

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE MASSACRE OF GRANDFATHER LINCOLN

One hundred and fifty years ago, in the year 1786, Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of President Lincoln, was massacred by the Indians while attempting to establish a home in the wilderness of Kentucky. In writing to a kinsman in 1863, when he was fifty-four years of age, President Lincoln said, "The story of his (grandfather's) death by the Indians, and of Uncle Mordecai, then fourteen years old, killing one of the Indians, is the legend more strongly than all others imprinted upon my mind and memory."

There is no monument designating either the site of the Indian attack or the burial place of Grandfather Lincoln. This anniversary year should offer the proper atmosphere for creating interest in the bit of folk lore which most deeply impressed the President, and the ultimate marking of the site.

The editor of *Lincoln Lore*, through his personal researches over a period of a great many years, has made several significant discoveries which should allow dependable conclusions to be drawn with respect to the time and place of the massacre and the probable burial place of the pioneer.

### *Time of the Massacre*

The President in his brief statements about the massacre was under the impression that it occurred about 1784, but we are now able to fix the date definitely as the month of May, 1786. Mordecai Lincoln, oldest son of the pioneer, who was present at the time of the massacre, stated on oath in an affidavit filed in the Nelson County Court House, "Abraham Lincoln departed this life May, 1786, without will."

### *The Farm on Which Lincoln Was Killed*

With the date definitely established the next task would be to locate the land of the Lincolns where the massacre took place.

The first land entry the pioneer is known to have made in Kentucky was on May 29, 1780, and it included a small improvement, or cabin, on Long Run, Jefferson County. On May 7, 1785, one year before the massacre, Lincoln arranged for the surveying of the land and his name appears on the surveyor's report as "marker." The names of his second son, Josiah, about twelve years of age, and Hananiah Lincoln, a cousin, serving as "chain carriers," also appear on the report. The presence of this small boy with his father on the farm the Lincolns owned should be sufficient evidence to prove the family was living there at that time. Further confirmation of the pioneer Lincoln's residence in Jefferson County is the appearance of Hananiah Lincoln's name on Jefferson County juries for October 4, 5, 6, and 7, 1785, indicating that he was a resident of Jefferson County Kentucky in the year 1785.

### *The Home at Hughes Station*

All versions of the story are in agreement that the pioneer and his sons were at work on their own farm. In the deed of conveyance at the time Mordecai Lincoln sold the Long Run farm it was described as "400 acres of land lying in the county aforesaid (Jefferson) on Long Run, a water of Floyd's Fork near where the Hughes Station was." Bland W. Ballard who lived near Hughes Station gave to Col. Durrett, early Kentucky historian, this story of a massacre which occurred at Hughes Station. Col. Durrett copied the information on a plat of the station which he had drawn:

"Bland W. Ballard states that the station (Hughes Station) was erected by Morgan Hughes in 1780; that it stood on Long Run in Jefferson County not far from the Baptist Meeting House; and it consisted of eight cabins and four block houses at the corners and that it was a weak fort poorly built. In 1786 a man was killed here by an Indian, while he was coming to the station from his land nearby on Long Run, where he had been putting in

a crop. His family resided in the station and soon after his death the widow and children removed to Washington County."

As Bland W. Ballard died as early as 1853 before the stories of the Lincoln massacre as remembered by the President were available, his testimony could not have been influenced by the fame of Lincoln. Some years after Ballard's testimony, however, Col. Durrett, having learned of the story of Lincoln's grandfather, wrote this query in pencil on the same piece of paper: "Query. Might not this man thus killed have been Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the President?"

In Mr. Durrett's own papers he might have found a satisfactory answer to this query if he had observed that on a subscription list of donors to the expedition against the Wabash Indians commanded by General Clark dated September 8, 1786, there appeared among the subscribers the name of "Widow Lincoln" who had presented to the expedition a gun valued at eighteen pounds. This was three or four months after the massacre of her husband. On this same subscription list appeared the name of Bland Ballard, Col. Durrett's informer, and many other citizens of the Hughes Station community.

### *The Grave of the Pioneer*

When the one-acre tract within the boundary of the pioneer Lincoln's four hundred-acre Long Run farm was set aside for a church and burial ground cannot be definitely ascertained. A deed recorded in the Jefferson County Court signed on March 6, 1834, contains this clause "Except one acre of the aforesaid tract of land (formerly Lincoln's) whereon the old Long Run meeting house now stands."

Whether or not there was a meeting house there as early as the pioneer Lincoln's death or whether his interment and possibly others caused the one acre to be set apart is problematical. All the tradition and folk lore in the community is agreed on this one point—that the grandfather of President Lincoln is buried somewhere within the boundaries of the original one-acre plot set apart within the same tract of land the pioneer Lincoln acquired in 1780. The exact location of the grave within the cemetery is not known.

### *The Widow's Removal*

Hananiah Lincoln, the pioneer's cousin, in the fall of 1783 entered two tracts of land in what later became Nelson and still later Washington County. One of these was on the south side of Beech Fork, the other on the east side of Cartright's Creek. He moved to one of these tracts some time previous to July, 1786. The Fee Book of Jefferson County makes this note opposite the name of Hananiah, a former resident, "No inhabitant, lives in Nelson County."

It is very likely that this was the relative living in Washington County who caused the Widow Lincoln to move there. There is no evidence whatever that Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer, ever owned land in Washington County. Hananiah Lincoln married in 1787. In 1792 Mordecai Lincoln entered one hundred acres of land on Beech Fork in his own name. The following year, his father's estate having been settled, he entered several tracts he had inherited from his father, but no land in Washington County was mentioned. The same year, 1793, the Widow Lincoln's name appeared on the tax list but no land was listed.

The appraisal of Abraham Lincoln's estate was not made until three years after his death, and at that time the personal property had been moved to the Beech Fork home. The settlement of the estate was cleared through courts of Nelson County, as it was here the widow was living, in that section which later became Washington County.