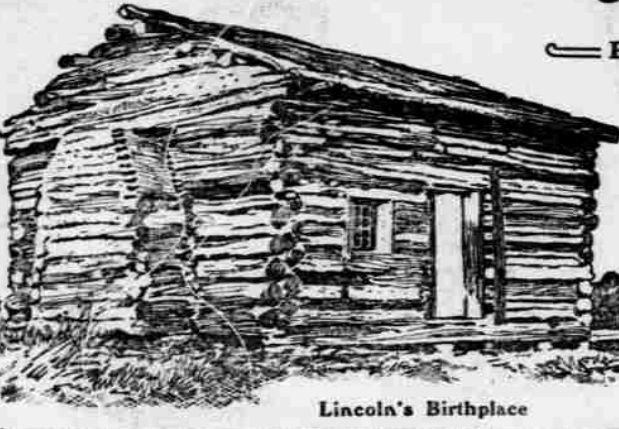


# Lincoln's Boyhood



By  
**WARD  
HILL  
LAMON,**

His Friend,  
Partner  
and  
Bodyguard

Lincoln's Birthplace

## CHAPTER I.

"The Short and Simple Annals of the Poor."



DANIEL BOONE.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born on the 12th day of February, 1809. His father's name was Thomas Lincoln, and his mother's maiden name was Nancy Hanks. At the time of his birth they are supposed to have been married about three years. Thomas Lincoln's ancestors were among the early settlers of Rockingham county, in Virginia, but exactly whence they came or the precise time of their settlement there it is impossible to tell. They were manifestly of English descent, but whether emigrants directly from England to Virginia or an offshoot of the historic Lincoln family in Massachusetts or of the highly respectable Lincoln family in Pennsylvania is a question left entirely to conjecture. Thomas Lincoln himself stoutly denied that his progenitors were either Quakers or Puritans, but he furnished nothing except his own word to sustain his denial. On the contrary, some of the family (distant relatives of Thomas Lincoln) who remain in Virginia believe themselves to have sprung from the New England stock. They found their opinion solely on the fact that the Christian names given to the sons of the two families were the same, though only in a few cases and at different times. The progenitors of all the American Lincolns were Englishmen, and they may have been Puritans. There is, therefore, nothing unreasonable in the supposition that they began the practice of conferring such names before the emigration of any of them, and the names, becoming matters of family pride and family tradition, have continued to be given ever since.

Dr. Holland, who, of all Mr. Lincoln's biographers, has entered most extensively into the genealogy of the family, says that the father of Thomas was named Abraham, but he gives no authority for his statement. The Hankses—John and Dennis—who passed a great part of their lives in the company of Thomas Lincoln, tell us that the name of his father was Mordecai, and so also does Colonel Chapman, who married Thomas Lincoln's stepdaughter. The rest of those who ought to know are unable to assign him any name at all. Dr. Holland says further that this Abraham (or Mordecai) had four brothers—Jacob, John, Isaac and Thomas; that Isaac went to Tennessee, where his descendants are now; that Thomas went to Kentucky after his brother Abraham, but that Jacob and John "are supposed to have" remained in Virginia.

This is doubtless true, at least so far as it relates to Jacob and John, for there are numerous Lincolns in Rockingham county, the place from which the Kentucky Lincoln emigrated. One of their ancestors, Jacob, who seems to be the brother referred to, was a lieutenant in the army of Yorktown. His military services were made the ground of a claim against the government, and Abraham Lincoln, while a representative in congress from Illinois, was applied to by the family to assist them in prosecuting it.

Lincoln, the emigrant, had three sons and two daughters. Thomas was the third son and the fourth child. He was born in 1778, and in 1780 or a little later his father removed with his little family to Kentucky.

tree watching his little assemblage of sprouts and wondering at the strange fruitfulness of the earth which fed them when he heard a footstep behind him. It was the great Daniel Boone's. They united their fortunes for the present, but subsequently each of them became the chief of a considerable settlement. Kenton's trail had been down the Ohio, Boone's from North Carolina, and from both those directions soon came hunters, warriors and settlers to join them.

But the Indians had no thought of relinquishing their fairest hunting ground without a long and desperate struggle. They had long contended for the possession of it, and no tribe or confederacy of tribes had ever been able to hold it to the exclusion of the rest. Here from time immemorial the northern and southern, the eastern and western Indians had met each other in mortal strife, mutually shedding the blood which ought to have been husbanded for the more deadly conflict with the common foe. The character of this savage warfare had earned for Kentucky the appellation of "the dark and bloody ground," and now that the whites had fairly begun their encroachments upon it, the Indians were resolved that the phrase should lose none of its old significance. White settlers might therefore count upon fighting for their lives as well as their lands.

