

# LINCOLN LORE

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## EARLIEST HOME OF THE LINCOLNS IN ENGLAND

The great numbers of Americans who have been located in England during the war has called attention to some of the memorials erected there which are associated with our history, and of course Lincoln has been given special attention. The secretary of The National Trust, D. M. Mathesen, in a letter to the director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, written on September 10, 1943, observed that to the man in the street, "Abraham Lincoln stands out as a great figure in world history who enunciated in unforgettable terms a doctrine of government which is now again at stake and for which we are fighting side by side." This letter was prompted by some new discoveries which have established the location of the earliest home of Abraham Lincoln's ancestors now standing on English soil.

On Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1944, *The Daily Sketch*, published in London, announced that "Col. John Leslie, the coal owner, bought the original site of the home of Lincoln's ancestors, a small piece of land on the outskirts of the village of Swanton Morley in Norfolk." The news dispatch continued "Today he will hand the title deeds over to the marquess of Zetland who will receive them in behalf of The National Trust. After the war the site will be used as a memorial museum for exhibits connected with the Lincoln family."

Supplementing the information about the preservation of the old dwelling there has just come from the press at Norwich, England, a brochure entitled *Swanton Morley Church* by Rev. R. N. Usher, M.A. One chapter of the pamphlet is a discussion of "Swanton Morley and the Lincoln Family," with maps and illustrations which establish the identity of the old building and surrounding property. Francis W. Steer is acknowledged by the author as one of the contributors to the source material he has used. Correspondence passing between Mr. Steer and the Foundation indicates he is still bringing to light new material on the English Lincolns.

The brochure not only gives a fine picture of the church where the Lincoln family attended but also two views of the old residence which Richard Lincoln occupied now known as "The Angel Inn." Supplementing these illustrations is an official plan which is a reproduction of "an actual transfer from the manorial map of Swanton Morley Manor made in 1692." The map shows six separate tracts, all adjacent, which were under the name of Henry Lincoln, grandson of Richard. Richard refers in his will to the residence he was then occupying as the "new mansion of me Richard Lincoln." The best evidence now available seems to suggest the house now called "The Angel Inn" was built about the year 1610, or two hundred years before Abraham Lincoln was born. "The Angel Inn" not only becomes a valuable shrine as the oldest known home of Lincoln's ancestors but it is the very house in which he signed his last will and testament which was indirectly responsible for the migration of some of his descendants to America. Richard Lincoln at the time he made his will in 1615 was married to his fourth wife and by her had three children, Henry, Anne and Elizabeth. He passed away on December 23, 1620. On February 24 following,

the widow Anne Bird Lincoln presented his will for probate. Lea and Hutchinson, joint authors of the book, *The Ancestry of Abraham Lincoln*, made a close study of the Richard Lincoln estate. They noted that "Samuel Lincoln's paternal grandfather (Richard), undoubtedly died possessed of a very respectable estate, and had the bulk of it descended in the ordinary course to his eldest son, the father of our boy-emigrant would have been apparently well-to-do. As it was, his father's fourth marriage ruined his prospects in life and by raising up other hands to grasp the property made of him a comparatively poor man. . . . The question whether the sons would have emigrated had the father been more prosperous opens up a wide vista of speculation."

Lea and Hutchinson also relate with some detail the litigation which took place upon Edward Lincoln's attempt to break his father's will which had bequeathed the bulk of the property to a younger brother. He failed in his purpose and removed to a small two-acre tract of land in Hingham not far away. It was from Hingham that the seventeen year old son of Edward and grandson of Richard migrated to America in 1837 and settled near Hingham, Massachusetts. Samuel was the first American progenitor of the President and was six generations removed from Samuel, or nine generations removed from Richard Lincoln of Swanton Morely.

The preservation of the old homes in which the various generations of Lincolns have lived has been one of the most important factors in creating a factual historical background for the family. One may start with the Springfield, Illinois, home of Abraham Lincoln, now a state shrine, visit the birthplace cabin at Hodgenville, Kentucky, travel over the wilderness road to Rockingham County, Virginia where the old Jacob Lincoln home stands. The back part of this structure was built by his brother Abraham, grandfather of the President, and from whom he originally purchased the property.

From Virginia the trail leads into Berks County, Pennsylvania, where there is located in a fine state of preservation the Mordecai Lincoln home. Even the beautiful colonial residence of Mordecai Lincoln, Senior at Scituate, Massachusetts, although somewhat remodeled, stands as a fine monument to the industry of the New England Lincolns. This Mordecai was the son of Samuel Lincoln who migrated from England in 1637, and whose father Edward probably lived at one time in the old home recently identified in Swanton Morley, England. It is possible that further research may discover even an earlier home of the Lincolns, and if so, it will probably be found at Hingham, England, where Robert Lincoln, father of Richard Lincoln, resided.

A visit to any one of the three ancestral homes located respectively in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts will make one come away with the feeling that Abraham Lincoln descended from a substantial American family.