

Chapter Two

“I Used to be a Slave”:

Boyhood and Adolescence in Indiana (1816-1830)

In 1817, a British traveler described Indiana as “a vast forest, larger than England, just penetrated in places, by the back-wood settlers, who are half hunters, half farmers.”ⁱ Late in the previous year, Thomas Lincoln, his wife, and their two children entered the Buck Horn Valley of that state, which had just been admitted to the Union.ⁱⁱ

The family’s journey from Kentucky was arduous, relentlessly exposing them to the rigors of camping out on cold winter nights. Upon reaching their new home site, the little

ⁱ Elias Pym Fordham, Personal Narrative of Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and of a Residence in the Illinois Territory, 1817-1818 (Cleveland: Augustus H. Clarke, 1906), quoted in R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (2 vols.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), 1:24.

ⁱⁱ There is much controversy about the exact route the family took from Kentucky to Indiana. See, for example, “Proceedings of Hearing Held before the Special Committee Appointed to Recommend the Proper Routing of the Proposed Lincoln National Memorial Highway,” typescript, Abraham Lincoln Association reference files, folder “Lincoln Memorial Highway,” Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; George H. Honig, “Where the Lincolns Crossed the Ohio,” chapter 7 of an unpublished book, “George H. Honig’s Sketches of Abraham Lincoln, The Youth,” ed. Lena Gabbert, typescript dated 1964, pp. 64-72, George Honig Papers, Willard Library, Evansville, Indiana. Honig (1875-1962) interviewed Joseph Gentry and others who had known the Lincolns. See also a statement, dated 1866, by Jacob Weatherholt, Jr., in Fred L. Holmes, Abraham Lincoln Traveled This Way (Boston: L. C. Page, 1930), 16. Descendants of Thomas Lincoln’s brother Josiah stated that the migrants stopped to visit Josiah near Corydon. Thomas walked while his wife and children rode. J. Edward Murr, “The Wilderness Years of Abraham Lincoln,” 110-11, unpublished typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Written after World War II, this manuscript is based, like Murr’s “Lincoln in Indiana” articles published in the Indiana Magazine of History, on interviews with the Rev. Mr. Allen Brooner, John Brooner, Joseph and James Gentry, Wesley and Porter Hall, Polly Agnew, Professor J. M. Johnson, Jacob Summers, Jefferson Ray, Dr. Loren Gage (a descendant of the Hanks family), Dr. John White, William Herron, Redmond Grigsby, Mrs. John Romine, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Lamar, William Forsythe, Charles Painter, and many of their children and the children of others who knew Lincoln. Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 267, 342. Eleven of these were Lincoln’s boyhood companions. Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 2, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.

family must have felt some trepidation as they began a new life with no domestic animals, settling miles from their nearest neighbor.ⁱⁱⁱ

HARDSHIPS IN FRONTIER INDIANA

They quickly erected a crude lean-to shelter called a “half-faced camp,” a temporary expedient commonly thrown up by pioneers when they first came to the frontier. These primitive domiciles consisted of three poll walls; where a fourth wall would normally stand, a fire was kept burning in cold weather. Covering them was a roof of poles and brush.^{iv} The Lincolns’ pole house, about fourteen feet on each side, had animal skins covering the open side when the fire was out.^v In this crude structure, which Dennis Hanks unfondly called “that Darne Little half face Camp,” the family lived for an undetermined time, probably

ⁱⁱⁱ Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, vol. 1 of A Life of Lincoln, ed. Marion Mills Miller (2 vols.; New York: Baker and Taylor, 1908), 25-26. On the reliability of Whitney’s testimony, see the appendix below, “A Note on Sources,” and Douglas W. Hill, “Henry Clay Whitney: A Reliable Source of Lincoln Research?” Lincoln Herald 102 (2000): 177-184.

^{iv} William A. Cockrum, A Pioneer History of Indiana (Oakland, Indiana: Oakland City Journal, 1907), 161. Logan Esarey noted that in frontier Indiana the “‘half-faced’ camp was common. It was made of poles, usually with three walls, and covered with poles and brush. A bed or beds were made of leaves and grass and woven coverlets or skins were used for covering. A fireplace for warmth and cooking was made outside, usually in front of the open side of the camp. An oven could be made in the hillside with walls of clay or small stones from the creek bed. The common cooking utensils were a spider or three-legged skillet in which to fry meat, and a larger skillet with a lid, in which corn pone could be made.” Esarey, The Indiana Home (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), 25. To cover the structure, “Poles were laid across a distance of three feet apart, and on these a roof of clapboards was laid and these were held down by weight poles. No floors were laid in these camps nor were there windows or chimneys.” Illinois Woman’s Columbian Club of Menard County, Menard, Salem, Lincoln Souvenir Album (Petersburg, Illinois: Pantagraph, 1893), unpaginated (page headed “The First Settlers”).

^v Dennis Hanks to Herndon, [December 1865?], Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 149; Eli Grigsby, reporting what he was told by his grandfather, Reuben Grigsby, and by his great uncle, Nathaniel Grigsby, Evansville Courier and Journal, 12 February 1933. It is not clear whether Thomas had constructed this camp during his exploratory sojourn earlier that year, or whether he threw it together when he arrived with his family in December. J. Edward Murr asserted that Thomas Lincoln and Thomas Carter constructed the camp in the early summer of 1816. Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 5-6, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.

several months.^{vi} Hanks’s aversion to that camp, which he and his foster parents occupied temporarily in 1817, is understandable, for such a dwelling would have been relatively comfortable in warm weather, but when winter storms howled and the south wind blew smoke into the faces of the inhabitants, it proved nearly intolerable.^{vii} Acquaintances of the Lincolns testified that young Abe lived “amid want, poverty and discomfort that was . . . about on the plane of the slaves he was destined to emancipate,” and they described the winter of 1816-17 as “a veritable childhood Valley Forge, of suffering, discomfort and self-denial.”^{viii}

Compared to this Little Pigeon Creek neighborhood, Hardin County, Kentucky, seemed a model of settled civilization. Lincoln portrayed it as a “wild region” of “unbroken

^{vi} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 12 March 1866, and Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 229, 98; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 27, 29. Elijah Grigsby told John B. MacHarg that the Lincolns spent the winter in the half-faced camp. MacHarg to Louis A. Warren, Rochester, N.Y., 19 December 1939, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Based on interviews with Indiana neighbors of the Lincolns, J. Edward Murr concluded that the family lived in the half-faced camp “for nearly one year.” Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 102, 125. Herndon and Weik wrote that the family lived there for an entire year. William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Herndon’s Lincoln, ed. Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis (1889; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 26-27. The historian Charles H. Coleman speculated that the Lincolns lived only a few days in the half-faced camp, which he thought had probably been built by Thomas on his preliminary expedition in November, and that the family in all likelihood threw up a cabin quickly. Charles H. Coleman, “The Half-Faced Camp in Indiana – Fact or Myth?” Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 7 (1952): 138-46. In the absence of any evidence to contradict Chapman, Whitney, Grigsby, Murr, and Herndon, Coleman’s argument is unpersuasive. Half-faced camps were common in frontier Indiana and “sometimes sufficed for the family for the first year.” Buley, Old Northwest, 1:142. In Illinois at the time, it was customary for settlers to occupy half-faced camps during their first winter. John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 71. Charles T. Baker, a diligent collector of Indiana lore, concluded: “How long into the year of 1817 the Lincoln family lived in their ‘open face camp’ will likely never be known, as the writer has never in documentary or tradition found anything to designate the end of the period.” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 1 February 1934. But elsewhere Baker stated that the Lincolns spent “a few months in a three-sided pole cabin.” “Meager Pioneer Homes,” undated typescript, Charles T. Baker Papers, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara. Baker was a vigorous defender of Thomas Lincoln. See “Thomas Lincoln Was Not Shiftless,” undated typescript, ibid.

^{vii} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 27, 28.

^{viii} Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 125-26.

forest” where “many bears and other wild animals” roamed.^{ix} Though it was “as unpoetical as any spot of the earth,” it inspired him to write poetry thirty years later:

When first my father settled here,
 ‘Twas then the frontier line;
 The panther’s scream, filled night with fear
 And bears preyed on the swine.^x

When the Crawford family first moved to the Little Pigeon Creek area nine years after the Lincolns, through the unchinked spaces in their cabin walls they observed the eyes of wolves reflecting light from the fireplace.^{xi} Less menacing fauna also abounded nearby. “We did not have to go more than 4 or 5 hundred yards to kill deer – turkeys & other wild game,” said Dennis Hanks.^{xii} The family could even hunt from the half-faced camp itself, as seven-year-old Abe did one day when he shot a wild turkey, an act he later recalled with some regret. In an 1860 third person autobiographical sketch, Lincoln wrote: “He has never since pulled a trigger on any larger game.”^{xiii} (During the Civil War, Lincoln asked a Congressman: “Doesn’t it strike you as queer that I, a man who couldn’t cut the head off a

^{ix} Autobiography written for Jesse W. Fell, 20 December 1859, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 3:511; autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [c. June 1860], ibid., 4:62.

^x Lincoln to Andrew Johnston, Tremont, Illinois, 18 April 1846, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:378; “The Bear Hunt,” ca. 6 September 1846, ibid., 1:386.

^{xi} Will F. Adams, the Crawfords’ grandson, “The Crawford Family,” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 1 August 1935.

^{xii} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 39.

^{xiii} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [c. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62. Dennis Hanks said that he shot the turkey from the half-faced camp. Hanks to Herndon, 7 and 12 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 226, 229.

chicken and who was sick at the sight of blood, should be cast into the middle of a great war, with blood flowing all about me?”^{xiv}

If game was readily at hand, water was not. Thomas dug holes in his property because he “wanted water badly.”^{xv} What little he thus obtained was “a miserable article” which had to be strained.^{xvi} When a Yankee douser alleged that for five dollars he could find water on his farm, the skeptical, cash-strapped Thomas replied: “Do you suppose I am going to give you \$5 – for a pig in the polk.” Young Abe, accompanied by a pet cat, often trudged back and forth to fetch clean water from a spring one mile distant.^{xvii} It is hard to know why Thomas settled so far from a water source, for typically pioneers made proximity to a supply of good water their principal consideration when choosing home sites.^{xviii} Perhaps he was one of those who feared that a dread disease called “milk sickness” was likely to be contracted near spring branches.^{xix}

The social as well as the physical environment of Little Pigeon Creek was quite primitive.^{xx} In 1866, one resident stated that the early settlers were quite sociable, kind, and accommodating, “more so than now,” but that “there was more drunkenness and stealing on

^{xiv} Reminiscences of Daniel Voorhees of Indiana, in an article by Alfred Henry Lewis (Dan Quinn), Human Life, June [no year indicated] undated clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Voorhees made these remarks in 1895.

^{xv} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 105.

^{xvi} Augustus H. Chapman, statement to Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 98.

^{xvii} Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 109. The spring may have been on the farm of their neighbors, the Grigsby family. A. J. Wedekind to Albert J. Beveridge, Dale, Indiana, 19 July 1924, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{xviii} Logan Esarey, History of Indiana (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922), 421.

^{xix} Esarey, The Indiana Home, 24.

a small scale, more immorality, less Religion, less well placed Confidence.”^{xxi} Pioneer customs, Dennis Hanks recalled, were “very Ruff.”^{xxii}

Ignorance and superstition prevailed among Hoosiers, who believed that breaking a mirror or the carrying a hoe or an ax into a cabin would bring a death in the family within a year’s time. The wailing of a dog portended a death the next day. If a dog crossed a hunter’s path, it was bad luck unless he locked his little fingers together. Friday was considered an inauspicious day to begin planting or harvesting. If a bird lit on a window or entered the house, it was regarded as a harbinger of woe. Farmers should plant, sow, and fence only if the signs of the moon were propitious. Subterranean crops like potatoes had to be planted in the dark of the moon, unlike tomatoes and beans, which must be planted in the light of the moon. The pioneers hired wizards to restore sick cows to health; thought that a child who was breathed on by a horse would contract whooping cough; and believed in faith healers, whose hands supposedly effected miracle cures. Young girls swallowed chicken hearts in the hopes that they would facilitate their quest for true love. Carrying a bag of eggs in one hand and a bag of salt in the other, young men mounted mules facing backward and rode for a mile; if no accident occurred, they concluded that they would have good luck throughout the coming year.^{xxiii}

^{xx} Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 124.

^{xxi} David Turnham to Herndon, Dale, Indiana, 21 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 217.

^{xxii} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 6 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 154.

^{xxiii} Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 13 (1917): 337-38; Ward Hill Lamon, The Life of Abraham Lincoln from His Birth to His Inauguration as President (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1872), 44; Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 54; Buley, Old Northwest, 1:264-70; George Cary Eggleston, The First of the Hoosiers: Reminiscences of Edward Eggleston (Philadelphia: A. J. Drexel Biddle, 1903), 89; George U. Miles, statement for Herndon, [1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 536; Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 7 August 1938.

Although Lincoln eventually shed many of the qualities of backwoods Indiana, he remained superstitious throughout life.^{xxiv} His law partner, William Herndon, to whom he once confided “I feel as if I shall meet with some terrible end,” said that Lincoln’s “Baptist training made him [Lincoln] a fatalist to the day of his death” and that his superstitious views “ran through his being like a bluish red vein runs through the whitest marble.”^{xxv} He believed in the therapeutic qualities of “mad stones.”^{xxvi} When a rabid dog bit one of his children, Lincoln took the boy to Terre Haute, Indiana, to be cured by a mad stone, which supposedly drained off any poison when applied to a wound.^{xxvii} As a congressman in the late 1840s, he declined to be a member of a party of thirteen people, an act which prompted a friendly colleague to declare sharply that he would rather be dead than be as superstitious as Lincoln.^{xxviii} In 1842, he confided to his best friend, Joshua Speed, “I always was superstitious.”^{xxix} Lincoln told Henry C. Whitney that in his boyhood, “I used to wander out in the woods all by myself. It had a fascination for me which had an element of fear in it – superstitious fear. I knew that I was not alone just as well as I know that you are here now. Still I could see nothing and no one, but I heard voices. Once I heard a voice right at my elbow – heard it distinctly and plainly. I turned around, expecting to see some one, of course. No one there, but the voice was there.” When Whitney asked what the voice said, Lincoln

^{xxiv} William E. Barton, The Soul of Abraham Lincoln (New York: George H. Doran, 1920), 233-36.

^{xxv} Herndon to Joseph Smith Fowler, Springfield, 18 February 1887, Herndon Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Herndon to Cyrus O. Poole, Springfield, 5 January 1886, and Herndon, “Lincoln’s Superstition,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

^{xxvi} Joseph Gillespie to Herndon, Edwardsville, Illinois, 31 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 182.

^{xxvii} Frances Todd Wallace, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 485.

^{xxviii} Henry C. Whitney, “Lincoln a Fatalist,” Rockport, Indiana, Journal, 11 February 1898. Lincoln told Whitney this in the “Big Grove” in Urbana, Illinois.

^{xxix} Lincoln to Joshua F. Speed, Springfield, 4 July 1842, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:289.

did not reply: “Deep gloom – a look of pain – settled on his countenance and lasted some minutes.”^{xxx}

In the forbidding, backward, remote Little Pigeon Creek area, “the great task,” as Lincoln put it, was “the clearing away of surplus wood.” In 1860, he recalled that, “though very young,” he was then “large of his age, and had an axe put into his hands at once.” For the next fifteen years he “was almost always handling that most useful instrument.”^{xxxi}

Lincoln felled trees, chopped them into logs, cleared away undergrowth, dug up stumps, and grubbed up roots, which he dried and burned. He also harrowed, planted, hoed, plowed, weeded, harvested, and butchered.^{xxxii}

Taking grain to a distant mill provided young Abe some relief from this soul-crushing routine.^{xxxiii} Lincoln reported “that going to mill gave him the greatest pleasure of his boyhood days,” for it “released him from a day’s work in the woods, besides affording him a much desired opportunity to watch the movement of the mill’s primitive and cumbersome machinery.”^{xxxiv} Henry C. Whitney explained that it was “usually no irksome task to wait [in line at the mill], for the boy who got home promptly must betake himself to drudgery, while the boy waiting for his grist would have a ‘gay old time’ fighting, wrestling, swapping

^{xxx} Henry C. Whitney, “Lincoln a Fatalist,” Rockport, Indiana, Journal, 11 February 1898.

^{xxxi} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62.

^{xxxii} John Locke Scripps, Life of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler and Lloyd A. Dunlap (1860; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 39.

^{xxxiii} David Turnham to Herndon, Dale, Indiana, 21 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 216-17.

^{xxxiv} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 29, 50. Lincoln patronized Huffman’s Mill on Anderson Creek, sixteen miles from his cabin. Ora V. Brown to John Meyer, Dale, Indiana, 26 February 1937, copy, Ora V. Brown Papers, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Henry Brooner’s reminiscences in J. T. Hobson, “New Sketches from the Early Life of Lincoln,” The Religious Telescope, 6 February 1907.

stories, jokes, etc. Verily, the apotheosis of a farm boy’s social life was attained in going to the mill.”^{xxxv}

Lincoln recalled a bizarre incident that occurred one day at Noah Gordon’s mill. As his mare slowly propelled the grindstone, he impatiently urged her on with a whip, exclaiming: “Get up, you lazy old devil!” Resenting his frequent use of the lash, she kicked him as he was delivering the hated command once again. He had uttered the words “get up” before being knocked unconscious. When he came to, he involuntarily completed his injunction: “you lazy old devil!” According to Herndon, Lincoln “considered this one of the remarkable incidents of his life. He often referred to it, and we had many discussions in our law office over the psychological phenomena involved in the operation.”^{xxxvi}

In their early months in Indiana, the family cleared land on which they raised a small crop of corn and vegetables. Once the seeds were planted, Thomas built a log cabin in which his family lived for thirteen years.^{xxxvii} Though far more weather-proof than the primitive half-faced camp, this new dwelling afforded few comforts. A windowless, one-story structure measuring eighteen by twenty feet, it was high enough to accommodate an overhead bedroom reached by a ladder of pegs stuck into holes in the logs.^{xxxviii} There Lincoln and Dennis Hanks slept.^{xxxix} From Kentucky, the Lincolns had brought little more

^{xxxv} Whitney, manuscript version of Lincoln the Citizen, p. 25, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. This passage was omitted from the published version of Whitney’s biography.

^{xxxvi} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 51; Herndon to Ward Hill Lamon, Springfield, 6 March 1870, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

^{xxxvii} Augustus H. Chapman, statement to Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 98.

^{xxxviii} This sort of cabin was typical among the pioneers in that region. Faragher, Sugar Creek, 72.

^{xxxix} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 40. An unidentified occupant of the cabin described it to William M. Thayer somewhat differently: “It was sixteen by eighteen feet in size, without a floor, the logs put together at the corners by the usual method of notching them, and the cracks between them stopped with clay. It had a shed-roof, covered with slabs or

than clothes, bedding, a Dutch oven, a skillet, and some tinware. All the family’s ironware had been lost when Thomas’s raft overturned.^{xl} Thomas fashioned a few pieces of crude furniture, including a pole bedstead and a slab table and stools. Thirteen people would eventually crowd together in this dismal abode, which afforded little comfort or privacy.^{xli} (In “one of the best” cabins in southwestern Indiana at this time, William Faux noted that “Males dress and undress before the females, and nothing is thought of it.” Faux inferred that “Shame, or rather what is called false shame, or delicacy, does not exist here.”)^{xlii}

DEATH OF NANCY HANKS

No sooner had the Lincoln family abandoned the half-faced camp in 1817 than Nancy’s aunt and uncle, Thomas and Betsy Sparrow, arrived from Kentucky to occupy it.^{xliii} They brought with them their foster-child, Dennis Hanks, bastard son of Mrs. Lincoln’s aunt Nancy. Dennis became a kind of surrogate older brother to his second cousin Abe, a decade his junior. The Sparrows had in effect adopted Nancy when she was quite young; she and

clapboards split from logs. It contained but one room, except overhead slabs were laid across the logs, so as to make a chamber, to which access was had by a ladder in one corner. It had one door and one window.” That window consisted of four 6 x 8 inch squares covered with the skin surrounding a hog’s fat. William Makepeace Thayer, The Pioneer Boy and How He Became President (Boston: Walker, Wise, 1863), 90. Dennis Hanks may have been Thayer’s informant. He is clearly an informant in later portions of the book (pp. 127ff.)

^{xl} Augustus H. Chapman, statement to Herndon, [before 8 September 1865] Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 98. Thayer stated that “a Dutch oven and spider constituted the culinary furniture of the cabin. All their other articles of ironware” had been lost when Thomas’s raft capsized. Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 99.

^{xli} Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 90-94.

^{xlii} Faux, Memorable Days in America: Being a Journal of a Tour to the United States (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823), in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, 1748-1846: A Series of Annotated Reprints of Some of the Best and Rarest Contemporary Volumes of Travel: Descriptive of the Aborigines and Social and Economic Conditions in the Middle and Far West, during the Period of Early American Settlement (32 vols.; Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1905), 11:226.

everyone else in the Little Pigeon Creek area regarded them as her virtual, if not biological, parents.^{xliv} Indeed, young Abraham thought of the Sparrows as his grandparents.^{xlv}

In 1818, within months of the Sparrows' arrival, an epidemic of "milk sickness" swept through southwest Indiana. Cows contracted the disease by eating weeds that contained the toxic substance tremetol. The malady killed both cattle and the humans who drank their infected milk. Doctors at the time knew neither the cause of the disease nor a cure for it. In the summer, it struck down Mrs. Peter Brooner, a neighbor of the Lincolns, and then the Sparrows. Nancy Lincoln nursed all three of them as they sickened with tremetol poisoning. Shortly after their deaths, she too came down with the disease.^{xlvi}

If she died the way most victims did, her husband and children must have been horrified in the one-room cabin as her body was convulsed with nausea, her eyes rolled, and her tongue grew large and turned red. After a few days, as death approached, she probably lay on her bed of pain, her legs spread apart, her breath growing short, her skin becoming cool and clammy, and her pulse beating irregularly.^{xlvii} Before her final coma, she urged Abe and Sarah to be good to one another and to their father, and to "reverence and worship

^{xliii} A. H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 98. It is not clear when the Sparrows arrived. Dennis Hanks suggests that it was in the spring of 1817. Hanks to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 12 March 1866, ibid., 229.

^{xliv} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds. Herndon's Informants, 123; Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 2 April 1866, ibid., 242; J. Edward Murr, "He Knew Lincoln's Neighbors," in Bess V. Ehrmann, The Missing Chapter in the Life of Abraham Lincoln: A Number of Articles, Episodes, Photographs, Pen and Ink Sketches Concerning the Life of Abraham Lincoln in Spencer County, Indiana, between 1816-1830 and 1844 (Chicago: Walter M. Hill, 1938), 91.

^{xlv} William E. Barton, The Women Lincoln Loved (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1927), 47–50.

^{xlvi} Reminiscences of Henry Brooner in Hobson, Footprints of Lincoln, 79-80, and in J. T. Hobson to Ida M. Tarbell, Washington, Indiana, 3 December 1895, Tarbell Papers, Smith College.

^{xlvii} Philip D. Jordan, "The Death of Nancy Hanks," Indiana Magazine of History 40 (1944): 103-10, and "Milk Sickness in Kentucky and the Western Country," Filson Club History Quarterly 19 (1945): 29-40; Theodore Lemon to Ward Hill Lamon, n.p., n.d., in Lamon, Lincoln, 27n.

God.”^{xlvi} On October 5, 1818, a week after her symptoms first appeared, she died, unattended by a physician.^{xlix}

Young Abe helped his father construct a coffin, a melancholy task that Thomas had performed often that season. Nancy’s body was conveyed on a home-made sled to a gravesite near the cabin, where Betsy and Thomas Sparrow already lay buried.¹ No tombstone marked her final resting place, and no preacher delivered a funeral sermon until months later, when David Elkin arrived from Kentucky and spoke to a group of about twenty mourners gathered at the grave.^{li}

No witnesses described Lincoln’s reaction to his mother’s death, nor did he say anything directly about its effect on him. Many years later, however, he indirectly revealed something of his emotions when he consoled a young girl whose father had been killed in the Civil War: “It is with deep grief that I learn of the death of your kind and brave Father; and, especially, that it is affecting your young heart beyond what is common in such cases. In this

^{xlvi} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 40.

^{xlix} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], and Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 97, 40.

¹ James Grigsby, paraphrased by his daughter Nancy (Mrs. Bartley Inco), in a talk, 20 June 1916, Indianapolis News, 21 June 1916; C. T. Baker, reporting Indiana tradition, Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 15 February 1934.

^{li} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 6 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 154. On the frontier, funerals were often performed well after the interment. William E. Barton, The Soul of Abraham Lincoln (New York: George H. Doran, 1920), 40-44. Elkin was visiting two of his sons who lived in Indiana. Interview with Elkin’s grandson, Fields Elkin, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 21 June 1922, conducted by Louis A. Warren, copy, Lincoln files, “David Elkins” folder, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. Many testified that people familiar with the history of southwestern Indiana asserted that Elkin preached a service at Nancy Hanks Lincoln’s grave. E. C. Turner to Ora V. Brown, Bedford, Indiana, 22 June 1938, enclosing several affidavits, Ora V. Brown Papers, Indiana Division, Manuscripts Department, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; J. Edward Murr to Noble L. Moore, New Albany, Indiana, 21 August 1942, Murr Papers, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. Some have argued that Elkin came to Indiana in response to a letter from Abe. J. Edward Murr asserted that he had “many affidavits from ministers, farmers, parishioners and near neighbors of Parson Elkins who state that they heard him say both from the pulpit as well as in fire-side conversations that he received the letter from Abe Lincoln and did ride horseback through the wilderness to preach the funeral sermon of Nancy Hanks Lincoln.” Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 9, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.

sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all; and, to the young, it comes with bitterest agony, because it takes them unawares. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now.” Significantly he added, “I have had experience enough to know what I say.”^{lii} Lincoln probably identified with the girl, for he too seems to have suffered the “bitterest agony” at the sudden death of his mother and to have been affected “beyond what is common in such cases.” He made a similar observation when his closest Illinois friend, Joshua Speed, returned home to Kentucky in 1841: “How miserably things are arranged in this world. If we have no friends, we have no pleasure; and if we have them, we are sure to lose them, and be doubly pained by the loss.”^{liii}

In 1856, Lincoln told another friend how lonely life had been in the months following his mother’s death, and how he cherished hearing the Bible stories she had once told him, for they brought her voice back to his mind’s ear. The loneliness was compounded by the lack of a truly close friend; in Indiana Lincoln formed friendships with many of his contemporaries, but none was a confidant.^{liv} In January 1861, Lincoln spoke of “the sad, if not pitiful condition of his father’s family” after Nancy Lincoln’s death.^{lv} William Herndon, perhaps reporting what Lincoln had told him, asserted that after the death of their mother, “little Abe and his sister Sarah began a dreary life – indeed, one more cheerless and less inviting seldom falls to the lot of any child. In a log-cabin without a floor, scantily protected from the

^{lii} Lincoln to Fanny McCullough, Washington, 23 December 1862, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:16-17.

