

Abraham Lincoln

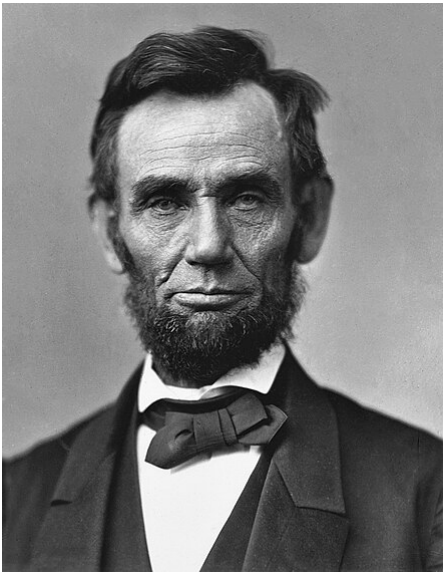


Abraham Lincoln (/ˈlɪŋkən/ *LINK-ən*; February 12, 1809 – April 15, 1865) was an American lawyer, politician, and statesman who served as the 16th president of the United States from 1861 until his assassination in 1865. Lincoln led the Union through the American Civil War to defend the nation as a constitutional union and succeeded in abolishing slavery, bolstering the federal government, and modernizing the U.S. economy.

Lincoln was born into poverty in a log cabin in Kentucky and was raised on the frontier, primarily in Indiana. He was self-educated and became a lawyer, Whig Party leader, Illinois state legislator, and U.S. Congressman from Illinois. In 1849, he returned to his successful law practice in Springfield, Illinois. In 1854, he was angered by the Kansas–Nebraska Act, which opened the territories to slavery, and he re-entered politics. He soon became a leader of the new Republican Party. He reached a national audience in the 1858 Senate campaign debates against Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln ran for president in 1860, sweeping the North to gain victory. Pro-slavery elements in the South viewed his election as a threat to slavery, and Southern states began seceding from the nation. During this time, the newly formed Confederate States of America began seizing federal military bases in the south. Just over one month after Lincoln assumed the presidency, the Confederate States attacked Fort Sumter, a U.S. fort in South Carolina. Following the bombardment, Lincoln mobilized forces to suppress the rebellion and restore the union.

Lincoln, a moderate Republican, had to navigate a contentious array of factions with friends and opponents from both the Democratic and Republican parties. His allies, the War Democrats and the Radical Republicans, demanded harsh treatment of the Southern Confederates. Anti-war Democrats (called "Copperheads") despised Lincoln, and irreconcilable pro-Confederate elements plotted his assassination. He managed the factions by exploiting their mutual enmity, carefully distributing political patronage, and by appealing to the American people. His Gettysburg Address came to be seen as one of the greatest and most influential statements of American national purpose. Lincoln closely supervised the

Abraham Lincoln



Portrait by Alexander Gardner, 1863

16th President of the United States

In office

March 4, 1861 – April 15, 1865

Vice President	<u>Hannibal Hamlin</u> (1861–1865)
	Andrew Johnson (March–April 1865)

Preceded by	<u>James Buchanan</u>
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Succeeded by	<u>Andrew Johnson</u>
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Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois's 7th district

In office

March 4, 1847 – March 3, 1849

Preceded by	<u>John Henry</u>
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Succeeded by	<u>Thomas L. Harris</u>
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Member of the Illinois House of Representatives from Sangamon County

strategy and tactics in the war effort, including the selection of generals, and implemented a naval blockade of the South's trade. He suspended *habeas corpus* in Maryland and elsewhere, and averted British intervention by defusing the Trent Affair. In 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared the slaves in the states "in rebellion" to be free. It also directed the Army and Navy to "recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons" and to receive them "into the armed service of the United States." Lincoln also pressured border states to outlaw slavery, and he promoted the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which upon its ratification abolished slavery, except as punishment for a crime.

Lincoln managed his own successful re-election campaign. He sought to heal the war-torn nation through reconciliation. On April 14, 1865, just five days after the war's end at Appomattox, he was attending a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Mary, when he was fatally shot by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln is remembered as a martyr and a national hero for his wartime leadership and for his efforts to preserve the Union and abolish slavery. Lincoln is often ranked in both popular and scholarly polls as the greatest president in American history.

Family and childhood

Early life

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, the second child of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, in a log cabin on Sinking Spring Farm near Hodgenville, Kentucky.^[2] He was a descendant of Samuel Lincoln, an Englishman who migrated from Hingham, Norfolk, to its namesake, Hingham, Massachusetts, in 1638. The family then migrated west, passing through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.^[3] Lincoln was also a descendant of the Harrison family of Virginia; his paternal grandfather and namesake, Captain Abraham Lincoln and wife Bathsheba (née Herring) moved the family from Virginia to Jefferson County, Kentucky.^[b] The captain was killed in an Indian raid in 1786.^[5] His children, including eight-year-old Thomas, Abraham's father, witnessed the attack.^{[6][c]} Thomas then worked at odd jobs in Kentucky and Tennessee before the family settled in Hardin County, Kentucky, in the early 1800s.^[6]

