



Lincoln Lore

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The Helm-Haycraft Collection of Kentucky Manuscripts

Since 1928 the Lincoln Library-Museum has had in its archives a very remarkable collection of manuscripts relating primarily to Hardin, Breckinridge, Nelson, Lincoln, Jefferson and Washington Counties in Kentucky. These 2,000 manuscripts range over a one hundred year period from 1778 to 1878.

The papers take the form of militia calls for military expeditions, land grants, agreements, contracts, fee bills, warrants, court documents, deeds, pension claims, petitions, promissory notes, surveys, business accounts, account books, orders, inventories, assessments, county levies, tax payments, treasury receipts, ledgers, personal letters, business letters, papers relating to religious controversies, church trustee books, printed material such as pamphlets and broadsides, and miscellaneous notes and records pertaining to the history of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. A sizeable collection of the documents relate to the slavery institution in Kentucky.

The discovery of this unique collection of manuscripts by Dr. Louis A. Warren is related in his statement as follows:

"While residing at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, during the years 1921 and 1922, I patronized a barber by the name of Skaggs, whose shop was located in the earliest brick structure in the community, erected in 1802 by Benjamin Helm. The barber suggested that I look over some old papers which he intended to destroy, located in the cellar of the building. It was not until I made a hurried visit to the town after my removal, that he again called my attention to the papers. Although lack of time permitted no perusal of them, a hasty glance revealed that they were very old, the paper having a rag content. Although having no knowledge of their character, rather than have them destroyed, I paid Mr. Skaggs a small sum for them.

"Months later when I found time to examine the papers, I discovered that they were associated with Benjamin Helm's early surveying interests in Kentucky and the personal papers of his son-in-law, Samuel Haycraft (Jr.), Hardin Court Clerk and the author of the *History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky*. Although a large percentage of the papers had deteriorated because of moisture and rodents, I was able to save about 2000 legible manuscripts.

"... the most valuable items were associated with Thomas Lincoln, father of the President. An original signature dated 1803 was discovered and several papers locating him at Elizabethtown as early as 1797 contributed much to our knowledge of his early years."

In the above statement, Dr. Warren did not relate that the basement of the building where the manuscripts were located was filled with water and that each piece of wet paper had to be placed between cardboard under pressure to dry. This was a most tedious process and quite some time elapsed before the collection could be carefully examined.

Even at this late date the manuscript collection has been examined by very few students due to its fragile condition. This problem has been remedied somewhat by placing each manuscript in an acetate folder on white bond paper.

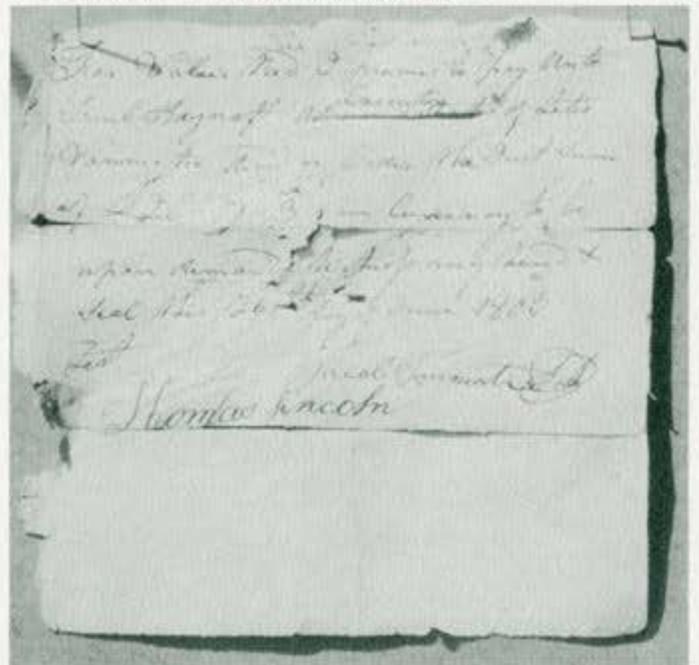
The Helm-Haycraft collection affords a wide appeal.

