

Abe Lincoln Memorial For Christian Church

Soon after the completion of the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis railroad in 1853 and the subsequent laying out of the original town of Lincoln, some of the disciples of the Campbellite faith who had been converted by pioneer Christian preachers John England, Walter Bowles who held meetings at French's Ford on Salt creek and other members of the faith began moving into the growing town.

In 1854 Thomas H. Denny, Sr. bought a farm near Lincoln and the following year brought his family to Logan county and he and his wife brought letters of commendation from the Christian church at Eureka. About this time an evangelist, William Brown, well known in central Illinois, as a man of eloquence and power came to Lincoln. "Billy Brown" as he was known held meetings in a warehouse owned by Hanchey and Logan near where the Spellman & Co. elevator now stands. Many of the auditors sat upon sacks of corn and wheat during the services.

Through efforts of Mr. Denny, "Billy" Brown who was the first preacher, and others interest was aroused for the construction of a church. First officers of the church organization were: Thomas H. Denny, Sr., Hopkins C. Judy, John M. Edwards and Charles H. Miller.

The site of the present church edifice was donated by Latham, Gilbert and Hickey, proprietors of the original town of Lincoln.

First Church Building.

The first church building was erected at a cost of \$3500 and David

Black was the contractor and before he turned the building over to the church board in 1857 he had agreed with the sheriff to permit holding of the September term of circuit court in the church as the first courthouse building in Lincoln had been destroyed by fire. The building was 40 by 60 feet, built of wood and heated by two stoves, one on either side. It had at the center of the south end, two raised platforms, the first for the pulpit and the upper for the baptistry. The walls at the sides and back of the Baptistry were semi-circular. The building seated about 250 and it was in the large room that Abe Lincoln acted as judge of the circuit court in 1857 during the absence of Judge David Davis.

In 1903 a new church building was proposed and the new structure was dedicated September 11, 1904. Much of the lumber of the first church was incorporated in the present building and the bell used in the first building is the same that rings each Sunday to call the congregation to worship.

As a memorial to Abraham Lincoln's connection with the old church the Men's club of the church Sunday will unveil a bronze plaque which will be placed on the front of the church beneath the large middle window. The program will be at 3 p. m. with Rev. Earl C. Hargrove and Judge L. B. Stringer as the speakers.

Average length of silk in a silk-worm cocoon is 1526 feet, or more than one-quarter mile.

Honor Lincoln With Tablet Dedication

This article is from the *Lincoln Evening Courier*, July 21, 1941, about the dedication of the plaque saying Abraham Lincoln practiced law in the building that later became the first Lincoln Christian Church when the circuit court was held there while the Logan County Courthouse was being rebuilt.

Article kindly located and provided by Mr. Bill Donath, researcher at The Logan County Genealogical & Historical Society.

The article includes the main dedicatory address given by Judge Lawrence B. Stringer, citing J.H. Beidler's reminiscence, published in the *Lincoln Herald* in the 1880s, in which Beidler says someone told him the substitute judge Beidler said he saw in the 1857 court in the pre-church building was "Abe Lincoln of Springfield."

Judge Stringer passed away in 1942.

Impressive ceremonies marked the unveiling of the bronze tablet, telling of the incident of Abraham Lincoln sitting as a judge of the Logan county circuit court in 1857 in the Lincoln Christian church, in an outdoor service held Sunday afternoon at the church and Latham park.

The Rev. Earl C. Hargrove, pastor of the church, spoke briefly on Abraham Lincoln's reverence, an attribute that marked him as a world leader, and Judge L. B. Stringer told of the historical events surrounding Lincoln and his connection to the church and the community.

Assisting in the program were: Rev. Gale Hollingsworth, of Emden; Rev. G. W. Terjung, of Lincoln; C. W. Routson and Ben Leisch, who presented the tablet to Harry Foster, president of the Men's club who in turn presented it to Paul Coffman, president of the joint church board. Spencer Littleton, sang, accompanied by Mrs. David Hanger; Mr. Hanger played an organ prelude; Vincent Jones lead in community singing and A. D. Dike, of the V.F.W. and Fred Kochendorfer, of the American Legion, lead the audience in the pledge to the flag.

