

Pendergast Inn

*Mackinaw's Landmark of Travel, Community, and
Lincoln-Era History*

Built 1837* Mackinaw, Illinois



Historic American Buildings Survey Arthur Caldwell – Photographer November 1936. View from South
Pendergast Inn, Market & Monroe Streets, Mackinaw, Tazewell County, IL

Welcome to the story of the **Pendergast Inn**—one of Mackinaw's most treasured historic landmarks and a lasting reminder of our community's frontier heritage.

Built in 1837, the Pendergast Inn stood during an important period in Illinois history. For generations it welcomed travelers, served local families, and witnessed the growth of Mackinaw from a young frontier settlement into a thriving village. More than simply a place to eat or spend the night, the inn became a center of community life and an enduring symbol of the hospitality that helped shape early Illinois.

The inn's story is closely connected to the history of Mackinaw and the many people who passed through the village, including Abraham Lincoln whose documented visits to Mackinaw occurred during his years riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit and later during his 1860 presidential campaign. Historical records document Lincoln's visits to Mackinaw, while local tradition has long associated the Pendergast Inn with those visits.

Although the original building is no longer standing, its legacy continues. The Illinois State Historical Marker ensures that future generations will remember the importance of this site and the role it played in the history of both Mackinaw and central Illinois. The original location of the inn stood at the intersection once known as **Market and Monroe Streets**, now **Fast Avenue and Monroe Street**. The historical marker is located on the Monroe Street side of **106 W. Fast Avenue**.

This booklet was created to preserve and share the history of the Pendergast Inn through historical research, photographs, maps, documented accounts, and local historical tradition. We hope it provides a greater appreciation for the people, places, and events that shaped our community while encouraging future generations to preserve Mackinaw's rich history.

Thank you for celebrating this remarkable chapter of our village's past with us. History continues to live on whenever it is remembered, shared, and passed from one generation to the next.

Table of Contents

Welcome	2
 The Village of Mackinaw	
A Brief History of a Growing Frontier Community	4
 The Pendergast Family	
The People Behind the Inn	7
 The Pendergast Inn	
Construction, Architecture, and Daily Life	12
 A Crossroads of Travel	
Stagecoaches, Commerce, and Community	19
 Abraham Lincoln and Mackinaw	
Lincoln's Visits, the Eighth Judicial Circuit, and the 1860 Campaign	21
 The Illinois State Historical Marker	
Honoring a Significant Chapter in Mackinaw's History	23

First Edition

Published by the Village of Mackinaw

To commemorate the installation of the Illinois State Historical Marker honoring the Pendergast Inn.

July 2026

The Village of Mackinaw

A Frontier Community That Helped Shape Central Illinois

Long before the Village of Mackinaw was established, Native American peoples recognized the value of this land. The fertile prairie, abundant timber, and nearby Mackinaw River provided food, transportation, and natural resources for thousands of years. Archaeological discoveries made northeast of present-day Mackinaw—including the famous "Mackinaw Cache" of finely crafted stone tools—demonstrate that people lived, hunted, and traveled through this region long before permanent European settlement. Today, these remarkable artifacts are considered among the finest examples of prehistoric stone craftsmanship ever discovered in North America.

Following Illinois statehood in 1818, settlers were drawn to the rich farmland, plentiful timber, and dependable water sources found along the Mackinaw River. The area's location naturally made it an important crossroads for transportation and commerce as central Illinois continued to grow.

Recognizing the importance of this developing settlement, the Illinois General Assembly created Tazewell County on January 31, 1827. Although lawmakers ultimately named the county in honor of Virginia statesman Littleton W. Tazewell, the original proposal was to name it Mackinaw. While the county received a different name, the village proudly retained "Mackinaw," preserving its connection to both the river and the region's Native American heritage.

Because of its central location, Mackinaw became the first county seat of Tazewell County in 1827. A modest log courthouse served as the center of county government,

where officials conducted business and early court sessions were held. For several years, the village played an important role as the political and judicial center of a large frontier county.

