

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN LOG SCHOOL HOUSES

The approach of September always whets a desire to explore the early surroundings of Abraham Lincoln which may have contributed to his education. We are reminded of the statement by the martyred President Garfield while addressing the alumni of Williams College. Desiring to pay a tribute to the president of the institution he presented the basic element in learning in this personalized axiom: "A log hut, with only a simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other."

*Lincoln Lore* through the years has presented many phases of Lincoln's educational process such as the five teachers who instructed him, textbooks used in the schools, borrowed books, parental aid, etc. We do not recall having had much to write about the "Log hut and simple bench" or the material surroundings which contributed something at least to the advantage of collective instruction of pioneer days. The entrance of television into the field of Lincolniana suggests a new value to be placed on historical sites and buildings. Little attention has been given to the establishment of the exact sites where the "log huts" stood where Lincoln attended school.

### *Knob Creek*

The earliest dramatization of the Lincoln story over television was presented on the "Omnibus" program a few months ago. The scenes were cast on Knob Creek in Kentucky where Lincoln lived from the time he was two until he was seven years of age. One of the locations visualized was the site where the log school house stood which accommodated the children of the Knob Creek community. Abraham attended two terms of school in the old log structure.

The location of the school attended by Abraham and his sister Sarah is established as early as 1805 by a court document written four years before Lincoln was born. A committee was appointed by the Hardin County Court to lay out a road from the Washington County trail to the Court House at Elizabethtown. They reported that one segment of the road is to "intersect the old road near the school house, then with the old road to Johnson's fork of Knob Creek."

A congressman from Hodgenville, the late E. W. Creal, prepared in 1919 for the *La Rue County News* a brief history of this school site. He states: "The first building which we will refer to later was built near the Ford place now Richardson's, which served the community from about 1795 to 1820 according to the nearest approximation obtainable . . . it is still standing and has been preserved and kept all these years for a particular reason, by the Ford family. It is without question, doubt or dispute the school attended by Abraham Lincoln for two terms when a resident of the Knob Creek Community."

It is to be regretted that a log structure which had been preserved for a hundred years because of historical importance could not have escaped destruction. If the editor of *Lincoln Lore* who remembers the old cabin had been as interested then as now in buildings related to the Lincoln story, possibly some effort might have been made to save the structure. The spot where the old building stood, however, is well known. The Athertonville public school, which serves the community that grew up near the fork of the roads mentioned in the old survey, stands not more than three hundred feet from the site where Abraham Lincoln attended his first two terms of school.

With the exception of the Lincoln birth-place farm three miles south of Hodgenville, and the location of the Knob Creek home five miles north of the same town,

there is no spot in Kentucky of more importance in the life of Abraham Lincoln than the location of this school house. It stood two miles north of the Knob Creek home and here Abe was instructed in the fundamentals of education, first by Zachariah Riney, and later by Caleb Hazel.

While we are confident that both terms of school in which Lincoln was enrolled in Kentucky were taught in the same building, we are not so fortunate as to have the precise location of the Lincoln school buildings in Indiana. If the preeminence given to the early school day scribblings of Abraham Lincoln warrant the 20 full page facsimiles from fragments of "Lincoln's Sum Book 1824-1826" in volume one of the recently published *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, then it would seem important to locate the site of the school buildings where the three terms of school attended by Lincoln were taught. At least six and possibly other sites are pointed out with but little documentary proof to sustain anyone of them. They might be identified by their proximity to the following places: Pigeon Church, Jonesville, Dale, Buffaloville and a certain "crossroads school-house" where Lincoln spoke when he returned to Spencer County in 1844. Distance from the Lincoln cabin might offer a logical order in which to present them.

### *Cross Roads*

A tradition has been associated with Lincoln's visit in 1844 which alleges that he spoke at the old Cross Roads school house which then stood on the adjacent quarter section to the Lincoln farm about a half a mile to the east on the land once in possession of Dennis Hanks, and opposite the property of John Carter.

### *Pigeon Creek*

The early biographers of Lincoln more often associate his early schooling with a school said to have been located near the Little Pigeon Church and constructed about the same time as the church. This would seem to be the logical place for a school house. It was a little over a mile south of the Lincoln home.

### *Dale*

There is a tradition of long standing that Lincoln traveled to school a couple of miles north instead of south. In what might be termed the Turnham community there was a building known as the John Jones home, formerly a school near Dale where it is said Lincoln was instructed by Azel W. Dorsey.

### *Jonesville*

The community of Gentryville by which the school is often designated did not become so named until long after the Lincolns left Indiana. There was a post office there as early as 1826 known as Gentry's Store, and about ½ mile west of the store a community known as Jonesville, named for Lincoln's friend Captain Jones. A spot is pointed out in an old cedar grove where it said the old Lincoln school once stood. This site would be about 2½ miles west from the Lincoln home.

### *Four Mile Schools*

There are at least two sites that vie for the location of the school taught by James Swaney. The best evidence we have is a reminiscence of John Hoskins who claims that he tore down "the old school house and built a stable with the logs." His home was in Jackson Township, section twenty-three, a good four miles from the Lincoln home. A school that was located in the Grisgby-Crawford community also seems to have been associated with Lincoln.

Nos. 52, 56, 59, 63, 65, 283, 334, 647, 686, 908, 1073, 1116.