

LINCOLN LORE

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INDIANA TERRITORY AND THE LINCOLNS

The Sesqui-Centennial celebration to be observed tomorrow, July the Fourth, at old Vincennes, marking the 150th anniversary of the setting apart of Indiana territory, invites the orientation of the Lincolns in that vast country drained by the Mississippi River. The ceremonies should be of interest to all the states which comprise the area bounded by Canada on the north, the state of Ohio, the rivers Ohio and lower Mississippi on the east, the Louisiana state line on the south, and the Rocky Mountains on the west.

The first division line in the old northwest territory occurred in the year 1800 when surveyors met at the mouth of the Great Miami River and proceeded to run a line directly north till it reached a line running west from the southwestern point of Lake Erie. The area east and south of these respective lines retained the original designation, Northwest Territory, now the state of Ohio. The land to the west became known as Indiana Territory, with its seat of authority at Vincennes. Out of this area was formed the states of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota.

The purchase in 1803 of the territory called the District of Louisiana further extended the jurisdiction of the governmental authorities at Vincennes. The northern half of this area reaching as far north as the Canadian line and as far west as the Rocky Mountains was annexed to the Indiana territory. Later, St. Louis became the capital of this survey temporarily associated with states of the old northwest.

Contemporary with this early territorial history is the story of the President Lincoln's grandfather migration to the western country. He must have been at Louisville, Kentucky, adjacent to the old Northwest Territory as early as 1782, and four years later he was massacred by Indians. The same year Fort Steuben was erected on the Ohio River opposite Louisville. A year after the pioneer's massacre, the famous Ordinance of 1787 was enacted.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of the President was brought to the western country as a small lad and was 10 years old at the time of the pioneer Lincoln's death. He saw service against the Indians in 1795 and two years later was at Elizabethtown, Ky. In 1803 Thomas purchased a tract of land about twelve miles distant from the Ohio River which three years before had been designated as Indiana Territory. During the spring of 1806 Thomas made a flatboat trip to New Orleans. West Point was the closest Ohio River landing to his Mill Creek Home and this river enterprise would allow him to get a good view of the entire southern boundary of that part of the country that was at that time designated Indiana Territory.

The year 1806 was also the year of Thomas Lincoln's marriage to Nancy Hanks and it is significant that he spent so many days on the river bordering on the land that was to be his future home. When Abraham Lincoln, the President, was born on Feb. 12, 1809, he was but nine days younger than the Illinois Territory which was cut off from the Indiana Territory on Feb. 3, 1809.

The Lincolns moved from the place of Lincoln's birth to what was known as the Knob Creek Home in 1811. It was this year that the General Assembly of Indiana Territory petitioned Congress for the privilege of setting up a state government and the following year the territorial capitol was moved from Vincennes on the western boundary to Corydon in the southeastern section. The population of the territory having reached 63,000 in

1814, the required number of inhabitants for a state government, the General Assembly again petitioned Congress. An enabling act was passed and approved on April 16, 1816. The following month delegates were chosen to the constitutional convention in session from June 10 to June 29 and on December 11 Indiana was formally accepted as the nineteenth state in the Union.

It is something more than a coincident that the Lincolns moved to the new state of Indiana in 1816 just at the time it came into the Union and Thomas Lincoln undoubtedly watched the territory emerging into statehood with much interest. The place to which the state capitol had been moved, to a point in Harrison County, was not more than 15 miles from West Point where Thomas embarked on the River Trip and not more than twenty-four miles from his home. At Corydon his brother, Josiah, had settled in 1812. Another brother, Mordecai, had moved to western Kentucky two years before. More important is the fact that two men, Austin and Davis Lincoln, sons of Hananiah Lincoln, cousins of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln, and with whom Thomas had lived in Elizabethtown, moved to the same community in Indiana where Thomas settled. They were undoubtedly responsible for his location in that particular community in Indiana.

Possibly one more reference might be made in orientating the Lincolns in the Indiana Territory which was cut out of the old northwest in 1800 and from which Indiana and Illinois were formed.

The family of President Lincoln's wife, the Todds, were instrumental in establishing a government for the western country conquered from the British preliminary to its formation as Indiana Territory. In October 1778 the Virginia Assembly designated all territory northwest of the Ohio River as the County of Illinois. Col. George Rogers Clark was the military commander and Col. John Todd then living in the Kentucky country near Lexington was appointed lieutenant-commandant of the county of Illinois. John Todd was a brother of Levi Todd, grandfather of Mary Todd Lincoln. One of her brothers was named George Rogers Clark Todd. Col. Todd began to organize a temporary government for the state of Illinois in the spring of 1779. He had just returned from Virginia in 1782 when the battle of Blue Licks, Kentucky was fought, in which he was engaged and where he was in command. He lost his life in this battle. The county of Illinois five years after his death was absorbed by the Northwest Territory by the Ordinance of 1887.

It was to the Illinois country that the Lincoln's migrated from Indiana which they left in March 1830. The year 1830 marks the close of the Pioneer area of Indiana and they served as a vanguard of pioneers moving into the newly settled Illinois country. The ancestors of the President who were identified with colonial migrations along the Atlantic coast as early as 1637 were the fore-runners of those identified with the newly organized Indiana Territory which on tomorrow, July 4, will celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its founding.