The village was officially platted on May 26, 1828, by George Hittle and E. Stout. As new families arrived, Mackinaw quickly developed into a thriving frontier community. Homes, churches, schools, mills, blacksmith shops, businesses, and inns were established to serve both local residents and the growing number of travelers crossing central Illinois.

Although the county seat moved to Pekin in 1831 as settlement expanded along the Illinois River, Mackinaw continued to prosper. Located along well-traveled stagecoach routes, the village became a familiar stop for merchants, attorneys, politicians, emigrants, and other travelers moving throughout the region. Historical records document Abraham Lincoln's visits to Mackinaw while riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit and again during his 1860 presidential campaign, reflecting the village's importance as a stop along central Illinois' principal travel routes.

Among Mackinaw's most recognizable landmarks was the Pendergast Inn, completed in 1837. Standing along the stagecoach route, the inn provided meals, lodging, and hospitality to travelers while also serving as a gathering place for local residents. As the village continued to grow, the Pendergast Inn became closely woven into the daily life of the community and remains one of Mackinaw's best-known historic landmarks.

Today, although the original inn is no longer standing, its story continues through historical research, photographs, archaeological interest, and the Illinois State Historical Marker that commemorates its location. Together, they preserve an important chapter in

the history of Mackinaw and ensure that the people and events that shaped this community will not be forgotten.

The Pendergast Family

The Family Behind Mackinaw's Historic Inn

The story of the Pendergast Inn begins with the family whose name it proudly bears. Like many pioneer families who settled in central Illinois during the early nineteenth century, the Pendergasts came seeking opportunity on the Illinois frontier. They arrived during a time when communities such as Mackinaw were beginning to take shape, and success depended upon hard work, determination, and a willingness to serve the needs of a growing settlement.

Recognizing the need for reliable lodging and meals, James and Elizabeth Pendergast established what would become one of the village's most recognizable landmarks.

Completed in 1837, the Pendergast Inn quickly became an important part of daily life in Mackinaw. While it welcomed travelers from across Illinois, it also served local residents who gathered there for meals, business, celebrations, and community events. For many years, the inn reflected both the growth of the village and the hardworking spirit of the family who operated it.

Operating an inn on the Illinois frontier required far more than providing a room for the night. The Pendergast family prepared meals, cared for livestock and horses, maintained the building, welcomed guests, and managed the countless daily responsibilities required to keep the business running. Their dedication helped establish the inn as a respected destination for travelers and a valued part of village life.

Historical records document Abraham Lincoln's visits to Mackinaw during his years riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit and again during his 1860 presidential campaign. While no surviving records conclusively establish that he stayed overnight at the Pendergast Inn, local historical tradition has long associated the inn with his visits. Regardless of individual guests, the Pendergast family welcomed the many travelers whose journeys brought them through central Illinois during this important period of the state's history.

Nearly two centuries after the inn first opened its doors, the Pendergast family's contribution to Mackinaw continues to be remembered. Their story reflects the perseverance, hospitality, and community spirit that helped shape early Illinois and contributed to the success of a growing frontier village.

A Local Historian's Account

The following excerpt is taken from the unpublished manuscript A Century to Remember or A History of Mackinaw, Illinois and Surrounding Neighborhood, 1827–1927 by local historian Lillian Sparks Blair. While portions of her account differ from other historical sources, it remains an important record of local history and is presented here as part of the historical tradition surrounding the Pendergast Inn.

“The Pendergast Inn was built in 1845. In 1843, James Pendergast began hauling lumber from Pekin for an addition to an existing house. That was the year of the Cholera plague in Pekin, and Mr. Pendergast contracting the disease, died. His wife finished building the addition and kept the Inn successfully. Several years later she married Elisha Barton, and the Inn became known as the Pendergast-Barton Inn. There were weddings and dinners held in the Inn and among the big events were Hunt dinners.

Mackinaw residents had always enjoyed hunting, for the wooded hills along the river abounded in game. To this day, much wild-life is found in the woods. In early days there were wild game hunting contests. The hunters went out in two sections, and the side killing the least game was required to banquet the winners at the Pendergast Inn.

