

# LINCOLN LORE

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## AN INDIANA AND LINCOLN ANNIVERSARY

There seems to be little or no interest aroused in Indiana over a joint anniversary which will occur in December of this year. It may not appear to be of much importance to the State of Indiana, that on December 11, 1941, the commonwealth reaches its 125th birthday. Possibly there is no significance in the anniversaries of governments except at the intervals of 50 or 100 years.

Another event however, occurred about the time that Indiana came into the Union, which has proven to be of much more than local importance. Practically the whole nation profited greatly because of an immigration which took place sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas in 1816. At this time one hundred and twenty-five years ago Abraham Lincoln, then a lad but 7 years of age, moved with his parents from the slave state of Kentucky to the free state of Indiana. It would be difficult to name a more important episode during his early life than the changing of his boyhood environment from that of a slavery community to the atmosphere of freedom.

Not only was Abraham Lincoln associated with the early history of the state and the commonwealth, but he was also born in the very same year, 1809, that Indiana was set apart from Illinois as a separate territory. At this time also, the territorial legislature, sitting at Vincennes, definitely decided Indiana should remain free from the slavery influence. Pursuant to a congressional enabling act, the Indiana territory adopted a constitution in the month of June, 1816, and on December 11 of the same year it was received into the Union.

Abraham Lincoln literally grew up in the State of Indiana, coming to it at the time the state was established and remaining in it until 1830, which the Indiana Pioneer Association at one time set apart as the concluding year of the Pioneer era. In 1830 the Lincoln family brought to a conclusion their Indiana residence.

When Abraham came to Indiana he was a small lad but 7 years old and there were but 15 counties in the state. When Lincoln left the Hoosier country, he was a grown man 6 feet 4 inches tall, weighing 200 pounds. In the meantime Indiana had grown up and at the time Lincoln left in 1830 sixty counties had been established.

The year 1816 also was an anniversary year for Thomas Lincoln, the father of the President. Forty years before he had been born in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia the same year that the colonies gave birth to the nation. Thirty years had passed since Thomas had been left an orphan by the death of his father in the Kentucky wilderness. Twenty years had elapsed since his first military service to protect the community, in which his widowed mother was living, against the Indians. Ten years previous he had married Nancy Hanks, the wife who now stood by his side ready to share with him the added responsibilities which invariably fell upon the women who lived on the frontiers of civilization. It does not appear as if any student of Abraham Lincoln should pass over the year 1941 without recalling some of the interesting and important anniversaries associated with the pioneer history of the Lincoln family.

While Indiana was sparsely settled in 1816, we must not draw the conclusion that the Lincolns were the first settlers in that region where they decided to make their home. The year before they arrived 318 men paid taxes in Perry County, Indiana where they settled. At the 4th of July celebration that year on the banks of the Wabash 150 people were present, all living from 6 to 12 miles from the New Harmony settlement or the Wabash.

About forty miles east from where Lincoln built his cabin the state capital Corydon was located. About the same distance west of the Lincoln home was Evansville, which town as early as June 21, 1814 advertised the sale of lots stating, "Evansville is in the Midst of a Flourishing Settlement." Princeton, a community to the northwest of the Lincoln country, also advertised a sale of lots in 1814. Practically all of the inhabitants of Indiana were then living within 100 miles of the Ohio River. The territory to which Abraham Lincoln and his parents moved was primarily a Kentucky colony.

It is also known that Thomas Lincoln and his family were not the first of the Lincolns to establish their home in southern Indiana as Austin Lincoln served on a jury in Perry County as early as the month of June, 1815 and his brother Davis Lincoln probably entered the community where Thomas Lincoln was to settle a year or two before the arrival of Abraham's parents. Little attention has been paid to this other Lincoln family which was undoubtedly instrumental in the removal of the Lincolns from Kentucky to Indiana. These two sons of Hananiah Lincoln associated with Thomas while they were residents of Hardin County. Both Austin and Davis Lincoln became prominent citizens of Perry and Spencer County, Davis serving as a Justice of the Peace. The old mill site where they settled and the Lincoln Mill is well known and but a few miles from where Thomas Lincoln established his cabin home.

On May 30, 1924 a great grandson of Hananiah Lincoln, father of Austin and Davis, made this affidavit:

"To Whom It May Concern. I hereby make the following statement: My father, John Crawford Lincoln, son of Moses Jeffries Lincoln, met President Lincoln at Danville, (probably Charlestown) Illinois, when Lincoln and Douglas met there in their political debate, and Abraham Lincoln related some of Moses Jeffries Lincoln's family history and in the conversation told him that two of Moses Jeffries Lincoln's brothers (Austin and Davis) had settled in Spencer County at about the time Thomas Lincoln settled there.  
(Signed) "F. M. Lincoln, Son of John Crawford Lincoln".

The Hanks family, which is usually associated with the Lincolns in Spencer County, probably had very little to do with Thomas Lincoln's migration, but it was the news brought back to Kentucky by the sons of Hananiah Lincoln which undoubtedly contributed to the reason for Thomas Lincoln's decision to move into the territory about to become a state.

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of the crossing of the Ohio River by the Lincolns in 1816. If Abraham Lincoln had grown up in a state where slavery was tolerated, it is doubtful if he would have been prepared for leadership in the great struggle that was to follow. When that ferry boat in 1816 pushed off from the Kentucky bank and worked its way across to the Indiana shore, the fate of Abraham Lincoln and possibly the fate of the nation was sealed. A free state provided an environment supplying just those contacts needed for the formative period of Lincoln's life. As Lincoln crossed the Ohio he could not see in those troubled waters a boundary line which would separate two warring peoples. Neither did he have the premonition that his own genius would enable him to quiet the restless waters and that the two divided groups would be welded into a civilization built to a large extent on his own ideals of right and justice.

That inspirational colonial canvas showing the crossing of the Delaware by Washington should be supplemented by some noble artist depicting the crossing of the Ohio by the Lincoln family sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas a century and a quarter ago in the year 1816.