Lincoln's Reverence.

"Reverence certainly was not lacking in the life of Abraham Lincoln", Rev. Hargrove said. "It was reverence for truth that led Lincoln, on July 17, 1858, to make his celebrated "house-divided-against-itself" speech, in opposition to the advice and protest of many of his closest friends. To their suggestion that it would defeat him in his contest with Douglas for the United States Senate, he replied:

"This thing has ~~been~~ retarded long enough. The time has come when these sentiments should be uttered, and if it is decreed that I should go down linked with the truth—let me die the advocacy of what is just and right."

"Charges have been made from time to time that Lincoln was an agnostic, an infidel and an atheist. Usually such charges have originated with men who were, themselves, skeptically inclined, and who evidently desired to place Lincoln in their class because of the support which his name would bring to their cause. The refutation of all such charges is found in Lincoln's life as revealed in his words and deeds.

"In view of the reverence which Lincoln always manifested in all the relations of life, it is certainly most fitting, and perhaps more than a mere coincidence, that the last act of Congress signed by him was one requiring that the motto, so constantly exemplified in his life; In God We Trust, should thereafter be inscribed upon all national coin; and that, in his last address he ever made, April 11, 1865, in referring to the joy which the hope of a right-
ever

STRINGER IN LINCOLN TABLET ADDRESS

(Continued from Page One)

from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten."

Judge Stringer's Address

Judge Stringer's address follows:

"The early history of Logan County and the early history of Abraham Lincoln ran in parallel grooves when they did not actually impinge upon each other.

"When deputy surveyor of Sangamon county, when what is now Logan was a part of Sangamon, he surveyed highways and a townsite in Logan County.

"When a member of the State Legislature and what is now Logan was a part of his district, he was the author of the bill which carved Logan out of Sangamon and gave Logan County separate civic life.

"When serving a single term in Congress, Logan County was likewise a part of his district.

"As a lawyer, he was for several years the tentative official lawyer of the county and he practiced law on the old and famous Eighth Judicial Circuit in four different court houses in Logan County, one at old Postville, the first county seat, one at Mt. Pulaski, the second county seat, and two at Lincoln, third and present county seat.

"The events we commemorate today have to do with Abraham Lincoln, with the third court house of Logan County, with a pioneer house of worship upon the site where we now stand and with the Old Eighth Judicial Circuit so famed in Lincoln story.

"Judicial circuits in those days, owing to the sparsity of population, were less numerous and more extensive than now and a single judge, instead of three as now, handled all the legal business of the circuit.

"By stage coach, horseback and horse-drawn chaise, over obscure trails and bridgeless streams, the judge toilsomely traveled the circuit from county seat to county seat and as the smaller county seats had few if any lawyers the lawyers of the larger county seats followed the judge around the circuit.

"The Old Eighth Judicial Circuit of Lincoln tradition and story was created in the same month and year that Logan county was created, namely the month of February, 1839, Logan county was always a part of that circuit from its creation until after the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln traveled that circuit from soon after his admission to the bar until he was elected President of the United States.

"When Postville was the first county seat of the county, Judge Samuel H. Treat was the circuit judge. In 1848, when Mt. Pulaski became the county seat, Judge David Davis, of Bloomington was circuit judge and he served in that capacity both at Mt. Pulaski and Lincoln until he resigned in 1861.

The reason Judge Davis resigned

was that one of the lawyers who had practiced before him at Mt. Pulaski and Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln, had become President of the United States and had elevated Judge Davis from a frontier Illinois circuit to the Supreme Court of the Nation.

"Four years prior to the events we commemorate today, the railroad had first come to Logan county and on its right-of-way three enterprising young men had laid out a new townsite, which in honor of their personal friend and incorporating lawyer they named Lincoln, the only town in the world named for Abraham Lincoln before he was President, before he was thought of as President and when his main reputation, as he traveled the old circuit, was that of a good lawyer and an honest man.

"The same year the people of the county voted to locate the county seat of the county at the new Lincoln-named townsite but litigation, which Abraham Lincoln car-

ried to the Supreme Court of the state, delayed the erection of a court house until the year 1856.