The Pendergast-Barton Inn remained in the family for three generations, being handed down from mother to daughter. The last of the family to live in the house was Miss Ida Campbell, who was a very fine artist.

Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas and Governor Oglesby are among those who stopped at the Inn.

(Handwritten note on the manuscript believed to be from a later time) The Inn beyond repair was torn down, and a new house erected on the premises by Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bennett while he was Supt of 701. The home is now occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Dean Dilkey.

The Pendergast Legacy Lives On

Although the Pendergast Inn is no longer standing, members of the Pendergast family remain a part of Mackinaw's history. James Pendergast, his wife Elizabeth, several of their children, and later descendants are buried in Mackinaw Township Cemetery, just a short distance from the site of the inn they helped establish.

Today, visitors can still pay their respects at these gravesites, providing a lasting connection between the people who shaped early Mackinaw and the community they helped build. Their resting places serve as a reminder that the history of the Pendergast

Inn is not only preserved through photographs and documents, but also through the generations of one family whose legacy remains in the Village today.



James Pendergast

BIRTH unknown
DEATH 10 May 1849
BURIAL [Mackinaw Township Cemetery](#)
Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA [Add to Map](#)
PLOT Section E, SubSec MS, Row 8K
MEMORIAL ID 206523473 · [View Source](#)



Photo added by [ccchand](#)

Elizabeth *Huff* Barton

BIRTH 1812
Virginia, USA
DEATH 3 Mar 1874 (aged 61–62)
Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA
BURIAL [Mackinaw Township Cemetery](#)
Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA [Add to Map](#)
PLOT Section E, Sub Sec MS, Row 8K
MEMORIAL ID 201717379 · [View Source](#)



Photo added by [Amelia Crombie-Christy](#)

Mary L. *Pendergast* Campbell

BIRTH 4 Mar 1844
Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA
DEATH 26 May 1907 (aged 63)
BURIAL [Mackinaw Township Cemetery](#)
Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA [Add to Map](#)
PLOT Section E, Sub Sec ME, Row 12J
MEMORIAL ID 53343089 · [View Source](#)



Photo added by [RWCNAC](#)

John M. Pendergast

BIRTH	18 Oct 1846 Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA
DEATH	9 Jun 1921 (aged 74) Gibson City, Ford County, Illinois, USA
BURIAL	Drummer Township Cemetery Gibson City, Ford County, Illinois, USA Show Map
MEMORIAL ID	151069951 · View Source

There are 3 markers named Child Pendergast that do not bear markings of names located in the Mackinaw Township Cemetery.

Last Descendant to Occupy the Property



Photo added by [Alvin Oglesby](#)

Ida Campbell

BIRTH	12 Feb 1865 Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA
DEATH	16 May 1928 (aged 63) Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA
BURIAL	Mackinaw Township Cemetery Mackinaw, Tazewell County, Illinois, USA Add to Map
PLOT	Section E, SubSec ME, Row 12K
MEMORIAL ID	61821343 · View Source

Visitors are welcome to visit Mackinaw Township Cemetery, where several members of the Pendergast family are buried. Their graves continue to serve as a lasting reminder of the family's contribution to the history of Mackinaw.

The Pendergast Inn

Construction, Architecture, and Daily Life

As Mackinaw continued to grow during the late 1830s, the Pendergast Inn became an essential part of daily life in the village. As settlement expanded and traffic increased along the region's roads, dependable lodging became an important part of community life. The Pendergast Inn helped meet that need for generations.

Although no complete architectural drawings from the time of its construction are known to exist, surviving photographs, historical accounts, and the Historic American Buildings Survey provide valuable insight into the building's appearance. The inn was a substantial two-story frame structure, built with locally available timber and designed for both durability and everyday use. Its practical construction reflected the craftsmanship and resourcefulness common among Illinois frontier builders.

The building was likely arranged around a central hallway with gathering rooms on the first floor and sleeping quarters above. Large fireplaces provided warmth during cold Illinois winters, while broad windows admitted natural light and fresh air during the warmer months. Furnishings were practical rather than elaborate, consisting of sturdy handmade tables, wooden chairs, rope or feather beds, and simple cabinetry built to withstand years of daily use.

