

The Lincoln Trail Hike

In 1926, R. Allan Stephens, a former Scout Commissioner of Springfield, Illinois, originated the idea of a Lincoln Trail Hike. At that time, there were no official Boy Scout trails in the United States. Mr. Stephens believed that Boy Scouts would acquire a greater appreciation of the obstacles Abraham Lincoln overcame in his rise to the presidency if they also walked the same 20-mile route followed by Lincoln from New Salem to Springfield.

After traveling about like a "piece of floating driftwood," Lincoln took up residence at New Salem in July of 1831. For the first time in his life, he was living by himself. At the age of 22, he began his career as a struggling store clerk and mill hand. When he left New Salem on April 15, 1837, to become the law partner of John Todd Stuart in Springfield, the new capital city for Illinois, Lincoln had learned many things and worked at various jobs as well as being a successful scholar. True, he still had some rough edges, but he had been a captain in the Black Hawk War, a postmaster, store owner, surveyor, state legislator and lawyer.

It was at New Salem that he completed his self-taught education by mastering grammar, literature, mathematics, surveying and law. Because law books were not available in New Salem, Stuart loaned his own to Lincoln. To save the stagecoach fare, which he could ill afford, Lincoln either had to walk into Springfield and back, or borrow a horse. Sometimes he rode, but many times he trudged both ways in a single day.

Lincoln's outstanding example of perseverance caused Mr. Stephens to propose that Boy Scouts be encouraged to walk in Lincoln's steps from New Salem to Springfield and that an award be made to those who successfully completed the trail. A route and rules were formulated by the Abraham Lincoln Council, and a medal was designed. Arthur Bennet was the first Scout to earn a Lincoln Trail Hike medal when he finished the course on November 6, 1926. That same day, three other Springfield Scouts also walked the trail. Since that day, over 75,000 youth from throughout the United States have retraced Lincoln's long strides over the Illinois prairie.

The 20-mile route is located as closely as possible to the roadways of Lincoln's New Salem days. This routing keeps hikers on secondary roads, byways and trails. The trail is scenic and historically correct.

A message to Hikers:

This Lincoln Trail is sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Council, Boy Scouts of America, which invites qualified youth and adults to make this hike and earn recognition items.

We feel that every hiker will be a better American citizen after he or she has studied the life of Abraham Lincoln and walked in his steps. Every American has the same opportunity to emulate Lincoln in our democratic government with its freedom and security. Some hiker today may one day sit in the White House. A humble birth in a log cabin did not stop Lincoln from studying and working and dreaming. With freedom of choice, he rose above his surroundings to become a noted lawyer. Then his country summoned him to Washington, D.C.

Lincoln's determination to achieve success after many failures is an inspiration to every person who reads of his struggles against great odds. In no other country could he have succeeded in the Nineteenth Century.

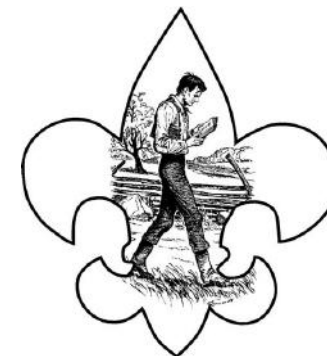
It is our sincere hope that every hiker will find not only fun and high adventure, but will also adopt the principles of honesty and determination followed by Abraham Lincoln. To succeed, a person must have determination and never-ending hope, in addition to ability and knowledge. With success comes the responsibility of serving one's fellow man.

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(EST. 1926)

Sponsored by

**Abraham Lincoln Council
Boy Scouts of America**



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Procedures for Hiking the Lincoln Trail

Each first time hiker must read a book on Abraham Lincoln and present a 300 word report to his unit leader. It is the responsibility of the unit leader to verify that hikers have completed a book report. Repeat hikers are not required to write a report.

There should be at least one adult for every 8 to 10 youth on the trail. Leaders should see that thorough instructions are given in hiking courtesy, safety, first aid, and foot care.

On the Hike

All hikers must secure trail maps from the Abraham Lincoln Council Service Center or the ranger's office at Lincoln's New Salem State Park. Follow the map, not the trail signs, which could be moved or missing.

Hikers are responsible for any damages to public or private property along the trail. **Please do not pet or taunt dogs along the trail and do not encourage them to follow you.**

Hikers may not accept rides or take shortcuts. Several parts of the trail are across easements on private property, and are as narrow as 10 feet. Please stay on the trail at all times.

Additional guidelines are available on our website at www.alincolnbsa.org.

Hikers must carry their own food and water. None is available on the trail. Please help keep the trail clean - carry your litter with you.

The Lincoln Trail ends at Robert A Stuart Park. Mr. Stuart was a well known scout and a descendant of Lincoln's law partner. Leaders are responsible for seeing that their hikers behave in a Scout-like manner and respect the privacy and property of others at all times.

After Making the Hike

After the hike has been completed, the leader forwards fees for each hiker who desires to purchase recognition items. A medal, patch and three repeat patches are available to purchase.

Hiking Hints:

1. Walk on left side of the road, facing traffic. When cars approach, get off the road. Be especially alert at blind spots in the road where drivers cannot possibly see you.
2. Wear comfortable leather shoes, well broken in.
3. Carry adhesive tape, gauze and antiseptic to care for blisters immediately.
4. Take frequent short rests. Elevate your feet while resting to aid circulation.
5. To prevent windburn and sunburn, wear a broad-brimmed hat and long sleeves.
6. Always be careful. Think before acting on impulse.

Words of Lincoln (to be learned while on the hike)

"Learn the laws and obey them."

"He sticks through thick and thin--I admire such a man."

"Success does not so much depend on external help as on self-reliance."

"It is better only sometimes to be right than at all times to be wrong."

"When you have an elephant on hand, and he wants to run away--better let him run."

"Gold is good in its place; but living, brave, and patriotic men are better than gold."

"The face of an old friend is like a ray of sunshine through dark and gloomy clouds."

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true."



Recognition Items

All recognition items can be ordered through the Council Office.