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A JUNE BRIDEGROOM

There could be no June brides without a corresponding number of bridegrooms, although the bridegrooms during this month are so overshadowed by their mates that they appear to be a rather insignificant part of the bride's trousseau.

Thomas Lincoln, father of the President, who was married to Nancy Hanks on June 12, 1806, seems to have been given little consideration by historians either as a participant in the wedding festivities or as being instrumental in shaping the career of his illustrious son—in fact, many of the early biographers claim there was no legal marriage of Lincoln's parents and that the so-called putative father was not worthy of the parentage of Abraham Lincoln.

The lowly esteem in which Thomas Lincoln is held by historians is illustrated by the following descriptive phrases selected from their writings and woven together into one paragraph:

"No more ignorant boy than Thomas Lincoln could be found in the back woods" . . . "a typical 'poor southern white,' shiftless and improvident" . . . "His parents were drifting, roaming people struggling with poverty" . . . "He was no toiler but from all accounts an ignorant shiftless vagabond" . . . "a migratory squatter by invincible tendencies and a very ignorant man" . . . "He reached the age of twenty-seven the year of his marriage a brawny, wandering laborer unlettered and untaught" . . . "amiable enough but colorlessly negative without strength of character and without ambitions worthy of the name" . . . "never succeeding in anything, who could neither read nor write" . . . "not only void of energy but dull" . . . "He was an idler, trifling, poor, a hunter, and a rover" . . . "a poverty-stricken man whom misfortune had seemingly chosen for her own and whose ambitions were

blighted and hope almost dead" . . . "without ambition for himself or his children" . . . "and never seemed to have left the impression of his goodness or of anything else on any man."

Over against this composite character sketch which has been built up entirely by the contributing authors from unreliable traditional evidence there must be placed the historical Thomas Lincoln who has but recently emerged from duly authorized public records and manuscripts contemporary with his time.

The Thomas Lincoln who stood before Rev. Jesse Head on June 12, 1806, in the cabin home of Richard Berry and promised to take Nancy Hanks as his lawful and wedded wife was from a worthy pioneer family and had at this time established himself as one of the substantial citizens of Hardin County who owned real estate and stock and was in good standing with the local merchants.

Thomas Lincoln's father, a captain in the Revolutionary War while living in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, was from a prominent New England and Pennsylvania family. When massacred by the Indians in Kentucky in 1786 he was in possession of 5544 acres of land. After his death the widow lost most of this land through bad land titles.

Thomas Lincoln enlisted to fight against the Indians in 1796 and the following year is found hard at work building a mill dam at Elizabethtown. The original ledger in which his account of work at this time was entered is in the library of the Lincoln Historical Research Foundation. He received over \$150 for the work he did for Samuel Haycraft.

Although the Lincolns suffered financial reverses after the death of the pioneer they were never poverty stricken and the widow kept her family together until all except her youngest son, Thomas, were married.

In 1801 Thomas acquired land in Cumberland County and in 1803 paid one hundred and eighteen pounds for 200 acres on Mill Creek in Hardin County. This same year he served on juries in Hardin County. During the next two years his name appeared on many documents as petitioner for roads, witness on notes, etc. One of his signatures in the Lincoln Historical Research Foundation reveals the fact that he could write a legible hand at this time.

In 1805 he became a Hardin County

policeman and served on the patrol of Christopher Bush. Other records which might be introduced here show Thomas Lincoln to have been a dependable, successful young man who through his own efforts had established a home for his mother and now in 1806 acquired a house lot and cabin in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, where he was to bring his bride.

Within the past year or two there has come to light the old account books of Bleakly and Montgomery, merchants at Elizabethtown, where Thomas Lincoln did some of his trading in preparing for his wedding day.

He had to his credit in the store at the time he began buying material for his wedding wearing apparel, about 49 pounds. While the pound may have been worth something less than \$5.00 at that time his credit with this firm alone must have amounted to about \$200.

The year before he had paid \$8.57 for a new hat, \$2.19 for a pair of suspenders. Several bills of merchandise including carpenters supplies indicate he was plying his trade as a cabinet maker.

The purchases he made which are of most interest to us occurred in May, the month before his wedding. Two bills of goods, one dated on May 16 and the other May 21, are positive evidence that Thomas Lincoln appeared at his wedding well groomed. These two inventories of his purchases forever remove the reflection cast upon his character and industry as set forth by early biographers:

May 16, 1806

	Pounds	Shillings	Pence
2 yards of cloth.....	3	12	0
1 3/4 yds. jeans.....		11	10
1 1/2 yds. Brown Holland.....		4	6
3/4 yd. Scarlet cloth.....		15	0
3 Sticks of twist.....		2	2
3 skeins of twist.....		2	3
3 doz. buttons.....		13	3
3 1/2 yds. Cassimere.....	2	12	3
2 yds. tape.....			9
1 doz. buttons.....		1	6
9 doz. buttons.....		16	2
2 yds. B. H.....		1	4
6 skeins thread.....			6

May 21 and 22, 1806

	Pounds	Shillings	Pence
3 yards Coating.....	3	4	3
1 1/2 yds. Br. Holland.....		4	9
1 3/4 yds. Red flannel.....		7	6
1 1/2 doz. buttons.....		6	3
2 skeins of silk.....		1	6
1 stick of twist.....		0	9
2 skeins of thread.....			6
May 22—Cash.....	33	16	2
	38	1	8

(\$112.70 cts.)

Nancy Hanks, it is quite certain, had reason to feel proud of the June bridegroom when some of this merchandise from Bleakly and Montgomery had been worked up for him by an Elizabethtown tailor, into a suit of clothes made especially for the occasion.