

JOURNEY INTO THE LAND OF LINCOLN

By CHARLES W. WHITE

LEXINGTON, Ky.—The Easterner who wants something rewardingly different as a vacation might well consider a family motor trip through the fabled Lincoln country. Such a journey would lead into Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, and the return might well be by way of Washington, D. C., thus following the Lincoln saga almost step by step from the birthplace cabin near Hodgenville, Ky., to its tragic conclusion at Ford's Theatre.

Lexington makes a convenient gateway and intermediate resting place for the trip. The scenery from here westward and up through Indiana into Illinois is magnificent; and Lexington, of course, fits into the Lincoln story as the girlhood home of Mary Todd Lincoln, the sixteenth President's wife, who has been such a favorite topic for historians and novelists recently.

The Robert Todd house may be visited, and there are many other reminders here of the Todds and Lincolns. In 1847, after Abraham Lincoln had been elected to Congress in Illinois, he and Mrs. Lincoln and their sons Robert and Eddie visited the aristocratic Todd relatives here for three weeks, going on by stage coach to Winchester, Va., and thence by rail to the capital.

A pleasant feature of Lincoln touring is that one keeps coming upon bits of legend and intimate lore concerning him and his times, facts which many average admirers of Lincoln might have missed—for instance, that the Todds and many of Mrs. Lincoln's Southern friends hereabouts and at Springfield had been slaveowners, and that Lincoln stood almost alone, at first, in supporting the anti-slavery movement in Illinois.

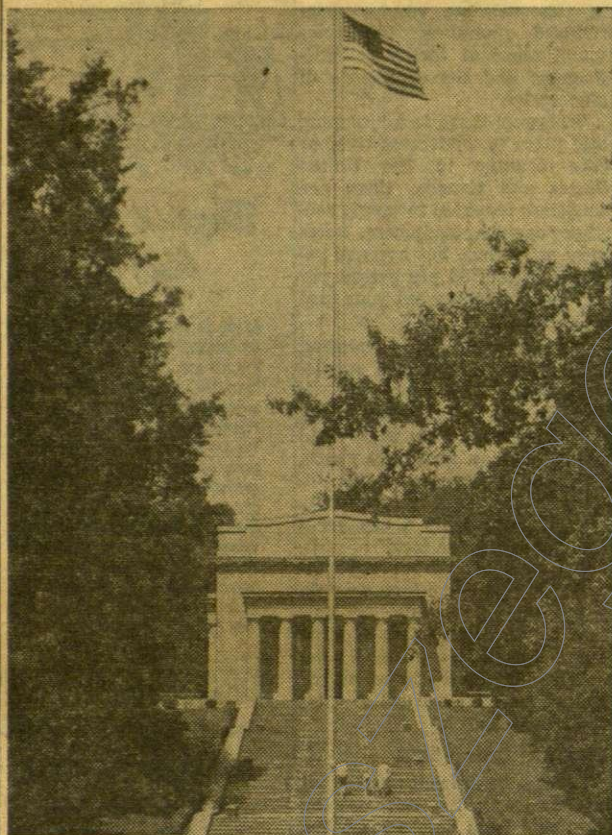
Routes From the East

Routing for the Eastern visitor may be suggested. From New York, the motorist might come west on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, turning south about Bedford, Pa., down U. S. 220 to U. S. 50 below Keyser, W. Va., then west on U. S. 50 to Parkersburg, W. Va., then south to Charleston, W. Va., where one enters U. S. 60, the main route to Lexington. (There is some wonderful mountain scenery on this route, and there are many convenient stopover places.)

There are other good ways, of course; through Washington, D. C., first and onto the Blue Ridge Parkway for a while on the way southwest; or by U. S. 25 down to Lexington from Cincinnati, which offers pleasant, bluegrass country vistas.

From Lexington on is the true, original Lincoln land. The first stop might naturally be at Hodgenville, Ky., reached via U. S. 62, and, about three miles south, on U. S. 31-E and State Route 61 to the Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park and Lincoln's birthplace.

Lincoln was born near Hodgenville on Feb. 12, 1809. His life divides into phases which can now be followed. First, seven years in Kentucky, then fourteen years in Indiana where he grew to manhood. At 21, he left for Illinois where he lived



Kentucky Division of Publicity
MEMORIAL—Cabin where Lincoln was born is housed in this building near Hodgenville, Ky.

near Decatur for a while, then to the pioneer village of New Salem where he kept the famous store, then to practice law at Springfield. After seeing the sites of these activities, a return to Washington (much of this return journey can be made on U. S. 40, the old National Road) carries the Lincoln story through its last tragic days.

Main objectives in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois would be: the birthplace cabin, preserved in the national park; the graves of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, and other members of the family at Lincoln State Park, Indiana; and the Springfield-New Salem circuit in Illinois.

