

# Lincoln as a Surveyor

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## FILM Strategy

Function    Importance    Location    Meaning



### FUNCTION

- Many people know Abraham Lincoln as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Most people do not know that Lincoln was employed in many occupations before he began to work in politics. Lincoln spent some time as a land surveyor, mapping out sections of Illinois for settlement. The statue of Lincoln as a surveyor was meant to “commemorate a relatively unknown segment” in Abraham Lincoln’s life.
- The marker consists of a bronze cast statue atop a marble base. Plaques bearing information on the statue are set into the base.
- The marker is fairly new and in excellent condition – no renovation needs were present at the time of my visit to the statue.

### IMPORTANCE

- This marker commemorates Lincoln’s time as a land surveyor in Illinois when he was approximately 25 years old and during the years of 1833-1837.
- Abraham Lincoln was forced to move homes twice as he was growing up because his father lost the family land in legal land disputes.

- Lincoln understood the legal sectioning of land; a skill that helped him as he fought numerous court cases on land disputes when he was a lawyer later in life.
- As president, Lincoln needed to understand how the states and territories were laid out based on legal land descriptions and if those areas were bound to be slave or free territories. His knowledge of land surveying was a valuable asset in those discussions as he understood how land could be partitioned.
- Abraham Lincoln used his knowledge of land surveying to aid him in his decision to sign the Homestead Act of 1862 into law. The Homestead Act laid out the steps a settler would need to complete to legally occupy and then own a piece of land.

#### LOCATION

- The location of Lincoln as a Surveyor statue is in New Salem, Illinois at the reconstructed town site.
- This is the perfect place for this monument because Lincoln spent a portion of his life as a young adult working various jobs, including land surveying, in the New Salem area.

#### MEANING

- This marker was erected by the *Illinois Professional Land Surveyors Association* and thousands showed up to view the statue as it was unveiled in fall of 2003.
- This marker was created by sculptor John McClarey based upon a Lloyd Ostendorf painting.
- The statue cost approximately \$130,000 and was paid for with donations from surveyors, historians, Lincoln enthusiasts and small/large business firms.

#### SOURCES

- The Illinois Professional Land Surveyors Association <http://www.abelincoln.com/ipsla.html>
- The National Archives: the Homestead Act of 1862 <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>
- The State-Journal Register Online <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/news/surveyor2.htm>
- Stephen Brown, Education Specialist, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site
- Tallia Del Bianco (Photos of statue and surveying instruments taken at the New Salem Illinois Historic Site: June 27, 2009)

