

LINCOLN LORE

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RICHARD BERRY—GUARDIAN OF NANCY HANKS

Day before yesterday I stood beside the grave of Richard Berry (ae) located in a private burial ground on the farm in Callaway, County Missouri where he passed away. Beside his remains is the resting place of his wife and also within the iron fence enclosure the well marked graves of many of their descendants. This Richard Berry (ae) signed the marriage bond of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks as the guardian of the prospective bride. By this act he made legally possible the nuptials of the parents of the President.

Richard Berry (ae) was born on September 2, 1769, as revealed by the date recorded on his tombstone. He was the fifth child of Richard (a) and Rachel Shipley Berry and migrated with other members of the family from the Roanoke River country in Virginia to Beech Fork community in Kentucky about 1780. He was married in Mercer County on October 22, 1794 to Mary (Polly) Ewing.

Nearly twelve years after his marriage to Miss Ewing, when he was thirty-seven years old and the father of several children, he inscribed his signature jointly with Thomas Lincoln on the famous bond issued in Washington County, Kentucky, June 10, 1806. On this legal paper he signed his name as "guardian" of Nancy Hanks.

The best evidence now before us, although lacking available public record confirmation, concludes that Richard Berry (ae) and Nancy Hanks were first cousins, being the offspring of two sisters, Rachel Shipley who married Richard Berry (a) and Lucy Shipley who married James Hanks, the father of Nancy.

Lucy Shipley Hanks after the death of Nancy's father married on April 30, 1790 in Mercer County, Kentucky, Henry Sparrow whose brother, Thomas, was later to marry Elizabeth Hanks, presumably a sister of Nancy's father, James Hanks. On the written affirmation which Lucy made stating that she was of age two kinsmen Robert Mitchell and John Berry served as witnesses to the certificate. Mitchell was a brother-in-law having married Naomi Shipley, a sister of Lucy and John Berry was a nephew, the son of her sister, Rachel Shipley Berry.

Well established tradition has it that at some time previous to the death of Richard Berry (a) in 1798 Nancy, daughter of Lucy, went to live with her Aunt Rachel Berry where there was also living Sarah Shipley

Mitchell, daughter of Naomi Shipley Mitchell, who had been massacred by the Indians. Whether or not the widow Rachel Berry was living at the time Nancy Hanks was married on June 12, 1806 we have been unable to learn.

Mordecai Lincoln, brother of Thomas Lincoln, served as an appraiser of the estate of Richard

BERRY FAMILY—THREE GENERATIONS

- a. Richard m. Rachel Shipley (Lunenburg County, Va.)
- - - - -
- aa. John m. Ann Mitchell
Aug. 18, 1786. Mercer County, Ky.
- ab. Joanna m. James Brumfield
- ac. Sarah
- ad. Rachel m. Thomas Pitman
March 30, 1782. Lincoln County, Ky.
- ae. Richard m. Mary (Polly) Ewing
Oct. 22, 1794. Mercer County, Ky.
- af. Francis m. Elizabeth Brazelton
Nov. 25, 1779. Washington Co., Ky.
- ag. Jane m. Daniel Mitchell
Dec. 29, 1794. Washington Co., Ky.
- ah. Edward m. Polly Brazelton
Dec. 15, 1808. Washington Co., Ky.
- - - - -
- aea. Caleb m. Virginia Fulkerson
- aeb. John m. Margaret Galbreth
- aec. Edward G. m. Sallie A. Galbreth
- aed. Richard m. (1) Elizabeth Watts
(2) Mary Hamilton
- aee. Samuel m. Eliza Watts
- aef. Robert M. m. (1) Elizabeth Martin
(2) Emily A. Scholl
- aeg. Elizabeth m. (1) Thomas Yocum
(2) John Watts
- aeh. Nancy m. John W. Johnson
- aei. Mary J. m. James B. Yager

Berry (a) and was closely associated with the younger Richard (ae) during the time they both lived in the Beech Fork community. Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks grew up in the same neighborhood.

Four years after the Lincolns migrated to Indiana, Richard Berry (ae) set out for Missouri. Apparently he was first attracted to the country while he served against the Indians in

Capt. James Callaway's rangers. St. Charles County, Missouri furnished the first stopping place of the Berry family in 1820 but three years later they moved to Garden Prairie, southeast of Fulton, in Callaway County. On December 1, 1825, John Quincy Adams signed a patent inscribed to Richard Berry (ae), for which he had made full payment for, "The north-west quarter of Section twenty-six in Township forty-seven north of Range nine, west, containing 160 acres of land."

It was on this piece of land that he lived until his death and on which he lies buried as already observed. On April 9, 1831, he deeded this 160 acre tract to Samuel and Robert Berry "for and in consideration of the love and affection which he has for his two youngest and dutiful sons and for further consideration of the sum of one dollar." This deed of gift was qualified by the statement that they were "not to have occupancy until after the death of said Richard Berry senior (ae)."

The inscription on the Richard Berry (ae) tombstone follows:

RICHARD BERRY
BORN
SEPT. 2, 1769
DIED
APRIL 16, 1843

On the headstone over Richard's wife's grave evidently placed there at some time after her husband's marker was erected, is this inscription:

OUR MOTHER
MARY
WIFE OF
R. BERRY
DIED
DEC. 3, 1829
AGED
55 YEARS

The burial ground of the Richard Berry (ae) family in Missouri is another spot which students of Abraham Lincoln should list among the cemeteries associated with the story of the Emancipator.