

# 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 429

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 28, 1937

## HARRISONBURG—PILGRIMAGE STATION NUMBER FOUR

Three generations of Abraham Lincoln's forebears resided in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia at one time, among them his own father, who was born there in 1776. In 1848, Abraham Lincoln attempted to learn more about his Virginia relatives and wrote a letter of inquiry to David Lincoln soliciting information about his ancestry. The first letter he wrote to his kinsman follows:

Washington, March 24, 1848

Mr. David Lincoln.

Dear Sir: Your very worthy representative, Gov. McDowell, has given me your name and address, and as my father was born in Rockingham, from whence his father, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated to Kentucky about the year 1782, I have concluded to address you to ascertain whether we are not of the same family. I shall be much obliged if you will write me, telling me whether you in any way know anything of my grandfather, what relation you are to him, and so on. Also, if you know where your family came from when they settled in Virginia, tracing them back as far as your knowledge extends.

Very respectfully,

A. Lincoln

The reply to this letter is not available but a second letter, written by the President about a week later reveals that his kinsman was unable to give him much information about the family which caused Abraham to ask David Lincoln seven direct questions about the family. His last question was, "Do you know anything of your family (or rather I may say our family) farther back than your grandfather?" David Lincoln's grandfather was John Lincoln or as he was commonly called "Virginia John."

John Lincoln, the oldest son of Mordecai Lincoln, was born in 1716 in New Jersey. His family was reared in Pennsylvania and when he was about fifty years old, he decided to establish a new home in Virginia.

Six hundred acres of Virginia land was purchased by John Lincoln on June 1, 1768. This farm was situated in the Shenandoah Valley in what was then the county of Augusta and was in that section of the county that later became Rockingham. The land was located on Linville Creek at a point about twelve miles north of where the county seat of Harrisonburg is situated.

From the deed it appears as if there may have been buildings standing on the farm at the time of the purchase and inasmuch as John, according to the deed, was then living in the county he may have been living on the place at the time of its purchase.

It was some time between June, 1765, the date of John's last land sale in Pennsylvania, and June, 1768, the date

of his purchase in Virginia, that he moved his family consisting of his wife, five sons, and four daughters into the Shenandoah Valley. There is a possibility that his last child, Rebecca, a daughter, was born in Virginia, but likely the others were born in New Jersey or Pennsylvania.

The urge to move into Virginia was probably supplied by the Boones with which families the Lincoln's had intermarried. Squire Boone had first migrated to Virginia in 1750, when his son, Daniel, was sixteen years of age. Later the family moved on to North Carolina. It was Josiah Boone, apparently, who, with his family, accompanied the Lincolns to Virginia, as he settled in Linville Creek about the same time as the Lincolns.

Possibly it was also the Boone family and especially Daniel Boone who urged the oldest son of John Lincoln and some of his brothers to seek out homes in the West. Before John Lincoln had passed away in 1788, at seventy-two years of age, his oldest son, Abraham, the grandfather of the President, had migrated to Kentucky. John lived long enough, however, to see Thomas Lincoln, the father of the President, grow up to the age of six before he bade him farewell.

The outstanding monument in Rockingham County to the memory of the Virginia Lincolns is the large Colonial dwelling built in the year 1800 by Jacob Lincoln, brother of the President's grandfather. It occupied the very spot, we are told, where the original John Lincoln home stood and here, in an earlier structure which occupied the building site, the father of Abraham Lincoln was born.

One who visits this substantial house and observes the broad acres once in possession of the Lincolns will not be mistaken about the place which the Lincolns occupied in Colonial Virginia. The records of the county also reveal that they were one of the most prominent and influential families in the early history of the county.

The graves of Jacob Lincoln and his wife are marked in the family burial ground close by and while tradition states that John and Rebecca Lincoln are buried in the same cemetery their graves are not marked.

In Rockingham County, Virginia, President Lincoln's great-grandfather, John, was buried, his grandfather, Abraham, was married, and his father, Thomas, was born.

While records are available to show that Captain Abraham Lincoln was married in Rockingham County in 1770, the name of his wife is not given in the records. Tradition claims that he married at this time Bathsheba Herring but this has not been substantiated by any contemporary record. We do know that his widow was named Bathsheba but there is also a tradition that she was the wife of a second marriage.