Perhaps its most significant papers pertain to Lincoln's father, but students of pioneer business firms would find its ledgers most revealing and Kentucky historians would discover material here that is unique. This is particularly true of Breckinridge County whose court house burned in Hardinsburg along with all its records.

Then, too, historians would find most fascinating personal letters from residents of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Virginia and Washington, D.C., some dating back to the 1840s. Students of early religious controversies, which once plagued the pioneer churches, would find ample material here concerning the fundamentalist's attitude toward the interpretation of the Bible with its accompanying narrow attitude in regard to the moral code. Others would undoubtedly be thrilled with the many beautiful land surveys and maps that constitute a large portion of the papers.

Certain outstanding items in the collection, to name only a few, might be listed as follows:

1. Seven manuscript books in which John Helm recorded surveys made by him from 1735 to 1804.
2. A book on surveying by Thomas Mendenhall, printed in Philadelphia in 1784. Used by John Helm the surveyor.
3. John Helm account book 1790.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

On June 26, 1803 Thomas Lincoln witnessed the promissory note of Jacob Vanmeter who agreed to the following: "For value recd. I promise to pay unto Sam Haycraft Executor of Letis Vanmeter decd. by order the just sum of L 26¹⁷'3 in curancy to be upon demand . . ." This document is without question the most valuable item in the Helm-Haycraft collection.

Name	Land	Horses	Cattle
Jacob Buchanan 100 1/2 acres	100 1/2	2	17
John Helm 100 1/2 acres	100 1/2	2	17
...
Caleb Hazel 100 acres	100	2	17
...

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Early Hardin County, Kentucky, tax list indicating that Caleb Hazel owned 100 acres of land, two horses and seventeen head of cattle. Abraham Lincoln made the statement that as a boy he went to school in Kentucky to two teachers: first, Zachariah Riney; second, Caleb Hazel. On October 12, 1816 the name of Thomas Lincoln appears on the marriage bond of Caleb Hazel. This was evidently a second marriage.

4. *The Ready Reckoner* by Daniel Fenning, printed by Christopher Sower in Germantown 1774.
5. Account book of Samuel Haycraft, Sr., 1796-1801, listing cash payments to Thomas Lincoln. An invaluable documentary source of information on the young Thomas Lincoln, father of the President. (See *Lincoln Lore* No. 1577, July 1969, page 4).
6. Samuel Haycraft receipt book 1794-1862, with receipts signed by H. (Hananiah) Lincoln, first cousin of Thomas Lincoln and other relatives and neighbors of Thomas Lincoln.
7. Samuel Haycraft account book 1797.
8. Hardin County, Kentucky tax book for 1798.
9. Ohio River surveys made by John Helm.
10. Broadside. Sale of Slaves by Order Hardin County, Kentucky Circuit Court October 10, 1859 Samuel Haycraft, Commissioner.
11. Letter of John B. Helm to Samuel Haycraft about his first meeting with Abraham Lincoln. (See

Lincoln Lore 1538 "A Case of Mistaken Identity" April, 1966.)

12. Autograph signature of Thomas Lincoln as a witness to a receipt dated June 26, 1803. One of the few and perhaps the earliest extant autograph of the father of the President.

The collection, aside from Thomas Lincoln and Hananiah Lincoln, (Lincoln's father lived with Hananiah in Elizabethtown for awhile) has names long associated with the Lincoln story such as Denton Geoghegan, (Thomas Lincoln worked for him under contract.), Caleb Hazel (Abraham Lincoln's schoolmaster), members of the Bush family, Van Meters, Brumfields, and a host of pioneers whom Thomas Lincoln knew and with whom he was associated.

There are also land grants signed by notable people such as the Virginia governor, Patrick Henry; first Kentucky governor, Isaac Shelby, and other early Kentucky governors. Another notable person whose letters are found in the collection is Gilbert Imlay, the author of *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America: Containing A Most Succinct Account Of Its Soil, Climate, Natural History, Etc.* published in London in 1797. Imlay's correspondence (three letters) has to do with land surveys, particularly in Jefferson County near the mouth of Salt River.

