# Interpreting Lincoln— A Work in Progress

## Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial as a Case Study

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Anniversaries are often a time of reflection; they offer an opportunity to look at where we have been and, perhaps, to contemplate where we may be going. As is so often the case, the way that we understand and tell stories about our past changes over time. New scholarship, changing values, and societal trends can—and do—influence the ways we choose to remember and honor the people and events of our history. As the nation celebrates the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, this process of examining how Americans study and interpret Lincoln's life is in full swing. The Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, which contains a portion of the Indiana farm where Abraham Lincoln lived for fourteen years of his youth, provides an interesting example of just how these influences manifest themselves over time.

The efforts to preserve the site associated with Lincoln's youth in Indiana date to 1897, when the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial Association was formed. The purposes for the association were to solicit funds for maintenance of Lincoln's mother's gravesite and to promote an Indiana memorial to the Lincoln family. In 1907, the state of Indiana

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established a board of commissioners to maintain both the gravesite and the surrounding sixteen acres that had been acquired. In 1909, the state cleared the park of dead trees, erected a fence and elaborate entrance gate, and built a road from the highway to the gravesite. At the highway entrance, the gateway featured life-size lions, with eagles perched on columns to the south of the lions and closer to the gravesite. Large stone urns were placed along the roadway to the cemetery.[1]

Subsequent to these efforts, Indiana celebrated its own centennial in December 1916. A focus on identifying locations important to the state's history was a key element of both programs. In 1917, Spencer County's centennial commission requested the assistance of older county residents in determining the exact location of Thomas Lincoln's cabin. Twenty volunteers assembled on the historic property and pointed to a site they believed to be correct, and a marker was erected there on April 28, 1917.[2]

After identifying the cabin site, interest in the historic Lincoln property increased. Various newspaper editorials lamented Indiana's lack of a proper state memorial to Abraham Lincoln. One man in particular who held this viewpoint was Colonel Richard Lieber, director of the state Department of Conservation. The state park movement was very strong in the 1920s, and Lieber hoped to develop an impressive system of scenically beautiful, historically significant parks. A memorial to Lincoln fit in perfectly with his plan. His support was an important factor in eventually establishing the Nancy Hanks Lincoln State Memorial and Lincoln State Park. In 1926, Lieber gained assistance in his efforts when a group of private citizens formed the Indiana Lincoln Union (ILU).[3] The goal of the ILU was to "propose that the people of our state, in mighty unison, rear a national shrine which . . . will express both our deathless devotion as well as our indefinite gratitude to the soul of the great departed and his Mother."[4]

Decisions about how to develop the park site during this period, from 1897 until 1944, were influenced by several factors, each of which

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[1]Paul V. Brown, *The Indiana Lincoln Memorial in Spencer County, Indiana*, (Indianapolis, 1938), 11-16.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]*Yearbook of the State of Indiana, 1927.*

affected the ways that Lincoln's youth was interpreted at the site. One of these was the high esteem in which Lincoln was held. By the twentieth century, Lincoln's elevation to the pantheon of American heroes was complete. He was the Preserver of the Union, the Great Emancipator, the author and orator of the Gettysburg Address, and the Martyred President. In short, in the thirty years after his death, he had become a larger-than-life figure; anything and any place associated with his life took on a greater significance, often leading to efforts to preserve and memorialize such memorabilia. That was certainly true of Lincoln's Indiana homesite—in his words, the "very spot where grew the bread that formed my bones."[5] Surely such a spot was worthy of preservation and commemoration.

Lending even more significance to the boyhood home site was the fact that it contained the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother who, so the reasoning went, tragically did not live to see her son's greatness, but contributed much to his eventual success. This line of thinking dovetailed nicely with the "cult of motherhood," a legacy of the Victorian era, which placed great importance on the influence of mothers on their children's lives. Lincoln's oft-quoted statement about his own "angel mother" did much to validate this view of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Therefore, preserving her gravesite in a properly honorable fashion was of utmost importance to early park planners and advocates. Their sentiments guided not only the initial development of the memorial site, but also its subsequent form and its interpretation of Lincoln's early life.