Lincoln's mother Nancy Lincoln is widely assumed to be the daughter of Lucy Hanks.^[8] Thomas and Nancy married on June 12, 1806, in Washington County, and moved to

In office	
December 1, 1834 – December 4, 1842	
Personal details	
Born	February 12, 1809 <div>Sinking Spring Farm, Kentucky, U.S.</div>
Died	April 15, 1865 <div>(aged 56)</div> <div>Washington, D.C. U.S.</div>
Manner of death	Assassination <div>(gunshot wound to the head)</div>
Resting place	Lincoln Tomb
Political party	Republican (after 1856) <div>Whig (before 1856)</div>
Other political affiliations	National Union <div>(1864–1865)</div>
Height	6 ft 4 in (193 cm) ^[1]
Spouse	Mary Todd (m. 1842)
Children	Robert · Edward · Willie · Tad
Parents	Thomas Lincoln <div>Nancy Hanks</div>
Relatives	Lincoln family
Occupation	Politician · lawyer
Signature	<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>
Military service	
Branch/service	Illinois Militia
Years of service	1832
Rank	Captain ^[a] <div>Private^[a]</div>
Battles/wars	American Indian Wars <div>Black Hawk War</div> <div>Battle of Stillman's Run</div>

Elizabethtown, Kentucky.^[9] They had three children: Sarah, Abraham, and Thomas, who died as an infant.^[10]

Battle of
Kellogg's
Grove

Thomas Lincoln bought or leased farms in Kentucky before losing all but 200 acres (81 ha) of his land in court disputes over property titles.^[11] In 1816, the family moved to Indiana where the land surveys and titles were more reliable.^[12] Indiana was a "free" (non-slaveholding) territory, and they settled in an "unbroken forest"^[13] in Hurricane Township, Perry County, Indiana.^{[14][d]} In 1860, Lincoln noted that the family's move to Indiana was "partly on account of slavery", but mainly due to land title difficulties.^[16]

In Kentucky and Indiana, Thomas worked as a farmer, cabinetmaker, and carpenter.^[17] At various times, he owned farms, livestock, and town lots, paid taxes, sat on juries, appraised estates, and served on county patrols. Thomas and Nancy were members of a Separate Baptists church, which forbade alcohol, dancing, and slavery.^[18]



The farm site where Lincoln grew up in Spencer County, Indiana

Overcoming financial challenges, Thomas in 1827 obtained clear title to 80 acres (32 ha) in Indiana, an area which became the Little Pigeon Creek Community.^[19]

Mother's death

On October 5, 1818, Nancy Lincoln died from milk sickness, leaving 11-year-old Sarah in charge of a household including her father, 9-year-old Abraham, and Nancy's 19-year-old orphan cousin, Dennis Hanks.^[20] Ten years later, on January 20, 1828, Sarah died while giving birth to a stillborn son, devastating Lincoln.^[21]

On December 2, 1819, Thomas married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, with three children of her own.^[22] Abraham became close to his stepmother and called her "Mother".^[23] Lincoln disliked the hard labor associated with farm life. His family even said he was lazy, for all his "reading, scribbling, writing, ciphering, writing Poetry, etc.". ^[24] His stepmother acknowledged he did not enjoy "physical labor", but loved to read.^[25]

Education and move to Illinois

Lincoln was largely self-educated.^[26] His formal schooling was from itinerant teachers. It included two short stints in Kentucky, where he learned to read but probably not to write, at age seven,^[27] and in Indiana, where he went to school sporadically due to farm chores, for a total of fewer than 12 months in aggregate by the age of 15.^[28] He persisted as an avid reader and retained a lifelong interest in learning.^[29] Family, neighbors, and schoolmates recalled that his reading included the King James Bible, Aesop's Fables, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*.^[30]

As a teen, Lincoln took responsibility for chores and customarily gave his father all earnings from work outside the home until he was 21.^[31] Lincoln was tall, strong, and athletic, and became adept at using an ax.^[32] He was an active wrestler during his youth and trained in the rough catch-as-catch-

can style (also known as catch wrestling). He became county wrestling champion at the age of 21.^[33] He gained a reputation for strength and audacity after winning a wrestling match with the renowned leader of ruffians known as "the Clary's Grove Boys".^[34]

In March 1830, fearing another milk sickness outbreak, several members of the extended Lincoln family, including Abraham, moved west to Illinois, a free state, and settled in Macon County.^{[35][e]} Abraham then became increasingly distant from Thomas, in part due to his father's lack of education.^[37] In 1831, as Thomas and other family prepared to move to a new homestead in Coles County, Illinois, Abraham struck out on his own.^[38] He made his home in New Salem, Illinois, for six years.^[39] Lincoln and some friends took goods by flatboat to New Orleans, Louisiana, where he was first exposed to slavery.^[40]



