

## Trip 4 – Episode #1: Back in the USofA

Yes, we're on the road again. Trying, as always, to find beautiful and interesting places that are warmer than Toronto in the winter. We had a plan. But of course, when we say "plan", it's more like a series of changeable ideas.

Last year, we left at the end of November, in a blizzard. This time, we left on the 25th of October in the hope that we could visit some of the scenic national parks in Colorado and Utah, before snow and freezing temperatures kept us away.

We can tell you this now: It was still too late.

However, we started off, driving into the States via Sarnia, with vague plans, including visiting a couple of friends in the early part of the trip and then continuing west to see what we could see.

As Jim said, if it got too cold, we'd just turn left.



Before crossing the border, we stopped in for an overnight in Stratford. We hadn't been there all season, and decided we'd squeeze in one show. It being late-ish autumn, there were still colours along the way, along with beautiful farm country.





And of course, Stratford was glorious, as always.





Also stunning was the new Tom Patterson Theatre. It was great to see *The Death of the King's Horseman* in this beautifully renovated space.



Our next brief stop was Sarnia. More fall colours framed our path, and we had a great lunch with our friend Cindy.





Then we continued on our way, crossing into the US.



There was no question we were in Michigan car country – This shot was in Flint.



On 15 1/2 Mile Rd (which was halfway between 15 Mile Rd and 16 Mile Rd), we found our stop for the night, in Camp Turkeyville



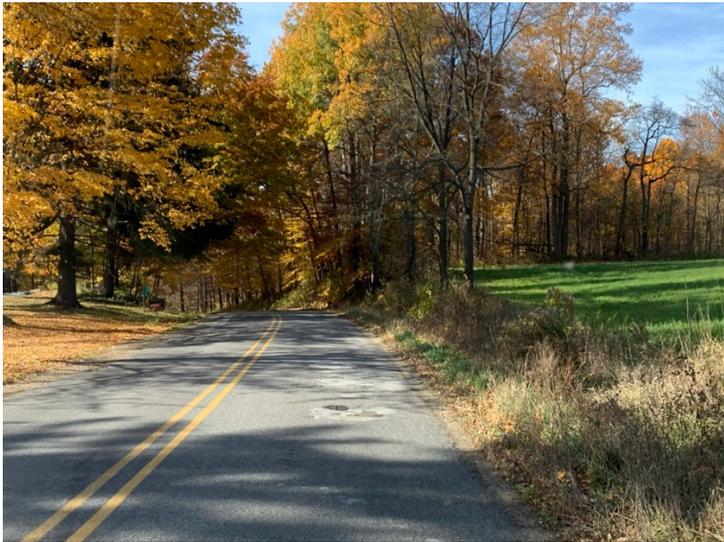
Which was right near the edge of town.



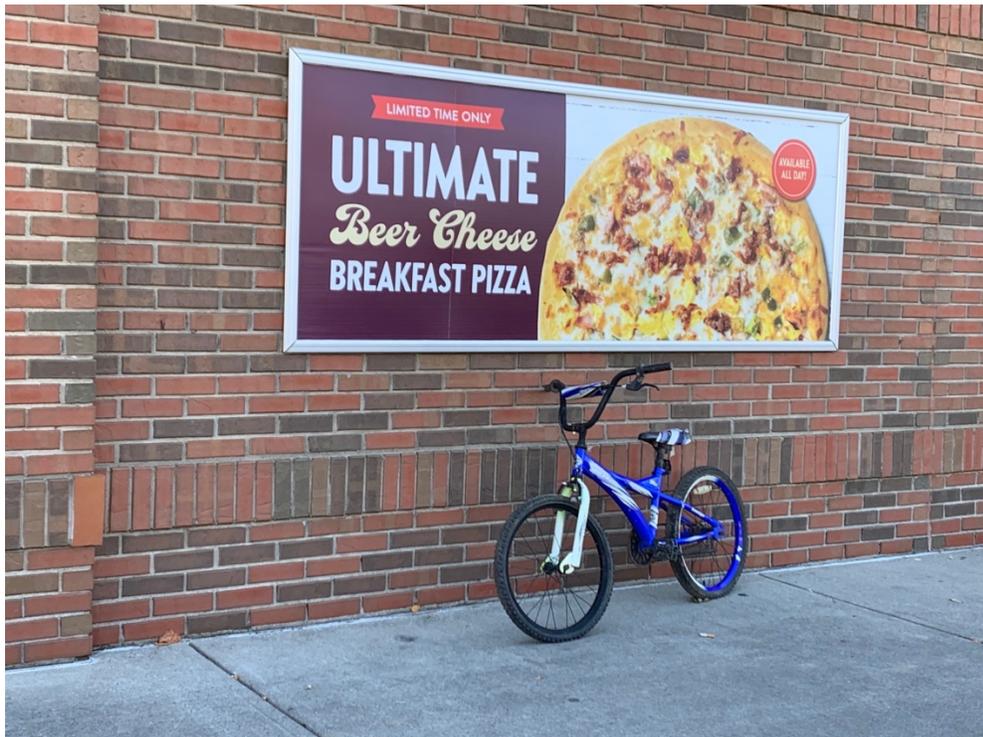
But, despite its odd name, it was a very pleasant spot. It even had a dinner theatre (which was closed by the time we got there) and boasted being the home of the world's best turkey sandwich (which we were also too late to enjoy).