There remains some question as to exactly where Thomas Lincoln, Abe's father, crossed the Ohio River with his family when they moved to Indiana. A modern migrant might get up into Indiana on Kentucky State Route 61, which is a four-lane thoroughway from Elizabethtown to Louisville, cross the Ohio River to New Albany, Indiana, and go west from there on U.S. 460 (Indiana 62) to the village of Dale, about sixty miles, thence on Indiana 345 a short distance southward to Lincoln State Park.

Route of the Lincolns

After visiting the Nancy Hanks shrine, where there are many pioneer relics and bits of Lincolniana, a run north from Dale on Indiana State Route 45 and U.S. 231 and westward on U.S. 50 allows one to follow the actual route the Lincoln family took into Illinois.

At Vincennes, site of the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Bridge across the water to Illinois, young Abe is said to have visited the print shop of Elihu Stout for his first look at a printing press. Across the Wabash, which

the Lincolns forded, there is an interesting monument showing the pioneer family on their laborious journey. From here, a good routing north in Illinois would be Illinois State Route 1, which connects with U. S. 36 just south of Chrisman, and a left turn on the latter for Springfield. There, memories of the circuit-riding lawyer and state legislator truly come alive.

500,000 Yearly Visitors

The big frame house where Abraham Lincoln and his wife lived and reared their children is on the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets. It is a dignified two-story structure with shutters at each window. Preserved as a memorial by the State of Illinois, it is visited by more than 500,000 people annually. They come from all over the world.

Delegations of high officials and plain citizens alike pay tribute at Lincoln's tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery in the northern part of the city. Also in Springfield is the Illinois State Historical Library, one of the nation's principal repositories of Lincolniana which has, among many priceless items, an original draft of the Gettysburg Address.

Most visitors drive out on Illinois Route 97 to restored New Salem Village to see the first Berry-Lincoln general store which Abe and his partner purchased in 1832; also the Rutledge Tavern, and the cabins and shops of Lincoln's neighbors. Lodging and dining at reasonable rates may be had, incidentally, at Owen's New Salem Lodge opposite the entrance to the New Salem park area. (Reservations should be made well in advance.)

In Springfield, nearly every townsman is a Lincoln historian, and the visitor can make fascinating explorations of his own.

Not long ago, for example, I spent a morning hunting up Lincoln's law office. He had several there, at one time and another. I found one of them on the third floor of the Lincoln-Logan building, on the corner of Sixth and Adams Streets, opposite the old courthouse (later the state capitol) where Lincoln tried cases and made speeches.

To get to the law offices, I labored up the same three flights of narrow stairs the lanky Illinois lawyer once climbed many times daily. The office now is occupied by an architectural firm. Its members are glad to show one around and tell Lincoln stories. There was a trap door in the office floor, they say, through which Lincoln used to listen in on jury and other official proceedings in the room beneath.

Ghouls Foiled

Springfield abounds with such lore. It was there that in 1876 an attempt was made to steal Lincoln's body from Oak Ridge Cemetery, where all his immediate family excepting Robert Todd Lincoln are buried. The ghouls' efforts were foiled by Pinkerton operatives, just in time.

At each Lincoln shrine, a visitor gets to know the Emancipator and his family more intimately. At the Lincoln Home, Mrs. J. H. Bradish, custodian, shows visiting housewives the kitchen, explaining housekeeping arrangements of Civil War times. (Many visitors are surprised that the Lincolns lived so comfortably, she says.)

The house is full of genuine relics, such as Lincoln's shaving mirror and mug, the writing box he placed on his knees, the long horsehair sofa he had made for himself (Lincoln was six feet four) and, a touching sight, the little rocking horse and chair Tad Lincoln used.

The Eastern explorer into Lincolniana could either make Washington, D.C., his first stop for a shorter trip, or come west and, following the chronology, return by way of Washington. Here it probably would be best to start with the Library of Congress, which has a permanent Lincoln exhibition on free display, and many thousands of Lincoln books, manuscripts and other items. A favorite item with some 750,000 annual Library visitors is the backwoods boy's school notebook page, on which he scrawled, "Abraham Lincoln, his hand and pen, he will be good, but God knows when."

The Memorial

At Washington, one might devote the morning to the Library of Congress displays; then go to the Ford Theatre Lincoln Museum, and the house across the street where he died. As a patriotic imperative and for an impression never to be forgotten, there is the Lincoln Memorial. It is visited by more than two million persons a year.

The Lincoln tour outlined here can be taken in little more than ten days, although three weeks would be better. It can be quite inexpensive, and at no time is one far from excellent modern accommodations. There is no finer way to get a deeper insight into the life and personality of one of the greatest Americans.