

Abraham Lincoln the Marine Safety Advocate

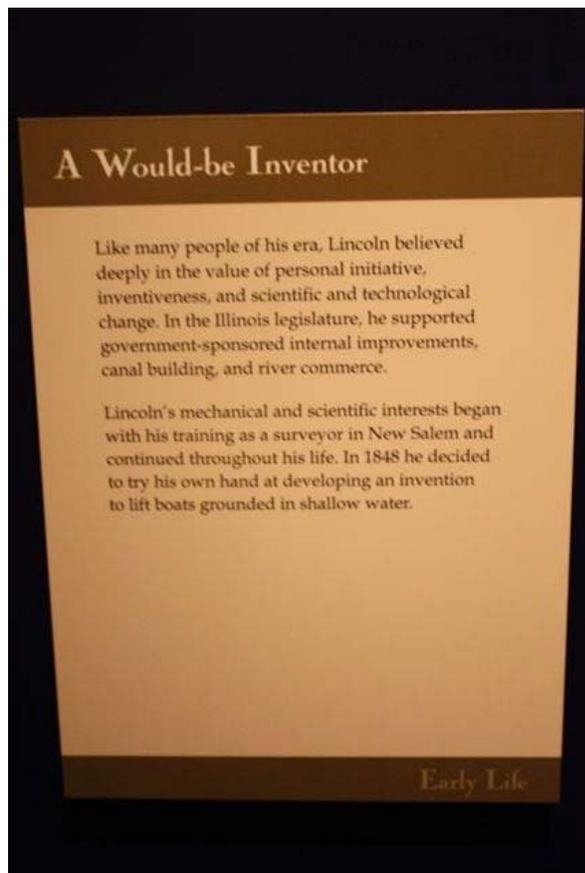
As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, one of his interests has been re-discovered -- **marine safety**.

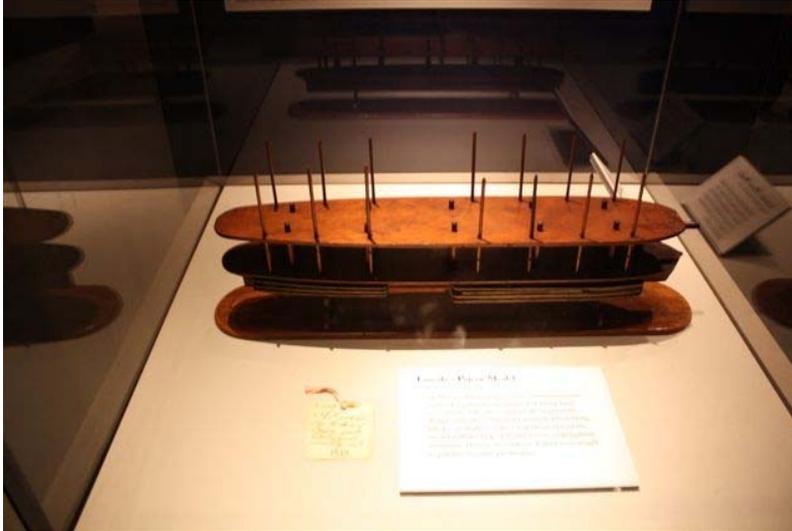
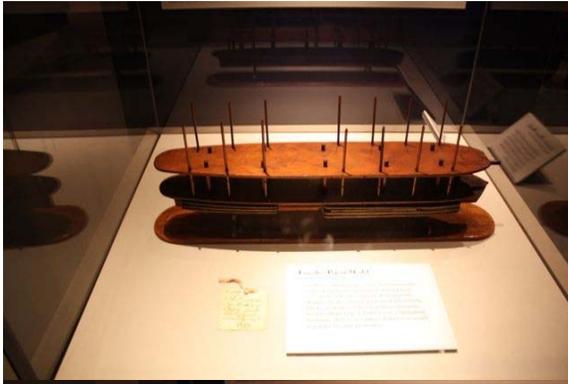
But it is not too late to recognize his interest in marine safety and naval architecture.

Lincoln was an inventor with an interest in ship safety and vessel operations. In 1849, he designed and patented, Patent # 6,469, a "device for buoying vessels over shoals."

His basic purpose was to address groundings on the western rivers. This interest stemmed from his direct experience as a young man serving as a captain of "flat boat" river raft where he grounded and it took considerable effort to get back underway.

His invention consisted of a bellows placed below the water line on each side of a vessel. It worked by a system of ropes and pulleys. When the keel touched against the river bottom or obstruction, the bellows could be filled with air to buoy up the vessel so that it could float over the shoal.





As President, Lincoln continued his interest safety and engineering by fostering advances in arms and ship design. He would listen to “inventors’ when others in the government would not.

Clearly the USS *Monitor*, a totally new ship design, was a favorite project of President Lincoln.

He recognized the importance of hot air balloons for gathering intelligence and as President received a telegraphic message from a balloon making observations on the an enemy Virginia near Washington DC.

Recognizing the importance of standards, President Lincoln advocated adoption of the metric system. Congress made the metric system legal in 1866.

Jason Emerson’s, *book Lincoln the Inventor* gives a good account of his lifelong interest in engineering development. *Life in Mr. Lincoln’s Navy* by Dennis Ringle merits reading.

2009 is the bicentennial of President Lincoln’s birth. There are a number of recognition events happening.

As we reflect on President Lincoln’s accomplishments, his interest in marine safety, naval architecture, and marine engineering should be remembered.

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