

# LINCOLN LORE

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### GRANDMOTHER LINCOLN

If it could be proven beyond doubt that the grandfather of President Lincoln was married but once it would be possible to present the christian name of Grandmother Lincoln and settle many other questions which have confronted those who have studied the president's ancestry. An early tradition to the effect that Grandfather Lincoln was married twice and had children by both wives makes the problem somewhat complicated.

It is the purpose of this monograph to present the data at hand in hopes that it may bring to light some information about the president's ancestry that is not generally known. It appears that one of the best clues to this problem is in Grandfather Lincoln naming his second son Josiah. As this is not a Lincoln name it was undoubtedly selected from among the names of his wife's people.

#### Bersheba

When Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the president, was massacred in 1786 he left a widow and five orphan children. There is positive evidence that the christian name of his widow was Bersheba and although there is no document extant to verify it, there is a well established tradition that her surname was Herring.

The following brief chronology will present all that the public records confirm about Bersheba:

1780—January 18, signed deed with husband in Rockingham County, Virginia.

1780—March 25, her daughter Ann born.

1781—September 24, voluntarily relinquished her right of dower to Virginia land.

1786—May, her husband massacred by Indians in Jefferson County, Kentucky.

1786—September 8, subscribed rifle to expedition against Indians.

1792—Name on Washington County (Kentucky) tax list.

1794—Name on Washington County (Kentucky) tax list.

1797—Name mentioned on road petition in Washington County (Kentucky.)

1801—February 3, signed certificate for granting of marriage license to her daughter Ann (Nancy) Lincoln.

The early Herring family traditions have it that Bersheba who married Lincoln was the daughter of Leonard Herring and that "her aristocratic father looked with scorn on the alliance and gave his daughter her choice of giving up her lover or being disinherited. The high spirited young woman did not hesitate. She married the man she loved and went with him to the savage wilds of Kentucky in 1782."

Abraham Lincoln was married in 1770 and Leonard Herring was married but ten years before so that it is not likely that one of Leonard's daughters became the first wife of Abraham Lincoln. Bersheba might have been his second wife and married him about 1777, which would give occasion for Bersheba's people objecting to her marrying a widower with four children who was contemplating removing to the wilderness of Kentucky.

The Herring family has now corrected the tradition of their first spokesman and Herring Chrisman a later biographer of the family makes Bersheba the sister of Leonard and the daughter of Alexander. It must be noted, however, the name of Bersheba does not appear in the settlement of the estate of either Alexander or Leonard Herring.

Such names as Alexander, Bethuel, Jesse, Leonard, etc., found in the Herring family are not used by the Lincolns and nowhere do we find the name Josiah among the Herrings.

Inasmuch as the Herrings were Presbyterians their religious background would not harmonize with the Quaker atmosphere which the president said existed in the home of his ancestors.

#### Winters

Gideon Welles prepared for the Galaxy magazine of January, 1877 an article on Abraham Lincoln in which he published the obituary notice of Mrs. Lucy Winters Potter. She was a daughter of William Winters who married as his first wife, Ann Boone, a sister of Daniel Boone. In this obituary notice it was said that in 1747 "William Winters' eldest daughter, Hannah, married in Rockingham County, Virginia, Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of President Lincoln. Shortly before his death in Kentucky he visited his father-in-law at what is now Williamsport and John Winters, his brother-in-law returned with him to Kentucky."

Waddell's "Annals of Augusta County" claims that it was Elizabeth instead of Hannah that Lincoln married, and in 1888 a letter from Staunton, Virginia, written to Col. Durrett claims that Abraham Lincoln's wife

was Elizabeth Winters. It does not appear from the Boone records that Daniel Boone had a sister, Ann, for William Winters to marry but that there was early contacts between the Boones, Lincolns and Winters families can be established.

William Winters witnessed Robert Harrison's will on Linville Creek in 1761 and the following year purchased land in this same community where the Lincolns settled.

When Daniel Boone went to Kentucky his survey book for July, 1776, showed that he made land entries for Abraham Lincoln, Hannaiiah Lincoln and William Winters. One entry shows the Lincoln and Winters land to be adjacent.

#### Boone

When President Lincoln in his autobiographical sketch stated that "The Lincoln family were originally Quakers, though in latter years they have fallen away from the peculiar habits of that people," he must have had some grounds for this statement. Inasmuch as we have been unable to discover any of the male Lincolns who were affiliated with that church it must have been the women who married into the family who gave the Lincolns this Quaker connection.

The very earliest attempt to find the name of the pioneer Lincoln's wife led to the acceptance of Ann Boone for this roll as there was an Ann Boone who married an Abraham Lincoln in 1760. It was the wrong Abraham however. Ann was a cousin of Daniel Boone and a Quaker. This Abraham Lincoln had a sister, Sarah, who married William Boone and she also became a Quaker. The above mentioned Abraham and Sarah Lincoln who married into the Boone family were uncle and aunt of the president's grandfather.

As the Boones were staunch Quakers and close neighbors of the Lincolns in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky the family may have furnished the first wife for the president's grandfather.

Josiah was a common name in the Boone family and a certain Josiah Boone who was born May 6, 1726 and married in 1750 moved to Linville Creek in Virginia about the time the Lincolns moved and acquired land on the same patent where Abraham Lincoln located. Abraham Lincoln and Josiah Boone sold their land about the same time to the same man and moved to Kentucky. This Josiah was a cousin of Daniel Boone. It will be recalled that Abraham Lincoln named his second son Josiah Lincoln.

The Lincoln Historical Research Foundation solicits the aid of those who have any information about the Herring, Winters and Boone families that might throw further light on the identification of the president's Grandmother Lincoln.