

LINCOLN LORE

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WASHINGTON! LINCOLN! SPLENDOR NAMES

Another one of a long series of visits to the Draper collection at the University of Wisconsin was made possible to the editor of *Lincoln Lore* by a visit to Madison during the week preceding the birthday of the father of the country. A Journal written by Major William Croghan, recording episodes during the Revolutionary War, seemed especially timely. The frequent references to Washington and Lincoln, in the entries made nearly one hundred and seventy years ago, recalled the long period of time that these two honorable names have been associated in American history.

The approaching birthday of Washington invited special interest in a unique celebration of the day at Fredericksburg in 1780 noted by Major Croghan. The fact that Washington's mother was alive and residing there as well as Washington's brother seems to make worthwhile a copy of the Journal referring to the anniversary festivities. A few lines preliminary to the episode and a brief aftermath will help to visualize the setting:

Feb. 5th (1780)—Marched three miles when arrived at Fredericksburg crossing Rappahannock River on the ice with the field pieces, ammunition and baggage wagons etc. as we did all the rivers and creeks on the march, they being frozen much harder than ever known. In the neighborhood of this town we saw the ground bare of snow for the first time since our march from the Jerseys, the whole of the march being extremely cold. We stayed about ten days here which we spent in the most agreeable manner. The inhabitants doing all in their power to add to our happiness. We had several public and private Balls a constant round of invitations on hand to sound a hearty welcome to all houses.

The eleventh of the month (February) being the birthday of His Excellency General Washington who arrived at his forty-eighth year of age. His Mother, Brother and other Friends of his living here. We were happy in having it in our power to add to the celebration of the day.

At eleven o'clock General Woodford's and Russell's, Gist's and Neville's detachments drew up at proper intervals, the six pieces of cannon placed after reviewing them, a few volleys were fired and a few maneuvers performed when the whole returned to go to dinner. At three o'clock all the officers, as many of the inhabitants as the tavern could hold dined together. After dinner thirteen Suitable Toasts were drank at the giving out of each Toast a cannon was fired, the evening was concluded with the most elegant Ball at which about sixty most agreeable ladies honored us with their company. During my stay in Fredericksburg I quartered at Doctor Morteymore's where Col. Nevill, Cabell and Lieut. Kelly likewise quartered.

Feb. 12—Colonel Russell's detachment marched from town.

Feb. 15—This evening General Wodford received orders by express from General Lincoln to make all possible haste to Charleston with the troops under his command saying the enemy had landed.

Of course the date February 11 designated as Washington's birthday is the "old style" calendar date, but one is somewhat startled to come upon it suddenly in a manuscript preceding Lincoln's birthday by one day. Although in 1752 the Gregorian or "new style" was established in England replacing the Julian or "old style,"

in America over a long period of years two birthdates were often associated with historical and biographical notations designed as "o.s." and "n.s." In the corrected Gregorian calendar there was a cancellation of the then existing excess of eleven days and the third of September 1752 became the fourteenth of September. Hence February 11, 1780 "old style" became February 22, 1780 "new style."

But it was the dispatch that reached Fredericksburg on February 15, 1780 from General Benjamin Lincoln that called to mind the association of his name with that of his more illustrious kinsman which has left the deeper impression. The Lincoln name was one of much significance in New England during colonial days and especially well esteemed in the early days of the Republic.

Benjamin Lincoln was born in Hingham, Mass., where the forbears of Abraham Lincoln settled. While the exact relation of Benjamin's earliest American ancestor, Thomas Lincoln the Cooper, and Samuel Lincoln, first progenitor of the President, both residents of Hingham, has not been definitely determined, the fact that they were related has never been questioned. Benjamin was a member of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts and its secretary, major general of the state militia in 1776 and in June of that year he cleared Boston harbor of British ships. The following year he was promoted to major-general upon recommendation of Washington and in 1778 was appointed by Congress to the chief command of the Southern Department.

Benjamin Lincoln was also directed by Washington to receive the sword of Cornwallis on the surrender of the British troops at Yorktown. As evidence of Washington's esteem for him he was the recipient of a set of epaulettes and swordknots from the commander-in-chief. It is of much interest to note that Benjamin Lincoln was still living at the time Abraham Lincoln was born and in later years as the boy in Indiana read about the famous revolutionary soldier by the same surname as his own, there must have been some satisfaction in reflection on the possibility of their having come from a common progenitor.

It is of some interest to note that when the presidential electors on February 4, 1789 chose Washington as the first President of the new nation there were eleven other nominees who received one or more votes. One of them was Benjamin Lincoln. So here at the very beginning of the political life of the nation a Washington and a Lincoln appear as potential leaders. Seventy-one years later another descendant of the Lincoln's of Hingham was to be a successful candidate for the Presidency. Long before his name became associated with Washington's and while a young man still in his thirties he paid a tribute to Washington which probably excelled any of the thirteen toasts made at Fredericksburg on February 11, 1780, it follows in part:

This is the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birthday of Washington.—We are met to celebrate this day. Washington is the mightiest name of earth—*long since* mightiest in the cause of civil liberty; *still* mightiest in moral reformation. On that name an eulogy is expected. It cannot be. To add brightness to the sun, or glory to the name of Washington, is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked deathless splendor, leave it shining on.