



# Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor  
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1505

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July, 1963

## The Lincoln Heritage Trail In Kentucky

Editor's Note: In the Indiana Magazine of History Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, December, 1937, the editor published a 46 page article entitled, "The Lincoln Migration from Kentucky to Indiana." This study gives considerable detail to the migration — in a sense, a house to house itinerary. The article was based on some established facts which were supported by affidavits (some of them quite tenable) which were submitted to the Lincoln Memorial Highway commission of Kentucky. Access to these documents was made easy by the fact that I was appointed to the commission by Kentucky Governor Ruby Laffoon. As the secretary of the commission and with the consent of the majority of the members, I wrote and compiled the report which bears the approval of the Governor as follows: "Accepted and Approved, Ruby Laffoon, Governor, December 5, 1935."

R. G. M.

On May 20, 1963 Kentucky Governor Bert Combs designated twelve sections of highway as a part of the Lincoln Heritage Trail. These segments of highway will be marked with attractive road signs. The states of Indiana and Illinois will also mark certain highways, relating to the Lincoln story, with identical trail markers.

The seven sections of the primary Kentucky trail are U. S. 60 from Louisville to Lexington, U. S. 68 from Lexington to Perryville, U. S. 150 from Perryville to Bardstown, U. S. 31-E from Bardstown to Elizabethtown, U. S. 31-W from Elizabethtown to Tip Top, and U. S. 60 from Tip Top to Henderson. Governor Combs explained that U. S. 60 in traversing a section of the state passes the site of the Long Run church, some eighteen miles north of Louisville, where Abraham Lincoln's grandfather and the forebears of former President Harry Truman are buried.

The secondary Lincoln trail routes are U. S. 41 from Henderson to Hopkinsville, U. S. 68 from Hopkinsville to Bowling Green, U. S. 31-W from Bowling Green through Park City to KY 90, KY 90 from U. S. 31-W to Ida in Clinton County and U. S. 127 from Ida to Harrodsburg.

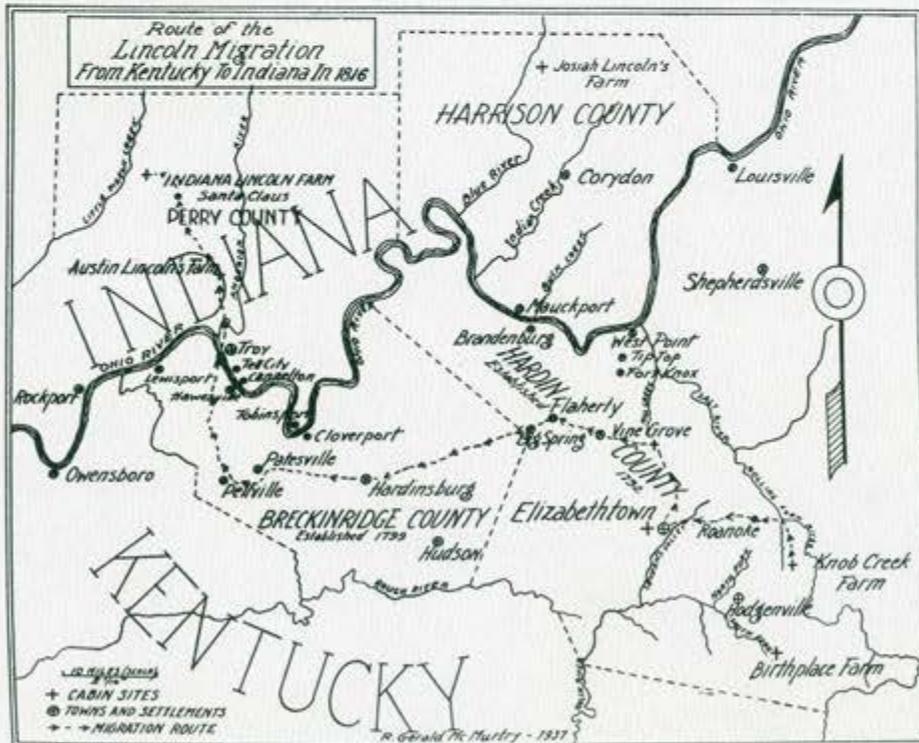
From a Lincoln historian's point of view, it is difficult to understand how such a Lincoln Heritage Trail could

be devised. Certainly, Thomas Lincoln and his son Abraham would be amazed with such a meandering route that goes or ends no place in particular. The majority of the Kentucky cities and towns on this Lincoln Heritage Trail route have no Lincoln connection whatsoever. Then, too, the trail only here and there follows or crosses the path the Lincolns followed as they moved from Kentucky to Indiana in 1816.

