

METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

NEWSLETTER

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Now You Don't Have to Leave Metamora to Visit Lincoln's Springfield Home!

After 3 years of very, very intricate work, former Springfield resident and long-time Metamora resident Phyllis Dietel has completed an AMAZING 1-inch scale replica of Lincoln's Springfield home.

All this amazing work was accomplished in spite of Phyllis needing to take periodic breaks due to health.

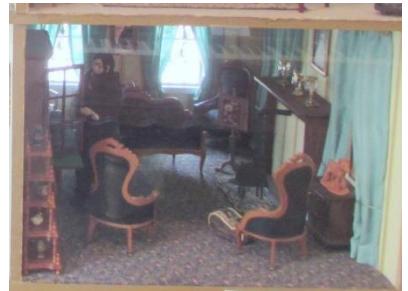
Left to Right –
Abe's Bedroom
Mary's Bedroom
Parlor



Exterior



Interior



Dining Room
Fido (Abe's dog)
Upper Hallway



This is something you really HAVE to see!

Starting with a kit, Phyllis did extensive research on the wall paper and fabric patterns in the home and reduced them to 1" scale. Even the thickness of the fabric had to be the correct scale. Much of the furniture and the house kit itself was made commercially for the opening of the Lincoln Library in Springfield. Even so, Phyllis still had to make many of the items in the house. Be sure to notice the little desk in Abe's bedroom which she made using her father's pocket knife and a nail file! Phyllis also made Mary Todd Lincoln's dressing table in her room.

In addition, Phyllis made 90 of the tiny items such as the crystal castor set in the middle of the dining room table, all the needlework including the stairs runner. Abe's shawls were knit on corsage pins. All the curtains, candle holders and more were painstakingly produced by hand by Phyllis.

Wife Mary wanted "that new wall-to-wall carpet" so she had strips loomed, hand stitched together and laid wall to wall. To reproduce this, Phyllis rumpled the carpet in place and drew lines on most of the carpet except that which is in the dining room. She then cut it in strips so the rough edges would show.

Phyllis, who grew up in and around Springfield with a view of Lincoln's Oak Ridge Tomb, is a long-time Lincoln enthusiast and scholar, and claims her project was indeed "a labor of love." She developed an early interest – encouraged by her teachers - in Lincoln and in miniatures – a "perfect storm!"

This remarkably detailed reproduction is now on display at the Metamora Courthouse. You can see it on Friday evenings when the Courthouse is open during the concerts in the park (usually 7:30-9:00) or during the day. The daytime hours are somewhat irregular right now as the state works out its budget.

A Little Background History...



Their first year together, the Lincolns lived in a hotel boarding house, the Globe Tavern. Here their first child, Robert Todd Lincoln, was born on August 1, 1843. The noisy, crowded conditions in the Globe did not make a homelike environment, so the Lincolns moved and spent the winter in a rented three-room cottage at 214 South Fourth St. The next spring, Lincoln bought Rev. Dresser's home on the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets for \$1,200 cash and a small lot worth \$300.

They lived on a tight budget. Lincoln himself chopped the wood, carried the water, milked the cow, and did the rest of the chores men did in those days. And to keep the money coming in, Lincoln had to go out and travel the judicial circuit. The Eighth Circuit, in which he practiced, covered 12,000 square miles and was sparsely settled with county seats far apart connected by rough roads often in disrepair. Lincoln traveled this circuit on horseback, exposed to the elements, with a volume of the Revised Statutes, copies of Blackstone's Commentaries and Chitty On Pleadings, and an extra shirt and change of underwear in his saddlebags. Lincoln made a name for himself on the circuit, and in 1846 he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Whig. That same year the Lincolns' second son, Edward Baker, was born.

A Little About Mary... You probably already know a lot about Abe. But do you know about Mary? Mary Todd came from a prominent family. She was born in Lexington, Ky., on December 13, 1818, the daughter of Robert Todd, a banker. The Todds were leading members of the community. They had helped found Lexington and Transylvania University, the first college west of the Appalachians. Mary grew up amidst all the comforts which the times and area offered: she went to a private school which only children of the "best families" attended, and slaves waited on her.

Photos

Handmade Castor set



Handmade desk and dresser

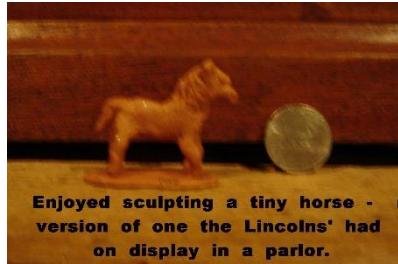


Handmade hair, hands, clothes



Photos

Handmade horse



1,800 shingles – individually stained and laid!



Handmade stairs runner



This and That...

Fascinating tidbits

Did you know that when Lincoln bought the home, it was only one story? Lincoln added the second story. They lived there 17 years.

- Jean Myers asked Phyllis to build the house so schools wouldn't have to travel to Springfield to see the house
- There were 198 unfinished pieces in the kit
- There were 1,800 individual shingles that had to be stained and individually laid
- Siding and shutters had to be painted and individually added to the house - just like building a real home!
- Phyllis cross stitched the carpet runner
- She made both Abe and Mary's clothes – starting with Mary's pantaloons!
- Mary's dressing table and Abe's desk (and many other pieces) were handmade from scratch
- Phyllis added electricity in order to light the candles. But the wiring, about the size of a hair, proved too brittle and broke frequently
- A horse in the parlor was hand sculpted with clay to the 1" scale (see photo above)
- Phyllis hand made the desk in Abe's bedroom. The legs are whittled and a pencil sharpener used to taper the legs
- The castor set was made with real crystal beads and jewelry findings
- Each dining room chair had to be put together and upholstered
- The kit cost \$500. The furniture was extra. A sofa, for example, cost \$22. Bass wood is the basic material used. The three years of construction by Phyllis, who was also ably helped by husband John and several friends, was all volunteer labor!! Amazing! Thank you SO MUCH!
- Be sure to check it out!

Contact Us

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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