

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



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I was born on February 12, 1809 near Hodgenville, Kentucky. My father was Thomas Lincoln and my mother was Nancy Hanks. When I was nine years old my mother died. My father later married Sarah Bush Johnston, who, proved to be a wonderful influence as she encouraged me to study and learn.

I had a sister, Sarah, and a little brother, Thomas, who died in infancy. My total formal education amounted to a little less than a year. I went to school a little bit at a time and had six different teachers.

When I grew to manhood, my height was 6' 4" and I weighed 180 pounds. In 1842, I married Mary Todd in Springfield, Illinois. She also was from Kentucky originally. We had four children: Robert Todd, Edward Baker, William Wallace and Thomas (Tad).

I was first elected to political office in 1834 when I won a seat in the Illinois state legislature. I served four terms there. In 1846 I was elected to serve as a U.S. Congressman. Then in 1860, I was the choice of the nation to become President. I served in that highest office from 1861 to 1865.

(Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, after having been shot by John Wilkes Booth on the previous evening at Ford's Theater).

SOME ABRAHAM LINCOLN FIRSTS AND ONLYS

- Abraham Lincoln was the first President born beyond the boundaries of the original 13 colonies.
- He was the tallest President at 6' 4". Weighing in at 180 pounds., he wore a size 14 boot and a 7 1/8 hat. (No wonder he was tabbed "Tall Sucker" and "Long Abraham").
- Our 16th President was the first to be nominated in a building erected especially to house a political convention. This was the Wigwam on Lake Street in Chicago, Illinois, built for the Second Republican Party Convention which met May 16th-18th, 1860.
- "Long Abraham" was the first Republican Party President. He was inaugurated on March 4, 1861.
- Clean-shaven until he was fifty-one years of age, Lincoln was the first President to sport a beard. Grace Bedell, an eleven-year-old girl from Westfield, New York, seems to have been the prime influence on him. She wrote and urged the Republican then-nominee for the Presidency to "let your whiskers grow" and "you would look better for your face is so thin."

- The first President to receive a transcontinental telegram, the former “Railsplitter” received it from Stephen John Field, Chief Justice of California. It was sent on October 14, 1861.
- He was the first President to have received a patent. On March 10, 1849, in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln applied for a patent for “buoying vessels over shoals.” This was a device for lifting vessels over shoals by means of inflated cylinders. The application was granted and on May 22, 1849, he received patent No. 6,469.

- Lincoln was the first President to institute an income tax.

- Lincoln was the greatest yarn spinner and teller of funny stories who ever gained the Presidency. He was oftentimes criticized by members of his Cabinet for invoking his humor during the bleak days of the war. His answer was: “If I did not laugh, I should die, and you need this medicine as much as I do.” One of his favorite stories dealt with two Quakeresses overheard discussing wartime leaders Jefferson Davis and Lincoln:

I think Jefferson will succeed.

Why does thee think so?

Because Jefferson is a praying man.

And so is Abraham a praying man.

Yes, but the Lord will think Abraham is joking.

- The man who is known as “The Great Emancipator” was the first President to sign a bill which brought African-American diplomats to Washington for the first time. This was when he established diplomatic ties with Haiti and Liberia.
- He was the first President to be assassinated. John Wilkes Booth was at the center of the plot. The other major characters were David E. Herold, George A. Atzerodt and Lewis Thornton Powell (better know as Lewis Payne, or Paine). An avowed racist and southern sympathizer, Booth had also planned to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William H. Seward.
- The first coin bearing the portrait of a President was the 1909 Lincoln penny. This was a copper cut designed by Victor David Brenner and based on a photograph of President Abraham Lincoln taken in 1864 by Matthew B. Brady.
- Abraham Lincoln leads the list of the 14 Presidents portrayed most frequently in the movies.

Lincoln - 133

Grant - 44

Washington - 34

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- For a man who had barely a year's formal schooling, Lincoln's published words add to an impressive total. It is estimated that they number around 2,000,000. Not bad for a rascal who started out by writing on his slate:

Abraham Lincoln
His hand and pen
He will be good but
God knows when.

- In virtually every survey of great Americans, Abraham Lincoln enjoys distinctive status. In the following highly respected polls conducted since 1948, Lincoln is listed as #1:

Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. Poll - 1948
Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. Poll - 1962
Gary Maranell-Richard Dodder Poll - 1970
U. S. Historical Society Poll - 1977
Chicago Tribune Poll - 1982
Robert K. Murray Poll - 1982

Perhaps the lofty status attained by this son of the frontier proved the worth of the advice he proffered to Isham Reavis:

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.”