Because those charged with the care of the site felt a great responsibility to properly honor Lincoln and his mother, they turned to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.—son of the famous designer of New York's Central Park and a noted landscape architect in his own right—to guide them in the formulation of a design for the memorial. Recognizing that Lincoln had spent a formative time of life in the area, Olmsted was convinced that the commemorative nature of the project should reflect the importance of the site. As a first step, he set guidelines for simplifying the areas surrounding the grave and cabin sites. He jointly termed these areas "the Sanctuary," and declared that they "should be freed of every

[5]"My Childhood Home I See Again" in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,* 9 vols., (1953; New Brunswick, N.J., 1990), 1:370.

petty, distracting, alien, self-asserting object." The object was to make "it easy and natural for . . . people . . . to be stimulated to their own inspiring thoughts and emotions about Lincoln."[6]

Olmsted's conceptual plan included a primary vista—the allée—between the gravesite and the highway, situated in a cruciform arrangement. A parking plaza and large flagpole at the intersection of the highway and allée anchored the two axes, and the flagpole provided a focal point for the south end of the allée. This arrangement established both the strong spiritual imagery and solemn atmosphere that Olmsted deemed necessary for best presenting the story of Lincoln in Indiana.[7]

The language used by ILU officials reinforced the religious atmosphere created by the memorial's physical form. Much of the literature the committee generated for fundraising purposes spoke of Nancy Hanks Lincoln as the "sainted Mother," referred to her grave as "sacred soil," and described visits as "pilgrimages."[8] A 1941 promotional article encapsulated ILU's intentions: "We are erecting here a shrine to Motherhood and to the family hearthstone. We are memorializing democracy and religion."[9]

The formality of the Olmsted plan made the ILU's intention's evident, by commemorating the Lincolns and celebrating their Indiana roots, without recreating their pioneer farm. Led by Lieber, who felt that recreating the farm would be inappropriate, the ILU strove instead to reflect "Hoosier" values through a more straightforward design, using current construction methods, native plants, and native materials.[10] While Olmsted agreed that accurately reconstructing the Lincoln farm was impossible, he did propose restoring part of the native forested landscape as a backdrop for the formal design. A recreated forest would not only symbolize the primeval conditions against which the pioneers struggled, but was "the only one of the now vanished features of the

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[6]Written report from Frederick Law Olmsted to Colonel Richard Lieber and the Indiana Lincoln Union, March 24, 1927, Park History Files, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial (hereafter PHF).

[7]Marla McEnaney, *A Noble Avenue: Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report* (n.p., 2001), 12.

[8]Brown, *The Indiana Lincoln Memorial*, 11-16.

[9]"Outdoor Indiana," Indiana Department of Conservation, July 1962, PHF.

[10]Frederick Law Olmsted to Indiana Lincoln Union, March 17, 1927, PHF.

Almost the "very spot which grew the bread that formed my bones"—Lincoln's Indiana homesite as constructed for the living history farm, at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. The site was designed not only to exemplify Lincoln's own past, but by extension that of all Hoosier pioneer families "living off the land, at harmony with nature."
Courtesy of National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. NPS Photo by Richard Frear.

place characteristic of Lincoln's time which can be reproduced without sham or falsehood."[11]

Although not included in Olmsted's original design concept, the development of what came to be known as the cabin site memorial was consistent with the underlying desire to create a proper commemoration of Lincoln's experiences in Indiana. After deciding that a replica of the Lincoln cabin would be inappropriate, the state hired architect Thomas Hibben, an Indiana native, to design a suitable monument to mark the spot where the cabin once stood. Hibben planned a bronze casting, in the shape of the cabin's sill and hearth, to be surrounded by a stone wall. The area would then be formally landscaped. The goal was:

> to mark the cabin site in such permanent means that knowledge of its location may not be lost to history and in such manner as to

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[11]Ibid.

> indicate the sacredness of the spot. The log sill is chosen as appropriate to mark the outline of the cabin; the hearth and fireplace are chosen because they have been, since time immemorial, the altar of the home, the center around which all life moved. The entire conception is cast in bronze in order that it may be durable and that it may not in any way seem a reconstruction of the original cabin. The entire purpose of the design is intended to be a symbol of the hearth and home of the Lincoln family.[12]

In May 1933, a Civilian Conservation Corps crew located the historic hearthstones, excavated them, constructed the stone wall, and landscaped the grounds. After numerous delays the bronze casting was finally placed on the site in July 1935.