"The March term of the Logan County circuit court for the year 1857 was held in this court house at Lincoln but the September term

new railroad, who recovered a few index books from the flames. With these exceptions, the prior records of the county were destroyed. This Thomas Lake was an uncle of the late lamented Prof. E. S. Lake, so well known to the present Christian

proved, considerable unentered, and church and school buildings very few and primitive.

"The town of Lincoln was but four years old and possessed a single school building but no completed church. Several church societies had been organized the year before and three had churches in process of erection.

"The most commodious of these three, the nearest to the public square and the nearest to completion was the Lincoln Christian church located on the site where we now stand. The Lincoln Christian church society is the only church society erecting a church building in Lincoln in the fifties which is still worshipping on the original site.

"By the time of the September 1857 session of the Logan county circuit court, the Christian church of Lincoln was practically completed, although the building had not yet been turned over to the church society by the contractor and the church had not yet been dedicated.

"Arrangements were therefore made for the use of the church building for the September session of the Logan county circuit court and the same was held in the building from September twenty-first to October second, Sundays excepted, Judge Davis presiding except on one historic occasion.

"Among the earlier educators of this county was one Dr. J. H. Beidler, of Mt. Pulaski, a man of literary and poetic talents, who in 1861 was elected School Commissioner for Logan county, an office now known as County Superintendent of Schools. In the middle eighties, he wrote reminiscences of his early experiences and they were published in the Lincoln Herald. Among other things he said:

"I saw Lincoln for the first time in the village of Lincoln, in Logan county. The Logan county court house had been destroyed by fire and court was held at the time in the Christian church.

"As I entered the court room, I discovered that Judge Davis was not occupying the bench but that another man and one I had never seen was dispensing justice. His rulings were so rapid and his language was so pertinent that I felt he must be a legal gentleman of eminence.

"I inquired who he was and was informed that he was Abe Lincoln of Springfield."

"In this connection, it may be truthfully said that Mr. Lincoln was never elected at any time as a judge of any court. Nevertheless, it may be as truthfully said that by agreement of judge and contesting lawyers, Mr. Lincoln temporarily performed duties as a judge in Judge Davis' absence.

"Frederick Trever Hill in his "Lincoln the Lawyer" says:

"Judge Davis frequently assigned Lincoln to the bench and left him to conduct the court in his absence. Judge Weldon informed the writer that he personally tried a jury case with Lincoln on the bench and Whitney asserts that once Lincoln conducted an entire term of court in Champaign county."

"After nearly a half century of service, the original Christian church built on this site in 1857 was in need of reconstruction and enlargement to meet increasing needs. So it was that the present church building came to occupy this site

In 1904, but the work of reconstruction was not wholly one of substitution. It was in part a work of absorption.

"All the usable materials in the original church were incorporated in the new. Many of the same hand-hewn beams and girders support the roof, original pews are still utilized and the same old bell calls to worship.

"The present church is a physical continuation of the building in which Abraham Lincoln held court and practiced law. It is a daily reminder of the contribution he made to honest popular government and of the Christian faith the pioneers brought to the prairies of central Illinois.

"In the early days of Logan county, the old Postville court house was the community-church. It was only turn about and fair play, that in later years a church should be a temporary Logan county court house.

"The Mosaic law of the Scriptures is the basis of all good law. Courts have been instituted for the dispensing of justice between man and man. Justice is an inherent attribute of Deity. The church and the courts have that which is in common.

"It is certainly fitting and appropriate that the associations which hang about this church structure should be commemorated in bronze recital upon its walls. It is fitting that the contacts of the great Lincoln with these surroundings in his formative years should thus be remembered.

