



# 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 46801

Number 1619

Fort Wayne, Indiana

January, 1973

## Re-Discovering The Supposed Grave Of Lincoln's Brother

Editor's Note: In the February, 1946 issue of the *Lincoln Herald*, I published an article bearing the above title. This is an account of a field trip I made in the summer of 1945 with the late Judge Otis M. Mather of Hodgenville, Kentucky, and my seven-year old son, Stephen, to the Redmon cemetery in the vicinity of the Lincoln home on Knob Creek. We were seeking the supposed grave of young Thomas Lincoln, Jr. As the magazine then had a limited circulation and because no new evidence has been discovered in the intervening twenty-eight years, it is thought appropriate to reprint (with some slight changes and deletions) the original article. This is, of course, done with the permission of Lincoln Memorial University, the publisher of the *Lincoln Herald*.

R.G.M.

Since the fall of 1933, a grave in the Redmon family cemetery, in the Knob Creek section of Larue County, Kentucky, has been marked as being that of Thomas Lincoln, Jr., the infant brother of Abraham Lincoln. In fact, all the evidence now available, which consists merely of a tradition and a crudely carved tombstone, seems to substantiate the claim that the grave of the infant Thomas has actually been discovered.

Little is known of this third and last child of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. The dates of his birth and death were not entered in the Lincoln family Bible, but at least he lived long enough to receive a name. The best evidence that historians have concerning the earthly existence of the infant brother are the words of Abraham Lincoln. In preparing an autobiographical sketch in 1860 for John Locke Scripps and writing in the third person, Lincoln made this statement, "He (Abraham) had a sister, older than himself, who was grown and married, but died many years ago, leaving no child, also a brother, younger than himself, who died in infancy."

Thomas was born two or three years after Abraham's birth. Biographers cannot seem to agree on the date. Some advance the year 1811, while others are inclined to select the year 1812. In fact, some historians have used both dates, at different times, in their published works. Without question, the infant brother was born while the family resided on their Knob Creek farm.

There is no documentary authority available to prove that the given name of the infant son was "Thomas." The earliest mention of the name appears on page 22 of J. G. Holland's biography, *The Life Of Abraham Lincoln*, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1866.

This is undoubtedly the original source for later biographers who made an effort to compile information concerning Lincoln's immediate family. Holland, apparently had some misgivings with respect to its accuracy, because he put the name in brackets. It is quite likely, however,



From *The Herald Post*, Louisville, Kentucky

The original limestone slab bearing the initials "T.L." which was discovered in the Redmon cemetery by James Taylor in the fall of 1933 as a marker over what is believed to be the grave of Lincoln's brother.

that the President may have told more than one of his interviewers that the boy's name was Thomas. Present day biographers, for want of contradictory proof, accept the name, Thomas, as accurate.

The causes of the death of the child, whom some say lived only three days, cannot be explained. However, it is possible that during his illness the family had the services of a professional physician. From the years 1811 to 1814, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, the county seat of Hardin County, had as one of its physicians, Dr. Daniel B. Potter. This doctor was a college graduate of recognized ability, and there is documentary evidence that he had some contact with Thomas Lincoln.

In 1814, the doctor died of the "cold plague," and, in the settlement of his estate, a record appears in the administrator's accounts in the form of

a credit to Thomas Lincoln for \$1.46. The services rendered by Dr. Potter were certainly between his arrival in Hardin County in 1811 and his death in 1814. Likely the doctor's bill was rendered for services in the years 1811 or 1812, during the illness of the boy baby.

