

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN LORE

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### UNTENABLE THEORIES ABOUT LINCOLN'S EARLY ENVIRONMENT

The following excerpts, which present the parents and early home life of Abraham Lincoln in such an unfavorable light, have been compiled to serve as a background for a paper to be read, by the editor, before the New England Genealogical Society at Boston on February 12. An exhibit of documentary sources will be published in Lincoln Lore next week which will justify the labeling of these excerpts as untenable theories. The traditional Thomas Lincoln must fade out as the historical Thomas Lincoln is introduced by duly authorized records. The stigma which has rested on the President's pioneer father and the exaggerated conditions existing in the early Lincoln home are not in harmony with documentary evidence:

"The old gentleman (Thomas Lincoln) was not only void of energy but dull." Herndon. Lincoln, page 6.

"No more ignorant boy than Thomas could be found in the back woods." Beveridge. Abraham Lincoln, page 12.

"The whole house squalid, cheerless, and utterly void of elevating inspiration." Schurz. Abraham Lincoln, page 12.

"Here was the home and here were its occupants, all humble, all miserably poor." Holland. Life of Abraham Lincoln, page 23.

"He (Thomas Lincoln) was no toiler but from all accounts an ignorant, shiftless vagabond." Coleman. The Sad Story of Nancy Hanks, page 8.

"It was here that Abraham Lincoln was born. The manger at Bethlehem was not a more unlikely birthplace." Sheppard. Abraham Lincoln, page 8.

"He (Thomas Lincoln) was a shiftless fellow, never succeeding in anything, who could neither read nor write." Stephenson. Lincoln, page 4.

"Reared in gripping, grinding, pinching penury, and pallid poverty, amid the most squalid destitution possible to conceive." Peters. Abraham Lincoln's Religion, page 3.

"Lincoln was born in a degradation very far below respectable poverty in the State of Kentucky, and lived in that poverty all his life." Chafin. Lincoln, Man of Sorrows, page 10.

"In the midst of the most unpromising circumstances that ever witnessed the advent of a boy into the world," Nicolay and Hay. Abraham Lincoln, A History, Volume 1, page 25.

"Nobody ever accused him (Thomas Lincoln) of building a house or to pretend to do more than a few little odd jobs connected with such an undertaking." Lamon. Life of Lincoln, page 9.

"The father was by calling a carpenter but not good at his trade, a shiftless, migratory squatter by invincible tendencies and a very ignorant man." Morse. Abraham Lincoln, Volume 1, page 10.

"Thomas seems to have been the only member of the family whose character was not respectable. He was an idler, trifling, poor, a hunter, and a rover." Lamon. Life of Lincoln, page 8.

"In childhood and youth his (Abraham Lincoln's) intimate associates and putative relatives a gross, illiterate, and superstitious rabble." Cathey. True Genesis of a Wonderful Man, page 193.

"Thomas Lincoln never prospered like Josiah and Mordecai, and never seemed to have left the impression of his goodness or of anything else on any man." Charnwood. Abraham Lincoln, page 4.

"Thomas Lincoln, a poverty-stricken man whom misfortune had seemingly chosen for her own, and whose ambitions were blighted and hope almost dead." Peters. Abraham Lincoln's Religion, page 3.

"There could hardly be a poorer family than that which now undertook to support its narrow, hopeless life in that dull corner of the earth's teeming surface." Stoddard. Abraham Lincoln, page 11.

"He (Thomas Lincoln) reached the age of 27 the year of his marriage, a brawny, wandering laborer, a poor white, unlettered and untaught except for the trade of carpenter." Strunsky. Abraham Lincoln, page 5.

"At the time of his (Thomas Lincoln's) birth, twenty-eight years before, his parents—drifting, roaming, people, struggling with poverty—were dwellers in the Virginia mountains." Stephenson. Lincoln, page 4.

"His (Abraham Lincoln's) father was an ignorant man, amiable enough, but colorlessly negative, without strength of character and without ambitions worthy of the name." Hill. Lincoln the Lawyer, page 6.

"Thomas Lincoln and Enlow had a regular set-to fight about the matter in which encounter Lincoln bit off the end of Enlow's nose. Finally, Lincoln, to clear himself, moved to Indiana." Weik. The Real Lincoln, page 31.

"I never could understand how so great and good a man as old Abe could have descended from such a low breed and entirely worthless vagabond as Thomas Lincoln." Cathey. True Genesis of a Wonderful Man, page 239.

"Thomas Lincoln was an ignorant, shiftless, worthless, illiterate man . . . he thought it a waste of time for young Abraham to learn to read and write as he could do neither." Chafin. Lincoln, Man of Sorrows, page 11.

"So pained have some persons been by the necessity of recognizing Thomas Lincoln as the father of the president, that they have welcomed a happy escape from this so miserable paternity." Morse. Abraham Lincoln, Vol. I, page 7.

"But Lincoln rose from a lower depth than any of them. From a stagnant, putrid pool; like the gas which set on fire by its own energy and self-combustible nature rises in jets blazing, clear, and bright." Herndon. Herndon's Lincoln, Volume 1, page 9.

"Born not only in poverty, but surrounded by want and suffering; favored in nothing; wanting in everything which makes up the joys of life . . . it was literal truth that 'he had not where to lay his head.'" Cathey. True Genesis of a Wonderful Man, page 255.

"The domestic surroundings under which the babe (Abraham Lincoln) came into life were wretched in the extreme. . . . Rough, coarse, low, ignorant, and poverty-stricken surroundings were about the child." Morse. Abraham Lincoln, Volume 1, page 9.

"In childhood and youth his (Abraham Lincoln's) place of abode a squalid cabin in a howling wilderness, his meal an ashen crust, his bed a pile of leaves, his nominal guardian a shiftless and worthless vagabond." Cathey. True Genesis of a Wonderful Man, page 193.

"His (Abraham Lincoln's) father a typical 'poor Southern white,' shiftless and improvident, without ambition for himself or his children, constantly looking for a new piece of ground where he might make a living without much work." Schurz. Abraham Lincoln, page 12.

"Abraham Lincoln came of the most unpromising stock on the continent, 'the poor white trash' of the South. His shiftless father moved from place to place in the western country, failing where everybody else was successful in making a living; and the boy spent the most susceptible years of his life under no discipline but that of degrading poverty." Woodrow Wilson. Division and Reunion, page 216.