

Vintage Lincoln Photographs/Biographical Sketches

Lincoln The Boy (1809-1831)



There were no actual photographs of Lincoln as a young boy—there was no such thing as photography in the years he lived on the Kentucky and Indiana frontiers. Instead, historians have relied on sketches prepared by artists who studied the later photographs to gather artistic details on facial features and then used them to create an image of a younger Lincoln. It must also be remembered that until Lincoln became a public figure, there was no desire to photograph him, even if such technology had been available. Lincoln was a simple, ordinary, pioneer boy of this time. There was little to distinguish him from other boys of his era, with the exception of his unusual height and hunger for learning.

Lincoln the Young Man (1831-1837)



This period of Lincoln's life began when he left his father Thomas Lincoln's farm in Coles County, Illinois, after helping the family resettle one last time, and ended with his departure from New Salem and arrival in Springfield, Illinois, to begin a new life as an attorney and politician. Lincoln first visited New Salem in the spring of 1831, while enroute to New Orleans via flatboat, with a load of farm produce belonging to merchant, Denton Offutt. Lincoln's flatboat became grounded on the town's milldam, due to low water conditions on the Sangamon River. After returning from New Orleans (Lincoln's second trip) Offutt hired Lincoln to be his store clerk in a new store he opened in New Salem. Within a year of hiring Lincoln, Offutt's store went bankrupt. Lincoln's partnership with another New Salem storekeeper, William Berry had similar results. They tried to open two stores in New Salem—both "winked out." In 1832, Lincoln was elected Captain

of the local militia, whose goal it was to get rid of Chief Black Hawk and his band of Sauk Indians. They had returned to Illinois (original homeland) from Iowa, where these Indians had been sent following treaty negotiations. Chief Black Hawk and his followers intended no harm—they were starving in a strange and hostile land. But their presence on the east bank of the Mississippi caused widespread panic and hysteria. Young men rushed to enlist to drive the "red savages" out of Illinois. Lincoln was no exception to the rule, at least not at first. But his encounter with an old Indian man who had been left behind as his people tried to flee the oncoming soldiers made him realize that the Indians had suffered many injustices at the hands of the white settlers. Lincoln and his militia company never saw any real fighting. As Lincoln put it, they fought with the mosquitoes more than anything else. Yet his selection to be Captain gave Lincoln a great deal of personal satisfaction and self-confidence. At the time he was involved in the Black Hawk War, Lincoln was campaigning for the Illinois Legislature. He lost his first election bid, largely because he wasn't back in his home district long enough to campaign. Lincoln's horse was stolen and he had to walk all the way back from northern Wisconsin, where the pursuit of Chief Black Hawk and the Sauk Indians had taken him, to New Salem in central Illinois. On his second try, Lincoln was elected to the state legislature. Lincoln and several of his colleagues in the Illinois House of Representatives were instrumental in getting the state capital moved from Vandalia in the southern part of the state to Springfield. Lincoln served the last of four terms he held as a state representative in the newly completed capitol building (now designated as the 'Old State Capitol' to distinguish it from the current [2005] Capitol Building, begun in 1868) In the play, the character of **Lincoln the Lawyer** appears later than was actually the case, because with the exception of the Almanac Trial much of his law career was omitted.