



Lincoln Lore

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THE BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGERS

The financial standing of Abraham Lincoln's father is best portrayed by a study of his accounts in Bleakley & Montgomery's ledgers and day book which are a part of the collection of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

These accounts of Thomas Lincoln with the Elizabethtown, Kentucky mercantile firm cover the period from July 30, 1804 to June 3, 1808. The account books are designated as Ledger "A" and Ledger "B". There is also a day book for the period of June 1, 1805 to November 22, 1806. The twenty Thomas Lincoln entries in the day book begin with the date of August 23, 1805 and end with the date of November 12, 1806.

It is believed that the Ledgers "A" and "B" were the first two used by the firm of Bleakley & Montgomery. This mercantile firm was composed of Robert Bleakley and William Montgomery who arrived in Elizabethtown about the year 1801. Previous to this they found employment in the same establishment in Baltimore, Maryland. The two partners were Scotch-Irishmen who in early manhood were expelled from their country because they were Orangemen. According to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., the author of "A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky and

Its Surroundings" (written in 1869) Montgomery "was arrested and confined in a prison from which men were taken and executed daily. Montgomery was released from prison through the interposition of his aunt, who was the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on the condition that he would emigrate to America."

Haycraft relates that "Bleakley who was engaged in the same rebellion, evading the officers of the government, concealed himself in a vessel and thus made his escape to the United States. They married sisters, two of the daughters of William Withers, Esq., a very respectable Virginia gentleman near West Point (Kentucky)." The Kentucky historian stated that "perhaps their stock of goods was the first that deserved the name of an assortment."

Haycraft thought that "There is something romantic and interesting in the history of these two men. Born on the same Island, engaged in the same rebellion, both compelled to leave to save their lives; emigrating to the same country, finding employment in the same establishment in the city of Baltimore, partners in merchandising in Elizabethtown, marrying sisters and then living



Bleakley & Montgomery's Ledgers and Day Book. The day book is laid open to Thomas Lincoln's account of May 16, 1806.

and dying on adjacent farms." Yet, in spite of their exciting life history these two men are only remembered by Lincoln students as merchants who did business with the father of the sixteenth president.

The store was located on the Public Square in a log house. The building was located on Lot No. 6 on the corner of the square which is now occupied by the First Hardin National Bank. Bleakley & Montgomery did a thriving business and were very popular citizens of the county seat town.

These early merchants conducted their business under the English monetary system of pounds, shillings and pence. However, there are occasional entries of payments in dollars and cents. Unfortunately, all the day books of the period of Thomas Lincoln's purchases are not extant and for that reason it is impossible to determine every item he purchased. Many times the merchants would enter several purchases in the ledgers as "Sundries" with reference to the folio or page in the day book which listed the items in detail.

The early biographers of the sixteenth president, without exception, depicted Thomas Lincoln as an indolent pioneer without money and with no financial responsibility in his community. But the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers reveal that he had excellent credit and that his purchases were not inconsiderable. Thomas Lincoln was evidently considered by this firm as a valued customer. In fact an examination of his account reveals that he not only purchased on credit, but that he was even charged with sizeable sums for his friends and relatives.

Otis M. Mather, writing for *The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, January, 1930, Vol. 28, No. 82, in an article entitled "Thomas Lincoln's Accounts With Elizabethtown Merchants" observed that "Thomas Lincoln began making purchases soon after Ledger 'A' was opened, but his transactions with the firm ceased long before Ledger 'B' was discarded." Ledger "B" has accounts running as late as the year 1810.

From all indications Thomas Lincoln's last transaction was made on June 3, 1808, when he purchased "sandpaper and screws," for which he was charged one shilling and three pence. One entry for the same date follows: "Bals put to the credit of work done. His note 12 (shillings)." This credit squared his account.

The reason for Thomas Lincoln's failure to make further purchases from Bleakley & Montgomery's store can be attributed to the fact that it was about this time (date of last purchase) that he contemplated moving to the Sinking Spring farm located on the South Fork of Nolin River. However, he did not get a title to the farm until, December 1808, when he bought it from his future brother-in-law, Isaac Bush. From the summer or fall of 1808, until his removal to Indiana in the fall of 1816, Thomas Lincoln lived a distance from fourteen to eighteen miles from Elizabethtown and the friendly merchants.

