

LINCOLN LORE

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MR. AND MRS. T. LINCOLN'S SECOND CHILD

Three children were born to Thomas and Nancy Lincoln within a period of five years. During this time and the interval between their marriage and the birth of the first child, they lived in four different cabin homes in what was then Hardin County, Kentucky. Naturally there would be some confusion in the traditions coming down from their neighbors as to just where the second child was born. There never was, however, any confusion in the mind of this second child as to where his parents told him he had been born.

The Lincoln birthday number of this bulletin offers a proper atmosphere for reviewing what Abraham Lincoln, this second child of his parents, said about his birth place and how his testimony squares up with the evidence discovered in public records which bears upon the location of the Lincoln homes.

Mill Creek Farm

On September 2, 1803, Thomas Lincoln acquired for "one hundred and eighteen pounds in hand paid" 230 acres of land on Mill Creek in Hardin County. He retained possession of this property until the year 1814, although he did not enter it for taxes, during the years 1804 to 1808 inclusive. The inference is drawn that his sister and her husband who lived there with his mother cared for the taxes during this period.

Thomas Lincoln himself wandered about a good deal in early life but probably made the Mill Creek home his headquarters from 1803 until after he was married. He may have brought his bride, Nancy Hanks, to this home in June, 1806, but they did not live there long.

Elizabethtown Cabin

Shortly after Thomas and Nancy Lincoln were married they moved to their own cabin home in Elizabethtown where they lived for two years. Thomas Lincoln's name appears on the tax book for 1807 as the owner of a cabin and a house lot in Elizabethtown. The following year the tax record shows him to have been in possession of a cabin and two house lots. They did not live at any time, however, in the old Elizabethtown cabin often pictured as the birth place of the president. This was the cabin home of Thomas Lincoln's second wife, Sarah Bush Johnston.

The following letter, written by Abraham Lincoln to Samuel Haycraft of Elizabethtown, is in harmony with the tax records and mentions the birth of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln's first child as having taken place there.

Springfield, Ill., May 28, 1860.
Hon. Sam Haycraft:
Dear Sir:

Your recent letter without date is received. . . . In the main you are right about my history. My father was Thomas Lincoln and Mrs. Sallie Johnson was his second wife. You are mistaken about my mother — her maiden name was Nancy Hanks. I was not born in Elizabethtown but my mother's first child, a daughter, two years older than myself, and now long since deceased was. I was born February 12, 1809, near where Hodginsville now is then in Hardin County.

My father has been dead near ten years, but my stepmother (Mrs. Johnston) is still living. I am really very glad of your letter and shall be pleased to receive another at any time.

Yours very truly,
A. Lincoln.

South Fork Home

The preceding letter establishes the place where the first child of Thomas Lincoln was born and avers that the second child says he was not born at Elizabethtown but near Hodginsville. As far as we know Abraham Lincoln never mentioned the Mill Creek property which his father owned. In the many references which Lincoln made to his birth place, in letters and signed statements, there is no evidence that he ever had any doubt as to the place of his birth.

A second letter to Mr. Haycraft is equally explicit and not only points out with more detail the place of his birth, but makes it equally clear that he was not born on Knob Creek. He states quite plainly in the letter from which the following excerpts are taken that his parents told him where he was born.

Springfield, Ill., June 4, 1860.
Hon. Samuel Haycraft:
Dear Sir:

Your second letter dated May 31 is received. . . . The place on Knob Creek mentioned by Mr. Read I remember very well but I was not born there. As my parents have told me I was born on Nolin, very much nearer Hodginsville than the Knob Creek Place is. My earliest recollection, however, is of the Knob Creek place.

Yours very truly,
A. Lincoln.

Inasmuch as two other owners had been in possession of the 300 acre tract for a period of four or five years, it is quite certain that a cabin had already been constructed on the place previous to the acquisition of the property by the Lincolns.

Thomas Lincoln soon found that there was not a clear title to the land and from one of the papers in the case this paragraph is copied:

"Vance has since sold the land to a certain Isaac Bush whom your orator prays to be made a defendant hereto and that sd. Bush sold to one Thomas Linkhorn who is also made a defendant to this bill and who is now living on the land as your orator supposes."

This court record would support the fact that the Lincolns actually occupied the farm they had purchased although they had moved from it at the time the above bill was drawn up.

The tax records for Hardin County for the years 1809 and 1810 include Thomas Lincoln in the Commissioners' Book for the South Fork District and his name appears among his South Fork neighbors.

Knob Creek Farm

Some time previous to May 11, 1811, the Lincolns moved from the farm where Abraham was born. This fact is supported by a document of that date which states directly that Thomas Lincoln was living "in Hardin County on Knob Creek." This would limit their residence on the birth place farm to two years and a half. The tax records for Hardin County for the years 1811 to 1816 inclusive includes the name of Thomas Lincoln in the Knob Creek community group and he lists some land for taxation on Knob Creek.

The Knob Creek home was about nine miles north of the South Fork residence but on the same Old Cumberland Road from Nashville to Louisville. The following excerpt from an autobiographical sketch, prepared for Scripps in June, 1860, gives a brief history of the family connections in the words of the president himself.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, then in Hardin, now in the more recently formed county of LaRue, Kentucky. His father, Thomas, and grandfather, Abraham, were born in Rockingham County, Virginia. . . . The present subject has no brother or sister of the whole or half blood. He had a sister, older than himself, who was grown and married, but died many years ago, leaving no child; also a brother younger than himself who died in infancy. Before leaving Kentucky he and his sister were sent, for short periods, to A B C schools, the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazel.

At this time his father resided on Knob Creek on the road from Bardstons to Nashville, Tennessee, at a point three or three and a half miles south or southwest of Atherton's Ferry, on the Rolling Fork. From this place he removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the autumn of 1816, Abraham then being in his eighth year.