

## **Abraham Lincoln and Marshall, IL**

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**Abraham Lincoln was born on Feb. 12, 1809 in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Abraham's parents were Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln. At the age of two he was taken by his parents to nearby Knob Creek and at eight to Spencer County, Indiana. The following year his mother died. In 1819, his father married Sarah Bush Johnston.**

**In 1831, after moving with his family to Macon County, Illinois, he struck out on his own, taking cargo on a flatboat to New Orleans, Louisiana. He then returned to Illinois and settled in New Salem where he split rails and clerked in a store. In 1833, he was appointed postmaster but had to supplement his income with surveying and various other jobs. At the same time he began to study law.**

**In 1832, Lincoln ran for state legislature. He was defeated, but he won two years later and served in the Lower House from 1834 to 1841. He quickly emerged as a leader of the Whig Party and was involved in the moving of the capital to Springfield. In 1836, Lincoln was admitted to the bar. He then entered successful partnerships with John T. Stuart, Stephen T. Logan, and William Herndon. Based on this success, Lincoln soon won recognition as an effective and resourceful attorney.**

**Even though Lincoln was born in Kentucky, a slave state, he had long opposed slavery. In the state legislature, he had voted against the "peculiar institution" and in 1837 was one of only two members to protest it. In 1846, Lincoln was elected to Congress and attracted a lot of attention because of his outspoken criticism of the war with Mexico and because he formulated a plan for emancipation in the District of Columbia.**

**Abraham Lincoln visited Marshall, Illinois, on several occasions during his lifetime. One**



**time in particular, however, he came here to defend a man from Coles County by the name of William Davis who was being tried in Marshall on a murder charge. This case was in July of 1850. The trial lasted two days, July 1 and July 2, and the result of the trial was a conviction on a lesser charge of manslaughter. Davis' punishment was three years in a penitentiary. After Davis had served two and one-half years in the penitentiary, Lincoln wrote a**

**letter to the Governor of Illinois asking that he pardon Davis and release him six months early. Lincoln believed that the conviction was correct, but that the amount of prison time Davis received was somewhat excessive. He also felt Davis should be released because Davis had a family that he needed to provide for and he had a handicap, he had lost an arm in the Mexican War.**

**Another connection between Lincoln and Marshall was a former resident of Marshall by the name of Mrs. Vandevanter. According to Mrs. Vandevanter, her family had known**

Abe for years. She said that when Abe made his campaign, he and his wife, Mary Todd, stayed with Mrs. Vandevanter and her family for a while.

Later in the 1850's, Lincoln began to gain national recognition. In the middle 1850's Lincoln began to get noticed on the national level when he ran for the Senate against Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas and Lincoln had several great debates with one another and even though Lincoln eventually lost the election he received national attention because of the debates. In 1860, Lincoln became the Republican nominee for president, and he won. Soon after his election seven southern states seceded from the Union. A new government in the South was inaugurated on February 1, 1861.

Shortly after Lincoln took office, the Civil War began when Confederate soldiers began firing at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Throughout most of the Civil War Lincoln had bad luck with the generals he appointed, but he eventually chose Ulysses S. Grant, who ended the war. Before the war was over Lincoln had to deal with the issue that started the Civil War, slavery.

Lincoln proceeded slowly in abolishing slavery. First, he freed slaves used by the South for military purposes. Next, he abolished slavery in the District of Columbia. Lincoln continued this slow progression until January 1, 1863 when he gave the Emancipation Proclamation.

After the war, Lincoln was re-elected and slavery was officially abolished with the 13th Amendment. After the war, Lincoln also had the responsibility of reconstruction. Lincoln's reconstruction policies were met with criticism from some of his fellow Republicans. Despite's the Confederate's loss in the Civil War many Southerners were still at odds with Lincoln and the North. One such person was John Wilkes Booth. Booth was a successful actor from Maryland who had plotted against Lincoln for some time. Booth had already failed once in his schemes against Lincoln. In 1864 Booth and several others unsuccessfully attempted to, kidnap Lincoln. On April 14, 1865, Booth was successful at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., when he got into Lincoln's private box and shot him in the head. Booth then jumped from Lincoln's box down to the stage and injured his leg. Lincoln died the next day. Booth was killed twelve days later, either being shot by himself or someone else, in a barn in Bowling Green, Virginia.

Today Lincoln is considered one of our greatest presidents, a brilliant speaker, and a great humanitarian. Lincoln, during his presidency, abolished slavery, re-unified our nation, and laid the foundation for suffrage for blacks. Abraham Lincoln can truly be considered one of the greatest men this country has ever known.