The next morning, we set our course for LaPorte, Indiana for another reunion with an old friend. It was another beautiful drive, with vibrant fall colours, lovely homes ... and some interesting signs.







Then we arrived at the residence where our friend Mary Louise is living, and we had a wonderful visit with her and her dog Pete. It was so great to see both of them.



That stop was the last one we'd actually planned. From there on, we were winging it. We had contemplated going to the site of The Field of Dreams, but it seemed too far out of the way. After our stop in LaPorte, we realized Springfield Illinois was not far away, and the home of Abraham Lincoln sounded like a good destination. So, we pointed Charles west.

We resisted the temptation to continue on the turkey theme...



... And we carried on.



... till we got to our next stopping point, just outside Springfield.



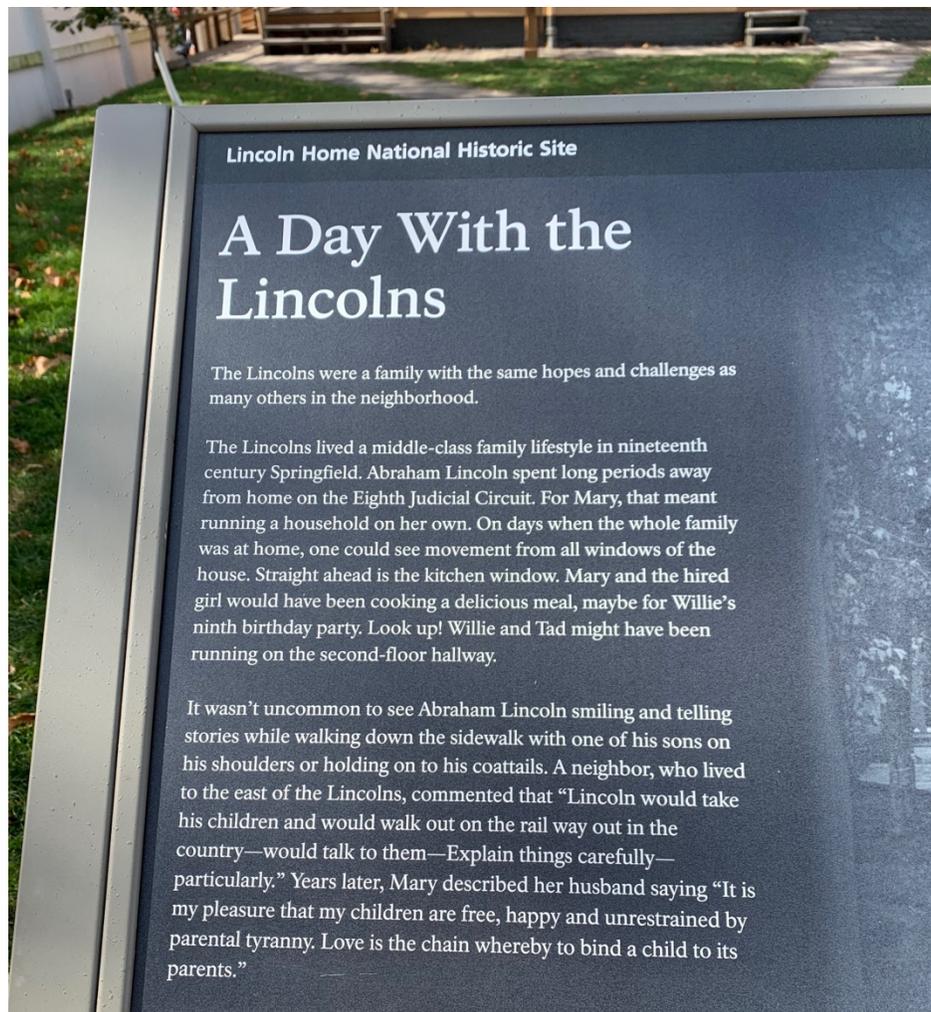
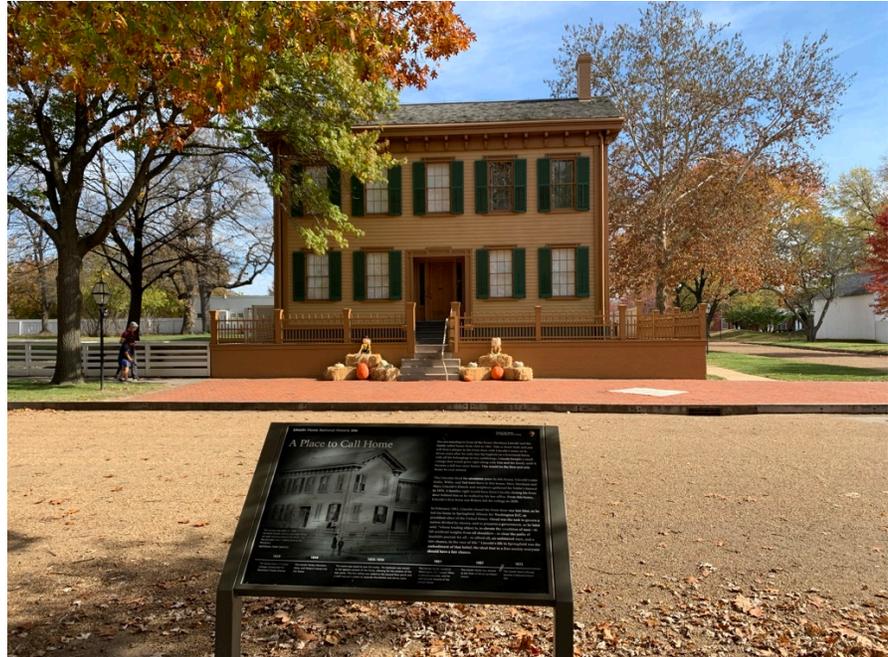
When we went downtown, we discovered that the street Lincoln had lived on before moving to the White House has been maintained as a memorial to him and his family.



All the houses on this block are the original homes from the 1800s, and they've been transformed into mini-museums, capturing different aspects of life in Springfield during Lincoln's time. It's like walking back in time.



What beams through is the morality, the kindness and the good humour of Abe Lincoln. He loved his family, their home and their community, and was admired as a lawyer, father, friend and neighbour.



You can wander through on your own, or take guided tours.



Downtown Springfield was pretty quiet the day we were there. We later found out that part of the reason was it was the Saturday before Halloween and they were preparing for the big parade that evening.



Wandering around downtown, we discovered the office of Tammy Duckworth, who was, at that point, running to hold onto her seat in the Senate.

Fortunately, she won, proving that Illinois still elects people with a strong moral character.



