

LINCOLN LORE

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PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S GRANDSON

Little information is available about the only grandson of President Lincoln. He was the son of Robert Todd Lincoln and named Abraham for his grandfather. Upon the boy's death, the prospect of continuing the Lincoln family name was dimmed and no male descendant of the President now lives to perpetuate it.

The three men so closely related, who shared the name Abraham Lincoln, all died tragic deaths and went to their graves prematurely. Grandfather Abraham Lincoln was massacred in Kentucky by the Indians in the month of May, 1786, when he was but forty-two years of age. The President, it will be recalled, was assassinated in Washington on April 14, 1865, being then but fifty-six years of age. The grandson already mentioned died in London on March 5, 1890, while still a youth, after he had undergone an operation for the removal of an abscess.

The death of this seventeen-year-old Lincoln boy in England recalls that two hundred and fifty years before his decease another lad of the same age named Samuel Lincoln started out from his English homeland for America where he was the forebear of many famous descendants. The branch of this family to which President Lincoln belonged passed through nine generations. England saw the beginning of this cycle with the migration of seventeen-year-old Samuel Lincoln and witnessed its consumation with the death of seventeen-year-old Abraham.

This last Abraham Lincoln, son of Robert Todd and Mary Harlan Lincoln, was born August 14, 1873. He was called "Jack", his parents and his most intimate friends using this nickname. His only given name was Abraham, so that "Jack" could not have been a diminutive of a middle name. One of his teachers ventured the suggestion that he was called "Jack" because the family revered the name Abraham to so great an extent that it would not serve for regular intercourse with the boy.

Possibly the boy himself did not like the name any more than the President did, as he never used it in signing his name. His signature was always written A. Lincoln and his handwriting greatly resembled that of his grandfather Lincoln.

A junior member of the Robert Lincoln law firm in Chicago, William G. Beall, said of him, "He was fond of the history of the late war. I have seen him lie on the floor in his father's library with war maps spread out before him, a book open, and study a battle by the hour. He was ready to discuss this situation or that in which General Grant and others had found themselves."

Professor C. N. Fessenden who was in charge of the University school on Dearborn Avenue and who was Jack's instructor for a season, had some very complimentary words to say about him as a student. In 1890 Professor Fessenden was interviewed by a representative of *The Chicago Tribune*. An excerpt from the printed account of the interview follows:

"He came to me when the family moved back from Washington after the Hayes Administration. He staid in the school until the family went to England.

"It was Mr. Lincoln's intention to have 'Jack' go to Phillips Academy at Exeter and then to Harvard. He was so far along in his studies that he could have entered Harvard next year, anyhow, and perhaps this year.

But, of course, his father wouldn't have permitted him to enter so young. His Latin, Greek, and mathematics, however, were really up to a college examination when he left me. He was broadly grounded on English literature, too. Don't imagine that I speak flatteringly. He was the best student in my school. Study came easy to him. He was the first boy in the school to get through his lessons. Then he was ready to help the others. The result was that he was popular. His schoolmates looked up to him besides liking him.

"Some of his chums were: Dick Hatton, son of Frank Hatton; Dwight Lawrence, son of E. F. Lawrence, who lived across the corner from Mr. Lincoln's residence, on the Lake Shore drive and Scott street; Charley King, son of C. B. King; Murray Washburne, son of E. S. Washburne, and Tom Dyer, son of Clarence H. Dyer.

"'Jack' was a grave boy, deliberate in his speech and actions. He had much of the Lincoln blood in his veins. . . . He was up in athletics, and used to lead the boys in the play-ground."

Robert Lincoln was appointed United States Minister to Great Britain in 1889 and served in this capacity until 1893. The family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, daughters Mary and Jessie, and son Abraham, took up their residence in London.

Edward S. Isham, another law partner of Robert Lincoln in Chicago, recalled some interesting facts about "Jack." He said:

"He was a singularly bright and capable boy, and mastered everything he undertook with facility. He is seventeen years old, handsome, manly and intelligent. He was so intellectually capable that he was easily first in his class. He was born in Chicago some time in 1873, I believe, and attended school in Washington and afterward in Chicago. He was taken ill some time in the latter part of November or the early part of December, while attending school in France. An abscess or something of that sort formed, and he had to submit to a delicate surgical operation and blood poisoning followed."

While "Jack" was ill in London, a cable dispatch was sent to America calling attention to the severe illness of the American Minister's son and noting that the Reverend Dr. Joseph Parker, in the course of his prayer at the City Temple on Sunday, February 23, mentioned the boy's illness.

Although the boy had been ill for over three months, he lingered on for nearly two weeks after Dr. Parker's reference to him. The best physicians in Paris and London had been called for consultation, but one of his lungs became involved and he passed away on March 5 at his parents' home, Number 2 Cromwell House, Kensington, London. The body was brought to Springfield, Illinois for burial, but later removed to the family lot in Arlington Cemetery.

This boy's death was a tragedy indeed. One grandfather was the President and America's most loved personality; the other grandfather, Senator James Harlan, was a member of Congress, University President, and noted educator; his own father was the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Few young men contemporary with "Jack" Lincoln gave more promise for an illustrious career than this only grandson of the President.