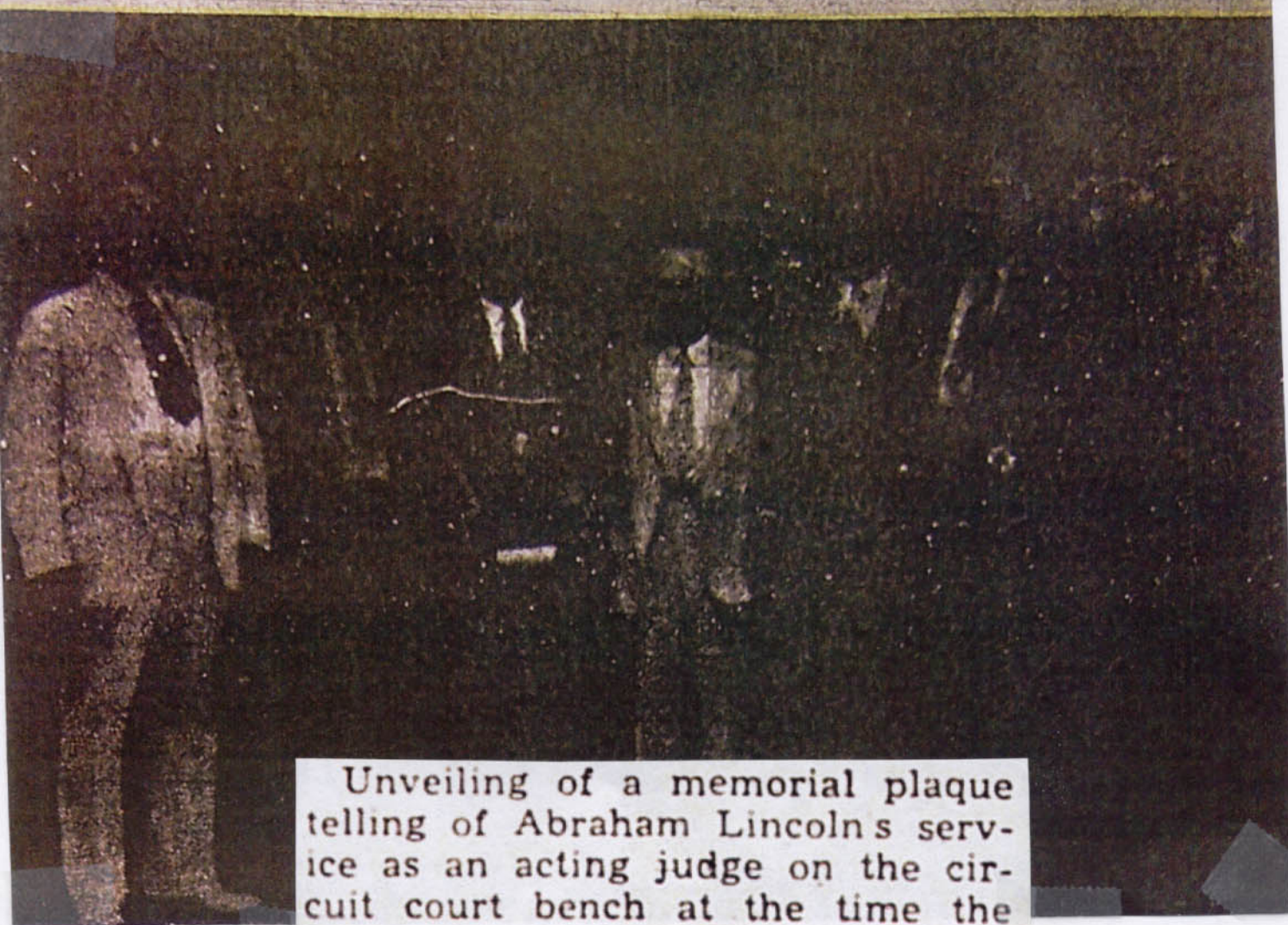
"The Lincoln of those days was a provincial Lincoln, known to a rural circuit and a frontier state. The Lincoln we know today is a Lincoln of world-wide thought, influence and power. The Lincoln of those days was a Lincoln of periodic environment. The Lincoln of today "belongs to the ages."

"Lincoln grew as his world widened. The world of his youth was the valley of the Ohio. The world of his maturer years was the greater valley of the Mississippi. The world of his Presidency was the whole round world, as he found it, and the issues he faced and the manner in which he faced them gave him immortality.

"Kentucky gave him to Illinois, by way of Indiana, as the forest ranger. Illinois gave him to the Republic in the hour of its peril. The Republic gave him to the world as the Morning Star of Humanity."