In analysing Thomas Lincoln's accounts Otis M. Mather made the following statements:

"It is of interest to note that in the statement of Thomas Lincoln's account there are charges for many tools pertaining to his trade as a carpenter—one cast steel (casteel) saw, on August 8, 1804, one plane bit, September 6, 1804; one file, November 10, 1804; one saw, February 27, 1805; and others. The item of 'Fiddle Bass,' on November 6, 1804, for which he was charged 1 shilling and six pence, must have been a fiddle string. Though Thomas Lincoln has not been mentioned in history as a musician, this purchase would indicate that he was possibly a fiddler in his early days, and this accomplishment may have been some attraction to the young lady who was soon to be his bride. And the charge of one pound and sixteen shillings . . . for a hat, on January 1, 1805, is persuasive evidence that Thomas wore no slouch when he went a-wooing. A pair of suspenders for nine shillings . . . which he purchased on May 25, 1805 should have been sufficiently ornamental for any rustic Beau Brummel.

"A pint of whiskey and a pound or two of tobacco now and then indicated that Thomas was not wholly averse to the superfluities of life. But let it be said for him that his purchases of whiskey were much less frequent than the average for the customers of Bleakley & Montgomery.

"Perhaps the most interesting of the entries are those of the Spring of the year 1806, when Thomas Lincoln was about to become the head of a family of his own. On March 1 of that year he had to his credit on the books the neat sum of 18 pounds, 11 shillings and 6½ pence . . . On the 16th of May of the same year he was credited with 'Sundries' to the amount of 30 pounds, 4 shillings and 7½ pence. In the meantime his purchases had been small—one half of a calf skin on May 3—possibly this was for his wedding boots—and two charges for 'Sundries' on May 16, one for 16 shillings and 6 pence, the other for 9 pounds, 1 shilling and 11½ pence. On May 20 Isaac Bush made purchases to the amount of 15 pounds on Thomas Lincoln's account. On May 21, and 22, 1806, Thomas purchased 'Sundries' to the goodly amount of 38 pounds, 1 shilling and 8 pence. It would be gratifying to Lincoln students to know the items making up the sum total of these purchases, but we most content ourselves to believe that they represented the final preparation for the wedding . . . On June 2, 1806, a bride was purchased for 13 shillings and 6 pence. This was probably used on the horse which a few days later carried Thomas to Springfield, Kentucky, where, on June 10, 1806, he signed a marriage bond, and on June 12 he married Nancy Hanks. The honeymoon must have been short, for on June 16, four days after the wedding, we find Thomas again buying 'Sundries' to the amount of 7 shillings and 3 pence from Bleakley & Montgomery, at Elizabethtown."

In making a study of the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers and day book it is significant to point out that Kentucky and Virginia mercantile firms used a particular sterling of their own and their shilling was worth 16⅔ cents (20 shillings equal 1 pound). Verification of this may be found in T. S. Berry's "Western Prices Before 1861," page 364. For example, referring to the Thomas Lincoln entry in the Bleakley & Montgomery day book dated May 20, 1806, the entry is for ¼ yard of Scarlet Cloth @ 60 which cost 0 pounds, 15 shillings and 0 pence. This makes the cost of the item exactly \$2.50. While this seems to be a big price to pay for one-fourth yard of cloth, the cost was high as it was likely imported and then transported across the mountains. Advances of 100 to 150 percent on such goods over the Baltimore or Philadelphia prices was common in Kentucky in 1806.

Perhaps no better documentary source can be produced than the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers to attest to Thomas Lincoln's ability to provide for his family the necessities and comforts of life. Certainly we can conclude that during the period from 1804 to 1808 he was a prosperous pioneer.

