

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Lincoln Memorial Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON Metamora Courthouse

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 113 East Partridge Street

CITY, TOWN Metamora

STATE Illinois

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Fifteenth

COUNTY Woodford

CODE 61548

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME State of Illinois, Department of Conservation, Division of Land and Historic Sites

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois 62701

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Woodford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

(no street address)

CITY, TOWN

Eureka

STATE

Illinois 61530

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Landmarks in Woodford County

DATE

1973

FEDERAL STATE  COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Department of Conservation

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

STATE

Illinois 62701

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lincoln Memorial Courthouse was built in 1845 by a local contractor at a cost of \$4,400.00. It is a forty by fifty foot rectangular two-story structure facing south onto the public square of the Village. The building was erected to serve as a courthouse on the old 8th Judicial Circuit and as the judicial seat for Woodford County from 1845 until 1894, when the County Seat was moved to Eureka.

The building was made entirely of local materials. The brick, used for both foundation and walls, was baked in a kiln west of the Village. The wooden joists and oak plank flooring were milled from local timber, and the shake shingles for the roof were handsplit locally.

The style of the building is an excellent example of classic revival architecture. The gabled, shake-shingle roof of the building extends forward creating a front portico the length of the facade and is supported by four wooden Ionic columns. In the tradition of Greek temple architecture, the symmetrical facade contains three bays which are separated by brick pilasters. The building has four chimneys, also symmetrically placed, with two rising above the west outer wall and two above the east. Although the building has four chimneys, there were no fireplaces as heat was provided by wood-burning stoves. Besides the columned portico, the most disguising feature of the building is the large wooden cupola near the front of the roof. The windows of the structure are double-hung with eight-over-eight sashes. All windows, lintels and sills are wooden.

The interior of the building is as stately as the exterior. Beyond the large entry doors, a central hall stretches the length of the building. Off this hall open rooms which were once used for County offices, two on the west side and one large room on the east. At the rear of the building is a stairway which rises from both the left and right to a central landing. Beneath this landing and directly opposite the front entry is a rear exit door. The second floor contains two small rooms in the rear, flanking the stairway. These two rooms served as the judge's chamber and the lawyer's preparation rooms. The remaining three-fourths of the second floor is a large open courtroom at the head of which (front of the building) is a platform for the judge. The courthouse also has an attic space and a cellar which are accessible via hatchways.

Both the exterior and interior of the building have been restored to their original appearance- the appearance they had when Lincoln practiced there. In the 1920's, major restoration began on the exterior of the building. Two side wing additions, which had been added in 1884, were removed. At this time, the two outer columns of the portico, which had been removed to add the wings, were replaced, leaving only the central two columns in their original state. Also at this time, an outdoor stairway to the second story was removed and the entrance cut into the south wall of the building was closed off. An asphalt roof, replacing the hand-split shake shingle roof, was added.

The interior has also undergone many changes since the 1920's. A central heating system was added, and indoor restrooms were provided. The interior rear stairway removed during the 1880's was reconstructed to its original form, including the walnut railing. On the main floor, walls and the ceiling were replastered, and a new hardwood floor was laid. On the upper floor, every effort is being made to keep as much

# SIGNIFICANCE

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1845 Construction BUILDER/ARCHITECT David Irving  
 1884 Addition of Wings - 1921 Removal of Wings

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lincoln Memorial Courthouse at Metamora is of great significance to the architectural, political and governmental history of the State of Illinois and the country as a whole. It was here that famous statesmen, orators, lawyers, and judges spoke to the people of Woodford County in the formation years of this country.

The Lincoln Memorial Courthouse was built in 1845 in the style of classic Greek architecture. During this period of our country's history, when the political and governmental systems were being formed and tested, the architectural mood was one of perfection and idealism. For these reasons, many government buildings in this country were patterned after the architectural style of a culture noted for its justice and statesmanship -- Greece. The Courthouse at Metamora was, therefore, built in a symmetrical pattern, with a wide portico and Ionic columns, and large windows giving a feeling of openness.

The building was made entirely of native materials. The brick, used for both the foundation and walls, was baked in a kiln west of the Village; the wooden joists and oak plank flooring were milled from local timber, and the shake shingles for the roof were hand-split locally.