Outside, the inn was just as active as the rooms within. Horses needed to be watered, fed, and cared for after long journeys. Wagons required space for loading, unloading, and occasional repairs, while supplies had to be delivered and stored for the

constant preparation of meals. Throughout the day, arrivals and departures created a steady rhythm of activity that made the property one of the busiest places in the village.

Guests came to the Pendergast Inn expecting more than shelter. After traveling miles over rough prairie roads, they found a warm meal, a comfortable bed, and an opportunity to rest before continuing their journey. Meals reflected the foods commonly produced by local farms and households, including fresh bread, cured meats, seasonal vegetables, eggs, butter, preserves, hearty stews, and coffee or tea. Supper often became the day's largest meal and an opportunity for conversation among travelers and neighbors alike.

Life at the inn extended far beyond providing lodging. Before newspapers reached every household, travelers often carried news from neighboring communities, market reports, political developments, and personal correspondence. Conversations around the dining table connected Mackinaw with the rest of Illinois, making the inn an important place for sharing information as well as welcoming visitors.

Running the Pendergast Inn required the efforts of the entire family. Rooms had to be cleaned and prepared, meals cooked over wood-burning stoves and fireplaces, linens washed by hand, livestock cared for, and supplies continually replenished. The work demanded long hours and constant attention, but it also placed the Pendergast family at the heart of village life. Through their daily efforts, they helped create a place remembered not only for its hospitality but also for its lasting contribution to the history of Mackinaw.

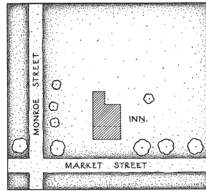
For nearly a century, the Pendergast Inn remained a familiar landmark within the village. As transportation gradually shifted from stagecoaches to railroads and eventually automobiles, the building continued to remind residents of Mackinaw's frontier

beginnings. Although the inn is no longer standing, its story lives on through photographs, historical records, archaeological interest, the Historic American Buildings Survey, and the Illinois State Historical Marker commemorating its location.

The following pages reproduce drawings and documentation prepared as part of the **Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)**, completed in 1936–1937. These records preserve the architectural character of the Pendergast Inn and provide an invaluable resource for understanding one of Mackinaw's best-known historic landmarks.

PENDERGAST INN

MACKINAW TAZEWELL COUNTY ILLINOIS



SKETCH PLAN OF LOCATION.



ERECTED - 1837

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

MEASURED OCTOBER - 1956

DRAWN: JANUARY - 1957

MEASUREMENTS CHECKED: A. CALDWELL



DRAWINGS APPROVED:

DRAWINGS APPROVED:

ACCEPTED FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

CHIEF ARCHITECT:

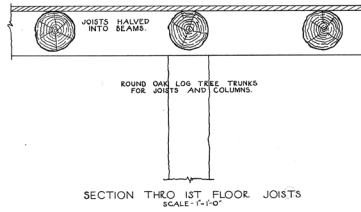
CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO. 11-2
ISSUED BY: LINDSEY DISTRICT OFFICE
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING
SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS
FIELD PARTY
F. E. LINDSEY - SQUAD LEADER
A. CALDWELL - L. VAN DERKRAFT

SURVEY NO.
ILL-268
SHEETS 1-3

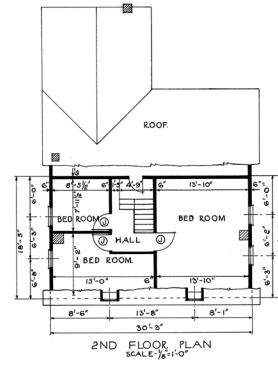
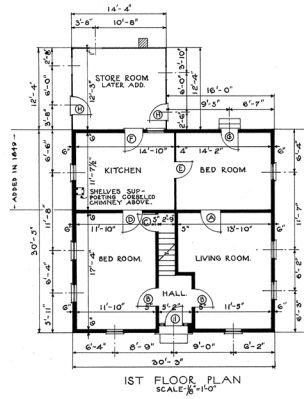
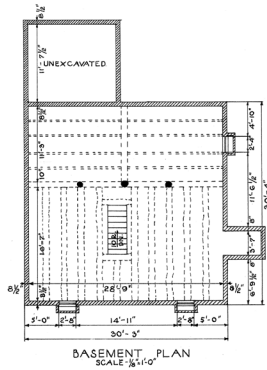
INDEX NO.
ILL
90-1162



