

LINCOLN LORE

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FREEHOLD—PILGRIMAGE STATION NUMBER TWO

New Jersey was the objective of the first migration of Abraham Lincoln's ancestors who settled in New England in 1637. Two brothers, Mordecai and Abraham, the former the great-great-grandfather of the President, established themselves in Monmouth County, New Jersey, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They may have arrived as early as 1710 and positively not later than 1714.

In 1708, a writer describing Monmouth County makes this statement: "There's a new town in the county called Freehold, which has not been laid out and inhabited long. It does not contain as yet above forty families and as to its Out Plantations we suppose they are much the same in number with the rest and may count it about 30,000 acres."

Where Mordecai and Abraham first settled in the county is not definitely known. They may have lived on several different tracts but in 1720, Mordecai is mentioned in a deed as living within the area then known as Freehold, Monmouth County. Richard Saltar, his father-in-law of the same county, sold him four hundred acres of land that year on the Machaponix River. Sometime previous to 1714, Mordecai Lincoln had married Hannah Saltar of Monmouth County who was just his own age, both parties having been born in 1686.

The Saltar Family

Richard Saltar, father of Hannah, appears on the records of Monmouth County, New Jersey, in 1687 and settled there some years earlier. In 1697, he was residing in Freehold and had a mill there. He also owned a tract of land about this time at Imalaystown where he also built a mill. The court records refer to him as the "King's Attorney" and later he became a justice and then a judge of Monmouth County. He was also a member of the Assembly.

Richard Saltar married Sarah Bowne, who was born at Gravesend, Long Island, on November 27, 1669. She was a daughter of Captain John Bowne and Mary Holmes Bowne. Richard and Sarah had nine children, seven boys and two girls. The two girls were named Deborah and Hannah. The latter was born in Monmouth County, April 24, 1686.

John Bowne was a merchant of Middletown, New Jersey, who made his will in 1714 and bequeathed the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds to his niece, Hannah Saltar Lincoln. Mordecai Lincoln's name appears in the inventory made of Capt. John Bowne's estate. A letter written by John Saltar, brother of Hannah Saltar, to Obediah Bowne, executor of John Bowne's estate, mentions "my brother Lincoln."

Mordecai's oldest son, John Lincoln, the great-grandfather of President Lincoln, was born at or near Freehold. There were also five daughters born to Mordecai and Hannah Saltar Lincoln in Monmouth County, New Jersey.

Home Sites

Although the location of some of Mordecai Lincoln's land is known, the site of anyone of his homes has not been positively identified. There is one spot about one mile from Clarksburg which is pointed out as the actual location of the Lincoln's old residence on what used to be known as the Larry Highland Farm and now called the Cahill Place. It is on the road from Clarksburg to New Sharon. There is a strong probability that Mordecai Lincoln lived here at the time he removed from the state.

Mordecai's brother, Abraham Lincoln, is said to have operated a blacksmith shop on the Cream Ridge road and the old stone shop still stands to mark the site of the Lincoln's iron forge.

Still another old building more than two hundred years old that may have some historical association with the Lincolns is an old farm house about two miles from Clarksburg on the Allentown road. Some have wondered if this could have been one of the old Saltar homesteads.

Burial Grounds

One marker which designates an actual spot where the Lincolns are known to have been is the tombstone of Deborah Lincoln. It stands in what is known as the old Jemison burying ground located on top of Covell Hill about two miles from Clarksburg on the road which leads to Allentown. It is the tombstone of a child, the inscription follows:

Deborah
Lincoln
Aged 3y 4m.
May 15, 1720

One investigator who has viewed the stone states that the age of the child is inscribed six years instead of three years. Local tradition states that the child's mother was buried in the same cemetery. We know that Hannah Lincoln, wife of Mordecai Lincoln, had a sister, Deborah Saltar, and possibly this child was a daughter of Hannah's named for her sister, Deborah. Hannah Lincoln passed away about seven years after the death of the child Deborah but by that time she was living in Pennsylvania and it is not likely her body was brought back for burial.

Religious Influences

Apparently it was in Monmouth County that the Lincolns first intermarried with members of the Baptist church, a religious body which was to greatly influence the Lincoln family for the next three or four generations. It has been observed that Hannah Saltar, who married Mordecai Lincoln, was the daughter of Lydia Holmes Bowne. Lydia's father was Obadiah Holmes, who was publicly whipped in Boston for preaching doctrines contrary to the established church and later became the minister of the First Baptist Church of Newport, Rhode Island. Members of the Saltar family in New Jersey were also united with the Baptist Church. Sarah Saltar is noted as a member of the Baptist Church of Middleton as early as 1713.

The Quakers were also active in the community where the Lincolns lived and the old East Branch Quaker Church on the road from Clarksburg to Allentown stands as a monument to their loyalty and industry. Tradition claims Abraham, brother of Mordecai Lincoln, belonged to this church. It will be recalled that President Lincoln referred to the Quaker inclinations of his ancestors.

It is quite certain that a generation of the Lincolns lived in Monmouth in the environs of Freehold and possibly at one time not far from the point about midway between Freehold and Allentown, at a place now known as Clarksburg. The duration of the families' residence in the county could not have been much more than ten years as they migrated to Pennsylvania in 1720. Here, however, Mordecai Lincoln married and here the great grandfather of Abraham Lincoln was born.