The Metamora Courthouse was built to serve as Woodford County's judicial seat and as a court building on the old 8th Judicial Circuit. It is one of only two remaining court structures of that circuit. In the circuit court system, which was adopted in 1839, the State was divided into multi-county circuits, each with a judge who traveled from county to county within his jurisdiction until he completed the judicial business of each county. Following the same route and schedule were traveling lawyers who represented the residents of each county.

Many noteworthy judges and lawyers traveled the 8th Judicial Circuit. The most famous of the lawyers was Abraham Lincoln, who traveled the circuit full time for twelve years during the 1840's and 1850's, and then part time until he became President in 1860. Lincoln was born in Harden County, Kentucky, and at the age of 21 he came to Illinois to practice law. From 1834 to 1841, he served in the State Legislature, and then became a circuit lawyer. One particularly noteworthy case for which he is remembered involved a Melissa Goings, who was charged with murdering her husband. During the trial at the Metamora Courthouse, her attorney, Abraham Lincoln, called for a recess to confer with his client and he led her from the courtroom.

"When court reconvened and Mrs. Goings could not find, Lincoln was accused of advising her to flee, a charge he vehemently denied. He explained, however, that the defendant had asked him where she could get a drink of water and he had pointed out that Tennessee had darn good water. She was never again seen in Illinois."



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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

of the original appearance as possible. A new hardwood floor laid in the upper level in the 1920's has been removed to show the original five-inch oak plank flooring. The walls and ceiling are being replastered only where absolutely necessary. The judge's platform has been reconstructed to its original form. The railing which separates the spectators from the remainder of the courtroom, added during the 1920's restoration, has been found to be of the wrong design and placement. A reconstruction of the original railing will replace it.

The building is currently being used as a museum. The main floor contains original tools, weapons, furniture, and handicrafts which exhibit life in the formation days of the Village of Metamora. The upper floor contains the courtroom exactly as it appeared in the days of the 8th Judicial Circuit. Located in the room are the original judge's bench and chair, the original seating for the spectators, and replicas of the other furniture and fixtures.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

This incident is confirmed in the Common Law Record Book of 1857 - 1861, October Term of 1857. This case is noteworthy because it shows the humanitarian side of Lincoln. He felt the woman acted in self-defense, and also felt that the judge and jury had the foregone conclusion that the woman was guilty and would therefore not receive a fair trial. This example shows how Lincoln circumvented the law in order to help an unfortunate woman.

The most famous judge to have served in the Metamora Courthouse was Davis Davis. Davis was born in 1815 in Cecil County, Maryland, and became one of the most eminent jurists and statemen in Illinois. He was admitted to the Bar in 1835, and practiced law in Bloomington, Illinois. In later years, Davis was elected judge of the 8th Judicial Court and rode the circuit for many years with Lincoln. Judge Davis was a delegate for the Republican party in 1860 and was largely responsible for Lincoln's nomination for president. In 1862, President Lincoln appointed Davis to the Supreme Court of the United States. Davis later resigned to become a senator.

Some of the other renowned judges, lawyers and statesmen who practiced in Metamora Courthouse were:

Adlai E. Stevenson - Stevenson was born in 1835 in Christian County, Kentucky. In 1852 he settled in Bloomington, Illinois, and in 1858 he began his law practice. He was a circuit lawyer and practiced in the Metamora Courthouse between 1859 and 1969. He served as district attorney and was elected to two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1875 to 1877, and 1879 to 1881. In 1885, he became the first assistant postmaster general in President Grover Cleveland's first administration. He was later to become Vice President in Cleveland's second administration.

Robert C. Ingersoll - Ingersoll was born in Dresden, New York, in 1833, and moved to Illinois as a child. He was admitted to the Bar in 1854 and practiced law in southern Illinois until he moved to Peoria in 1857, where he continued to practice law. A great orator, he served as a lawyer in the Metamora Courthouse on several occasions. After 1882, he practiced law in New York City and became a noted trial lawyer.

