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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

GRANDMOTHER HANKS

It is admitted generally that the Christian name of Abraham Lincoln's grandmother was Lucy. There is still much confusion, however, about her family name which has been called both Shipley and Hanks before marriage, and both Hanks and Sparrow after marriage.

Duly authorized public records and statements by members of connected families will be introduced in an attempt to clarify the problem of the identification of this grandmother of the president. The approach to the question can be made most satisfactorily by working from the positively known facts back to the traditional evidence.

Mrs. Lucy Sparrow

The first information about the maternal grandmother of Abraham Lincoln to receive attention was submitted by Dennis Hanks. He wrote:

"Her name (Lincoln's mother) was Nancy Sparrow. Her father's name was Henry Sparrow, her mother was Lucy Sparrow, her (Lucy's) maiden name was Hanks, sister to my mother.

"You say why was Nancy called Hanks? All I can say is this, she was deep in the stalk of the Hanks family. Calling her Hanks is probably my fault... I think this is the way if you call her Hanks you make her a base-born child, which is not true." (Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 1866.)

John Hanks "corroborated Dennis on all vital and essential points" about Lincoln's mother and neither one of them ever changed their opinion about the regularity of the birth of Nancy Hanks, although they could not explain why her name was called Hanks.

Henry Sparrow and Lucy Hanks were married by John Bailey in Mercer County, Kentucky, on April 30, 1790. Nancy Hanks at the time of this marriage must have been about five years of age. While there is a possibility that Lincoln's mother as a small child may have gone by the name of Nancy Sparrow during the time she lived with her stepfather, Henry Sparrow, when she left this home, she evidently used her real name, Nancy Hanks.

Miss Lucy Hanks

Dennis Hanks was indirectly responsible for the second theory put forth which, in the minds of early biographers, contradicted his first statement. He claimed that Lucy was one of four daughters of Joseph Hanks. Herndon ignored Dennis' earlier testimony about the regularity of Lin-

coln's mother's birth and claimed that Nancy Hanks was the illegitimate child of a Miss Lucy Hanks, daughter of Joseph Hanks.

The following observations supported by court records refute the theory that Lucy was the daughter of Joseph Hanks.

1. The will of Joseph Hanks names five sons and three daughters living in 1793, and inasmuch as he mentioned "all my children" in one bequest it implies he had named them all, but no one of the three daughters is called Lucy.

2. Before Lucy could marry Henry Sparrow a certificate of her age had to be filed with the county clerk. If Joseph Hanks had been her father he would have been expected to sign this certificate. This he did not do.

3. Upon the marriage of Lucy to Henry Sparrow, the court required a bond to be signed and the signature of Lucy's father, or some near relative, would have been necessary. Although the family of Joseph Hanks was living not far away no member of this family signed the marriage papers.

There is one document which seems to support the theory that Lucy was an irresponsible character but when viewed from the proper perspective a different light is thrown on the proceedings. A Mercer County grand jury brought an indictment against her for fornication. She was never brought to trial, however, because her marriage to Henry Sparrow seemed to have removed the cause of the complaint.

It is very likely that she was living with Sparrow as his common law wife, not an unusual occurrence in the wilderness, and action was brought to bring about a marriage contract. The fact that she raised a family of eight children, two of them ministers, would not indicate her character was as debased as some authors have supposed.

Except for this alleged misconduct on the part of Lucy, there would be no indication that the birth of Nancy Hanks was irregular.

Mrs. Lucy Hanks

All the members of the Sparrow family now living in Mercer County claim that when Henry Sparrow married Lucy Hanks she was a widow.

The editor of Lincoln Lore is confident that when the name of Lucy Hanks was inscribed on the certificate stating that she was of age in 1790, it was signed Widow Lucy Hanks.

The confusion of Dennis Hanks rested in the fact that Lucy was a sister-in-law instead of an own sister to the three Hanks girls.

Furthermore, members of the Hanks family have stated that the name of this son of Joseph Hanks, who married Lucy, and died before Joseph made his will, was James Hanks. Nancy, it is claimed, was the daughter of James and Lucy Hanks.

When Nancy Hanks married Thomas Lincoln, the legal procedure necessary is in harmony with the con-

tention that at this time Nancy's mother was a widow and had married again.

The Kentucky guardian law called for the appointment of: "first, the father; second, the mother, if unmarried; third, the next of kin giving preference to males." Nancy's father being dead and her mother, Lucy, married again, her Uncle Richard Berry, with whom she was living, would be the legal choice for her guardianship and he so signs her marriage bond with Thomas Lincoln, the prospective groom.

Miss Lucy Shipley

There is much evidence now available to show that Lucy was a daughter of Robert Shipley instead of Joseph Hanks, and that her alleged father was probably her father-in-law. The Hankses lived not far from the Shipley colony in Virginia and the writer has been over some of the land they owned. Later they moved to North Carolina.

On William Caldwell's commissioners' book for Lunenburg County, Virginia, in 1750, the names of Robert Mitchell, Richard Berry, and Robert Shipley appear.

It is said there were six Shipley girls and four of them are accounted for: Rachel, who married Richard Berry; Ann, who married David McCord; Naomi, who married Robert Mitchell; and Lucy, who married James Hanks, and later Henry Sparrow. Some family notes supporting these connections follow:

"Nancy Hanks' mother's name before marriage was Shipley and she was a Virginian. There were, I think, six sisters in the Shipley family but I only remember the names of the husbands of three: Richard Berry, and Robert Mitchell, my grandfather, and Mr. Hanks, Nancy's father." (Charlotte Hobart Vawter letter in 1895.)

"I used to hear my grandmother say that she was a second cousin to Nancy Hanks. My grandmother was Jane Caldwell McCord. Her grandfather was David McCord, whose wife was Ann Shipley. (R. C. Simpson of Vincennes, Letter to editor of Lincoln Lore 1929.)

"My mother was a Mitchell, a first cousin of President Lincoln's mother, their mothers were Shipleys from North Carolina... Nancy Hanks, Abraham Lincoln's mother, went to live with Uncle and Aunt Richard Berry." (Sally Shipley Mitchell in Louisville Courier Journal, Jan. 5, 1881.)

There is no evidence that even suggests that Nancy was the daughter of Miss Lucy Shipley before she married James Hanks so that but one of the names introduced in this monograph must be eliminated. There is no dependable evidence to show that Lucy was ever a Miss Lucy Hanks. She was first Miss Lucy Shipley, next, Mrs. Lucy Hanks, and then Mrs. Lucy Sparrow. This is the person who we believe was the maternal grandmother of Abraham Lincoln.