

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Tim Townsend

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Historians Speak - Lincoln Oral History project

Interview # HSL-A-L-2019-032.1-2

Tim Townsend, the historian at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site who discusses the history of the Abraham Lincoln home, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Historians Speak - Lincoln* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jun 13 & Jul 12, 2019

Location: Townsend office at the Lincoln Home
National Historic Site

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:33 + 2:20 / 1.55 + 2.33 = 3.88 hrs.

Session 1: Townsend's personal information & 19th Century story of Lincoln home

Session 2: 20th Century history of Lincoln home and National Historic Site

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 19,
2019.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield,
Illinois.

© 2019 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Abstract

Tim Townsend *Historians Speak - Lincoln*, HSL-A-L-2019-032

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Tim Townsend was born in Freeport, Illinois in September 1966 and grew up in Stockton, Illinois. He attended from Stockton High School in 1984 and attended St. Ambrose College. While there he interned at the Rock Island Arsenal and developed a love for public history. Following his graduation in 1988 he worked at a variety of positions over the next several years, including the Galena Historic Site and the Old State Capitol in Springfield. In 1991 he began working at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site as a seasonal. He eventually became a full-time employee at the home and served as the site's historian at the time of this interview. He also became the site's expert on its history since the days when the Lincoln family lived in the home.

Townsend talks extensively about the many plans that various civic groups and individuals developed during the early 20th Century, and the spur in interest in Lincoln and other sites in the post-World War I years. The home went through major renovations in the mid-1950s and again in the late 1980s. In 1967 Congressman Paul Findlay, whose district included the Lincoln home, began to champion efforts to have the federal government take over the home (then owned and operated by the state of Illinois, with adjacent properties owned by local property owners). After several years Congress passed legislation transferring the home and the project to the National Park Service, which continues to operate the site. President Richard Nixon signed the legislation in August 1971. Following that, the site underwent dramatic changes, including the construction of a visitor center, parking area, and the renovation of several of the homes in the four-block historic site. The site continues to be a popular destination for tourists and school groups, and its popularity and stature has not diminished despite the opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in 2004-2005.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Lincoln Home National Historic Site; Abraham Lincoln family; National Park Service; Rock Island Arsenal; Galena Historic Site; Congressman Paul Findlay; St. Ambrose College; Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Old State Capitol; Lincoln centennial of 1909; Abraham Lincoln birthplace; New Salem, Illinois; Myron Howard West; Julie Cellini; Wally Henderson

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955