While work was underway on the cabin site memorial, J. I. Holcomb, president of the ILU, suggested another major design feature for the landscape. He recommended "a collection of stones from the various points of Lincoln interest," situated along a wooded trail as miniature shrines to moments in Lincoln's life. This "Trail of Twelve Stones" would also include stone benches and tablets that described the stones' origins. ILU members and others immediately began acquiring stones, and by 1934 the trail was complete. A promotional piece described the trail: "Each shrine," it promised, "will be especially landscaped to emphasize its historical significance."[13]

While the Trail of Twelve Stones was not part of Olmsted's plan, it provided a significant physical and allegorical link between the cabin and the gravesite. The connection of Lincoln's childhood home to his mother's grave emphasized the theme of pilgrimage. The trail symbolized the visitors' journey during which they could learn about and reflect upon the different stages of Lincoln's life, and also represented the sad story of Lincoln's childhood: his passage from innocence into maturity and on to his eventual sacrifice for the nation.[14]

With the placement of the casting, the first phase of the memorial's development was complete, and the state moved on to the construction

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[12]Brown, *The Indiana Lincoln Memorial*, 11-16.

[13]"Stones Taken From Scenes Vitally Linked with the Life of Lincoln Made Into Shrines at Nancy Hanks Park," *Evansville Courier and Journal*, January 1, 1933, PHF.

[14]McEnaney, *A Noble Avenue*, 22.

of the memorial building. The building's location had been a subject of debate for many years, with plans offered that placed it alternately at the north end of the allée, near the gravesite, or at the south side of the plaza. Lieber was opposed to placing it near the gravesite out of concern that it would "crush the very object of our veneration: that unpretentious little grave holding the body and the enigma of Nancy Hanks Lincoln."[15] After consulting with Olmsted, he reported to the ILU that "[b]uildings in that location would disrupt the reveries or contemplations of those who come to visit that little hallowed spot."[16] Finally, in 1938, the Department of Conservation and the ILU decided to place the structure south of the plaza, away from the north end gravesite.

Hibben earlier proposed a 200-square-foot structure with four square courts, surrounding a 150-foot-tall tower housing a large pipe organ. The courts were to be connected with cloisters decorated in frescoes and sculptures; the tower would be painted with murals. The building would have restrooms, and even a small restaurant, for the convenience of visitors. This proposal was generally well received by the public, but some members of the Department of Conservation and the ILU were uncomfortable with the design, fearing that its magnificence would "interfere with the spirit of the place."[17] Olmsted, too, felt the plan was wrong. Ultimately the ILU rejected the proposal.

Olmsted suggested a matched pair of structures on either side of the allée, at its south end, creating a portal through which visitors could pass to begin their journey to the gravesite. A semicircular wall connecting the two structures would also create a "court of honor" between the two wings. His proposal was accepted, and the ILU hired National Park Service architect Richard Bishop to finalize the design and supervise the construction of the memorial building.

Bishop's goal was to create a building that suggested the best design and construction practices of Lincoln's day, and simultaneously "expressed the qualities of simplicity, strength and dignity that are invariably associated with Lincoln's character."[18] In an effort to maintain this simplicity, Bishop insisted that all elements of the building also serve a

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[15]Lieber to Olmsted, June 13, 1938, PHF.

[16]Lieber to J.I. Holcomb, December 13, 1938, PHF.

[17]Lieber to Olmsted, June 10, 1938, PHF.

[18]Bishop to Indiana Department of Conservation, June 28, 1939, PHF.

utilitarian purpose. Consequently, the semicircular court wall, in addition to housing sculptured panels on its exterior, was expanded into a curved passage for connecting the adjacent ends of the two halls.[19] Heavily influenced by the commemorative nature of the park—as exemplified by the cabin site memorial, the memorial landscape, and the treatment of the cemetery area—Bishop summed up his thoughts in this way,

> Whatever is built should be a forthright expression of honesty, simplicity and dignity, qualities that we associate with Lincoln and his mother. There should be no false construction or design. Materials should be native and largely hand worked. Design should be suggested by the best practice of the days when Nancy Hanks was a young woman. Not a design suggestive of the log cabins she lived in but a type of structure that might have been built by one of the best builders of the period to commemorate an illustrious pioneer.[20]

Construction began in 1941 and was completed in 1944. With the main building open, the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial, as conceived by the ILU, was essentially complete. The result was a site heavily commemorative in nature, a place where visitors could "remember" the early life of a great American. Its designers and developers had believed that simply being in this place, where Abraham Lincoln had grown up, was enough to inspire reverence and respect for both the man and his mother. That guiding principle consequently influenced the site's later development and set the tone the way in which Indiana's chapter of the Lincoln story would be interpreted for years to come.

