



# Foundation Document Overview

## Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park

### Kentucky

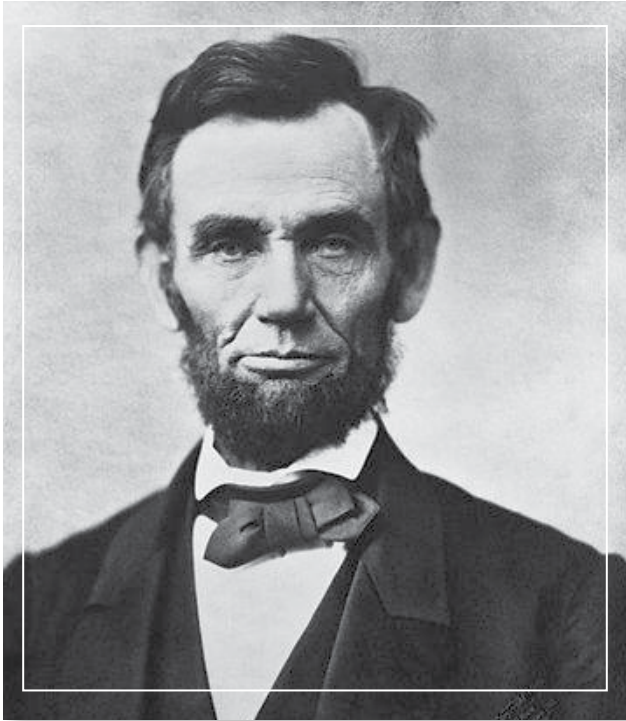


#### Contact Information

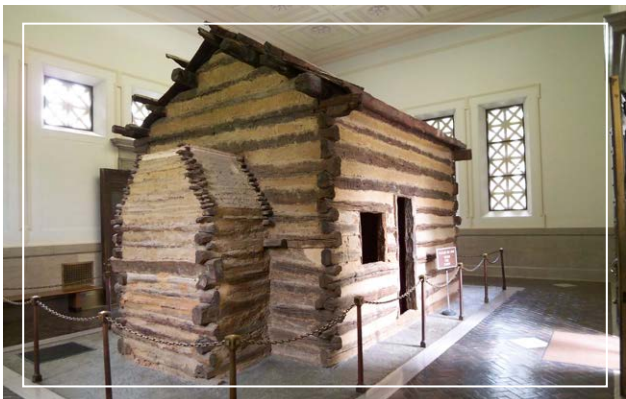
For more information about the *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park Foundation Document*, contact: [abli\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:abli_superintendent@nps.gov) or 270.358.3137 or write to: Superintendent, 2995 Lincoln Farm Road Hodgenville, Kentucky 42748



## Purpose



*ABRAHAM LINCOLN BIRTHPLACE  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK in Kentucky  
preserves, protects, and interprets  
the significant cultural and natural  
resources associated with Abraham  
Lincoln's birth, early boyhood, and  
memorialization, including the  
symbolic birth cabin, memorial  
building, and Knob Creek Farm.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

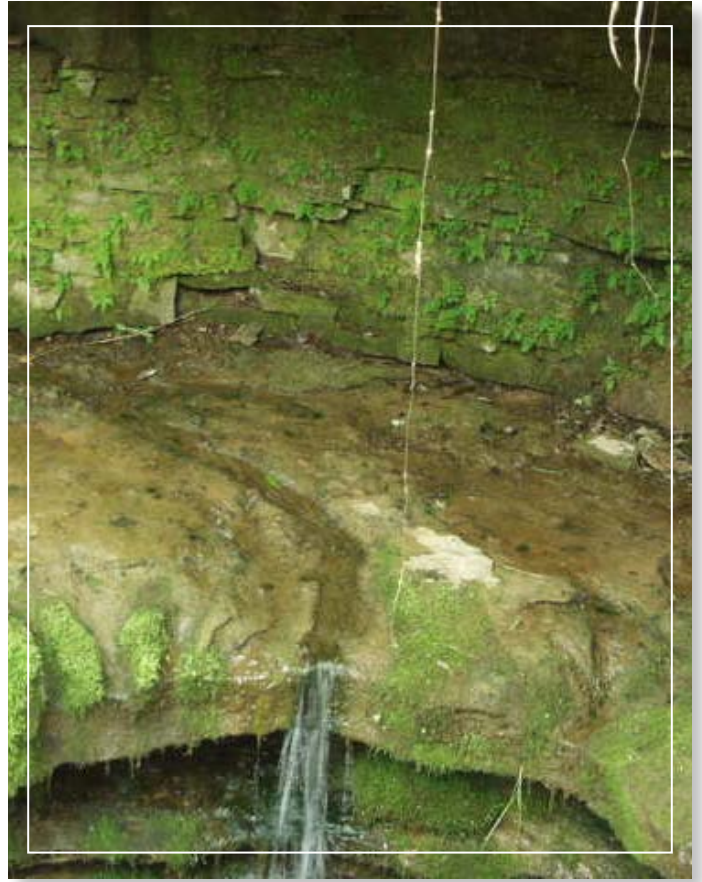
1. The Sinking Spring Farm and Knob Creek Farm were the birthplace and early boyhood home of the 16th president of the United States.
2. The formal landscape and memorial building at Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park were constructed by the Lincoln Farm Association, in 1910 creating the first major memorial to honor the memory of Abraham Lincoln.
3. Lincoln's boyhood home at Knob Creek was the site of his formative years and earliest memories, influencing his beliefs and choices throughout his life and presidency.



# Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Memorial Building.** The Abraham Lincoln Birthplace Memorial Building was designed by John Russell Pope in a neoclassical architectural style. It was constructed between 1909 and 1911 by the Lincoln Farm Association and, following its donation to the federal government in 1916, was managed by the War Department until 1933. Components that comprise this FRV include the marble and granite building itself, the 56 steps to the building, and the viewshed southeast across the landscape. The building is on the List of Classified Structures, and is also a contributing feature of the larger national register-listed historic district, which is described in further detail within the Birthplace Cultural Landscape FRV.
- **Symbolic Birth Cabin.** The symbolic log birth cabin at Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park is enclosed within and protected by the memorial building. The cabin was thought to have been constructed, in part, of logs from the original Lincoln cabin, but now the small, simple cabin stands as a symbol that represents the simplicity of Abraham's earliest years. The cabin is on the List of Classified Structures, and is also part of the museum collection.
- **The Sinking Spring.** The Sinking Spring at the Birthplace Unit is the namesake of the Lincolns' Sinking Spring Farm, and as a perennial source of water, was probably a deciding factor in selecting the location of the cabin site. The family depended on the spring for their daily water supply during their time there. Today the Sinking Spring lies south of the memorial building stairway, and is built up with stone retaining walls. Stairs lead down to the cool spring pool, which is surrounded by a platform with two stone benches. Geologically, the spring is a karst window, formed when a portion of the cave collapses exposing the underground stream directly on the surface. It connects to a network of subsurface streams in and near the park. This karst system typically supports a variety of fragile cave biota. The absence of soil means water is not filtered, making the cave particularly sensitive to pollutants from adjacent land use.



- **Birthplace Cultural Landscape.** The Birthplace Cultural Landscape is the memorial landscape that comprises the national register-listed historic district. It includes all of the land on the west side of the park that constitutes the original Lincoln Farm Association purchase, plus additional land that was purchased to protect the Boundary Oak. The landscape consists of the plaza, sidewalks, formal plantings, the steps off of the parking lot, and the wall at the back of the plaza. The viewshed from the plaza to the memorial building is also part of this cultural landscape; the building itself is described in further detail within the Memorial Building FRV.
- **Farm Landscape at Knob Creek.** The Farm Landscape at Knob Creek is one of the few areas of the park that is largely unchanged since the time of the Lincolns. This serene environment is the closest setting to that which the young Abraham Lincoln would remember of his time in Kentucky. It includes the viewshed; the fields, knobs, and other land formations; Knob Creek; and other natural features. This area of the park is also one of the best places to experience a quiet setting, natural sounds, and a dark night sky.



## Description

President Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, on the Sinking Spring Farm near present-day Hodgenville, Kentucky. The farm site sits three miles south of Hodgenville and about fifty miles south of Louisville, on US Highway 31E in LaRue County. In 1811, due to an ongoing legal struggle regarding a prior land claim, the Lincoln family relocated to the Knob Creek Farm a few miles away. Abraham's father, Thomas Lincoln, leased and farmed thirty acres there. The family remained at Knob Creek until 1816. Frustrated by ongoing legal battles over Kentucky land titles, Thomas Lincoln moved the family to Indiana.

Although interest in Lincoln's origins increased after his assassination in 1865, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that a memorial of his birthplace was attempted. In February 1906, several prominent Americans formed the Lincoln Farm Association with the intention of creating a national memorial to Lincoln. Through private donations, the group raised funds to purchase a portion of the farm and a cabin containing logs that local residents had identified as coming from the original Lincoln cabin. It has since been determined that this is not the original cabin, but it is still protected as a symbol of the one in which Lincoln was born.

In 1907, the Lincoln Farm Association commissioned young architect John Russell Pope to design the memorial building. Due to a funding issue, Pope had to modify his original design; the memorial was made smaller than originally planned, but large enough to house the symbolic birth cabin.

The cornerstone of the building was laid by President Theodore Roosevelt on February 12, 1909, the centennial of Lincoln's birth. In 1911, President Taft presided over the dedication of the completed building.

In 1916, the Lincoln Farm Association donated the 110-acre site along with the memorial building and the symbolic birth cabin to the US government. Congress then established the site as the Abraham Lincoln National Park. The park was administered by the War Department until August 10, 1933, when it was transferred to the National Park Service. Designated as a national historical park on August 11, 1939, it was later named the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site on September 8, 1959. Subsequent legislation on March 30, 2009, renamed the site as the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park.

The current appearance of the memorial landscape partially reflects the original 1911 design, as well as later War Department alternations intended to improve visitor access and give the plaza a more finished appearance. Some historic materials have been replaced—

notably the trees flanking the terraces and the flagstone pavers of the plaza—but the formal, ceremonial aspects of the approach to the memorial building are unchanged.

Beyond the immediate area of the memorial building, secondary-growth forest covers about half the site, with the rest consisting of expansive mowed lawns. The site also includes a 1959 Mission 66 architectural style visitor center, which contains a gift shop, theater, and interpretive exhibits on the Lincoln family. The site also contains two employee residences, two small stone maintenance buildings constructed by the War Department, and a maintenance garage. A picnic area with a restroom building and pavilion, forest trails, and an area for environmental study are east of US Highway 31E.

In 1998, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire, by donation, about 228 acres of land of the historic Knob Creek Farm. The property became a unit of the park in 2001 and includes a historic roadside tavern, a reconstructed pioneer cabin, Knob Creek, agricultural fields, and forested areas.