Samual H. Treat - Judge Treat was born in 1811 in Otsego County, New York. He was admitted to the Bar in that state. Journeying to Illinois in 1834, he settled in Springfield and began his practice in 1839. He was appointed Circuit Judge and presided over the 8th Judicial Circuit, of which Metamora was a part, from April, 1841, to September, 1848. Judge Treat presided at the first session of the Circuit Court in Woodford County; his successor was Davis Davis. Judge Treat was later to become Judge of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Illinois.

Not much is known of the cases these men tried. Extensive records were not kept during the early years of our country's judicial system. We only know that these men, who were a vital part of our country's history, defended and passed judgments on the people of Woodford County in the Metamora Courthouse.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

In Lincoln's Path, by Woodford County Old Settlers Association, 1964.

Metamora Courthouse, pamphlet by State of Illinois Department of Conservation;  
Springfield, Illinois.

Metamora Past and Present, by Woodford County Old Settlers Association, 1968.

Metamora Remembers, by Woodford County Old Settlers Association, 1966.

Personal interview with Jeanette Smith, Historic Site Manager, Lincoln Memorial  
Courthouse; Metamora, Illinois; May 10, 1977.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 2

Inventory of Architecture before WWII in Woodford County  
1973  
Department of Conservation  
Springfield, Illinois  
Scope: County

Historic Courthouses in Illinois  
1964  
Lucy Miller Sturges for the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America  
in the State of Illinois  
Scope: State

Illinois, "Prairie State"  
Pictorial History or Museum Book for Illinois; vol. IV Pictorial History  
1964  
Olin Dee Morrison  
Scope: State



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

Date Entered MAR 30 1978

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Metamora Courthouse	Metamora Woodford County

Also Notified

Hon. Charles H. Percy  
Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson  
Hon. Tom J. Corcoran

**COPIES OF CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION**

## ILLINOIS HISTORIC SITES SURVEY INVENTORY

W0-H-27

## 1. Name of site:

Common Metamora Courthouse  
Historic

200118

## 2. Location:

Street and number Township Section  
113 E. Partridge  
City or Town Zip Code Range 1/4 Section  
Metamora 61548  
County

## 3. Classification:

Category (check one)

District  Building  
 Site  Structure

Integrity (check one)

Altered  Unaltered  
 Moved  Original Site

## 4. Ownership

Private  
 Public

Status (check one)

Occupied  
 Unoccupied  
 Preservation work in Progress

Access to Public

Yes  Restricted  Unrestricted  No

Present Use ( check one or more)

Agricultural  Industrial  Religious  
 Commercial  Military  Scientific  
 Educational  Museum  Transportation  
 Entertainment  Park  Other (specify)  
 Government  Private Residence

## 5. Ownership of Property

Owner's name State of IllinoisStreet and numberPhone NumberCity or Town SpringfieldState IllinoisCountyZip Code

62706

## 6. Description

Condition

Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated  Ruins  Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation underway?  Yes  No

## 7. Historical Themes: (check one or more of the following)

Archaeological Site (Pre-Columbian)  
 Archaeological Site (Post-Columbian to 1673)  
 French Influence 1673-1780  
 Illinois Frontier (1780-1818)  
 Illinois Early (1818-1850)  
 Illinois Middle (1850-1900)  
 Illinois Late (1900-present)  
 Famous People (give names & dates)  
Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

GOVERNMENT



8. Specific Date: Erected 1844

Areas of significance (check one or more of the following)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (historic)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (pre-historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture               | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication             | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation              | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industry                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invention                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture    |   |

Brief statement of significance: (include all names and dates.) Use additional sheets if necessary. The Woodford County Courthouse from 1844 to 1897.

9. Form prepared by:

Name and title: Jeanette Smith Date: 8-3-'72

Organization: Historic Site Manager

Street and number: 303 N. Hanover

City or town: Metamora County Woodford Zip Code 61548

Phone Number: (309)367-2217

During the course of the Survey we often find it necessary to search for references for a particular site. When filling out the Survey form, please list according to the following example, published references to the site for which forms are being completed. If a bibliography can be compiled, it will greatly deduct from the Survey's task.

Bibliography

Robertson, Robert, Of Whales and Men. New York, Alfred K. Knopf, Inc., 1954.