Interestingly, Olmsted—in a letter to Lieber in 1927—had declared how important it was that "these simple familiar associations speak for themselves to future generations, and to subordinate in this place any desire that we of today may have to impress those future generations with what we think about Lincoln." Indiana, he said, had "a right to take pride in expressing the honor which it feels for Lincoln's memory" by creating a memorial. He also emphasized, however, that the boyhood

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[19]McEnaney, *A Noble Avenue*, 32.

[20]Bishop to Leiber, January 25, 1940, quoted in Richard E. Bishop, *Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial* ([Indianapolis], 1944), 16-17.

A "curved chronology in stone documenting important moments in Abraham Lincoln's life" with simplicity, strength, and dignity: The Memorial Court at Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial.
Courtesy of David Wiegers, Gurnee, Illinois

farm "which speaks directly from the grave where he buried his mother and from the vacant site of his early home is the last place in which to express that pride in any self-assertive way that might thrust our 20th century ideas between posterity and the significance of the place itself."[21]

Olmsted, Lieber, the ILU, and Richard Bishop agreed that the only proper way to honor Lincoln, while guarding against the imposition of any twentieth-century ideas, was to develop a memorial site to commemorate the great man's time in Indiana. Ironically, the very notion of a Lincoln memorial was itself a twentieth-century idea, influenced by his stature as an American historical figure, and exemplified by other sites such as the Lincoln Memorial (1922) in Washington D.C., and Mount Rushmore (1937) in South Dakota. The development of the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial Park represented just one more manifestation of the way in which Lincoln's life was interpreted during the 1930s and 1940s.

Though the actual physical development of the site ended with the completion of the memorial building, the interpretive tone, set by Olmsted and Lieber among others, remained the same throughout the period when the site was managed by the state. A brochure for Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial from the 1950s, for example, continued to

[21]Olmsted to Lieber, March 24, 1927, PHF.

refer to the site as a "National Shrine . . . erected as a tribute to Nancy Hanks Lincoln and her illustrious son."[22]

In 1959, with the observation of the sesquicentennial of his birth, there was renewed interest in the study of Lincoln. For its part, the Indiana Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, alongside the Indiana Lincoln Foundation, proposed the construction of a museum at the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial Park. The foundation's stated goal was to "make a National Shrine of the 'Lincoln Land' in southern Indiana." As part of the fundraising campaign, school children were asked to contribute one dollar apiece to become "Abraham Lincoln Schoolfellow Donors." The money would then be used to construct a museum "perpetuat[ing] the code by which Abraham Lincoln lived—honesty, integrity, hard work, self-discipline—as the pattern of living for our youth."[23] The campaign was apparently unsuccessful; the museum was never built.

By the late 1950s, there was talk of transferring management of the memorial to the federal government and thereby making it a national park. In 1959, Senator Vance Hartke, of Evansville, introduced a bill into the Congress authorizing the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a feasibility study. The study neither recommended the idea nor endorsed it. In the meantime, however, local Indiana businessman William Koch, became interested in the idea and worked with Congressman Winfield K. Denton proposing a national park at Lincoln City. Once the state endorsed Koch and Denton's proposal and offered to donate the 200 acres—containing the cabin site, the gravesite, and the memorial building—to the NPS, the legislation passed easily. President John F. Kennedy signed the act officially authorizing the establishment of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial on February 19, 1962 and, on July 10, in a ceremony held in front of the memorial building, the transfer was formally made as Indiana's first authorized unit of the National Park System was dedicated.[24]

With its transfer to the NPS, the Indiana Lincoln site's interpretation changed. The NPS, which emphasized education and visitor services, believed that the traditionally commemorative nature of the site provided too few opportunities for engagement. The park needed to be

[22]Indiana Department of Conservation brochure, 1950, PHF.

