



Indiana pays tribute to Hoosier hero with bicentennial celebrations

This year, America will celebrate the 200th birthday of one of our nation's greatest presidents. But you don't have to travel far to take part in the celebrations—in fact, you don't even have to cross the state line.

Although Abraham Lincoln wasn't born in Indiana, he did spend his formative years here. From age 7 to 21, the 16th president grew up in Spencer County, in Southern Indiana, developing the traits that shaped his character.

On Indiana's frontier Abe learned how to use a plow and an axe, but more importantly, he developed a love of reading. With little formal schooling, he educated himself by reading books such as "Life of George Washington," "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin" and "Robinson Crusoe" – all by age 11. During his time here he also learned some of life's hard lessons, losing his mother, who died of milk sickness.

The "wild region" that Lincoln once described as home has changed considerably during nearly two centuries, but you can trace his roots by walking down the same wooded paths that young Abraham did.

Activities throughout Indiana

Attractions across the state include the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, which includes his mother's grave and some of the most extensive collections of Lincoln artifacts found anywhere in the world. This year, such attractions take center stage as communities large and small host special bicentennial events and projects to showcase Lincoln's Hoosier roots.

The bulk of the activities take place in Spencer County. However, the state's biggest birthday party will be at the Indiana State House on Feb. 12. Hosted by the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, the "Lincoln Bicentennial Birthday Bash" will include an appearance by a Lincoln interpreter and Indiana-related Lincoln displays.

In Lincoln City, celebrations at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial will include a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Abe's mother as well as a guest speaker and an open house. The Lincoln City Post Office, located inside the Memorial's visitors center, will offer a special pictorial postmark that features an image of young Abe with ax in hand.

Throughout the year, events range from fancy (a Presidential Ball) to somber (a funeral re-enactment); all are educational and entertaining. Here's a sneak peek at statewide exhibits and celebrations, listed alphabetically by city.

Bedford, Ind.

Held in conjunction with the Lawrence County History Fest, the April 18 "Presidential Ball, honoring President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln" will recreate a Victorian-era ball with period music, dancers and costumes, as well as a Civil War encampment.

Evansville, Ind.

On Sunday, Feb. 22, The Evansville Museum hosts "That All Mankind Shall Be Free: Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass." Historian Thomas C. Mackey examines Lincoln's views of slavery and its political threats to the nation, as well as Douglass' view of Lincoln and his policies of the time.

"Lincoln Remembered" and "The Popular Lincoln," two exhibits at The Evansville Museum, bring together Lincoln artifacts and memorabilia from across the state, including a number of items from the Jack Smith Lincoln Graphics Collection of the Indiana Historical Society and from Lincoln historian William Bartelt. "Lincoln Remembered" ends March 29; "The Popular Lincoln" remains until April 12.

Fort Wayne, Ind.

An exhibit on Hugh McCulloch of Fort Wayne, one of President Lincoln's most trusted advisors, will be on display at the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society. McCulloch served as the nation's first Comptroller of Currency and the 27th Secretary of the Treasury. The exhibit honoring him runs until June.

Indianapolis

On Feb. 11, Indiana University Professor Patrick Baude marks the eve of Lincoln's birthday deliver the talk "Abraham Lincoln: Profile in Courage" at St. Richard's School. Baude's remarks will be followed by a candlelight vigil, and eighth-grade students will read excerpts from Lincoln's writings and speeches through the night and day to commemorate Lincoln's birth.

On Feb. 12, the "Lincoln Bicentennial Birthday Bash" takes over the Rotunda and east and west atriums of the Indiana State House. Organizations from across the state will erect Lincoln-related exhibits and displays, and, during a noon program, awards given to Indiana students by Gov. Mitch Daniels. In addition, the Commander of the USS Abraham Lincoln will receive a special gift for his ship and crew—a quilt made especially for the ship by a group of Hoosier quilters—and Honest Abe will speak.

The Indiana State Museum has a number of Lincoln-related items, including a cupboard believed to have been built by Abe's father, possibly with the help of young Abe himself. In the years to come, the museum's collection will grow considerably, as it was recently announced a \$20 million collection of Lincoln artifacts and documents that were formerly

a part of the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne will be housed at the Indiana State Museum and the Allen County Public Library.

Lincoln City, Ind.

On May 14, the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial will hold a first-day issue event for a special Indiana-focused penny being released that day by the U.S. Mint. One of four re-designs of the Lincoln penny (representing his four homes, in Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and Washington D.C.), the Indiana penny features Abe with an axe at his side and a book in his hands.

The Lincoln Amphitheatre inside Lincoln State Park presents “LINCOLN – A New Theatrical Experience” June 12-Aug. 15. With this dramatic, multimedia presentation, the audience experiences the rough-and-tumble life of the Indiana boy who grew up to become the nation’s 16th president. In addition, the amphitheatre holds extensive archives and provides walking tours of trails Abraham wandered as a boy. Kids also can play pioneer games, just like Abraham and his sister, Sarah, did.

Also on June 12, a new public art piece funded by the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and developed with support from the Indiana Arts Commission will be unveiled at Lincoln State Park. Designed to honor the years Lincoln spent in Indiana, the circular plaza will be dotted with limestone pedestals signifying key moments in young Abe’s life. A larger-than-life bust of Lincoln will hold center stage in the plaza designed by two Indiana artists.

On Sept. 6, the Lincoln Amphitheatre will host the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra for a patriotic-themed tribute to Abraham Lincoln. The performance will include a rendition of Aaron Copeland’s “A Lincoln Portrait,” which combines music with readings from Lincoln’s writings.