^{liii} Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, 25 February 1842, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:281.

^{liv} Murr, “Wilderness Years of Abraham Lincoln,” 156. His best friends were Nat Grigsby and the Gentry brothers (Allen, Joe, and Jim). Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 17, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. See David Herbert Donald, “We Are Lincoln Men”: Abraham Lincoln and His Friends (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 3-6.

^{lv} Jesse W. Weik, The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 293. Cf. A. H. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 October 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 136.

severities of the weather, deprived of the comfort of a mother’s love, they passed through a winter the most dismal either one ever experienced.”^{lvi} In the late 1840s, Lincoln read William Cowper’s poem, “On Receipt of My Mother’s Picture,” and marked one stanza that may well have called to his mind Nancy Hanks Lincoln:

Oh that those lips had language! Life has pass’d
 With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
 Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
 The same that oft in childhood solaced me.^{lvii}

For over a year, Lincoln’s sister Sarah, only eleven when her mother died, assumed the domestic responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, washing, mending clothes, and spinning wool. Kind, good-natured, amiable, dark-skinned, heavy-set, gentle, and intelligent, she was, as Nathaniel Grigsby remembered, “a quick minded woman & of extraordinary Mind – She was industrious – more so than Abraham – Abe worked almost alone from the head – whilst she labored both.” Like her brother, she “could meet & greet a person with the very Kindest greeting in the world – make you Easy at the touch & word.”^{lviii} Austin Gollaher, who was

^{lvi} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 31.

^{lvii} According to William H. Townsend, Lincoln “was particularly impressed with Cowper’s poem . . . and drew a hand with the index finger pointing to the stanza.” Lincoln “marked or underscored heavily with a lead pencil” certain passages when he visited his in-laws in Kentucky in 1847 and 1849. William H. Townsend, Lincoln and the Bluegrass: Slavery and Civil War in Kentucky (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1955), 136.

^{lviii} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 40; John Hanks, interview with Herndon [1865-66], ibid., 456; Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 126; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 122; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 113; Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 126.

quite fond of Sarah, described her as “just as pretty as Abe was homely,” with “big brown eyes and curly chestnut hair.”^{lix}

Sarah was hardly able to replace her mother in the little household, even with the assistance of kindly neighbors who took turns helping her out.^{lx} The gloom that had settled over their cabin did not lift until December 1819, when Thomas Lincoln brought home his new bride, the former Sarah Bush Johnston, who, in Lincoln’s words, “proved a good and kind mother.”^{lxi} William Herndon thought she “did her job well in making Abe: she is the good angel who did it.”^{lxii} To Herndon and others, Lincoln said that she was “considerate & attentive,” a “kind, tender, loving Mother,” and “a noble woman” to whom he was “indebted more than all the world for his kindness – amiability etc.”^{lxiii}

Despite the benefits conferred by such a stepmother, the “profound agony” of the fifteen-month period between Nancy’s death and the advent of Sarah Bush Lincoln left its mark on Abe.^{lxiv} Psychologists have found that bereavement in childhood “is one of the most significant factors in the development of depressive illness in later life,” and that “a depressive illness in later years is often a reaction to a present loss or bereavement which is associated with a more serious loss or bereavement in childhood.”^{lxv} If a parent dies, the

^{lix} Interview with Gollaher by J. C. M., Hodgenville correspondence, 23 March, Cincinnati Tribune, 24 March 1895.

^{lx} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 34.

^{lxi} Autobiography written for John Lock Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62.

^{lxii} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Chicago, 14 January 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

^{lxiii} Herndon to Caroline Dall, Springfield, 8 January 1867, Dall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

^{lxiv} Louis A. Warren, “The Mystery of Lincoln’s Melancholy,” typescript, Papers of the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, Evansville Central Library.

^{lxv} Felix Brown, “Depression and Childhood Bereavement,” Journal of Mental Science 107 (1962): 770. The results of many studies, while not conclusive, do show an association between early bereavement and

quality of the child’s relationship with the surviving parent is critically important.^{lxvi} The central cause of later depressions seems to be inadequate care for the child.^{lxvii}

Lincoln’s unsympathetic father did not provide him adequate care in the wake of Nancy’s death, for Lincoln was to be plagued with depression as an adult. (Also predisposing Lincoln to depression were the deaths of his infant brother in 1812, of his sister in 1828, and of his sweetheart in 1835.)^{lxviii} At one point, Thomas left his two children with their cousin Sophie Hanks (who had come to live with the Lincolns around 1818) to fend for themselves while he drifted down the Ohio River to sell pork.^{lxix} He again left the children when he wooed Sarah Bush Johnston in Kentucky, where, according to family tradition, he spent more time than he had intended to.^{lxx} One source alleged that the “children had given him up as having been killed by some wild animal. They had become almost nude for the want of clothes and their stomachs became leathery from the want of food.”^{lxxi} When Sarah Bush

depression among adults. E. S. Paykel, “Life Events and Early Environment,” in Handbook of Affective Disorders, ed. E. S. Paykel (New York: Guilford Press, 1982), 146–61.

^{lxvi} Alan Breier et al., “Early Parental Loss and Development of Adult Psychopathology,” Archives of General Psychiatry 45 (1988): 987-93.

^{lxvii} Tirrill Harris, George W. Brown, and Antonia Bifulco, “Loss of Parent in Childhood and Adult Psychiatric Disorder: The Role of Lack of Adequate Parental Care,” Psychological Medicine 16 (1986): 657.

^{lxviii} See Michael Burlingame, The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 92-122.

^{lxix} Statement by Dr. James LeGrande, son of Sophie Hanks, Jasper, Arkansas, 15 February 1909, Arthur E. Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{lxx} Eleanor Gridley, evidently relying on the testimony of John J. Hall, Thomas’s step-grandson, wrote that “Thomas Lincoln had been away from his little family fully three months” by the time he returned with his new wife. Gridley, The Story of Abraham Lincoln; or, The Journey from the Log Cabin to the White House (Chicago: Monarch, 1902), 78.

^{lxxi} Address by Clarence W. Bell in Mattoon, Illinois, 11 February 1931, in the Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 27 February 1931. Bell was the grandson of Elisha Linder, a neighbor of the Lincolns in Illinois and the first cousin of Lincoln’s friend Usher F. Linder. This story comes from his family tradition. Bell claimed that he was “closely related to Sarah Bush Lincoln.” Bell’s address delivered 18 September 1930, “New Lincoln History,” Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 7 November 1930; and his testimony, 18 September 1930, in “Proceedings of Hearing Held before the Special Committee Appointed to Recommend the Proper Routing of the Proposed Lincoln National Memorial Highway,” typescript, pp. 21-40, Abraham Lincoln Association reference files, folder “Lincoln Memorial Highway,” Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. A careful local historian of Coles

Lincoln arrived, she found Abraham and his sister “wild – ragged & dirty.”^{lxxii} She said, “the first time I saw Abe he was the ugliest chap that ever obstructed my view.”^{lxxiii} “I dressed Abe & his sister up – looked more human,” she recalled.^{lxxiv} To make the youngsters appear more human, she “Soaped – rubbed and washed” them “so that they look pretty neat – well & clean.”^{lxxv} Shampooing was also necessary, for young Abe had lice in his hair.^{lxxvi} The highly capable Sarah Bush Lincoln provided more than adequate care for Abraham and his sister, but the year and a quarter that separated her arrival from Nancy Hanks Lincoln’s death was in all likelihood miserable indeed for both youngsters and left enduring scars. Children often interpret the early death of a parent as a deliberate act of abandonment, and throughout his life Lincoln feared being abandoned and was inclined to attack those who forsook their party or their principles. He also harbored an abiding mistrust of women in general; his mother’s death evidently taught him that women are unreliable and untrustworthy.^{lxxvii}

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County regarded Bell’s testimony as trustworthy. Charles H. Coleman, Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois (New Brunswick, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1955), 2-3, 16-18, 22, 84, 115, 145.

^{lxxii} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 41. “The Chil[dren] were Sufiring greatly for clothes, th[e]y [had] but one Suit each & these v[er]y poo[r] the boys being Dressed mostly in Buck Skins.” Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], ibid., 99.

^{lxxiii} Unidentified clipping in Dennis Hanks Dowling’s scrapbook, quoted in William F. Sullivan, “Tales of Lincoln’s Early Life,” Paris, Illinois, News, 14 February 1922.

^{lxxiv} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 106.

^{lxxv} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 41.

^{lxxvi} Murr, “Wilderness Years of Abraham Lincoln,” 156. Murr’s informant was Wesley Hall, a playmate of Lincoln’s who was slightly younger than Abe. His family lived near the Lincoln cabin.

^{lxxvii} Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 123-46.

It is not hard to understand why Thomas might find the thirty-year-old Sarah Bush Johnston attractive.^{lxxviii} Though her family was “rough, uncouth, and uneducated,” they were far higher on the social and economic ladder than the Hankses.^{lxxix} William Herndon thought she “was far above Thomas Lincoln – somewhat cultivated and quite a lady.”^{lxxx} Augustus H. Chapman described her as “a woman of great energy, of remarkable good sense, very industrious, & saving & also very neat & tidy in her person & Manners & Knew exactly how to Manage children.”^{lxxxi} Her granddaughter portrayed her as handsome, tall, with good posture, and a light complexion; she was sprightly, talkative, proud, kind, and charitable.^{lxxxii} In Kentucky she was “considered honest and industrious,” a “poor woman but of spotless character,” and described as “a tall, slender-built woman, quite good-looking, and was taken in those days to be quite a graceful, gay lady.”^{lxxxiii} An Indiana neighbor remembered her as “a strong healthy woman” who “was Cool – not Excitable,” “truthful,” “gentle,” “Kind,” “smart,” “shrewd,” “social,” “intelligent,” “quick & strong minded.”^{lxxxiv}

When in the fall of 1819 Thomas proposed marriage to Sarah Bush Johnston, it was not the first time he had done so, for they had known each other since childhood. He had had

^{lxxviii} She was born 13 December 1788. Sketch of Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, Hardin County Historical Society, “Who Was Who in Hardin County,” privately printed by the Elizabethtown News, n.d., copy, Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Public Library, Springfield, Illinois.

^{lxxix} John B. Helm to Herndon, 1 August 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 82.

^{lxxx} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 19 January 1886, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

^{lxxxii} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99.

^{lxxxiii} Harriet A. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 17 December 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 145.

^{lxxxiiii} Presley Nevil Haycraft to John B. Helm, 19 July 1865; Samuel Haycraft to Herndon, Elizabethtown, [June 1865]; Samuel Haycraft to John B. Helm, Elizabethtown, 5 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 87, 68, 85; Samuel Haycraft quoted in Elizabethtown correspondence, n.d., Louisville Commercial, [ca. 1886], Lincoln Scrapbook, p. 10, Rare Book Room, Library of Congress.

dealings with some of her eight siblings, including her brother Isaac, who had accompanied him on a trip to New Orleans in 1806.^{lxxxv} She had rejected his offer of marriage in favor of Daniel Johnston, who passed away a decade after their wedding, leaving her a twenty-seven-year-old widow with three young children.^{lxxxvi} Accounts of the renewed courtship differ. Ward Hill Lamon’s biography of Lincoln stated that Thomas “represented himself as a thriving and prosperous farmer” and thus “induced her to marry him” under false pretences.^{lxxxvii} Dennis Hanks’s son-in-law said that she accepted Thomas’s second proposal “at the urgent solicitation of her Friends.”^{lxxxviii} Her brothers, who knew and liked Thomas, also urged her to wed him.^{lxxxix} According to the clerk who issued their marriage license, Thomas courted his prospective bride matter-of-factly, saying to her as she was doing laundry: “Well Miss Johns[t]on, I have no wife & you have no husband[.] I came a purpose to mary you[.] I knowed you from a gal & you knowed me from a boy – I have no time to loose and if you are willing, let it be done Straight off.” She replied that it was “so sudden” and “asked for time to consider, but he said he was not in a mood to fool away time on such an important business as wife hunting.” To this she said: “Tommy I know you well & have no objection to marrying you, but I cannot do it straight off as I owe some debts that must

^{lxxxiv} Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 126.

^{lxxxv} Thomas J. Malone, “Stepmothered to Greatness,” American Legion Magazine, February 1939, 4.

^{lxxxvi} R. Gerald McMurtry, “The Stepmother of Abraham Lincoln,” in McMurtry A Series of Monographs Concerning the Lincolns and Hardin County, Kentucky (Elizabethtown, Kentucky: Enterprise Press, 1938), 17-20; Charles H. Coleman, “Sarah Bush Lincoln, The Mother Who Survived Him,” Lincoln Herald 54 (1952): 13-19.

^{lxxxvii} Ward Hill Lamon, The Life of Abraham Lincoln: From His Birth to His Inauguration as President (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1872), 11.

^{lxxxviii} A. H. Chapman (written statement) [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 98.

^{lxxxix} Malone, “Stepmothered to Greatness,” 4.

first be paid” and “could never think of burdening the man I marry with debt; it would not be right.” Thomas promptly settled with her creditors (paying them approximately three dollars), showed her the receipts, and married her on December 2, 1818.^{xc} He hired his brother-in-law to haul the bride’s many household goods, including a bureau, table, spinning wheel, set of chairs, large chest of drawers, cooking utensils, dishes, cutlery, and two beds.^{xc}

Upon arriving in Indiana, Sarah was taken aback by the quasi-ursine condition of the Lincoln cabin, which she proceeded to improve forthwith.^{xcii} She was not indifferent to appearances. As a girl, she had annoyed her mother, who thought her excessively proud because she “tried to make herself look decent & keep in the fashion of that early day.”^{xciii}

When her new husband insisted that she sell some of her furniture, “saying it was too fine for

^{xc} Samuel Haycraft to John B. Helm, Elizabethtown, 5 July 1865; Presley Nevil Haycraft to John B. Helm, 19 July 1865; Samuel Haycraft to Herndon, Elizabethtown, [June 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 85, 87, 68; Samuel Haycraft’s reminiscences, as told to John W. Cunningham, pastor of the Elizabethtown circuit of the Louisville conference of the Methodist Church South (1865-66), St. Louis Globe Democrat, 13 February 1897; Samuel Haycraft’s reminiscences, unidentified clipping from the Indianapolis Star, datelined Evansville, 12 February [no year indicated], Eleanor Gridley clipping collection, owned by Charles Hand of Paris, Illinois; Samuel Haycraft’s reminiscences, Decatur, Illinois, Magnet, 28 April 1869, copied in the Shelby County Leader, 3 July 1902; Samuel Haycraft quoted in Elizabethtown correspondence, n.d., Louisville Commercial, [ca. 1886], Lincoln Scrapbook, p. 10, Rare Book Room, Library of Congress; William E. Barton, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1925), 1:117n; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, manuscript, 47, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 35; Lincoln Lore, no. 1592 (October 1970), 1-4. The minister who performed the ceremony was George L. Rogers. Stephen G. Burbridge to Lincoln, Lexington, Kentucky, 8 November 1864, copy, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

^{xc} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865]; Dennis Hanks to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 12 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99, 228. The brother-in-law was Ralph Crume, husband of Thomas’s sister Mary.

^{xcii} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99. The biography of Lincoln by Ward Hill Lamon alleged that “When she got there, Mrs. Lincoln was much ‘surprised’ at the contrast between the glowing representations which her husband had made to her before leaving Kentucky and the real poverty and meanness of the place. She had evidently been given to understand that the bridegroom had reformed his old Kentucky ways, and was now an industrious and prosperous farmer. She was scarcely able to restrain the expression of her astonishment and discontent; but, though sadly overreached in a bad bargain, her lofty pride and her high sense of duty saved her from hopeless and useless repinings.” Lamon, Lincoln, 30-31.

^{xciii} Samuel Haycraft to Herndon, Elizabethtown, [June 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 68.

them to keep,” she refused to do so. After replacing the crude puncheon tables and stools, she swiftly effected other improvements: a floor was laid down, doors and windows were installed, Abe and Sarah were dressed up with some of the abundant clothing she had brought from Kentucky, and “in a few weeks all had changed & where evry thing was wanting now all was snug & comfortable.”^{xciv} She was a good cook, though her culinary skill was wasted on Abe, whom she described as “a moderate Eater” who obediently “ate what was set before him, making no complaint: he seemed Careless about this.”^{xcv} (Such gustatory indifference persisted into adulthood. According to a White House secretary, Lincoln during his presidency “was one of the most abstemious of men; the pleasures of the table had few attractions for him.”)^{xcvi} Her meals were evidently nutritious, for the boy enjoyed good health.^{xcvii} She probably served him the customary pioneer diet in Indiana, which consisted “mainly of cornbread on weekdays and wheatbread on Sundays; and mush and milk some of the time; pork, chickens, quails, squirrels and wild turkeys.”^{xcviii} Occasionally she “used to

^{xciv} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99.

^{xcv} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 108.

^{xcvi} John Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” Century Magazine, November 1890, in Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side: John Hay’s Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 134. On Lincoln’s taste in food, see Wayne C. Temple, The Taste is in My Mouth a Little: Lincoln’s Victuals and Potables (Mahomet, Illinois: Mayhaven, 2003), passim.

^{xcvii} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 113. See also Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 106-9.

^{xcviii} Affidavit of John Walker McCoy, grandson of John Tuley, recalling what he heard from his grandfather, from his grandfather’s sister (Elizabeth Tuley Hesson), from Nathaniel Grigsby, and from “other old friends, neighbors and acquaintances of Abraham Lincoln in Spencer County, Indiana,” 1937, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University; Temple, Lincoln’s Victuals and Potables, passim.

get some sorghum and ginger and make some gingerbread. It wasn't often, and it was our biggest treat," Lincoln recalled.^{xcix}

Sarah Bush Lincoln tended to Abraham's emotional as well as physical needs. Augustus H. Chapman reported that she "took an espical liking to young Abe" and "soon dressed him up in entire new clothes & from that time on he appeared to lead a new life." She encouraged him to study, for she recognized that he was "a Boy of uncommon natural Talents," which she did all she could to foster.^c As she told an interviewer, she moderated Thomas Lincoln's reluctance to let Abe read: "I induced my husband to permit Abe to read and study at home as well as at school. At first he was not easily reconciled to it, but finally he too seemed willing to encourage him to a certain extent."^{ci}

The relationship between stepmother and stepson was remarkably close, as she remembered it: "I can say what scarcely one woman – a mother – can say in a thousand and it is this – Abe never gave me a cross word or look and never refused in fact, or Even in appearance, to do any thing I requested him." She, in turn, "never gave him a cross word." Abe and his stepmother were kindred souls, she thought: "His mind & mine – what little I had [-] seemed to run together – move in the same channel." He "was dutiful to me always – he loved me truly I think." She compared Abe favorably to her own son John: "Both were

^{xcix} Lincoln allegedly told this to a Southerner during the Civil War. Walter B. Stevens, "Recollections of Lincoln," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 24 January 1909, magazine section, p. 3. Stevens did not identify his informant.

^c Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 99.

^{ci} Sarah Bush Lincoln, statement of 8 September 1865, in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Lincoln, 35n.

good boys, but I must Say . . . that Abe was the best boy I Ever Saw or Ever Expect to see.”^{cii}
 He “always wanted to do just as I wanted him.”^{ciii}

Lincoln reciprocated the love of his stepmother, whom he called “mama.” In 1861, speaking “in the most affectionate manner,” he told Augustus H. Chapman that “she had been his best Friend in this world & that no Son could love a Mother more than he loved her.” Chapman concluded that “her love for him was warmly returned & continued to the day of his death. But few children loved there parents as he loved this Step Mother.”^{civ} Joshua Speed, Lincoln’s closest confidant, thought that his “fondness for his step-mother and his watchful care over her after the death of his father [in 1851] deserves notice. He could not bear to have any thing said by any one against her.” Near the end of his life, Lincoln told Speed “of his affection for her and her kindness to him.”^{cv} Curiously, Lincoln did not visit his stepmother often, even after his father had died.^{cvi} Perhaps he was reluctant to visit the paternal cabin lest it call to mind the one in Indiana where he had grown up.^{cvii}

Just as Sarah Bush Lincoln seemed to prefer her stepson to her own son, Thomas Lincoln favored his stepson John D. Johnston over Abe.^{cviii} Yet little stepsibling rivalry developed between them. Mrs. Lincoln remembered that Abe “and his step-brother never

^{cii} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 108.

^{ciii} Interview with Sarah Bush Lincoln, Tuscola, Illinois, Journal, n.d., copied in the Bloomington Pantagraph, 17 December 1867.

^{civ} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99; Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 October 1865, ibid., 136-37.

^{cv} Joshua Speed, Reminiscences of Lincoln and Notes of a Visit to California: Two Lectures (Louisville: John P. Morton, 1884), 36-37.

^{cvi} Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 142-56.

^{cvii} William E. Wilson, “There I Grew Up,” American Heritage 17 (1966): 102.

^{cviii} Augustus H. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 28 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 134.

quarreled but once, and that, you know, is a good deal for step-brothers.”^{cxix} A year younger than Abe, Johnston was an honest, handsome, kind-hearted, lazy, shiftless, generous, hospitable fellow with a quarrelsome streak.^{cx} His glibness and sociability made some think Johnston smarter than his shy stepbrother.^{cxii} Sophie Hanks reported that Lincoln “would stick up for him [Johnston] when he was in the right, but if he wasn’t Abe would let him get licked.” She added that Johnston “was not very truthful. Sometimes he would do some devilment. John would not always tell the truth, and Uncle Tom would say ‘Wait till Abe comes, and we’ll find out about it.’”^{cxiii} In adulthood Johnston became known as “the Beau Brummel of Goose Nest Prairie,” who wore the best clothes, even if he could not afford them.^{cxiii} He may have had a drinking problem; a ledger shows that he purchased over fourteen gallons of whiskey in four months.^{cxiv} After Lincoln had become a successful lawyer and politician, Johnston “would tell with much relish how he once thought Abe a fool, because, instead of spending his evenings sporting with the young folks, he seemed to care for nothing but some old musty books.” To Johnston and his contemporaries, such behavior

^{cxix} Tuscola, Illinois, Journal, n.d., copied in the Bloomington Pantagraph, 17 December 1867.

^{cx} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 26 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 176; Elizabeth Crawford, interview with William Fortune, fall 1881, Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; interview with Dennis Franklin Johnston, son of John D. Johnston, Los Angeles Times, 12 February 1929, part 2; William Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 24 November 1882, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. On Johnston, see Stanley Harris’s typescript biography, Lincoln History files, Lincoln Boyhood Home Memorial, Lincoln City, Indiana; Marilyn C. Ames, “Lincoln’s Stepbrother: John D. Johnston,” Lincoln Herald 82 (1980): 302-11; and John Y. Simon, “House Divided: Lincoln and His Father” (pamphlet; Fort Wayne: Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum, 1987), 18.

^{cxii} Allen Brooner, interview with Anna C. O’Flynn, ca. 1895, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College; Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 97.

^{cxiii} Dr. James LeGrande, paraphrasing remarks he heard from his mother, Sophie Hanks, in an undated interview with Arthur E. Morgan, Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cxiii} John Cunningham (b. 1828) of Mattoon, Illinois, unidentified clipping, in Carl Sandburg, Lincoln Collector: The Story of Oliver R. Barrett’s Great Private Collection (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 88; Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 60.

^{cxiv} The ledger of Michael Huffman, p. 1, entries between 8 March and 2 July 1851, Hall-Johnston Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

“was clear proof of Abe’s insanity. ‘But, now,’ said he, ‘Abe is a great and wise man, and I am a fool still.’”^{cxv} Sarah Bush Lincoln said that “John used to be the smartest when they were little fellows. But Abe passed him. Abe kept getting smarter all the time, and John he went just so far and stopped. I never saw another boy get smarter and smarter like Abe did.”^{cxvi}

It is hard to imagine someone more different from Lincoln than Johnston. Nonetheless, Lincoln spoke of him “in the Most affectionate Manner” and said that he and his stepbrother “were raised together, slept together, and liked each other as well as actual brothers could do.”^{cxvii} Whenever his sister told “him to keep away from the Johnstons or they would ruin him,” Lincoln “would laugh and say he was all right.”^{cxviii} In 1848, he wrote to Johnston, saying “You have always been [kind] to me.”^{cxix} During the 1840s and 1850s, Lincoln extended himself to help Johnston’s children, although he was reluctant to subsidize Johnston himself.^{cxx} Johnston may have resented the lectures that Lincoln gave him on

^{cxv} Interview with Sara Bush Lincoln, Tuscola, Illinois, Journal, n.d., copied in the Bloomington Pantagraph, 17 December 1867.

^{cxvi} Amanda Poorman, daughter of Dennis Hanks, “New Stories about the Great Emancipator,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 26 May 1901.

^{cxvii} Augustus H. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 October 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 137; Henry C. Whitney, Life on the Circuit with Lincoln, ed. Paul M. Angle (1892; Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940), 46. Lincoln also told Whitney that “he loved him [Johnston] as if he had been his own brother.” Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 37.

^{cxviii} Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times-Herald, 22 December 1895.

^{cxix} Lincoln to John D. Johnston, Washington, 24 December 1848, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:16.

^{cxx} Henry C. Whitney, interview with Jesse W. Weik, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 51-53; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 37. Lincoln wanted to have Johnston’s son Abraham come live with him “so that he can go to school, and get a fair start in the world.” Lincoln to John D. Johnston, Shelbyville, Illinois, 9 November 1851, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:112. Mary Todd Lincoln scotched that plan. In 1856, when Johnston’s son Thomas stole a watch and was jailed, Lincoln helped defend the lad. Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 419-21. Thomas Johnston also stole Lincoln documents and memorabilia from his grandmother’s cabin. Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 26-27. In 1867-68, Thomas was arrested “for being with a croude who got in to a row with a fellow who was verry near killed.” Thomas Lincoln Davis Johnston to “Dear

indolence.^{cxxi} In the 1840s, Johnston also believed that Lincoln did not do enough for Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln, who lived with Johnston. As Dennis Hanks recalled, the stepbrothers consequently became “Enimes for awhile on this ground.” Hanks mysteriously added “I Dont want to tell all the thing[s] that I No” for “it would Not Look well in history.” Still, Hanks concluded, “I think Abe Dun more for John than he des[er]ved . . . Abe treated John well.”^{cxxii}

Lincoln was also friendly with his two stepsisters, Elizabeth, who was ten years old when she came to Indiana, and Matilda, who was eight. The stepsiblings “got along finely together” as if they had “been the children of the same parents.”^{cxxiii} Indeed, relations were so cordial among the children of the blended Lincoln-Hanks families that two of them, Elizabeth Johnston and Dennis Hanks, became husband and wife in 1821. When their daughter Harriet reached school age, Lincoln invited her to live with his family in Springfield and pursue her education there, which she did.^{cxxiv}

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cosen,” Springfield, 29 January 1868, Hall-Johnston Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. Cf. T. L. D. Johnston to John D. Johnston, Springfield, 2 January and 22 May 1868, ibid.