New Salem, Illinois

Marriage and children

Speculation persists that Lincoln's first romantic interest was Ann Rutledge, whom he met when he moved to New Salem. Witness testimony, given decades afterward, showed a lack of any specific recollection of a romance between the two.^[41] Rutledge died on August 25, 1835, most likely of typhoid fever; saying that he could not bear the idea of rain falling on Ann's grave, Lincoln sunk into a serious episode of depression, and this gave rise to speculation that he had been in love with her.^{[42][43][44]}



1864 photo of President Lincoln with youngest son, Tad



Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of Abraham Lincoln, in 1861

In the early 1830s, he met Mary Owens from Kentucky.^[45] Late in 1836, Lincoln agreed to a match with Owens if she returned to New Salem. Owens arrived that November and he courted her for a time; however, they both had second thoughts. On August 16, 1837, he wrote Owens a letter saying he would not blame her if she ended the relationship, and she never replied.^[46]

In 1839, Lincoln met Mary Todd in Springfield, Illinois, and the following year they became engaged.^[47] She was the daughter of Robert Smith Todd, a wealthy lawyer and businessman in Lexington, Kentucky.^[48] A wedding set for January 1, 1841, was canceled at Lincoln's request, but they reconciled and married on November 4, 1842, in the Springfield mansion of Mary's sister.^[49] While anxiously preparing for the nuptials, he was asked where he was going and replied, "To hell, I suppose."^[50] In 1844, the couple bought a house in Springfield near his law office. Mary kept house with the help of a hired servant and a relative.^[51]

Lincoln was an affectionate husband and father of four sons, though his work regularly kept him away from home. The oldest, Robert Todd Lincoln, was born in 1843 and was the only child to live to maturity. Edward Baker Lincoln (Eddie), born in 1846, died February 1, 1850, probably of tuberculosis. Lincoln's third son, "Willie" Lincoln was born on December 21, 1850, and died of a fever at the White House on February 20, 1862. The youngest, Thomas "Tad" Lincoln, was born on April 4,

1853, and survived his father but died of heart failure at age 18 on July 16, 1871.^{[52][f]} Lincoln "was remarkably fond of children"^[54] and the Lincolns were not considered to be strict with their own.^[55] In fact, Lincoln's law partner William H. Herndon would grow irritated when Lincoln brought his children to the law office. Their father, it seemed, was often too absorbed in his work to notice his children's behavior. Herndon recounted, "I have felt many and many a time that I wanted to wring their little necks, and yet out of respect for Lincoln I kept my mouth shut. Lincoln did not note what his children were doing or had done."^[56]

The deaths of their sons, Eddie and Willie, had profound effects on both parents. Lincoln suffered from "melancholy", a condition now thought to be clinical depression.^[43] Later in life, Mary struggled with the stresses of losing her husband and sons, and Robert committed her for a time to an asylum in 1875.^[57]

Early career and militia service

During 1831 and 1832, Lincoln worked at a general store in New Salem, Illinois. In 1832, he declared his candidacy for the Illinois House of Representatives, but interrupted his campaign to serve as a captain in the Illinois Militia during the Black Hawk War.^[58] When Lincoln returned home from the Black Hawk War, he planned to become a blacksmith, but instead formed a partnership with William Berry, 21, with whom he purchased a New Salem general store on credit. Because a license was required to sell customers single beverages, Berry obtained bartending licenses for \$7 each for Lincoln and himself, and in 1833 the Lincoln-Berry General Store became a tavern as well. As licensed bartenders, Lincoln and Berry were able to sell spirits, including liquor, for 12 cents a pint. They offered a wide range of alcoholic beverages as well as food, including takeout dinners. But Berry became an alcoholic, was often too drunk to work, and Lincoln ended up running the store by himself.^[59] Although the economy was booming, the business struggled and went into debt, causing Lincoln to sell his share.

In his first campaign speech after returning from his military service, Lincoln observed a supporter in the crowd under attack, grabbed the assailant by his "neck and the seat of his trousers", and tossed him.^[35] In the campaign, Lincoln advocated for navigational improvements on the Sangamon River. He could draw crowds as a raconteur, but lacked the requisite formal education, powerful friends, and money, and lost the election.^[60] Lincoln finished eighth out of 13 candidates (the top four were elected), though he received 277 of the 300 votes cast in the New Salem precinct.^[61]

Lincoln served as New Salem's postmaster and later as county surveyor, but continued his voracious reading and decided to become a lawyer.^[62] Rather than studying in the office of an established attorney, as was the custom, Lincoln borrowed legal texts from attorneys John Todd Stuart and Thomas Drummond, purchased books including Blackstone's Commentaries and Chitty's Pleadings, and read law on his own.^[62] He later said of his legal education that "I studied with nobody."^[63]

Illinois state legislature (1834–1842)

Lincoln's second state house campaign in 1834, this time as a Whig, was a success over a powerful Whig opponent.^[64] Then followed his four terms in the Illinois House of Representatives for Sangamon County.^[65] He championed construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and later was a Canal Commissioner.^[66] He voted to expand suffrage beyond white landowners to all white males, but adopted a "free soil" stance opposing both slavery and abolition.^[67] In 1837, he declared, "[The] Institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but the promulgation of abolition