[23]Indiana Lincoln Foundation promotional literature, PHF.

[24]Jill O'Bright, "Administrative History of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial," 1987, PHF.

more than a place of remembrance and reflection. It needed to teach visitors about Lincoln's life while in Indiana, and about the effect that his childhood had on his later life. To that end, the new owners enclosed the cloister of the memorial building and built a new wing, which housed a museum and an auditorium. Proper respect was maintained for the gravesite, but the park's historical narrative was expanded beyond Nancy's influence on her son's life, to include the family's experience of life on the frontier. The new museum highlighted aspects of farm life and the difficulty of obtaining a formal education. Exhibits also featured information about the Little Pigeon Creek community in which Abraham had grown up. In 1968, the film "Here I Grew Up" premiered in the park's auditorium. It presented the young Lincoln as a boy growing up in a simple place who went on to achieve great things.

The most significant evolutionary development in interpretation at the site resulted, at least in part, from a shift in how Americans had begun to view their history by the late 1960s. Park visitors were less interested in mere remembrance. They wanted to know about the lives of average people, and about the lives of great Americans such as Lincoln, before they became great. One way that this new interest manifested itself was in the development of "living history farms," which created, or recreated, historical locations for telling history in an engaging manner.

In 1966, the National Park Service began working with the Department of Agriculture and the Smithsonian Institution to establish a nationwide system of farms representing a variety of regions and time periods. NPS Director George Hartzog was an early proponent of the idea and, following a visit to the Indiana park in 1968, selected the Lincoln Boyhood Home as one such site. It was a popular idea, both with Superintendent Al Banton, who began making plans, and with Congressman Denton, who helped obtain the necessary appropriations. In November 1968, the new edition of the *NPS Interpreters Newsletter* reported that a new park had been created at the Lincoln Boyhood site. "Previously, the emphasis was on monumental memorialization totally divorced from the life Lincoln led there. Now we have a cabin and outbuildings and crops and animals and a fine idea of the environment in which the nation's most illustrious son grew up."[25]

[25]Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*, (n.p., n.d.).

This move toward deemphasizing the commemorative aspects of the park was officially stated in the 1970 version of the park's interpretive planning document. It called for the "removal of the unsightly retaining wall from around the . . . cabin site memorial" because it was "a definite intrusion on the Living Historical Farm as park development moves from the formal memorialization of the site to a more educational use." Removing the wall, it was felt, would minimize any intrusive aspects of the memorial. The same document also stated that the Trail of Twelve Stones had been removed from the farm.[26] Clearly, the farm had become the primary means of interpreting the Indiana Lincoln story.

The development of the farm also coincided with the new, burgeoning emphasis, in late 1960s and early 1970s, on environmental awareness felt throughout the country, particularly within the national parks. The NPS developed special environmental programs and repackaged Lincoln's Indiana story as one of pioneer families living off the land, in harmony with nature. The interpretive prospectus of 1970 stated: "The main theme depicts self-sufficiency and man in his environment. Everything the Lincolns used was either totally consumed or recycled—nothing was wasted. The Lincolns derived their living from the land and forest around them."[27]

Some interpretive planners, however, disagreed with this view. They expressed concerns regarding the "tendency to shift the focus of interpretation away from Lincoln and his boyhood at the site to a more generalized attempt to portray a 19th century frontier lifestyle."[28] They also argued that "the historical record challenges the . . . claim of the Lincoln farm's 'self-sufficiency.'"[29] In fact, the idyllic interpretation of pioneer life was at odds with reality—the Lincolns and other pioneers had actually worked hard to "tame the wilderness," and establish communities economically tied to the more settled areas of the East. As quicky as possible, farming replaced hunting, and manufactured goods replaced homemade ones.

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[26]"Interpretive Prospectus," National Park Service, 1970, PHF.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Acting Chief, Cultural Resources to Assistant Director, Planning and Development, October 25, 1977, PHF.

[29]Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services to Assistant Director, Planning and Development, October 17, 1977, PHF.