^{cxxi} Lincoln to Johnston, Washington, 24 December 1848, and Springfield, 12 January 1851, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:15-16, 97.

^{cxxii} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 26 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 176.

^{cxxiii} Augustus H. Chapman, written statement, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 99.

^{cxxiv} Harriet Hanks told Herndon that “When a C[h]ild I Spent a great deal of my time with Grand Pa and Grand Ma Lincoln and loved them both dearly.” Harriet A. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 17 December 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 145. She later amended her statement: “Enny information that I Can give you in regard to the loved and lamented Lincoln will be freely given, but [I] would rather Say nothing about his Wife, as I Could Say but little in her favor I Conclude it best to Say nothing.” Harriet A. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 21 November 1866, ibid., 407. Cf. Harriet A. Chapman, interview with Weik, [1886-87], ibid., 646.

Lincoln’s own education continued fitfully in Indiana, where he attended ABC schools for brief stretches.^{cxxv} As he himself put it, “the agregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year.”^{cxxvi} Though Lincoln declared that on the frontier where he grew up there “was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education,” he noted that by the age of twenty-one “somehow I could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three; but that was all.”^{cxxvii} In 1858, he laconically described his education as “defective.”^{cxxviii} Two years later he deprecated his meager schooling: “He regrets his want of education, and does what he can to supply the want.”^{cxxix} In 1852, he may well have been alluding to his own experience when he said of Henry Clay’s meager education: “it teaches that in this country, one can scarcely be so poor, but that, if he will, he can acquire sufficient education to get through the world respectably.”^{cxxx}

Lincoln’s earliest surviving composition is a bit of doggerel scribbled in an arithmetic notebook:

Abraham Lincoln
 his hand and pen
 he will be good

^{cxxv} He attended his first school session when he was about ten, the second when he was about fourteen, and the third when he was about sixteen. Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 35-36; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112.

^{cxxvi} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62. Augustus H. Chapman reported that Lincoln had three months’ schooling in Kentucky and five months’ schooling in Indiana. Chapman, written statement, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 101.

^{cxxvii} Autobiography written for Jesse W. Fell, 20 December 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:511.

^{cxxviii} Brief autobiography, [15?] June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:459.

^{cxxix} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62.

god knows when.^{cxxx}

Joseph D. Armstrong, superintendent of the Spencer County schools in the 1870s, acknowledged that “the facilities for acquiring an education were very poor indeed” when Lincoln was growing up there. “The only teachers of those days were those who ‘boarded around the neighborhood;’ the principal qualifications requisite to obtain a school were ‘to be able to make a quill-pen and handle a beech limb adroitly.’”^{cxxxii} As late as 1849, the schools in Lincoln’s township were “very inferior.”^{cxxxiii} His teachers held forth in a low-ceilinged cabin, with a floor of split logs, a chimney of poles and clay, and a window of greased paper.^{cxxxiii} In such schools, often infested by fleas, pupils sat on uncomfortable benches without backs but with splinters aplenty.^{cxxxiv}

As if these conditions were not uncondusive enough to learning, young scholars studied aloud so that the teacher could tell that they were not daydreaming. In such a “blab school,” the novelist Edward Eggleston “found it impossible to determine in his own mind whether the letters ‘b-a-k-e-r’ in his spelling book spelled ‘lady’ or ‘shady.’”^{cxxxv} Eggleston

^{cxxx} Eulogy on Henry Clay, 6 July 1852, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:124.

^{cxxxii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:1 (dated [1824-1826]). This may have been a Lincoln family tradition. In a dictionary kept by the family of Lincoln’s uncle Mordecai there appears the following inscription: “Mordecai Lincoln his hand and pen he Will be good, but you know when. When he is good then you may say The time is come and will hurray this was Wrote by Mordecai Lincoln in the twenty third year of his adge in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety three in the second year of the Common Wealth.” Thomas M. Marshall to Albert J. Beveridge, St. Louis, 12 May 1924, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress. Also copied into Lincoln’s arithmetic book are verses beginning “Time What an emty vaper,” a hymn by Isaac Watts sometimes mistaken for an original Lincoln composition. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:1 (dated [1824-1826]).

^{cxxxiii} Joseph D. Armstrong, “History of Spencer County,” in An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Spencer County, Indiana (Philadelphia: D. J. Lake, 1879), 13.

^{cxxxiiii} Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, 4 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 93.

^{cxxxv} Barton, Life of Lincoln, 1:121; William M. Cockrum, Pioneer History of Indiana (Oakland City, Indiana: Press of Oakland City journal, 1907), 46.

“simply could not force attention upon his mind in the midst of such a din.”^{cxxxv} A Hoosier child “repeated the one word ‘heptorpy’ from morning to noon and from noon till night in order to make the teacher believe that he was studying his lesson.”^{cxxxvi} (Such schooling probably accounts for Lincoln’s tendency to read aloud, which irritated his law partner William Herndon. To justify that annoying habit, Lincoln explained: “I catch the idea by 2 senses, for when I read aloud I hear what is read and I see it; and hence 2 senses get it and I remember it better, if I do not understand it better.”)^{cxxxvii}

Frontier pedagogy was harsh. If a boy misspelled a word or miscalculated a sum, the master would immediately lash him with a switch. Half a dozen strokes were usually administered for acts of *lèse-majesté* like whispering to a classmate. More serious breaches of decorum – such as looking disrespectfully at a teacher – merited a bloody flogging on the bare back.^{cxxxviii} One Hoosier recalled how, as a pupil in a frontier school, he would sometimes whisper to a neighboring child or wriggle in his seat. If the teacher observed such behavior, he would deliver “a stinging blow from the switch, which he ever held in his hand.” Punishment of that sort “was so frequent and so severe that the marks remained for

^{cxxxv} George Cary Eggleston, The First of the Hoosiers: Reminiscences of Edward Eggleston (Philadelphia: A. J. Drexel Biddle, 1903), 34.

^{cxxxvi} Unidentified source, quoted in D. D. Banta, “The Early Schools of Indiana – Third Installment,” Indiana Magazine of History 2 (1906): 136.

^{cxxxvii} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 21 October 1885, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. William E. Connelley, secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, recalled attending a “blab school” where the “teacher would be lazy and sleepy and the studying would die down to the droning of one or two pupils and the very silence of it would wake the teacher who would thrash the floor with a long beech switch, starting us all to work again, and the din as we began, was loud and a babel of confusion. When we came to studying the final lesson of the day, we knew we would soon be out and we fell on the lesson with a mighty noise, each studying the spelling at the top of his voice. . . . As a boy it was difficult for me to read silently. It took some years for me to get out of the habit of reading aloud. I feel that Lincoln read aloud during his [adult] life because of the habit of studying aloud in any schools he may have attended in his youth.” Connelley to Albert J. Beveridge, Topeka, 7 December 1925, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cxxxviii} Eggleston, First of the Hoosiers, 39; Cockrum, Pioneer History, 464; William O. Stoddard, “Recollections of a Checkered Lifetime,” unpublished memoirs, 2 vols., 1:99, Stoddard Papers, Detroit Public Library; Faragher, Sugar Creek, 121-23.

hours and told their tale to my mother, when undressing me for bed.” Older girls were not exempt.^{cxv} Occasionally boys were whipped so severely that they vomited.^{cxl} Some parents encouraged the whipping of their children.^{cxli} Lincoln recalled an episode of corporal punishment when a teacher slapped a classmate who mispronounced the names of the Biblical figures Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.^{cxlii}

Teachers were often inept as well as brutal. In 1833, the governor of Indiana lamented the shortage of competent instructors, which he described as “a cause of complaint in many sections of the State, and it is to be regretted that in employing transient persons from other States, containing but little qualification or moral character, the profession is not in that repute it should be.”^{cxliii} The problem was not confined to Indiana; throughout the Old Northwest similar conditions prevailed.^{cxliv} The primitive instructional technique emphasized rote memorization. Fast learners stagnated while waiting for their slower schoolmates to master a lesson. Preoccupied with enforcing discipline, making quill pens, and other chores,

^{cxv} T. A. Goodwin, “The Hoosier Schoolmaster of Seventy-Five Years Ago, as I Remember Him,” The Indianian: A High-Class Illustrated Monthly Magazine, February 1899, 124-25.

^{cxl} William M. Thayer, The Unfinished Autobiography of William M. Thayer (Boston: Barta Press, 1909), 26.

^{cxli} One parent, alarmed that the teacher had not whipped anyone in school for several weeks, complained to the teacher. “Why, who’ll I whip?” asked the instructor. “Whip Sam,” came the answer. “What for?” “He’s lazy, I know; but I can’t whip him for laziness can I?” “Yes, give it to him. Sam’s my boy and I know he needs it every day.” Quoted in Banta, “The Early Schools of Indiana: Third Installment,” 136-37.

^{cxlii} John B. Henderson in Walter B. Stevens, ed., A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 171; Titian J. Coffey in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time (New York: North American Review, 1888), 237-38; Adlai E. Stevenson, Something of Men I Have Known (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1909), 352-53; Francis B. Carpenter, Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln (New York: Houghton & Hurd, 1866), 256-57.

^{cxliii} D. D. Banta, “The Early Schools of Indiana: Second Installment,” Indiana Magazine of History 2 (1906): 84.

^{cxliv} In 1836, a contributor to The Western Monthly Magazine deplored the “well known fact, that in small towns school-masters for the most part are men of little or no acquirements or address.” Buley, Old Northwest, 2:371n.

teachers hardly had time, even if they had the inclination, to encourage independent thought and understanding.^{cxlv}

For boys, the school year was brief, usually beginning after the fall harvest and ending before the arrival of spring. As one pioneer recalled, “The first day of March found every able-bodied boy back on the farm whether school was out or not. School was a mere incident of minor importance, while ‘the call of the wild’ or ‘back to the farm’ was imperative. There were rails to make, fences to build, grubbing to do, lands to clear, and the thousand and one other things to do, to prepare the land for a crop.”^{cxlvi}

Along Little Pigeon Creek, Lincoln’s teachers were Andrew Crawford, James Swaney, and Azel Dorsey.^{cxlvii} Only Dorsey left reminiscences of Lincoln; he recounted “with great satisfaction how his pupil, who was then remarked for the diligence and eagerness with which he pursued his studies, came to the log-cabin school-house arrayed in buckskin clothes, a raccoon-skin cap, and provided with an old arithmetic which had somewhere been found for him to begin his investigations into the ‘higher branches.’”^{cxlviii} Swaney would have had few memories of Lincoln, who attended school under his direction only briefly.^{cxlix} In the first of Lincoln’s intervals of schooling in Indiana, his teacher,

^{cxlv} Bruce E. Wheeler, “The Education of Abraham Lincoln,” Hobbies, February 1944, 6-7.

^{cxlvi} William Riley McLaren, “Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Illinois,” quoted in Faragher, Sugar Creek, 100.

^{cxlvii} Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62. Crawford was his first teacher. It is not clear whether Dorsey or Swaney was the second. Louis A. Warren, “Lincoln’s Hoosier Schoolmasters,” Indiana Magazine of History 27 (1931): 104-18.

^{cxlviii} Henry J. Raymond, The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Derby and Miller, 1865), 21. Dorsey allegedly observed in the late 1820s that “Lincoln was one of the noblest boys I ever knew and is certain to become noted if he lives.” Chauncey Hobart, Recollections of My Life: Fifty Years of Itinerancy in the Northwest (Red Wing: Red Wing Printing Co., 1885), 71.

^{cxlix} According to an unsigned article in The Indiana History Bulletin, Crawford evidently taught only one session, during the winter of 1819-20; Swaney apparently taught Lincoln in the winter of 1821-22; and Dorsey taught in the winter of 1824-25. “Lincoln’s Hoosier Schoolmasters,” The Indiana History Bulletin, n.d., pp. 12-15, copy, Abraham Lincoln Association Reference Files, “Education” folder, Lincoln Presidential Library,

Andrew Crawford, went beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic and tried to impart manners to his backwoods charges. He would have one pupil leave the room and then return, to be formally introduced by another pupil to all the others.^{cl}

Lincoln, too, tried to civilize his contemporaries by denouncing their mistreatment of animals. (On the Illinois frontier, cruelty to animals was common. At log rollings, men would “round up a chip-munk, a rabbit, or a snake, and make him take refuge in a burning log-heap and watch him squirm and fry.”)^{cli} In one of his early bouts of schooling, Lincoln wrote an essay on that subject.^{clii} In later school years, he continued to deplore such behavior. His stepsister Matilda said that when Lincoln was about fifteen, her brother John D. Johnston “caught a land terrapin – brought it to the place where Abe was preaching – threw it against the tree – crushed the shell and it Suffered much – quivered all over – Abe preached against Cruelty to animals, Contending that an ant[’]s life was to it, as sweet as ours to us.”^{cliii} When his mother urged him to kill a snake, Abe replied: “No, it enjoys living just the same as we do.”^{cliv} (Lincoln’s outrage at the mistreatment of animals foreshadowed his indignation at the cruelties of slavery. In the 1850s, he asserted that the “ant who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest, will furiously defend the fruit of his labor, against whatever robber assails

Springfield. Nathaniel Grigsby recalled that “Lincoln did not go to school to him [Crawford] all the time.” Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112.

^{cl} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112.

^{cli} William Riley McLaren, “Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Illinois,” quoted in Faragher, Sugar Creek, 153.

^{clii} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112.

^{cliii} Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 109.

^{cliv} Charleston, Illinois, Plaindealer, February 1892, photocopy, Abraham Lincoln Association reference files, folder marked “Coles County,” Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. Cf. Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 88.

him.” By the same token, he added, “the most dumb and stupid slave that ever toiled for a master, does constantly know that he is wronged.”^{clv}

Lincoln’s concern for animals persisted into adulthood. One day while traveling in Illinois, dressed more formally than usual, he saw a pig mired down. Reluctant to soil his clothes, he determined to pass the creature by, but his conscience would not allow him to do so. The imploring look in the porcine eyes seemed to say, “There now! My last hope is gone.” Moved to pity, Lincoln turned back to rescue the unfortunate beast.^{clvi} He similarly extricated a mud-bound lamb.^{clvii} When he observed a sow attempting to eat one of her piglets, he declared, “By jings! the unnatural old brute shall not devour her own progeny,” and clubbed her lustily.^{clviii} On another occasion he restored two small birds to their nest. When friends derided him for wasting his time, he responded: “Gentlemen, you may laugh, but I could not have slept well to-night, if I had not saved those birds. Their cries would have rung in my ears.”^{clix} In Pontiac, Illinois, where he was abed one stormy night, Lincoln heard a cat mewling outside in the rain. The “thought of the suffering cat troubled Lincoln so much that he could not sleep until he had opened the door and let the poor creature in.”^{clx}

Lincoln also chastised his playmates for cruelty to other youngsters. When they tormented James Grigsby, who stuttered badly, Lincoln intervened. “Abe took me in charge,”

^{clv} Fragment on Slavery, [1 July 1854?], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:222.

^{clvi} Mary Owens Vineyard to Herndon, Weston, Missouri, 22 July 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 262; Charles S. Zane, “Lincoln As I Knew Him,” Sunset 29 (October 1912), reprinted in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 14 (1921-22): 80.

^{clvii} Charles Maltby, The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln (Stockton, California: Daily Independent Steam Print, 1884), 55.

^{clviii} John Wickizer to Herndon, Chicago, 25 November 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 424.

^{clix} Speed, Reminiscences of Lincoln, 25-26.

^{clx} Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader, 1874), 335. The source for this story was evidently Lincoln’s close friend, Jesse W. Fell.

Grigsby recalled, when “rough boys teased me and made fun of me for stuttering. Abe soon showed them how wrong it was and most of them quit.”^{clxi}

Lincoln composed essays on subjects other than cruelty to animals. He showed a piece he wrote on temperance to his neighbor William Wood, who thought it “Excelled for sound sense” anything he had read in the press.^{clxii} Lincoln’s enthusiasm for temperance did not keep him from aiding a poor drunkard sleeping along the roadside one bitterly cold evening. To prevent the fellow from freezing to death, Lincoln carried him to the cabin of Dennis Hanks and stayed the night with him.^{clxiii} (Most young Hoosiers showed less compassion. According to Edward Eggleston, Indiana boys who found a drunk would often place a large crate over him and weigh it down with logs “that would make escape difficult when the poor wretch should come to himself. It was a sort of rude punishment for inebriety, and it afforded a frog-killing delight to those who executed justice.”)^{clxiv} Lincoln’s youthful hostility to drink and his kindness to drunks were reflected in a temperance address he delivered many years later.^{clxv} Another of Lincoln’s lost essays, written in 1827 or 1828,

^{clxi} Article by Andrew M. Sweeney, Indianapolis Star, 12 March 1933. Sweeney had often spoken with Grigsby in 1870 and 1871, when he boarded with him in southwestern Indiana. Grigsby told Sweeney that during recess, Lincoln “would throw his long arm over my narrow shoulders and walk and talk with me, and would often take me part of the way home.”

^{clxii} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 123-24. Wood added that “I gave the article to one Aaron Farmer, a Babtist Preacher: he read it – it Struck him: he said he wanted it to send to a Temperance paper in Ohio for publication: it was sent and published I saw the printed piece – read it with pleasure over and over again.” According to J. T. Hobson, Farmer was a minister in the United Brethren Church, not the Baptist Church. In the 1820s he was in charge of five counties in southern Indiana and published the first United Brethren Church paper in Salem, Indiana, called Zion’s Advocate. J. T. Hobson to Anna C. O’Flynn, French Lick, Indiana, 4 December 1905, John E. Iglehart Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

^{clxiii} David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 122. Turnham was evidently the informant who told this story in some detail to William M. Thayer. See Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 192-95.

^{clxiv} Edward Eggleston, The Hoosier Schoolmaster (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 82n.

^{clxv} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:271-79.

dealt with national politics. William Wood, who admired it, said that it was published.^{clxvi} In his twenties, Lincoln often read his first composition, written when he was about fourteen, to William G. Greene. Lincoln thought highly of that witty piece.^{clxvii}

In school Lincoln was especially adept at spelling, a subject that interested him throughout life. He constantly sought to improve his skills in that department. At the White House in 1862, as he sat in a roomful of visitors “writing a note on a card held on his knee,” he “sung out ‘How d’ye spell missill’ – meaning ‘missile’ – ‘I don’t know how to spell it.’” The next day a government official who was present asked, “Is there another man in this whole Union who, being President, would have done that? It shows his perfect honesty and simplicity, & that he is truly a great man – for he is so, and the more I see of him the more I am convinced of the fact.”^{clxviii} At a reception in February 1865, Lincoln told Supreme Court Justice David Davis, “I never knew until the other day how to spell the word ‘maintenance.’ I always thought it was ‘m-a-i-n, main, t-a-i-n, tain, a-n-c-e, ance – maintainance,’ but I find that it is ‘m-a-i-n, main, t-e, te, n-a-n-c-e, nance – maintenance.’” (An observer called this scene “a spectacle! The President of a great nation at a formal reception, surrounded by many eminent people, statesman, ministers, scholars, critics and ultrafashionable people – by all sorts – who honestly and unconcernedly, in the most unconventional way, speaks before all, as it were, of a personal thing illustrative of his own deficiency.”)^{clxix} In 1864, Lincoln again confessed his weakness as a speller: “When I write an official letter I want to be sure it is

^{clxvi} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124. Wood asserted that Judge John Pitcher was enthusiastic about the essay, but the judge denied it. Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, July 1888, ibid., 662.

^{clxvii} William G. Greene to Herndon, Tallula, Illinois, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 11.

^{clxviii} Benjamin Brown French to Mrs. Catherine J. Wells, Washington, 3 June 1862, French Family Papers, Library of Congress. This took place on June 2.

^{clxix} Albert Blair, in Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 96.

correct, and I find I am sometimes puzzled to know how to spell the most common word. . . . I found, about twenty years ago, that I had been spelling one word wrong all my life up to that time. . . . It is very. I used always to spell it with two r's – v-e-r-r-y. And then there was another word which I found I had been spelling wrong until I came here to the White House. . . . It is opportunity. I had always spelled it, op-per-tu-ni-ty."^{clxx} Similarly, one day during the Civil War, Lincoln asked three young men, "when do you use a semicolon?" Upon receiving an answer, the president replied: "I never use it much, but when I am in doubt what to use, I generally employ the 'little fellow.'"^{clxxi} (He told the journalist Noah Brooks, "With educated people, I suppose, punctuation is a matter of rule; with me it is a matter of feeling. But I must say that I have a great respect for the semicolon; it's a very useful little chap.")^{clxxii} These episodes lend credence to Joshua Speed's assertion that Lincoln "was never ashamed . . . to admit his ignorance upon any subject, or the meaning of any word no matter how ridiculous it might make him appear."^{clxxiii} Leonard Swett, his close friend on the Illinois legal circuit, was impressed by Lincoln's diligence. "He is the only man I have ever known," said Swett, "who bridged back from middle age to youth and learned to spell well."^{clxxiv}

^{clxx} "Robert Livingston Stanton's Lincoln," ed. Dwight L. Smith, Lincoln Herald 76 (1974): 174. These reminiscences were written either in the 1870s or around 1883.

^{clxxi} The young men were John Hay, Henry Villard, and Robert R. Hitt. Nelson Thomasson, "Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," paper read before the Illinois Commandery of the Loyal Legion, 3 February 1927, published by the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, unpaginated, photocopy, James Franklin Aldrich Papers, box 7, Chicago History Museum. Thomasson was John Hay's cousin.

^{clxxii} Noah Brooks, "Personal Reminiscences of Lincoln," Scribner's Monthly, 15 (February 1878), 566.

^{clxxiii} Joshua Speed, statement for Herndon, [by 1882], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 589.

^{clxxiv} Leonard Swett's address at the dedication of Augustus St. Gaudens's statue of Lincoln in Chicago, Chicago Times, 23 October 1887. Lincoln was far from a perfect speller. Charles Coleman, "Spelling Bothered Lincoln, Too," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 49 (1956): 405-15.

Though his command of spelling was imperfect, Lincoln was far ahead of his schoolmates, whom he often helped out. That subject enjoyed pride of place in the frontier curriculum. An Indiana teacher recalled that the “public mind seems impressed with the difficulties of English orthography, and there is a solemn conviction that the chief end of man is to learn to spell.” Edward Eggleston noted that often “the pupil does not know the meaning of a single word in the lesson.” But that mattered little, for the pioneers believed that words “were made to be spelled, and men were probably created that they might spell them. Hence the necessity for sending a pupil through the spelling-book five times before you allow him to begin to read, or indeed to do anything else.” Each school session, morning and afternoon, ended with a long spelling class, and Friday afternoons were entirely devoted to spelling matches, viewed as a kind of spectator sport on the frontier.^{clxxv} One day, Andrew Crawford asked his charges to spell defied and declared he would keep them in school until they spelled it properly. None of the pupils could meet the challenge until Anna Roby noticed Lincoln at the window with his finger pointing to his eye. She took the hint, changed her guess from defyed to defied, and Crawford finally dismissed the class.^{clxxvi} He also assisted his chums with their handwriting.^{clxxvii}

Miss Roby did not always appreciate Lincoln’s attempts to educate her. She remembered one evening observing to him that the moon was sinking. “That[’]s not so,” he

^{clxxv} Eggleston, Hoosier Schoolmaster, 16-17. Students often had memorized the entire spelling book. After learning to spell, they were instructed in “pronouncing lessons,” then taught to read. Banta, “Early Schools of Indiana: Third Installment,” 132-33. Nathaniel Grigsby recalled, “We had Spelling Matches frequently.” Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112. John Oskins remembered, “We would Choose up and spell as in old times Every Friday night.” Oskins, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 128.

^{clxxvi} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 132.

^{clxxvii} Interview with Joseph C. Richardson, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

replied; “it don’t really go down: it Seems So. The Earth turns from west to East and the revolution of the Earth Carries us under, as it were: we do the sinking as you call it. The moon as to us is Comparatively still. The moon[’]s sinking is only an appearance.” The skeptical Miss Roby exclaimed: “Abe – what a fool you are.”^{clxxviii} Astronomy would remain a lifelong interest of Lincoln’s, as would mathematics. His passion for math, which led him in middle age to master the first six books of Euclid, was initially stimulated by his teachers, by several textbooks, and by a neighbor, James Blair.^{clxxix} His math education enabled Lincoln in his early twenties to master surveying speedily; it also helped him develop a keenly analytical mind.^{clxxx}

A didactic impulse prompted Lincoln to share with others his laboriously acquired knowledge. To Anna Roby, Nathaniel Grigsby, and other schoolmates he often summarized what had had read, using stories and maxims to explain things clearly and simply.^{clxxxi} In adulthood he continued to act the role of educator. Henry C. Whitney remembered that Lincoln “always enjoyed reading aloud, or commenting on a book to a companion, whoever he might be.” Whitney once observed him discuss Euclid’s geometry with a stableman.^{clxxxii}

^{clxxviii} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 132.

^{clxxix} Mrs. Belle Blair Raaff, granddaughter of James Blair, quoted in Charles T. Baker, “Abe Lincoln, The Hoosier School Boy,” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 28 February 1935; Charles T. Baker to Ora V. Brown, Grandview, 19 August 1935, Ora V. Brown Papers, Indiana Division, Manuscripts Department, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

^{clxxx} Maurice Dorfman, “Lincoln’s Arithmetic Education: Influence on His Life,” Lincoln Herald 68 (1966): 61-80, 108-20; Lloyd A. Dunlap, “Lincoln’s Sum Book,” Lincoln Herald 61 (1959): 6-10; Houser, Lincoln’s Education, 72-86.

^{clxxxi} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 132; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114-15. Anna Roby’s father, Absalom Roby, impressed that Lincoln “understood a thing thoroughly & could Explain so clearly,” was convinced that “he had a good mind.” Absalom Roby, interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, ibid., 132.

^{clxxxii} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 43.

