

# LINCOLN LORE

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## TRADITIONAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF LINCOLN'S MOTHER

Nancy Hanks Lincoln, mother of the President, must have had more brothers and sisters than any other human who ever lived, if statements relating to her parentage found in books, magazines, newspapers and Hanks family correspondence could be relied upon. There is available in the archives of the Lincoln National Life Foundation information gleaned from these sources that would credit Nancy Hanks with having at least thirty-five brothers and forty-one sisters when it is generally accepted that she never had a full brother or full sister.

There were a great many women who bore the same maiden name as Nancy Hanks and there may have been some confusion as to their identity, as many of these women lived contemporary with Mrs. Lincoln and from the viewpoint of chronology could very well fit in the picture. Possibly the primary reason why so many traditional, close relatives have been discovered is because the ancestral line of Nancy Hanks has never been traced accurately to the satisfaction of the careful students of Abraham Lincoln's lineage. The chief interest in Hanks genealogy is to discover the point of contact with the family of the President's mother.

Inasmuch as *Lincoln Lore* does not offer sufficient space to elaborate on the evidence in any controversial subject, the claim to kinship with the mother of Lincoln by many branches of the Hanks family in America cannot be successfully discussed in this bulletin. The *Lincoln Kinsman*, the monthly publication of the Foundation, is available for such discussions and in the current issue there has just appeared the first of a series of articles which will consider the testimony of many of these family units which claim to have furnished so many brothers and sisters for Nancy Hanks.

The July *Kinsman* offers a good illustration of what may be expected in this series as it analyzes the statement made by David Starr Jourdan in his book *Your Family Tree*, which claims that Abraham Lincoln, through his maternal ancestry was descended from royalty. At least four brothers and five sisters to Nancy Hanks are contributed by this theory, and in the tabulation of a few of the traditional brothers and sisters of Lincoln's mother, it might be well to start with the descendants of John and Margaret (Williams) Hank. The names of the parents of the traditional brothers and sisters are in italics.

### *John and Margaret (Williams) Hank*

Through Sarah Evans, who married a Hank, the alleged royal descent of Abraham Lincoln is traced. Most early biographers chose for the parents of Lincoln's mother, a son of Sarah, named John, who married Margaret Williams. They were the parents of these nine children who would be eligible for brothers and sisters of Nancy: four boys—John, Caleb, Joshua and William; five girls—Jane, Susannah, Ellen, Margaret and Hannah.

### *Abner and Elizabeth (Dale) Hanks*

A Des Moines newspaper in 1922 published the story of a local woman whose "grandmother was Sarah Hanks, sister of Nancy Hanks, the mother of the Martyred President. She married a "[Corbin] Utterbach while Nancy married a Lincoln." In this instance the traditional Nancy must be credited with a total of eighteen brothers and sisters; six boys—Thomas, John Dale, Sydnor, Melton, Washington and David; twelve girls—Matilda, Elizabeth, Alosey, Mary, Mariah, Suzanne, Sarah, Martha, Caroline, Grace, Amanda and America.

### *Richard and Pheobe (Hayes) Hanks*

Mark Dellehay, one of Lincoln's political friends married Louisiana Hanks, daughter of Joshua Hanks. Louis-

iana had a sister named Indiana. The family tradition preserved in letters written in 1894 is that "Joshua Hanks, the son of Richard, was a brother to Nancy Hanks, mother of Abraham Lincoln. This family contributes nine more prospective brothers and sisters: six boys—John, Joshua, James, Thomas, David, Nathan; three girls—Martha, Mary and Ann.

### *William and Sarah (Ralph) Hanks*

A Wisconsin woman seeking to trace her ancestors informed Mrs. Hitchcock on September 4, 1924 that a kinsman said, "John Hanks was a brother of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, mother of Abraham Lincoln." John's parents, William and Sarah, had three sons—Fleetwood, John and Benjamin; six girls—Rachel, Nancy, Rosannah, Leah, Mary, and Sarah, nine children in all.

### *Abraham and Lucy (Jennings) Hanks*

The old revolutionary soldier, Abraham Hanks, is often credited with being the father of Nancy Hanks, as one of the descendants puts it, "The revolutionary soldier was named Abraham Hanks. His sons were Luke, John, and William. He also had a daughter who was the mother of Abraham Lincoln." A revision of the list of daughters would add Polly and Hanna as the daughters of Abraham, in place of Nancy, so five children, three boys and two girls are known to have lived in this family.

### *John and Mary Hanks*

Captain Stephen Beck Hanks, famous for nearly seventy-five years, as captain and pilot on the upper Mississippi, makes this statement in the Burlington, Iowa *Post* for April 2, 1921, with respect to a child of his grandfather, "The girl was named Nancy and she became the wife of Thomas Lincoln and later the mother of our martyred president, Abraham Lincoln." The seven children, four boys—Joshua, John, Nathan, Thomas and three girls—Sally, Charlotte, Polly, not including Nancy, are often named as brothers and sisters of Mrs. Lincoln.

### *Joseph and Nancy Hanks*

With most of the traditions in this issue of *Lincoln Lore* before her, it is not strange that when Mrs. Hitchcock in 1895 discovered the will of Joseph Hanks with a daughter Nancy, in the county adjacent to where the marriage bond of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks appeared, and also adjacent to the county in which Abraham Lincoln was born, that she immediately drew the conclusion that Joseph and Ann Hanks must have been the father and mother of the President. The eight children of Joseph and Ann consisted of five boys—Thomas, Joshua, William, Charles, Joseph and three girls—Elizabeth, Mary and Nancy, however, the Nancy named here was not the mother of the President.

### *Luke and Ann Hanks*

One South Carolina tradition about the parents of Lincoln's mother gives Luke and Ann Hanks as her parents. Arthur's *History of North Carolina* reviews the tradition. There were eleven children, four sons and seven daughters in this family, four boys—Thomas, Luke, Robert, John; seven daughters, Elizabeth, Nancy, Martha, Polly, Susan, Lucretia, Judith. The daughter Nancy, supposed to be the mother of Lincoln, married a man by the name of South.

If more space were available this list might easily be increased to show a hundred brothers and sisters of Nancy Hanks, as it is, seventy-six persons are mentioned whose hundreds of descendants have traced their family connections with the Abraham Lincoln through his mother, Nancy Hanks.