

★ KENTUCKY'S ★ ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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John Todd (1750-1782)

John Todd, the great-uncle of Mary Todd Lincoln, was an influential Kentucky pioneer and a founder of Lexington. He was killed at the Battle of Blue Licks, Kentucky, which some historians have called the last battle of the American Revolution. Todd County was later named in his honor.

Born in Pennsylvania and well-educated, John traveled to Kentucky in 1775, where he surveyed and purchased extensive tracts of land. Eventually settling at Lexington, in 1777 he became one of the first two men to represent Kentucky County in the Virginia legislature. The next year he served as an officer in General George Rogers Clark's expedition to Illinois, and, after fighting there, Virginia Governor Patrick Henry appointed Todd the first governor of Illinois Territory.

By August 1782, Todd was colonel of the Fayette County militia. Upon learning that Native Americans had attacked Bryan's Station, Todd organized several companies and pursued the Indians. On August 19, the Kentuckians fought the Indians and British soldiers at the Battle of Blue Licks in present-day Robertson County. Outnumbered and defeated, the Kentuckians suffered high casualties. Most of their officers were killed, including John Todd. John's brother, Levi, who was present at Blue Licks, helped bury the dead. He informed another sibling that the corpses "were all stript naked, scalped & mangled . . . it was hard to know one from another. Our Brother was not known." It is assumed that Todd's unrecognizable remains were buried in the mass grave now located at Blue Licks Battlefield State Park.

The service of the Todds to Kentucky, as well as their extensive land holdings propelled the family into prominence. Nineteenth-century historian Thomas M. Green called John Todd "the best educated and most accomplished . . . of all the early pioneers and surveyors of Kentucky." The attainments of the Todd pioneers gave Mary Todd Lincoln's family wealth, prestige, and influence in antebellum Lexington.

Todd County was named in John's honor in 1819.

Image of Blue Licks from Kentucky Military History Museum
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