

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

NUMBER 1274

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

SEPTEMBER 7, 1953

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S NAMESAKE TOWNS

One hundred years ago in the month of August, just passed, a new town was laid out in Illinois which was named for Abraham Lincoln. The *Illinois State Journal* carried an advertisement, dated August 16, 1853 over the caption, "Great Sale of Lots in the Town of Lincoln." An editorial in the *Daily Register* at Springfield commented, "The town was named by the proprietors, . . . in honor of A. Lincoln, Esq. the attorney of the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad Company."

Lincoln, Illinois was the first of many post offices, towns and cities to be named after the son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. On one occasion Abe was asked if the town was named after him and he replied, "Certainly the town of Lincoln was named after me because I was named first." As early as the summer of 1852 surveys were made for a railroad through Logan County. Mr. Lincoln as the attorney for the road was often associated with the proprietors of the new community later to bear his name. However, there is not extant any official document in his handwriting relating to the founding of the town. Tradition claims he was present at the sale of lots on August 2, 1853 and with a cup of water squeezed from a watermelon christened the place "Lincoln."

The recognition of this centennial observance of the town encouraged the printing of an interesting brochure of eighty pages published by the Centennial Booklet Committee of which Miss Ethel Welch was chairman. It bears the date of August 27, 1953. The brochure is profusely illustrated with reproductions of the early documents associated with the establishment of the town, facsimiles of surveys and maps, as well as pictures of early public buildings. Furthermore, it might almost be called a photograph album of the contemporaries of Abraham Lincoln and their descendants. Brief histories of various institutions of the city are traced from their beginnings to the present day.

Among the many interesting features associated with the celebration was a Centennial Convocation on September first at Lincoln College, which is located within the city. Two well known Lincoln students, Carl Haverlin, President of Broadcast Music, Inc. and founder of the Civil War Round Table of New York, and Benjamin P. Thomas, author of *Abraham Lincoln. A Biography*, were the recipients of honorary degrees. These were well deserved acknowledgements and appropriate recognitions. President Lincoln was advised in letters written on the day of his second inaugural about the establishment of the university in the town "named for you before presidential honors had any influence." Members of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago arranged a special meeting to coincide with the September first program at Lincoln, which also included a pageant entitled "Lincoln 'Tis of Thee," presented at the fair grounds.

While the Logan County site may have been the first town to bear the name of the 16th President of the United States, the name Lincoln had long been used as the appellation of many communities, some of them dating back to colonial days. Twenty-five years ago N. C. Abbott made a canvas in which he attempted to locate and learn the history of all communities bearing the place name Lincoln. His findings were published in Volume XXI *Publications of the Nebraska Historical Society* of which society Mr. Abbott was then president. Mr. Abbott found six different incentives which caused the English name Lincoln to be used in America:

1. By direct adaptation from the English town by that name.
2. To honor General Benjamin Lincoln of Revolutionary War fame.
3. To honor Enoch Lincoln of Maine.
4. To honor Abraham Lincoln.
5. To honor local characters by name of Lincoln.
6. To embellish an honored name with some suffix.

A tabulation made in 1930 revealed that the following states had located within their borders post offices utilizing the name Lincoln in some form: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois (2); Indiana (3); Iowa, Kansas (2); Kentucky (2); Maine (4); Massachusetts, Michigan (2); Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey (2); New Mexico, New York (2); North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania (4); Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

As one might surmise, Mr. Abbott first became interested in the procedure for the naming of Lincoln, Nebraska. It is the only state capital bearing the illustrious name and a brief comment on Mr. Abbott's conclusions are presented. A few months after the President's assassination there was a post office by the name of Lincoln in Dodge County, Nebraska but it was only in existence about two years. The commissioners who were appointed to select a site for the seat of government for the new state of Nebraska in 1867 chose a small town bearing the same name of the county in which it was located, Lancaster. Soon after the selection of the state capitol site, it was changed to Lincoln. The magnificent state capitol building located there has featured the Abraham Lincoln theme both within and without the structure. At the west entrance to the capitol grounds is an impressive heroic bronze statue of Lincoln, standing in front of a huge tablet of stone on which has been inscribed the Gettysburg Address. Another sculptural portrait of Lincoln is an engaged statue in stone on an exterior wall of the capitol depicting Lincoln as a young man. The only inscription in the capitol Memorial Hall is the final words of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Among the relief panels on the terrace is one portraying Lincoln reading the Emancipation Proclamation.

Massachusetts has the honor of having within its borders the first town in America to bear the name Lincoln and it was named for the English town bearing that name. It is appropriate that the state should be thus honored as Abraham Lincoln's first forebears settled not far away at Hingham in 1637. History states that the early settlers of the town of Lincoln, Mass. came from Lincolnshire, England and "the town was named by them from their former place of residence." It was established in 1754.

It was not until 1923 that Kentucky, the state where Lincoln was born, named a town for Lincoln, a small sawmill community of about a hundred people. However, as early as 1912 a school for negroes was established 22 miles east of Louisville and two years later a post office was located there under the name of Lincoln Ridge.

Possibly the last post office to bear the name of Lincoln was dedicated on February 12, 1940. At this time there was established at the reconstructed community of New Salem, Illinois, where Lincoln lived for five years, an office known as Lincoln's New Salem.