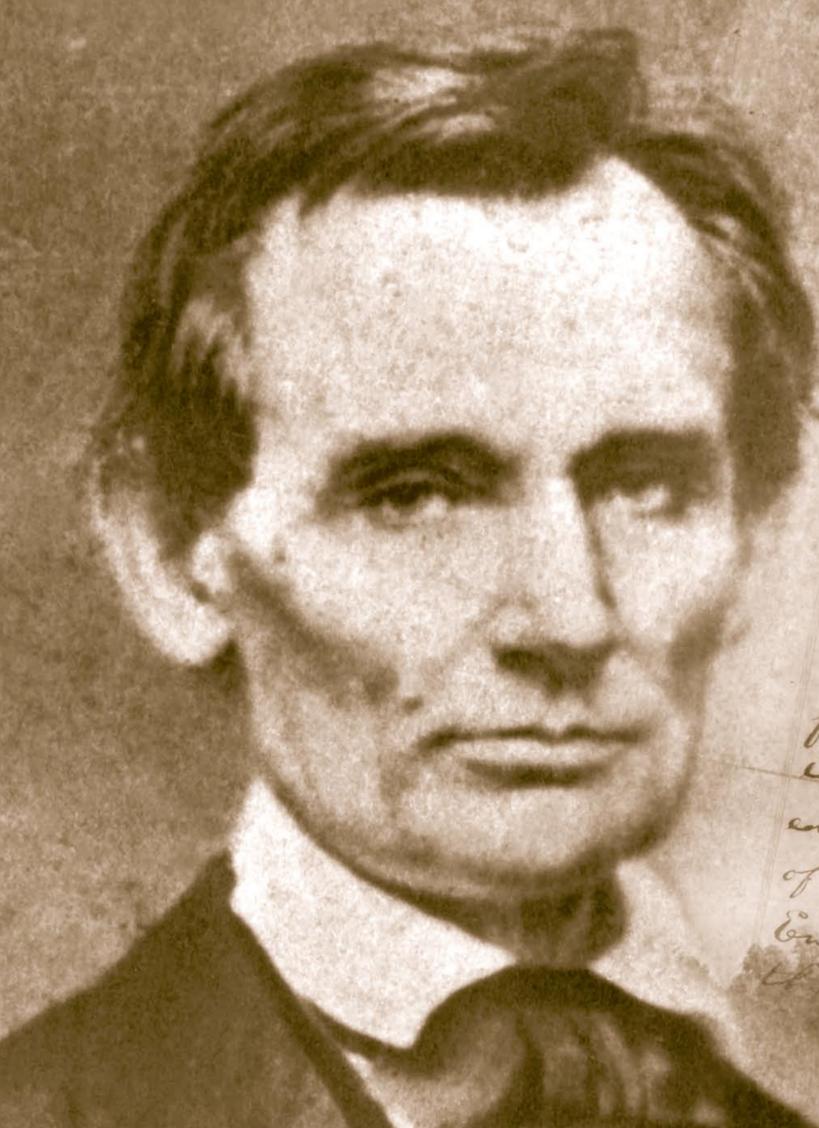




# Abraham Lincoln Birthplace

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin near Sinking Spring. Growing up in rural Kentucky, his character was shaped by the hard work and tragedy of frontier life. As the 16th president, his policies and politics saved the Union and ended slavery in the United States.

The park has two locations: the Birthplace where the Lincoln family lived from 1808 to 1811 and the Boyhood Home at Knob Creek where the Lincolns lived from 1811 to 1816.



*I was born Feb. 12. 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of emigrant Quaker families. My mother, who died in the month year, was of a family of the name of Hardin, some of whom now reside in Adams, and other in Mason Counties, Illinois. My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky, about 1780, where, a year or two later, he was killed by Indians; not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. His ancestor, who was Quaker, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania. An effort to identify them with the New England family, however, is nothing more definite than the name of Christian name.*



Visit the Memorial Building.



Use the picnic facilities.



Enjoy the trails.



