Park; Elizabethtown, Kentucky 1973
5. Surratt House Museum; Clinton, Maryland 1976
6. Mary Todd Lincoln House, Lexington Kentucky 1977
7. Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum - Lincoln Memorial University; Harrogate Tennessee 1977
9. Macon County Historical Museum and Prairie Village, Decatur Illinois 1979

1980s
1. Lincoln Studies Center - Knox College; Galesburg Illinois 1980s
2. Bryant Cottage; Bement, Illinois 1985

1990s
1. Lincoln Memorial, Lincoln Living Legacy exhibit; Washington D.C. 1994
2. Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home; Manchester, Vermont 1991
3. The Lincoln Museum and Lincoln Statue; Hodgenville, Kentucky 1991
4. Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln Memorial; Elizabethtown, Kentucky 1992
5. Lincoln’s Virginia Ancestors marker in Rockbridge and Rockingham Counties Virginia 1997

2000s
1. Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum, Coles County Fairground; Charlestown IL c. 2000
2. Plymouth Historical Museum; Plymouth, Michigan 2002
3. Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana 2002
5. President Lincoln’s Cottage at the Old Soldiers Home; Washington D. C 2008
6. Forkland Abraham Lincoln Museum, Gravel Switch, KY 2008
7. The Felsenthal Lincoln Collection; (City collection) Brownsville, Tennessee 2009
8. Indiana State Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana 2009

2010s
1. Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana 2011
2. Bostic Lincoln Center, Bostic, North Carolina 2012
3. Lincoln Legacy Museum; Springfield, Kentucky 2013
4. Idaho State Historical Society, (Lincoln Legacy in the West) Boise, Idaho 2013
Appendix C

Geographical Distribution of Lincoln Sites and Research Centers
Table C.1 Geographical distribution of Lincoln sites and research centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State by numerical order</th>
<th>Number of historic sites, museums and archives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington D.C. – does not include the White House Lincoln Room</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimate total of Lincoln sites in the United States – current and closed 80
Appendix D

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Oct. 24, 2016

Evelyn B. Smith
Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs

Oct. 28, 2016
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Description
The History and Administration of President Lincoln
Lincoln’s Bookcase and Chair illustrated in McClure's Magazine
Lincoln’s Survey Tools illustrated in McClure's Magazine
Lincoln’s Temporary Tomb Memorial
Interior of Memorial Hall at Lincoln Tomb
Lincoln Home in Springfield, Illinois c. 1908
Post card of the Ann Rutledge Grave, Petersburg, Illinois
Post card of the Lincoln Funeral Car
Post card of Lincoln Birthplace Cabin
Fragment from Birthplace Cabin
Lincoln Birthplace Memorial souvenir
Post card of Lincoln’s Marriage Cabin
Post card Log Cabin to the White House
Samples of Springfield, Illinois guidebooks
Samples of Illinois State guidebooks
Nancy Hanks Inn
Post card of the Lincoln Tavern, Knob Creek Farm
Lincoln Diorama
Lincoln Memorial Highway
Ford’s Theater Interior
Wagon Wheel Inn at New Salem Brochure
Post card of The Talisman II
Souvenirs of Lincoln Exhibit at Huntington Library, California
Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War
From: Erin Carlson Mast [mailto:EMast@lincolncottage.org]
Sent: Saturday, October 22, 2016 12:39 PM
To: Mackie, Thomas
Subject: RE: need another permission

Tom,

This email serves as permission to publish the interior image of the "Emancipation Room," located on the second floor of President Lincoln's Cottage, in your dissertation.

Best wishes!

Erin Mast
CEO & Executive Director
President Lincoln’s Cottage
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