HISTORY
 ERECTED IN 1857. JAMES
 PENDERGAST, ORIGINAL OWNER.
 USED AS TAVERN AND REGULAR
 STOP FOR STAGE COACHES.
 VISITED BY LINCOLN, DOUGLAS,
 OSBESBY AND GENERALS OF
 CIVIL WAR.



DOOR SCHEDULE
 A - 2'-11" X 6'-4" X 1 1/4"
 B - 2'-8" X 6'-7" X 1 1/4"
 C - 2'-6" X 6'-0" X 1 1/8"
 D - 3'-1" X 6'-3 1/2" X 1 1/8"
 E - 2'-6" X 6'-0 1/2" X 1"
 F - 3'-0" X 6'-2 1/2" X 1"
 G - 2'-7 1/2" X 6'-4" X 1 1/8"
 H - 2'-7" X 6'-2" X 1 1/4"
 I - 2'-8 1/2" X 6'-3" X 1 1/8"
 J - 2'-7" X 6'-0" X 1 1/8"



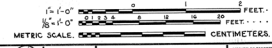
LEGEND
 WOOD BRICK
 A. CALDWELL
 L. VAN DERGRAFT DELS.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT NO. 265-6907
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

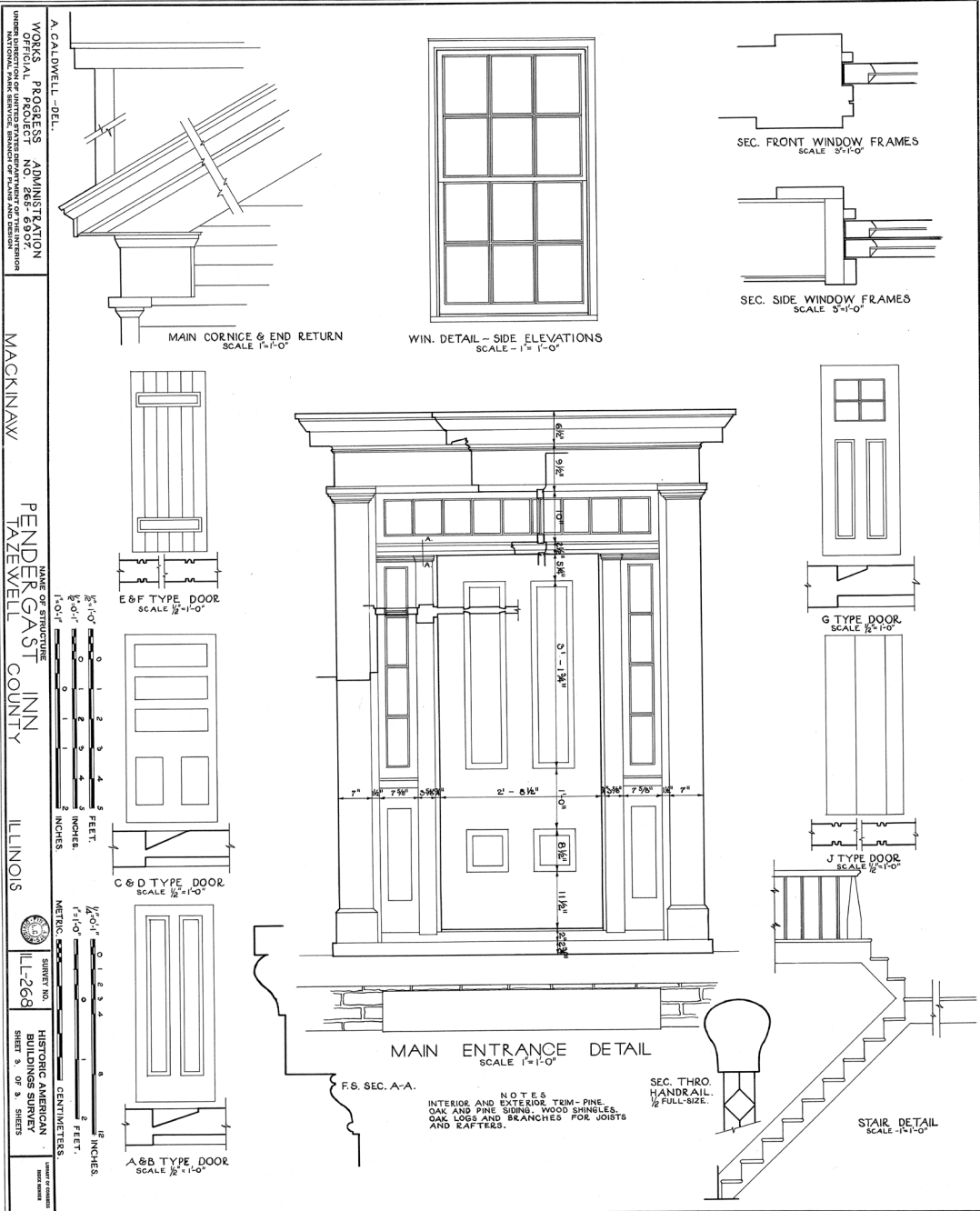
MACKINAW

NAME OF STRUCTURE
 PENDERGAST INN
 TAZEWELL COUNTY

ILLINOIS



SURVEY NO. ILL-268
 HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 2 OF 3 SHEETS
 DRAWN BY: [blank]
 CHECKED BY: [blank]



A Crossroads of Travel

Stagecoaches, Commerce, and Community

During the mid-nineteenth century, stagecoaches served as the primary means of long-distance travel across much of Illinois. They carried passengers, mail, newspapers, freight, and important government communications between communities, connecting small frontier towns with larger population centers throughout the state.

Because Mackinaw was located along one of central Illinois' well-traveled routes, the village became a regular stopping place for stagecoaches traveling across the region. These scheduled stops allowed horses to be watered, fed, and changed while passengers rested before continuing their journey. Inns such as the Pendergast Inn played an essential role in making that travel possible.

For travelers, an inn offered far more than food and lodging. It provided a place to escape harsh weather, recover from long days on rough prairie roads, and enjoy the company of others making similar journeys. In an era before automobiles, telephones, or modern highways, these brief stops offered comfort, conversation, and a welcome opportunity to rest.