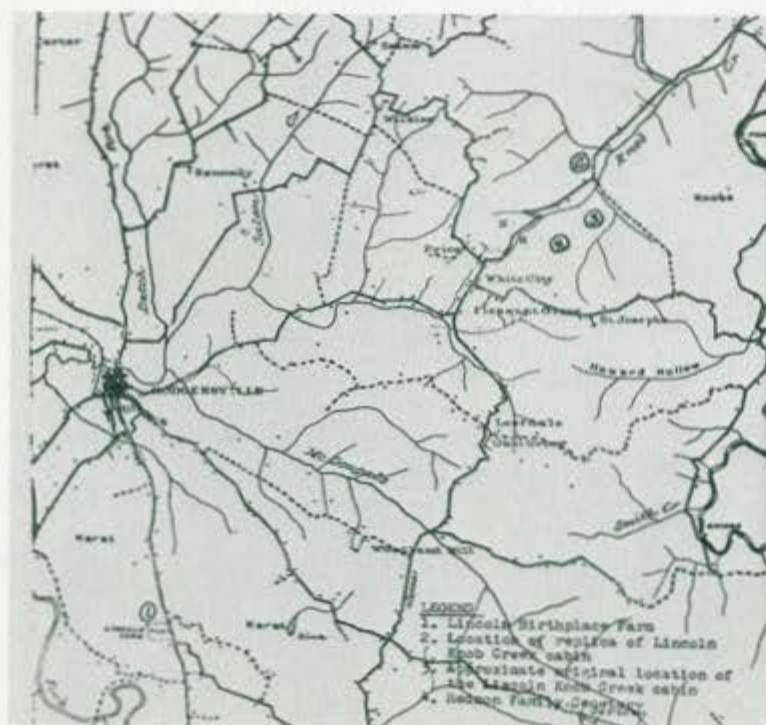
A Knob Creek tradition relates that with the death of the child, the father made a coffin for his infant son, and that George Redmon, a neighbor living on an adjoining farm, carried the remains on his shoulder for about three-quarters of a mile over a rugged path from the Knob Creek Valley home to his more pretentious log house on the brow of Muldrough Hill, where funeral services were held. The burial was said to have followed in the Redmon family cemetery located about seventy-five yards from the Redmon cabin.

This tradition, related by the descendants of the Taylor family, one-time neighbors of the Redmons, did not receive very much consideration from students who have delved into the Kentucky phase of Lincolniana. Not until the year 1933, when the so-called grave of Lincoln's brother was discovered, was the tradition revived. Many historians were until then of the opinion that the infant Thomas was buried in the Little Mount Cemetery located about three miles east from Hodgenville. However, exhaustive efforts made to locate the grave there proved to be futile.

It was a crew of relief workers, under a foreman named James Taylor, that made the discovery of the grave in the early fall of 1933. With the task of cleaning and clearing old and neglected graveyards, the foreman selected the Redmon cemetery, then the property of Fred De Spain, as their special project. This cemetery is located about half-way between Hodgenville and New Haven, not far from U.S. Highway 31-E. About seventeen marked graves, arranged in two orderly rows, were uncovered by the workmen, and a third irregular row with four isolated graves was likewise cleared of sassafras, sumac, briars and weeds. Two of the isolated graves have no inscriptions on the lichen-covered headstones, while another one bears the initials "S.B."

In this irregular row of graves, which archaeologists might term as intrusion burials, Taylor noticed a





A section of a geological map of Larue County, Kentucky, showing the location of the Lincoln Birthplace Farm, the replica of the Lincoln Knob Creek cabin, the approximate original site of the Lincoln Knob Creek cabin and the Redmon Family cemetery. Many of the roads and highways on this map have been relocated.

coln National Bank at Hodgenville. There it remained for many months.

Soon this flurry of interest in Lincoln's brother's grave subsided, and only a few historians and biographers remembered the details of the discovery. Next, the W. P. A. discontinued its activities in providing relief work, and the cemetery quickly reverted to its wild, natural state with a lush growth of weeds, sumac, and sassafras. Also, the ownership of the farm was changed. Fred De Spain, who had received so much publicity as the owner of the cemetery, sold out and moved nearer to town. Also, the stone marker bearing the initials "T. L." was taken out of the bank vault and placed in a meat house. Little Tommy Lincoln's fame was short lived.

During the summer of 1945, I spent several weeks of my vacation in Kentucky, and, growing tired of inactivity, I decided to rediscover the grave of Lincoln's brother. Fortunately, I called at the law office of Judge Mather, who immediately realized that I could never locate the grave due to the relocation of county roads and the inaccessibility of the pioneer cemetery. Very graciously, he offered to be my guide, and, with my seven-year-old son, Stephen, we set out by car in quest of the grave, which was located approximately six or seven miles northeast of Hodgenville. Traveling as far on wheels as possible, we finally were forced to abandon our car and follow our course on foot. Even the Judge experienced some difficulty in keeping his bearings in this isolated country, but, eventually, we found the tobacco patch where R. Beauchamp

Brown, the present owner of the farm and cemetery, was at work, and, then, we knew that we had achieved our objective.

Upon examination of the cemetery, we found it a tangled mass of brambles and weeds, and, after locating the walnut tree which was our general marker for the identification of the historic spot, we sighted the crude stone that had been placed over the supposed grave. The original marker was still locked in the meat house, which we, unfortunately, did not see on this visit, but which we had seen earlier while the stone was being preserved in the bank vault.

Much to our disappointment, we found, too, that the log home of George Redmon, which had for several years past been used for a tobacco barn, had just recently been dismantled and the logs neatly stacked in one corner of the field. It is of interest to note that the original side-wall logs of the Redmon cabin measured from eighteen to twenty-one inches thick.

While trying to relive the historic scene that was undoubtedly enacted in this cemetery in 1811 or 1812, I could not help but think how the gods of chance had dealt so graciously with Abraham and, at the same time, had been so parsimonious with Thomas. At least, he made one contribution to his more fortunate brother. The mere fact that Lincoln had an elder sister and a younger brother silences the charges made by the President's political enemies that he was illegitimate. Then too, the earthly existence of the brother refutes the attacks made against the father, in regard to the President's paternity.

One conclusion we did reach, in our fatigued condition, was that the world will never beat a path to the grave of Thomas Lincoln, Jr.

## Lincoln Remembered A Stone House In Kentucky

When Dr. Jesse Rodman of Hodgenville, Kentucky, called on President Lincoln in Washington, D. C., in regard to Larue County's 1863 quota under the military draft, they conversed at some length about the area around Knob Creek where the President had lived from 1811 to 1816.

Lincoln told Rodman that two objects in Larue County "which were most impressed upon his memory were a big tree that was somewhere on South Fork and the 'Stone House.'"

Otis M. Mather in his book, *Six Generations of LaRues And Allied Families*: . . . , 1921, described the "Stone House" as follows: "The quaint dwelling, situated two miles east of Hodgenville, which was erected about the year 1800, with limestone walls so thick as to be suggestive of a fortification, is yet well known to the people of the locality by the same name which had lingered in the mind of President Lincoln. He probably saw it often in his childhood as he travelled between the Knob Creek home and Hodgen's mill."

The "Stone House" still stands on property once owned by Gustavus Ovesen and later by Claude Williams. The house is located two miles east of Hodgenville on the Bardstown Road (Route 31-E). While Otis M. Mather referred to the building as a dwelling, it might also have served occasionally as a fortification, a school house and a spring house.

A photograph of the Old Stone House was first published as a frontispiece in J. Rogers Gore's book, *The Boyhood Of Abraham Lincoln*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1921.

Louis A. Warren in his article, *Living Lincoln Memorials*, 1929, made the following statement about the "great tree somewhere on Nolin River":

"There are a few residents of that region today who remember hearing of a famous old tree on Nolin River near Buffalo, but it has been down so long its location has been forgotten. Just recently, however, some authentic information about this tree has come to light. Dennis Hanks, the boyhood associate of Lincoln, wrote to one of his relatives in Kentucky on March 25, 1866, and among his many inquiries was this one: 'Is the old Lunderner (?) poplar a-standing yet? I was born within thirty steps of that tree in the old peach orchard.'"

Warren continued: "This is undoubtedly the tree which Lincoln remembered and it has not been difficult to locate the place where it stood. It was near the old mill site at Buffalo, on one of the branches of Nolin River. It is difficult to imagine the enormous growth which these old trees achieved."

## CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1971-1972

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, Boston University, 725 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E. B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 404 Union Arcade Bldg., Davenport, Iowa; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1971

LUEBKE, FREDERICK C.

1971-27

Ethnic Voters/And The/Election Of Lincoln/Edited with an introduction/by/Frederick C. Luebke/University Of Nebraska Press. Lincoln/ [Copyright 1971 by the University of Nebraska Press. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/4" x 5 1/2", xxxii p., 226 pp., includes percentage tables of vote distributions, price, \$9.75.

MILLER, WALTER H.

1971-28

"I was born/February 12,/ 1809 . . . in/Kentucky."/ Lincoln / Lived / Here / (Cabin)/Colorful . . . Lincoln Heritage Trail/ [Back & Front Cover title] [Copyright 1971 by Walter H. Miller. Published by Walter H. Miller and Company, Inc., Williamsburg, Virginia.]