Apparently, the highway officials' main objective was to keep the motorist on good highways. Certainly, it would not be practical to direct tourist traffic through country where there are no roads, and across rivers where there are no bridges.

It appears that the Kentucky highway officials did not consult the 1935 report made to Governor Ruby Laffoon by the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky, or a 1936 Act of the Kentucky General Assembly which declared the 1816 Lincoln Migration trail a part of the primary system of Kentucky that was to be marked the "Lincoln Memorial Highway."

It is regrettable that the Lincoln migration trail of 1816 will not be considered and adequately marked under the new system of highways. There is something thrilling about a motor trip that follows a historic trail when historical facts and chronology enter into the planning of the route. The trail from the cradle to the grave in the three states has more significance than just aimlessly following meaningless trails



that have no historical importance.

The December 5, 1935 Report Of The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission Of Kentucky follows:

Your commission realizes that after a lapse of more than a century it is impossible to locate with absolute certainty the route traveled by Thomas Lincoln with his family in 1816 from their home in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky, to their future home in what is now Spencer County, Indiana. We have not hoped to satisfy the public at large. Not even the commission is a unit on

all the report as submitted. Among the hundreds of traditional affidavits submitted to the commission, it is rather easy to select those that should be considered evidence when studied and compared with other facts. We believe the great majority of these affidavits were submitted in good faith and we want to express our thanks to all who earnestly and honestly expressed their claims.

Even the court records which are complete and abundant in regard to the opening and upkeep of roads in the early days are confusing. Like the calls in early land surveys, their land marks were of a temporary nature. The identity of the farms and plantations they passed has been lost. The "black jack groves," the "maple swamps," the meadows and the barrens that constituted the field notes have long since disappeared. In some cases even the names of the smaller streams have been changed. Yet the salient features of the traditions and road records, taken into consideration with other facts, make the location rather satisfactory when associated with the scant recorded history. In the following report, references will be indicated to the material so that interested students may have easy access to the documentary facts upon which this report is based.

Your commission was impressed with the importance of its task and entered upon its labors with an ambition to find if possible, the actual route over which Thomas Lincoln and his family traveled in their migration. It has tried to avoid being influenced by the selfishness and ambitions of individuals and communities, and has based its findings on the following considerations:

First—The reasonableness of the route as determined by distances, directions, available roads, and natural attractions, such as friends and kindred to be visited before undertaking such a journey.

Second—Traditions existing in various communities traversed as shown by sworn affidavits of responsible citizens.

Third—Certified court records as to the opening and upkeep of the roads.

Fourth—Recorded history.

Upon this basis the Lincoln's journey as finally determined naturally divides itself into six sections.

First—From the birthplace of Abraham on the South Fork of Nolin River to the Knob Creek home.

Second—From the Knob Creek home to Elizabethtown.

Third—From Elizabethtown to the Mill Creek home of the mother of Thomas, Bersheba Lincoln, and his sister, Mrs. William Brumfield.

Fourth—From Mill Creek to Big Spring.

Fifth—From Big Spring to Hardinsburg.

Sixth—From Hardinsburg to the Ohio River.

#### Section I

##### FROM THE BIRTHPLACE WHERE THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL NOW STANDS TO KNOB CREEK

Thomas Lincoln moved in the year 1811 from the farm on the South Fork of Nolin River where Abraham was born February 12, 1809, to the Knob Creek farm. While there is no evidence filed with the commission to prove any particular route on this section, it is a well established fact that the Nolin-Bardstown road (now U. S. 31-E) was then in existence. He would naturally follow that road through what is now Hodgenville to their new home, the place that remained their home until the fall of 1816 when they moved to what is now Spencer County, Indiana. It was from this home that the future President attended his first school, taught by Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel and where the foundations of his character were laid, amid the rugged hills and babbling brooks of primitive nature.

#### Section II

##### FROM THE KNOB CREEK HOME TO ELIZABETHTOWN

This section meets all the requirements as the Elizabethtown-Springfield road was the most direct road be-

tween the Knob Creek home and Elizabethtown. Certified road records in the Hardin County Court House show that it was opened and kept in repair from 1793 until the time of the migration in the year 1816. Local tradition has it that this was the road traveled by Thomas Lincoln when he went to Springfield to be married and over which he returned to Elizabethtown in the year 1806 with his bride, Nancy Hanks. It was, and is yet, a ridge road with no streams to cross, being located on the divide between Nolin River on the south and the Rolling Fork of Salt River on the north. This route is amply supported by traditional affidavits made by reliable people whose families have lived in this (Elizabethtown) territory from the earliest days. Historically, according to Dr. Louis A. Warren, it is "probably the road followed by the Lincolns."

#### Section III

##### FROM ELIZABETHTOWN TO MILL CREEK

This section is the only one on the entire route on which Thomas Lincoln turned from the direct course to his destination. This route over what is now the Shepherdsville road, at that time was called Bullitt's Salt Lick road. This road ran by the farm of Thomas Lincoln, now called the Mill Creek farm.

The Shepherdsville road was selected by the commission as being the most available road to reach the home of his mother, Bersheba Lincoln, widow of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the President.

This section carries us not only to the site of the home of his mother, but also to the old Mill Creek cemetery, the final resting place of Bersheba Lincoln and her youngest daughter, Mrs. William Brumfield, as well as many other descendants of this worthy pioneer mother.

This place should be made a national shrine to the memory of this pioneer mother who, from the time her husband fell a victim to a savage bullet in 1786 until 1803 held her orphan family of three sons and two daughters together amid the vicissitudes and hardships of pioneer life.

This particular section of country is rich in early social, commercial, political and religious history. The location of this road is established by court records, traditional affidavits, the substance of which was secured forty years ago, before the subject of a memorial highway was under consideration.

#### Section IV

##### FROM MILL CREEK TO BIG SPRING

After his visit with his mother and sister at the Brumfield home Thomas Lincoln traveled directly west on the road leading through "Viney Grove" (now the town of Vine Grove) and on through Flaherty to Big Spring.

It is a peculiar fact that of the four routes suggested to the commissioners leading out of Elizabethtown all terminated at Big Spring. It seems that at that early date Big Spring was one of the important towns in the county. Tradition shows that all the emigrants on their trek to the then rapidly developing west, passed through and usually camped at Big Spring.

The road selected for this section meets the necessary requirements laid down in our schedule of premises. It was the most direct route as it avoided deep streams, and was under constant upkeep, and is amply supported by traditional affidavits.

#### Section V

##### FROM BIG SPRING TO HARDINSBURG

The county officials and other interested citizens of Breckinridge County furnished certified court records showing that there were different roads leading from Big Spring to Hardinsburg. The commission selected what, in their opinion, is the best and most direct route. It follows what is known locally as the "Lost Run" road to Harned Station on Federal Highway No. 60 and then along that Highway to and through Hardinsburg.

## Section VI

## FROM HARDINSBURG TO THE OHIO RIVER

The Yellow Banks road, later called the Owensboro road, leads from Hardinsburg in almost a direct line towards the Lincolns' destination. It is a ridge road avoiding deep fords, and the Ohio River crossing put the party beyond any deep streams and on an established road in Indiana.

This route is supported by scores of affidavits as to the traditional passage of this party, that bear all the earmarks of truth and much of it was developed before a memorial road was under consideration.

Many certified court records from Breckinridge County show that this road had been established and was kept in repair from 1801 up to the time of the migration. All the records show that the road was kept in repair fifteen feet wide continuously.

As to recorded history:

L. P. Brockett, *Life and Times of Abraham Lincoln*, 38. The crossing is placed "at or near the mouth of Anderson Creek."

Joseph H. Barrett, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 22. The writer makes the same location.

John G. Nicolay and John Hay make the same location.

Louis A. Warren, *Parentage and Childhood of Lincoln*, 294. The same location is quoted.

W. M. Thayer, in *The Pioneer Boy*, puts them across the river on Thompson's Ferry at the mouth of Anderson Creek.

So also other biographers place the crossing at Thompson's Ferry. These include Holland, Lamon, Herndon, Tarbell, and Barton.

Were this commission to ignore all this historical background it would succeed only in laying itself open to ridicule by competent Lincoln biographers.

