



NEWS RELEASE

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Commission announces Indiana activities to commemorate Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday

Books, lilac trees, license plates, public art to celebrate Lincoln

The country's three-year Lincoln Bicentennial kicks off next week, and Indiana – Abraham Lincoln's boyhood home – has a front-row seat.

"Indiana has such a wealth of Lincoln history and heritage, that it only makes sense for our state to have a major role in the national celebration," said Connie Nass, chairperson of the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (IALBC).

Lincoln, who would have been 200 on Feb. 12, 2009, spent 14 of his most formative years – from age 7 to 21 – in Spencer County in southern Indiana before ultimately going on to become the 16th president of the United States. The honesty, leadership, and determination that shaped his legacy were formed during his youth in the Hoosier state.

Indiana is one of 49 states officially taking part in the Lincoln Bicentennial celebration, which takes place nationally from February 2008 to February 2010.

"It's important to mark this special milestone," said Nass. "The Commission's goal is for all Hoosiers to be proud of the fact that one of our country's best presidents came from our home state. Plus, we want visitors from Indiana and beyond to travel to see the Lincoln sites."

Indiana's permanent Lincoln attractions are many and varied. The Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis and the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne offer some of the most extensive Lincoln collections found anywhere in the world, and Spencer County, where Lincoln lived with his pioneer family, offers a cluster of Lincoln-related sites. These include the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln State Park and the Lincoln Pioneer Village and Museum. Links to more information about each of these attractions can be found at www.IndianasLincoln.org.

Mother's Day marks celebration's start

Lincoln once said, "All I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother." Therefore, it's fitting that Indiana's celebration of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday will kick off on Mother's Day weekend, May 10 and 11, 2008, in Spencer County. A special ceremony on Sunday, May 11, at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Spencer County will honor Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who died when he was 9 years old. The future president helped his father dig the grave and bury his mother in a pioneer cemetery there.

The Mother's Day event will include a dramatic presentation, musical performances and other special tributes. This special ceremony will highlight the influence the women in Lincoln's life had on the development of his character. It is the second of five national signature events in honor of the Lincoln Bicentennial. It is being funded by the National Parks Service and coordinated by the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial.

Scouts honor Lincoln and learn about his life

Also on Mother's Day weekend, more than 5,000 Boy and Girl Scouts from Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois are expected for a campout at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln State Park and Buffalo Run in Lincoln City, Ind. The scouts will learn about Lincoln's time spent in Indiana by taking part in a variety of pioneer activities and demonstrations.

Indiana Historical Society plans events

The Indiana Historical Society will host several events in Indianapolis the weekend of Aug. 8-9.

Free events on Aug. 8 include a reenactment of Lincoln's February 1861 Indianapolis speech and Q&A session with noted Lincoln interpreter Fritz Klein outside the Indiana State House, as well as free family activities at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center. That evening, Lincoln enthusiasts, educators and scholars can attend a dinner and lecture at the History Center with scholar, author and Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission co-chair Harold Holzer.

On Saturday, Aug. 9, the History Center will host a Lincoln Bicentennial Conference featuring a keynote address by Edna Greene Medford (Howard University) in addition to several concurrent sessions for: libraries and local historical organizations facilitated by Joan Flinspach (CEO, Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne), schools and educators led by IHS education staff and Martin Tuohy (National Archives and Records Administration – Great Lakes); and history buffs, directed by Holzer and Medford.

Books and trees to mark the anniversary in schools

The IALBC has arranged for several commemorations focused on Indiana's school children. This fall, each of the 2,266 schools in the state will receive grade-level appropriate books about Lincoln. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources is currently cultivating Abraham Lincoln Lilac Tree seedlings that in spring 2009 will be planted at participating schools throughout the state along with a plaque stating they are in honor of Lincoln's 200th birthday. Each school also will receive related lesson plans for math, history and horticulture.

Commemorative license plates, public art and more

Beginning in late spring 2008, Indiana motorists will have the ability to select a Lincoln-themed license plate that includes Indiana's Lincoln logo and reads "Lincoln's Boyhood Home." It will be one of three license plate options available at no additional charge.

In addition, more than 10 Indiana artists are in the process of submitting proposals for a public art piece that will be placed in Lincoln State Park to commemorate the Lincoln Bicentennial. The Indiana Arts Commission and Indiana Historical Bureau are coordinating this effort in conjunction with the IALBC.

The Studebaker Museum in South Bend is working to restore its 1865 carriage that President Lincoln rode in on the night he was assassinated.

Other planned activities include student essay, PowerPoint and stamp design contests; traveling exhibitions, a Library of Congress exhibit and a new jazz composition commemorating Lincoln's time in Indiana by Dr. David Baker of the Indiana University School of Music.

In 2007, Governor Mitch Daniels dedicated new highway signs at every entrance to the state that proclaims Indiana is "Lincoln's Boyhood Home."

Local groups planning Lincoln bicentennial-related activities and events are encouraged to notify the Commission by applying for endorsement. Endorsed events will be listed on the IALBC Web site, indianaslincoln.org, and will be allowed to use the Indiana's Lincoln logo in their promotional efforts.

To learn more about Indiana's Lincoln sites and statewide bicentennial efforts, please visit www.IndianasLincoln.org. The IALBC Web site was produced in partnership with the Indiana Office of Tourism Development. For more travel ideas, log on to VisitIndiana.com or pick up a copy of the 2008 Indiana Travel Guide.

The Commission

The IALB Commission was formed in 2006, by the Indiana General Assembly, to commemorate America's greatest president and showcase his Hoosier roots. Members of the Commission are: Connie Nass, chairperson, Huntingburg; William Bartelt, vice chair, Newburgh; Brian Blackford, Indianapolis; Darrel Bigham, Evansville; Dan Bortner, Bedford; Rep. Suzanne Crouch, Evansville; Joan L. Flinspach, Fort Wayne; Jack Kroeger, Santa Claus; Sen. Jim Lewis, Charlestown; Sen. Jim Merritt, Indianapolis; Rep. Dennie Oxley, English; Ray Robison, Bedford; Rep. Tom Saunders, Lewisville; Dan Smith, Indianapolis; Jack Smith, South Bend; Rep. Russ Stilwell, Boonville; Dr. William H. Wiggins, Jr., Bloomington; Sen. Tom Wyss, Fort Wayne; Sen. Richard Young, Milltown. Melissa Miller, Santa Claus, serves as secretary.

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