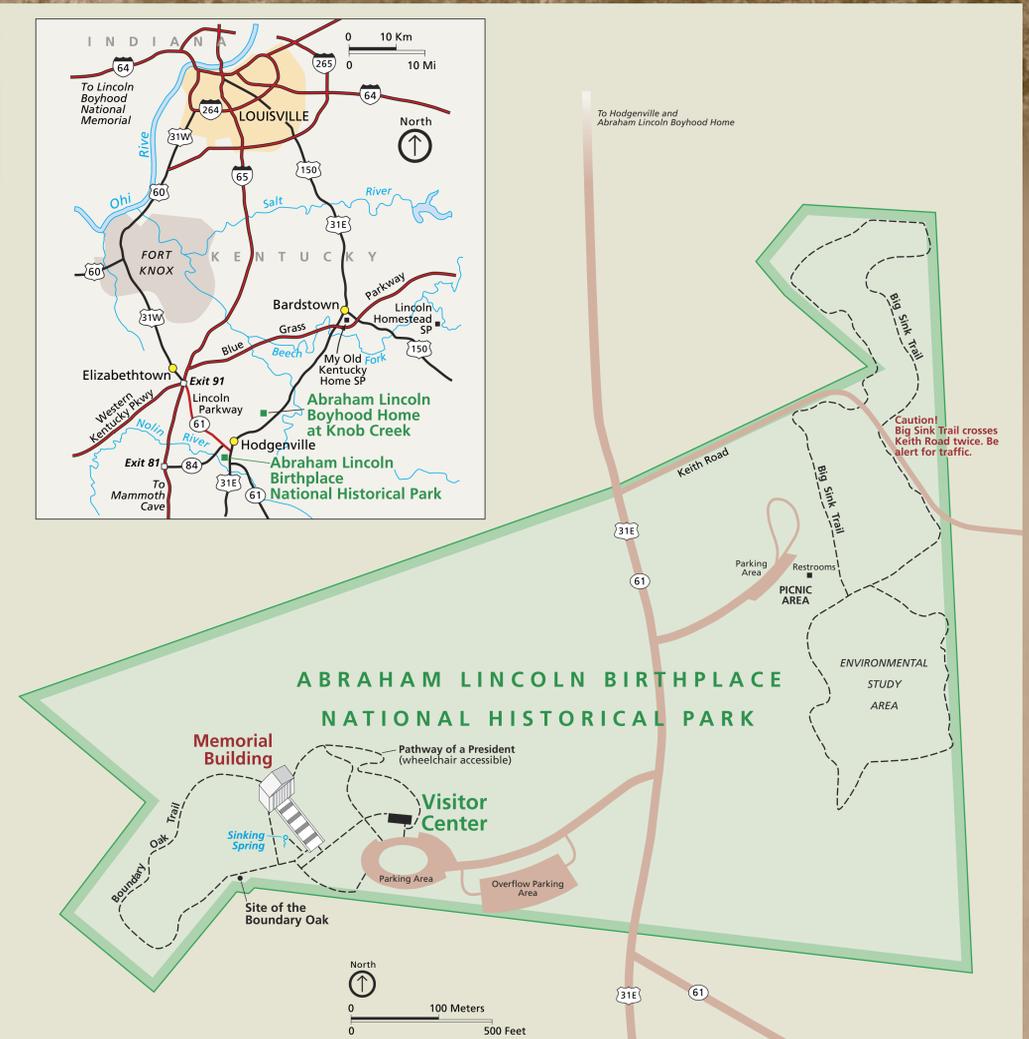
Learn about the symbolic birthplace cabin.



View the Sinking Spring.



Tour the visitor center exhibits.



### For Your Safety

- Stay on trails.
- Watch your step.
- Avoid poison ivy, briars, ticks, and poisonous snakes.