While it is not practical at this time to carry this memorial highway to the actual point of crossing of the Ohio, on account of the unfavorable terrain, and physical characteristics of the river, we believe the best and most reasonable thing to do is to locate the route over the old Yellow Banks road from Hardinsburg through Breckinridge and Hancock Counties to Pellville, and there to turn to the Ohio River at Hawesville and connect with the terminus of the Indiana division as located by that State's commission. This is the most practical bridge site, and *this location* is in near proximity to the site of the actual crossing.\*

Signed:

J. R. Miller, Commissioner from Meade County

Porter H. Hodges, Commissioner from Hancock County

Frank Dean, Commissioner from Breckinridge County

D. E. McClure, Commissioner from Hardin County

R. Gerald McMurtry, Commissioner from Hardin County

'Accepted and Approved'

RUBY LAFFOON, Governor

December 5, 1935

## ACCEPTANCE OF THE KENTUCKY COMMISSION'S REPORT

The report of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission concerning the route and location of the proposed Lincoln Memorial Highway through Kentucky was "accepted and approved" by Governor Ruby Laffoon before he retired from office. The report was submitted by Judge J. R. Miller, Commissioner from Meade County; Porter H. Hodges, Commissioner from Hancock County; Frank Dean, Commissioner from Breckinridge County; and Dr. D. E. McClure and R. Gerald McMurtry, Commissioners from Hardin County. Other members of the

commission are Judge John P. Hasewell, Commissioner from Breckinridge County; and Judge Otis Mather, Commissioner from LaRue County.

In approving the report the Governor said:

I wish to express to the commission my appreciation for the careful research and painstaking study embodied in the details of your report. It is my hope that the proper plans will eventually be made for the acquisition of the needed right-of-way, and the construction of the Lincoln Memorial Highway as outlined in your report.

\*Notes:

a. Study of the Lincoln migration of 1816 does not include the removal of the Lincoln family in the year 1811 from the birthplace farm on the South Fork of Nolin River to the Lincoln farm on Knob Creek.

b. The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky designated the location on the Ohio River where the Lincolns are believed to have crossed the stream. The remaining sixteen mile route of the journey of 1816 was determined by the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Indiana.

\*Note: Porter H. Hodges Commissioner from Hancock County, died August 8, 1937.

## THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ROUTE ON THE PRIMARY SYSTEM OF ROADS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

After the acceptance and approval by Governor Ruby Laffoon, of the Report Of The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky, a bill was introduced in the Kentucky Legislature during the regular session of the year 1936, establishing the route of the Lincoln Memorial Highway as part of the primary system of highways in the commonwealth. This bill along with numerous other highway measures became a law after the period prescribed by law, without the signature of Hon. A. B. Chandler, Governor of Kentucky.

In House  
Regular Session 1936  
House Bill No. 576  
Wednesday, February 5, 1936

Mr. (Clyde) Howard introduced the following bill, which was ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee on Rules, viz.: An Act establishing as a part of the primary system of highways in this Commonwealth a road leading from the Lincoln birthplace near Hodgenville to Hawesville by way of Knob Creek, Elizabethtown, Mill Creek, Big Spring, and Hardinsburg, to be known as the Lincoln Memorial Highway and to provide for marking same.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

1. That there be established as a part of the primary system of highways of this Commonwealth a road leading from Lincoln's birthplace near Hodgenville to Hawesville by the way of the Lincoln Home on Knob Creek, Elizabethtown, the home of Lincoln's mother and sister on Mill Creek, Vine Grove, Kentucky, Big Spring, Hardinsburg, Pellville to Hawesville.
2. That the State Highway Commission shall upon the request of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission properly mark such highways by appropriate signs.

## THE LINCOLNS CROSSED THE OHIO RIVER AT THOMPSON'S FERRY

Editor's Note: This account of the Lincolns crossing the Ohio River at Thompson's Ferry is taken from an article by R. Gerald McMurtry entitled, "The Lincoln Migration from Kentucky to Indiana — 1816," published by the Indiana Magazine of History, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, December 1937.

As the Ohio River crossing was the most exciting adventure of the entire Lincoln family migration of 1816, a voluminous amount of traditional stories are current concerning the event. Claims have been made, based on tradition, that the Lincolns crossed the Ohio River at practically every ferry site from West Point to Owensboro on the Kentucky side of the river. Corresponding claims have also been produced on the Indiana side of the Ohio, but after an exhaustive study by many historians of

available data, the crossing at Thompson's Ferry appears to be, without a doubt, the location of the historic passage.