In addition to authorship, Imlay had another questionable claim to fame. He had a common law marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft which ended in 1796 when Mary became the wife of William Godwin. A daughter born to the Godwins (Mary died during childbirth) eventually became the wife of the English poet, Shelley.

Even John C. Calhoun is included in the papers. As Secretary of War, he signed a certificate dated April 13, 1822, attesting to the fact that Samuel Haycraft, Sr. served as a private in the Army of the Revolution. Under this claim, Haycraft was to receive a pension of \$8.00 per month to commence on June 20, 1820. The document is of considerable interest and is further enhanced with the seal of the War Department. The pension was of little value to Haycraft as he died on October 15, 1823.

Several documents signed by Duff Green (1791-1875) are included in the collection. He married Lucretia Edwards, an aunt of Ninian Wirt Edwards, who was a brother-in-law of Abraham Lincoln. While a resident of Elizabethtown, Duff Green lived for awhile in the same house in which Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush Johnston. This house was adjacent to the Benjamin Helm building, where the papers were discovered, with only an alley separating them.

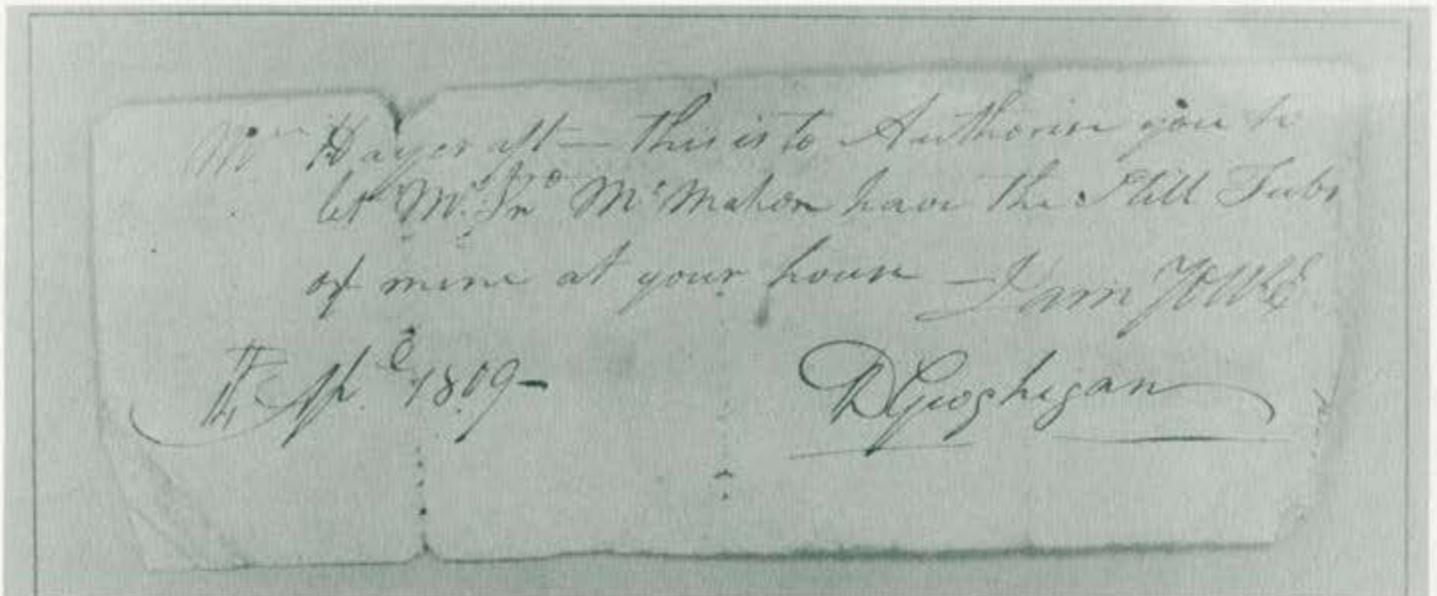
Green is remembered as an American journalist and politician. As editor and owner of the *United States Telegraph* (1825), he attacked Adams' administration. Later (1829-33) he became printer to Congress and an influential leader of the Democratic Party. For awhile he was a member of Andrew Jackson's so-called Kitchen Cabinet. He enjoyed a long and distinguished career. During the Civil War he supported the Confederacy. After the war he appears to have become a disgruntled and disappointed man. He did aid, however, in the industrial recovery of the South.

Samuel Haycraft, Jr., whose papers are most abundant in the Helm-Haycraft collection, was an avid fruit grower, and he carried on an active correspondence with

Late President Buchanan about the year
1813 or 1814 came to Ky. coming down the Ohio in a
flat boat with Maj. James Crutcher & Thomas S.
Crutcher with their goods. He =

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Hardin County, Kentucky, in the year 1813 or 1814 had residing within its limits the future 15th and 16th Presidents of the United States. Samuel Haycraft, Jr. in his unpublished notes for his *A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky . . .* (1869) made the following statement: "Late President Buchanan about the year 1813 or 1814 came to Ky — coming down the Ohio in a flatboat with Maj. James Crutcher & Thomas S. Crutcher with their goods."



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Denton Geoghegan, from whom Thomas Lincoln had a contract for getting out lumber for a mill, listed for taxation twenty slaves in 1816.

people of similar interest. This led to the formation of the Kentucky State Pomological and Horticultural Society of which Haycraft was the Corresponding Secretary. At their first convention the members met in Elizabethtown on October 12 and 13, 1865. An 18 page pamphlet of the transactions of this first session has been preserved in the collection.

Haycraft is best remembered for his *A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky And Its Surroundings*, written in 1869. He is also well known to Lincoln students as a correspondent of Abraham Lincoln, having written to the future President six different letters and receiving in return five replies, all before Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. (See *Lincoln Lore* 1530, "Lincoln-Haycraft Correspondence" August 1965).

In the preparation of his history, Haycraft carried on an extensive correspondence with those who might best remember the early historical events of Elizabethtown and Hardin County. A large file of such correspondence, containing biographical sketches of prominent residents, is today available for those students interested in this particular field of Kentucky history. Haycraft also corresponded with Richard H. Collins who wrote and compiled Collins' *History of Kentucky*, which was published in 1878. In a letter to Haycraft dated May 4, 1872, Collins commented on *A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky* as follows: "I have seldom read more interesting and entertaining matter any where . . . I will of course, give you the credit for what I have condensed from your work — not 100th part in quantity of yours, but all that I can spare room for."

While Haycraft's history is considered a valuable collateral work by most Lincoln collectors, his unpublished notes also reveal some interesting information concerning the Fifteenth President James Buchanan. The Helm-Haycraft collection contains quite a number of pages and fragments of Haycraft's original handwritten manuscript along with his rough notes relative to Elizabethtown history. One such note follows: "Late President Buchanan about the year 1813 or 1814 came to Ky — coming down the Ohio in a flatboat with Major James Crutcher and Thomas S. Crutcher with their goods."

The Crutchers owned and operated a store in Elizabethtown and made frequent trips to Pennsylvania to purchase goods for this store. Young Buchanan came to Kentucky as a lawyer to protect his father's landed interests. Other statements by such historians as Little and Collins corroborate Haycraft in regard to Buchanan's residence in Elizabethtown. It is a most interesting fact that in the year 1813 or 1814 the future Fifteenth and Sixteenth Presidents of the United States resided in Hardin County within fifteen or twenty miles of each other.