Boone did not make his final settlement till 1775. The Lincolns came about

1780. Nearly the whole of the north-west territory was then occupied by the hostile Indians. Kentucky volunteers had yet before them many a day of hot and bloody work on the Ohio, the Muskingum and the Miami, to say nothing of the continental surprises to which they were subjected at home. Every man's life was in his hand. From cabin to cabin, from settlement to settlement, his trail was dogged by the eager savage. If he went to plow, he was liable to be shot down between the handles; if he attempted to procure subsistence by hunting, he was hunted himself.

On the journey out the Lincolns are said to have endured many hardships and encountered all the usual dangers, including several skirmishes with the Indians. They settled in Mercer county. Their house was a rough log cabin, their farm a little clearing in the midst of a vast forest. One morning not long after their settlement the father took Thomas, his youngest son, and went to build a fence a short distance from the house, while the other brothers, Mordecai and Josiah, were sent to another field not far away. They were all intent about their work when a shot from a party of Indians in ambush broke the "listening stillness" of the woods.

**Killed by Indians.**  
The father fell dead, Josiah ran to a stockade two or three miles off. Mordecai, the eldest boy, made his way to the house and, looking out from the loophole in the loft, saw an Indian in the act of raising his little brother from



THE FATHER FELL DEAD.

the ground. He took deliberate aim at a silver ornament on the breast of the Indian and brought him down. Thomas sprang toward the cabin and was admitted by his mother, while Mordecai renewed his fire at several other Indians that rose from the covert of the fence or thicket. It was not long until Josiah returned from the stockade with a party of settlers, but the Indians had fled, and none was found but the dead one and another who was wounded and had crept into the top of a fallen tree.

When this tragedy was enacted Mordecai was a well grown boy. He seems to have hated Indians ever after with a hatred which was singular for its intensity, even in those times. Many years afterward his neighbors believed that he was in the habit of following "wicked" Indians as they passed

through the settlements in order to surreptitious shots at them, and it was no secret that he had killed more than one in that way.

Immediately after the death of her husband the widow abandoned the scene of her misfortunes and removed to Washington county, near the town of Springfield, where she lived until the youngest of her children had grown up. Mordecai and Josiah remained there until late in life and were always numbered among the best people in the neighborhood.

Thomas seems to have been the only member of the family whose character was not entirely respectable. He was idle, thriftless, poor, a hunter and a rover. One year he wandered away off to his uncle, on the Holston, near the confines of Tennessee. Another year he wandered into Breckinridge county, where his easy good nature was overcome by a huge bully, and he performed the only remarkable achievement of his life by whipping him. In 1806 we find him in Hardin county trying to learn the carpenter's trade.

Thomas Lincoln was not tall and thin, like Abraham, but comparatively short and stout, standing about five feet ten inches in his shoes. His hair was dark and coarse, his complexion brown, his face round and full, his eyes gray and his nose large and prominent. He weighed, at different times, from 170 to 190. He was built so "tight and compact" that Dennis Hanks declares he never could find the points of separation between his ribs, though he felt for them often. He was a little stoop shouldered and walked with a slow, halting step. But he was sinewy and brave and, his habitually peaceable disposition once fairly overborne, was a tremendous man in a rough and tumble fight. He thrashed the monstrous bully of Breckinridge county in three minutes and came off without a scratch.

"Linckhorn" and "Linckern."

His vagrant career had supplied him with an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes, which he told cleverly and well. He loved to sit about at "stores" or under shade trees and "spin yarns," a propensity which atoned for many sins and made him extremely popular. In politics he was a Democrat—a Jackson Democrat. In religion he was nothing at times and a member of various denominations by turns—a Free Will Baptist in Kentucky, a Presbyterian in Indiana and a Disciple—vulgarily called Campbellite—in Illinois. In this latter communion he seems to have died.

It ought, perhaps, to be mentioned that both in Virginia and Kentucky his name was commonly pronounced "Linckhorn" and in Indiana "Linckern." The usage was so general that Thomas Lincoln came very near losing his real name altogether. As he never wrote it at all until after his marriage, and wrote it then only mechanically, it was never spelled one way or the other unless by a storekeeper here and there who had a small account against him. Whether it was properly "Lincoln," "Linckhorn" or "Linckern" was not definitely settled until after Abraham began to write, when, as one of the neighbors has it, "he remodeled the spelling and corrected the pronunciation."

By the middle of 1806 Lincoln had acquired a very limited knowledge of the carpenter's trade and set up on his own account, but his achievements in this line were no better than those of his previous life. He was employed occasionally to do rough work that requires neither science nor skill, but nobody alleges that he ever built a house or pretended to do more than a few little odd jobs connected with such an undertaking.