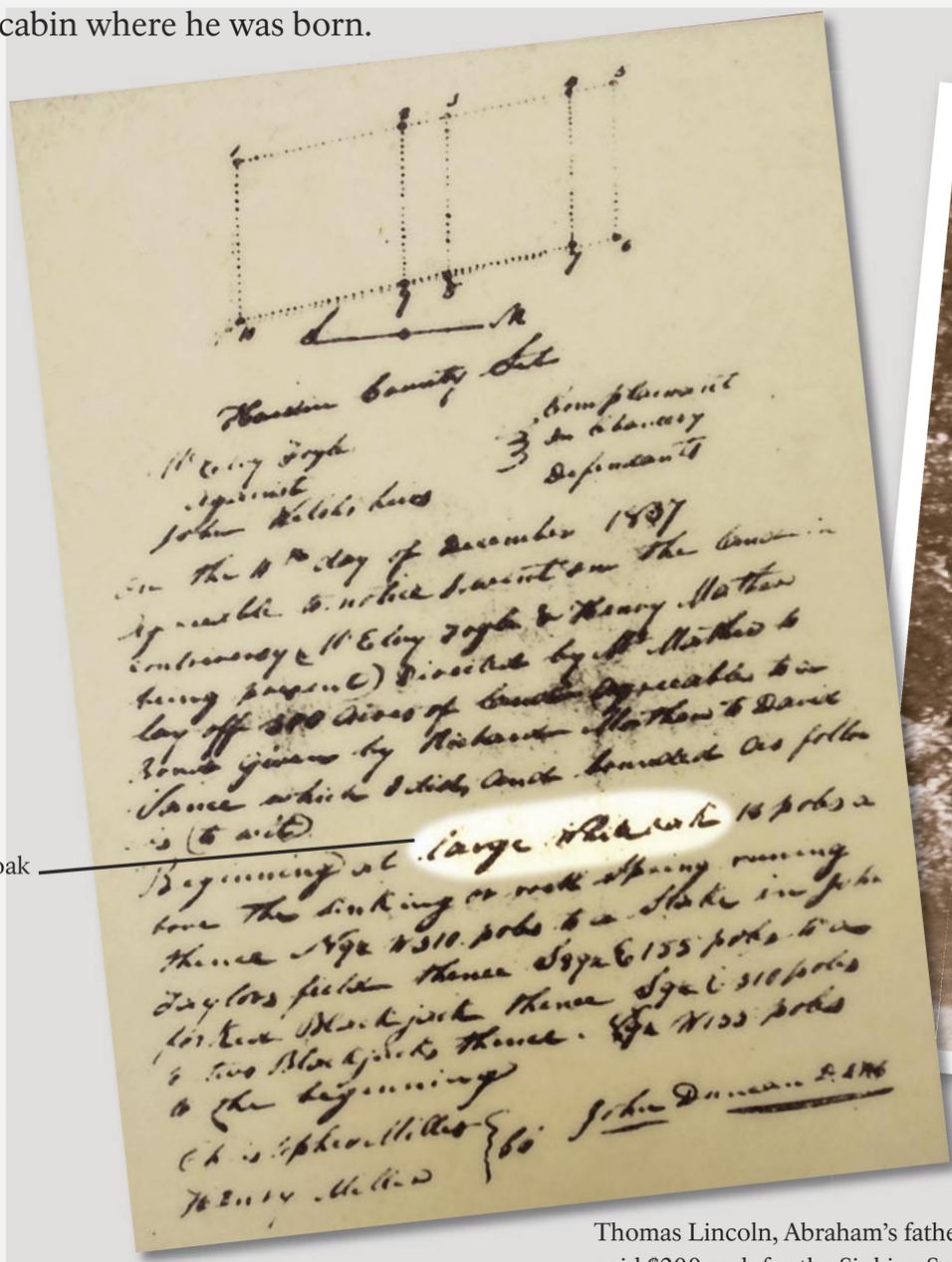
# Boundary Oak

The Boundary Oak was one of the most significant features of Sinking Spring Farm. Until its death in 1976, the great white oak remained the “last living link” to Abraham Lincoln. The tree, thought to be 25 to 30 years old at Lincoln’s birth, was located less than 150 yards from the cabin where he was born.

Oak trees often served as boundary markers and survey points for determining property lines because they could live well beyond 200 years. The tree served as a boundary marker in the original farm survey.