Because of the many facets of the Helm-Haycraft Collection a new catalogue is now in process. An effort is being made to catalogue the collection in depth with hundreds of guide cards to the many different types and forms of information in the collection. Due to the large number of papers which mention "Samuel Haycraft," considerable difficulty is sometimes encountered in deciding whether the name refers to Sr. (1752-1823) or Jr. (1795-1878). This is especially true of manuscripts bearing no date. Little difficulty is encountered in determining the signatures. In fact, quite a sizeable quantity of manuscripts bearing no date are found in the collection. These are to be catalogued alphabetically.

The collection is large in bulk, interesting in content and awaiting students and historians who may some day find it a veritable mine of information. Up to date it has only been searched for Thomas Lincoln documents (references) and those of his contemporaries, and the quest has been most rewarding.

Editor's Note: An additional cut pertaining to the Helm-Haycraft Collection appears on page 4. — R.G.M.

"Captain Robert Lincoln has sent the carriage for Mrs. Dixon." April 14, 1865

Editor's Note: The editor is grateful to Miss Judith A. Schiff, Chief Reference Specialist, Manuscripts & Archives, Yale University Library, for bringing Mrs. Dixon's original letter to his attention. R. G. M.

Historians have had little to say about Mrs. James Dixon who was present at Lincoln's deathbed at the Petersen house following the President's assassination at Ford's Theatre. She was the wife of Senator James Dixon (1814-1873) of Connecticut. Her maiden name was Elizabeth Lord Cogswell and her father was the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Cogswell, a professor in the Connecticut Theological Institute. She married James Dixon in 1840.

The Republican senator and his wife were unusually friendly to the Lincoln administration and even supported the administration of Andrew Johnson to the extent that he voted against the sufficiency of the articles of impeachment and from that date he participated no longer in the councils of the Republican party. He retired from public life in 1869.

However, the reason for Mrs. Dixon's presence at the Petersen house on April 14th, 1865 can be attributed to Robert T. Lincoln, who throughout his mother's lifetime was most solicitous for her welfare. Undoubtedly, Lincoln's eldest son believed Mrs. Dixon would be a comfort to his mother during the tragic event. Whether or not this was the case is unknown. However, every indication is that she was a most sympathetic friend.

Fortunately, a letter has come to light which provides some details concerning Mrs. Dixon's visit to the Petersen house. The letter written in Washington, D.C. on April 14, 1866 is addressed to Othniel C. Marsh by

**COMMISSIONER'S SALE
OF
VALUABLE NEGROES.**

In obedience to a decree of the Hardin Circuit Court, in the Equity cause of Robert T. Yarnum, Sheriff, Hardin Co., and others, against John Lee and others, pronounced at July term, 1859, I will, on the

31st day of December, 1859,

At the last residence of John Lee, deceased, now in the occupancy of Robert T. Yarnum, of the Books of Street Town, in Hardin County, 12 or 13 miles from Elizabethtown, sell, in the highest bidder, at public auction,

**THREE
LIKELY NEGROES.**

Consisting of two valuable women and one boy.

LUCY, ANN AND PETER,

the latter under 10 years of age.

TERMS OF SALE.

The sale will be on a credit of eight months, the purchaser to give bond with approved security, to bear interest from the day of sale to the term and effect of a regular bond at maturity, and to be made payable to the undersigned.

October 16th, 1859.

Also, on the same day, a very valuable young negro man, an owner, sold at the same place.

HARTEL HAYCRAFT, Clerk.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Hardin County, Kentucky, Commissioner's Sale of Valuable Negroes dated December 31, 1859. This slave broadside (11½" x 15½") is of unusual significance because it relates to slavery in the community where Lincoln was born, fifty years earlier, and Samuel Haycraft, Jr. who conducted the sale was a correspondent of Abraham Lincoln, having written to the future president six different letters and receiving in return five replies all before Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. (*Lincoln Lore* 1530, August, 1965 "Lincoln-Haycraft Correspondence").

Early Lincoln biographers have attempted to prove that slavery was a negligible factor in the community life of Hardin County when the Lincolns resided there. Available records indicate otherwise. In 1811 the tax list for Hardin County shows that there were then 1,007 slaves listed for taxation. This same year, the white male population above sixteen years of age, was 1,627. This would indicate an average of at least two slaves for each family in the county. In 1813 one Hardin County resident alone listed fifty-eight Negroes in his possession.