Stagecoaches also carried more than people. They delivered letters, newspapers, legal documents, business correspondence, and news from across Illinois and beyond. As travelers arrived and departed, they shared stories, market reports, political developments, and news from neighboring communities. In this way, inns became informal information centers, helping frontier communities remain connected to the rapidly changing world around them.

For Mackinaw residents, the arrival of a stagecoach brought new faces, fresh news, and opportunities for commerce. Merchants welcomed customers, local businesses supplied travelers' needs, and residents learned about events taking place throughout Illinois. The constant movement of people and information helped strengthen both the local economy and the village's connection to surrounding communities.

Although the era of the stagecoach eventually gave way to railroads and later the automobile, its influence on communities such as Mackinaw remains an important part of local history. The Pendergast Inn stands as a reminder of a time when hospitality, transportation, and community were closely connected, and when a small frontier village played an important role in keeping Illinois on the move.

Abraham Lincoln and Mackinaw

A Community Along Lincoln's Journey

During his years as a lawyer riding Illinois' Eighth Judicial Circuit, Abraham Lincoln traveled thousands of miles on horseback and by carriage, representing clients in communities across central Illinois. His travels regularly brought him through towns such as Mackinaw, where court business, political discussions, and community gatherings made villages like this important stops along the route.

Historical records document Lincoln's visits to Mackinaw during both his legal career and his 1860 presidential campaign. During his campaign for the presidency, he met with local citizens and spoke in the community, reflecting Mackinaw's importance as a growing village in central Illinois.