Some time in the year 1806 he married Nancy Hanks. It was in the shop of her uncle, Joseph Hanks, at Elizabethtown, in Hardin county, that he essayed to learn the trade. We have no record of the courtship, but any one can readily imagine the numberless occasions that would bring together the niece and apprentice. It is true that Nancy did not live with her uncle, but the Hankses were all very clannish, and she was doubtless a welcome and frequent guest at his house. It is admitted by all the old residents of the place that they were honestly married, but precisely when or how no one can tell. Diligent and thorough searches by the most competent persons have failed to discover any trace of the fact in the public records of Hardin and the adjoining counties. At the time of their union Thomas was twenty-eight years of age and Nancy about twenty-three.

Lincoln had previously courted a girl named Sally (Sarah) Bush, who lived in the neighborhood of Elizabethtown, but his suit was unsuccessful, and she became the wife of Johnston, the jailer. Sally Bush was a modest and pious girl, in all things pure and decent. She was very neat in her personal appearance, and because she was particular in the selection of her gowns and company had long been accounted a "proud body," who held her head above common folks. But she had a will as well as principles of her own, and she lived to make them both serviceable to the neglected and destitute son of Nancy Hanks. Thomas Lincoln took another wife, but he always loved Sally Bush, and years afterward, when her husband and his wife were both dead, he returned suddenly from the wilds of Indiana and, representing himself as a thriving and prosperous farmer, induced her to marry him.

Lincoln's Mother.

Nancy Hanks, who accepted the honor which Sally Bush first refused, was a slender, symmetrical woman of medium stature, a brunette, with dark hair, regular features and soft, sparkling hazel eyes. Tenderly bred, she might have been beautiful; but hard labor and hard usage bent her handsome form and imparted an unnatural

coarseness to her features long before the period of her death. Toward the close her life and her face were equally sad, and the latter habitually wore the woeful expression which afterward distinguished the countenance of her son in repose.

By her family her understanding was considered something wonderful. John Hanks spoke reverently of her "high and intellectual forehead," which he considered but the proper seat of faculties like hers. Compared with the mental poverty of her husband and relatives, her accomplishments were certainly very great, for it is related by them with pride and delight that she could actually read and write. The possession of these arts placed her far above her associates, and after a little while even Thomas began to meditate upon the importance of acquiring them. He set to work accordingly in real earnest, having a competent mistress so near at hand, and with much effort she taught him what letters composed his name and how to put them together in a stiff and clumsy fashion. Henceforth he signed no more by making his mark, but it is nowhere stated that he ever learned to write anything else or to read either written or printed letters.

Nancy Hanks was early sent to live with her uncle and aunt, Thomas and Betsy Sparrow, and became so completely identified with them that many supposed her to have been their child. They reared her to womanhood, followed her to Indiana, dwelt under the same roof, died of the same disease at nearly the same time and were buried close beside her. They were the only parents she ever knew, and she must have called them by names appropriate to that relationship, for several persons who saw them die and carried them to their graves believed that they were in fact her father and mother.

The Hankses claim that their ancestors came from England to Virginia, whence they migrated to Kentucky with the Lincolns and settled near them in Mercer county. The same, precisely, is affirmed of the Sparrows. Branches of both families maintained a more or less intimate connection with the fortunes of Thomas Lincoln, and the early life of Abraham was closely interwoven with theirs.

Lincoln took Nancy to live in a shed on one of the alleys of Elizabethtown. It was a very sorry building and nearly bare of furniture, was about fourteen feet square, had been three times removed and twice used as a slaughter house and once as a stable. Here a daughter was born on the 10th day of February, 1807, who was called Nancy during the life of her mother and after her death Sarah.

Lincoln's Desolate Birthplace.

Thomas Lincoln soon wearied of Elizabethtown and carpenter work. He thought he could do better as a farmer, and shortly after the birth of Nancy (or Sarah) removed to a piece of land on the south fork of Nolin creek, three miles from Hodgenville and about thirteen miles from Elizabethtown. What estate he had or attempted to get in this land is not clear from the papers at hand. It is said he bought it, but was unable to pay for it. It was very poor, the landscape of which it formed a part was extremely desolate, and it was nearly destitute of timber. On every side the eye rested only upon weeds and low bushes and "barren grass." It was, on the whole, as bad a piece of ground as there was in the neighborhood and would hardly have sold for a dollar an acre. The general appearance of the surrounding country was not much better. A few small but pleasant streams—Nolin creek and its tributaries—wandered through the valleys. The land was generally what is called "rolling"—that is, dead levels interspersed by little hillocks. Nearly all of it was arable; but, except the margins of the water courses, not much of it was sufficiently fertile to repay the labor of tillage. Here it was only by incessant labor and thrifty habits that an ordinary living could be wrung from the earth.

The family took up their residence in a miserable cabin which stood on a little knoll in the midst of a barren glade. Near by a "romantic spring" gushed from beneath a rock and sent forth a slender but silvery stream, meandering through those dull and unsightly plains. As it furnished almost the only pleasing feature in the melancholy desert through which it flowed the place was called after it, "Rock Spring Farm."

