

This Day in History... February 12, 1809

Birth of Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809.

Lincoln was the second child of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln. The Lincolns lived in a one-room log cabin on Sinking Spring Farm in Hardin County, Kentucky. Seven years later, they lost their farm due to a faulty real estate title and moved to Perry County (now Spencer County), Indiana. Lincoln's mother died of milk sickness when he was nine and his father married Sarah Bush Johnston.



Unpopular at the time, the Pictorials are some of the most beloved classic-era stamps today.

Lincoln received about 18 months of formal education from various teachers, but was an avid reader and mostly self-taught. A tall boy, he helped his father as a rail-splitter and was also a talented wrestler. He refused to hunt or fish because he could not bring himself to kill animals.

In 1830, the Lincolns relocated again to Macon County, Illinois. The following year, 22-year-old Abraham left his family to canoe down the Sangamon River to New Salem. There he was hired by a local businessman to deliver goods by flatboat to New Orleans via the Sangamon, Illinois, and Mississippi Rivers. After witnessing the horrors of slavery first-hand, he returned home.

In 1832, Lincoln began his political career, running for the Illinois General Assembly. He was well-known for his stories and anecdotes, but lacked a formal education, powerful friends, and money and finished eighth in the election. Lincoln went on to serve as New Salem's postmaster and county surveyor. Two years later, Lincoln was elected to the state legislature as a Whig.

After deciding to become a lawyer, Lincoln began teaching himself from law books. He was admitted to the bar in 1837 and moved to Springfield, Illinois, to practice under John T. Stuart (a cousin of his future wife, Mary Todd). Lincoln quickly built a positive reputation, especially for his cross-examinations and closing arguments.

At the same time, Lincoln also served four consecutive terms in the Illinois House of Representatives as a member of the Whig party. Lincoln supported economic modernization in banking, railroads, and internal improvements, urbanization, and protective tariffs. In this office, he was known for his "free soil" position, standing against both slavery and abolitionism.



From the first series of US postage stamps printed by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing.

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Lincoln returned to politics in 1854 to oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise that had restricted slavery. Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas included popular sovereignty in the act, which gave people the right to determine whether or not to allow slavery in their territory. In response to this, Lincoln delivered his "Peoria Speech," which claimed the Kansas Act "declared indifference."



From the Series of 1922-25

Three years later, the Illinois Republican Party nominated Lincoln for the US Senate, leading to his famous "House Divided" speech. In 1858, Lincoln and Senator Stephen Douglas held a series of seven debates that are among the most famous in US history. Although Lincoln lost the seat to Douglas, the debates brought him national attention that made him a top runner for the upcoming presidential election.

Following Lincoln's well-received Cooper Union Address in New York City, the Illinois Republican party formed a team to promote his campaign for president. They embellished his childhood pioneer days nicknaming him "The Rail Candidate." Lincoln was elected the 16th president on November 6, 1860. Lincoln won 180 electoral votes, compared to the 123 of all his opponents combined. The following month, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union. By February, six more states followed and declared themselves the Confederate States of America (CSA). Lincoln attempted to compromise, but the CSA refused.

In his Inaugural Address, Lincoln said to the South, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies... The



The first mourning stamp was issued nearly a year after Lincoln was shot – in 1866.



1870-71 Lincoln Bank Note Stamp



This imperforate stamp was never intended for public sale. Only about 1,575 were saved.



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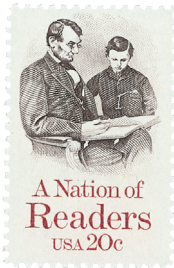
Less than two months after Lincoln’s address, the commander of Fort Sumter in South Carolina requested provisions. The Confederates saw this as an act of war and on April 12, 1861, fired on Union troops at Fort Sumter, officially beginning the Civil War. Lincoln then called upon 75,000 troops to recapture forts, protect Washington, DC, and “preserve the Union.” This forced the states to choose sides, leading North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Virginia to secede, with Richmond, Virginia, becoming the new Confederate capital.



Issued for the 85th anniversary of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address

Lincoln called upon his presidential war powers to create a blockade on the South, distribute funds without Congress’s permission, and suspend habeas corpus – arresting and imprisoning thousands of Confederate sympathizers without a warrant. He faced criticism from all sides, with war opponents unhappy that he would not compromise on the slavery issue and Radical Republicans believing he was taking too long to abolish slavery. In addition to the stress of the war, Lincoln was also faced with the death of his young son Willie.

Although Lincoln had little experience with military tactics, he studied books from the Library of Congress and field reports and kept a close watch on all military endeavors. His primary goals were to protect the capital and win the war as quickly as possible. Lincoln understood the importance of taking control of strategic points and defeating the enemy, rather than just capturing territory.



Stamp pictures President Lincoln reading with his son Tad.

Following the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, which he had written months earlier. The proclamation, which went into effect the following January, freed all enslaved people in the Confederate States of America and permitted African Americans to join the Union Army. However, the Confederates did not recognize his authority so few slaves were freed at first.

The next major Union victory was not until almost a year later. The Battle of Gettysburg, although a success for the Union, was one of the bloodiest battles of the war. So many Union soldiers were killed, a special cemetery was created and Lincoln was invited to speak at its dedication. He saw this as his chance to rally public support for the war by defending his actions, explaining why the war had to continue, and that because of these casualties the “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” His Gettysburg Address has become one of the most famous speeches in history.



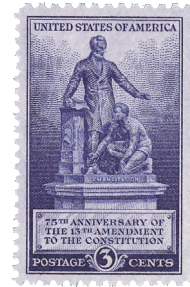
Stamp pictures a close-up of the Lincoln Memorial statue

To give Lincoln a broader appeal in the election of 1864, the Republican Party selected Andrew Johnson, a War Democrat from Tennessee, as his running mate. While many Republicans feared he might still lose the election, Lincoln signed a pledge promising that if he lost, he would beat the Confederacy before leaving the White House. Ultimately, Lincoln won the election in a landslide, winning all but three states.

Four years of fighting reached an end on April 9, 1865, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Grant at the Appomattox Court House in Virginia. With the war over, Lincoln finally felt relief and was prepared to lead the United States through Reconstruction.

While he is largely remembered as the Civil War president, Lincoln made progress in other areas. His signature led to the establishment of agricultural colleges in each state, the construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad, the creation of the first US income tax, a system of national banks, the Department of Agriculture, the establishment of Thanksgiving as a national holiday, and the creation of the Medal of Honor.

Then, on April 14, 1865, while attending the play *Our American Cousin* at Ford’s Theater, well-known actor and Confederate spy John Wilkes Booth snuck up behind the unprotected president and shot him in the head. Lincoln was taken to the Petersen House across the street, where he remained in a coma for nine hours. He was the first US president ever to be assassinated.



Stamp issued for the 75th anniversary of the 13th Amendment.



Lincoln stamp from the Liberty Series



From the Prominent Americans Series



This stamp was issued primarily for use on airmail to Asia, Australia, and most of Africa and includes a portion of the Gettysburg Address.

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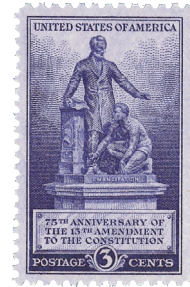
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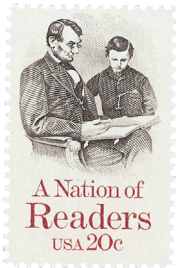
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