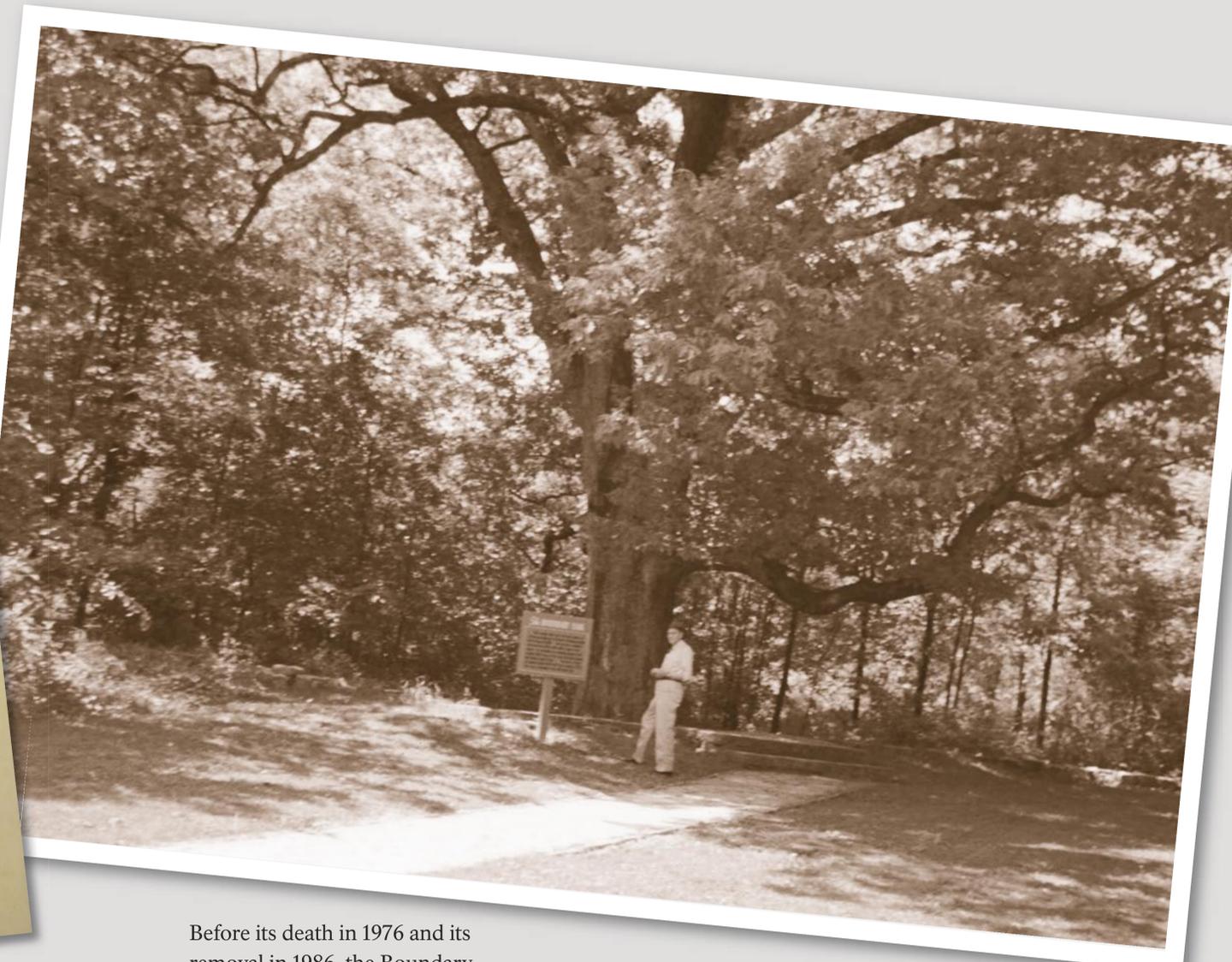
Original diameter of the Boundary Oak



large white oak

Beginning at large white oak 16 rods a  
line the sinking or rock spring running  
thence N 72° E 310 rods to a stake in John  
Taylor's field thence S 72° E 155 rods to a  
stake in Mathew's field thence S 72° E 310 rods  
to the beginning  
Chas. S. Phelps & Co. Surveyors  
Feb 14 1808

Thomas Lincoln, Abraham’s father, paid \$200 cash for the Sinking Spring Farm in 1808.



Before its death in 1976 and its removal in 1986, the Boundary Oak reached six feet in diameter and 90 feet high with a crown spread of 115 feet.



