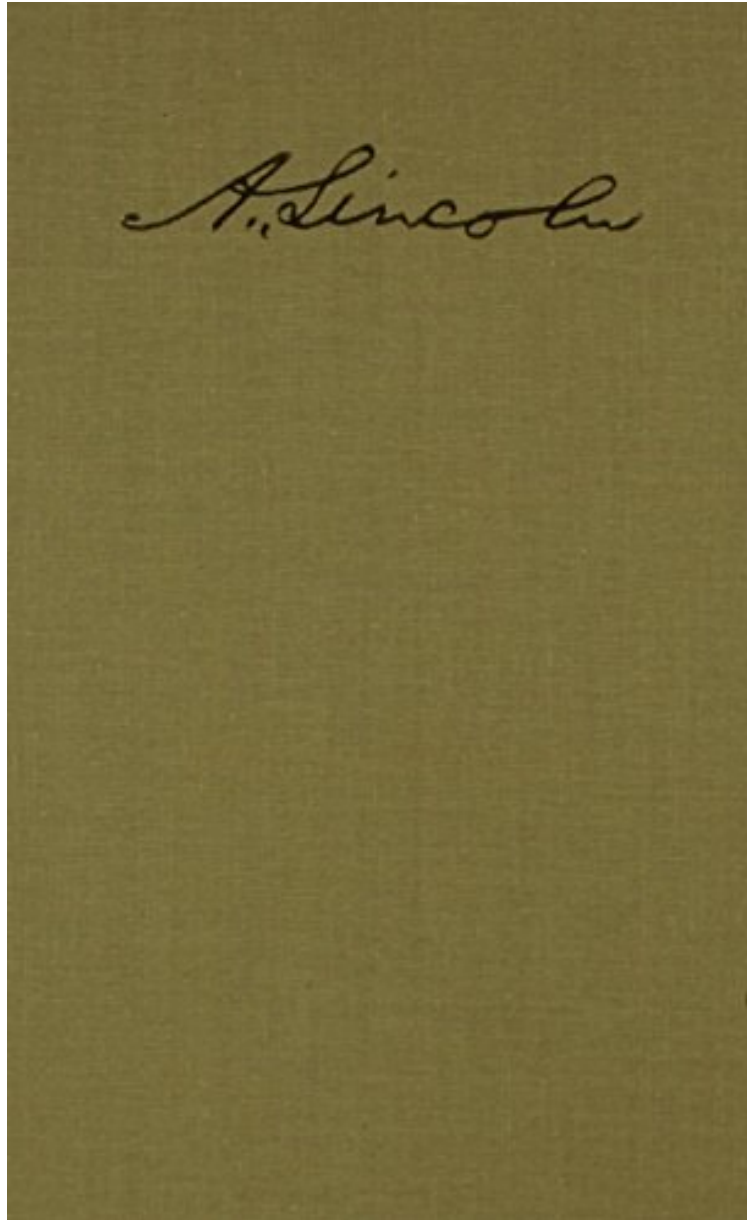


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## The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal Documents and Cases

*Abraham Lincoln*

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and Cases:

Many in politics began their careers in the law; no one has cut such a distinguished path in this regard as Abraham Lincoln. Before his presidency, from 1836 to 1861, Lincoln practiced law in the courts of central Illinois. Part of an ambitious undertaking to collect and publish the surviving documentary record of Lincoln's life, this four-volume set addresses his quarter-century law career. Arranged chronologically, the four volumes present documents from more than fifty of Lincoln's most interesting, important, or representative cases, all of which are transcribed and annotated. The edition features illuminating essays on Lincoln's career as a lawyer and as a court official, as well as a biographical directory, an extensive legal glossary, and a cumulative index covering all four volumes. Lincoln first studied the law, through private reading, during an early stint in the state legislature. His passion was evident from the start--he felt that a reverence for the law should be "the political religion of the nation"--and he distinguished himself rapidly. By his early thirties, he was already considered one of the finest attorneys in Illinois. The move of the state capital to Springfield (a shift that Lincoln, as a legislator, helped effect) brought the state supreme court, as well as the U.S. circuit and district courts, to Lincoln's hometown. This played an important role in his later political career; it also brings a useful federal dimension to the documents collected in this edition. Rather than specializing, Lincoln practiced general law, and so we see him taking on both civil and criminal cases, with breaches of contract and patent infringements sharing space with bootlegging, assault, even murder cases. Much of his work concerned debt collection, for which Lincoln was known well beyond Illinois, and these cases provide a unique window on nineteenth-century business. Lincoln also went out on the road twice yearly to try cases in the state's circuit courts; this edition documents some of these tours in detail. The cases represented paint a vivid picture of America in the decades leading up to the Civil War. The nation's surging expansion is reflected in cases over land speculation, property disputes, construction, and, of course, the railroads, whose interests are a consistent theme throughout. Other trials touch on domestic law, the Black Laws, even the California gold rush. This collection will appeal to all scholars and students of the law and its history, as well as to anyone interested in antebellum America or presidential biography. No understanding of Lincoln is complete without a look at the great career in law that preceded his remarkable presidency. Published in association with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency