



# Lincoln Lore

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## "Abraham Lincoln" - The Name (Misspelled, Mispronounced and Forged)

Both President Abraham Lincoln and his grandfather, Captain Abraham Lincoln, had considerable trouble with their given and surnames. Once the grandson was nominated for the Presidency, there was some speculation about the spelling of his name, especially his given name. In fact, the nominee had occasion to complain about it in a letter written to George Ashmun on June 4, 1860:

"My Dear Sir: It seems as if the question whether my first name is 'Abraham' or 'Abram' will never be settled. It is 'Abraham,' and if the letter of acceptance is not yet in print, you may if you think fit have my signature thereto printed 'Abraham Lincoln.' Exercise your judgment about this."

While the matter of the spelling of the surname of the Republican candidate was generally agreed upon, the contemporaries of the family in Kentucky and Indiana, and the early biographers persisted in referring to the pioneer family as "Linkens," "Linkerns," "Linkons," "Linkorns," "Lingcums," "Lingcorns"; and those opposed to his candidacy especially favored the name "Linkhorn." In all, there are some twenty-eight variations in the spelling of the name. This is difficult to understand, because the name "Lincoln" was an important place-name in Kentucky. In November, 1780, Kentucky was divided into three counties bearing the names of Fayette (named in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette), Lincoln (named in honor of General Benjamin Lincoln) and Jefferson (named in honor of President Thomas Jefferson). Yet in spite of the existence of Lincoln County, court clerks and others who kept the public records would sometimes spell the name "Linkhorn" or use some other inexcusable variation.

This confusion about the correct spelling of the surname cannot be attributed to the Lincolns. There is no evidence that any member of Abraham Lincoln's ancestral line ever spelled his name other than LINCOLN. It is also of interest to note that "there is yet to be discovered a Lincoln related to the President who could not write his name, and there were many illiterate men in America during the early years of the nation's existence."

Once Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin were nominated for the Presidency and the Vice-Presidency at Chicago, Illinois in May, 1860, it did not take long for some printer with a whimsical nature to discover that the last three letters of the nominee's given name and the first three letters of his surname spelled in this form: abr(HAM LIN)coln, identified both Republican candidates.

It would be expected that with Lincoln's great fame and the correspondingly high prices asked for his manuscripts that his name and his handwriting would be forged for private gain. Every Lincoln collector is constantly on the alert to avoid the purchase of manuscripts from the pens of Charles Weisberg, Joseph Cosey and others, which are occasionally placed on the market allegedly as genuine Lincoln items. However, some interesting exhibits of forgeries have purposely been assembled by Lincoln collectors, in order to display the skill of the forgers. In the Foundation's Library-Museum more interest is manifested by the public in the forgeries than in the genuine items.

Whereas President Lincoln's handwriting may always be a challenge to the forger who would like to make some easy money, one would hardly expect Grandfather Lincoln to be a victim of such a fraud. Yet, there is ample evidence that his name, too, was forged to a land document; the reason, again, being greed.

Found in the Nelson County, Kentucky, court records is the following copy of a Land Office Treasury Warrant No. 14487 addressed "To the principal surveyor of any county of Virginia:"

"This shall be your warrant to survey and lay off one or more surveys for Abraham Linkhorne his heirs or assigns the quantity of 2268½ acres of land due unto said Abraham Linkhorne, in consideration of the sum of 3630 pounds current money paid into the public treasury the payment whereof to the treasurer hath been only certified by the auditors of public accounts and their certificate received into the land office. Given under my hand and seal of the land office this 26th day of September in the year 1782 John Howie Reg. Ld. Of."

On the lower portion of this document appears the following statement:

I assign the within warrant to John Reed and his heirs for value received.

Abraham Linkorn

Nov. 24, 1783

Mordecai Lincoln, the eldest son and heir-at-law of Captain Lincoln, declared the signature "Abraham Linkhorn" to be a forgery, and contested the assignment dated November 24, 1783.

There is some evidence that Captain Lincoln made an effort to enter a tract of land under Warrant 14487 and apparently had some kind of an agreement with John Reed to have it surveyed. However, by May 1786, when the grandfather was killed by the Indians, no settlement between Lincoln and Reed had been made. As could be expected, Mordecai, the administrator of his father's estate, by virtue of the English law of primogeniture, brought suit. By this time John Reed was also deceased.

Felix Grund, the attorney for the "Complainant", stated the case as follows:

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A document bearing the genuine signatures of Captain Abraham Lincoln and John Reed. It was signed on December 21, 1783, within one month of the time that the alleged land transaction was supposedly negotiated.



"Mordecai Lincoln, heir at law to Abraham Lincoln

vs

John Reed's heirs and executors

To the honorable the judges of the district court of Bardstown, your orator Mordecai Lincoln respectfully sheweth that sometime in the year 1783 Abraham Lincoln now deceased and a certain John Reed now deceased entered into the following agreement to wit: Said Lincoln furnished said Reed with a land warrant No. 14487 by which warrant said Lincoln was entitled to 2268 acres of land and said Reed agreed to take said land warrant to locate the same according to law for one half of the land which should be procured by said warrant and your orator further states that said Reed received into his possession the said warrant from the contract aforesaid, and your orator further states that he has no reason to believe that Abraham Lincoln ever assigned said warrant to said Reed but in all probability said Reed assigned the said warrant to himself. Your orator further states that said Reed by virtue of said warrant made the following entry with the surveyor to wit; John Reed assignee of Abraham Lincoln enters 1000 acres part of the same warrant No. 14487. Begun at the lower end of the first Narrows below the first Buffalo crossing above the mouth of Bear Creek to run down Green River to the upper end of the next Narrows, then off westwardly for quantity. . . .

Your orator further states that said Abraham Lincoln departed this life in May 1786 without will and your orator his oldest son became entitled to the land aforesaid as heir at law to the said Abraham Lincoln. . . ."

This and related documents pertaining to this suit are to be found in the Chancery Bundle, labeled June, 1816, of the Nelson County Court.

The "Complainant" attested that the above bill was correct as follows:

"This first day of September 1797 came Mordecai Lincoln before me a justice of the peace for Washington County and made oath that what he knows of the above bill of his own knowledge is true and what he has from information he believes to be true."

In connection with this suit it was necessary to determine how Captain Lincoln signed his name so a deposition was taken by Christopher Greenup. It follows:

"The deposition of Thomas Lincoln [a brother of Captain Abraham Lincoln and uncle of Mordecai Lincoln] of full age taken at the state house in Frankfort between the hours of eight o'clock in the forenoon and six o'clock in the afternoon, to be read in answer in a suit in chancery in the Nelson Circuit Court, where Mordecai Lincoln is Complainant and Benjamin Grayson guardian for the heirs of John Reed is defendant. This deponent being duly sworn deposeth and saith that;

Question by complainant—

Do you know how my father Abraham Lincoln spelt his name?

Answer—

He spelt his name Abraham Lincoln.

Q.—Do you know who is the said Abraham Lincoln's heir at law?

A.—Mordecai Lincoln the complainant in the above suit is his oldest son and heir at law.

Q.—Are you acquainted with Abraham Lincoln's handwriting?

A.—I am having lived near him and seen his writing often.

Q.—Do you believe the signature to assignation on a Treasurer Warrant of 2268 acres No. 14487 to John Reed Nov. 24, 1783 where it is spelt Abraham Linkorn, is the signature of the said Abraham Lincoln?

A.—I have examined this signature this day in the Registrar's Office and do not believe it to be the said Abraham Lincoln's [the father of the complainant] handwriting. And further the deponent saith not.

The above deposition was subscribed and sworn to before me a justice of the peace of the county aforesaid at the place mentioned within this 19th, day of May 1812."

So the name is "Abraham Lincoln" despite the twenty-eight different ways of spelling the surname or the

tendency to refer to the President as "Abram" or to call the Captain a "Linkhorn."

See Lincoln Lore Number 566 "A bra ham Lin Kun," February 12, 1940; and 788 "Documents For The Lincoln Ancestral Records," May 15, 1944.

### Schuyler Colfax's Tribute to Lincoln

The Foundation has been unusually fortunate in securing letters written by Schuyler Colfax which relate to Abraham Lincoln (See Lincoln Lore Number 1475 "Schuyler Colfax—Lincoln Lecturer," January, 1961). A recent acquisition dated at Washington, D. C., December 3, 1866, and addressed to F. B. Carpenter follows: "I have just seen Halpine's engraving of your original portrait of Mr. Lincoln. It is a very striking portrait of him, but I am not surprised at its fidelity, knowing your excellent opportunities during your six months at the White House, your daily study of him, and the frequent sittings he gave you. Mr. Lincoln always spoke of your portrait as the best ever taken of him; and it represents him in his most thoughtful and solemn mood, weighed down with care and sadness, as those who knew him best were so often accustomed to see him. It is a work to be prized and loved by all who appreciate him while living, and who realize his worth and honor his memory since he has passed away."