In addition to this single natural beauty Lincoln began to think in a little while that a couple of trees would look well and might even be useful if judiciously planted in the vicinity of his bare house yard. This enterprise he actually put into execution, and years afterward three decayed pear trees constituted the only memorials of him or his family to be seen about the premises.

In that solitary cabin, on this desolate spot, the illustrious Abraham Lincoln was born on the 12th day of February, 1809. The Lincolns remained on Nolin creek until Abraham was four years old. They then removed to a place much more picturesque and of far greater fertility. It was situated about six miles from Hodgenville, on Knob creek, a very clear stream. This farm was well timbered and more hilly than the one on Nolin creek. It contained some rich valleys, which promised such excellent yields that Lincoln bestirred himself most vigorously and actually got into cultivation the whole of six acres, lying advantageously up and down the branch.

This, however, was not all the work he did, for he still continued to pother occasionally at his trade; but no matter what he turned his hand to, his gains were equally insignificant. He was satisfied with indifferent shelter, and a diet of "corn bread and milk"

was all he asked. JOHN HANKS DAVERY observed that "happiness was the end of life with him." The purchase of the Knob creek farm must have been a mere speculation, with all the payments deferred, for the title remained in Lincoln but a single year. The deed was made to him Sept. 2, 1813, and Oct. 27, 1814, he conveyed 200 acres to Charles Milton, leaving thirty-eight acres of the tract unsold. No public record discloses what he did with the remainder. If he retained any interest in it for the time it was probably permitted to be sold for taxes. The last of his transactions in regard to this land took place two years before his removal to Indiana.

Young Abe's Close Call.

In the meantime Dennis Hanks endeavored to initiate young Abraham, now approaching his eighth year, in the mysteries of fishing and led him on numerous tramps up and down the picturesque branch—the branch whose waters were so pure that a white pebble could be seen in a depth of ten feet. On one occasion when attempting to "coon" across the stream by swinging over on a sycamore tree Abraham lost his hold and, tumbling into deep water, was saved only by the utmost exertions of the other boy. But, with all this play, the child was often serious and sad. With the earliest dawn of reason he began to suffer and endure, and it was that peculiar moral training which developed both his heart and his intellect with such singular and astonishing rapidity.

It is not likely that Thomas Lincoln cared a straw about his education. He had none himself and is said to have admired "muscle" more than mind. Nevertheless, as Abraham's sister was going to school for a few days at a time he was sent along, as Dennis Hanks remarks, more to bear her company than with any expectation or desire that he would learn much himself.

One of the masters, Zachariah Riney, taught near the Lincoln cabin. The other, Caleb Hazel, kept his school nearly four miles away, on the "Friend" farm, and the hapless children were compelled to trudge that long and weary distance with spelling book and "dinner," the latter a lunch of corn bread. Hazel could teach reading and writing after a fashion, and a

little arithmetic. But his great qualification for his office lay in the strength of his arm and his power and readiness to "whip the big boys."

But as time wore on the infelicities of Thomas Lincoln's life in this neighborhood became insupportable. He was gaining neither riches nor credit, and being a wanderer by natural inclination, began to long for a change. His decision, however, was hastened by certain troubles which culminated in a desperate combat between him and one Abraham Enlow. They fought like savages, but Lincoln obtained a signal and permanent advantage by biting off the nose of his antagonist, so that he went bereft all the days of his life and published his audacity and his punishment wherever he showed his face. But the affair and the fame of it made Lincoln more anxious than ever to escape from Kentucky. He resolved, therefore, to leave these scenes forever and seek a roof-tree beyond the Ohio.

The lives of his father and mother and the history and character of the family before their settlement in Indiana were topics upon which Abraham Lincoln never spoke but with great reluctance and significant reserve.

(To be Continued.)

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Hon. Wm. A. Jolly, the present County Commissioner of Benton county, is a thoroughly competent man in every particular as his life work has abundantly shown. He has spent a long and successful experience in Benton county. He is thoroughly acquainted with the wants and needs of the people in the line of duty as county commissioner. His recent experience in this office for the last four years well enables him to continue the work having this ripe experience to start with on a new term. The business of Benton county is of considerable magnitude involving large expenditures of the taxpayers' money, and Mr. Jolly's experience and ability are well fitted to the people. He deserves well of their favorable consideration.

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## Notice to Creditors.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been duly appointed by the County Court of the State of Oregon, for Benton County, administrator of the estate of Henry Holroyd, deceased. All persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same at the office of J. F. Yates, properly verified as by law required, at Corvallis, Oregon, within six months from the date hereof. Dated this 13th day of February, 1906. W. S. McFARLAND, Administrator of the Estate of Henry Holroyd, deceased.

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