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**Jesse White Announces Discovery of the 1840 Menard County Census**  
*Abraham Lincoln acquaintances listed in census*

Illinois Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White announced today that his office has found the original 1840 state census for Menard County. Menard County Treasurer Jacqueline S. Horn along with other county officials and county board members assisted in the discovery of the census.

“Working with Menard County officials, my office at the Illinois State Archives discovered the 27 page hand-written census in a county vault, located across the street from the Menard County Courthouse in Petersburg,” White said. “Abraham Lincoln lived in New Salem, just south of Petersburg in present day Menard County, from 1831 to 1837. We are proud to say that a few of President Lincoln’s associates are listed on this newly discovered census.”

Among Lincoln’s acquaintances listed in the census are Mentor Graham, who served as a teacher to Lincoln; Bowling Green, who helped teach Lincoln law; and James Rutledge, who encouraged Lincoln to run for the state legislature in 1832. Menard County was established by legislation sponsored by state representative Abraham Lincoln on February 15, 1839. It previously had been part of Sangamon County.

With the 1840 census, genealogists and family historians can access information on early Menard County, including the names of the heads of households and the number of people living in each household. According to the census, the county had 11 mills and three distilleries. The census shows the population of Menard County as 4,481; 2,381 males and 2,086 females. Of the males, 648 were reported as liable for militia service. There were fourteen African Americans listed as living in the county. This included seven African Americans listed as indentured servants, which in 1840 Illinois could be seen as coded language for slaves.

Illinois conducted state censuses by county every five years, from 1820 to 1845 and then conducted censuses in 1855 and 1865. The 1840 census would have been the first state census to include the newly created Menard County. Federal censuses were and still are conducted every ten years at the start of every decade.

Each county appointed a commissioner who was responsible for taking the census and transferring one copy to the Secretary of State and another to the clerk of the county’s circuit court. However, very few copies of the early state censuses exist. Until the discovery of the Menard County 1840 state census, the Archives held similar enumerations for only 37 counties of the 87 that existed at that time.

Other historic documents in the vault include an early land tract book (1827 – 1848), delinquent tax lists (1850 – 1870), a tax assessment abstract (1850 – 1857) and a county order book (1848 – 1873).

The 1840 census has been cleaned and flattened by State Archives staff. It will be microfilmed and scanned to make it available to researchers and genealogists at both the Menard County Clerk’s office and the Illinois Regional Archives Depository located at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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