# An Enduring Symbol

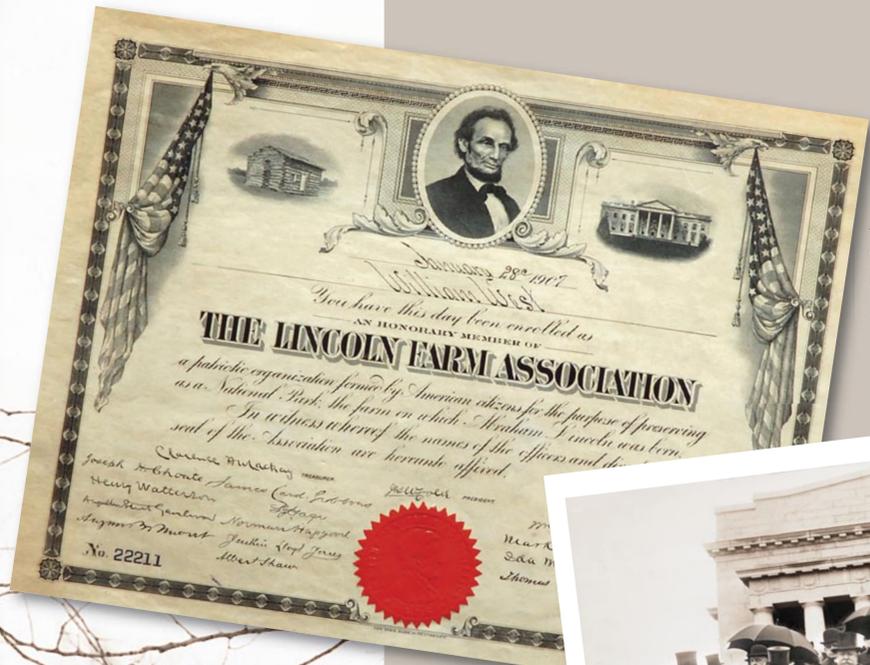
John Russell Pope's neoclassical architecture reflects the nation's adulation of Abraham Lincoln and its budding interest in historic preservation after the Civil War. The Lincoln Farm Association constructed this Memorial Building between 1907-1911 to preserve what was thought to be Lincoln's birth cabin as a "national shrine" perpetuating his life as an "abiding symbol of opportunity with which democracy endows men."

The association's dream came true in 1916 when the site was designated the Abraham Lincoln National Park. About 40 years later, further research revealed that the cabin was not the original Lincoln cabin. However, it remains an icon of Lincoln's humble beginnings.



Cornerstone for the Memorial Building was laid in 1909.

President Theodore Roosevelt arriving to dedicate the construction of the Memorial Building on Abraham Lincoln's 100th birthday, February 12, 1909.



A certificate was given to every person who donated at least twenty-five cents to the Memorial Building Fund.



President William Howard Taft, a member of the Lincoln Farm Association, dedicates the Memorial Building on November 9, 1911.



Commemorative ribbons were made for Abraham Lincoln's Centennial. They represented county, state, and national levels. The ribbon shown here represents the national level.



Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, at Sinking Spring Farm in a log cabin located where the enshrined log cabin now stands.

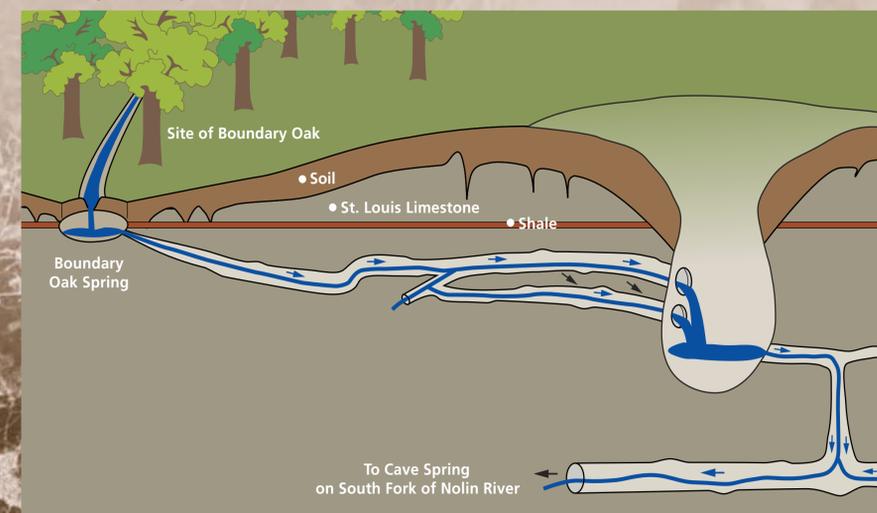


# Sinking Spring

Abraham Lincoln probably took his first drink of water from this spring. A dependable water source undoubtedly was an important factor in Thomas Lincoln's decision to purchase Sinking Spring Farm.

The Sinking Spring is an example of a karst window, an unusual landform. A karst window is a special type of sinkhole that gives us a view into the karst aquifer.

Sinking Spring



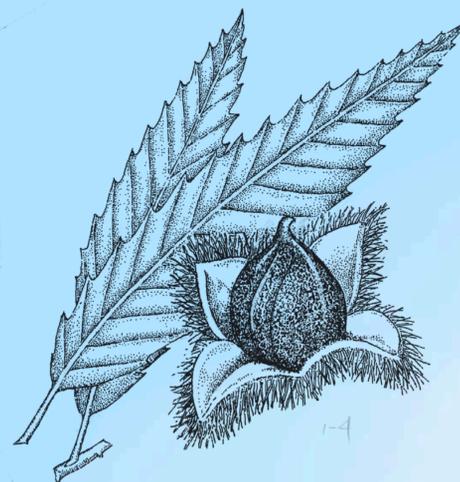
Typical of Kentucky's karst topography and hydrologic systems, the spring is a significant natural resource. Its water drains through the subsurface and empties into a branch of the Nolin

River a short distance from the park. Sinking Spring is a part of the network of springs and subsurface streams in and near the park.