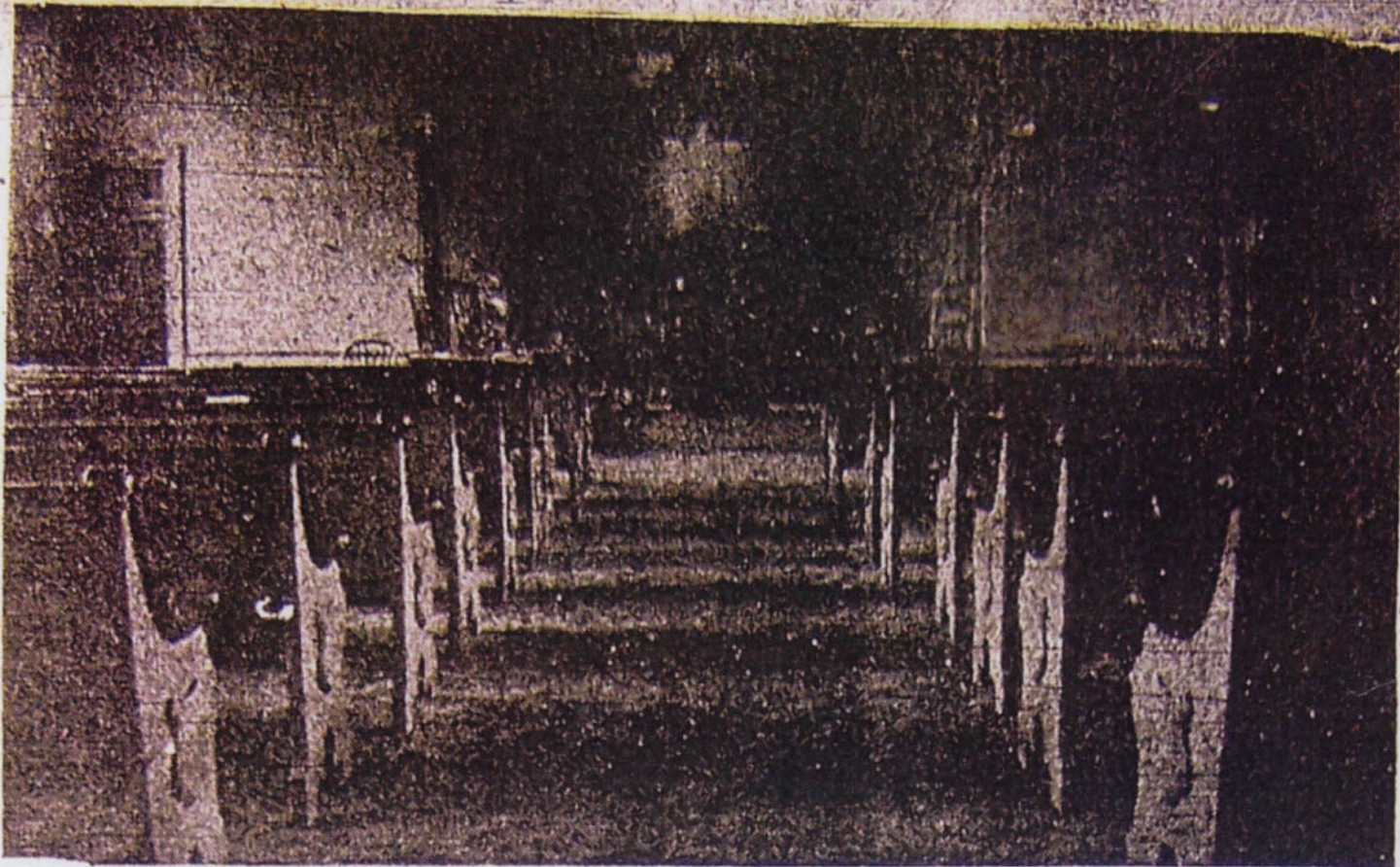
Below is the photo in the plaque dedication article. The original photo quality in the newspaper is poor, and the microfilm version of the newspaper makes it even poorer. The newspaper caption follows the photo. The article also included a photo of the plaque, but the quality is so poor on the microfilm version that the text is unreadable. The next page contains a photo of the plaque provided to me in 2007 by church officials.

