

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.

Number 428

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 21, 1937

BOYERTOWN—PILGRIMAGE STATION NUMBER THREE

The extent of Abraham Lincoln's knowledge of his Colonial forebears is suggested in a letter which he wrote to Solomon Lincoln in 1848 in which he said: "We have a vague tradition that my great-grandfather went from Pennsylvania to Virginia, and that he was a Quaker. Further back than this I have never heard anything. It may be no harm to say that 'Abraham' and 'Mordecai' are common names in our family."

The first two names we meet in the Pennsylvania history of the Lincolns are Abraham and Mordecai, the latter the father of the great-grandfather mentioned by the President in the letter to Solomon Lincoln. There are at least four places in that part of Pennsylvania where the family established their home sites, which should receive some attention by Lincoln students. Boyertown offers the best station base for visiting these sites as one approaches the Pennsylvania Lincoln country from the East.

Coventry Home

The first evidence of Mordecai Lincoln's removal from New Jersey to Pennsylvania is from the tax lists of Chester County, Pennsylvania for the year 1720. His name also appears in 1722, 1724, and 1725. It is apparent that during these five years he was located near the branches of French Creek and Brandywine in the township of Coventry.

It was evidently the iron industry which beckoned him to Pennsylvania and caused him to settle in or near Coventry in the very heart of the iron country. In 1722 he entered into partnership with Samuel Null, an "iron monger," and William Branson, a merchant of Philadelphia. The company owned a forge, engines, and a dwelling house. Three years later, on December 14, 1725, Mordecai sold his interest in the business for five hundred pounds.

The duration of Mordecai Lincoln's residence in Chester County is not definitely known but he is mentioned in a deed as having been living there as late as May 26, 1726. At this time he purchased some more land back in New Jersey and there is a possibility he may have returned there for a few months. His last child by Hannah Saltar Lincoln was born in February, 1727, and shortly after the birth of the child his wife died, whether at Coventry or not, we do not know. Mordecai's residence in Chester County, Pennsylvania, could not have been for a period of more than seven years.

Amity Home

Before the close of the year 1727, Mordecai Lincoln had settled in Oley Township, of Philadelphia County, where he was serving as a road surveyor. Two years after the death of his wife, Hannah, in 1727, he married Mary Robeson. A year later, in 1730, he purchased a three hundred acre tract of land which was a part of his father-in-law, Robeson's, original grant. A change of township lines brought his farm within Amity Township, Philadelphia County. In later years, further boundary changes included the farm in Exeter Township, Berks County. Mordecai Lincoln was dead before this Exeter boundary was changed in 1842 and Berks County was not yet established so we have called the Mordecai Lincoln residence the Amity Home.

Mordecai Lincoln either built a new home or added to the old one on his three hundred acre tract sometime after his purchase of the farm as the stone structure bore in the gable this date, 1733. The house is still standing and in a good state of preservation but the date in the gable has been obscured. This is the most important landmark of Lincoln's ancestors in Pennsylvania. Although Mordecai survived but three years after the house was completed it was here that his children by his second wife were born and here he passed away in the month of

May, 1736. He resided at Amity altogether about nine years.

Caernarvon Home

When Mordecai Lincoln died in 1736, his oldest son, John, was but twenty years of age. John may have gone back to New Jersey upon inheriting from his father three hundred acres of land in Middlesex County, New Jersey. Where he was living when he married Mrs. Rebecca (Flowers) Morris, on July 5, 1743, is not known. Neither is it known where he was living when his first son, Abraham, was born on May 13, 1744. Abraham was the grandfather of President Lincoln, for whom the President was named.

We first find record of John in Pennsylvania on October 9, 1746. He is referred to in a deed of that date as of "Caernarvon" in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Two years later he sold his New Jersey land. The deed revealed that at that time he was living in Caernarvon Township, Lancaster County. This home is said to have been at Monacy Station. It is not known how much longer John lived in Lancaster County but inasmuch as he started buying land in Berks County at this time there is a likelihood that he soon moved to his new possession.

Union Home

The first Pennsylvania home which John Lincoln is known to have purchased was in Union Township, Berks County. It consisted of but fifty acres and he acquired it on October 9, 1746, while living in Caernarvon. In 1754, John Lincoln's name appears in the tax lists of Berks County in possession of land in both Union and Amity Townships.

John Lincoln handled much real estate from 1763 to 1765 and cleared five hundred and thirty-four pounds on his land transactions. The fifty acres which he first purchased in Union Township was the last tract sold and it was disposed of on June 13, 1765. His name disappears from the records of Berks County at this time so that it is likely he removed to Virginia during this year. Altogether the three generations of Lincolns, Mordecai, John, and Abraham, lived in Pennsylvania about forty-five years.

Exeter Meeting House

The substantial stone church in Berks County, Pennsylvania, now known as the Exeter Meeting House, was constructed in 1759. As early as 1718, the Boones and some of their Quaker neighbors who were members of the Gwynedd Monthly Meeting of Philadelphia County established their homes in what became known as the Oley Community, northeast of Reading, Pennsylvania. A small log meeting house was erected in 1726 on an elevation near the northwestern boundary of a tract called Amity. About ten years later, a larger building was erected on the same site. A division of the township in the year 1742 caused the property to be entered in the boundaries of Exeter Township so when the stone building was erected near the site of the old structure it was called Exeter Meeting House.

Fully as interesting as the old church where the Lincolns and Boones attended is the cemetery by the side of the church. As early as 1817 every available space in the cemetery had been utilized for burials. Adjacent acres were not available so soil was deposited to a depth of four feet over the entire cemetery and another tier of burial lots were utilized. There are seven rows of graves in the upper tier. A burial occurred there as late as 1934, when the last male member of the church passed away. In this cemetery, tradition claims there is buried the body of Mordecai Lincoln, great-great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln.