

LINCOLN LORE

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HINGHAM—PILGRIMAGE STATION NUMBER ONE

A general court held at "Newe Towne," Massachusetts Bay Colony, on September 2, 1635, specified the community known as "Barecove is changed and hereafter to be called Hingham." Most of the settlers in the town were from Old Hingham, England, hence the name of this New England village.

Rev. Peter Hobart and twenty-nine other citizens drew house lots in Hingham on September 18, 1635, and within a few weeks lots were granted to Thomas Lincoln, the miller, Thomas Lincoln, the weaver, and Thomas Lincoln, the cooper. A brother of Thomas, the weaver, named Samuel, disembarked at Boston, on June 20, 1637, and soon took up his residence in Hingham. Another Thomas Lincoln called the husbandman, also arrived in Hingham about this time. By the year 1638, there were eight men named Lincoln who had come from Norfolk County, England, then living in Hingham. Six of them married and left children, one was married but left no children and one was a bachelor.

Samuel Lincoln was still in his teens when he reached Hingham. The date of his marriage and the surname of his wife, Martha, are not known. There were eleven children born to this union, six sons and five daughters. Many of these children continued to make their homes in Hingham after they were married. Samuel became the progenitor of an illustrious line of descendants, among them President Abraham Lincoln, Attorney General Levi Lincoln, Governor Levi Lincoln, Junior, and Governor Enoch Lincoln.

When the two hundredth anniversary of the town of Hingham was celebrated in 1835, there were twenty-three men by the name of Lincoln on the voting list. Honorable Solomon Lincoln was the orator of the day. Fifty years later on the occasion of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the town, Solomon's son, Solomon Lincoln, Jr., was the orator. Two of the three officers of the committee of arrangements were Lincolns.

Family Memorials

There are many memorials to the Lincolns which may be visited in Hingham and adjacent counties, and especially the old home of Mordecai Lincoln, great-great-great-grandfather of the President. This colonial structure, located in Scituate, was erected about 1695 and is in an excellent state of preservation.

The site of Samuel Lincoln's early home can be pointed out to the visitor. It is likely that Samuel Lincoln's remains and those of his wife are in the community burial lot in which there are deposited the ashes of the earliest settlers whose resting places were disturbed when highway construction demanded more room. A tall granite monument back of Derby Academy stands over a vault in which the remains were placed. The marker was erected in 1831 in memory of the first settlers.

Another burial place near north Scituate holds the remains of other Lincolns. Groveland Cemetery is the

name of this sacred place and over the graves of Mordecai and his second wife the tomb stones, although made of slate, are well preserved. These are the earliest of the definitely marked graves of Abraham Lincoln's forebears.

Old Meeting House

However, it is the "Old Meeting House" which seems to hold the memories and traditions which contribute most to the Lincoln atmosphere at Hingham, for in this structure Samuel Lincoln and his descendants worshipped for many generations. This seems to be a proper shrine to be designated as Station Number One on any comprehensive pilgrimage touching the important places associated with the history of Abraham Lincoln in America.

The frame of the building often called the "Old Ship Church" was erected on the days of July 26, 27, and 28th, 1681, and was completed and made ready for worship on January 8, 1682. It was the second house erected by the parish at Hingham and tradition claims much of the material in the first meeting place, which stood a short distance north of the present church, was used in the construction of the present edifice.

For fifty years, the church built in 1681 was adequate to the needs of the parish but in 1731, the side towards the cemetery was extended fourteen feet. In 1755 a similar addition was made to the street side. At the time of this second enlargement square pews were installed and first made available to the church members by an auction held on January 6, 1765, by which the new pews were allotted to the parishioners. A new pulpit was also constructed at the same time.

An impressive restoration was managed in 1930 by which the interior of the house was made to appear as it did in Colonial days. The massive hand hewn beams and curving timbers long obscured by plastered walls now allow one to observe a fine specimen of Colonial church architecture. Everything has been done that is physically possible to preserve the old structure, even the heating plant is installed in another building on the opposite side of the street.

The Parish Records are remarkably well preserved from 1712 up to date. When the church was under the jurisdiction of the town, the records relating to its activities in the early years were scattered through the town reports.

There have been but twelve ministers who have served the church from 1635 to the present day, making the length of the average pastorate twenty-five years. At the time Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States, Calvin Lincoln was minister of the Hingham church and served the congregation twenty-six years, from 1855 to 1881.

The "Old Meeting House" at Hingham, said to be "the oldest building in America continuously used for the purposes of public worship," would seem to offer an excellent atmosphere for the beginning of a tour to Lincoln memorials. Thus this old church of the Lincolns is made Station Number one in the itinerary mapped out for a Lincoln Shrine Pilgrimage.