Despite these concerns, the living history farm soon became an extremely popular feature of the park and was, for many years, the centerpiece of the its interpretive efforts. The NPS hired additional seasonal employees to staff it during the spring and summer, purchased more livestock, and gradually increased the area under cultivation. As the years passed, park administrators did little with other media, in spite of an assessment by NPS interpretive planners in the 1980s calling for an update of the movie and the museum exhibits. Limited funds, however, combined with the continued emphasis on living history, delayed implementation of these projects for many years. The park was still showing the 1968 movie, and still had the 1966 museum exhibits in place, in the 1990s. The park's brochure, with its almost exclusive emphasis on the farm operation, had not been revised since 1972. Pioneer skills demonstrations, despite their popularity, did not always have a direct relevance to the Lincoln story. In short, the program was unbalanced.

A new 2001 long range interpretive plan summed up the park's problems:

> The popularity of the farm operation, both with the public and with the staff, has led to an imbalance in the interpretive effort. While countless hours and dollars have been put into the farm, virtually nothing has been done to revise or update any of the other interpretive media. The museum exhibits in the Memorial Visitor Center need to be replaced; the park brochure is at least 20 years old and reflects a discernible bias in favor of the farm operation; and the Exhibit Shelter has never been fully utilized. Even in the area of personal services, the attitude has commonly been that "real interpretation" could only be done at the farm and that the Memorial Visitor Center exists primarily as a means of directing visitors to the farm.[30]

It went on to say:

> The challenge, then, is one of restoring balance. The farm operation is an important component of the program, and

[30]"Long Range Interpretive Plan," 2001, PHF.

> will certainly not be eliminated. However, it needs to be viewed as one of several interpretive tools, and not the centerpiece of the program. An investment of time and money needs to be made in upgrading and modernizing the other non-personal components of the program—the museum, the brochure, the movie—as well as an increased emphasis on personal interpretation at the Memorial Visitor Center. Strategies also need to be devised to make the program more inclusive of those components that reflect the memorial nature of the park—the characteristics of the Memorial Visitor Center structure, the memorial landscape, the Cabin Site Memorial, and the Trail of Twelve Stones.[31]

This renewed commitment toward the overall interpretive effort, combined with the funding benefits which user fees make possible, has allowed the park to begin the process of restoring a sense of balance in recent years. In late 2001 a new movie, "Forging Greatness," premiered. Telling the Lincoln story as comprehensively as possible and using the farm as a backdrop, the film also calls attention to other features of the park, such as the cabin site memorial and the Trail of Twelve Stones, making them equally important to the visitors' experience. A new brochure presents the park as multifaceted, with the farm, the interpretive media, and the commemorative features all smaller parts of a larger whole. In January 2006, a complete rehabilitation of the museum resulted in displays that not only told Lincoln's Indiana story, but that also tried to make some connection between his time here and his later life. For the first time, too, ongoing efforts to preserve the site and create a park are acknowledged and recognized as vital pieces of the narrative. One wall of the museum contains a display entitled "An Indiana Memorial," paying tribute to the work of the early park developers and their vision of the site as a memorial. With these changes, the park has moved closer to accomplishing the interpretive objectives stated in its 2004 long range interpretive plan:

> - To relate information, in a relevant and interesting manner, about specific people and experiences that had an impact on Lincoln.

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[31]Ibid.

- To demonstrate specific pioneer skills that would likely have been a part of Lincoln's life, as a means of helping the visitor to better understand the world in which he grew up and what part that world played in shaping his character.
- To present the story of the creation of Lincoln Boyhood NM as an illustration of how the nation's respect and reverence for Abraham Lincoln manifested itself in a commemorative manner at this park.[32]

The story of the evolution of interpretation at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is indicative of the ways that many influences, sometimes even seemingly contradictory influences, can affect how history is depicted. Each telling is reflected through the prism of the time in which it is being told. Early development of the park was reflective of the desire to create a memorial to Abraham Lincoln and his mother. The development of the farm was part of an attempt to make history more engaging for the visitors. Is one ultimately better than the other? The truth is most likely that each interpretation is a valid approach. Visitors connect to the tangible resource of this site in whatever way is most meaningful for them, just as they do to the intangible resource that is Abraham Lincoln. Each of us seeks our own meanings. The process is ongoing.

[32]"Comprehensive Interpretive Plan," 2004, PHF.