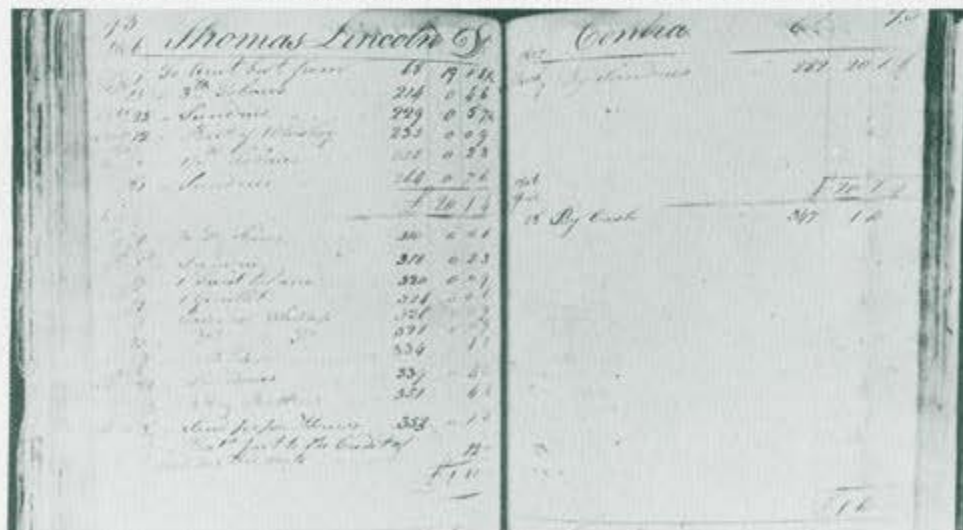
Thomas Lincoln			Contra		
1103	To Balance b/d from	29 5 3 1/2	1805	By Henry Linnick	191 7 7
1807	Sundries	136 1 10 6	1806	Sundries	118 21 14
13	2 1/2 lbs. Calico	12 7 0 11			
27	1 Saw	13 0 0 9			
1808	2 lbs. tobacco	14 0 0 11			
1808	1 pint whiskey	16 0 0 9			
1808	1 pair suspenders	16 7 0 0 9			
1808	1 Hat	17 0 0 16			
1808	Sundries	211 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	214 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	216 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	218 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	219 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	220 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	221 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	222 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	223 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	224 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	225 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	226 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	227 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	228 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	229 0 0 16			
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1808	1 Hat	245 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	246 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	247 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	248 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	249 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	250 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	251 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	252 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	253 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	254 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	255 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	256 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	257 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	258 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	259 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	260 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	261 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	262 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	263 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	264 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	265 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	266 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	267 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	268 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	269 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	270 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	271 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	272 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	273 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	274 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	275 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	276 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	277 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	278 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	279 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	280 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	281 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	282 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	283 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	284 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	285 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	286 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	287 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	288 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	289 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	290 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	291 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	292 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	293 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	294 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	295 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	296 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	297 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	298 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	299 0 0 16			
1808	1 Hat	300 0 0 16			

Bleakley & Montgomery Ledger A
Thomas Lincoln's account from February 9, 1805 to February 27, 1806.

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY DAY BOOK
June 1, 1805 to November 22, 1806