Church Unveils Lincoln Memorial



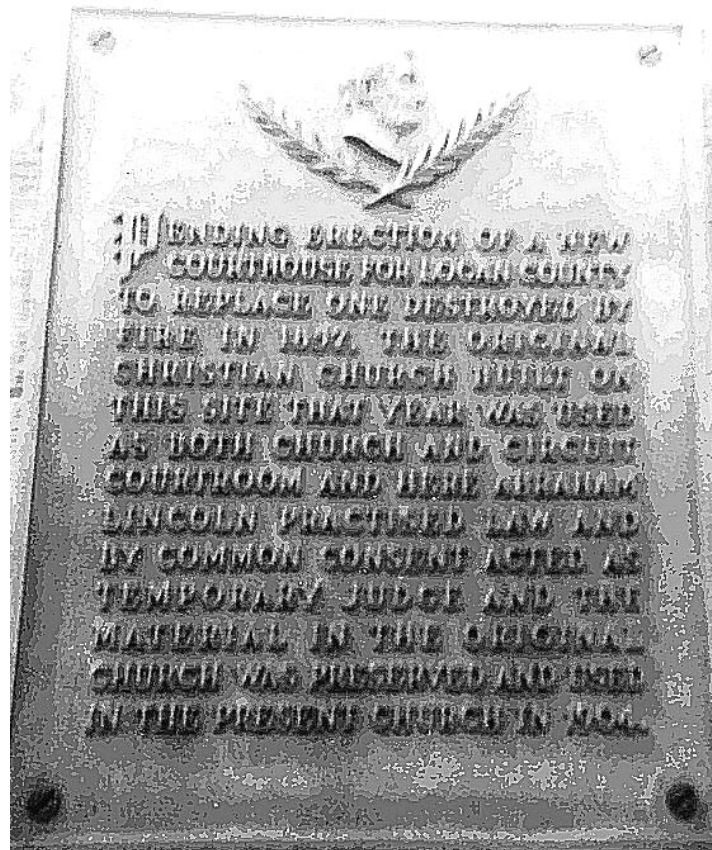
Unveiling of a memorial plaque telling of Abraham Lincoln's service as an acting judge on the circuit court bench at the time the Logan county circuit court was held temporarily in the original Lincoln Christian church, was held Sunday afternoon with Judge L. B. Stringer, historian, as the principal speaker. Left to right: Paul Coffman, president of the joint board of the church; Ben Leisch and C. W. Routson, members of the Men's club; Judge L. B. Stringer, Rev. Earl C. Hargrove, E. H. Lukenbill, who presided, and Harry Foster, president of the Men's club. The plaque, pictured below, was the gift of the Men's club of the church.

As Christian Church Looked In 1857



The auditorium of the original building of the First Christian church, which was built in 1857 on Pekin street between McLean and Kickapoo streets, on the present site of the church. It was in this auditorium, the picture of which was furnished by Miss Jennie Martin, a member of the congregation, and probably taken about 40 years ago, that Abraham Lincoln acted as a judge of the circuit court, the only time that he acted in such a capacity. Unveiling of a plaque telling of the incident will be held at 3-p. m. Sunday at a special service in Latham Park.

The following is a 1975 photo of the plaque discovered by Lincoln Christian Church officials in 2007, and this photo shows the plaque's text: "Pending erection of a new courthouse for Logan County to replace one destroyed by fire in 1857, the original Christian Church built on this site that year was used as both Church and Circuit Courtroom and here Abraham Lincoln practiced law and by common consent acted as temporary judge and the material in the original church was preserved and used in the present church in 1904." ("Common consent" means that the lawyers on both sides agreed to allow another lawyer to substitute for the regular judge.) Most likely Judge Stringer wrote the text.



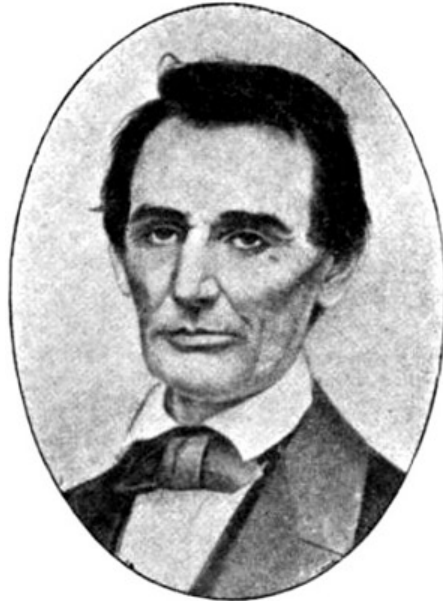
For more information about the history of the "Abe in church" question, see <http://findinglincolnillinois.com/churches.html>.