Throughout the year, the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial will host speakers from across the country as part of its bicentennial speaker series, and will also screen Lincoln-themed movies as part of its bicentennial film series.

Buffalo Run, one mile from the Lincoln Boyhood National Monument, hosts a holiday open house on Dec. 5. In addition to visiting a Lincoln-era cabin (where Abe spent the night in 1830), you can watch buffalo roam behind the candlelit cabin. On Dec. 12 and 13, visit “Buffalo & Mistletoe” to see pioneers, frontiersman and Native Americans demonstrate life skills of the Lincoln era.

Rockport, Ind.

Assuming you weren’t there the first time around (144 years ago), you can pay your last respects to Honest Abe in a funereal observation from noon to midnight on April 14 at the Spencer County Courthouse in Rockport. A reproduction of Lincoln’s casket will be on display as guards in period costumes keep watch.

On April 25, the Rockport Lincoln Pioneer Village celebrates Pioneer Day and invites Hoosiers to tour 14 replica cabins from the Lincoln era in Spencer County. Costumed interpreters will demonstrate life in the village and trade techniques commonly used during the period when Lincoln grew up in Southern Indiana. Walking tours hosted by the Spencer County Public Library will showcase Rockport and the Lincoln Pioneer Village. Participants will receive a book on Lincoln's Indiana youth.

The village will hold an 1816-1830 Rendezvous May 16-17, presenting the village as it was during Lincoln's era. Activities include a young Abe look-alike contest, a mock wedding ceremony, muzzle-loading and tomahawk-throwing demonstrations, and shopping with vendors.

Sheridan, Ind.

The Sheridan Public Library has two Lincoln-related exhibits. The first runs until Feb. 26 and features the "Faces of Lincoln." The second, "Freedom: The history of US," will be available Feb. 28-March 31. It focuses on emancipation and the end of slavery.

South Bend, Ind.

An exhibit titled "Celebrating Lincoln" runs Feb. 10 through Dec. 31, 2010, at the Studebaker National Museum.

Lincoln fans will descend on South Bend June 16-20 for the Indiana Lincoln Highway Association's annual conference. The association works to preserve and the Lincoln Highway, which was America's first transcontinental highway and the first major monument to President Lincoln, predating the Lincoln Memorial.

A free seminar that's open to the public on June 18 will feature a keynote speaker who will discuss national byways, as well as an artists and authors reception. A Lincoln Highway Day Parade on June 19 will feature the 90th Anniversary U.S. Military Cross County Convoy that will be en route from Washington D.C. After the parade, the military vehicles will be on display at the Studebaker national Museum and Howard Park Vietnam Veteran's Memorial. The five-day conference also offers a variety of daytrips from South Bend.

For more information on Lincoln-related events and on Indiana's Lincoln bicentennial celebrations, go to www.IndianasLincoln.org.

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Calendar of events

A number of Abraham Lincoln-related events are planned for the coming year. Following is a list in chronological order. These same events are described in more detail above, listed alphabetically by city.

Through Feb. 26: “The Faces of Lincoln,” Sheridan Public Library, Sheridan, Ind.

Through March 29: “Lincoln Remembered,” The Evansville Museum, Evansville, Ind.

Through April 12: “The Popular Lincoln,” The Evansville Museum, Evansville, Ind.

Through June: “Lincoln’s Treasurer: Hugh McCulloch of Fort Wayne,” Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Throughout 2009: Lincoln Bicentennial Speaker Series and Lincoln Bicentennial Film Series, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Ind.

February 2009

Feb. 10-Dec. 31, 2010: “Celebrating Lincoln,” Studebaker National Museum, South Bend Ind.

Feb. 11: “Abraham Lincoln: Profile in Courage,” St. Richard’s School, Indianapolis.

Feb .12: “Lincoln Bicentennial Birthday Celebration,” Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Ind.

Feb. 12: “Lincoln Bicentennial Birthday Bash,” Indiana State House, Indianapolis.

Feb. 22: “That All Mankind Shall Be Free: Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass,” The Evansville Museum, Evansville, Ind.

Feb. 28-March 31: “Freedom: The History of US,” Sheridan Public Library, Sheridan, Ind.

April 2009

April 14: Abraham Lincoln Funeral Reenactment, Spencer County Courthouse, Rockport, Ind.

April 18: “Presidential Ball, honoring President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln,” Lawrence County History Fest, Bedford, Ind.

April 25: Pioneer Day, Rockport Lincoln Pioneer Village, Rockport, Ind.

May 2009

May 14: Lincoln Penny First-Day Issue Event, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Ind.

May 16-17: “1816-1830 Rendezvous,” Rockport Lincoln Pioneer Village, Rockport, Ind.

June 2009

June 12-Aug. 15: World Premiere of “Lincoln,” Lincoln Amphitheatre, Lincoln State Park, Lincoln City, Ind.

June 12: Dedication of Public Art, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Ind.

June 16-20: Indiana Lincoln Highway Association conference, South Bend, Ind.

August 2009

Aug 5-9: Lincoln Bicentennial Jubilee, various locations in Spencer County, Ind.

September 2009

Sept. 6: “A Lincoln Portrait,” featuring the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra, Lincoln Amphitheatre, Lincoln State Park, Lincoln City, Ind.

December 2009

Dec. 5: Holiday Open House, Buffalo Run, Lincoln City, Ind.

Dec. 12-13: “Buffalo & Mistletoe,” Buffalo Run, Lincoln City, Ind.

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