Lincoln outshone his schoolmates. He arrived at school early, paid close attention to his studies, read and re-read his assignments, never wasted time, and thus made swift progress and always stood at the head of his class.^{clxxxiii} John Hanks ascribed Lincoln’s scholastic success to his industriousness: he “worked his way by toil: to learn was hard for him, but he worked Slowly, but Surely.”^{clxxxiv}

With his schoolmates, Lincoln enjoyed broad jumping, foot racing, putting the shot, and hop-step-and-jumping. Favorite games included slap jack, towel ball, stink base, wrestling, I spy, catapult, bull-pen, and horseshoes. Lincoln did quite well in contests where he could use his exceptional strength to good advantage.^{clxxxv} That strength impressed his neighbors, including William Wood, who reported that Lincoln could sink an axe deeper into a tree and strike a heavier blow with a maul than anyone he knew.^{clxxxvi} He could easily carry what three other men would have a hard time lifting.^{clxxxvii} In his early twenties, Lincoln, with the aid of a harness, hoisted over a thousand pounds.^{clxxxviii} Dennis Hanks described Lincoln’s prowess with an ax: “how he could chop! His ax would flash and bite into a sugar

^{clxxxiii} Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 4 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 94; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 121; Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], ibid., 119.

^{clxxxiv} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 454.

^{clxxxv} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 24 December 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 146; Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 34-35; Cockrum, Pioneer History, 342-44.

^{clxxxvi} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124, 125.

^{clxxxvii} Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 120. Richardson observed Lincoln “Carry a chicken house made of poles pinned together & Covered that weighed at least 600 [pounds] if not much more.”

tree or sycamore, and down it would come. If you heard him fallin' trees in a clearin' you would say there was three men at work by the way trees fell."^{clxxxix}

A form of recreation that Lincoln enjoyed little was his father's favorite, hunting.^{cxc} One of his rare hunting expeditions led Lincoln to kill his father's dog. He and John D. Johnston slipped out one night to join their friends in search of raccoons, only to have the barking of "Joe," Thomas's house dog, disclose their nocturnal escapade. To silence the cur, Lincoln and his comrades took it along with them on a hunt. After they had caught a coon, they sewed its skin around Joe, who promptly ran toward home. En route it was intercepted by larger dogs, who killed it. In recounting this tale later, Lincoln said: "Father was much incensed at his death, but as John and I, scantily protected from the morning wind, stood shivering in the doorway, we felt assured little yellow Joe would never be able again to sound the call for another coon hunt."^{cxc} This cruel act by a young man so solicitous of animals suggests that Lincoln's hostility toward his father ran deep. Such an uncharacteristic deed may have been Lincoln's way of retaliating, perhaps unconsciously, against Thomas for having slaughtered young Abe's beloved pet pig.^{cxcii}

^{clxxxviii} William G. Greene, interview with Herndon, Elm Wood, Illinois, 30 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 19; Hardin Bale, interview with Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 29 May 1865, ibid., 13; J. Rowan Herndon to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 28 May 1865, ibid., 7.

^{clxxxix} Robert McIntyre, "Lincoln's Friend," Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885.

^{cxc} Augustus H. Chapman alleged that Lincoln "Never cared very much for hunting or Fishing." Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 102. See also Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 113; Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 221. An unidentified informant wrote this to Thayer. See Thayer, From Pioneer Home to the White House: Life of Abraham Lincoln (Norwich, Connecticut: Henry Bill, 1882), 190.

^{cxc} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Lincoln, 28n; J. Rowan Herndon to William H. Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 21 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 51.

^{cxcii} Charles T. White, "Lincoln's First Pet: An Experience of Lincoln When He Was Six Years Old, Told by Lincoln Himself to Captain Gilbert J. Greene," McClure's Magazine, November 1922, 23-25. Gilbert Greene was a compositor on the Illinois State Journal in Springfield in the late 1850s, when Lincoln told him this story. During the Civil War, Lincoln named him marshal of Winchester, Illinois, and subsequently a dispatch carrier

For all his enjoyment of sports and games, Lincoln possessed a streak of introversion and a fondness for solitude.^{cxci} He disliked crowds and often preferred his own company.^{cxci} After Nancy Hanks died in 1818, her son matured quickly and had less time for playmates. As David Turnham recalled, “he seemed to change in appearance and action.” He “began to exhibit deep thoughtfulness, and was so often lost in studied reflection we could not help noticing the strange turn in his actions. He disclosed rare timidity and sensitiveness, especially in the presence of men and women, and although cheerful enough in the presence of boys, he did not appear to seek out company as earnestly as before.”^{cxci} William Wood remembered that “Abe was always a man though a boy.” He “would say to his play fellows and other boys – Leave off your boyish ways and be more like men.”^{cxci}

Lincoln devoted most of his leisure, such as it was, to study; consequently he quickly got ahead of his instructors.^{cxci} He “read diligently,” mostly in the morning rather than at night. “Abe read all the books he could lay his hands on,” his stepmother recalled; “and when he came across a passage that struck him he would write it down on boards if he had no paper & keep it there till he did get paper – then he would re-write it – look at it repeat it –

for General Grant. See also Ruth Painter Randall, Lincoln’s Animal Friends (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 12-20, 96-97. Thomas may also have killed a dog of Abraham’s. John J. Hall, in Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 68. See also A. H. Chapman to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 October 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 137.

^{cxci} E. R. Burba to Herndon, Hodgenville, Kentucky, 31 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 241.

^{cxci} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 131; Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 108.

^{cxci} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 29.

^{cxci} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124.

^{cxci} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 131.

He had a copy book – a kind of scrap book in which he put down all things and this preserved them. He ciphered on boards when he had no paper or no slate and when the board would get too black he would shave it off with a drawing knife and go on again: When he had paper he put his sums down on it.”^{cxcviii} While John D. Johnston attended dances, “Abraham was at home with [his] head at [the] fire place reading or studying.”^{cxci} When employed by Josiah Crawford, Lincoln at lunchtime would bury his nose in a book as the rest of the hired hands sat around chatting, smoking, and chewing tobacco.^{cc} Crawford’s wife recollected that “while other boys were out hooking water melons & trifling away their time, he was studying his books – thinking and reflecting. . . . When he worked for us he read all our books – would sit up late in the night – kindle up the fire – read by it – cipher by it. We had a broad wooden shovel on which Abe would work out his sums – wipe off and repeat till it got too black for more: then he would scrape and wash off and repeat again and again.” Mrs. Crawford said she often saw Abe as he “ciphered with a coal or with red Keel got from the branches: he smoothed and planed boards – wrote on them – ciphered on them.” While “others would romp and lafe he would be engaged in the arithmetic or asking questions about Som[e] history heard or re[a]d of.”^{cci} He followed the same pattern on other jobs, always

^{cxcviii} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 107. Dennis Hanks recollected that Lincoln “was always reading – scribbling – writing – Ciphering – writing Poetry &c. &c.” Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 104. John Hanks remembered that “Abr[aha]m read Constantly when he had an opportunity . . . devoured all the books he could get or lay hands on: he was a Constant and voracious reader.” John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], ibid., 455. Cf. J. W. Wartmann to Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 21 July 1865, ibid., 79.

^{cxci} George B. Balch, interview with Jesse W. Weik [1886?], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 597.

^{cc} Will F. Adams to Albert J. Beveridge, Rockport, Indiana, 22 November 1924, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cci} Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 126; Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 4 January 1866, ibid., 151. In 1860, Josiah Crawford shared similar recollections with a journalist in Evansville. Evansville correspondence, 12 June 1860, Cincinnati

carrying a book which he read during rest periods. On Sundays he devoted his free time to reading.^{ccii} While walking to and from school, he read aloud at such a decibel level that “he could be heard for quite a distance from the road.”^{cciii} In 1828, Lincoln spent a few weeks at the Rockport home of Daniel Grass, whose books he enjoyed conning. In the evenings, he would lie before the fireplace so that he could read, which he often did until midnight or later.^{cciv} When he worked with John Hanks, Lincoln would return to the house at day’s end, grab a piece of cornbread, and peruse a book.^{ccv}

Although Lincoln allegedly told a friend that “he had got hold of and read through every book he ever heard of in that country for about fifty miles,” Elizabeth Crawford’s reminiscences cast some doubt on that claim.^{ccvi} She testified that “when ever he would get hold of A new book he would examine it and if he thought it A good work and would be an advantage to him to read it he would do So but if not he would close it up and Smile and Say I don’t think this would pay to read it.”^{ccvii} Henry C. Whitney, who reported that whenever Lincoln ate “he wanted a book in his hand, or someone to whom he could intelligently talk,”

Commercial, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 22 June 1860. See also Holmes, Abraham Lincoln Traveled This Way, 24.

^{ccii} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, and Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, 4 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112-13, 94.

^{cciii} Dr. James LeGrande, paraphrasing remarks he heard from his mother, Sophie Hanks, in an undated interview with Arthur E. Morgan, Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cciv} John Grass, grandson of Daniel Grass, to his cousin Laura, Denver, Colorado, 23 August 1926, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University. In this document, Grass reported what his mother had told him.

^{ccv} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 455.

^{ccvi} Leonard Swett in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 459. According to Indiana tradition, Lincoln borrowed books from Judge John Brackenridge, whose large library included Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Shakespeare, Byron, Goldsmith, and Dr. Johnson. Roscoe Kiper to Albert J. Beveridge, Boonville, Indiana, 7 January 1925, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress; Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,” 15-16, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Curiously, he never checked a book out of the Rockport public library, established in 1820. History of Warrick, Spencer and Perry Counties, Indiana (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1885), 273.

asserted that young Lincoln’s reading was “superficial and desultory.” Though “inordinately fond of books,” Lincoln was “not fond of consuming a great amount of time with any particular one, at any one time.” A “short book he might read entirely through; a long one he would read conscientiously for a few chapters, and then skim the rest.” Books like Parson Weems’s biography of George Washington “he would read through consecutively; ‘Robinson Crusoe’ he would not read by rote, but would select chapters to suit his fancy, and, ultimately, perhaps, read all; ‘Aesop’s Fables’ and Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ he would read in patches.” In order to remember passages that struck him forcefully, he would jot them down.^{ccviii}

Reading helped liberate Lincoln from his backwoods environment. In middle age, he stated that before Johann Gutenberg’s day, “the great mass of men, at that time, were utterly unconscious, that their conditions, or their minds were capable of improvement. They not only looked upon the educated few as superior beings; but they supposed themselves to be naturally incapable of rising to equality. To immancipate the mind from this false and under estimate of itself, is the great task which printing came into the world to perform.”^{ccix} Print performed that task for Lincoln, emancipating his mind and firing his ambition.

Lincoln practiced writing letters of the alphabet in various ways, sometimes carving them on slabs of wood, on tree trunks, and even on stools and the table in his family’s cabin.^{ccx} Dennis Hanks claimed credit for teaching his cousin to write, a boast that may be

^{ccvii} Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 7 September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 335.

^{ccviii} Whitney, manuscript of Lincoln the Citizen, 56, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 41-42; Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 142.

^{ccix} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:362-63.

^{ccx} Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 130, 134-35. Thayer’s source seems to have been Dennis Hanks. Ibid., 126-29. See also Dennis Hanks’s interview in Robert McIntyre, “Lincoln’s Friend,” Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885.

justified, for Dennis, ten years older than Abe, could write.^{ccxi} John Locke Scripps reported that it was Lincoln’s practice “to form letters, to write words and sentences wherever he found suitable material. He scrawled them with charcoal, he scored them in the dust, in the sand, in the snow – anywhere and everywhere that lines could be drawn, there he improved his capacity for writing.” Neighbors and family members availed themselves of Lincoln’s facility with a pen. When it was learned that he conducted the correspondence for his own family, he “was considered a marvel of learning and wisdom by the simple-minded settlers; and ever afterward, as long as he remained in Indiana, he was the letter-writer for the neighborhood generally.” Scripps believed that Lincoln’s greatest strength was not so much his skill as a stenographer as it was “his ability to express the wishes and feelings of those for whom he wrote in clear and forcible language.”^{ccxii} Years later, Lincoln told a friend “that the way he learned to write so well & so distinctly & precisely was that many people who Came with them from K[entuck]y & different sections after they moved” to Indiana employed him as an amanuensis, which “sharpened” his “perceptions” and taught him “to see other people[’s] thoughts and feelings and ideas by writing their friendly confidential letters.”^{ccxiii} He also drafted legal documents, including a contract between his stepbrother and a man who

^{ccxi} “I taught Abe his first lesson in spelling – reading & writing –. I taught Abe to write with a buzzards quill which I killed with a rifle & having made a pen – put Abes hand in mine & moving his fingers by my hand to give him the idea of how to write –. We had no geese then – for the Country was a forrest. I tried to kill an Eagle but it was too smart – wanted to learn Abe to write with that.” Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 37; Hanks interviewed in Robert McIntyre, “Lincoln’s Friend,” Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885; Dennis Hanks, autobiographical statement, 1877, Lincoln Miscellaneous Collection, University of Chicago. See also Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 126-32.

^{ccxii} Scripps, Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 29, 30-31. Cf. Mentor Graham to Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 15 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 76.

^{ccxiii} Mentor Graham, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 450. Scripps, perhaps reporting what Lincoln told him, said that it “cannot be doubted that something of Mr. Lincoln’s style and facility of composition in later years . . . is to be traced back to these earlier efforts as an amanuensis for the neighborhood.” Scripps, Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 31.

hired Johnston to run a still house. (Lincoln himself worked at that facility in the winter of 1829-30.)^{ccxiv}

In addition to writing for his neighbors, Lincoln also read to them. He regularly visited William Wood's house to read newspapers aloud for the edification of the unlettered. He had a knack for making his listeners understand what they heard. (He could be puckish when performing this service. Wood's daughter reported that "he would often hold the paper up in front of him and read articles that was not there.")^{ccxv} In his early twenties, he continued this practice in New Salem, Illinois.^{ccxvi}

Sometimes Lincoln memorized items in the press. John Romine recalled that "Abe borrowed a newspaper from me which contained a long editorial about Thomas Jefferson, and read the entire paper by firelight. The next morning he returned the paper, and it seemed to me that he could repeat every word in that editorial, and not only that [-] he could recount all the news items, as well as tell all about the advertisements."^{ccxvii} J. Rowan Herndon said Lincoln "had the Best memory of any man I Ever Knew," for he "Never forgot any thing he Read."^{ccxviii}

Of all the volumes he studied, young Lincoln most admired Lindley Murray's English Reader, an anthology of poetry and prose which he called "the greatest and most useful book

^{ccxiv} Reminiscences of Henry Brooner in Hobson, Footprints of Lincoln, 79-80, and in J. T. Hobson to Ida M. Tarbell, Washington, Indiana, 3 December 1895, Tarbell Papers, Smith College. Lincoln alluded to this episode in his first debate with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:16.

^{ccxv} S. Grant Johnson, "Abraham Lincoln," Dale, Indiana, Weekly Reporter, 18 February 1944. Johnson was the great-grandson of William Wood.

^{ccxvi} J. Rowan Herndon to William H. Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 28 May 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 7.

^{ccxvii} Oakland City, Indiana, Enterprise, n.d., copied in the Indianapolis Journal, copied in a clipping marked "Times," 27 August 1899, Lincoln scrapbooks, vol. 2, Indiana University, Bloomington. John Romine had been interviewed by Joseph D. Armstrong of the Enterprise.

^{ccxviii} J. Rowan Herndon to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 28 May 1865, Wilson and Davis eds., Herndon's Informants, 7.

that could be put in the hands of a child at school.”^{ccxix} It contained some antislavery sentiments, such as these lines by Cowper:

I would not have a slave to till my ground,
 To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
 And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
 That sinews bought and sold have ever earn’d.
 I had much rather be myself the slave,
 And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.^{ccxx}

(Lincoln would later famously write: “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.”)^{ccxxi}

Lincoln’s other schoolbooks included Thomas Dilworth’s New Guide to the English Tongue, Noah Webster’s American Spelling Book, and Asa Rhoads’s American Spelling Book. In addition to his family Bible, he read volumes borrowed from neighbors, including Josiah Crawford, William Jones, Thomas Turnham, and John Pitcher.^{ccxxii} Among them were The Arabian Nights, Aesop’s Fables, The Kentucky Preceptor, John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s

^{ccxix} Herndon, quoting Lincoln, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 22. Lindley’s volume was part of the library of Colonel Matthew Rogers of Athens, Illinois, near New Salem. Lincoln borrowed books from Rogers, according to Mentor Graham. James T. Hickey, “Three R’s in Lincoln’s Education: Rogers, Riggin and Rankin,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 52 (1959): 195-207.

^{ccxx} Cowper, “Indignant sentiments on national prejudices and hatred; and on slavery,” in Lindley, The English Reader: or, Pieces in Prose and Poetry Selected from the Best Writers (New York: Collins, 1819), 211-12.

^{ccxxi} Definition of democracy, [1 August 1858?], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:532.

^{ccxxii} John R. Dougherty, interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 13; David Turnham to Herndon, Elizabeth, Indiana, 16 September 1865, ibid., 129; Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, 14 July 1888 and July [no day given] 1888, ibid., 658-59, 662-63; Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 130. John Pitcher told Judge John E. Igelhart “that Abe often called at his office to borrow books.” Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 15, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.

Progress, James Barclay’s English dictionary, Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, James Riley’s Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, William Grimshaw’s History of the United States, a biography of Henry Clay, Mason Weems’s life of George Washington, and William Scott’s Lessons in Elocution.^{ccxxiii} (Curiously, the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin seems not to have been among the books read by Lincoln, who was to become as famous a representative of the self-made-man ethic as Franklin.)^{ccxxiv}

It is not possible to say precisely what Lincoln derived from these volumes.^{ccxxv} His views on slavery may have been affected by William Scott’s anthology, which contained Laurence Sterne’s indictment of human bondage: “Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, slavery! still, thou art a bitter draught; and though thousands, in all ages, have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account.”^{ccxxvi} Scott also included Cowper’s poem, “Cruelty to brutes censured,” which may have had a special appeal to young Lincoln.^{ccxxvii} Robinson Crusoe perhaps reinforced young Lincoln’s sense of irony and fatalism. (In it, Defoe’s eponymous hero says that it “may not be amiss for all People who

^{ccxxiii} Robert Bray, “What Abraham Lincoln Read: An Evaluative and Annotated List,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 28 (2007): 28-81.

^{ccxxiv} Daniel Walker Howe, Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21-47, 138-49.

^{ccxxv} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 41, 42; Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 126; David Turnham to Herndon, Elizabeth, Indiana, 16 September 1866, ibid., 129; Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 109; See also Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 3-17; David C. Mearns, “‘The Great Invention of the World’: Mr. Lincoln and the Books He Read,” in Three Presidents and Their Books: Jefferson, Lincoln, F. D. Roosevelt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 45-88; Houser, Lincoln’s Education, 45-71.

^{ccxxvi} Laurence Sterne, “Liberty and Slavery,” in Scott, Lessons in Elocution or a Selection of Pieces in Prose and Verse for the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Robert Bailey, 1805), 212-13.

^{ccxxvii} Scott, English Reader, 204-5.

shall meet with my story, to make the just observation from it, viz. How frequently in the Course of our Lives, the Evil which in its self we seek most to shun, and which when we are fallen into it, is the most dreadful to us, is oftentimes the very Means or Door of our Deliverance, by which alone we can be rais'd again from the Affliction we are fallen into.”^{ccxxviii}

In the late 1820s, Lincoln began perusing newspapers, including the New York Telescope, the Washington National Intelligencer, and the Louisville Journal.^{ccxxix} From the press he developed an interest in politics. He originally supported Andrew Jackson’s Democratic party but soon switched his allegiance to the National Republicans, whose leader Henry Clay was to found the Whig party in the 1830s.^{ccxxx} Dennis Hanks ascribed the change to the influence of a prosperous, influential merchant, William Jones, who admired Clay so much that when the Kentucky statesman was defeated for president in 1844, Jones was unable to attend to business for several days.^{ccxxxii} Jones employed young Lincoln in his store

^{ccxxviii} Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (New York: Macmillan, 1868), 183-84.

^{ccxxix} David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 121; William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 123; Absalom Roby, interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, ibid., 132; Augustus H. Chapman, statement to Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], ibid., 101-2; George Close, interviewed by James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccxxx} Joel H. Silbey, “‘Always a Whig in Politics’: The Partisan Life of Abraham Lincoln,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 8 (1986): 21-42; David Turnham to Herndon, Dale, Indiana, 29 September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 356; Dennis Hanks to Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 12 March 1866, ibid., 229; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114; Dennis Hanks interviewed in Robert McIntyre, “Lincoln’s Friend,” Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885. In 1861, Lincoln told John Minor Botts that he had always been an old-line Henry Clay Whig. John Minor Botts, The Great Rebellion: Its Secret History, Rise, Progress, and Disastrous Failure (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866), 196. See also Lincoln’s autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, Basler, ed., Collected Works, 2:64. The Whig party formally came into being in the winter of 1833-34. Michael Holt, The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), ix, 26-28.

^{ccxxxii} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 103; Evansville, Indiana, Daily Journal, 19 July 1860.

and served as a friendly, encouraging mentor to him.^{ccxxxii} Lincoln spent much leisure time at the store, where he could read the Louisville Journal and discuss politics.^{ccxxxiii} In all likelihood, Lincoln’s preference for the National Republicans stemmed from his aversion to the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian celebration of agrarianism and negative government.^{ccxxxiv} Eager to escape rural backwardness, he probably associated the Democrats with shiftless frontiersmen, like his Democratic father, and associated the National Republicans with the more ambitious, enterprising lawyers and merchants he had observed, like William

^{ccxxxii} Louis A. Warren doubted that Lincoln worked at Jones’s store, pointing out that Jones did not become postmaster until 1831; that the earlier post office had been discontinued at Gentry’s store in October 1829; and that Jones purchased a piece of land at Gentryville crossroads only in 1831, after the Lincolns had left for Illinois. Warren, Lincoln’s Youth, 188-89. But much testimony contradicts Warren’s conclusion. In January 1861, when Jones called on Lincoln at Springfield, a reporter said that thirty years earlier Lincoln “worked as a common farm hand at one dollar per day” for Jones. Springfield correspondence, 12 January, Chicago Tribune, 14 January 1861. On 8 June 1865, J. W. Wartmann told Herndon: “Col William Jones, for whom Mr Lincoln clerked, was killed last Summer near Atlanta.” Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 29. According to John R. Dougherty, “Lincoln worked & Clerked for Col Jones at Gentryville 15 M north of this place (Rockport) – L drove a team – cut up Pork & sold good for Jones.” John R. Dougherty, interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, ibid., 133. John Tuley reported that “Abe worked for a while in a pork house for Bill Jones. I saw him several times cutting up pork and salting it and rendering lard.” Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times Herald, 22 December 1895. Robert Gentry testified that his father “said that he and Abraham Lincoln were playmates but that Abraham Lincoln was some older, and that Abraham Lincoln frequently worked for Col. William Jones on his farm and in his store.” Statement by Robert M. Gentry, Rockport, 28 July 1915, William L. Barker et al., Brief Prepared by the Warrick County Lincoln Route Association (Boonville, Indiana: Boonville Standard, 1931), 29. The husband of Aaron Grigsby’s sister “also heard Col. William Jones . . . say that . . . Abe Lincoln often worked for him in his store, and on his farm.” Statement by Bartley Inco, Rockport, 28 July 1915, ibid., 37. See also statements by Capt. William Jones, son of Lincoln’s employer, 16 April 1915, and by Allen Gentry, 28 July 1915, ibid., 24, 26-27. William E. Bartelt, after a careful examination of the surviving evidence, concluded that “there seems to be little doubt but what William Jones and Abraham Lincoln knew each other . . . in Spencer County prior to March 1830. It seems logical that William Jones came to the Gentryville area in 1828 and was employed in the Romine or Romine-Gentry store. In 1829 he opened his own store, and Lincoln worked and discussed politics here. It appears that the Jones Store was more than just a trading center. Jones evidently was also involved in the buying of swine for selling and butchering.” Bartelt, “Colonel William Jones of Spencer County,” typescript dated 1992, p. 12, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Indiana. See also “Col. William Jones,” in Bess V. Ehrmann, “Lincoln and His Neighbors,” unpaginated pamphlet (Rockport: Democrat, 1948), and several affidavits in the files of the Col. William Jones Home, Lincoln City, Indiana.

^{ccxxxiii} J. Edward Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 46-48; Charles T. Baker, “The Jones Store of the Lincoln Neighborhood,” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 27 April 1933.

^{ccxxxiv} See Allen C. Guelzo, Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 26-63; Daniel Walker Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 263-98; Holt, Whig Party, 2-32, 64-70.

Jones.^{ccxxxv} (Supporters of President Jackson and his successor, Martin Van Buren, were often portrayed as citizens of dubious respectability. In 1840, the Whig journalist Horace Greeley declared: “Wherever you find a bitter, blasphemous Atheist and enemy of Marriage, Morality, and Social Order, there you may be certain of one vote for Van Buren.”)^{ccxxxvi}

When Lincoln was about fourteen years old, hearing that David Ramsey’s biography of the first president offered an account of Washington superior to Mason Weems’s, he promptly borrowed a copy of the Ramsey book from Josiah Crawford and read it avidly. Before he could return it, the volume inadvertently got soaked by rain that poured into the cabin one night. When he explained to Crawford what had happened and offered to pay for the book, Crawford suggested that the lad cut the tops from a field of corn, which he did for three days.^{ccxxxvii} Lincoln believed that Crawford, a tightfisted man known for his pettiness in dealing with neighbors, had made an excessive demand, and he retaliated by composing satirical verses ridiculing Crawford unmercifully.^{ccxxxviii}

Lincoln did not rely solely on the printed word or the classroom for his education. From travelers who stopped at William Jones’s store, he and his companions would learn

^{ccxxxv} Dennis Hanks maintained that “Abe . . . was originally a Democrat after the order of Jackson – so was his father.” Dennis Hanks, interview, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 105. Theodore Calvin Pease speculated that Lincoln’s “desire for something better in life” led him “to imitate the successful men he looked up to in politics, in the hope he might follow in their track in other things.” Pease’s annotation on a draft of Albert J. Beveridge’s second chapter of the first volume of Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccxxxvi} Greeley quoted in Robert Gray Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 132.

^{ccxxxvii} Scripps, Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 36.

^{ccxxxviii} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 101; Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, ibid., 41. On Crawford’s reputation, see Judge John Pitcher, paraphrased in Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, July 1888, and Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], ibid., 662, 119.

about the outside world. Lincoln took the initiative in querying such strangers.^{ccxxxix} Along with Dennis Hanks, Nathaniel Grigsby, and other friends, Lincoln attended political meetings and discussed issues of the day endlessly.^{ccxli} Lincoln insisted on digesting thoroughly whatever he read or heard. His stepmother recollected that “Abe, when old folks were at our house, was a silent & attentive observer – never speaking or asking questions till they were gone and then he must understand Every thing – even to the smallest thing – Minutely & Exactly.” He “would then repeat it over to himself again & again – sometimes in one form and then in another & when it was fixed in his mind to suit him he became Easy and he never lost that fact or his understanding of it.” Occasionally “he seemed pestered to give Expression to his ideas and got mad almost at one who couldn’t Explain plainly what he wanted to convey.”^{ccxli}

Lincoln never lost this desire to gain a clear understanding of whatever he read or heard. In 1860, he described to a Connecticut clergyman one of his earliest recollections: “I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don’t think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings. I could not sleep, though I often tried to, when I got on such a hunt after an idea, until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied

^{ccxxxix} Charles Carleton Coffin, Abraham Lincoln (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 35. Coffin’s source was a letter from Joseph Gentry, dated September 1890.

^{ccxli} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 105; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114.

^{ccxli} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 107.

until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me, for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north and bounded it south and bounded it east and bounded it west.”^{ccxlii} Lincoln tried rewriting the words of family guests to make his own prose more concise. When visitors came to the cabin, he would patiently listen to them talk. Employing a kind of shorthand, he jotted down their remarks and later went over them repeatedly, striking out extraneous words while retaining the substance and flavor of the conversations.^{ccxliii}

RELIGION

Lincoln read the Bible, but how diligently he perused it is not clear. Some recalled that he read it often.^{ccxliv} In the 1850s, he told an Illinois lawyer that his boyhood library consisted of “66 books of which he was very fond” (i.e., the Bible) and that he “studied it with great care.”^{ccxlv} Lincoln would probably have agreed with the historian who called the Bible “a whole literature, a library,” a collection of poems and short stories teaching “history, biography, biology, geography, philosophy, political science, psychology, hygiene, and sociology,” as well as “cosmogony, ethics, and theology,” and presenting “a worldly

^{ccxlii} The Rev. Mr. John P. Gulliver, “A Talk with Abraham Lincoln,” New York Independent, 1 September 1864. Gulliver sent Lincoln proofs of this article before its publication and asked the president to confirm or deny its accuracy. Gulliver to Lincoln, Norwich, Connecticut, 26 August 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccxliii} Lincoln told this to Richard Oglesby and Milton Hay, whose recollections were paraphrased by Joseph W. Fifer. Chicago Tribune, 5 January 1936, part 7, p. 7.

^{ccxliv} Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 21 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 169; John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], ibid., 455; Elizabeth Crawford, interview with William Fortune, fall 1881, Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

panorama” with “particulars so varied that it is hard to think of a domestic or social situation without a biblical example to match and turn to moral ends.”^{ccxlv}

In his mature years, Lincoln often referred to the Bible, which he described as “the richest source of pertinent quotations” and “the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man’s welfare, are to be found portrayed in it.”^{ccxlvii} Near the end of the Civil War, he told his closest friend, Joshua Speed: “take all of this book [the Bible] upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier and better man.”^{ccxlviii} The Bible, Noah Brooks reported, “was a very familiar study with the President, whole chapters of Isaiah, the New Testament, and the Psalms being fixed in his memory.” (Of the Psalms, he said: “they are the best, for I find in them something for every day in the week.”)^{ccxlix} Lincoln, Brooks added, “would sometimes correct a misquotation of Scripture, giving generally the chapter and verse where it could be found. He liked the Old Testament best, and dwelt on the simple beauty of the historical books.”^{cccl}

ccxlv Joseph Nicholas Barker, “What I Remember of Abraham Lincoln,” undated manuscript, Lincoln Collection, Chicago History Museum. In 1849, Barker was appointed deputy U.S. marshal for Illinois.

ccxlvii Jacques Barzun, From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 27-28.

ccxlviii John Langdon Kaine, “Lincoln as a Boy Knew Him,” Century Magazine 85 (February 1913): 557; reply to loyal colored people of Baltimore upon presentation of a Bible, 7 September 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:542. On Lincoln’s use of the Bible, see Joseph R. Fornieri, Abraham Lincoln’s Political Faith (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 35-69.

ccxlix Speed, Reminiscences of Lincoln, 32-33.

cccl Anna L. Boyden, Echoes from Hospital and White House: A Record of Mrs. Rebecca R. Pomroy’s Experiences in War-Times (Boston: Lothrop, 1884), 62. In 1862, Mrs. Pomroy spent several weeks in the White House caring for the Lincolns’ son Tad.

cccl Noah Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, July 1865, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 219.

Lincoln often cited the Old Testament. In discussing the relationship between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he alluded to the Book of Proverbs (25:11): “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”^{ccli} While pondering his future, he told a friend he would follow the advice of Moses in Exodus (14:13): “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”^{cclii} Responding to Stephen A. Douglas in 1852, he quoted Genesis 5:24: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”^{ccliii} Opening his campaign for the senate in 1858, he took a text from Ecclesiastes (9:4): “a living dog is better than a dead lion.”^{ccliv} He made another Biblical canine allusion while complaining about press criticism during the Civil War “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” (Second Kings, 8:13)^{cclv} He also alluded to a passage in Proverbs (30:10) dealing with servants: “Accuse not a servant to his master lest he curse thee and thou be found guilty.”^{cclvi} In 1861, speaking in Philadelphia, he gave a condensed version of the following passage from the 135th psalm: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”^{cclvii} When denouncing slavery, Lincoln repeatedly cited God’s injunction to

^{ccli} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:169.

^{cclii} Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, 4 July 1842, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:289. In the Book of Exodus, Moses tells the Israelites as Pharaoh’s army closes in on them: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today.”

^{ccliii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:141.

^{ccliv} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:467.

^{cclv} Carpenter, Six Months at the White House, 230.

^{cclvi} Reminiscences of Thomas F. Pendel, Washington correspondence by Frank G. Carpenter, 19 October, Cleveland Leader, 22 October 1883.

^{cclvii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:239.

Adam: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” (Genesis 3:19)^{cclviii} In 1864, when told that 400 malcontents had convened to nominate someone to challenge his reelection bid, he quoted I Samuel, 22:2: “And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them, and there were with him about four hundred men.”^{cclix}

Lincoln also liked the New Testament, frequently quoting the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Matthew, 7:1)^{cclx}

“Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh.” (Matthew, 18:7)^{cclxi}

“Every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” (Matthew, 12:25)^{cclxii}

“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”
(Matthew, 24:28)^{cclxiii}

“The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew, 16:18)^{cclxiv}

“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke, 16:31)^{cclxv}

^{cclviii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:411; 7:368; 8:155, 333. See Earl Schwartz, “‘A Poor Hand to Quote Scripture’: Lincoln and Genesis 3:19,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 23 (2002): 37-49.

^{cclix} Francis B. Carpenter, Six Months at the White House, 220-21.

^{cclx} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:368, 8:333.

^{cclxi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:333.

^{cclxii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:315; 2:461.

^{cclxiii} Statement of Andrew H. Goodpasture, Petersburg, Illinois, 31 March 1869, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 573.

^{cclxiv} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:115, 4:194.

^{cclxv} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:130.

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew, 7:12)^{cclxvi}

“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit.” (Luke, 6:43-44)^{cclxvii}

“They seek a sign, and no sign shall be given them.” (Luke, 11:29)^{cclxviii}

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matthew, 12:34)^{cclxix}

“As your Father in Heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect.” (Matthew, 5:48)^{cclxx}

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” (Matthew:12:30/Luke 11:23).^{cclxxi}

In addition to quoting or paraphrasing scripture, Lincoln often referred to Biblical passages. His lecture on discoveries and inventions, delivered in the 1850s, contains more than thirty such references.^{cclxxii} When offering consolation to his dying father, Lincoln alluded to Jesus’ statement: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all

^{cclxvi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:473.

^{cclxvii} Lincoln paraphrased Jesus thus: “By the fruit the tree is to be known. An evil tree can not bring forth good fruit.” Lincoln to Williamson Durley, Springfield, 3 October 1845, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:347.

^{cclxviii} Lincoln to Henry J. Raymond, 28 November 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:145-46.

^{cclxix} Lincoln paraphrased Jesus thus: “out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth will continue to speak.” Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:271.

^{cclxx} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:501.

^{cclxxi} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:462.

^{cclxxii} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:437-42; 3:356-63; William J. Wolf, The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), 132. Basler considered this to be two separate lectures, but in fact, as Wayne C. Temple has shown, what Basler presented was in fact two parts of the same lecture. Temple, “Lincoln the Lecturer,” Lincoln Herald 102 (1999): 97-101.

numbered.” (Matthew 10:29-20).^{cclxxiii} In stinging indictments of pro-slavery theology, he alluded to Satan’s temptation of Christ (Matthew 4:8-10/Luke 4:5-8) and to Jesus’ injunction: “Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away they goods ask them not again.” (Luke:6:30/Matthew/6:1-4). On two occasions he cited Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:11-14; Luke 15:4-7).^{cclxxiv}

As a youth, Lincoln “did not read the Bible half as much as is said,” according to Dennis Hanks, who reported that “the Bible puzzled him, especially the miracles. He often asked me in the timber or sittin’ around the fireplace nights, to explain scripture.”^{cclxxv} Lincoln’s stepmother testified that “Abe read the bible some, though not as much as [is] said: he sought more congenial books – suitable for his age.”^{cclxxvi} (In 1860, Lincoln confessed to a Springfield minister: “I have read my Bible some, though not half as much as I ought.”)^{cclxxvii} Joseph C. Richardson told an interviewer that Sarah Bush Lincoln “used to make him read the Bible for entertainment whenever anybody came in the house. That was her idea of hospitality.” One day Richardson observed her instruct her stepson to read aloud from scripture. Evidently resenting this assignment, young Lincoln “began just as fast as a horse would run,” whereupon she “called out to him, but it did no good. The more she called the faster and louder Abe read. This exasperated the old woman and she went at the young man

^{cclxxiii} Lincoln to John D. Johnston, Springfield, 12 January 1851, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:97.

^{cclxxiv} Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:510-11, 4:272, 7:368, 3:204.

^{cclxxv} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 106; Robert McIntyre, “Lincoln’s Friend,” Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885.

^{cclxxvi} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 107.

^{cclxxvii} Albert Hale to Theron Baldwin, Springfield, 15 June 1860, in Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 97.

with the broom. He dropped the book and took to the brush. He had accomplished what he wanted.”^{cclxxviii} On another occasion he read aloud from the Book of Isaiah, playfully interpolating passages from Shakespeare.^{cclxxix}

If the recollections of Dennis Hanks and Sarah Bush Lincoln are accurate, Lincoln’s youthful attitude toward the Bible may reflect disenchantment with the ignorant preachers and hypocritical worshippers he observed in Kentucky and at the Little Pigeon Baptist Church, with which his parents affiliated in 1823 but which Abe did not join.^{cclxxx} That congregation seethed with personal feuds, quarrels over the proper credentials for those who were authorized to administer baptism, opposition to benevolent missionary work, and disputes over creeds.^{cclxxxii} Lincoln was probably repelled by the primitive worship services, the heavy emphasis that Baptists placed on arcane doctrinal matters, and the drunk and ignorant preachers he heard.^{cclxxxiii} The Reverend Dr. William E. Barton speculated plausibly

^{cclxxviii} Interview with Joseph C. Richardson, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

^{cclxxxix} Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,” 16, typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Murr’s informant was Wesley Hall, who was present on that occasion.

^{cclxxx} J. H. Spencer, A History of Kentucky Baptists (2 vols.; Cincinnati: J. R. Baumes, 1885), 1:644-49; John B. Boles, Religion in Antebellum Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 134-37. It is not clear why the Lincolns had not joined the Little Pigeon Baptist Church earlier, for the congregation had been formed in 1816. At the time they got around to joining, it consisted of forty-seven members. They may have hesitated because they had been Regular Baptists and the Little Pigeon Creek church was founded by Separatists.

^{cclxxxii} John F. Cady, “The Religious Environment of Lincoln’s Youth,” Indiana Magazine of History 37 (1941): 16-30; L. R. Cronkrite, “The Church Lincoln Didn’t Join,” The Christian Century, 6 February 1935, 170.

^{cclxxxiii} J. Edward Murr to Albert J. Beveridge, [New Albany, Indiana, 21 November 1924], Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress. Murr (1868-1960) served as a local preacher at Rockport in 1897 and over the next four decades embraced charges in Grandview, Princeton, Indianapolis, and elsewhere in Indiana. Murr, “Glimpses of an Itinerant,” typescript of an autobiography, 1952, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana; Minutes of the Indiana Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, 130th Session (n.p., n.p., 1961), 565. Murr’s grandfather settled near Lincoln’s uncle Josiah in southeast Indiana. “The Real Formative Period in the Life of Abraham Lincoln,” The Christian Advocate, 8 February 1912, 175. Murr wrote “The Wilderness Years of Abraham Lincoln,” a 350-page unpublished typescript now in the Murr Papers, DePauw University, and published three articles in the Indiana Magazine of History on “Lincoln in Indiana.”

that before Lincoln reached the age of twenty-eight, he may not have encountered a Baptist preacher who acknowledged that the earth was round. Barton described the kind of services Lincoln probably attended on the frontier: “The [Baptist] preachers bellowed and spat and

Elsewhere Murr elaborated on these points: “In making the simple statement that young Lincoln was not a Christian, nor so regarded by his associates, it would be altogether misleading unless it be properly understood. Their standards and his for presuming upon such a claim were of course measured by the practice of the local church in demanding the observance of certain forms and subscribing to certain tenets. It was, of course, not allowed that any one could be so presumptuous as to set forth the claim that he was a Christian, independent of these. Lincoln not having done this was, of course, not considered as being a Christian.

“It may be truly said, without casting any aspersion upon the character and profession of some, that there were others, indeed many, who composed the membership of Little Pigeon Baptist church in Lincoln’s day who possessed doubtful morality; certainly they failed to measure up to the requirements of Christian standards of living generally in vogue today. It is not charged that gross and flagrant wrongdoing characterized any one of them, but it is claimed that delinquencies in many matters were the rule.

“The ministers themselves were often indeed quite generally given to dram drinking, and certainly this was true of substantially all the parishioners – women as well as men. It will be seen, therefore, that these well-meaning pioneers hedged up the door of entrance into the kingdom by erroneous theological emphasis upon some matters by demanding of all who sought fellowship with them that they subscribe to these, but too often their own delinquencies and shortcomings were such as to be only too painfully apparent.

“Lincoln, given to approaching any and all things along lines of reason, could not fail to note the inconsistencies in profession and practice. Possessing morals quite beyond most people, abstaining from the use of intoxicants and tobacco, temperate in speech and painstakingly honest and truthful, given to reading the Bible daily, and regarded as possessing such a wholesome amount of common sense and sound judgment as to be selected to adjudicate all differences arising among his fellows, it may therefore be seen that while Lincoln made no profession of religious faith in conformity to the standards of the time, yet his character was quite beyond that of others.

“For this youth, who if not educated in the ordinary acceptation of the term, possessed more knowledge even then perhaps than most of us are ready to allow, and being acquainted for instance, as we know that Lincoln was with the movement of the heavenly bodies, and then to hear in the Sunday sermon the maledictions of Heaven hurled at ‘edicated’ folks who presumed to think that the earth was round, that it ‘revolved upon its axle tree,’ and similar animadversions, one can deeply sympathize with a disposition to refrain from formal union with such a class.

“Again, for young Lincoln to assemble with these worshippers in Little Pigeon church; the preacher and people to engage as they often did in a give and take sort of fashion in the coarse, crude jokes of doubtful propriety anywhere – much less in a place of worship – hurling at one another, albeit good-naturedly, hilarious repartee and scintillating witticisms better suited to the school house debates; and when the minister suggested that it was time for worship for some old brother to start the hymn, ‘How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours,’ pitching it in a strange key, putting in an unconscionable number of quarter and half rests, and then for the leader, perhaps, at the close of the stanza to expectorate his ambier in a belated sort of manner, no matter where, preparatory to another effort; and when that was finished and the sermon was entered upon, with all of the vials of wrath poured forth and anathemas heaped upon the heads of offenders (as was often the case) in such a fashion as to indicate enjoyment in anticipation, with a great deal of sound and little sense; therefore, for a youth of Lincoln’s purity of character and sense of propriety, faculty of reasoning and freedom from such habits above referred to refrain from formal union with the church is after all not a thing to excite

whined, and cultivated an artificial ‘holy tone’ and denounced the Methodists and blasphemed the Presbyterians and painted a hell whose horror even in the backwoods was an atrocity.”^{cclxxxiii} In The Hoosier Schoolmaster, the former circuit-riding minister Edward Eggleston portrayed Hardshell Baptist congregations in antebellum Indiana: “Their confession of faith is a caricature of Calvinism, and is expressed by their preachers about as follows: ‘Ef you’re elected, you’ll be saved; ef you a’n’t, you’ll be damned. God’ll take keer of his elect. It’s a sin to run Sunday-schools, or temp’rince s’cieties, or to send missionaries. You let God’s business alone. What is to be will be, and you can’t hender it.’” These “prodigiously illiterate, and often vicious” fundamentalist parishioners sometimes had ministers who were “notorious drunkards” and who dragged “their sermons out sometimes for three hours at a stretch.”^{cclxxxiv}

After hearing sermons or speeches, Lincoln repeated them nearly verbatim to his friends, mimicking the gestures and accent of the speaker.^{cclxxxv} Often he would return from

wonder or provoke harsh criticism.” Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 63-65.

^{cclxxxiii} Barton, Soul of Lincoln, 63-66, 48. The first preacher at the Little Pigeon Creek Baptist church was Samuel Bristow, who helped found it in 1816. He left for Morgan County, Illinois around 1821. Jacksonville, Illinois, Courier, 2 December 1930. One Father Hart evidently succeeded him. Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 246-47.

^{cclxxxiv} Eggleston, Hoosier Schoolmaster, 84-85. Eggleston conceded that this description “never applied to the whole denomination, but only to the Hardshells of certain localities. Some of these intensely conservative churches, I have reason to believe, were always composed of reputable people. But what is said above is not in the least exaggerated as a description of many of the churches in Indiana and Illinois. Their opposition to the temperance reformation was both theoretical and practical. A rather able minister of the denomination whom I knew as a boy used to lie in besotted drunkenness by the roadside. I am sorry to confess that he once represented the county in the State legislature. . . . Most of the preachers were illiterate farmers.” Illinois Governor Thomas Ford painted a similar portrait of frontier clergy in his state: “many of these preachers were nearly destitute of learning and knowledge . . . it was a matter of astonishment to what length they could spin out a sermon embracing only a few ideas. The merit of a sermon was measured somewhat by the length of it, by the flowery language of the speaker, and by his vociferation and violent gestures.” Thomas Ford, The History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (2 vols.; Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1945-46), 1:38-40.

^{cclxxxv} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 102; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 123; Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 107. Turnham told

church, mount a box in the middle of the cabin, and replicate the service.^{cclxxxvi} He would do the same outdoors, climbing on a stump and inviting his friends to hear him deliver sermons or political speeches. Because this interfered with farm work, Thomas Lincoln frequently rebuked his son and made him quit.^{cclxxxvii} His stepsister Matilda remembered that sometimes she and Lincoln would conduct mock religious services at which she would lead the singing while “Abe would lead in prayer. Among his numerous supplications, he prayed God to put stockings on the chickens’ feet in winter.”^{cclxxxviii}

A strain of irreverence remained with Lincoln all his life. He especially relished humorous stories about ignorant preachers, including one about a camp meeting where, as the tents were being struck, “a little wizened-faced man ascended the log steps of the pulpit, and clasping his small hands, and rolling his weak eyes upward, squealed out, ‘Brethern and sistern!’” Because he presented “such a striking contrast to the last speaker,” the assembled people paused “to look with wonder upon him.” Encouraged by their attention, he resumed: “I rise to norate on toe you on the subject of the baptismal – yes, the baptismal! Ahem. There was Noah, he had three sons – ahem – namlie, Shadadarack, Meshisck, and Bellteezer! They all went in toe the Dannel’s den, and likewise with them was a lion! Ahem.” Observing that his auditors were inattentive, the fellow adopted a new tack: “Dear perishing friends, ef you

Herndon about Lincoln’s regurgitation of a sermon by Jeremiah Cash. Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 123. Turnham evidently told William M. Thayer the same story. Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 158-59.

^{cclxxxvi} Dennis Hanks’s reminiscences, Robert McIntyre, “Lincoln’s Friend,” Charleston, Illinois, Courier, n.d., Paris, Illinois, Gazette, n.d., Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1885; Hanks’s interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 104.

^{cclxxxvii} Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 110; Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], ibid., 102.

^{cclxxxviii} In 1888, John J. Hall, son of Matilda Johnston Moore, reported this to John E. Remsburg. Remsburg, Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian? (New York: Truth Seeker Company, 1893), 197. See also Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 109.

will not hear on toe me on this great subject, I will only say this, that Squire Nobbs has recently lost a little bay mare with a flaxy mane and tail amen!”^{cclxxxix}

Lincoln told a similar story about a Baptist minister in Indiana: “The meeting-house was in the woods and quite a distance from any other house. It was only used once a month. The preacher – an old line Baptist – was dressed in coarse linen pantaloons, and shirt of the same material. The pants, manufactured after the old fashion, with baggy legs and a flap in front, were made to attach to his frame without the aid of suspenders. A single button held his shirt in position, and that was at the collar. He rose up in the pulpit and with a loud voice announced his text thus: ‘I am the Christ, whom I shall represent today.’ About this time a little blue lizard ran up underneath his baggy pantaloons. The old preacher, not wishing to interrupt the steady flow of his sermon, slapped away on his legs, expecting to arrest the intruder; but his efforts were unavailing, and the little fellow kept on ascending higher and higher. Continuing the sermon, the preacher slyly loosened the central button which graced the waist-band of his pantaloons and with a kick off came that easy-fitting garment. But meanwhile Mr. Lizard had passed the equatorial line of waist-band and was calmly exploring that part of the preacher’s anatomy which lay underneath the back of his shirt. Things were now growing interesting, but the sermon was still grinding on. The next movement on the preacher’s part was for the collar button, and with one sweep of his arm off came the tow linen shirt. The congregation sat for an instant as if dazed; at length one old lady in the rear

cclxxxix [D. W. Dow], Peoria, Illinois, n.d., to the editor, “Editor’s Drawer,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, June 1875, 155-56. The author was the wife of Kimball Dow, who represented Kane County in the Illinois House of Representatives (1844-48).

of the room rose up and glancing at the excited object in the pulpit, shouted at the top of her voice: ‘If you represent Christ then I’m done with the Bible.’”^{ccxc}

Though Lincoln delighted in mimicking backwoods clergymen, something of what they preached became imbedded in his psyche, for he remained a Calvinistic fatalist throughout life.^{ccxi} Frequently he quoted Hamlet’s lines, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,/ Rough-hew them how we will.”^{ccxcii} In addition to Shakespeare, he found religious significance in the poetry of Alexander Pope, whose “Essay on Man” he thought “contained all the religious instruction which it was necessary for a man to know.”^{ccxciii} Mary Todd Lincoln recalled that her husband’s “maxim and philosophy was – ‘What is to be will be and no prayers of ours can arrest the decree.’”^{ccxciv} Herndon heard those same words dozens of times.^{ccxcv} Lincoln also retained a fondness for the ministers’ theatrical style. In 1861, he told the sculptor Leonard Volk “I don’t like to hear cut-and-dried sermons. No – when I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees!”^{ccxcvi}

^{ccxc} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 62n; J. Rowan Herndon to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 3 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 69.

^{ccxi} On Lincoln’s Calvinistic streak, see Guelzo, Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President, 117-21; Wayne C. Temple, Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet (Mahomet, Illinois: Mayhaven, 1995), 15-19; Charles David Hein, “Abraham Lincoln’s Theological Outlook” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1982), 171-210.

^{ccxcii} William H. Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 6 and 11 February 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Isaac N. Arnold, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1885), 81; Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 245. For an analysis of Shakespeare’s influence on Lincoln’s religious thought, see James A. Stevenson, “A Providential Theology: Shakespeare’s Influence on Lincoln’s Second Inaugural,” The Midwest Quarterly 43 (2001): 11-28.

^{ccxciii} George Tuthill Borrett, Letters from Canada and the United States (London: J. E. Adlard, 1865), 254 (letter dated “on board the Kangaroo,” November 1864).

^{ccxciv} Mary Todd Lincoln, interview with Herndon, [September 1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 358, 360.

^{ccxcv} Herndon to Joseph S. Fowler, Springfield, 18 February 1887, Herndon Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. See also Herndon to John E. Remsburg, n.p., n.d. [sometime in the 1880s], in Remsburg, Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian?, 113-23, and Herndon to Francis E. Abbott, Springfield, [1870], ibid., 98-104.

^{ccxcvi} Leonard W. Volk, “The Lincoln Life-Mask and How It Was Made,” Century Magazine 23 (1881): 226.

RELATIONS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

His great height and sartorial insouciance did not endear Lincoln to the opposite sex, nor did his physical and social awkwardness. Joseph Gentry thought him “one of the gawkiest boys he ever knew.”^{ccxcvii} He was long, thin, swarthy, raw-boned, “leggy,” and “dried up & Shriveled.”^{ccxcviii} His garments, though primitive (he was thirteen before he owned a white shirt), were not unusual – tow linen pants in warm weather, buckskin pants in cool weather, flax shirts, linsey-wollsey jackets, short socks, low shoes, and caps fashioned from animal skins – but they fit him poorly.^{ccxcix} His buckskin pants were often so short that they exposed six to twelve inches of “sharp, narrow, blue shin bones.”^{ccc} As his stepmother recalled, Lincoln was indifferent to his appearance, caring “nothing for clothes” so long as “they were clean & neat.” Fashion “cut no figure with him – nor Color – nor Stuff nor material – [he] was Careless about these things.” But he was “very careful of his person” and “tolerably neat and clean.”^{ccci} His most striking feature was his unusual height. He reached

^{ccxcvii} Notes of an interview with Gentry conducted by William Fortune in 1881, Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

^{ccxcviii} Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 131; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 121; Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], ibid., 119.

^{ccxcix} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 100; John Hanks, interview with Herndon [1865-66], ibid., 455; Elizabeth Crawford interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 126; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 113; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 121.

^{ccc} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 113; John Romine, interview with Herndon, 14 September 1865, ibid., 118.

^{ccci} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 108.

six feet at sixteen; the following year he grew two more inches.^{ccci} By the age of twenty-one, he had attained his full stature of six feet four inches.

