



Kevin J. Wood

Portrayals of President Abraham Lincoln

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From Obscurity to Greatness: Illinois and Lincoln, 1830 to 1861

Program for Libraries, Senior Residences, Community Groups, Etc.

In 1830, the young State of Illinois – only 12 years old – was the fifth smallest in the nation in terms of population. It was a relatively unknown and mostly undeveloped land with an uncertain future and not necessarily destined for any measure of greatness. That same year, a young man arrived in Illinois with his family and the same could be said about him: unknown, undeveloped, an uncertain future and not apparently destined for much. The next 31 years would see the transformation of both the state and the man, of both Illinois and ... Abraham Lincoln.

By 1860, Illinois would grow more than tenfold to become the nation's fourth largest state, full of energy and promise and a microcosm of the entire nation: a mix of northerners and southerners, native-born and immigrants, rich and poor, liberal and conservative, urban and rural. These groups clashed at times, but also learned how to live and work together to further the interests of all. And Abraham Lincoln would grow tremendously, too, to become known throughout the country as the President-elect of a nation in crisis, on the verge of disunion and perhaps even civil war, the leader who would need to try to keep a divided nation (and state) together, yet without abandoning his principles. This program tells the story of how Illinois, and Lincoln, grew from obscurity to greatness during Illinois' early years.

This program is most appropriate for adults and for children from ten years old on up. It runs one hour and is followed by an additional time of Q&A, photos, and informal interaction. It is also available virtually, whether live via video conferencing (Zoom) or live-streaming (Facebook Live or YouTube Live) or as a pre-recorded video. And it is also available in Spanish (*De la oscuridad a la grandeza: Illinois y Lincoln, 1830 a 1861*). This program was originally developed for the Illinois Humanities' Road Scholars Speakers Bureau.

Mr. Lincoln is portrayed by Kevin Wood, a professional Lincoln presenter who bears a remarkable resemblance to "the Great Emancipator" and who is extremely knowledgeable about his life and times. Mr. Wood has been portraying Mr. Lincoln since the year 2000, and on a professional basis since 2015. He has made over 2,300 appearances in 33 states plus Washington DC and two foreign countries: Canada and Spain. Mr. Wood also writes an occasional blog – "*Loath to Close... Still!*" – which encourages others to reflect upon and learn from President Lincoln's life and legacy. For more information, visit www.mrlincoln.com.