

Lincoln's Law Office
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This month's front cover features a photo of the interior of Lincoln's law office as it appeared in 1843 when he became a partner of Stephen T. Logan. The law office is located on the third floor of a building at 6th and Adams Streets in Springfield which for 128 years was known as the Tinsley Building.

Following the restoration of the interior and exterior of the building in 1969 to resemble its early appearance, its name was changed to the Lincoln-Herndon Building. Lincoln and William H. Herndon became partners in 1847 and established their offices in the building.

Besides housing Lincoln's law office, the building at one time was the site of Illinois' only Federal Court and the Springfield Post Office. It also housed the office of Edward D. Baker, a Civil War Colonel and a U.S. Senator, and the office of James Shields, who once challenged Lincoln to a duel but which was averted at the last minute. Shields, then Illinois state auditor, later became an Illinois Supreme Court Justice and then served as a U.S. Senator from three different states—Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri.

Lincoln practiced law in the building from 1843 to 1852. Several important events in his life occurred during that span:

In 1843 he rejected a plan for his nomination as a candidate for Governor of Illinois.

In 1846 he was elected to Congress, his first major entry into the national political arena.

He declined a proffered appointment as Governor of the Oregon Territory.

Two of his sons, Edward Baker Lincoln and William Wallace Lincoln, were born.

The front cover photo reveals that Lincoln's office facilities consisted of a table to serve as a desk, a wood-burning stove, a few straight chairs for Lincoln and his clients and a few law books on a shelf. The floor was bare.

According to legend, Lincoln once jumped through a trap door of the third floor offices to the Federal courtroom on the second floor to defend Edward Baker while he was making a speech on the abolition of slavery. It is presumed that the crowd in the courtroom became angry at Baker. Lincoln was said to have heard the commotion below and decided to jump through the trap door to defend his friend.

The Lincoln-Herndon Building, which is across the street from the newly restored old State Capitol Building, is open to the public from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during weekdays and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. During the summer tourist season it is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. There is a small admission charge.¹

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¹These are the hours that were in effect in 1972. For current hours visit <http://www.state.il.us/hpa/hs/Herndon.htm>