One Indiana maiden recalled that Lincoln “was so tall and awkward” that all “the young girls my age made fun of Abe. They’d laugh at him right before his face, but Abe never appeared to care. He was so good and he’d just laugh with them. Abe tried to go with some of them, but no sir-ee, they’d give him the mitten every time, just because he was . . . so tall and gawky, and it was mighty awkward I can tell you trying to keep company with a fellow as tall as Abe was.”^{ccciii} Elizabeth Wood found him “too awkward.”^{ccciv} Pretty, vain Elizabeth Tuley reported that “he was big and awkward and couldn’t dance much.” Whenever she was seen with Lincoln, her friends “teased her unmercifully” about “his coat sleeves and pantlegs always being too short.”^{cccv} Another young woman who thought him “too big, awkward &

^{ccci} Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 119; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 112.

^{ccciii} Polly Richardson Egnew, in J. Edward Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 57; Murr to Albert J. Beveridge, [New Albany, Indiana, 21 November 1924], Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccciv} Jane L. Mosby (daughter of Elizabeth Wood) to Anna C. O’Flynn, Grandview, Indiana, 8 March 1896, O’Flynn Papers, Vincennes University. See also Warren, Lincoln’s Youth, 157; J. W. Wartmann to Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 4 September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 330; Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 19 September 1866, ibid., 345; David Turnham to Herndon, Dale, Indiana, 5 September 1866, ibid., 334.

^{cccv} T. Hardy Masterson, “Lincoln’s Life in Indiana,” Rockport, Indiana, Journal, 12 February 1897; interview with Tuley’s grandniece, Mrs. Louisa K. Barr, St. Paul, Minnesota, Pioneer Press, 12 February 1925; Nora Bender, granddaughter of Elizabeth Tuley, to Laura Wright, Chrisney, Indiana, 16 August 1926, copy, and C. E. Jones to Nora Bender, Wichita, Kansas, 28 January 1926, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University; interviews with Elizabeth Tuley, Evansville Courier and Journal, 12 February 1928, and Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times-Herald, 22 December 1895. According to her daughter, Elizabeth Tuley “was considered the most beautiful woman in southern Indiana” in her youth and was courted persistently by Lincoln: “They used to go to spelling schools and such meetings as they had in this country in those days, and he would come ten miles on horseback after my mother.” Mrs. Rachel Bryant, quoted in “The Woman Who Refused to Wed ‘Abe’ Lincoln,” unidentified clipping, “Sweethearts” folder, Lincoln files, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

ugly” further objected that he “just cared too much for books.”^{cccvi} His cousin Sophie Hanks reported that Lincoln would attend parties but “he wouldn’t dance. He would get a bunch of boys around him and told them stories.” The girls resented this, for occasionally “it would be hard to get enough boys to stand for a set.”^{cccvii} Yet another Hoosier damsel remembered that Lincoln was “so quiet and awkward and so awful homely” that “girls didn’t much care” for him.^{cccviii} According to a descendant of the Bolin family of Gentryville, girls in that neighborhood “liked Lincoln, but not in the romantic sense. They liked to kid with him and listen to him talk; but, as a beau, he was out. They said he was ‘too green and awkward.’”^{cccix}

In his early twenties at New Salem, Illinois, he was “not a man whom all women liked.” The daughters of his landlord in that village “made fun of his awkwardness and called him ‘Old plain Abe.’”^{cccix}

Lincoln reciprocated these feelings.^{cccxi} His stepmother remembered that he “was not very fond of girls.”^{cccxi} Anna Roby, speaking from firsthand experience, recollected that

^{cccvi} Eli Grigsby, second interview with Francis Marion Van Natter, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 December 1935, Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University.

^{cccvii} Dr. James LeGrande, paraphrasing remarks he heard from his mother, Sophie Hanks, in an undated interview with Arthur E. Morgan, Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cccviii} Mrs. Samuel Chowning, in Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 136. Cf. the statement of Lincoln’s step-nephew, John J. Hall, ibid., 75–76.

^{cccix} Clara Stillwell, “A Few Lincoln-in-Indiana Stories,” typescript, 3, Lincoln Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington. The author was the granddaughter of Nancy Bolin, whose older brothers Bill and George “knew Lincoln quite well. They were not close friends of his, but they were often closely associated with him.” Ibid., 1. William Bolin appears in the 1820 census for Spencer County, with no township listed. In 1860, William Bolin appears again in the Spencer County census, living in Troy. In 1818, he married Charity Sandage in Perry County.

^{cccix} Sarah Rutledge Saunders, interview with William E. Barton, Lompoc, California, correspondence, 14 January, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 January 1922.

^{cccxi} J. Edward Murr reported that in Indiana “he was never ‘smitten’ at any time. Lincoln never had a love affair until he reached Illinois.” Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 310. A Lincoln biographer, John T. Morse, remarked that his subject “was unfortunate in his emotions towards the other sex; he did not understand women; he seemed to lose his good & clear intelligence in connection with them.” Morse to Albert J. Beveridge, Boston, 30 October 1924, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress. For a discussion of Lincoln’s attitude toward women, see Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 123-46.

Lincoln “didn’t like girls much” and “did not go much with the girls” because he regarded them as “too frivolous.”^{cccxiii} Lincoln’s cousin Sophie Hanks told her son that Abe “didn[’]t like the girls company.”^{cccxiv} John Hanks said that “I never could get him in company with women; he was not a timid man in this particular, but he did not seek such company.”^{cccxv} Mrs. Samuel Chowning recollected that Lincoln “never made up to the girls.”^{cccxvi}

Some Hoosiers alleged that Lincoln, after turning seventeen, began to take a romantic interest in girls, but little evidence confirms those reports.^{cccxvii} Bill and George Bolin of Gentryville thought that “Lincoln never had a girl while he lived on [Little] Pigeon Creek.”^{cccxviii} Joseph C. Richardson reported that Lincoln “never seemed to care for the girls,” and David Turnham told an interviewer that Lincoln “did not seem to seek the company of the girls and when [with] them was rather backward.”^{cccxix} Dennis Hanks testified that Lincoln “Didn’t love the company of girls” and was the “bashfullest boy that

^{cccxii} Sara Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 108.

^{cccxiii} Statement of Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 131.

^{cccxiv} Dr. James LeGrande’s answers to a questionnaire, [ca. 1909], Arthur E. Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cccxv} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 455.

^{cccxvi} Mrs. Samuel Chowning, in Gridley, Story of Lincoln, 136. See also the statement of Lincoln’s stepnephew, John J. Hall, ibid., 75–76.

^{cccxvii} Louis A. Warren, Lincoln’s Youth: Indiana Years, 1816-1830 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1959), 155–58; Francis Marion Van Natter, Lincoln’s Boyhood: A Chronicle of His Indiana Years (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), 125-30; William E. Barton, The Women Lincoln Loved (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1927), 123-66. Barton asserted that Lincoln loved Caroline Meeker, but a resident of southwest Indiana protested that “Dr. Barton made up the story of Caroline Meeker being a sweetheart of Abe Lincoln.” Mrs. R. G. Higdon, interview with Francis Marion Van Natter, 20 October 1937, Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University.

^{cccxviii} Clara Stillwell, “A Few Lincoln-in-Indiana Stories,” typescript, p. 3, Lincoln Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

^{cccxix} Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 120; statements by Turnham, 15 September 1865 and 17 December 1866, ibid., 123, 518.

ever lived.”^{cccxx} John D. Johnston recollected that Lincoln “didn’t take much take much truck with the girls” because “he was too busy studying.”^{cccxxi}

QUASI-SLAVERY AS A RENTED LABORER

As well as bashful, Lincoln was also busy. He worked not only on his father’s farm but also for neighbors to whom his father rented him. Around 1825, Thomas Lincoln found himself in greater financial trouble than usual when a friend defaulted on a loan that Thomas had endorsed. To pay off that note, Thomas removed his son from school and hired him out to neighbors, including Thomas Turnham, Wesley Hall, William Wood, Silas Richardson, Joseph Gentry, John Dutton, John Jones, and Josiah Crawford.^{cccxxii} For the next few years, Lincoln was a virtual slave, toiling as a butcher, ferry operator, riverman, store clerk, farm hand, wood chopper, distiller, and sawyer, earning anywhere from 10¢ to 31¢ a day. These

^{cccxx} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 105; Hanks quoted in the Charleston, Illinois, correspondence, 24 July [1891], Chicago Republic, undated clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

^{cccxxi} Dennis Franklin Johnston, son of John D. Johnston, paraphrasing what his father told him, Los Angeles Times, 12 February 1929, part 2.

^{cccxxii} David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 122; Ezra M. Prince, recalling a conversation with Lincoln in October 1856, “A Day and a Night with Abraham Lincoln,” in Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 196; letter by L. R. W. [perhaps Robert L. Wilson], Peoria, 25 June 1860, Cleveland Leader, n.d., copied in the New York Tribune, 9 July 1860; Leonard Swett to Josiah H. Drummond, 27 May 1860, Portland, Maine, Evening Express, n.d., copied in the New York Sun, 26 July 1891; Swett in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 458-59; Swett, lecture on Lincoln, typescript, pp. 4-5, Swett Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; statement of Nathaniel Grigsby, 12 September 1865, in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 35; Silas Richardson’s interview with William Fortune, undated notes, Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; Joseph Gentry, Jr., interview with Anna C. O’Flynn, ca. 1895, O’Flynn Papers, Vincennes University; John F. Cady, “Why Abraham Lincoln Never Joined the Baptist Church,” Missions, n.d., reprinted in the Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, undated clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana; William H. Townsend, Lincoln and Liquor (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1934), 22.

meager wages he handed over to Thomas, in compliance with the law stipulating that children were the property of their father and that any money they earned belonged to him.^{cccxxiii} Locked in this bondage, Abraham felt as if he were a chattel on a southern plantation. “I used to be a slave,” he declared in 1856.^{cccxxiv} Years earlier, describing his joy at escaping from an engagement to be married, he said: “Through life I have been in no bondage, real or imaginary from the thralldom of which I so much desired to be free.”^{cccxxv} Thanks to his father, he knew what it was like to be in bondage. This painful experience led him to identify with the slaves and to denounce the South’s peculiar institution even when it was politically risky to do so.^{cccxxvi}

Among the people for whom young Lincoln slaved was a neighbor, Thomas Carter, who paid him 10¢ a day to cut corn.^{cccxxvii} Josiah Crawford gave him 25¢ daily to split rails, build fences, dig wells, cut pork, clear land, daub his cabin, and perform other farm chores.^{cccxxviii} When Lincoln and Joseph Richardson pulled fodder, they each received 25¢

^{cccxxiii} Lamon, Lincoln, 70. In 1860, Leonard Swett, to whom Lincoln described his youth, reported that “Lincoln was a man of simple habits, and unexceptionally pure life. . . . As he grew up, his father designed to give him the limited education common to western men; but becoming involved by being surety for a friend, lost his property and was compelled to take him from school when he had been there only six weeks. He never went to school again, but worked during his minority to acquire for his father a new home. When he was about twenty one, they had gathered money enough to enter 80 acres of land, at \$1.25 per acre; and they then moved to Coles county in this State, where Lincoln assisted his father in building his rude cabin and reducing his land to cultivation.” Leonard Swett to Josiah H. Drummond, 27 May 1860, Portland, Maine, Evening Express, n.d., copied in the New York Sun, 26 July 1891.

^{cccxxiv} Reminiscences of John E. Roll, Chicago Times-Herald, 25 August 1895.

^{cccxxv} Lincoln to Mrs. O. H. Browning, Springfield, 1 April 1838, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:118.

^{cccxxvi} See Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 20-56.

^{cccxxvii} Van Natter, Lincoln’s Boyhood, 51, citing Mrs. Mary J. Scott, Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 26 August 1920.

^{cccxxviii} Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 125-26; Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 7 September 1866, ibid., 335; J. W. Wartmann to Jesse W. Weik, 20 July [1888], ibid., 660; Will F. Adams, “The Crawford Family,” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 1 August 1935.

for a full day’s work.^{cccxxxix} In 1827, he spent three months clearing land for John Jones, who compensated the young laborer with corn instead of money.^{cccxxx} Lincoln received 20¢ a day from James Taylor, who hired him to operate a ferry on Anderson Creek.^{cccxxxi} (He had met Taylor while hauling goods for a tanner.)^{cccxxxii} When not shuttling passengers across that hundred-foot-wide expanse of water, Lincoln helped with chores on Taylor’s farm, where he lived for several months. He earned even more money (31¢ a day) butchering hogs. That was “rough work,” involving “Barrells of hot water – blankets – clubs.”^{cccxxxiii} A hog had to be clubbed, doused in scalding water, and its bristles removed. Then one man held the warm, moist, greasy carcass, as heavy as 200 pounds, nearly perpendicular with its head down; another man ran a gambrel bar through a slit in the animal’s hock, over a string pole, and then through the other hock. Holding the hog was a challenge.^{cccxxxiv} Lincoln later termed this regimen at Taylor’s “the roughest work a young man could be made to do.”^{cccxxxv}

^{cccxxxix} Interview with Joseph C. Richardson, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

^{cccxxx} Richard Jones, son of John Jones, in the Indianapolis Journal, 12 October [no year indicated], clipping in the Lincoln History Files, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Indiana. Jones told an interviewer, “Whether there was ever a money transaction between father and young Lincoln I cannot say. On numerous occasions Thomas Lincoln came to our house and obtained corn for meal. He would speak with father, and then he would go with a sack to the granary, where he would take a bushel or so of corn and ride on to the mill with it. This, as I understood then, was Lincoln’s only pay for his work.” Ibid. Land records of 1817 show that John Jones owned 171 acres near Thomas Lincoln’s farm.

^{cccxxxi} Correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

^{cccxxxii} Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 158. The tanner was the father of his chum Wesley Hall.

^{cccxxxiii} Green B. Taylor, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 129-30; S. Grant Johnson, “Abraham Lincoln,” Dale, Indiana, Weekly Reporter, 18 February 1944. Taylor owned big meat packing establishments. Thomas De La Hunt, Perry County: A History (Indianapolis: W. K. Stewart, 1916), 31-32. Lincoln also slaughtered pigs for the merchant William Jones, who paid him 30¢ a day. Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 46-48.

^{cccxxxiv} Hiram W. Beckwith, “Lincoln: Personal Recollections of Him, His Contemporaries and Law Practice in Eastern Illinois,” Chicago Tribune, 29 December 1895.

^{cccxxxv} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 51.

Lincoln shared sleeping quarters with Green B. Taylor, who remembered that the tall hired hand “usually read till near midnight,” then “rose Early – would make a fire for my mother – put on the water & fix around generally.”^{cccxxxvi} As a ferryman clad in a coonskin cap, deerskin shirt, and homemade trousers, Lincoln impressed an observer as “one of the gawkiest and most awkward figures I ever saw.”^{cccxxxvii}

While working for Taylor, Lincoln built a small boat which one day caught the attention of two anxious gentlemen hurrying to the shore. When they asked Lincoln to row them and their trunks out to a steamer on the Ohio River, he complied gladly. As they boarded the steamboat, they dumbfounded the boy by pitching two silver half-dollars into his vessel. Recounting this episode, Lincoln said: “it was a most important incident in my life. I could scarcely credit that I, the poor boy, had earned a dollar in less than a day; that by honest work I had earned a dollar. The world seemed wider and fairer before me; I was a more hopeful and thoughtful boy from that time.”^{cccxxxviii}

Rowing passengers out onto the Ohio did not always bring such happy results. John T. Dill, who owned a ferry on the Kentucky shore, sued Lincoln for allegedly operating a ferry without a license. After hearing the accusation and Lincoln’s response, the presiding justice of the peace, Samuel Pate, ruled for the defense, pointing out that the statute in question covered ferries plying between the southern and northern banks of the Ohio and not

^{cccxxxvi} Green B. Taylor, interview with Herndon, 19 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 129; Taylor to Anna C. O’Flynn, Newark, South Dakota, 18 September 1895, O’Flynn Papers, Vincennes University.

^{cccxxxvii} John W. Lamar, quoted in the Indianapolis News, 12 April 1902, in Hobson, Footprints of Lincoln, 22.

^{cccxxxviii} William D. Kelley, in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 279-80. In 1862, Lincoln gave a similar account of this story to Egbert L. Viele. Viele, “A Trip with Lincoln, Chase and Stanton,” Scribner’s Monthly 16 (1878): 817.

ferryman who merely rowed passengers part-way across the river.^{cccxxxix} This episode may have stirred Lincoln’s interest in the law; it might have also predisposed him to read constable Thomas Turnham’s copy of The Statutes of Indiana with unusual avidity.^{cccxi}

As a ferryman, Lincoln had grown so fond of working on the water that he readily accepted the offer made by a local merchant, James Gentry, to accompany his son Allen on a cargo boat trip to Louisiana.^{cccxli} The two young men spent weeks constructing a flatboat for their corn, pork, potatoes, hay, and kraut – all destined for Deep South sugar plantations.^{cccxlii} In late December 1828, they shoved off from Rockport, beginning a 1200-mile, seven-week excursion down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, with Lincoln manning the bow oars and Gentry the tiller. The constantly changing scenery and the boats passing by kept the voyage from being monotonous. From the riverbanks, villagers would call out, “Where are you from?” “Where are you bound?” “What are you loaded with?” “Creature comforts were few, for there were no beds. Gentry and Lincoln slept on the hard deck, which was difficult when storms raged; then they struggled hard to keep their boat from capsizing. On occasion they were pelted by rain for days on end.^{cccxlili}

As they floated along, they stopped frequently to peddle their cargo. According to Henry C. Whitney, who heard about this trip from Lincoln, “they commenced to barter away

^{cccxxxix} Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 152; William H. Townsend, Lincoln the Litigant (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 34-39; “Dill-Pate-Lincoln Episode,” copy of a manuscript by Mrs. A. H. Bergenroth, and notes of an interview with Mrs. R. G. Higdon of Frankfort, Kentucky, 20 October 1937, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University.

^{cccxi} Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 42.

^{cccxli} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 114.

^{cccxlii} For a description of how flatboats were constructed and navigated, see Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 49-52.

^{cccxlili} Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 205; Louis A. Warren, “Thayer’s Pioneer Boy,” Lincoln Lore, no. 689 (22 June 1942).

their load after they had fairly embarked on the Mississippi, receiving cotton, tobacco, and sugar in exchange for potatoes, bacon, apples, and jeans.”^{cccxliv} Reportedly they stopped at Memphis and chopped wood for a plantation owner.^{cccxlv} One night, while tied up at a plantation a few miles below Baton Rouge, they were attacked by seven slaves. The blacks, “observing that the boat was in charge of but two persons . . . formed a plan to rob it during the night. Their intention evidently was to murder the young men, rob the boat of whatever money there might be on it, carry off such articles as they could secrete in their cabins, and then, by sinking the boat, destroy all trace of their guilt.” Gentry and Lincoln “were considerably hurt” during the “severe struggle,” but managed to fend off their assailants.^{cccxlvii} Gentry’s widow said that “Abe fought the Negroes – got them off the boat – pretended to have guns – had none – the Negroes had hickory Clubs – my husband said ‘Lincoln get the guns and Shoot[‘] – the Negroes took alarm and left.”^{cccxlviii}

After selling all their wares along the banks of the Mississippi, Lincoln and Gentry proceeded to New Orleans, where they strolled about, viewing the sights, one of which made an indelible impression on Lincoln: a slave auction at which scantily-clad young females were exhibited on the block and pinched and ogled by prospective buyers. Revolted, Lincoln said: “Allen, that’s a disgrace.”^{cccxlvi} (In the 1840s, Lincoln would again observe slavery

^{cccxliv} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 52.

^{cccxlv} The plantation owner, a Col. Ferguson, told this story. Memphis Bulletin, 12 March 1861, copied in the Missouri Democrat (S. Louis), 16 March 1861.

^{cccxlvii} Scripps, Life of Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 51-52. In his third-person autobiography written for Scripps, Lincoln said: “one night they were attacked by seven negroes with intent to kill and rob them. They were hurt some in the melee, but succeeded in driving the negroes from the boat, and they ‘cut cable’ ‘weighed anchor’ and left.” Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:62.

^{cccxlviii} Anna C. Gentry (née Roby), interview with Herndon, 17 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 131.

^{cccxlviii} E. Grant Gentry, recalling what his grandmother, Anna Caroline Roby Gentry, wife of Allen Gentry, had told him, in Francis Marion Van Natter’s notes of two interviews (dated 21 January and 10 February 1936), and an affidavit dated Rockport, 5 September 1936, and notes of an interview with his sisters Anna, Hannah,

close-up during three long sojourns in Kentucky, and again would express his revulsion.^{cccxlx} To an intimate friend in that state, Lincoln described how he saw a dozen manacled slaves, a sight which, he said, “was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border.”^{cccl}

Lincoln and Gentry probably returned to Illinois via steamboat, perhaps one like Frances Trollope described in her reminiscences of the riverboatmen whom she observed on a trip up the Mississippi: “We had about two hundred of these men on board; but the part of the vessel occupied by them is so distinct from the cabins, that we never saw them, except when we stopped to take on wood; and then they ran, or rather sprung and vaulted over each other’s heads to the shore, whence they all assisted in carrying wood to supply the steam engine; the performance of this duty being a stipulated part of the payment of their passage.”^{cccli} When he reached home with Gentry, tales of their adventures won Lincoln “the credit of being a good boatman, manager, and salesman, as well as a courageous defender of number one.”^{ccclii}

If the trip to New Orleans convinced Lincoln that chattel slavery was disgraceful, it also intensified his desire to escape his own quasi-slavery in Indiana.^{cccliii} Soon after his return from the Crescent City, Lincoln called on a neighbor, William Wood. Shy and timid,

and Rose, Rockport, 21 January 1936, Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University. Allen Gentry, who died in 1862, left no account of this voyage.

^{cccxlx} Townsend, Lincoln and the Bluegrass, 70-80.

^{cccl} Lincoln to Joshua F. Speed, Springfield, 24 August 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:320.

^{cccli} Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (1832; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1927), 13.

^{ccclii} Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 211.

^{cccliii} According to Herndon and Weik’s biography, “After he had passed his nineteenth year and was nearing his majority he began to chafe and grow restless under the restraints of home rule.” Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 52.

the young man found it difficult to voice his concerns. Wood prompted him: “Abe what is your Case?”

He replied, “Uncle I want you to go to the River – (the Ohio) and give me Some recommendation to some boat.”

Citing the law which made children their father’s property till they attained their majority, Wood said: “Abe – your age is against you – you are not 21 yet.”

“I Know that, but I want a start,” protested Lincoln.

Wood refused, counseling him to stay with his father till 1830. Reluctantly Lincoln followed this advice.^{cccliv}

Lincoln may have been eager to escape his home for some time. According to an interviewer who spoke with several Lincoln informants in Kentucky and Indiana, “Mr L does not appear to have cared for home after the death of his mother.”^{ccclv} At the age of thirteen, he worked away from home for the first time, cutting wood with Dennis Hanks and Squire Hall on the banks of the Ohio River.^{ccclvi} Thereafter he frequently absented himself from the paternal cabin.^{ccclvii} In 1825 he stayed several months with the Taylors on Anderson Creek.^{ccclviii} After his sister Sarah wed Aaron Grigsby in the summer of 1826, Lincoln spent

^{cccliv} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124.

^{ccclv} John B. Rowbotham to Herndon, Cincinnati, 24 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 56.

^{ccclvi} A. H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 100.

^{ccclvii} Annie Heibach (née Grant), who alleged that she had been an Indiana neighbor of the Lincolns, told an interviewer: “I know his folks were awfully poor, and Lincoln would be absent from his home for weeks at a time.” San Francisco Call, 16 February 1896. Her father was James L. Grant.

^{ccclviii} Green B. Taylor said Lincoln lived with his family between six and nine months in 1825. Taylor, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 129.

much time at their home.^{ccclix} In the spring of 1827, he lived with John Jones’s family at Dale, returning home only on Saturday nights.^{ccclx} That same year Lincoln and John D. Johnston “went together to Louisville Ky to try & get work & earn some money.” They were successful, finding employment on the Louisville and Portland Canal.^{ccclxi} James Gentry, Thomas Lincoln and Abe used “to make frequent trips to Louisville with produce and cattle to exchange for merchandise.”^{ccclxii} In the fall of 1828, while helping Allen Gentry construct a flatboat, Lincoln stayed weeks with the family of Daniel Grass in Rockport.^{ccclxiii} Lincoln lived with William Jones when he worked on his farm and at his Gentryville store.^{ccclxiv}

^{ccclix} Redmond Grigsby (b. 1818) told a reporter: “I became acquainted with Lincoln at his sister Sarah’s. Being the youngest of the boys I was at my brother Aaron’s a good deal. Lincoln spent most of his time at his sister’s and he used to make playthings for me.” Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times Herald, 22 December 1895. Grigsby related the same story to the Rev. Mr. J. T. Hobson. Hobson to Ida M. Tarbell, Washington, Indiana, 22 April 1899, Tarbell Papers, Smith College. Eli L. Grigsby reported that his grandfather, Redmond D. Grigsby, told him how he “would follow Abraham and the older Grigsby boys to a swimming hole in Buckhorn creek; how he would stay nights with his brother, Aaron and wife, Sarah, and how they would make a pallet down for him and Abraham to sleep on, as he (Abraham) stayed most of his time with his sister after her marriage until her death.” Gentryville correspondence, 11 February, Evansville Courier and Journal, 12 February 1933. Elizabeth Ray Grigsby’s daughter, Mary Engoff, reported that Lincoln often visited her parents. Charles T. Baker, “The Lincoln Family in Spencer County,” Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 16 February 1928.

^{ccclx} Richard Jones, son of John Jones, Indianapolis Journal, 12 October [no year indicated], Lincoln History Files, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Lincoln City, Indiana.

^{ccclxi} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 100-1. The canal was constructed between 1825 and 1830. Nathaniel Grigsby recalled that Lincoln would “take jobs of work sometimes – would go to the river – the Ohio – 13 or 16 miles distant and there work. It is 60 miles to the Wabash – he did [not] work on the Wabash – but on the Ohio.” Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114.

^{ccclxii} John Orville Chewning, Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 25 September, Louisville Courier-Journal, 26 September 1903. John Chewning, Sr., was the deputy assistant clerk of Spencer County.

