

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

No. 399

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

November 30, 1936

LINCOLN'S SHIPLEY ANCESTRY

The Shipley Family seems to hold the key to the mystery surrounding the identity of at least one and possibly both of Lincoln's grandmothers. That there was some direct connection between the Shipley's and Lincoln's is evident from available documents. Mary Shipley and Lucy Shipley have been named as the paternal and maternal grandmothers respectively of Abraham Lincoln. Mary is said to have been the wife of the pioneer, Abraham Lincoln and Lucy, the wife of James Hanks.

Mary Shipley

Honorable John L. Nall, born in 1830, a member of the Kentucky Legislature, wrote in 1895: "My grandmother was a daughter of Mary Shipley Lincoln and a sister to Thomas Lincoln, the father of the president." Records discovered in recent years, however, prove conclusively that the widow of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln was named Bersheba and not Mary. Bersheba's surname has not been definitely affirmed and while tradition says it was Herring it may have been Shipley. Thomas, father of the president, very likely was the son of an earlier marriage of the pioneer Lincoln. This might be responsible for the Mary Shipley contact.

It is impossible to explain Mr. Nall's confusion, yet it does not seem likely that he could have been correct in calling president Lincoln's paternal grandmother a Shipley. However, Daniel Boone, close friend and relative of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln did visit the Shipley community in Virginia before 1770, and there is a possibility that Lincoln was with him.

Lucy Shipley

As early as 1873, Mrs. Charlotte Hobart Vawter, an educated and cultured woman, wrote about the maternal ancestry of Lincoln. She claimed that her grandmother, Sarah Shipley Mitchell, was an own cousin of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, and that both girls were brought up in the home of their aunt, Rachel Shipley Berry. She always insisted that this Rachel Shipley Berry, Lucy Shipley Hanks and her own grandmother, Naomi Shipley Mitchell were sisters, the daughters of Robert and Sarah Shipley. Two other sisters, Ann Shipley

Sloan and Margaret Shipley McCord have been discovered who were, without any doubt, the daughters of Robert and Sarah Shipley.

It is evident that in all three states, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, where Robert Shipley lived, there has been one or more Hanks families in the immediate communities. When the migrations from North Carolina to Kentucky took place, Naomi Shipley Mitchell was massacred by the Indians and her daughter, Sarah made captive. Robert Mitchell, husband of Naomi, signed a certificate which affirmed that Lucy Hanks was above the age of twenty-one at the time of her contemplated marriage to Henry Sparrow. Descendants of Henry Sparrow claim Lucy was a widow at the time of the marriage and there is one bit of evidence on the marriage papers which seems to affirm this. It is well known that Richard Berry, son of Rachel Shipley Berry signed the marriage bond of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, as the guardian of Nancy.

An attempt to discredit entirely the work of Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock, who first called attention to the Lincoln-Shipley connections has caused some students of Lincoln to believe there was no such family as the Shipleys connected with the Lincoln story.

It is the purpose of this bulletin to give some references which refer to Robert Shipley, born in 1713, who was in the opinion of the editor of Lincoln Lore, the maternal grandfather of Abraham Lincoln.

Robert Shipley Chronology

Maryland

1713, October 9—Born in Queen Caroline Parrish.

1736—Robert's father held Pew 11, and William Hanks, Pew 28, in Christ Church, Queen Caroline Parrish.

1745, February 25—Land grant in Baltimore County.

1748, April 28—A daughter, Naomi, born.

Virginia

1750, July—Name on military list, Lunenburg County, with Robert Mitchell and Richard Berry.

1754, May 4—Signs note in Lunenburg County.

1755, May 31—Buys bill of goods, Lunenburg County.

1756, April 19—Buy goods in Bedford County.

1757—Defendant in law suit.

1758—Private in Bedford County militia, Edward Shipley on same list.

1759—His name with Edward Shipley and Elizabeth Shipley appear on Roger's will.

1760, September—Defendant in law suit.

1761, August—Son, Robert, Jr., plaintiff in law suit.

1762, May 26—On jury in Bedford County.

1763, August 1—A tithable on tax list in Bedford with his son, Robert, Jr., Robert Mitchell, and several McCords.

1764, August—On commission book.

1765—Patent for land.

1766, February 7—Sells land in Bedford to Robert Irvine.

1766, March 31—Land transaction in Baltimore County, Maryland, refers to Robert Shipley, formerly of Maryland, as residing in Bedford County, Virginia.

1766, October 5—His daughter, Anne Shipley McCord's first child born.

1768—Name appears on R. Irvine's "lists of hands" to work roads.

1769, May 10—Edward Shipley and Robert Shipley, Jr., both buy land from Thomas Daugherty.

1771, April 30—Joins with wife, Sarah, in sale of land to Daniel Mitchell, Jr.

North Carolina

1772, April 18—His daughter, Anne, joins with her husband, David McCord, in sale of land to Robert Shipley, Jr., with Edward and George Shipley as witnesses to deed.

1773, April 26—His daughter, Naomi Mitchell's first child born.

1776, April 12—His daughter, Anne, joins with her husband, David McCord, in sale of land, joining Shipleys, to her brother-in-law, Robert Mitchell.

1777, September 6—Son, Robert, Jr., and his wife, Rachel, sell land.

1778, October 12—His daughter, Margaret, joins with her husband, Robert Sloan, in sale of land.

1789, September 25—He sells land joining the property of David McCord.