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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

CALEB HAZEL, LINCOLN'S NEIGHBOR AND TEACHER

According to the testimony of Abraham Lincoln, the name of his second school teacher was Caleb Hazel. Like his predecessor, Zachariah Riney, Hazel was no itinerant pedagogue but a resident of long standing in the Knob Creek community. He was very closely associated with both of the parents of the president, as will be shown.

Some time in the year 1785, Hazel married the Widow Hall. On November 17, 1788, he signed an agreement to pay her orphan children, Elizabeth, Levi, David, and Henry, "the sum of five pounds each" which was due them from the estate of their father who had been killed by the Indians.

Elizabeth Hall and Levi Hall both married children of Joseph Hanks, said to be the grandfather of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother. On January 10, 1794, Hazel signed an endorsement as a witness to a land transaction which took place between two of the sons of Joseph Hanks.

As early as December 9, 1789, Hazel's home had become sufficiently well known to have been designated in a road order as "Caleb Hazel's cabin on the waters of Knob Creek." In 1795 he was appointed a surveyor of the road from "the mouth of Knob Creek to Hazel's cabin."

There is evidence that for some time he kept a tavern or "ordinary," as it was then called. On September 24, 1793, an indictment was brought against him "for retailing spiritous liquors by the small without a license." He evidently continued in the tavern business for in 1797 he was issued a license "to keep an ordinary at his home on Knob Creek." The year after this license was granted, he contracted on the 17th of March, 1798, by a "written agreement" to rent the place for six years to Conrad Suter for \$51.00 per year. Apparently Hazel refused to give Suter possession as is set forth in a suit brought against Hazel. Further difficulties were experienced by Hazel when he sold some property on Knob Creek to Clement Lee and also

deeded the same piece of ground to his stepson, Henry Hall.

It was about this time that Hazel decided to move to Green County. His name disappeared from the tax books of Hardin County and was entered on the Green County records.

In the meantime, four children had been born to Caleb Hazel and the former Widow Hall—Richard, Peter, Caleb, and Lydia. Richard was born May 14, 1786. When the oldest child was twenty years old, the same year that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married in Washington County, Caleb Hazel bought twenty acres of land in Green County, about halfway between Greensburg and Hodgenville. Probably he had been living on this place for the past three or four years.

Some time after the Lincolns moved to Knob Creek in 1811 Caleb Hazel returned and occupied a one hundred acre tract adjacent to the Thomas Lincoln land. In fact, the house of Caleb Hazel was so close to the Lincoln line that the person who later purchased the cabin wondered whether or not it was on his land or the land Lincoln had owned.

Some time previous to Lincoln's school days, Caleb Hazel's wife had passed away, and when he started out on a second matrimonial venture he secured Thomas Lincoln, his next door neighbor, to serve as his bondsman. This bond signed by Thomas Lincoln October 12, 1816, is one of the last official acts of Thomas Lincoln in the state of Kentucky as the family moved to Indiana within the next month or so.

An endorsement on an early record in the Hardin County court shows that when Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky he stored "about forty bushels of corn in the loft of the house that Caleb Hazel now lives in."

Hazel's new bride was Mary Stevens. She certified in an oath to the county clerk that her age "is far above the demands of the law." It was just previous to this second marriage in 1816 that Hazel became the school teacher of Abraham Lincoln. He was then a widower and must have been about 55 years of age. He had been a member of the South Fork Baptist Church but was given a letter of dismission about the time the church was divided over the slavery controversy. He probably united with the Little Mount Anti-Slavery Church which was organized at that time and with which Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lincoln were affiliated.

We learn from one of the descendants of Caleb Hazel that "he was what

the old people called a school teacher. Our grandfather Hazel was a good scholar for his time and had many fine books leather bound. I believe they were his father's books brought from Virginia." There are several examples of Caleb Hazel's handwriting in the records of the Hardin County court. There is evidence that he was not only a good scribe but a good grammarian as well. There is no question but what he was able to contribute very much to the early educational training of Abraham Lincoln.

It should not be overlooked that he was very closely connected with the Hanks family through his marriage with Elizabeth Hall. Letters from his descendants, which are now before me, claim that the Halls, Hankses, and Hazels all came into the Kentucky country together and were neighbors back in Virginia. There is evidence that he was a friend of the pioneer Joseph Hanks. We have observed that two of his stepchildren married two of Joseph Hanks children, William Hanks and Nancy Hanks, said to be uncle and aunt of Abraham Lincoln's mother. One of Caleb Hazel's own children and a son of William Hanks married sisters.

When Abraham Lincoln went to school to Hazel he was no stranger to the teacher. Hazel was not only well acquainted with the child's parents but he had known the boy's grandparents as well. The Knob Creek school must have been made up, very largely, of cousins. Among these cousins were some of Hazel's own grandchildren.

As the first school teacher of Abraham and his sister Sarah was at least fifty years old when he taught them and as Hazel himself was fifty-five when he taught the children of Thomas Lincoln, the future president's first formal instruction was cared for by men above middle age.

Hazel's last days were spent in Green County on the farm still known as the old Hazel farm. He died on a boat on the Ohio River while on the way to visit his son Peter Hazel.

There are some descendants of Caleb Hazel who feel that Caleb Hazel, Jr., was the teacher of the president rather than the old gentleman. We know nothing whatever about the scholarship abilities of the younger Hazel and preference seems to have been given to the older man as the teacher of Abraham. Caleb, Jr., was married on January 13, 1813, to Polly Atherton, but is said to have been living in Green County at the time Lincoln was attending the Knob Creek school in Hardin County.

Note: This is the second article in a series on the five school teachers of Abraham Lincoln.