^{ccclxiii} John Grass, grandson of Daniel Grass, to his cousin Laura, Denver, Colorado, 23 August 1926, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University. Bess Ehrmann asserted that he spent two weeks with the Grasses. Ehrmann, “Lincoln’s Indiana Neighbors,” typescript, p. 11, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

^{ccclxiv} Arietta Bullock, “Jonesboro in 1830,” p. 6, typescript essay, 1938, Bullock Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Lincoln heartily disliked farm chores. His employers testified that he “was not industrious as a worker on the farm or at any other Kind of Manu[al] Labor.”^{ccclxv} John Romine, for whom Lincoln pulled fodder in 1829, declared that “Abe was awful lazy.” He “would laugh & talk and crack jokes & tell stories all the time,” but he “didn’t love work.” Still, he “did dearly love his pay” for he cherished his independence.^{ccclxvi} David Turnham said “he didn’t love physical work – wouldn’t do it if was agreeable to all.”^{ccclxvii} Elizabeth Crawford, who was fond of Lincoln, conceded that “he was no hand to pitch in at work like killing Snakes.”^{ccclxviii} Lincoln’s family agreed that he was not an industrious farm hand. His stepmother acknowledged that for all his virtues, he “didn’t like physical labor.”^{ccclxix} Dennis Hanks called him “a very lazy man.”^{ccclxx} Lincoln admitted that “his father taught him to work but never learned him to love it.”^{ccclxxi}

On the frontier, “laziness” connoted physical, not mental, indolence. A neighbor of the Lincolns in Illinois recalled that Abe “always did take” to “book-readin’” and “on that account we uns uset to think he would n’t amount to much. You see, it war n’t book-readin’

^{ccclxv} Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 102.

^{ccclxvi} John Romine, interview with Herndon, 14 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 118; interview with Joseph C. Richardson, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

^{ccclxvii} David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 121.

^{ccclxviii} Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 7 September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 335.

^{ccclxix} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 106.

^{ccclxx} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 104.

^{ccclxxi} John Romine, statement to Herndon, Lincoln Farm, Indiana, 14 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 118.

then, it war work, that counted.”^{ccclxxii} Another Illinois acquaintance, John Purkatile, declared that “Lincoln was a mighty lazy man. Why, I’ve seen him under a tree with a book in his hand and too mortal lazy to move when the sun came round.”^{ccclxxiii} As his stepsister Matilda observed, Lincoln was indeed intellectually industrious, if reluctant to perform farm chores: “Abe was not Energetic Except in one thing – he was active & persistant in learning – read Everything he Could – Ciphered on boards – on the walls.”^{ccclxxiv} Sarah Bush Lincoln told an interviewer that her stepson “was diligent for Knowledge – wished to Know & if pains & Labor would get it he was sure to get it.”^{ccclxxv}

He longed to escape the toilsome world of subsistence farming. Prophetically he told Elizabeth Crawford, “I don’t always intend to delve, grub, shuck corn, split rails, and the like.”^{ccclxxvi} She remembered that “Abe was ambitious, sought to outstrip and override others.”^{ccclxxvii} His friend Joseph Gentry had a similar recollection: “Abe wa[s]n’t fond of work and often told me he never intended to make his living that way – he often said he would get some profession, in fact his whole mind seemed bent on learning and education.”^{ccclxxviii} Sophie Hanks recalled that her cousin Abe “always had a natural idea that

^{ccclxxii} An unidentified resident of Charleston, quoted in Alonzo Hilton Davis, “Lincoln’s Goose Nest Home,” Century Magazine, September 1892, 798-99.

^{ccclxxiii} Volney Hickox, “Lincoln at Home,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 October 1874.

^{ccclxxiv} Matilda Johnston Moore, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 109. See also Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 102.

^{ccclxxv} Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 106-7.

^{ccclxxvi} Van Natter, Lincoln’s Boyhood, 36.

^{ccclxxvii} Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 127.

^{ccclxxviii} Notes of Anna C. O’Flynn’s interview with Joseph Gentry, ca. 1895, Anna C. O’Flynn Papers, Vincennes University. See also Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 42.

he was going to be something” and that “he always talked like he would be something.”^{ccclxxix}

In 1829, Lincoln wrote the following couplet in a friend’s copybook:

Good boys who to their books apply

Will make great men by & by.^{ccclxxx}

Lincoln not only avoided hard physical labor but also induced others to do the same. At house raisings, corn shuckings, and similar events, “he would say to himself and sometimes to others – I don’t want these fellows to work any more and instantly he would Commence his pranks – tricks – jokes – stories – and sure Enough all would stop – gather around Abe & listen, sometimes Crying – and sometimes bursting their sides with laughter.” Occasionally he “would mount a stump – chair or box and make speeches – Speech with stories – anecdotes & such like thing: he never failed here.”^{ccclxxxi} One day when Dennis Hanks and Lincoln had a job pulling fodder, they procrastinated all morning by playing marbles. At noon, Hanks “reminded Lincoln that they had not pulled any fodder. Lincoln replied that he had rather play marbles any time than pull fodder.”^{ccclxxxii}

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Upon his return from New Orleans, after months of freedom as a flatboatman, Lincoln grudgingly resumed the uncompensated toil imposed on him by his father. The contrast seemed to curdle Lincoln’s good nature; in 1829 the dark side of his personality emerged as

^{ccclxxix} James LeGrande, recalling the words of his mother, undated memo, Arthur E. Morgan Papers, Library of Congress.

^{ccclxxx} Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 119.

^{ccclxxxi} Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 42.

^{ccclxxxii} Interview with Joseph C. Richardson, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

he became testy, belligerent, spiteful, and vindictive.^{ccclxxxiii} This transformation was especially obvious when he attacked the neighboring Grigsby clan. Although one of his best friends was Nathaniel Grigsby, Lincoln disliked Nathaniel's eldest brother, Aaron, who in 1826 had married his sister Sarah. Lincoln "thought that the Grigsbys mistreated her."^{ccclxxxiv} Lincoln may have resented the haughtiness of some members of the Grigsby family, who apparently looked down on his sister because she had been "hired help."^{ccclxxxv} (The Grigsbys were the most prosperous family in Gentryville in its early days. When asked to name the best farmer in the county, Lincoln replied: "Old man Reuben Grigsby. He plants a few more rows of corn and a little longer than anyone else.")^{ccclxxxvi} Joseph C. Richardson, remarking on Lincoln's anger at Grigsby, said: "You may think you have forgiven the fellow who married your sister and abused her, but you never do. You go gunning for him in your sleep."^{ccclxxxvii}

^{ccclxxxiii} William E. Wilson has suggested that in 1829 "the once kind and good-natured young man passed through a strange period of torment, found himself at odds with many of his old friends in the backwoods of southern Indiana, and engaged in malicious pranks at their expense. Several circumstances may account for the change in his nature, which lasted almost a year." Among those circumstances were overcrowding at the family cabin as Dennis Hanks and his wife (Lincoln's stepsister Elizabeth) and Squire Hall and his wife (Lincoln's stepsister Matilda) began having children; the demise of Lincoln's purported romance with Anna Roby; and the death of his sister. More important still, he had tasted freedom on the trip to New Orleans the previous year and evidently wanted to escape parental tyranny, but William Wood would not give him a letter of recommendation to rivermen. Wilson, "There I Grew Up," 101.

^{ccclxxxiv} Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Chicago, 8 January 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. Samuel E. Kercheval thought that Aaron Grigsby's "cruel treatment of his wife caused trouble between the Lincoln & Grigsby families." Kercheval to Jesse W. Weik, Rockport, Indiana, 2 December 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 645.

^{ccclxxxv} Mrs. Eli Grigsby, wife of Sarah Lincoln Grigsby's great nephew, was asked if the relatively prosperous Grigsbys looked down on Sarah as the child of a poor family. "'Well,' she answered hesitantly, 'Sally was hired help and you know how you'd feel about that.'" Indianapolis Star, 11 February 1940.

^{ccclxxxvi} Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times-Herald, 22 December 1895. On the prosperity of the Grigsbys, see Charles T. Baker, "The Grigsby Family – Friends of the Lincolns," typescript enclosed in Baker to the contest editor of The Reader's Digest, n.p., 20 March 1939, carbon copy, C. T. Baker Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara. J. Edward Murr's informants told him that Nancy Grigsby, Reuben's wife, "did not especially take to Abe Linkern." Murr, "Wilderness Years of Lincoln," 228.

^{ccclxxxvii} "Young Abe in Indiana," correspondence dated "down the Ohio and round about," 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

A year and a half after her wedding, Sarah died in childbirth. Upon hearing the news, Lincoln “sat down on a log and hid his face in his hands while the tears rolled down through his long bony fingers. Those present turned away in pity and left him to his grief.”^{ccclxxxviii} According to Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln despairingly asked himself over and over, “What have I to live for?” Whitney, who thought that “Abraham’s inner life was a desert of sorrow,” speculated plausibly that Sarah’s death reawakened painful memories of his mother’s demise ten years earlier.^{ccclxxxix} Lincoln and his father believed that Sarah’s death “was due to neglect,” for which they blamed the Grigsby clan.^{cccxc} The Grigsbys contended that “Sarah Lincoln was well cared for; but the only doctor within reach had a very serious fault: he would drink to the extent of becoming drunk. He was an excellent physician in midwifery . . . , but if he could get the whiskey the patient was neglected and often died.”^{cccxi}

Two years later, the Grigsbys angered Lincoln further by inviting everyone in the neighborhood except his family to an “infair,” a kind of housewarming for a bride and groom.^{cccxcii} Abraham was “Miffed, mortified, insulted” and “declared that he would have

^{ccclxxxviii} Redmond Grigsby in the Lincoln City, Indiana, correspondence, 1 October 1902, Evansville Journal-News, 1 October 1902; Rockport, Indiana, correspondence, 21 December, Chicago Times Herald, 22 December 1895. Grigsby gave a slightly different account in an unidentified clipping, [Chicago Tribune, ca. 1916], Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. See a similar account by John W. Lamar in Indianapolis News, 12 April 1902, in Hobson, Footprints of Lincoln, 24.

^{ccclxxxix} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 36, 56. Just as the mature Lincoln had little to say about his mother, so too he “never said much about his sister in after years.” Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Lincoln, 24.

^{cccxc} Hobson, Footprints of Lincoln, 24; Van Natter, Lincoln’s Boyhood, 54. According to Charles T. Baker, who relied on traditions current in southwest Indiana in the 1920s and 1930s, the death of Sarah “appears to have cast a gloom over the life of Tom Lincoln and he refused to work for [Reuben] Grigsby further, thinking there had been some neglect in medical attention.” Baker, “The Grigsby Family – Friends of the Lincolns,” unpaginated typescript, enclosed in Baker to the contest editor, Writer’s Digest, 20 March 1939, copy, C. T. Baker Papers, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

^{cccxi} Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 13 February 1930. The nearest physician lived twenty miles away. Lincoln Lore, no. 1069 (2 October 1949).

^{cccxcii} Reminiscences of Elizabeth Ray Grigsby, in J. T. Hobson, “New Sketches from the Early Life of Lincoln,” The Religious Telescope, 6 February 1907, 16; T. Hardy Masterson, “Lincoln’s Life in Indiana,” Rockport, Indiana, Journal, 12 February 1897.

revenge.”^{cccxciii} To achieve it, he ridiculed Reuben and Charles Grigsby, whose double wedding (to Elizabeth Ray and Matilda Hawkins, respectively) occasioned the infair. Lincoln had developed a knack for mimicry; his favorite targets were Baptist clergy, whose tone and style he captured “with wonderful accuracy.”^{cccxciv} To humiliate the Grigsbys, Lincoln penned a satire in Biblical language titled “The Chronicles of Reuben,” which described grooms inadvertently bedding down the wrong brides. This burlesque, as Nathaniel Grigsby recalled, was so “sharp” and “cutting” that “it hurt us.”^{cccxcv} It became famous in the Buck

^{cccxciii} Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 119-20. See also Samuel E. Kercheval to Jesse W. Weik, Rockport, Indiana, 2 December 1887, ibid., 645.

^{cccxciv} David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 123. See also interviews with Matilda Johnston Moore, Sarah Bush Lincoln, and Dennis Hanks, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, and Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], ibid., 110, 108, 104, 102.

^{cccxcv} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 114. See also J. W. Wartmann to Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 21 July 1865, ibid., 79. The text of that document, as recalled by Elizabeth Crawford, reads thus: “first Chronicles of ruben now thair was a man in those days whose name was ruben and the Same was very grate in substance in horses and Cattle and Swine and avery grate house hold and it Came to pass that when the Sons of ruben grew up that thay ware desirus of taking to them Selves wives and being too well known as to onor in ther own Country So thay took to them Selves a Journy in to a far Country and procured to them Selves wives and it Came to pass that when thay ware about to make the return home that thay Sent a messenger before them to bare the tidines to there parents So thay inquired of the mesengers what time there Sones and there wives wood Come So thay made a grate feast and Cald all ther kinsmen and neighbors in and maid grate preperations So when the time drew near thay sent out two men to meet the grooms and ther brids with a treet to welcom them and to acompany them So when thay Came near to the house of ruben there father the mesengers Came on before them and gave a Shout and the whole multitude ran out with Sho[uts of] Joy and musick playing on all kinds of instruments of musick Some playing on harps and Some on vials and Some blowing on rams hornes Some Casten dust and ashes tourd heaven and amongst the rest Josiah bloing his bugle making Sound So grate that it maid the neighborin hills and valys eco with the resonding aclamation So when thay had played and harped Sounded tell the grooms and brides approched the gate the father ruben met them and welcomed them in to his house and the weding dinner being now ready thay ware all invited to Set down to dinner placing the bridegroomes and ther wives at each end of the table waters ware then apointed to Carve and wate on the guests So when thay had all eaten and ware ful and mary thay went out and Sang and played tell evening and when thay had made an end of feasting and rejoising the multitude dispersed each to his one home the family then took Seat with ther waters to Converse awhile which time preperations ware being maid in an upper Chamber for the brids to be first Convayed by the waters to ther beds this being done the waters took the two brids up stares to ther beds placing one in a bed at the rite hand of the Stares and the other on the left the waters Come down and nancy the mother inquired of the waters which of the brids was paced on the rite hand and thay told her So She gave directions to the waters of the bridegrooms and thair thay took the bridegrooms and placed them in the rong beds and Came down Stares but the mother being fearful that thair mite be a mistake inquired again of the waters and learning the fact took the light and Sprang up tares and runing to one of the beds exclaimed ruben you are in bed with Charleses wife the young men both being alarmed Sprang out of bed and ran with such violance against each other that thay Came very near nocking each other down which gave

Horn Valley, where the Chronicles of Reuben were remembered “better than the Bible – better than Watts hymns.” Joseph C. Richardson called the Chronicles “the first production that I know of that made us feel that Abe was truly & really some[one]. This called the attention of the People to Abe intellectually.”^{cccxcvi} In Indiana, Lincoln evidently wrote other satirical chronicles, though none seems to have survived.^{cccxcvii}

Not content with the wounds thus inflicted on Reuben and Charles Grigsby, Lincoln wrote a bawdy poem questioning the sexual preference of their brother William:

I will tell you a Joke about [Josiah?] & Mary

Tis neither a joke nor a story

For Reuben & Charles have married 2 Girls

But Billy has married a boy

He tried the girls on Every Side

evidence to those below that the mistake was Certain that all Came down and had a Conversation about who had made the mistake but it Could not be decided So ended the Chapter.” Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 4 January 1866, *ibid.*, 151-52. Elizabeth Ray Grigsby, one of the two brides involved, recalled the text similarly. Hardy Masterson, “Lincoln’s Life in Indiana,” Rockport, Indiana, *Journal*, 12 February 1897. In the Bible, the fifth chapter of First Chronicles begins “Now the sons of Reuben that first born of Israel.” The editors of The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln believed there is insufficient proof of Lincoln’s authorship for inclusion in their work. But abundant reminiscences by Lincoln’s contemporaries as well as internal evidence suggest that Lincoln almost certainly wrote the Chronicles. Howard Feinstein, “The Chronicles of Reuben: A Psychological Test of Authenticity,” *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 637-54. J. Edward Murr reported that Redmond Grigsby had the original copy of the Chronicles of Reuben and burned it. Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 230.

^{cccxcvi} Joseph C. Richardson, interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 120. David Turnham said “it marked the boy – as a man.” David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 122.

^{cccxcvii} Nathaniel Grigsby told Herndon that Lincoln “rit other Cronicles [than the Chronicles of Reuben] consarning other people, i have ben conversing with some of Mr Lincoln old friends they say he rit many Cronicles but I cannot learn the particular a bout them.” Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 209. William Wood remembered that “Abe wrote Poetry a good deal, but I can’t recollect what about Except one piece which was Entitled the ‘Neighborhood broil’ Abe always brought his pieces – prose or Poetry to me straight.” William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, *ibid.*, 124. Elizabeth Crawford recalled that Lincoln “wrote 3 or 4 Satires – one was Called the Book of Chronicles” and that “whenever anything happened in the neighborhood he would write a piece about

He had well tried
 None could he get to agree
 All was in vain
 He went home again
 And since that he's married to Natty

 so biley and naty agreed very well
 and mamas well pleased at the matc[h]
 the egg it is laid but Natys afraid
 the Shell is So Soft that it never will hatc[h]
 but betsy She Said you Cursed ball head
 my Suiter you never Can be
 besids your low Croch proclaimes you a botch
 and that never Can anser for me^{cccxcviii}

When William Grigsby sought to avenge his family's honor pugilistically, the larger and stronger Lincoln protested that it would hardly be a fair fight. A compromise was

it." Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, ibid., 127; interview with William Fortune, 1881, notes, William Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

^{cccxcviii} Elizabeth Crawford, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, and letter to Herndon, 4 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 127, 152. See also John Romine, interview with Herndon, Lincoln Farm, Indiana, 14 September 1865, ibid., 118. In 1890, a Rockford resident familiar with the Chronicles of Reuben remembered a variation on this poem:

"Charlie and Reuben are married,
 Mother well-pleased with the match;
 The egg it was laid, and Reub was afraid
 That the egg was so soft 'twouldn't hatch."

"Young Abe in Indiana," correspondence dated "down the Ohio and round about," 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25.

reached: Grigsby would battle Lincoln’s stepbrother, John D. Johnston. John Gentry recalled that the “ring was pitched in Warrick County, a short distance from the old Lincoln homestead. That was for the purpose of evading any investigation by the grand jury. The fight was well advertised. . . . Every township in the county was represented, I reckon. There was a big crowd present. Abe Lincoln was there, and he was mad because he couldn’t get anybody to fight him.”^{cccxcix} Johnston and Grigsby pummeled each other till the former was seriously hurt. At that point, “Abe burst through, caught Grigsby – threw him off some feet – stood up and swore he was the big buck at the lick.” A general melee then broke out.^{cd}

This uncharacteristically boastful intervention in a fight that he himself caused suggests that Lincoln at age twenty was not entirely a paragon of virtue, despite his reputation as a sociable, cheerful, good natured, and gentle fellow.^{cdi} The Bolins of Perry County thought that “the young Lincoln of Pigeon Creek, like all his Indiana cronies, was pretty much of a rowdy, and, certainly, was not of a saintly nature.”^{cdii} The “reprehensible trait of character” that he demonstrated in his satirical skewering of the Grigsbys would mar him for years to come; not until midlife did he abandon his habit of wounding people with

^{cccxcix} James Gentry, interview, correspondence dated “down the Ohio and round about,” 10 September, Chicago Tribune, 21 September 1890, p. 25

^{cd} Green B. Taylor, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informant, 130; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114. Nathaniel Grigsby recalled that “the fite that took place between Wm Grigsby and John D Johnston took place on 16th of July, 1829 neare Gentryville Ind.” Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, 19 September 1866, ibid., 345. J. Edward Murr, who interviewed three eyewitnesses of this fight, denied Green B. Taylor’s assertion that Lincoln boasted about being the big buck at the lick. Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 227.

^{cdi} Dennis F. Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 39; David Turnham to Herndon, Dale, Indiana, 17 December 1866, ibid., 518; Elizabeth Crawford to Herndon, 4 January 1866, ibid., 151; Mrs. Allen Gentry (née Anna Caroline Roby), interview with Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 17 September 1865, ibid., 131-32; David Turnham interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 121; Joseph C. Richardson interview with Herndon, [14? September 1865], ibid., 120; Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, ibid., 114; Sarah Bush Lincoln, interview with Herndon, near Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, ibid., 107-8.

^{cdii} Clara Stillwell, “A Few Lincoln-in-Indiana Stories,” typescript, pp. 4-5, Lincoln Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

his exceptional knack for ridicule.^{cdiii} He liked to poke fun at physical features, such as Josiah Crawford’s nose, which, like Thomas Lincoln’s, was unusually large.^{cdiv}

In other ways Lincoln showed his frontier crudeness. “At times a highly-polished cuss word would escape his lips,” his stepmother said.^{cdv} When he raised the possibility of studying law with Judge John Pitcher in Rockport, that attorney tried to discourage the youngster because, as he later put it, Lincoln “was nothing but a long, lean gawky country-Jake. In fact I didn’t think it was in him.”^{cdvi} Another lawyer, John Brackenridge, thought little of the ill-clad youth. After listening to Brackenridge at a trial, Lincoln approached him to offer his congratulations; the attorney refused to shake the hand proffered by “the Shabby boy.”^{cdvii} Lincoln, “humiliated, shamefacedly left the court room.”^{cdviii} Though an abstainer in adulthood, Lincoln as an adolescent drank alcohol. In 1858, he told a friend that “he had

^{cdiii} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 43. Whitney added that “The satirical element clove to him through life, though he suppressed it in his responsible years. I have known him, however, in the privacy of a judicial circle (but very rarely) to impale an object disagreeable to him on a sarcastic lance quite as effectually, and in better style than in his youthful days.” Ibid., 47. See also Robert Bray, “‘The Power to Hurt’: Lincoln’s Early Use of Satire and Invective,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 16 (1995): 43-51, and Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 147-209.

^{cdiv} In “The Chronicles of Reuben” there appears this dig at Crawford: “Josiah bloing his bugle making Sound So grate that it maid the neighborin hills and valys eco with the resonnding acclamation.” Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 151. According to Judge John Pitcher, Crawford “had a verry large nose, and was known by the name of Nosey Crawford.” Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, July 1888, ibid., 663.

^{cdv} Unidentified clipping in Dennis Hanks Dowling’s scrapbook, quoted in William F. Sullivan, “Tales of Lincoln’s Early Life,” Paris, Illinois, News, 14 February 1922. His friend William Wood, however, said: “I never knew him to swear.” William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124.

^{cdvi} Alice L. Harper Hanby, “John Pitcher,” p. 3, paper read to the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, Evansville, 31 January 1922, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University; Oliver C. Terry to Jesse W. Weik, Mt. Vernon, Indiana, 14 July 1888, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 658.

^{cdvii} S. T. Johnson, interview with Herndon, Indiana, 14 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 115. See also Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 1 December 1938.

^{cdviii} William L. Barker, talk given to Loyal Legion at Indianapolis, 12 February 1929, copy, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University. During the Civil War, Lincoln allegedly said to Brackenridge, “it was the best speech that up to that time I had ever heard; if I could as I then thought, make as good a speech as that, my soul would be satisfied.” Ibid. Cf. G. W. Brackenridge to Jesse W. Weik, San Antonio, 15 December 1914, Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 318.

never taken a drink of any alcoholic beverage in the past twenty years,” clearly implying that he stopped drinking in 1838, at the age of twenty-nine.^{cdix} Nathaniel Grigsby testified that “Lincoln was a temperate drinker” who “drank his dram as well as all others did, preachers & Christians included.”^{cdx} Elizabeth Tuley alleged that, at her father’s insistence, “one time after they got away from the crowd she told Lincoln he could not come back any more for he had been too intoxicated.”^{cdxi} Her father objected because “Abe had gotten too much cider or apple-jack one time and fell in a branch on his face and almost drowned.” She reported “that Abe was not a regular drinking fellow and she never heard of him doing it again, but her father was very strict about drinking and would never forgive that one lapse.”^{cdxii}

In Indiana, Lincoln developed a lifelong taste for off-color humor.^{cdxiii} Dennis Hanks said he liked to sing “Little Smuty Songs,” but Hanks refused to recite their lyrics for it

^{cdix} Horace White to Jesse W. Weik, New York, 14 December 1913, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 382.

^{cdx} Nathaniel Grigsby, interview with Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 12 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 112. William Wood had a similar recollection: “Abe once drank as all people did here at that time.” William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 123. William Herndon maintained that Lincoln “was never seen under the influence of liquor more than once or twice in his younger days” when “liquor was quite in universal use.” Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 5 February 1887, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. J. Edward Murr, a Methodist minister who spent many years in southern Indiana, reported that when Lincoln was growing up, “even Preachers and other splendid men were much given to drinking their drams.” Murr to Albert J. Beveridge, [New Albany, Indiana, 21 November 1924], Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress.

^{cdxi} Affidavit of John Walker McCoy, grandson of John Tuley, recalling what was told to him by his grandfather, by his grandfather’s sister (Elizabeth Tuley Hesson), by Nathaniel Grigsby, and by “other old friends, neighbors and acquaintances of Abraham Lincoln in Spencer County, Indiana,” 1937, Francis Marion Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University. The tradition that Lincoln’s drunkenness led to the demise of his relationship with Elizabeth Tuley persisted in the family for generations. Lloyd Ostendorf, “Faces Lincoln Knew: Photographs from the Past,” Lincoln Herald 99 (1997): 184-85.

^{cdxii} Enclosure in T. Hardy Masterson to George H. Honig, Kennett, Missouri, 21 October 1927, copy, Papers of the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, Willard Library, Evansville. In this document Masterson recalled what he had been told in 1895 by Elizabeth Tuley Hesson. Masterson, who frowned on debunkers, did not include this information in his published version of the interview, “Lincoln’s Life in Indiana,” Rockport, Indiana, Journal, 12 February 1897.

^{cdxiii} J. Edward Murr heard from Lincoln’s companions four off-color stories that Lincoln told. Murr did not repeat them, though he asserted that three of them, with only minor changes, could be repeated without offending good taste. Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 244.

“would Not Look well in print.”^{cdxiv} J. Rowan Herndon also declined to tell all he knew of Lincoln’s anecdotes: “there is many . . . that i could Mention But thay [are] on the vulger order such as Pranks he used to Play off when going to mill.”^{cdxv} Nathaniel Grigsby described the circumstances which gave rise to a vulgar satire by Lincoln: “A man by the name of Chas Harper was going to mill – had an Extremely long wheat bag on the horse and was met by sister Gordon [Mrs. Noah Gordon] – who said to Bro Harper – Bro H your bag is too long – No said Bro Harper – it is only too long in the summer. They were Bro and Sister in the church – Mrs Gordon told her husband of the vulgar [remark] – Gordon made a fuss – had a church trial – Lincoln got the Secret – wrote a witty piece of Poetry on the scenes & Conversations.”^{cdxvi}

In addition to being crude, Lincoln could sometimes be “a kind of forward boy,” a “little rude” and “stubborn.”^{cdxvii} One day while working on Anderson Creek as a ferryman, he exasperated his roommate, Green B. Taylor, who recalled that “Abe taunted me about a certain girl in Troy that I did not like and kept it up until I tore the husk off a big ear of corn and threw the ear at him.”^{cdxviii} Lincoln then “spanked him good and plenty.”^{cdxix} Lincoln was

cdxiv Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 27 December 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 147.

cdxv J. Rowan Herndon to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 3 July 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 69.

cdxvi Nathaniel Grigsby interview, Gentryville, Indiana, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 128. See also William G. Greene to Herndon, Tallula, Illinois, 23 January 1866, ibid., 170.

cdxvii Dennis Hanks to Herndon (interview), Chicago, 13 June 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 39.

cdxviii John Rust, recalling what Green Taylor told him in 1865, Grandview, Indiana, Monitor, 25 October 1928; Green B. Taylor, interview with Herndon, 16 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 130.

cdxix Anna C. O’Flynn, “The Environments of Abraham Lincoln in Indiana: The Best Witnesses,” talk delivered to the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, 17 November 1925, copy, Southwestern Indiana Historical Society Papers, Willard Library, Evansville. O’Flynn’s source was, she claimed, a letter from Taylor himself.