While no surviving guest registers or firsthand accounts conclusively establish that Lincoln stayed overnight at the Pendergast Inn, local historical tradition has long associated the inn with his visits. As one of the village's principal places of lodging and hospitality, the Pendergast Inn would have been well known to travelers passing through Mackinaw during this period.

Lincoln's connection to Mackinaw places the village within the broader story of Illinois history. Like many frontier communities, Mackinaw played a role in the network of towns that shaped Lincoln's legal career and later supported his successful campaign for the presidency. Although small in size, communities such as Mackinaw formed an

important part of the social, political, and economic landscape of nineteenth-century Illinois.

Today, Lincoln's documented visits and the long-standing traditions surrounding the Pendergast Inn continue to remind us that even small rural communities contributed to the larger story of our nation. By preserving these stories, future generations can better understand the significance of places like Mackinaw and the people who helped shape its history.

Illinois State Historical Marker

Honoring the Legacy of the Pendergast Inn

PENDERGAST INN

IN 1837, JAMES PENDERGAST BOUGHT THIS LOT IN MACKINAW AT WHAT WAS THEN THE INTERSECTION OF MONROE AND MARKET STREETS. IN 1843, HE BEGAN HAULING LUMBER FROM PEKIN FOR AN ADDITION TO THE EXISTING HOME, WHICH WHEN COMPLETED WOULD BECOME A ONE AND HALF STORY, FIVE BEDROOM ROUGH OAK LOG BUILDING WITH BLACK WALNUT TRIM, PINE FLOORING, AND A 13" THICK BRICK BASEMENT. THE PENDERGAST INN SERVED AS AN INN, TAVERN, AND STAGECOACH STOP BETWEEN BLOOMINGTON AND PEORIA. NOTABLE PEOPLE STAYING AT THE INN INCLUDED STEPHEN DOUGLAS, GOVERNOR JAMES OGLESBY, AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN. LINCOLN ONCE HELD LEGAL HEARINGS IN THE SOUTHWEST ROOM OF THE FIRST FLOOR. IN 1860, A LINCOLN RALLY HELD AT THE INN BROUGHT HUNDREDS TO THIS SPOT, WITH GUESTS SLEEPING IN CHAIRS AND ON THE FLOOR AS ALL THE BEDS WERE UTILIZED. JAMES PENDERGAST PASSED AWAY ON MAY 10, 1849. HIS WIFE ELIZABETH CONTINUED OPERATIONS OF THE INN AND SEVERAL YEARS LATER MARRIED ELISHA BARTON. ELIZABETH DIED MARCH 6, 1874 AND ELISHA DIED FEBRUARY 17, 1879. JAMES, ELIZABETH AND ELISHA ARE ALL BURIED IN MACKINAW TOWNSHIP CEMETERY. THE PENDERGAST INN WAS THEN TRANSFERRED TO ELIZABETH'S DAUGHTER MARY L. PENDERGAST CAMPBELL (1844-1907) AND THEN MARY'S DAUGHTER IDA CAMPBELL (1865-1928) WHO USED IT AS AN ART STUDIO. IDA CAMPBELL TAUGHT ART CLASSES IN THE BUILDING IN DRAWING, PAINTING, AND CERAMICS. HER YOUNGER SISTER, MAY C. CAMPBELL JAMES (1871-1958), BECAME THE LAST DIRECT DESCENDENT TO OWN THE PROPERTY FOLLOWING IDA CAMPBELL'S DEATH. THE PENDERGAST INN WAS TORN DOWN IN THE 1950s.

SPONSORED BY
VILLAGE OF MACKINAW AND
THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
JULY 2026



Historic American Buildings Survey Arthur Caldwell – Photographer November 1936. View from East
Pendergast Inn, Market & Monroe Streets, Mackinaw, Tazewell County, IL

Dedicated to the generations of Mackinaw residents who preserved the photographs, documents, memories, and stories that made this publication possible. May the history of the Pendergast Inn continue to inspire future generations to value and preserve the rich heritage of our community.