

## **Falsehoods in the ALA's Proposal for Creating a Replica of Lincoln's Springfield Cottage by Norman Hellmers**

The ALA's proposal is an attempt to justify the construction of a replica of the 1844 cottage owned by Abraham and Mary Lincoln. The stated purposes are to claim that the cottage can be compared to the Lincoln Home and demonstrate Lincoln's "right to rise" and the nature of Lincoln family life in the cottage.

Unfortunately, throughout the proposal, the conclusions that are reached are based on false assumptions. The original cottage was six rooms, but the Lincolns only lived in it for two years. In 1846 the Lincolns added a downstairs bedroom (likely to accommodate Lincoln's 6'-4" height) and a pantry, making the six-room cottage into an eight-room house. (That bedroom eventually became the rear parlor, but the first-floor footprint was the same then as it is today.)

The proposal gives no consideration to the significant 1846 addition. This omission leads to a number of false statements and inferences. These are marked in yellow on a copy of the proposal, with comments here.

1. Page 2, second paragraph: "In 1856, the Cottage was expanded by the addition of a second story, transforming a six-room abode into a commodious twelve-room house. . . ." Already in 1846, the cottage had eight rooms. Referring to the cottage as a "six-room abode" is a falsehood. It starts the canard that the cottage was always six rooms until it was converted into the Lincoln Home we see today. That is a falsehood.
2. Page 3, second paragraph: ". . . but they [visitors] cannot as easily appreciate what life was like for that family during the preceding twelve years when their quarters were far more cramped." The "far more cramped" quarters obviously refers to the 1844 (original) cottage in which the Lincolns lived for only two years. Claiming that the Lincoln family lived in the original cottage for twelve years is a falsehood.
3. Page 3, third paragraph: ". . . what the Lincolns' life was like for three-fourths of the time that they lived in the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets (1844-1856)." The Lincoln family lived in the 1844 (original) cottage for only two years. Claiming that the Lincolns lived in this cottage from 1844 to 1856 is a falsehood.
4. Page 3, third paragraph: "Those visitors will wonder how so many people could comfortably live together in the Cottage." Using the phrase "so many people" is a fabrication presumably intended to gin up support for the project. For the majority of their years of residence in the cottage, the family consisted of two parents and two young sons. This "Cottage" reference obviously refers to the 1844 cottage, in which the Lincolns lived for only two years. To claim otherwise is a falsehood. Also, four people (and as of 1853 five) cannot honestly be referred to as "so many people." The over-exaggeration of "so many people" is equivalent to a falsehood.

5. Page 4, fourth paragraph: “Thus can they [visitors] easily compare the Home to the Cottage, gaining a clearer understanding of the difference between the cramped domestic environment that the Lincoln family experienced from 1844 to 1856 and the environment of the nearby spacious two-story Home which they occupied from 1856 to 1861. The Lincoln family did not live in the 1844 (original) cottage from 1844 to 1856. This is a falsehood.

Again, especially to be kept in mind as one reviews the ALA’s proposal prepared by Michael Burlingame is that the Lincolns only lived in the original cottage for two years (1844-1846). By 1846, the house had seven rooms, eight including the pantry. For the years between 1844 and 1852, the house never had more than four people living there (the Lincolns and two sons).

Any statements that infer that the Lincolns lived in the 1844 six-room cottage for more than two years are falsehoods.

The ALA wants to construct the 1844 cottage. By ignoring the important 1846 addition of two rooms, and by comparing the 1844 cottage to today’s Lincoln Home, the ALA would be creating a false comparison.

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