

LINCOLN LORE

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EARLIEST ILLINOIS SIGNATURE OF LINCOLN

The most important Lincoln autograph discovery of the year was made the first of this month at Decatur, Illinois. An old election petition dated May 26, 1830 and endorsed by the Commissioners of the Macon County Court of June 7, 1830 contains the signature A. Lincoln among the forty-five signers. This is the earliest known writing of Abraham Lincoln as a citizen of Illinois and also the earliest signature extant after he became of age.

The credit for the finding of this rare document should go to Edwin Davis, who was referring to documentary sources in the office of County Clerk Laurence Tagney. The Lincoln National Life Foundation has already been supplied with a photostatic copy of the petition which is printed verbatim in this issue of Lincoln Lore. The document gives the names of those in the community where the Lincolns first settled in Illinois.

The Lincolns migrating into Illinois from Indiana, reached Decatur on March 14, 1830 and on the following day located on the north bank of the Sangamon River, ten miles southwest of Decatur. They were not among strangers, as relations of both Thomas Lincoln's first wife, Nancy Hanks, and his second wife, Sarah Bush were living near by.

The Honorable County Commissioners Court for the County of Macon addressed by the petitioners, consisted of Benjamin Wilson, Elisha Freeman, and James Miller. Wilson's wife was Jane Warrick, sister of "Uncle Billy" Warrick. James Miller was from Grayson County, Kentucky.

It will be observed that the cause of the petition which Lincoln signed, was an appeal to the County Court to change the voting place in Decatur precinct to a more central location. Permenias Smallwood, in whose home the elections had previously been held, may have been a relative through marriage of Sarah Bush Lincoln, whose sister Rachel, married Samuel Smallwood.

It will be of interest to make brief citations about some of those whose signatures appear on the petition, the first group of names to be associated with Lincoln on any Illinois document.

David Miller.—The name of David Miller appears first on the list and he was probably the one who circulated the petition. A year later he was made a county commissioner.

Samuel B. Deweese.—Private in the Black Hawk War. Taken sick while in service.

D. H. Stewart.—Private in Black Hawk War mustered out at Fox River.

S. R. Sheppard.—2nd Corporal in Black Hawk War mustered out at Fox River. He married Mary Hanks.

John Miller.—Second treasurer of Macon County.

William Hall.—Probably the brother of Squire Hall, whose name follows. William and Squire were the sons of Levi and Nancy Hanks Hall. The latter was the daughter of Joseph Hanks and the sister of William Hanks, who married Elizabeth Hall. Elizabeth was the sister of Levi.

J. B. Brown.—Married Sarah Hanks sister of John Hanks.

Squire Hall.—Mentioned above, married Matilda Johnston, step-sister of Abraham Lincoln and migrated to Illinois at the same time the Lincolns moved.

William Hanks.—Probably William, Junior, brother of John Hanks.

Joseph Stevens. — Married Mary Warrick on June 17, 1830, ten days after the election petition was endorsed. If Lincoln courted Mary as has been alleged, it must have been during the three months after he arrived in Macon County.

Andrew W. Smith.—Saw service in Black Hawk War and was a member of the Commissioners Court for many years.

John Dickey.—Early citizen of Macon, married Martha Stevenson.

William Dickey. — Revolutionary War soldier, father of John Dickey.

Thomas Cowan.—In Macon County as early as 1822. One of the Commissioners to locate the county seat of Macon.

I. C. Pugh.—On Board of Commissioners in 1832 and served as Captain in Black Hawk War. Became a general in Civil War. As Justice of the Peace, he married several of the Hankses in Macon County.

James Miller.—A private in Black Hawk War.

Buel Stevens.—It is claimed by the historian, John W. Smith, that a child of Stevens and his wife was the first infant born in Macon County.

David Florey. — Married Isabella Wright. Possibly of the same Wright family that inter-married with the Hankses.

James Johnson.—Promoted to Colonel while serving in Black Hawk War.

John Hanks. — Son of William Hanks and the relative of Lincoln's, who became famous because of the "rail" episode in the Campaign of 1861.

John D. Johnston.—The step-brother of Abraham Lincoln. He was but fifteen years old at the time he signed the petition. The Coles County Order Book for the year 1832 reveals that John D. Johnston served as clerk in the presidential election in that county in 1831. He received 62 cents for his work.

PETITION

To the Hon County Comm Court for the County of Macon

We the undersigned qualified votes in Decatur Precinct earnestly request your honor to change the present place of holding Elections in said Precinct from Permenias Smallwoods to the Court house in Decatur.

26th May 1830

David Miller	M. C. Shaw
Thomas Law	Charles Lewis
Saml. Deweese	S. Semrill
D. H. Stuart	Robert Stewart
S. R. Sheppard	John Dickey
John Miller	William Dickey
William Hall	Thomas Cowan
J. B. Brown	I. C. Pugh
Squire Hall	James Miller
William Hanks	Philip W.
Thomas Cole	Williams
John Biglow	Buel Stevens
Landy Harell	David Florey
Alfred Hall	Moses Hand
William Horen	David Owen
John Pettyjohn	Randolph Rose
Reuben Brown	Isaac Miller
James Martin	Jas. Johnson
H. I. Armstrong	John Ballard
Henry Ewing	Phillip Ballard
Joseph Stevens	John Hanks
John Grimsley	John D. Johnston
Andrew W. Smith	A. Lincoln

Endorsement

Box 172 Granted the 7th
 June 1830
 Filed this 7th June
 1830
 Change of place of
 voting in Decatur
 precinct