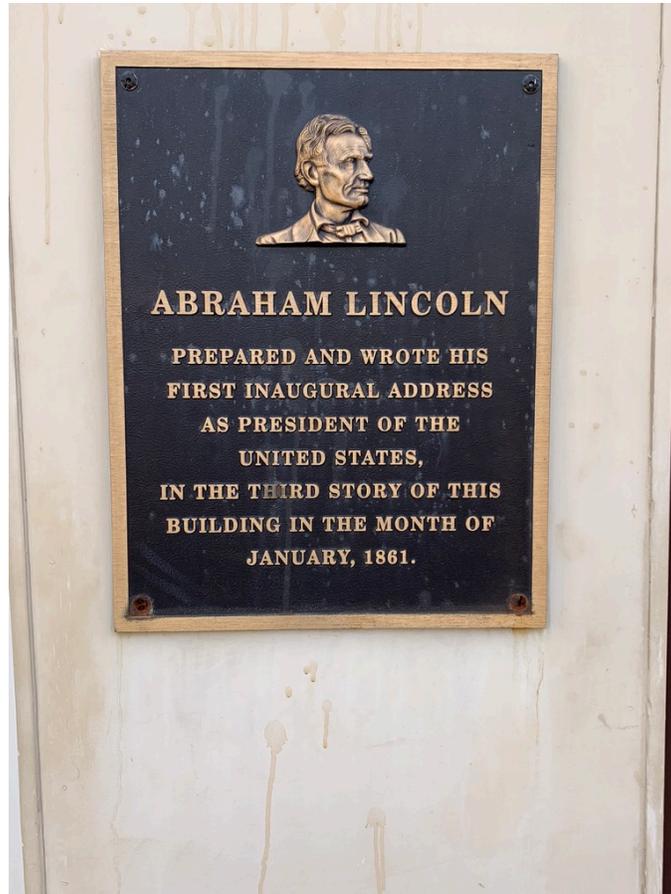
Of course, Lincoln is everywhere.





This statue of Lincoln, the family man and lawyer is right in front of the location where his legal office was.





Inside, they have a small display of some of his office contents.



But of course, there's much more to tell about Lincoln's life story. And it's all told extraordinarily well in the beautiful Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.



It's a little disappointing when you first walk in and are greeted by Madame Tussaud's type models.



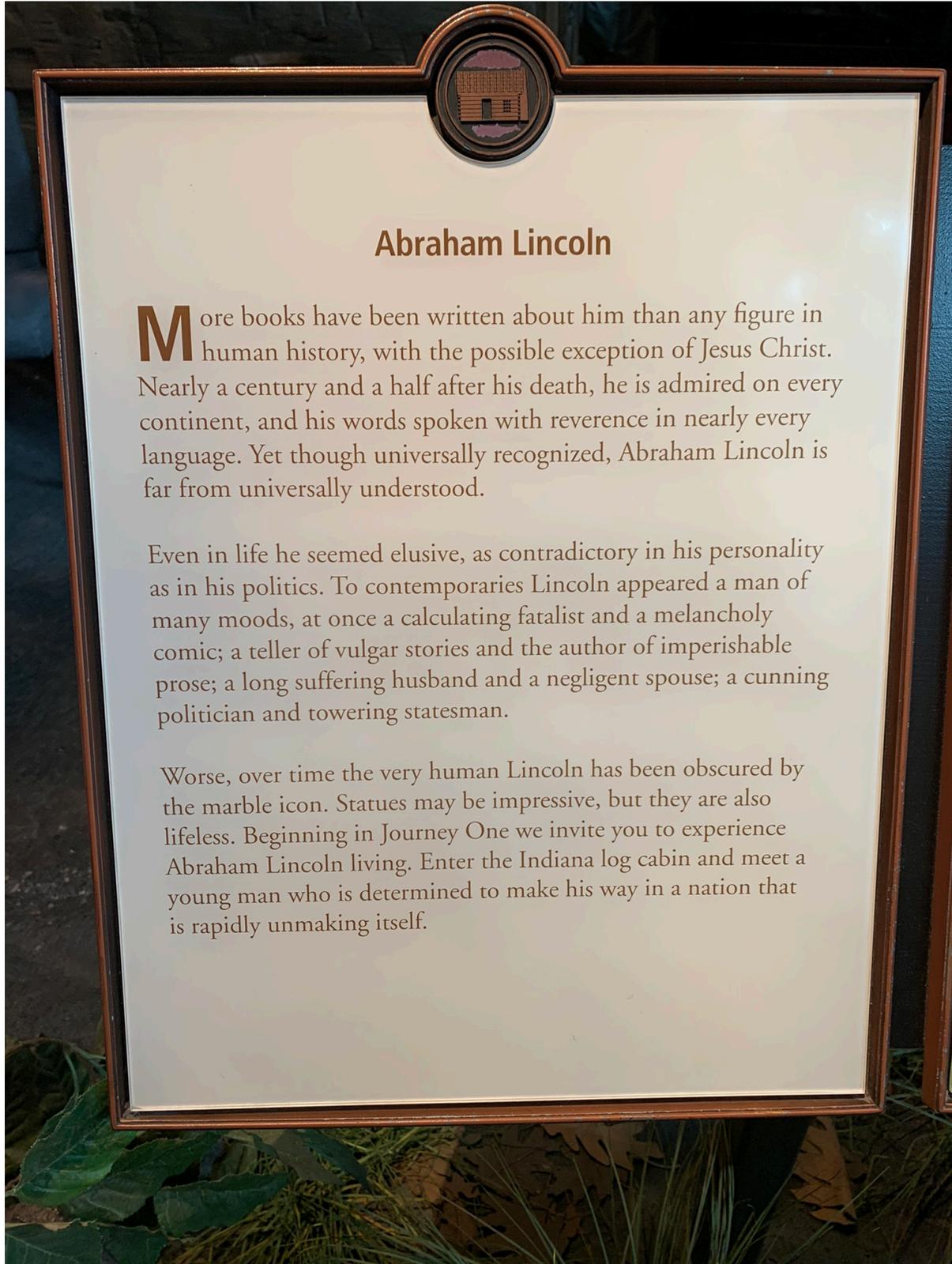
But it gets much, much better. They start off by offering ways for young people to get engaged.



