

LINCOLN LORE

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LINCOLN'S EDUCATION

When Abraham Lincoln prepared his autobiographical sketch of forty-eight words for the Dictionary of Congress in 1859 he used but the one word, "defective" to refer to his education. This purely relative word carries little meaning unless we are familiar with the standard of excellency by which he concluded he was defective in learning. Just about this time his son Robert was preparing for the Harvard entrance examinations and it was undoubtedly brought home to Mr. Lincoln how inadequate his own training had been compared with that of his oldest son.

If Lincoln had taken as a standard to measure his own progress the general status of education on the western frontier he would probably have said his education was similar to that of youths growing up in the pioneer country. Certainly his education was not "defective" compared with the opportunities of those with whom he was associated in early days. We know that he did attend five terms of school as a growing boy which might be considered a common school education for those days. It appears that in his autobiographical sketch Lincoln was trying to emphasize the fact he was not a college trained man rather than to leave the impression that he had received no formal instruction.

The purpose of this issue of Lincoln Lore is to present with the opening of the schools a few statements which will arrange in a chronological order factors which contributed to Lincoln's education. One may be able to trace the mental development of Lincoln from his earliest days until he reached the White House which became the great laboratory where he was to work out successfully the most difficult problem ever confronting the nation.

Parents not illiterate but able to create helpful home environment.

Father had made at least one trip to New Orleans.

Mother, according to Abraham, was a "ready reader."

Sister two years his senior his first tutor.

When six attended subscription school taught by Zachariah Riney.

Kentucky homes located on main road from Louisville to Nashville.

Enrolled in Caleb Hazel's log cabin school at 7 years of age.

Parents attended Kentucky church where famous anti-slavery orator was preaching.

Environment changed from slave to free state before his eighth birthday.

Secured Weem's *Washington* when first began to read.

Books including Scott's *Lessons in Elocution* brought by his stepmother from Kentucky.

An attendant at eleven years of age in Andrew Crawford's Spencer county Indiana school.

Stepmother encouraged him in his studies.

Became letter writer for the neighbors on Pigeon Creek.

When thirteen attended James Swaney's school for short time.

Borrowed books wherever they could be found.

When fifteen years of age studied mathematics up to the "rule of three" in school of Azel W. Dorsey.

Cultivated practice of repeating things he heard and putting them in simple language.

Worked on bank of Ohio River and came in touch with outside world.

Access to newspapers containing addresses of Henry Clay.

Heard lawyers plead in courthouses at Boonville and Rockport, Indiana.

Read about foreign affairs, science and American politics in Western Sun newspapers.

While still in Indiana borrowed his first law book, the *Statutes of Indiana* from William Turnham.

Wrote essays on Temperance and Politics by the time he was eighteen.

Made a trip to New Orleans at 19 years of age and observed slave markets.

At 21 years of age, after removing to Illinois, began making political addresses.

Observed navigation needs on western rivers on second trip to New Orleans.

As a captain in Black Hawk war assumed some new responsibilities.

Encouraged to study law by Stuart.

Position as Postmaster at New Salem made available current news of the day and valuable periodicals.

Studied English grammar at New Salem.

Secured books at New Salem on surveying by both Flint and Gibson.

Traveled as far west as Council Bluffs, Iowa surveying land.

When but 25 years old came in contact with leading men of state in Illinois Legislature at Vandalia.

After five years studying law he was admitted to bar in 1837.

Participated in programs in Young Men's Lyceum at Springfield.

Made speeches on such political subjects as State Bank, Internal Improvements, Tariff.

Legal practice brought him in touch with leading lawyers of state.

Entered law partnership with Logan, ten years his senior.

Married in 1842 a highly educated young woman.

Inspired to write some poetry by visiting his old home in 1844.

Visited with wife's people in Kentucky where there was a fine library.

At 38 years of age associated in Congress at Washington with leading men of the nation.

Books in Library of Congress were available to him.

Secured patent for invention of a steamboat device.

Increased legal practice made new demands.

His political thinking aroused by repeal of Missouri Compromise.

Observed college trained eastern lawyers in law suit at Cincinnati.

Mastered the six books of Euclid after 40 years of age.

Made over 50 political speeches in 1856.

Spoke on such subjects as "Dred Scott Decision," "Popular Sovereignty," "Le Compton Constitution."

Found recreation in solving problems in solid geometry while traveling the Eighth Judicial Circuit.

Intellect sharpened by debates with Douglas.

Submitted opinion on surveying at request of surveyors' convention.

Lectured on Discoveries and Inventions.

Prepared agricultural address for Wisconsin State Fair.

Read widely for preparation of Cooper Institute speech.

Stimulated by reception of speeches in New York and New England.

A paragraph prepared by Woodrow Wilson gives a glimpse of his development during his Washington years.

"He was not fit to be President until he actually became President. He was fit then because, learning everything as he went, he had found out how much there was to learn, and had still an infinite capacity for learning. . . . Lincoln was always a-making, he would have died unfinished if the terrible storms of war had not stung him to learn in those four years what no other twenty could have taught him."