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# Hodgenville pays tribute to Lincoln



The central figure on Hodgenville's historic Lincoln Square, the statue was created by noted New York sculptor Adolph A. Weinman and placed on the square in 1909 to honor the centennial of Lincoln's birth. Originally, the responsibility for care of the statue fell to a group of local women, the Ladies Lincoln League; today, the statue is maintained through the civic efforts of the Hodgenville Rotary club.

The city of Hodgenville is making plans for a big tribute to its most famous native son—President **Abraham Lincoln**. Preparations are already underway for a two-year celebration of the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth that is expected to draw 1 million visitors to the Commonwealth.

The festivities will kick off with a celebration at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site on Feb. 12, 2008, and will run throughout the country until February 2010.

The National Park Service's Abraham Lincoln Birthplace has been preparing for and promoting the event. Its efforts have included a renovation of the Memorial Building's interior and exterior, landscaping around the Memorial Building to its 1930s appearance, new exhibits in the visitor center and renovations to its auditorium. The National Park Service has also expanded the bookstore at the birthplace and hired additional staff to present curriculum-based educational programs for all Kentucky schools and increase visibility in the education community.

The city of Hodgenville has been busy preparing for 2008 as well. The community is in the process of receiving bids for creation of a statue that will depict Abraham Lincoln as a boy to accompany the adult version-statue that already sits in the town. Officials are planning to have the project completed by May 31, 2008, the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the original statue.

Although Hodgenville will be the site for the kickoff of this tribute to the 16th president of the United States, the city is already holding events to generate excitement and anticipation.

The city is currently hosting an ongoing bicentennial speaker series featuring a variety of speakers whose messages and themes are associated with Lincoln's Kentucky years. A February public speaking contest for Kentucky students will pay tribute to Lincoln's oratory skills.

Plans are underway to pay tribute to Lincoln's oratory skills by hosting a public speaking contest in February 2007 for students from all around Kentucky.

Finally, to help further Lincoln's legacy in the classroom, organizers are working on conducting a teachers' workshop with a tri-state focus on Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, three states with strong ties to the former president. The goal of the workshop is to generate 20 lesson plans for educators to teach their students about President Lincoln. According to **Steve Brown** of the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace, the lesson plans will be placed on a Web site for teachers worldwide to download and utilize.

# Hodgenville at a Glance

Reactions to the preparations have been overwhelmingly positive, Brown said. “We enjoy wonderful community support here in the park. We really have an enviable relationship with the people here in town.”

The excitement can be found throughout the Commonwealth.

“The entire state is gearing up for a celebration that commemorates the state’s unique connection to the birth, life and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln,” said **Kent Whitworth**, executive director of the Kentucky Historical Society, which co-chairs the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

The city of Hodgenville and the Commonwealth of Kentucky cordially invite you to visit and experience some of our great nation’s history—the birthplace of the man who saved this great country.

—NEWCITIES INSTITUTE STAFF



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1. Connect to the world
2. Encourage youth, diversity and inclusiveness
3. Feed the mind, nurture the soul
4. Embrace healthy living
5. Remain true to the city’s uniqueness
6. Don’t merely grow; plan and develop over time
7. Build beautifully and steward the environment
8. Cultivate leadership and citizen involvement
9. Recruit, retain and generate wealth
10. Mimic bigness, but think small
11. Rethink boundaries
12. Buy locally, sell globally



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**Mayor:** Roger Truitt

**Population:** 2,788

**Location:** LaRue County in west-

central Kentucky.

**History:**

In the late 1700s, **Robert Hodgen**, then living in a plantation home near the Nolin River in LaRue County, saw the need for a mill for the

people living in an extensive territory around his settlement. At the time, this area was part of Nelson County, and on Dec. 9, 1788, Hodgen applied to the Nelson County Court at Bardstown for a permit to build the mill. The request was granted, and the mill was in operation in 1789 and became the center of interest in a broad community that was protected by Phillip’s Fort. Hodgen passed away in 1810. Several years later, in response to numerous requests, his widow, **Sarah**, and sons **Isaac** and **John** petitioned the Hardin County Court to establish a town on Hodgen’s land. Their request was granted, and the city of Hodgenville was established in 1818 and was officially incorporated as a city in 1839. In 1843, it became the county seat of LaRue County after it was set apart from Hardin County. The initial layout of the city featured two churches, a brick hotel, a schoolhouse, a few stores and 30 homes.

In 1888, the community got a boost in its development when the Illinois Central Railroad built a branch line that stopped in nearby Elizabethtown and Toniaeville. This railroad line allowed citizens of Hodgenville easier access to transportation needed for mercantile and agricultural products, building materials, livestock, and travel.



Knob Creek Tavern and Cabin Knob Creek as it appeared in the early 1930’s.

**Special events and attractions:** The Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site honors the birth and early

life of the former president and has a visitor center with exhibits, sales facilities and the movie *Lincoln—The Kentucky Years*. The city’s historic downtown commercial dis-

trict contains many buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has shops for arts and crafts, antiques and collectibles. The Lincoln statue sits in Town Square and is photographed by thousands of visitors each year. Lincoln Days, celebrated every year during the second

week of October, was created to honor and celebrate the birth of Hodgenville’s most famous native son. The event features food, vendors, a parade and a baby pageant.



The cornerstone of Hodgenville’s historic district, The Lincoln Museum is Kentucky’s only museum dedicated solely to Lincoln’s life and times. It is a Civil War Trust Discovery Site and a Kentucky Scenic Byway Site.

**Native sons and daughters:**

**Abraham Lincoln**, the 16th president of the United States, was born in LaRue County and spent much of his childhood there. **Robert Hodgen** lived in present-day LaRue County, and his land served as the starting point for the city of Hodgenville. He was one of the first justices of the peace and served Hardin County in the state legislature.

**Web sites:**

[www.laruecounty.org](http://www.laruecounty.org)

[www.lincolnbirthplace.com](http://www.lincolnbirthplace.com)