		Thomas Lincoln, Dr.		Contra		Cr.						
59	214	Aug. 23, 1805	1/2 Lb. Raisins 1 Foot Adze	1 1/2 8 3		59	118	Feb. 18, 1806	2400 lbs. pork @ 15/ 494 " beef @ 15/	18 3 14 1/2	21.14.1/2	
68	156	May 3, 1806	1/2 Calf Skin	3		68	160	May 16, 1806	Going to Orleans	16	10	
68	160	May 16, 1806	2 yds. cloth @ 36 1 1/4 " Jane @ 6/9 1 1/2 " Brown Holland @ 3 1/4 " Scarlet Cloth @ 60 3 sticks twist 2 skanes Silk 3 Doz. Buttons @ 4/6 3 1/2 yds. Cassimere @ 15 2 " tape 1 Doz. Buttons 9 Buttons 2 yds. Brown Holland 6 skanes thread	3 12 11 10 4 6 15 2 3 1 6 13 6 2 12 6 2 9 1 6 1 1 1/2 6 1						Gold	13 14 7 1/2	30.4.7 1/2
			Deduct	1 6								
68	160	May 16, 1806	5 yds. Linnen @ 3/ 1 lb. Tobacco	15 1 6								
68	162	May 20, 1806	Thomas Lincoln to Isaac Bush answered for the Latter	15								
68	162	May 21, 1806	3 yds. Coating @ 21/6 1 1/2 " Brown Holland @ 3/ 1 1/4 " Red flannel @ 6/ 1 1/2 " Doz. Buttons @ 3/9 2 skanes Silk 1 stick twist 3 skanes thread	3 4 6 4 6 7 6 6 3 1 6 9 6								
		22	Cash	\$112.70	33 16 2							38.0.10
68	163	May 24, 1806	Thomas Lincoln pr. order Silk for Mrs. Ogden	12								
68	167	June 2, 1806	1 Tipt Bridle	13 6								
68	168	June 4, 1806	Sundries for Mrs. Johnston	7 6								
68	174	June 10, 1806	1/2 set Knives & Forks 3 skanes Silk	5 2 3								0.7.3
68	175	June 20, 1806	1 skane thread	2								
68	176	June 21, 1806	1 shoe knife 2 skanes thread	1 6 4								0.1.10
68	196	Aug. 4, 1806	1/2 Doz. spoons 1 lb. Tobacco	6 1 6								0.7.6
68	196	Aug. 6, 1806	Thomas Lincoln answered for	1 4								
68	202	Aug. 14, 1806	Thomas Lincoln answered for Henry Erwin	1								
93	214	Sept. 13, 1806	3 lbs. Tobacco	4 6								
93	229	Oct. 25, 1806	Needles & Whiskey	1 1 1/2								
93	235	Nov. 12, 1806	1/2 Bushel Salt Bals of Whiskey	4 6 9								

EDITOR'S NOTE: TWO OF THE ABOVE ENTRIES MERIT SOME NOTICE; NAMELY, "SILK FOR MRS. OGDEN," AND "SUNDRIES FOR MRS. JOHNSTON." DID THESE TWO WOMEN MAKE UP TOM LINCOLN'S WEDDING OUTFIT? MRS. OGDEN WAS THE WIFE OF BENJAMIN OGDEN, A METHODIST PREACHER AND THE KEEPER OF THE KEYS OF THE COURTHOUSE. MRS. JOHNSTON WAS THE WIFE OF DANIEL JOHNSTON (DIED 1816), THE HARDEN COUNTY JAILOR, WHOM TOM LINCOLN WAS DESTINED TO TAKE AS HIS SECOND WIFE ON DECEMBER 2, 1819, NANCY HANKS LINCOLN HAVING DIED ON OCTOBER 5, 1818.



Bleakley & Montgomery Ledger B
Thomas Lincoln's account from September 13, 1806 to June 3, 1808.

