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VIRGINIA ORIGIN OF JOSEPH HANKS, SR.

The last contribution appearing in *Lincoln Lore*, which discussed the history of the Hanks family, was confined to the descendants of the pioneer Joseph Hanks after they reached Kentucky. It was from this family that Nancy Hanks is supposed to have come.

It is the purpose of this monograph to present some of the testimonies of the descendants of the family, and others, bearing on the residence of the pioneer Joseph Hanks before settling in Kentucky. Some of the excerpts exhibited are from letters written to Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and now in possession of the editor of *Lincoln Lore*. Some excerpts from duly authorized public records are used also.

Joseph Hanks, Sr. died in 1793 and named as beneficiaries in his will his widow and eight children. The youngest son, Joseph, was but twelve years old at the time of his father's death.

We learn from a deposition of Daniel Vittertow, filed in a chancery suit as early as 1819, in the Nelson County, Kentucky, Court, that Joseph Hanks, Jr., the youngest son of Joseph Hanks, Sr., returned to Virginia shortly after his father's death. The question put to the plaintiff was as follows: "Did Joseph Hanks, Jr., go to Virginia soon after the death of his father?" The deponent replied, "He did."

The fact that the younger Joseph was but twelve years of age at the time he went to Virginia would imply that someone went with him. The family tradition has it that the widow returned to the old home and this record seems to support that assumption. Evidently, at least one of the older sons had remained in Virginia when the family moved to Kentucky.

Joseph Hanks, Jr. himself made an affidavit in 1817 that reveals he was back in Kentucky again by the year 1799, which is in harmony with a reminiscence of his granddaughter, Mrs. Wilson:

Cannon City, Colorado
Feb. 25, 1895

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

"My grandfather, Joseph Hanks, Jr. was the youngest or near the youngest of the family, was left an orphan at an early age and went to live with an older brother in Virginia, was mistreated by his brothers wife and ran away from Virginia to Kentucky."

Mrs. M. A. Wilson.

Another grandson of the same Joseph Hanks, Jr. also suggests that the old place in Virginia had been kept intact and held by the elder brother whom she names. The excerpt carrying this information follows:

Florence, Colorado,
January 26, 1895.

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

"Grandfather (Joseph Hanks, Jr.) told me that an estate of 660 acres was rightfully his having been unlawfully held by his elder brother, who I think was named Joshua."

J. M. Hanks.

It is interesting to note that the name "Joshua" mentioned in J. M. Hanks correspondence is similar to that of the oldest son mentioned in the will of Joseph Hanks, Sr.

This leads us to inquire about the Virginia site of the original Hanks farm. As an authority for the general location of it we have the testimony of Dennis Hanks, a grandson of Joseph Hanks, Sr. Dennis conveyed this information to William Herndon and Mr. Weik forwarded the quotation to Mrs. Hitchcock:

Greencastle, Ind.
Dec. 10, 1894

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

"Dennis Hanks said that the Hanks's came to Kentucky from the 'Roanoke River Country in Virginia' but he never knew the county. He thought it was Halifax County but was never certain."

Jesse W. Weik.

A Virginia branch of the Hanks family has conserved much valuable historical data. They have evidence which contributes to our knowledge of the original home of the Joseph Hanks group.

Pipers Gap, Va.
Dec. 11, 1895.

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

"My grandfather, Joshua Hanks, Sr., was born in Amelia County, Virginia, in the year 1760 . . . I believe that Joseph Hanks who moved to Nelson County, Kentucky, was a brother

or uncle of Joshua, Sr. Joshua Hanks, Sr., had one or two brothers who moved to Kentucky.

C. L. Hanks.

The testimony of Dennis Hanks in Kentucky and J. M. Hanks in Virginia seem to be in agreement as to the general location of the home and will make it much easier to trace the site or sites occupied by the family.

Another question which confronts us when we reach back into Virginia is the personnel of the group with whom Nancy Hanks migrated to the Kentucky country. Two of the earlier Lincoln biographers, Barrett and Whitney, seem to have gathered some first-hand information on this subject. Mr. Whitney wrote a long letter to Mrs. Hitchcock about the early history of the family. A brief extract follows:

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

"Nancy Hanks Lincoln's father died in Virginia and his widow and daughter came to Kentucky where the widow married Henry Sparrow for her second husband."

H. C. Whitney
Jan. 17, 1895

It is of importance to put alongside of this opinion a reminiscence of J. H. Barrett who had a personal interview with Lincoln about his family history:

Loveland, Ohio
September 14, 1895

Mrs. C. H. Hitchcock:

Mr. Lincoln stated to me in 1861 that his mother was born in Virginia, that she came to Kentucky with some of her relations and not with her parents, but gave me no other clue.

J. H. Barrett.

These testimonies are not in serious conflict with the traditions of the descendants of Richard Berry, guardian of Nancy Hanks, who claim that Nancy and her widowed mother Lucy did not come to Kentucky with the family of Joseph Hanks but with a group of her mother Lucy's people.

The findings here also agree with the testimony of Abraham Lincoln relative to the location of the Hanks family at the time his mother was born. In the autobiography prepared for Scripps he said: "My parents were both born in Virginia."

The next task in this series of studies on the Hanks Family will be confined to the Virginia history of the maternal ancestors of Abraham Lincoln.