Sinking Spring was also known as Cave Spring and Rock Spring. Travelers often paused at the spring to drink the refreshingly cool water.

# A Rail-splitter's Favorite Tree—American Chestnut

Settlers like Abraham Lincoln's family depended on chestnuts for both food and shelter. In the early 1800s chestnuts dominated the woods here at Sinking Springs Farm. You could build everything from a log cabin to split rail fences using these tall, straight, rot-resistant trees. And both people and the livestock of that time enjoyed the sweet taste of chestnuts.



Mature American chestnut trees often grew to be 100 feet tall and up to 30 feet around.

Chestnut trees once filled forests from Maine to Georgia and west through the Ohio River Valley. In Lincoln's lifetime, one out of every four hardwood trees was an American chestnut.

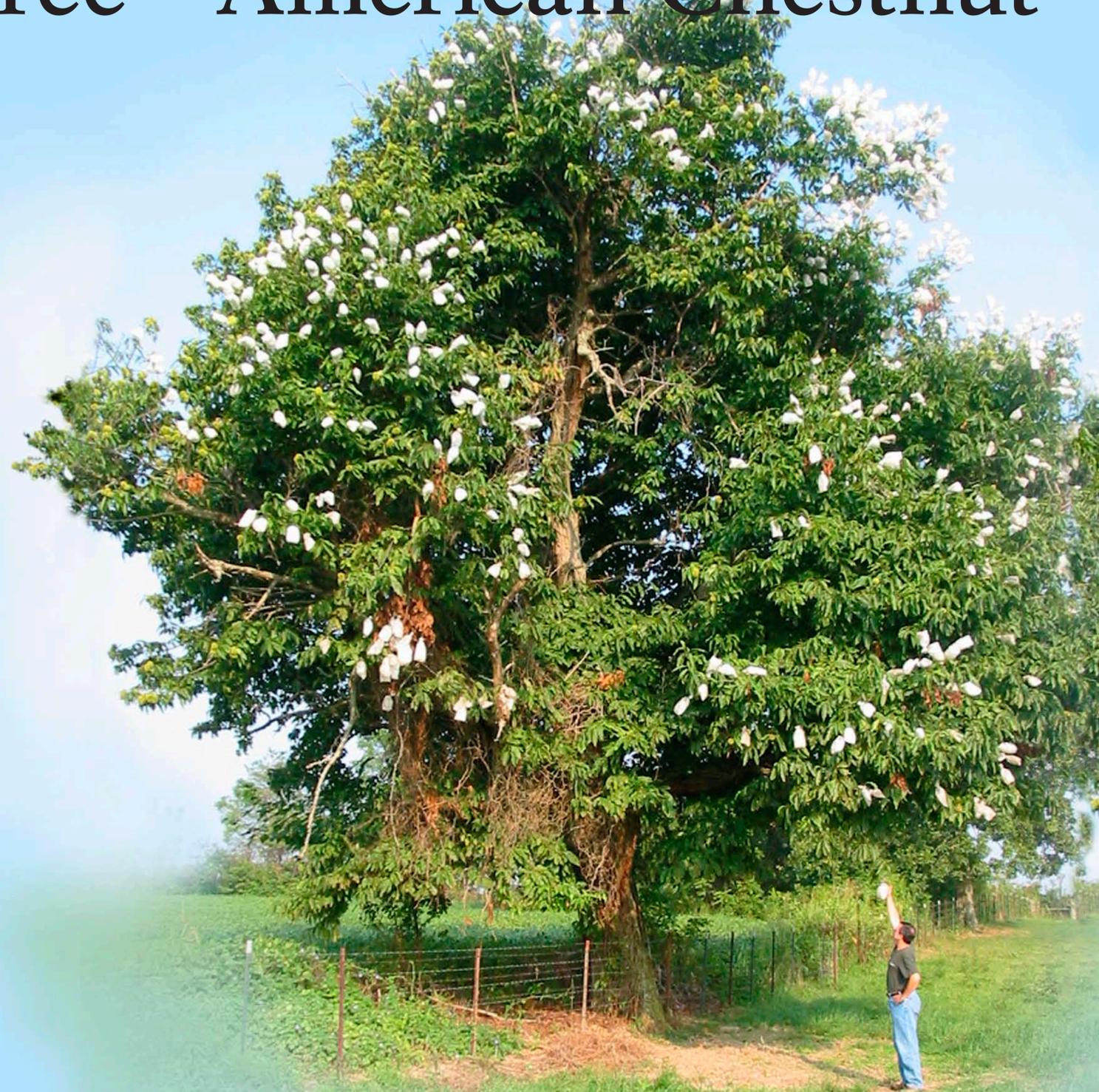
Then in the early 1900s an imported disease called *chestnut blight* killed four billion trees. Chestnut blight destroyed some nine million acres of woodlands. The American Chestnut Foundation's scientists are working now to bring this key species back. Abraham Lincoln Birthplace works with the Kentucky Association of Professional Surveyors and the American Chestnut Foundation to grow chestnut trees here as part of the bicentennial celebration of Lincoln's birth.