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGER A
1804 - 1806

1804			1804			1804			1804		
Thomas Lincoln			Dr.			Contra			Cr.		
25	July 30-31	Sundries	fo.	19	18	20	Oct. 16	By Beef	63	3	1 1/2
	Aug. 8	1 Casteel Saw		38	18			" Balance	5	3	1 1/2
	Aug. 15	Sundries		33	3 5 3						
	Aug. 27	Ditto		40	1 6						
	Sept. 6	1 Plane Bit		4	1 6						
	Sept. 27	Sundries		54	3 4 1/2						
	Oct. 8	Ditto		60	6 9						
	Nov. 6	1 Fiddle Bass		71	1 6						
	Nov. 10	1 File		73	1 6						<u>\$8.3.1 1/2</u>
<u>1805</u>						<u>1805</u>					
	Jan. 1	1 Hat		105	1 16	59	July 27	By Henry Ewin Notes	191	7	7
	Jan. 14	Sundries		109	9 9						
		Balance carried to		59							<u>\$8.3.1 1/2</u>
59		To Balance brot from		29	5 3 1 1/2						
	Feb. 9	Sundries		126	1 10 6						
	Feb. 13	2 yds. Calico		127	10						
	Feb. 27	1 Saw		133	9						
	Apr. 4	2 twists Tobacco		144	1 6						
	May 15	1 pint Whiskey		163	9						
	May 25	1 pair Suspenders		167	9						
	June 12	1 skane Silk		175	9						
	Aug. 20-21	Sundries		211	8 10						
	Aug. 22-23	Ditto		214	9 4 1/2						
	Aug. 24	1 twist Tobacco		216	1 6						
	Sept. 9	1 File		12	9						
	Sept. 18	4 yds. Muslin		19	12 9						
	Sept. 26	1 twist Tobacco		23	1 6						
	Oct. 2	2 Brass Rings		26	1 6						
	Dec. 2	1 twist Tobacco		67	1 6						
<u>1806</u>						<u>1806</u>					
	Feb. 27	Hay		128	8 7 1/2	59	Feb. 18	Sundries	118	21 14 1 1/2	<u>\$29.1.1 1/2</u>
		Balance Carried to Ledger B		85							<u>\$29.1.1 1/2</u>

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGER B
1805 - 1807 (10)

Thomas Lincoln			Dr.			Contra			Cr.		
<u>1806</u>						<u>1806</u>					
68	May 2	1/2 Calf Skin		156	3	March 1	By Balance brot from				
	May 16	Sundries		160	16 9		Lodger A	59	18 11 6 1/2		
		Do.		"	9 1 11 1/2		Sundries	160	30 4 1 1/2		
	May 20	Isaac Bush		162	15		Balance	14	6 11 1/2		
	May 21-22	Sundries		"	38 1						<u>\$63.3.1 1/2</u>
		Balance (to be paid in pork)		14	6 11 1/2						
	May 24	Silk		163	12						
	June 2	1 Bridle		167	13 6						
	June 4	Sundries		168	7 5						
	June 16	Do.		174	7 3						
	June 19	1 skane thread		175	2						
	June 21	Sundries		176	7 10						
	Aug. 4	Do.		196	7 6						
	Aug. 6	Answered for B. Bromfield		198	1 4						
		" Henry Ewin		202	1 6						<u>\$19.0.8 1/2</u>
92		To. Amt. brot from		58	19 8 1/2		By. Amt. Carried to	93			<u>\$19.0.8 1/2</u>
	Sept. 13	3 tw. Tobacco		214	4 6						
	Oct. 25	Sundries		229	5 7 1/2						
	Nov. 12	Bals of Whiskey		235	9						
<u>1807</u>						<u>1807</u>					
	Jan. 3	1 1/2 tw. Tobacco		255	2 3						
	Jan. 21	Sundries		264	7 6	93	March 9	By Sundries	282	20 1 4	<u>\$20.1.4</u>
	July 2	1/2 Doz. Screws		319	6						
	Aug. 4-5	Sundries		318	2 3						
	Aug. 17	1 twist Tobacco		320	9						
	Sept. 19	1 Gimblet		324	6						
	Oct. 3	Calomet & Jallop		328	9						
	Oct. 25	Do. Do.		328	9						
	Nov. 2	1 lb. Tobacco		334	1 6						
<u>1808</u>						<u>1808</u>					
	Feb. 22	Sundries		329	5 3						
	May 13	3 Doz. Buttons		351	4 6		April 23	By Cash	347	1 10	
	June 3	Sandpaper & Screws		353	1 3						
		Bals. put to the Credit of work done His Note			12						<u>\$1.10.0</u>

EDITOR'S NOTE: THERE IS A MAY 20, 1806 ENTRY ON PAGE 39 OF LEDGER B INDICATING THAT THOMAS LINCOLN (folio 162) CREDITED THE ACCOUNT OF ISAAC BUSH IN THE AMOUNT OF £15. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF BOOKKEEPING THERE ARE LIKELY MANY DISCREPANCIES IN THESE ACCOUNTS DUE TO THE FRAGMENTARY CONDITION OF THE LEDGERS.