Upon the arrival of the Lincoln party at Thompson's Ferry, it is believed that other emigrating families were here waiting to be transported to the Indiana side. Barrett in his Lincoln biography, speaks of the river as swollen "to fair proportions by the autumn rains." If the river was at flood stage, it must be concluded that other parties were at the river bank. Traditions relate that eleven families, in addition to the Lincoln party, constituted the waiting group, while others say that fifteen families were waiting to cross the river. Sixty-one souls are said to have constituted the caravan, and that two days were required to transport them to the Indiana side. While the above traditions cannot be authenticated, it must be true that the river crossing did require considerable time, and, if the Ohio was at flood stage, it would have necessitated a prolonged delay. Likewise, such a delay stopping ferry traffic would have caused many people to congregate at the point to await favorable ferrying conditions.

All types of river craft are said to have been used for the ferriage of the Lincoln family to Indiana. Log rafts have been mentioned by several as the mode of conveyance across the Ohio; however, if early court records regarding the establishment of ferries are to be followed, it is believed certain regulations were to be complied with to legally operate a licensed ferry. These requirements usually prescribed the kind and size of boat to be used, the number of operators and the fare to be charged for persons, animals and vehicles. The ferry-keeper was also required to give bond. An ancient document establishing a ferry in the year 1804, taken from the files of the Hardin County Court records, ordered that twenty-five cents was to be charged for the ferriage of man and horse. For a horse only twelve and one-half cents was to be charged and this amount also applied to a foot-man. The said ferry-keeper was required to keep a boat of sufficient size for the transporting of a wagon and four horses, and was ordered to keep two able-bodied ferrymen to operate the boat. It is believed that the Thompson Ferry was a legally operated, licensed enterprise and that its requirements and fares were similar to the Hardin County regulations. Such were the conditions of ferry-boat transportation in the year 1816 when the Lincolns moved to Indiana.

It must have been a dramatic scene when Thomas Lincoln's frightened horses pulled their pioneer wagon upon the Thompson ferryboat. Before moving away from the bank, the horses were likely uncoupled from the wagon to prevent an accident in case they might become unmanageable in midstream. If several head of cattle were driven along, two trips may have been required to remove the Lincoln family's worldly possessions to the opposite bank. It is to be supposed that Nancy Hanks was apprehensive of the impending danger of this water passage while Thomas Lincoln was busy quieting his horses and promoting all necessary safety measures in effecting a safe crossing. Sarah and Abraham must have enjoyed most of the trip to the fullest extent. It was with a sigh of relief that the Indiana shore was reached, for then the most hazardous portion of the journey was completed.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Forty year old photograph of scene near the mouth of Anderson Creek. Thompson's Ferry was located in this vicinity.

## DISCOVERED ! A LITTLE KNOWN LINCOLN STATUE



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation  
LINCOLN STATUE AT MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN

The Lincoln National Life Foundation from time to time has published information concerning heroic bronze Lincoln statues that have been erected in this country and abroad. The last compilation was published in Lincoln Lore Number 1488, dated February 1962. At that time eighty-one statues were listed.

A statue eligible for that list, but unknown to the editor at that time, is located at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

The statistics follow:

Dedication: November 25, 1961

Sculptor: Anita Schoenke, cast by Amerigo Di Martino Barsanti, Pietrasanta, Italy

Location: Center of circle drive in front of main entrance to Lincoln High School, South 8th Street, Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Donor: Graduating Class of 1961. The class raised \$2300 from various projects. Donations were not solicited.

## NEW LINCOLN STATUE TO BE UNVEILED APRIL 14, 1964

A fourteen foot equestrian statue of Abraham Lincoln will be placed next year at the entrance of the New Salem State Park in Illinois. It will depict a circuit-riding Lincoln — a young lawyer, book in his right hand, reading while the horse munches grass along the wayside.

Lincoln will be portrayed as a young man between the ages of 22 and 28 years "on his way to fame via the Illinois Legislature and later the U. S. Congress." The sculptor is Anna Hyatt Huntington of Bethel, Connecticut.

The Huntington statue will be the first equestrian study of Lincoln to be cast in heroic dimensions.