Then they take you on a trip through Lincoln's life, from his log cabin beginnings.



Outside the cabin is this introduction:



## Abraham Lincoln

**M**ore books have been written about him than any figure in human history, with the possible exception of Jesus Christ. Nearly a century and a half after his death, he is admired on every continent, and his words spoken with reverence in nearly every language. Yet though universally recognized, Abraham Lincoln is far from universally understood.

Even in life he seemed elusive, as contradictory in his personality as in his politics. To contemporaries Lincoln appeared a man of many moods, at once a calculating fatalist and a melancholy comic; a teller of vulgar stories and the author of imperishable prose; a long suffering husband and a negligent spouse; a cunning politician and towering statesman.

Worse, over time the very human Lincoln has been obscured by the marble icon. Statues may be impressive, but they are also lifeless. Beginning in Journey One we invite you to experience Abraham Lincoln living. Enter the Indiana log cabin and meet a young man who is determined to make his way in a nation that is rapidly unmaking itself.

Each area of the museum covers a different part of Lincoln's life. Some of the exhibits are more traditional. But there are very interesting rooms that give you a real sense of the times and the issues surrounding him.



In this display, you wind through hallways, kind of like a house of horrors, with political cartoons presented in distorted ways, and punctuated by audio quotes, mostly haranguing Lincoln. It really gives you the sense of what it was like (and still is!) to be in that position of power.

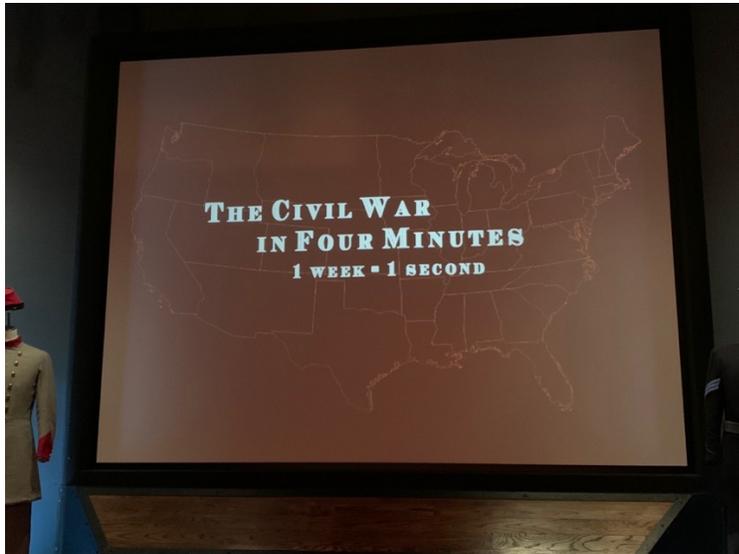


It seemed no matter what he did, nobody was happy. Sound familiar?

