

3-22-2007

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"The Hauenstein Center and GVSU Students Visit Springfield, IL" (2007). *Features*. 49.  
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## The Hauenstein Center and GVSU Students Visit Springfield, IL

March 16-18, 2007

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Gleaves Whitney led members of his history class on U.S. presidents (HST 380) on a field trip to Springfield, IL, over St. Patrick's Day weekend, 2007, to learn more about Abraham Lincoln and the crises leading up to the Civil War.



The first stop was at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, which opened April 19, 2005, under Richard Norton Smith's direction. It is a state-of-the-art museum that packs a powerful emotional punch and makes history come alive.



Abraham Lincoln, the nation's 16th president, arguably faced the greatest crises in American history: (1) the fracturing of the Union, (2) the outbreak of a civil war, and (3) the long-looming moral, political, economic, and social confrontation with slavery, which had reached a boiling point by 1861.



Lincoln was the first U.S. president to sport a beard in the White House. He grew his beard during the 1860 campaign for president. An eleven-year-old girl, Grace Bedell of Westfield, New York, told the Republican candidate that his face would look better with a beard. Besides, she reasoned, "All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you."



Abraham Lincoln as a boy in southern Indiana. His biological mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died when he was nine. She was buried in a wood coffin held together by pegs Abraham had whittled.

Lincoln's stepmother was Sarah Bush Johnston (often called Sally). Abraham was ten when his father Thomas married her. She was a wonderful stepmother, valuing education and encouraging Abraham to read as much as he could. All told, Lincoln would have less than one year of formal schooling.



One of the most powerful experiences Lincoln had as a youth was a flatboat journey to New Orleans when he was 19. The other young man on the boat, Allen Gentry, recalled, "We stood and watched slaves sold and Abraham was very angry."



Lincoln's law office looked out on the State Capitol in Springfield. Pictured are two of his sons playing rough-house in the office, while he lounges on a couch and reads a brief.

Lincoln became an attorney by studying under John T. Stuart, whom he met in 1832 in the Black Hawk War. Then, in 1836, he obtained his license to practice law with Stuart. Lincoln's most famous partner, however, would be his third, William Herndon, who would write a lengthy first-hand account of what Lincoln was like.



The other famous lawyer in Springfield was Stephen Douglas. In fact, Lincoln often had to argue briefs before Justice Douglas, who sat on the Illinois Supreme Court before the people of Illinois sent him to the U.S. Senate. These court appearances served as dress rehearsals for the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858.

Apparently there is no extant photograph that shows the two men standing together. What an image it would have been -- the 6'-4" Lincoln towering over the 5'-4" Douglas, nicknamed The Little Giant.

Although Douglas beat Lincoln in the U.S. Senate race of 1858, Lincoln bested his rival in the presidential contest two years later. Lincoln thus became The Giant Slayer.



Abraham and Mary Lincoln knew many tragedies. Three of their four sons died young. Their third son, Willie, died in 1862 when the Lincolns were in the White House. Abraham was often observed grieving over the loss of the eleven-year-old boy.



This scene depicts Lincoln's "Team of Rivals" -- his talented but contentious cabinet, debating when to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. It was issued in its final form on January 1, 1863.

The document was hailed by some for giving additional moral authority to the Union cause, and slammed by others since it freed not one slave behind enemy lines. Nor did the Emancipation Proclamation free any slaves in the four border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri.

Lincoln said to newspaper editor Horace Greeley, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."



In Ford's Theatre shortly after 10 p.m. on Good Friday, April 14th, 1865, John Wilkes Booth opened the door to the presidential box...

The First Couple were watching *Our American Cousin*. Moments before Booth entered the box, Abraham reached for Mary's hand. She whispered, "What will Miss Harris think?" Her husband answered, "She won't think anything about it." These were Lincoln's last words.

Mortally wounded by the bullet Booth fired, Lincoln was carried to the Peterson's lodging house across the street, where he died the next morning at 7:22.



Lincoln's body made the long pilgrimage back to Springfield, stopping at each place where the President-elect had spoken on his inaugural trip from Springfield to Washington in February 1861.

In Springfield, the body lay in state in the House Chamber of the Old State Capitol -- the very room where he had given his "House Divided" speech 7 years before.



The Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois, which students from HST 380 toured after leaving the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. In this building Lincoln's career as a lawyer and national figure blossomed.



To prepare briefs for trial, Lincoln frequently used the state library in the Old State Capitol, then stuffed his notes and other important papers -- not in a briefcase -- but in his stovepipe hat.



After Lincoln won the 1860 election, Illinois's governor graciously allowed Lincoln to use his office (pictured) to meet people and compose documents.

Brian Jackson takes in the rotunda of the Old State Capitol.



6'-4" Justin Noordhoek uses a measuring tape to see if the Little Giant, Stephen Douglas, was indeed

just 5'-4" tall. (He is on a pedestal on the second floor of the Old State Capitol.)



This is the famous chamber where the Illinois House of Representatives used to meet. The upside-down stovepipe hat is where Representative Lincoln used to sit. In this chamber, the new Republican Party held its national convention in 1858, and Lincoln addressed the convention with his famous "House Divided" speech. Also in this chamber, Abraham Lincoln's body lay in repose after the long train journey from Washington, DC.

Appropriately the portrait over the Speaker's Chair is of George Washington, who argued for Union in his Farewell Address.



In the old House Chamber.



Sarah Gosline discovers the "Weird Sarah" -- possibly named after Lincoln's big sister -- a sandwich served at a restaurant on the Old Courthouse Plaza.



Grand Valley history professor Samantha Warber and her father Bill Warber take a break at the Lincoln House visitors' center before the next tour.



Outside the Lincoln house on Eighth Street, Springfield, IL.



This is the real "Lincoln bedroom," in his last house in Springfield, IL. It is not unlikely that he composed his farewell address to the people of Lincoln at this desk, in early February 1861.



A National Park Service ranger talks about the Lincolns' last Springfield house.



This is the third-floor office in the Lincoln-Herdon Law Offices -- a brilliant place to rent office space. It is said that the trap door in this room, which accesses the courtroom below, is where Lincoln would stretch out and listen to lawyers arguing cases. The strategic eavesdropping provided Lincoln with a fine legal education.



The next stop for the class was the Lincoln Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, IL. The official Illinois Historic Preservation Agency says:

*Dedicated in 1874, the Lincoln Tomb is the final resting place of Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary, and three of their four sons, Edward, William, and Thomas. The eldest son, Robert T. Lincoln, is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Also on the site is the public receiving vault, constructed ca. 1860, the scene of funeral services for Abraham Lincoln on May 4, 1865.*



The Lincoln Tomb.



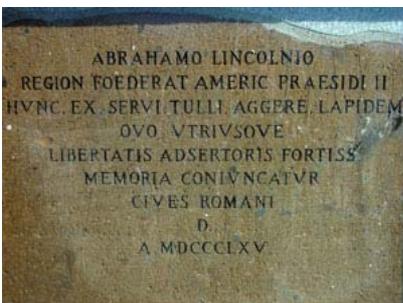
Detail at the base of the obelisk.



Looking up at Lincoln and the obelisk -- or is it a highway to the sky?



One of the four sculpture groups guarding the obelisk.



Lincoln was regarded as a good Roman republican by champions of freedom from around the world. This stone, from one of the most ancient walls of Rome, symbolized emancipation and was a gift from the people of the Eternal City to Abraham Lincoln in early 1865.



The class hopes that rubbing Lincoln's nose will give them good luck on their next history test.



Northern *and* Southern states are represented at the Lincoln Tomb, as Gleaves Whitney points out.



A historian with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency tells the story of how the Lincoln Tomb was designed and built, especially to prevent grave robbers from disturbing the body. (They certainly tried!)

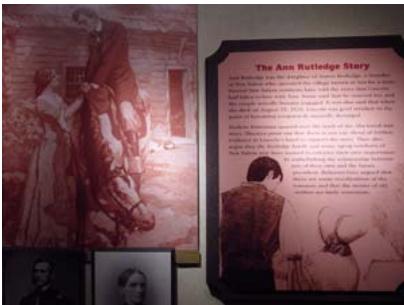


Abraham Lincoln's final resting place.



After the visit to Lincoln's Tomb, the class went 20 miles northwest of Springfield to New Salem, Illinois, where Lincoln moved as a young man, tried his hand at business, and began his study of the law.

An exhibit is in the visitors' center at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site.



About Lincoln's first true love.



Frontier commercial centers at the time of Lincoln's youth were mostly on the Ohio River -- Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville -- and also on the Mississippi, comprising the "interstate highway system" of the early 19th century.



Scene from New Salem, which was a ghost town by the 1840s.



New Salem forest in late winter.

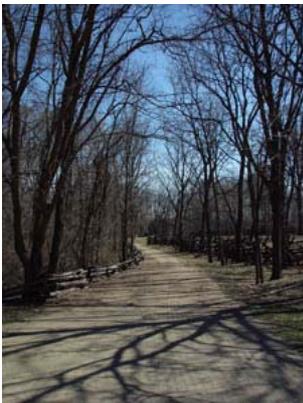


New Salem "dogtrot" cabin, similar to dogtrots in Texas that were popular at the time.



About Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency observes:

*The six years Lincoln spent in New Salem formed a turning point in his career. Although he never owned a home here, Lincoln was engaged in a variety of activities while he was at New Salem. He clerked in a store, split rails, enlisted in the Black Hawk War, served as postmaster and deputy surveyor, failed in business, and was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 1834 and 1836 after an unsuccessful try in 1832.*



The country road to one of the stores Lincoln ran and partially owned.



The water mill in New Salem



One of the houses in New Salem, where

*Twelve log houses, the Rutledge Tavern, ten workshops, stores, mills and a school where church services were held have been reproduced and furnished as they might have been in the 1830s.*



Peeking into the school house, New Salem



New Salem frontier cabin



New Salem



The class poses one last time in New Salem.