

Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of the
LINCOLN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

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(Continued from No. 28)

Hanks signed her name she signed it, "Widow" Lucey Hanks. Just before the letters "doy" at the beginning of her signature, and apparently connected with these three letters, are tracings which appear to me to be the letters "wi." The pronunciation of the word in pioneer days would account for the use of the final "y" in the spelling. The writer is aware of the fact that there are those who do not accept his interpretation of this signature, and while there is no question in his own mind as to what Lucey Hanks wrote, the dimness of the two important letters prevents a positive affirmation which cannot be challenged. Here in the county adjacent to the community where Nancy Hanks lived, we have found a woman whom I believe to have been the widow of a Mr. Hanks, the father of Nancy.

One other Kentucky document should be exhibited here as bearing upon the identity of the Hanks family, to which Lincoln's mother was related:

Joseph Hanks' Will

"In the name of God Amen. I Joseph Hanks, of Nelson County, State of Kentucky, being of sound mind and memory. . . . I give and bequeath unto my son Thomas. . . . my son Joshua. . . . my son William. . . . my son Charles. . . . my son Joseph one horse called Bald also the land whereon I now live. . . . my daughter Elizabeth. . . . my daughter Polly. . . . my daughter Nancy. . . . I give and bequeath unto my wife Nanny all and singular my whole estate during her life afterward to be equally divided between all my children. . . . Signed sealed and delivered in presence of us this eighth day of January one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three."

his
Joseph X Hanks
mark

Witnesses, Isaac Lansdale, John Davis, Peter Atherton.

The above will was entered for probate in Nelson County on May 14, 1793, five months after it was signed. Since William Hanks, named in this will, was the father of John Hanks, whom Lincoln claimed was first cousin of his mother, it is desirable to show some contact between the Joseph Hanks who signed the will, and the Lucey Hanks who married Henry Sparrow in 1790. If the integrity of the will is to be conserved and the

marriage papers of Lucey Hanks properly appraised, but one deduction can be made which would not violate the evidence of these records and still allow the cousin relationship of John Hanks and the president's mother to be maintained. Lucey must have been a daughter-in-law of Joseph, her husband having died at least four years before Joseph made his will.

One other supposition has been set forth to show the relationship between Joseph Hanks and Lucey Hanks. It is based on the assumption that Nancy Hanks was the unnatural child of Lucey Hanks and took her mother's name. There is no documentary support for this supposition. It further assumes that Lucey Hanks was a daughter of Joseph Hanks. Her name does not appear in the will in which Joseph names his living children and specifies that after the death of his wife the estate "be equally divided between all my children." A further assumption, based on the alleged illegitimacy of Nancy and some later irregularities of Lucey holds that Joseph Hanks cut her off in his will. At the time Joseph Hanks made his will Lucey had been happily married to Henry Sparrow for two and one-half years. Joseph lived for five months after the will was made and by this time at least two of Lucey's eight children were born. If Joseph Hanks' anger towards a daughter, who had been living an honorable married life for three years, was so intense that he did not care to have her share in his estate, he would have been more cautious in the wording of the document which was to disown her.

One other observation supports the fact that Lucey Hanks was not a daughter of Joseph Hanks. When she was asked by the clerk of Mercer county to present a certificate that she was over twenty-one years of age it would have been necessary to secure the signature of either her father or mother to this affirmation if they were living in the adjacent county of Nelson. It would also follow that her father or at least one of her five brothers would have been asked to sign the marriage bond, if she were a daughter of the Joseph Hanks in question.

The most difficult task which the West Virginia commission has to perform is to establish the connection between the Joseph Hanks of the Kentucky will and a Joseph Hanks whose name appears on certain documents in Hampshire county, Virginia. It is unfortunate that the census returns for Hampshire county, in the year 1782, do not give the names or the sex of the other ten members of Joseph Hanks' family. It is also to be regretted that the name of Joseph Hanks' wife does not appear on the land document for 1784. Some assistance is derived from another Hampshire county document bearing the name of Joseph Hanks, of which a photographic copy has been received

from Mrs. C. F. White, of Brookline, Massachusetts. It is a tax report for the year 1782 revealing that Joseph Hanks was the only male member of his family, of eleven, who had reached the age of twenty-one at that time.

The pension claim of Thomas Hanks, stating that he was born in 1759, place not named, and drafted into service in Hampshire county in 1780, does not make the desired transition between the Kentucky and Virginia Hankses. There is no positive evidence that he was the same Thomas whose name appears on the will of Joseph Hanks. He could not have been one of Joseph Hanks' family of "eleven white souls", living in Hampshire county in 1782, as he was twenty-three years old at this time and Joseph Hanks was the only male member of his family who was above the age of twenty-one. It would be just as difficult to show by the use of public records any relation whatever between the Joseph Hanks, who lived in Hampshire county, Virginia, and the Joseph Hanks who lived in Richmond county, Virginia.

There are any number of traditions which have come down through different branches of the Hanks families which attempt to establish the identity of Lincoln's mother. There are also available in print several traditions and theories, attempting to trace Lincoln's maternal ancestry, which are cited below in case the commission cares to refer to any of them.

Traditional Parents of Nancy Hanks

George Washington & Lucy Hanks'
John Marshall & Lucy Hanks'
Unknown Va. farmer & Lucy Hanks'
Joseph Hanks & Nancy Shipley Hanks'
Henry Sparrow & Lucy Hanks Sparrow'
Thomas Sparrow & Elizabeth Hanks Sparrow'
John Berry & Lucy Hanks'
_____ Hanks & Lucy Shipley Hanks'
William Hanks & _____ Hanks'
_____ Hanks & _____ Berry Hanks'
Luke Hanks & Ann Hanks''

It is very clear that duly authorized public records should not be corrected or nullified to fit traditions or theories, but the great mass of data which has been gathered on this question should only be allowed to stand as it is in harmony with the documents which speak with authority.

References

- (1) The Pocahontas Times, Price, August 29, 1929.
 - (2) The Sorrows of Nancy, Boyd, p. 78.
 - (3) Life of Lincoln, Herndon, Vol. 1, p. 3.
 - (4) Nancy Hanks, Hitchcock, p. 25.
 - (5) Life of Lincoln, Herndon, Vol. 1, p. 3, note.
 - (6) The Life of Abraham Lincoln, Lamon, p. 11.
 - (7) Origins of Clements-Spalding and Allied Families, Clements, appendix, p. 2.
 - (8) Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood, Warren, p. 31.
 - (9) Abraham Lincoln a North Carolinian, Coggins, p. 13.
 - (10) Lincoln the Citizen, Whitney, p. 16.
 - (11) History of North Carolina, Arthur, p. 319.
- NOTE—The spelling of the word Lucey in the argument is adopted to agree with the spelling in the signature on the certificate.—Ed.