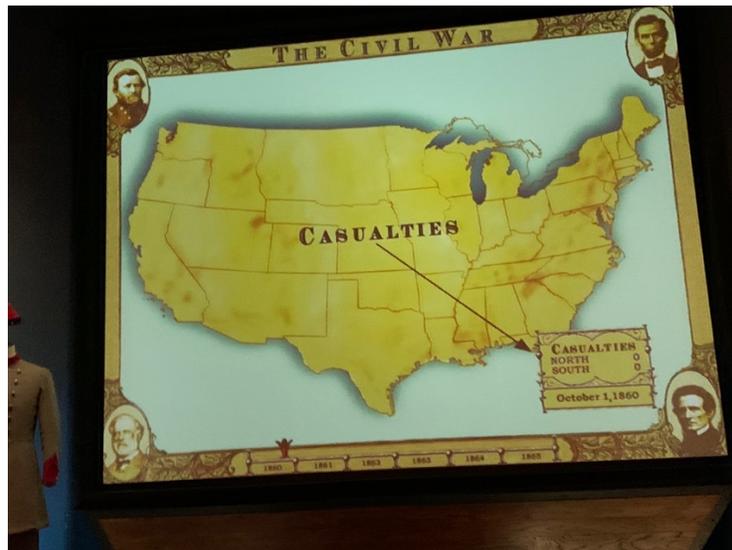


Then of course, there's the very uncivil Civil War.





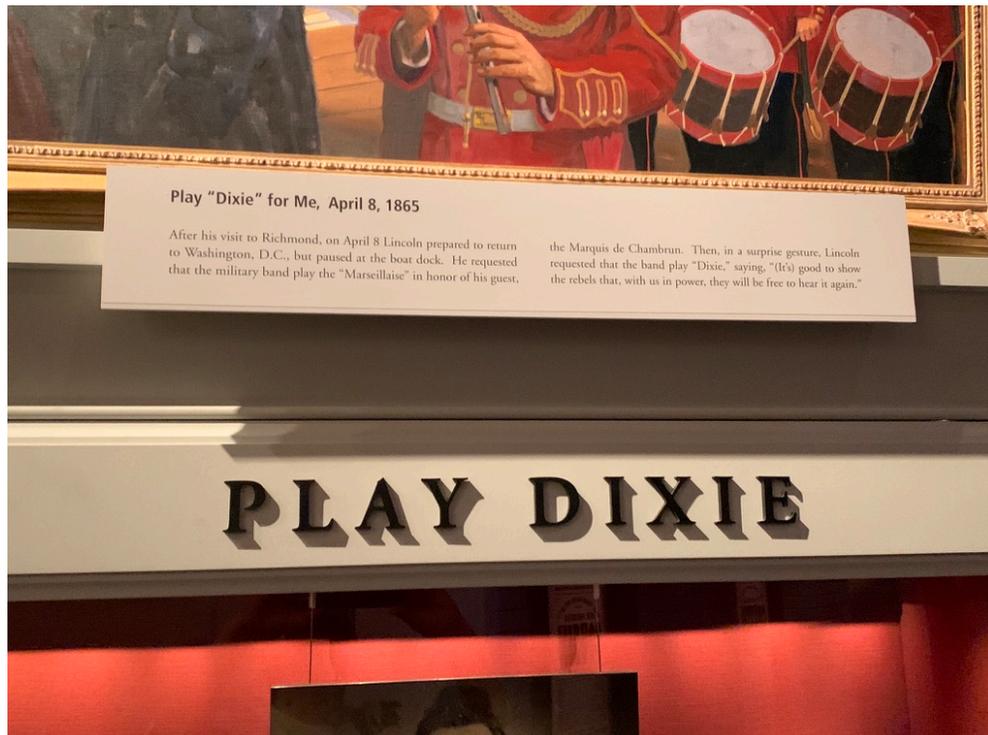
This visual display was very powerful, showing where battles happened and the number of casualties mounting week by week.



