

Documents and Resources

- [Lincoln's Advice to Lawyers*](#)
- [Lincoln's Notes for a Law Lecture*](#)
- [The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln Second Edition](#)

Commentary

- [Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed, Attorney and Client](#) (JISHS)
- [An Honest Calling: Lincoln's Law Practice](#) (ALI)
- [Dalby Revisited: A New Look at Lincoln's "Most Far-Reaching Case" in the Illinois Supreme Court](#) (JALA)
- [Herndon on Lincoln: An Unknown Interview with a List of Books in the Lincoln & Herndon Law Office](#) (JISHS)
- ["Judge" Abraham Lincoln](#) (JISHS)
- [Leonard Swett: Lincoln's Legacy to the Chicago Bar](#) (JISHS)
- [Lincoln and the United States Supreme Court](#) (ALA)
- [Lincoln and the United States Supreme Court: A Postscript](#) (ALA)
- [Lincoln, Benjamin Jonas and the Black Code](#) (JISHS)
- [Lincoln's Earlier Practice in the Federal Courts 1839-1854](#) (ALA)
- [Lincoln Holds Court](#) (ALA)
- [Lincoln in the United States Court 1855-1860](#) (ALA)



Lincoln as a Young Lawyer

Lincoln Legal Career Timeline

Abraham Lincoln enjoyed a successful legal career in Illinois spanning nearly 25 years. Like most lawyers of his time, he did not attend law school. It was customary to study under established lawyers, but he lived in a rural village and taught himself. In 1834 John T. Stuart, a Springfield attorney, encouraged him to study law and lent him the necessary books. Less than three years later Lincoln was admitted to the bar and joined Stuart as a junior partner. He formed two additional partnerships before being elected President. The timeline below shows a brief overview of his career, as well as presidential appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Timeline

NOVEMBER 12, 1831

Writes first-known legal document for [New Salem](#) friend

- [Stephen T. Logan Talks About Lincoln](#) (ALA)
- ["Terrific in Denunciation" -- Taking a New Look at Lincoln the Lawyer](#) (Humanities)
- [The Eighth Judicial Circuit](#) (ALA)
- [The Forgotten Lincoln Circuit Markers](#) (JALA)
- [The Lawyer as Peacemaker: Law and Community in Abraham Lincoln's Slander Cases](#) (JALA)
- [This was a Lawyer](#) (JISHS)

Lincolniana

- [The Famous "Chicken Bone" Case](#) (JISHS)
- [The Melissa Goings Murder Case](#) (JISHS)

Places

- [Abraham Lincoln's Supreme Court*](#)
- [Beardstown Courthouse*](#)
- [Eighth Judicial Circuit Lincoln Markers](#) (HMDB)
- [Lincoln Law Career Photo Tour*](#)
- [Lincoln's Springfield Law Office*](#)
- [Metamora Courthouse*](#)
- [Mt. Pulaski Courthouse*](#)
- [Old State Capitol*](#)
- [Old State Capitol Photo Tour*](#)
- [Postville Courthouse*](#)

Books

- Bannister, Dan W. *Lincoln and the Illinois Supreme Court*. Springfield, Illinois, 1994.
- Billings, Roger and

FALL 1834

Borrows law books from John Todd Stuart and studies in New Salem

MARCH 24, 1836

Takes first step for obtaining law license in Sangamon County

SEPTEMBER 9, 1836

Receives license to practice law in all Illinois state courts

MARCH 1, 1837

Name entered on list of lawyers in the Illinois Supreme Court office

APRIL 15, 1837

Moves to Springfield, Illinois, to practice law with John Todd Stuart

OCTOBER 12, 1838

Successfully represents accused murderer Henry Truett (*People v. Truett*)

SEPTEMBER 23, 1839

Starts practicing law on the Illinois Eighth Judicial Circuit

DECEMBER 3, 1839

Admitted to practice law in the U.S. circuit courts

JUNE 18, 1840

Argues his first of many cases before the Illinois Supreme Court

APRIL 14, 1841

Ends law partnership with John Stuart; becomes Stephen T. Logan's partner

MARCH 1, 1842

Admitted to practice law in the U.S. District Court

DECEMBER 1844

Dissolves partnership with Stephen Logan; accepts William H. Herndon as junior partner