A second acquisition of Colfax's is dated at South Bend, Indiana, May, 1880. This tribute was solicited by Osborn H. Oldroyd for his "The Lincoln Memorial Album—Immortelles" which was published in 1882. The edited version of the tribute appears on page 199 of the Oldroyd book. The original unedited version follows:

"D. Sir, In reply to your request for my views upon the public life and services of our Martyred President, I would say that in his freedom from passion & bitterness—in his acute sense of Justice—in his courageous faith in the Right, & his inextinguishable hatred of Wrong—in his warm & heartfelt Sympathy & Mercy,—in his coolness of Judgment & his unquestioned rectitude of intention,—in a word, in his ability to lift himself for his country's sake, above all mere partisanship,—in all these marked traits of his character combined, he has had no parallel since Washington. And, while our Republic endures, he will live with him in the grateful hearts of his grateful countrymen."



South Bend, Ind. - May 1880.

I refer, in reply to your request for my views upon the public life & services of our Martyred President, I would say that, in his freedom from passion & bitterness—in his acute sense of justice—in his courageous faith in the Right & his inextinguishable hatred of Wrong—in his warm & heartfelt Sympathy & Mercy,—in his coolness of Judgment & his unquestioned rectitude of intention,—in a word, in his ability to lift himself for his country's sake, above all mere partisanship,—in all these marked traits of his character combined, he has had no parallel since Washington. And, while our Republic endures, he will live with him in the grateful hearts of his grateful countrymen.

Respectfully,  
Schuyler Colfax

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Schuyler Colfax's tribute to Lincoln for publication in Osborn H. Oldroyd's "The Lincoln Memorial Album—Immortelles."



## Robert T. Lincoln's Speech About His Father

Robert T. Lincoln always appeared reluctant to make public statements about his distinguished father. However, on October 7, 1896 on the 38th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debate in Galesburg, Illinois, John H. Finley, the president of Knox College, who presided at the celebration, succeeded in getting Robert Lincoln to say a few words about his father.

The program included an address of welcome by Hon. Clark E. Carr; greetings from the schools by Dr. C. E. Nash; an anniversary oration by the Hon. Chauncey M. Depew; an address by S. S. McClure; an address by Frank Hamlin; the unveiling of a memorial tablet; and an unveiling address by Hon. John M. Palmer. However, the most significant statement of this occasion was perhaps made by Robert Lincoln, who for the first and only time made a public declaration about Abraham Lincoln.

The address follows:

"On an occasion of this peculiar significance it would suit me far better to be a listener or to give you hearty assurance of the grateful emotions that overcome me on witnessing this demonstration of respect for my father. He knew that here he had many sympathizing friends, but what would have been his feelings could he have known that after nearly forty years, after his work was done over thirty years, there would come together such a multitude as this to do him honor! It is for others and not for me to say, I will give expression to but a few thoughts.

The issues of 1858 have long been settled. My father called the struggle one between right and wrong. In spite of the great odds against him he battled on, sustained by conscience and supported by the idea that when the fogs cleared away the people would be found on the side of right.

He was right, and to-day not a man could be found who would not resist the evil against which he protested. This should give us confidence in our battle against the evils of our own times. Now, as then, there can be but one supreme issue, that between right and wrong. In our country there are no ruling classes. The right to direct public affairs according to his might and influence and conscience belongs to the humblest as well as to the greatest. The elections represent the judgments of individual voters. Perhaps at times one vote can destroy or make the country's prosperity for thirty years. The power of the people, by their judgments expressed through the ballot box, to shape their own destinies, sometimes makes one tremble. But it is times of danger, critical moments, which bring into action the high moral quality of the citizenship of America. The people are always true. They are always right, and I have an abiding faith they will remain so."

In 1921 this short address was privately printed for Charles T. White, Herald Print, Hancock, New York in an edition of twenty-five copies. The copy in the Library-Museum of the Lincoln Foundation is No. 9. See Monaghan No. 2514.

## Cumulative Bibliography — 1965

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Fort Lauderdale .....	Jan. 21
Orlando .....	Jan. 24 & 25
Jacksonville .....	Jan. 26 & 27
San Diego .....	Feb. 7 & 8
Fresno .....	Feb. 9
Los Angeles .....	Feb. 10 to 14
San Francisco .....	Feb. 15 & 16
Oakland .....	Feb. 17 & 18
Sacramento .....	Feb. 21 & 22
Oklahoma City .....	Feb. 24 & 25

Those persons interested in learning of the schedule in detail in the various cities named above, may contact the general agency offices of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company.