Elizabeth Dixon. The original letter is a part of the Othniel Charles Marsh papers of the Manuscript and Archives Department of the Yale University Library. An excerpt from the letter, dated April 14, 1866 from Washington, D.C., follows:

"... We were with her (Mrs. Sigourney) during her last illness and death. This day also recalls the murder of President Lincoln. I had been to Church that day (Good Friday) & went to the Hospital, remaining all day & until quite late, so that Bessie & Clemmie were ready to return with me.

"We were all very tired & had retired at half past eight. I had fallen asleep & was awake by a carriage dashing up to the door. I heard a man ask if Senator Dixon lived here & said he had a message from Captain Robert Lincoln for Mrs. Dixon. I knew Capt. Lincoln was in the army & immediately thought of Jamie & that he probably had some bad news for me.

"I threw open the window & asked what the matter was, my heart standing still. The gentleman had been sent for me & he replied: 'Captain Robert Lincoln has sent the carriage for Mrs. Dixon & wants her to come to his mother as quickly as possible — the President is dead.'

"I thought he had died at the White House suddenly & said: 'Certainly I will go, as soon as possible.' Mr. Dixon & Harry were

in Hartford, Jamie in the Army & we had only a young friend of Jamie's staying here — to take care of us. Mr. Kinney fortunately had recently returned that morning from Richmond, so I sent for him & when I was ready I learned that the President had been murdered at the Theatre & we were to go to the house opposite where he had been taken.

"So we proceeded there & I remained with Mrs. Lincoln all night, part of the time beside the murdered President & then we would persuade her to go out for a few moments. I went home with her to the White House. The next morning, a scene of desolation & horror truly.

"I have forbidden artists from putting me into the picture representing the death of the President. I was so haunted by it & so nervous, that I did not wish the association perpetuated & thought it would be very unpleasant to see such a picture advertised or on exhibition. The newspaper reporters have a way of putting everything into the papers & I told one of them that I would pay him if he ever saw our names going into the paper, to keep them out."

Mrs. Dixon stated in her letter that she had forbidden artists from putting her into pictures representing the death of the President. That statement was undoubtedly true in regard to published pictures in 1866, but she did appear in John B. Bachelder's engraving, which was begun in 1865, along with Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris, Mrs. Kinney and her daughter, Mary Cogswell Kinney was a sister of Mrs. Dixon, and her daughter Constance was of course Mrs. Dixon's niece.

Bachelder made arrangements with Brady & Co. photographers to make pictures of all those present at the deathbed, shortly after the remains of the President left the city. Apparently, Mrs. Dixon cooperated with the artist and posed in the position she occupied by the deathbed.

Forty-seven people were depicted in the Bachelder engraving. Fortunately, a key was published which allows one to identify Mrs. Dixon with certainty. The engraving was executed by B. H. Hall, Jr., the eminent engraver upon steel.

Next, the design was placed in the hands of Alonzo Chappel, an historical painter. His painting bears the date of 1868. In the key published by Bachelder Mrs. Dixon looks directly toward the dying President which conceals many of the features of her face. However, in the Chappel painting she looks in the direction of Robert T. Lincoln which reveals the important features of her face.

A further indication of Mrs. Dixon's cooperation with Bachelder and Chappel was her willingness to sign a statement as follows: "We the undersigned visited the late President Lincoln at his bedside during his last hours. We have since sat for a likeness to be used expressly in the composition of the Historical Painting of that event, designed by John B. Bachelder and painted by Alonzo Chappel." Mrs. Dixon's signature is written E. L. Dixon.

Why Mrs. Dixon changed her mind about forbidding artists from putting her into a picture representing the death of the President, we will likely never know.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A section of the Chappel painting "The Last Hours of Lincoln" depicting Mrs. Dixon seated at the left of the kneeling Mrs. Lincoln.