OCTOBER 16, 1847

Appears for plaintiff in a fugitive slave case (*Bryant et al. v. Matson*)

MARCH 7, 1849

Admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court and gives his only oral argument there

FEBRUARY 28, 1854

Represents railroad before the Illinois Supreme Court (*Illinois Central RR v. County of McLean*)

SEPTEMBER 19 - 26, 1855

Attends trial in Cincinnati, Ohio, (*McCormick v. Manny*) but Edwin Stanton prevents his participation

DECEMBER 1, 1856

Takes place of David Davis as judge in Sangamon County

Williams, Frank J., editors. *Abraham Lincoln, Esq.: The Legal Career of America's Greatest President*. University Press of Kentucky, 2010.

- Carnahan, Burrus. *Act of Justice: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Law of War*. University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

- Dirck, Brian. *Lincoln the Lawyer*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

- Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln's Herndon*. DaCapo, 1989.

- Duff, John J. A. *Lincoln, Prairie Lawyer*. New York: Rinehart & Co., 1960.

- Fraker, Guy C. *Lincoln's Ladder to the Presidency: The Eighth Judicial Circuit*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

- Frank, John P. *Lincoln as a Lawyer*. Americana House, 1991.

- Hill, Frederick T. *Lincoln the Lawyer*. Fred B. Rothman & Co., 1986.

- Lincoln, Abraham. *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal Documents and Cases*. University of Virginia Press, 2008.

- Matthews, Elizabeth W. *Lincoln as a Lawyer: An Annotated Bibliography*. Carbonale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

circuit court

MARCH 31, 1857

Helps prosecute murder case in which defendant claimed insanity (*People v. Wyant*)

JUNE 18, 1857

Receives \$5,000 fee in Illinois Central Railroad case but had to sue to get it

SEPTEMBER 8, 1857

Present at opening of "Effie Afton" steamboat trial (*Hurd v. Rock Island Bridge Co.*)

MAY 7, 1858

Uses almanac to clear Duff Armstrong of murder charge (*People v. Armstrong*)

SEPTEMBER 3, 1859

Clears Peter Cartwright's grandson of murder charge (*People v. Harrison*)

JANUARY 21, 1862

Nominates Noah H. Swayne of Ohio as a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice

JULY 16, 1862

Nominates Samuel F. Miller of Iowa as a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice

OCTOBER 17, 1862

Nominates David Davis of Illinois as a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice

FEBRUARY 21, 1863

Nominates Stephen J. Field of California as a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice

OCTOBER 15, 1864

Attends Washington funeral of Roger B. Taney, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice

DECEMBER 6, 1864

Nominates Salmon P. Chase of Ohio as U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice

Timeline Sources: *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler and others; *Lincoln Day by Day* edited by Earl Miers

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- Simon, James F. *Lincoln and Chief Justice Taney: Slavery, Secession, and the President's War Powers*. Simon & Schuster, 2006.
- Spiegel, Allen D. A. *Lincoln, Esquire: A Shrewd, Sophisticated Lawyer in His Time*. Mercer University Press, April 2002.
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- Stowell, Daniel W. *In Tender Consideration: Women, Families, and the Law in Abraham Lincoln's Illinois*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
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- Townsend, William H. *Lincoln the Litigant*. Lawbook Exchange, 2000.
- Walsh, John Evangelist. *Moonlight: Abraham Lincoln and the Almanac Trial*. St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Whitney, Henry C. *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*. Lawbook Exchange, 2001 reissue.
- Woldman, Albert A. *Lawyer Lincoln*. Boston

and New York: Little,
Brown, and Co., 1937.

Other Timelines

- [Lincoln and Gettysburg Timeline*](#)
- [Lincoln Early Life Timeline*](#)
- [Lincoln Family Timeline*](#)
- [Lincoln Pre-Presidential Political Timeline*](#)
- [Lincoln Presidential Timeline*](#)
- [Lincoln Tomb Timeline*](#)
- [Mary Todd Lincoln Timeline*](#)
- [Robert Todd Lincoln Timeline*](#)

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