Pamphlet, paper, 6 7/8" x 5 3/4", (32) pp., illus., map of Lincoln Heritage Trail on inside of back cover.

SCHWEDE, A. O. 1971-29

Die / Abraham / Lincoln / Story /erzählt von A. O. Schwede/Union Verlag Berlin/ [1971 Alle Rechte vorbehalten. Union Verlag (VOB) Berlin.] [Printed in German language]

Book, cloth, 8 1/8" x 5", 510 pp.

1972

BURMEISTER, W. L.

1972-15

(Profile) / His / Life / and / Times / 1809-1865 / Abraham / Lincoln / Sixteenth President of the United States/Concept: W. L. Burmeister / Design: Jerry Warshaw/a Longview book/Copyright @ 1972 by W. L. Burmeister/ [Cover title]

Folder, 8 1/2" x 5 3/4", (20) pp., illus.

HARMAN, JEROME

(1972)-16

(Statue of Abraham Lincoln by Robert Merrill Gage)/Abraham Lincoln's/Advice/To Young Lawyers/ [Cover title]

Folder, 7" x 4 1/2", (4) pp.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1972-17

Lincoln Herald/Index/Vol. 72/Spring, 1970 through Winter, 1970/Compiled by/Gary R. Planck/Edited by/Wayne C. Temple/Lincoln Memorial University Press/Harrogate, Tennessee/ 1972/ [Cover title]

Pamphlet, paper, 10 3/8" x 7 1/8", 15 pp.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1972-18

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Spring, 1972/ Vol. 74, No. 1/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the

Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 3/8" x 7 1/8", 1-72 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1972-19

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Summer, 1972/Vol. 74, No. 2/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 3/8" x 7 1/8", 73-120 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

STONE, IRVING

1972-20

(Printed in Japanese language) Love Is Eternal/by Irving Stone/ [Original Copyright: Marion Saunders. Book published in Japan by arrangement with Marion Saunders through Charles E. Tuttle Co. Inc., Tokyo. Copyright 1972 by Tadae Fukisawa. Printed in Japan.]

Book, cloth, 7 1/4" x 5 1/2", 561 pp., illus.

U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK  
SERVICE (1972)-21

(Scene of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Indiana)/Lincoln Living Historical Farm/ [Cover title] [Art by Karen Pierce. Printed by Chatham Press, Inc., Old Greenwich, Connecticut.]

Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2" open, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2" folded, (4) pp., illus.

TURNER, JUSTIN G.

TURNER, LINDA LEVITT  
1972-22

Mary Todd/Lincoln/Her Life and Letters/Justin G. Turner/LindaLevittTurner/ With an Introduction by Fawn M. Brodie/Alfred A. Knopf New York 1972/ [Copyright 1972 by Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 9 5/8" x 6 1/4", fr., xxv p., 750 pp., index (i-xxxvi), illus., price, \$15.00.

LINCOLN NATIONAL  
LIFE FOUNDATION

1972-23

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 / 46801 / Number 1613, July 1972 to Number 1618, December 1972.

Folder, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 4 pp., illus. Number 1613, Recent Library-Museum Acquisitions, July

Lincoln Lore Bibliography 1972-22

This 750 page book, published on September 27, 1972 by Alfred Knopf, brings together for the first time all 609 of Mary Todd Lincoln's available letters, over half of which have never before been published. This work must be considered an essential title of Lincolniana and, certainly, one of the finest contributions to the field in many years.

1972: Number 1614, The Presidential Election — 1864, August 1972; Number 1615, Tad Lincoln: Could He Have Written a Letter Or Telegram in 1864?, September 1972; Number 1616, Lincoln Cigar and Tobacco Labels, October 1972; Number 1617, Hannibal Hamlin — Lincoln's Vice President (First Term), November 1972; Number 1618, Index for 1972, December 1972.

WILLIAMS, T. HARRY

1972-24

T. Harry Williams/Two War Leaders: Lincoln and Davis/Abraham Lincoln Association/Springfield, Illinois, 1972/ [Cover title] [Copyright 1972, Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois.]

Pamphlet, paper, 9" x 6 1/4", 20 pp., illus.

