

LINCOLN LORE

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF LINCOLN'S HOME

There is not a residence in what once comprised the old Northwest Territory, which has been more often photographed than the home of Abraham Lincoln, at Springfield, Illinois. It was just 100 years ago on January 16, 1844, that the first legal papers were signed, which looked forward to the early occupancy of the home by Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln.

The minister who was engaged to marry Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd, the Rev. Charles Dresser, rector of the Episcopal Church, lived in a cottage he had built in 1840, on the northeast corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets. It was the intention of Abraham and Mary to have been married in this parsonage, and if Mrs. Edwards, Mary's sister, had not insisted that the wedding take place in her home, the young people would have been married in the house which within a few months was to become their own.

On February 5, 1844, Lincoln made a payment of \$750.00 on the contract price of \$1200.00, and in which there was also involved a piece of real estate on the public square, valued at \$300.00. The deal was consummated by the signing of a deed of conveyance on the following May 2nd, when the Lincolns took possession. So the first and only home the Lincolns ever owned was originally a manse.

The Cottage

The dwelling at the time it was purchased by Lincoln was a story and a half cottage, and few improvements were made until 1850, when a fence with a brick foundation was constructed. When the family had reached a total of five, the Lincolns were in need of more room, and another story was added to the cottage in 1856, at a cost of \$1300.00. This would bring the cost of the property, including the improvement, to about \$3000.00, and this is the amount for which Lincoln had the place insured.

It is not likely that the story and a half cottage was ever photographed, previous to the remodeling, although some drawings have been made of it which probably are fairly accurate. Just when the first picture of the home was made, it is difficult to say. There is a rather ingenious method of determining the probable dates when the pictures of the Lincoln home were taken. Sometime previous to 1860, an elm tree was set out by Mr. Lincoln in front of his home, and it serves as a measuring rod for the chronological identification of the many pictures taken of the building up to 1906.

The Candidate's Residence

J. C. Whipple, of Boston, went to Springfield after Lincoln's nomination to the presidency, on May 18, 1860, and took at least two photographs of the Lincoln home. These pictures of the building show Mr. Lincoln in the front yard with two of his sons, "Willie" and "Tad." There is also to be observed in one of the two different prints the picture of a small boy in front of the house. He is identified as Isaac Diller, who recently passed away, at Springfield, at the age of eighty-nine years.

Previous to the taking of these photographs, Robothan, the artist, visited Springfield on his trip through the Lincoln country of Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, probably in May, 1860, and made a drawing of the Lincoln home. It is his work which is reproduced in what may be the first picture of the Lincoln home to appear in a book—Barrett's *Life of Lincoln*, published in 1865. Brackett's *Life of Lincoln*, published the same year, also shows a picture of the home, but it is an idealized view made from one of the Whipple photographs. The first really fine engraving of the home appears in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*.

One of the most interesting and widely circulated photographs of the building was taken on August 8, 1860. A large political rally was being held in Springfield, and a parade, which was passing the Lincoln home, stopped long enough to be photographed in front of the dwelling.

The President's Homestead

It is difficult to discover original photographs taken of the residence while the Lincolns were making their home at Washington, from 1861 to 1865. An engraving made by J. Manz, of Chicago, and another appearing in *Harper's Weekly* for May 20, 1865, were probably made from photographs taken during this period.

The Martyr's House

Upon the assassination of Abraham Lincoln the building was immediately draped in black. The Lincoln National Life Foundation has several original photographs taken of the house while wearing its mourning garments. Several of them bear the imprint of "F. W. Ingmire, City Galleries, West side of Public Square, Springfield, Ill." The earliest photograph of the building draped in mourning shows the decorator's ladder against a fence, and all the trimmings are in perfect order, as if the work had just been finished.

There were several group pictures made at the time of the funeral, with the house serving as a background. The most common one shows a very large delegation which almost fills the yard and the sidewalk. A group of one hundred Chicago citizens is another well-known picture. In a still smaller group there appears the delegates from Washington, containing twenty-one men, U. S. Senators and Congressmen. In another picture Lincoln's old horse, covered with a mourning blanket, is photographed with attendants, and in front of the house a dozen or more citizens stand on the sidewalk. A group consisting of eleven men, women and children with one of the boys up in the top of the elm tree was also taken in front of the President's former home.

These group pictures taken on May 2nd, the day of the funeral and also the day following, show the elm tree just starting to put out its leaves, but a later picture, by Ingmire, reveals the tree in full foliage with the decorations still up, but badly disarranged.

The Rental Property

The last tenant to occupy the home under the ownership of Robert Lincoln was O. H. Oldroyd, who is said to have encouraged Robert Lincoln to give the property to the state. Possibly the first pictures of the home to have a wide distribution were single views and stereoscope pictures taken on August 8, 1885, and sold by Oldroyd at twenty-five cents each. Over the front door of the house there appeared a sign with this inscription, "Lincoln Residence."

A State Shrine

After the home became a state shrine in 1887, much more interest was taken in the building and *The First Biennial Report of the Lincoln Household Trustees*, published in 1889, carries an engraving of the home by Blomgreen Bros. The back fence was taken down and a cannon and flagpole placed in the backyard. Several hundred dollars were spent on repairs at this time, and Bullard and Bullard, architects, were paid \$50.00 for "taking measurements and preparing full drawings of the home."

On August 17, 1906, the historic elm tree which stood in front of the home and made it possible through its growth to give proper chronological sequence to the pictures of the house, was destroyed by a storm.

It is not generally known that the famous home itself was in danger of being destroyed two years later during a race riot in Springfield. A Springfield news dispatch of August 18, 1908 stated: "It developed to-day that an attempt was made late Saturday night to burn the house of Abraham Lincoln. A torch had been lighted and applied to the building but it was discovered in time by a woman living in the neighborhood and the fire was extinguished with little damage."