Chestnuts provided an important cash crop for many rural families. Every winter, the railroads hauled carloads of chestnuts into American cities.



Vendors roasted and sold chestnuts on big-city street corners.



This American chestnut tree in Adair County, Kentucky survived the blight.

Note the white bags that help limit pollination to this disease-resistant tree. The American Chestnut Foundation uses this tree to start new seedlings.



★ KENTUCKY ★  
**LINCOLN**  
★ HERITAGE TRAIL ★

- 1809** Abraham Lincoln born at Sinking Spring farm, in present-day Larue County, Kentucky.
- 1816** Lincoln family moved from Kentucky.
- 1841** Abraham Lincoln visited his friend Joshua Speed at Farmington, the Speed family plantation, in Louisville, Kentucky.
- 1842** Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky.
- 1847** The Lincoln family visited Lexington, Kentucky, en route to Abraham's only term in Congress.
- 1860** Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States in November.
- 1865** Abraham Lincoln assassinated at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.

# THE LINCOLNS AT KNOB CREEK

Challenges to land titles were common in Kentucky's early years, and the Lincoln family experienced these problems firsthand.

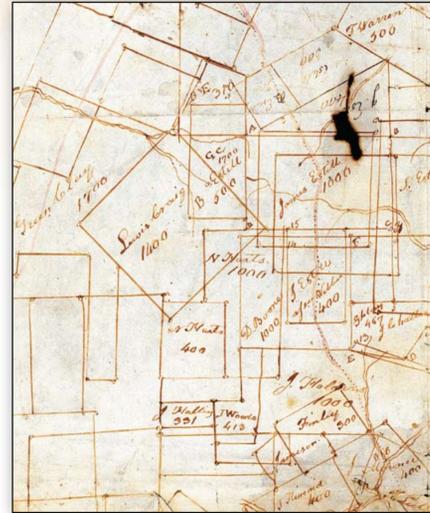
In 1811, Thomas and Nancy Lincoln moved here, to Knob Creek, with their two children, Sarah and Abraham. They leased thirty acres of bottomland along the Old Cumberland Trail, and it was here that their third child, Thomas, was born and died in infancy.



Thomas Lincoln  
Photograph courtesy of the  
Abraham Lincoln Museum of  
Lincoln Memorial University,  
Harrogate, Tennessee.

Abraham and his sister attended the local school, located two miles northeast of here. Two teachers, Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel, gave young Abraham his first formal schooling. Lincoln's classroom education, however, would not last. The demands of the frontier required him to work the family farm, but he continued his education. He borrowed books and read them in front of the fireplace or under a shade tree.

In 1815, the Lincolns and nine of their neighbors were involved in a land title dispute for the entire Knob Creek valley. The next autumn, Thomas Lincoln lost a court case to regain the Sinking Spring farm where the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial is now located. He then moved the family to present-day Spencer County, Indiana.



Many pioneer Kentuckians faced the same land claim issues as Thomas Lincoln. To the left is a survey map of overlapping land claims in late-18th-century Kentucky, where many individuals laid claim to the same tract of land.  
Courtesy of the Eastern Kentucky University Archives, Richmond, KY



*The place on Knob Creek, mentioned by Mr. Read, I remember very well; but I was not born there. As my parents have told me, I was born on Nolin, very much nearer Hodgins-Mill than the Knob Creek place is. My earliest recollection, however, is of the Knob Creek place.*

-Letter from Abraham Lincoln to the Hon. Samuel Haycraft, June 4, 1860.



