

Lincoln's LOUISVILLE

By Doug Stern | Photo by Mary Yates

NEW RIVERFRONT MEMORIAL TELLS A STORY

Abe Lincoln is back in Louisville. Only this time, it looks like he'll be staying longer.

On June 4, a bronze statue of the 16th president of the United States was unveiled on the banks of the Ohio. The Lincoln Memorial at Waterfront Park was created as part of Kentucky's commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth in present-day LaRue County, Ky., about an hour southwest of Louisville, near Hodgenville.

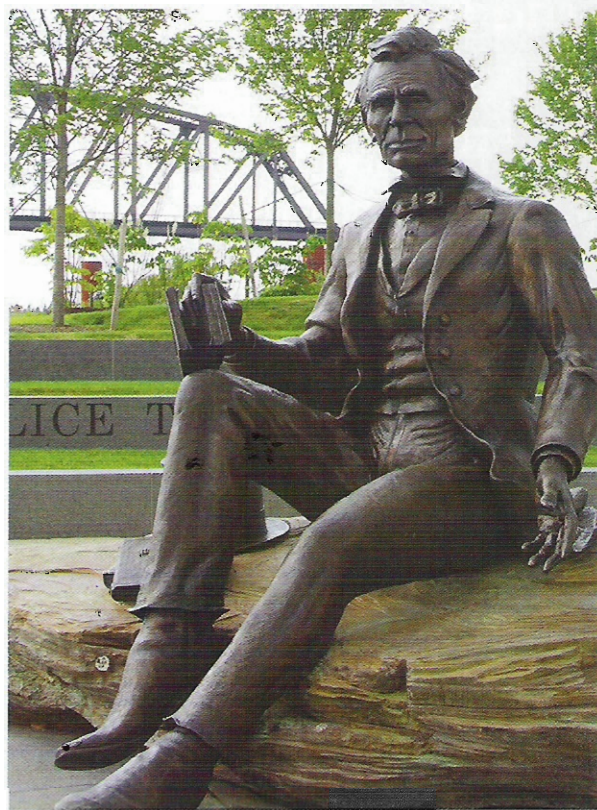
The 12-foot tall figure captures Lincoln seated on a rock, holding an open book and looking pensively toward the river.

It's a posture he may have had throughout August and September of 1841. Lincoln had returned to Kentucky then to spend time with Joshua Speed, a lawyer he had met and befriended a few years earlier in Springfield, Ill. Farmington, the Speed family plantation near Louisville, offered Lincoln a place to rest and recover from the breakup of his engagement a few months earlier.

During that summer, Lincoln would often walk the six miles to Louisville. That's where he might chat with the courthouse crowd; or possibly sit on the riverfront, reading and watching wharf life.

Among the things Lincoln saw on the Louisville banks of the Ohio River in 1841 were slaves being bought, sold and transported. It made a lasting impression on him.

Lincoln's views on slavery are part of the new memorial. Four bas-relief plaques depict Lincoln's life and experiences in Kentucky, including an image of a group of shackled slaves—a sight, Lincoln wrote years later in a letter to Speed, that had been "a continual torment" to him.



The Lincoln Memorial was created by Ed Hamilton, a Louisville-based sculptor. Several groups covered the \$2.2 million cost of the statue and surrounding amphitheatre, including the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the family of Harry S. Frazier, Jr., and the Kentucky Historical Society/Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. The landscape design for the memorial was handled by Hargreaves Associates, the lead architects and planners for the \$95 million, 85-acre, Waterfront Park. ■