

Remembering Lincoln

A Christian businessman is selling penny-sized plots of farmland Abraham Lincoln once owned to help support evangelistic ministry.

✖ As the nation marks Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday this week, a Christian businessman is hoping to use land Lincoln once owned to help advance the kingdom.

Dan Arnold, owner of the Road Ranger chain of gas stations and convenience stores, is selling penny-size plots of land Lincoln purchased in Coles County, Ill. The former president bought the property from his father during a time of financial hardship, enabling his parents to stay on the farm.

The land, which is adjacent to the Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, the 1840s home of Lincoln's father and stepmother, remained in the Lincoln family until the early 1900s.

Arnold said God led him in 2007 to buy the four acres of prairie land, and his goal is to use 90 percent of the profits from the \$ souvenir deeds to fund evangelistic efforts and other "good works." Arnold paid \$ million for the property, but his goal is not to recoup his investment.

"If I buy this property and it can do a lot of good, I don't need the money back," said Arnold, who is even offering to give deeds away to Christian ministries and nonprofit groups to use as fund-raiser. "I don't need to make money on this. I already have a business."

Based in Rockford, Ill., Arnold started Road Ranger LLC at age 26 with \$5,000 and sold it at age 33 to Phillips Petroleum Company after it had become a multimillion-dollar franchise.

"I spent the next four years miserable-I was angry, I had no rest," Arnold said. "I had already had money, I had already had everything that everyone else wants, and I didn't want it anymore. I wanted Him."

He accepted Christ in 1994 and said he planned to go into missions but was led instead to restart the business as Ranger Enterprises in 1997. Today he owns 88 Road Ranger convenience stores in seven states across the Midwest. Last year, he said, the business grossed nearly \$1 billion.

Through the years, he said he has given away more than \$10 million to organizations such as the Gideons International Bible distributors and Campus Crusade for Christ.

In addition to supporting ministry work, Arnold wants the land to help teach youth about Lincoln's character and to draw tourism to his state. He said selling the 64 million available deeds will help preserve both Lincoln's legacy and the property itself.

"The big idea on this is that this property shouldn't belong to any person, county or state, but to all people everywhere who like Lincoln [and] love liberty," Arnold said. "So anybody who would buy this property is, in a sense, affirming the qualities that they hold dear about Lincoln, and they are saying, those are the qualities that I want to identify with."

Intercessors affiliated with the Illinois Apostolic Prayer Network were among the first to purchase one of deeds. "It was just the idea, if we're going to pray for Illinois, how interesting would it be if we actually owned, even symbolically, something that represents Illinois," said John Makan, a prayer leader and associate pastor at Faith Center in Rockford. "Then it becomes, not only do we pray for [the state], we actually own it."

An amateur military historian, Arnold said he believes Lincoln

still has much to teach America-and the world. "He did the right thing, even though it was unpopular," Arnold said. "And it took his life. But here we are 200 years later, and we're still talking about him."

The deeds are available at the Lincoln Family Farm Web site, along with a book on the history of the Lincoln property. He admits that he's still not completely sure what God has in store for the project. "This one is one of those that you don't know how it's going to turn out," he said "I don't know where [God is] going with this. All I know is my influence has been multiplied by numbers I never thought possible And that's happened in just a year."