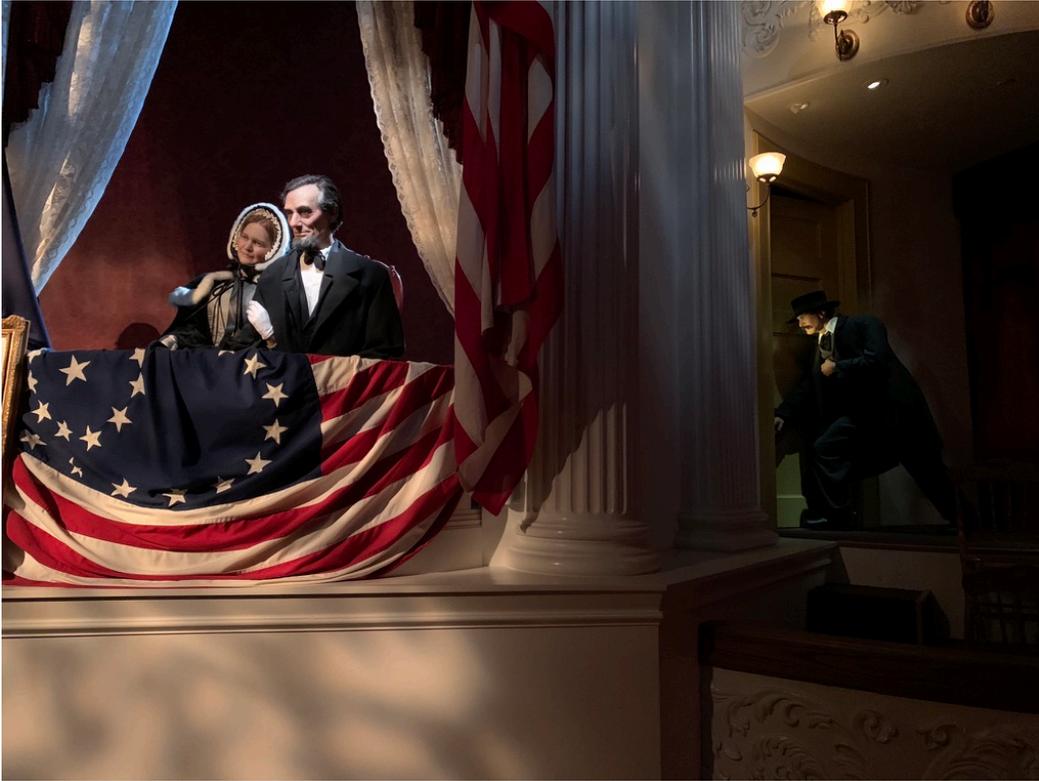
And here we saw the toll the presidency and the war took on Lincoln.



This was a nice little example of Lincoln's attitude toward the former enemies of the country.



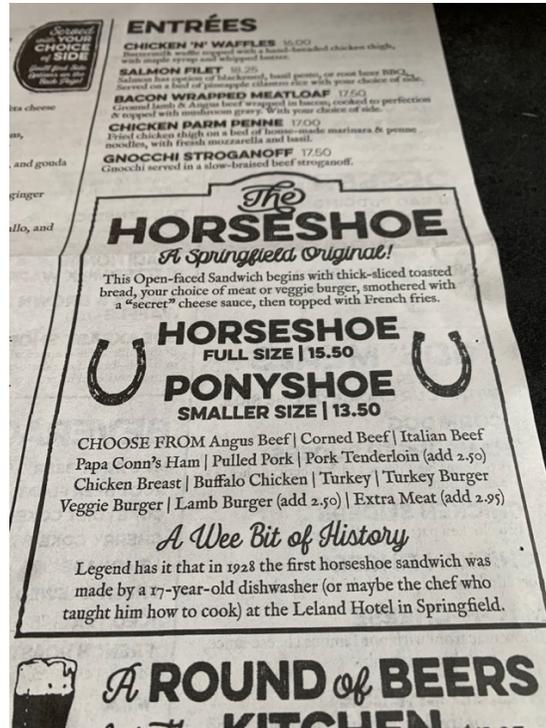
And even if the models are a little cheesy, it's impossible not to feel dread and grief when looking at this scene.



There were also two theatre presentations, using a really interesting kind of holographic technique to present different aspects of Lincoln's life. They were both excellent.



After all that mental strain, we needed sustenance, and found it at a local pub. Eager to get the true Springfield experience, Jim ordered their Horseshoe. Fortunately, he ordered the "pony size".



We also got a show while we ate, as families gathered for Halloween festivities.



In fact, all through town, Halloween was happening.







We decided to stick around for the big parade. They really went all out. This was them getting ready to go.



The sidewalks along the parade route were packed with families, dressed up in their costumes and carrying buckets and bags for the candies that the parades tossed out for them.





It was great to see all the different community groups who got involved.





And of course the high school bands.



In fact, seeing all the people in the parade, we kind of wondered how there were so many Springfield residents left to line the streets!



It got a little political at times, although this was the only nasty sign we saw.



All in all, it was a fun way to end our visit to Springfield. And to be reminded why there's a monument in Washington.

