

# LINCOLN LORE

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## DOCUMENTS FOR THE LINCOLN ANCESTRAL RECORDS

There seems to be a reluctance on the part of many historians to lay aside purely traditional data, though it may be contradicted by duly authorized public records. While some errors do creep into the manuscripts, they are usually much more accurate than memories. If we are to have a dependable history of Lincoln's ancestry, it must be gleaned from contemporary writings rather than from handed down reminiscences.

There has never been an adequate appreciation of the valuable historical source material to be found in the papers recording the proceedings of the numerous land suits tried in the pioneer day. This is especially true in Kentucky where the title to property was so uncertain, because of overlapping surveys and the haphazard method of making land entries. Affidavits made by the earliest pioneers and other records kept by county officers contain what is unquestionably our most authentic data relating to the frontiersmen who moved out beyond the Alleghenys.

Apparently Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President, was inoculated with the western fever some time between September 6, 1779 and February 18, 1780. On the former date he acquired a tract of land by purchase to increase the extent of his Shenandoah Valley farm, but on the latter date he sold this estate on Linville Creek for the sum of "5000 pounds current money of Virginia." His wife, Bersheba, joined with him in signing the deed of conveyance. Within three weeks after the sale of the property Abraham purchased his first land warrant good for 400 acres of land in Kentucky, for which he paid 160 pounds. At this rate per acre he would have been able to buy over 12000 acres of Kentucky land with the money received for his Virginia property.

He was not so fortunate in another purchase, however, because land warrant No. 14487, which he acquired on September 26, 1782, cost him 3630 pounds, and it called for only 2268½ acres. There is evidence that he made an effort to enter a tract of land with this warrant and apparently had some kind of an agreement with a certain John Read to have it surveyed. However, at the time of the pioneer Lincoln's massacre by the Indians no settlement between Lincoln and Read had been made and the transaction between them, whatever it may have been, was soon in litigation.

Possibly the most valuable collection of papers extant, referring to Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the President, was discovered by the editor of *Lincoln Lore* many years ago in the suit which Mordecai Lincoln, oldest son of the pioneer, had brought against the heirs of John Read. It was an attempt to secure a title to a part of the 2269½ acres of land which had apparently been lost to the Lincolns, partly through an alleged forging of the pioneer's name to the warrant.

In the bill against Read, Mordecai affirmed that the pioneer "Abraham Lincoln departed this life on May 1786

without will and your orator his oldest son became entitled to the land aforesaid as heir at law to the said Abraham Lincoln." This brief picture settled for all time four very important facts: the date of the massacre, that Lincoln died intestate, that Mordecai was his oldest son, and that the law of primogeniture was in force at the time.

The President was under the impression that his grandfather, for whom he was named, was killed by the Indians in 1784. In a letter written to Solomon Lincoln, on March 6, 1848, Congressman Lincoln stated that his grandfather went to Kentucky "about the year 1782 and two years afterwards was killed by the Indians."

This same suit, *Lincoln vs. Read*, contains a deposition by Thomas Lincoln, of Lexington, Kentucky, brother of the pioneer Abraham, which forever settles the question of how the Lincolns spelled their name.

"Question by complainant (Mordecai Lincoln).

"Do you know how my father Abraham Lincoln spelt his name?

"Ans.—He spelt his name ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"Q. Are you acquainted with Abraham Lincoln's handwriting?

"Ans. I am, having lived near him and seen his writing often.

"Q. Do you believe the signature to assignment on a treasury warrant of 2269½ acres No. 14487 to John Read, Nov. 24, 1783, where it is spelt Abraham Linkorn is the signature of the Abraham Lincoln.

"Ans. I have examined this signature this day in the registers' office and do not believe it is the said Abraham Lincoln's handwriting."

Now a more recent discovery by the editor of *Lincoln Lore* has brought to light a document bearing the actual signatures of the pioneer Lincoln and this John Read. It was signed within one month of the time that the alleged land transaction took place. The endorsement on this newly discovered paper is as follows:

"I do hereby assign over the within note unto Cally George it being for value received of her as witness my hand this 21 Day of December 1783.

"John Read

"Test

"Abrm Lincoln"

The above date and signatures are reproduced in this bulletin from a photostatic copy of the document. It seems to offer added proof that the alleged Lincoln signature on the land warrant assigned to John Read was a forgery.

This 21 Day of Decembe. 1783 —  
Test  
Abrm Lincoln  
John Read

*(Vertical stamp: 1783-1800)*  
*(Vertical stamp: 21 May)*