For Lawrence B. Stringer's biography and photos, see <http://findinglincolnillinois.com/historians.html#lbs>.

(Please continue reading on the next page.)

February 26, 2010

Curiously, when Mr. Bill Donath sent me the 1941 *Lincoln Evening Courier* article about the plaque dedication, I was researching a picture of Abraham Lincoln included in J.H. Beidler's 1903 *Poems*. The only information Beidler gives about the picture is the caption: "The Capps-Lincoln picture was presented Mr. Jabez Capps of Mt. Pulaski, Ills., by Lincoln about 1852, as an old-style type. The picture was photographed for Hoke Beidler's book of poems in 1902. *Lincoln, Ills., November 1, 1902* (Hoke Beidler's *Poems*, 1903, p. 94). Jabez Capps was a friend and political ally of Mr. Lincoln. (Pictures of Capps and Beidler are on the next page.)



The Capps-Lincoln Picture

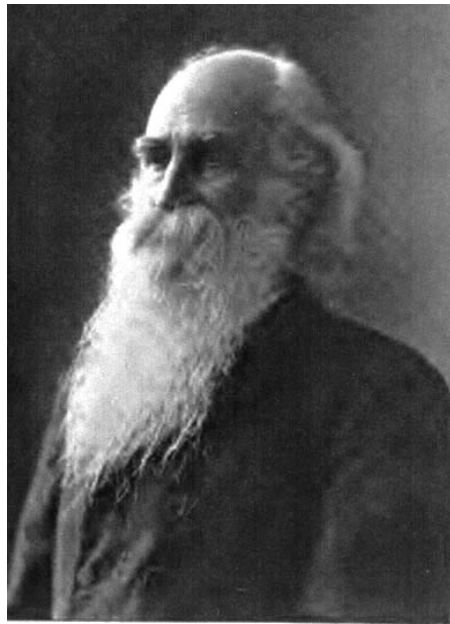
This picture of Lincoln is also in Stringer's 1911 *History of Logan County*. The only information Stringer gives is the caption: "Taken from a portrait presented by Mr. Lincoln to Jabez Capps of Mount Pulaski, on one of Mr. Lincoln's visits to the Capps' home at that place" (between pages 214 and 215).

I began to research this picture to find more information. The terms *picture* and *portrait* in the captions are ambiguous. I wondered whether the original image photographed was a drawing, painting, or other photograph. I was also curious about the creator. If the original image dates to 1852, or earlier, I wondered whether this image has been previously unrecognized as one of the earliest images of Lincoln. Bill Donath emailed me information specifically about this picture as did history buff Phil Bertoni of Mt. Pulaski and history buff and genealogist Cheryl Rothwell. I examined photos of Lincoln published in books and searched the Internet, including a visit to the Web site of the Library of Congress. Information from these various sources answered my questions. The story of that research has several interesting plot twists that can best be told in a photographic essay. In the near future, I will publish that composition on my community history Web site of Lincoln, IL: <http://www.geocities.com/findinglincolnillinois/>. The essay is titled "Solving the Mystery of the Jabez Capps' Picture of Abraham Lincoln: A Photographic Essay." A version of this story will also be included in my book on the Lincoln heritage of his first namesake town.



Jabez Capps

(History of Logan County, Illinois, 1886, between pp. 748--749)



Hoke Beidler.

Jacob Hoke Beidler, M.D.

(J.H. Beidler, Poems, 1903, no page number)



Missouri State.
UNIVERSITY

DAROLD LEIGH HENSON, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus of English

P.O. Box 3127 GSS • Springfield, Missouri 65808

Phone: 417-869-5184

DLHenson@missouristate.edu

<http://english.missouristate.edu/faculty/henson.html>