The cabin before you was constructed using logs from the original Gollaher cabin. Austin Gollaher, a childhood playmate of Abraham Lincoln, is believed to have saved Lincoln from drowning by pulling him to safety from the nearby swollen creek.

Courtesy of Mary Brooks Howard



The Gollaher cabin logs prior to their reassembly at the present site before you.  
Courtesy of Mary Brooks Howard



★ KENTUCKY ★  
**LINCOLN**  
★ HERITAGE TRAIL ★

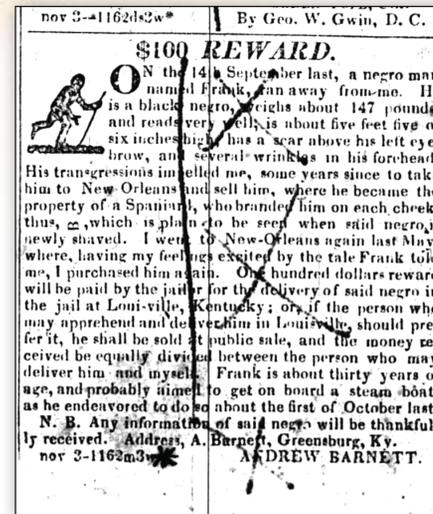
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# SLAVERY IN THE VALLEY

Abraham Lincoln most likely encountered slavery while living here as a young child. In 1811, when Lincoln was two years old, this portion of Kentucky was part of Hardin County. At the time, there were 1,007 slaves in Hardin County, compared to 1,627 white males who were sixteen years of age or older. Five years later, when the Lincoln family moved from Kentucky, the owner of nearby Atherton's Ferry owned eight slaves.

Historians are just beginning to learn about the history of slavery in this area. In addition to the likely presence of slaves on some neighboring farms, the Old Cumberland Trail (today U. S. Hwy. 31E) ran directly beside the Lincoln family farm. It was a main route between Louisville, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee. Some historians believe it was one of the overland routes slave dealers used to transport enslaved African Americans from Kentucky to slave markets farther south.

Lincoln's parents, Thomas and Nancy, attended the Little Mount Baptist Church. This church is believed to have been formed by antislavery advocates in 1810. It may have been part of a much larger antislavery movement within the Baptist churches of Kentucky, beginning in the 1790s. Lincoln later recalled that his father's decision to move the family from Kentucky to Indiana was partly due to slavery.



Andrew Barnett, a Greensburg, Kentucky, resident, notes in this runaway-slave advertisement that he sold his slave, Frank, in New Orleans. Other individuals in this section of Kentucky also sold enslaved African Americans south to Natchez and New Orleans.  
*Louisville Public Advertiser, November 3, 1829*

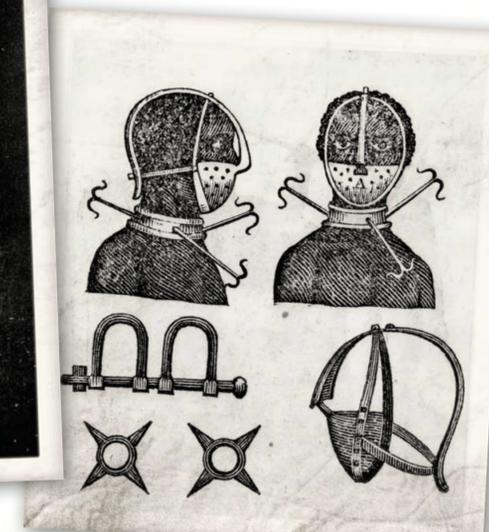


*I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel.*

-Abraham Lincoln to Albert Hodges, editor of the *Frankfort Commonwealth*, April 4, 1864



The Old Cumberland Trail was a main travel artery through this section of Kentucky.  
*Courtesy of The Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, IN (Ref#1063)*



An image of slave shackles and restraints, from Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant*, 1807.  
*Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division*



# An Idyllic Frontier Scene

The Lincolns typified families who settled on the Kentucky frontier in the early 1800s. They built self-sufficient lives around the area's natural resources. At Sinking Spring Farm, they cleared land to raise vegetables, used the trees to build and heat their home, hunted game, and raised their children, Sarah and Abraham.



Artist Lloyd Ostendorf was commissioned to create this artwork of the Lincoln family by the owner of the Nancy Lincoln Inn, Carl Howell.