“a good listener to his Superiors,” but was “bad to his inferiors” because “he Couldn’t Endure Jabber,” according to Dennis Hanks.^{cdxx} Lincoln enjoyed deflating boastful men. John W. Lamar remembered one election day when he and his father were riding to the polls: “We fell in company with an old man named James Larkin who was a great brag[gart] –, always relating some miraculous story or other. While riding along we overtook Abe Lincoln – going to the polls on foot. Old Man Larkin commenced telling Lincoln about the great speed & ‘bottom’ of the mare he was riding. Why, said Larkin, ‘Yesterday I run her five miles in four minutes – and She never drew a long breath.’” Lincoln replied quietly, “I guess She drew a great many Short ones.”^{cdxxi} The consequent laughter enraged Larkin, who “declared he would fight Abe if he wasn’t so big. He cussed and jumped around until Abe quietly said, Now Larkin, if you don’t shut up I’ll throw you in that water.”^{cdxxii}

THE MOVE TO ILLINOIS

In 1830, Thomas Lincoln moved his family to a site near the hamlet of Decatur, in Macon County, Illinois, where John Hanks and some of his relatives had settled two years earlier.^{cdxxiii} Hanks’s letters extolling the virtues of the Prairie State helped induce Thomas to

^{cdxx} Dennis Hanks, interview with Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 September 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 105.

^{cdxxi} James W. Wartmann to Herndon, Rockport, Indiana, 21 July 1865, Wilson and Davis eds., Herndon’s Informants, 79. See also John W. Lamar to Herndon, Buffaloville, Indiana, May 1867, ibid., 560.

^{cdxxii} John W. Lamar, interview with Anna C. O’Flynn, 1895, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

^{cdxxiii} Edwin Davis, “Lincoln and Macon County, Illinois,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 25 (1932): 64-73. In 1828, John’s father, William Hanks, Sr., and his siblings Nancy, James, Charles, and William, Jr., had settled in Macon County.

migrate west.^{cdxxiv} His decision was abrupt; in 1829 he and Abe had been whipsawing logs for a new cabin in Indiana and had already erected the walls.^{cdxxv}

Dennis Hanks took the lead in moving to the Prairie State, and Thomas followed his example. Dennis removed his wife Elizabeth (the elder daughter of Sarah Bush Lincoln) and their four children from Indiana because of an outbreak of the “milk sick.” Not wanting to be separated from her daughter and grandchildren, Mrs. Lincoln prevailed upon Thomas to join Dennis and Elizabeth in Illinois.^{cdxxvi} Thomas sold his farm, corn and pigs to Indiana neighbors, disposed of his wife’s lot in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and obtained from his church a letter of dismission, a kind of recommendation to other Baptist congregations.^{cdxxvii} (Little Pigeon Creek church records show that a month after that letter was issued, “Nancy

^{cdxxiv} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 456; Murr, “Lincoln in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 14 (1918): 165. William Hanks and Charles Hanks had moved to Illinois directly from Kentucky. Lincoln to John Hanks, Springfield, 24 August 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:100. See also Edwin David Davis, “The Hanks Family in Macon County, Illinois: A Biographical Directory,” Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1939 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1940), 112-52.

^{cdxxv} William Wood, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, Wilson and Davis eds., Herndon’s Informants, 124; Nathaniel Grigsby to Herndon, Gentryville, Indiana, 25 October 1865, ibid., 140; John Romine interviewed by J. M. Griffin, article in the Louisville Commercial, copied in the Evansville, Indiana, Journal, 27 June 1887.

^{cdxxvi} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 7 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 226.

^{cdxxvii} J. Edward Murr reported that the “Lincoln farm tract had not attracted buyers and they were on the point of leaving without making a sale, but at the eleventh hour a Jonesboro neighbor made the purchase at a mere nominal figure.” Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 315. According to William L. Barker, “Thomas Lincoln had tried to trade James Gentry his relinquishment of his eighty acres for a young horse; Mr. Gentry did not want the land but told John Romine of the offer and Romine said he would like to have the land and if Gentry would sell him the horse on credit he would take it and follow the Lincolns and trade for the land. Romine overtook the emigrants just as they were starting to go into camp at Little Zion Baptist church and the deal was consummated.” Barker to William Fortune, Boonville, 6 November 1924, Fortune Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Sarah Bush Johnston had purchased a lot in 1818 for \$25. In 1829, she sold it for \$125. Sketch of Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, Hardin County Historical Society, “Who Was Who in Hardin County,” (privately printed by the Elizabethtown News, n.d.), copy, Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Public Library, Springfield, Illinois. See also Daniel E. McClure, Two Centuries in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, Kentucky (Elizabethtown: Hardin County Historical Society, 1979), 100. Harriet Chapman reported that Mrs. Lincoln “told her that before her removal to Ills. she returned to her Kentucky home where some money was due her and with it bought side-saddles for herself and daughters – they rode on horseback a good portion of the way.” Harriet Hanks Chapman, interview with Jesse W. Weik, Charleston, Illinois, 3 January 1896, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 328.

Grigsby informed the church that she was not satisfied with Bro. and Sister Lincoln. . . . The church agreed and called back their letter until satisfaction could be attained The parties convened at Wm. Hoskins and agreed and settled the difficulty.” The substance of Mrs. Grigsby’s complaint is unknown.)^{cdxxviii}

On March 1, 1830, with his wife, son, stepson, stepdaughters and their families – eight adults and five children all told – Thomas Lincoln set out for Illinois in a primitive wagon constructed by Abe and his father almost entirely of wood. Many neighbors, including James Grigsby, turned out to see them off.^{cdxxix} Their departure was slightly delayed by Abe’s tardiness. When he finally appeared, Grigsby noticed Thomas, ox whip in hand, looking impatiently at his son. “Watch old Tom flail him,” Grigsby said to a friend. Instead of a beating, Thomas gave Abraham the whip and told him to lead the way.^{cdxxx}

^{cdxxviii} Church records, entry for 10 January 1830, Warren, Lincoln’s Youth, 207. Those records indicate that a month later Mrs. Grigsby charged one Betsy Crofford with falsehood. A committee of five, including Thomas Lincoln, investigated the charge and acquitted Sister Crofford. According to J. Edward Murr, Nancy Grigsby, Sarah Lincoln’s mother-in-law, was “a disturbing factor in Little Pigeon Church.” Murr, “Wilderness Years of Lincoln,” 227-28.

^{cdxxix} Dennis Hanks to Herndon, 2 April 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 242; David Turnham, interview with Herndon, 15 September 1865, ibid., 121-22; Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], ibid., 102; James Grigsby in a typed copy of an undated article from the Chicago Tribune, Southwestern Indiana Historical Society Papers, Willard Library, Evansville. Some recall that there were two wagons, others three. Harriet Hanks Chapman, who was four years old at the time, said that the party traveled in “three covered wagons, two drawn by oxen, and one by horses, and two saddle horses.” Affidavit dated Charleston, Illinois, 2 November 1912, in Charles M. Thompson, The Lincoln Way (Springfield: Illinois State Journal, 1913), 18. Harriet’s sister, Sarah Jane Hanks Dowling, who was eight years old at the time, recalled that they traveled in two wagons. Bloomington, Illinois, Bulletin, 31 January 1909. A team that investigated the Lincoln family migration reported “a sharp difference of opinion as to the manner and methods of the Lincolns’ travels. Concerning these even the members of the party have disagreed. Some have said that the entire party had but one wagon, others two, and yet others three.” Charles M. Thompson, “The ‘Lincoln Way’ Investigation in Illinois,” The Magazine of History 19 (1914): 102. See also The Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana (Indianapolis: State of Indiana, 1932). For a detailed account of the Lincolns’ travels through Coles County in 1830, see Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 8-18. The party consisted of Thomas, Abraham, and Sarah Bush Lincoln; Dennis Hanks and his wife Elizabeth and four children (Sarah, Nancy, Harriet, and John); John D. Johnston; and Squire Hall and his wife (Matilda Johnston) and their son John.

^{cdxxx} Van Natter, Lincoln’s Boyhood, 152; Andrew W. Sweeney’s reminiscences of conversations with Grigsby, Indianapolis Star, 16 April 1933. In a third-person autobiographical sketch, Lincoln said: “Their mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams, and A[braham] drove one of the teams.” Autobiography written for John L. Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:63.

The 225-mile journey took the family past Lickskillett, Loafers Station, Polkberry Creek, the Embarrass River, Polk Patch, Dead Man’s Grove, Purgatory Bottom, and Paradise.^{cdxxxix} Problems with the crude wagon wheels – disks of solid wood – forced occasional stops, including one in Vincennes, “a dilapidated, rusty looking town,” where Lincoln visited a newspaper office and first beheld a printing press.^{cdxxxix} En route, as they crossed a river coated with a thin layer of ice, they inadvertently left behind Lincoln’s dog, which howled in despair. Lincoln removed his shoes, rolled up his pants, and waded through the frigid water to rescue the canine. In recounting this story, he said: “I guess that I felt about as glad as the dog.”^{cdxxxix} Though the weather was generally clement, the roads were so wet that Abe for long stretches found himself slogging through mud several inches deep. The Kaskaskia River overflowed its banks, almost washing out the corduroy road. Following some debate, the party decided to press on, and for a few miles Abraham led the team through water so high that it threatened to sweep away wagon, oxen, and all.^{cdxxxix}

^{cdxxxix} Thompson, Lincoln Way, 1-16; Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 8-18; Evansville Courier and Journal, 12 February 1933.

^{cdxxxix} Usher F. Linder, Reminiscences of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois (Chicago: Chicago Legal News, 1879), 297; statement of Harriet Hanks Chapman to Jesse W. Weik, 3 January 1896, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 327; Charles M. Thompson, Investigation of the Lincoln Way (Springfield: Lincoln Presidential Library, 1915), 34. See also Henry W. Slawson, interviews with Francis M. Van Natter, Bruceville, Indiana, 10 and 11 January 1939, Van Natter Papers, Vincennes University; Van Natter to Albert T. Reid, Washington, 9 August 1947, carbon copy, ibid. See also notes of Mrs. William Warren on the history of her grandfather Bathell’s family, Newburgh, Indiana, Register, 22 April 1927, copy, ibid.

^{cdxxxix} Jesse K. Dubois, interview with Herndon, 1 December 1888, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 718-19. In 1860, Lincoln allegedly described this incident in detail to Dubois’s friend Peter Smith of Lawrenceville, Illinois, who in turn described it to his cousin. Peter Smith to Joseph Warren Keifer, Petty’s P. O., Lawrence County, Illinois, 17 July 1860, photostatic copy, Richard W. Thompson Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Smith was a delegate to the 1860 Republican State Convention in Decatur. Wayne C. Temple, “Delegates to the Illinois State Republican Nominating Convention in 1860,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 92 (1999): 294.

^{cdxxxix} Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 216-18; Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 103. John J. Hall later asked Dennis Hanks, “don’t you mind when we crossed Hurricane how we all like to got drowned?” Joseph A. Hall, son of John J. Hall, to Charles M. Thompson, Janesville, Illinois, 9 January 1913, Thompson, Lincoln Way, 52-53. John W. Cain, a friend of Hall’s, also heard him tell this story. Cain’s affidavit, Janesville, Illinois, 16 December 1912, ibid., 59.

After two weeks, they reached Decatur, Illinois.^{cdxxxv} At the courthouse, “the wagon halted, and the various members of the little ragged and muddy coterie drew together in a circle” while Thomas Lincoln went inside and timidly “ventured to inquire of a boy who was recording deeds if he could inform him which road ‘mout’ lead to John Hanks’s place on the Sangamon.” Hanks’s farm was four miles northwest of Decatur, “and thither the humble procession wended its way, arriving there at nightfall, to receive the heartiest of welcomes from their kinsman.” After eating their “first square meal under a roof for two weeks,” the Lincoln party chatted for hours with John Hanks, whom Henry C. Whitney described as “home-spun, matter-of-fact, and dull to a superlative degree, but he was the very soul of generosity, truth, and probity.”^{cdxxxvi} Conditions were primitive; deer and wolves roamed about freely, sometimes coming close enough to homes to be visible from doorways and windows.^{cdxxxvii}

Though legally free to go his own way as of February 12, 1830, Lincoln postponed his self-emancipation. John Locke Scripps explained that he “was the only son of his father, now advanced in years, and it was not in his nature to desert his aged sire at a time when all the hardships, privations, and toil of making a new home in a new country, were about to be entered upon. Whatever the future may have seemed to hold in it as a reward of effort specially directed to that end, he cheerfully put aside in obedience to his sense of duty, and

Augustus H. Chapman, statement for Herndon, [before 8 September 1865], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 103.

cdxxxv Thompson, “The ‘Lincoln Way’ Investigation in Illinois,” 101-5; Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 8-18; Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 218.

cdxxxvi Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 91; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 62-63, 64, 67-68.

cdxxxvii Jane Martin Johns, Personal Recollections of Early Decatur, Abraham Lincoln, Richard J. Oglesby and the Civil War (Decatur: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1912), 259-60.

engaged at once and heartily in the work before him.”^{cdxxxviii} John Hanks had chosen a site a few miles west of Decatur, where Abraham assisted him and Thomas Lincoln in erecting a cabin, fencing it in, and clearing several acres. Henry C. Whitney called that area “unusually uninteresting; much more so than that which the emigrants had left behind in Indiana.”^{cdxxxix} When building cabins for his father and others, Lincoln was “always one of the men picked out to carry up a corner,” a task requiring “an expert ax man” with “a mechanical eye.”^{cdxli} Because he often stayed with the families who hired him as a laborer, Lincoln spent little time in this new paternal cabin.^{cdxli} Abraham broke prairie, raised crops, and split rails for Macon County sheriff William Warnick, Reuben Brown, William Butler, Charles Hanks, and William Miller, among others.^{cdxlii} One cold day, when Miller’s wife (John Hanks’s sister Nancy) noticed that Lincoln’s pants were worn out, she offered to make him new ones. To his protest that he had no money, she replied that he could chop wood for her instead of

^{cdxxxviii} Scripps, Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 45.

^{cdxxxix} John Hanks to the editor, Decatur Chronicle, 4 July 1860; Charles Hanks to the editor, Decatur Magnet, n.d., copied in the Rockport, Indiana, Democrat, 11 August 1860; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 62-63, 64, 67-68.

^{cdxli} Reminiscences of Robert Warnick, Decatur Review, 22 March 1903.

^{cdxli} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 65.

^{cdxlii} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 456; reminiscences of Dunham Wright, grandson of William Hanks, enclosed in H. E. Hendryx to Fred Lockley, Baker, Oregon, 12 February 1922, copy, Dunham Wright Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Lincoln to John Hanks, Springfield, 24 August 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:100; reminiscences of William Warnick’s son, Robert Warnick, Decatur Review, 22 March 1903, and Decatur Herald, 5 June 1910; George Close, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 20. Butler added that Lincoln “worked round there all summer driving team for [Reuben] Brown who was breaking prairie in the neighborhood.” In 1861, Brown’s wife told Albert Hale, a Springfield minister, that “I remember Mr Linken – he worked with my old man . . . all the season & made a crap of corn.” The Brown farm was about seven miles north of Springfield. Albert Hale to Josiah G. Holland, Springfield, 22 June 1865, Holland Papers, New York Public Library. When he published an account of this episode, Holland noted that “Lincoln worked for Mr. Taylor, who owned the farm, and boarded with Mr. Brown.” J. G. Holland, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (Springfield, Massachusetts: Gurdon Bill, 1866), 40-41. See also Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 218-20.

paying cash.^{cdxliii} In both Macon and Sangamon counties, Lincoln and John Hanks “cut hundreds of cords of wood selling and dividing equally the proceeds.”^{cdxliv} (Lincoln’s later reputation as a rail-splitter was no fanciful invention of political publicists.) Joining them in some of these labors was George Close, who described Lincoln as “the toughest looking man I ever saw,” a “poor boy” dressed in “pants made of flax and tow, cut tight at the ankle – his knees were both out.” Close recalled that they had a “hard time to get work. All a man could do was to keep himself in clothes.” Lincoln trudged “5, 6, and 7 miles to his day’s work.”^{cdxlv} As a farmhand, Lincoln was especially noted for his skill with a reap hook, for his “long arms and huge hands adapted him for this particularly difficult work and there were few who could beat him.” It was “hard, hot, thirsty work.”^{cdxlvi} At lunch break, “he would mount a log, swallow his dinner in from eight to ten minutes, and then spend fifty minutes in close study before commencing the afternoon’s work.”^{cdxlvii}

cdxliii Reminiscences of Dunham Wright, grandson of William Hanks (whose sister was Lincoln’s grandmother Lucey Hanks), enclosed in H. E. Hendryx to Fred Lockley, Baker, Oregon, 12 February 1922, copy, Dunham Wright Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; George Close, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. It took Lincoln three days to split the necessary wood. Dunham Wright, paraphrased in an undated clipping, St. Paul, Minnesota, Pioneer Press, n.d., Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

cdxliv Lincoln to John Hanks, Springfield, 24 August 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:100; reminiscences of William Warnick’s son, Robert Warnick, Decatur Review, 22 March 1903, and Decatur Herald, 5 June 1910; George Close, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 456. In the manuscript draft of Jesse Weik’s Real Lincoln is a passage not included in published version: “In an interview shortly before his death John Hanks recalled the days of 1830 when he and Mr Lincoln split the famous rails in Macon county Illinois as well as incidents of their flat-boat ride to New Orleans in the spring of the following year. ‘Later’ he related ‘we also split rails in Sangamon county north of Springfield and about where the Lincoln monument now stands.[’] That Lincoln thought well of him is well known for he treated him with more deference and appreciation than any of his relatives.” Weik, draft of The Real Lincoln, Weik Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

cdxlv George Close, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

cdxlvi Reminiscences of Robert Warnick, Decatur Review, 22 March 1903.

cdxlvii Letter by L. R. W. [perhaps Robert L. Wilson], Peoria, 25 June 1860, Cleveland Leader, n.d., copied in the New York Tribune, 9 July 1860.

For good reason, then, Henry C. Whitney deemed that year in Macon County one of the “three eras of unusual hardship and misery” in Lincoln’s “melancholy journey of life.”^{cdxlviii} He was, Whitney observed, “in a new State surrounded by the most primitive society of the frontier – a mere adventurer, with nothing on earth but his right arm and uneducated brain as a capital with which to commence the journey of life. He was legally, but not morally, independent. His father had no financial ability, and, to put it plainly, was very liable to need the aid of his only son in the future as in the past. Faithful to all moral obligations then as thereafter, Abraham felt resting upon his shoulders, contingently, the burden of his father’s and step-mother’s support; and, all things considered, it would not be easy to find a more unenviable condition of American manhood than that which environed Abraham Lincoln when he cast off from the shores of dependent youth, and embarked on the uncertain voyage of independent and responsible life.”^{cdxlix}

INTRODUCTION TO ILLINOIS POLITICS

Lincoln’s introduction to Illinois politics occurred in the summer of 1830, while he was helping to plow William Butler’s land at Island Grove near Springfield. There he heard a speech by Peter Cartwright, a popular Methodist circuit rider then campaigning for office. Butler recalled that Lincoln, who was “awkward and very shabbily dressed,” thought that “Cartwright laid down his doctrines in a way which [was] . . . a little too dogmatical. A discussion soon arose between him and Cartwright, and my first special attention was

^{cdxlviii} Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, p. 86, manuscript at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. This passage does not appear in the published version of Whitney’s biography. The other two unusually painful periods, Whitney asserted, were those following the deaths of Nancy Hanks Lincoln in 1818 and Ann Rutledge in 1835.

attracted to Lincoln by the way in which he met the great preacher in his arguments, and the extensive acquaintance he showed with the politics of the State – in fact he quite beat him in the argument.”^{cdl}

Lincoln had been practicing public speaking in Indiana and now in Illinois.^{cdli} That season Lincoln put this carefully cultivated skill to work and delivered his first political speech. As George Close remembered the event, two candidates for the state legislature, William L. D. Ewing and John F. Posey, spoke in Decatur. Posey violated frontier custom by failing to offer liquid refreshment to the crowd, whose amour-propre was offended. (At that time people drank heavily and expected candidates to treat them to alcoholic beverages.)^{cdlii} Close urged Lincoln to “get up and abuse” Posey. Lincoln replied that he would do so if his friends “would not laugh at him.” When beginning his remarks, he “was frightened but got warmed up made the best speech of the day.” He did “not abuse Posey but spoke well of both men – pictured out the future of Ill[inois].” After he finished, Ewing called Lincoln “a bright one.”^{cdliii} John Hanks recalled this episode differently: “Posey Came into our neighborhood

^{cdxlix} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 64-65.

^{cdl} William Butler, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 13 June 1875, in Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 20; Robert Bray, Peter Cartwright: Legendary Frontier Preacher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 138-40. A similar account of a speech that Lincoln gave in response to a candidate appears in Johns, Personal Recollections of Early Decatur, 60-61. Mrs. Johns’ informant was Sarah Powers Durfee, who alleged that Lincoln worked briefly on a farm west of Decatur for a man named Shepherd.

^{cdli} Henry C. Whitney described the exercise thus: “It will be recollected that Henry Clay . . . had largely improved himself in the art of oratory by addressing imaginary audiences, represented by hencoops, stumps, trees, etc.” Lincoln “underwent a similar self-imposed discipline, and alike in Spencer County, Indiana, and Macon County, Illinois, he was wont to convert the ‘deep, tangled wildwood’ into an imaginary audience, and thus discipline his genius in the ways and graces of the effective orator.” Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 66.

^{cdlii} Thomas Ford, History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847, ed. Rodney O. Davis (1854; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 68.

^{cdliii} George Close, interview with James Q. Howard, [May 1860], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; William Dean Howells, Life of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Harry E. Pratt (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1938), 28. William G. Greene told Herndon that Lincoln’s “first Stump Speech ever made[,] I have heard him say[,] was in Macon Co in reply to two Men by the Names of a Mr Posey & Ewing[,] this was no Political Speech but an Experementer in 1830 or 31[,] that was before I knew him[,] all I know of that effort I learned from Mr Lincoln[,] I have often heard him regret that he had no copy of it as it was Extempo.” Greene

and made a Speech: it was a bad one and I Said Abe could beat it. I turned down a box or Keg and Abe made his Speech. The other man was a Candidate – Abe wasn't. Abe beat him to death – his subject being the navigation of the Sangamon River. The man after the Speech was through took Abe aside and asked him where he had learned So much and what he did so well. Abe Explained, Stating his manner & method of reading and what he had read: the man Encouraged Lincoln to persevere.”^{cdliv}

Thomas Lincoln did not wish to persevere in Illinois. In the summer of 1830, he and nearly everyone else in the Decatur area was attacked by disease-bearing mosquitoes (“gallinippers” in frontier parlance) whose bite induced malaria, then variously known as the “Illinois shakes,” “the ague” or “chills and fever,” a debilitating malady that left its victims feeling “poor, disconsolate, and sad.”^{cdlv} According to Henry C. Whitney, it “was an unusually severe season for chills and fever, and Thomas and his family were so sorely afflicted with it as to become thoroughly discouraged. Their sorry little cabin presented a melancholy sight: the father and mother both shaking at once, and the married daughter, who came to minister to their sufferings, not much better off. So terribly did they suffer that the father vowed a vow that as soon as he got able to travel he would ‘git out o’ thar.’”^{cdlvi}

When the mosquitoes disappeared, relief was short-lived, for in December a blizzard dumped three feet of snow on central Illinois. Soon thereafter came a freezing rain,

to Herndon, Tallula, Illinois, 29 May 1865, Wilson and Davis eds., Herndon’s Informants, 11. Andrew H. Goodpasture’s account of the speech, based ostensibly on what George Close told him, seems implausible, for it suggests that Lincoln talked about slavery rather than internal improvements. Goodpasture, statement for Herndon, Petersburg, Illinois, 31 March 1869, ibid., 574.

^{cdliv} John Hanks, interview with Herndon, [1865-6], Wilson and Davis eds., Herndon’s Informants, 456.

^{cdlv} Otto R. Kyle, Lincoln in Decatur (New York: Vantage Press, 1957), 29-31; Faragher, Sugar Creek, 89-90. In the record books of a Decatur store are entries showing that in August the Lincolns purchased the standard remedy for “the ague,” Peruvian bark and whiskey tonic. Ida M. Tarbell, In the Footsteps of the Lincolns (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1924), 161; Decatur Herald, 15 March 1914.

^{cdlvi} Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 66-68.

encrusting the snow bed with a layer of ice. Another storm deposited more snow atop the ice. Temperatures then plunged below zero and remained there a fortnight. During the miserable two months when snow blanketed the region, the Lincolns and their neighbors, ill-prepared for such harsh weather, were immured in their cabins while livestock and wildlife froze and starved outside.^{cdlvii} To replenish the family’s dwindling supply of meat, Abraham overcame his aversion to hunting and braved the cold in search of game.^{cdlviii} The hunting was easy, for deer were caught fast when their sharp hooves penetrated the ice crust.^{cdlix} (Lincoln, too, had trouble with his feet, which got wet one day as he crossed the Sangamon River bound for sheriff Warnick’s; they became frostbitten as he trudged two more miles to his destination, where Mrs. Warnick nursed him back to health.)^{cdlx} Lincoln also defied the elements in order to have corn ground. As he made his way to the mill, he encountered a farmer who with difficulty was gathering corn from stalks not completely buried in snow. Asked by the farmer if he were having similar problems, Lincoln replied: “Yes, we have to do worse than that, for we have used up all of our corn, and now have to go to our neighbors for assistance.”^{cdlxi} In the annals of Illinois history, this season became immortalized as “the winter of the deep snow.”

cdlvii John Carroll Power, History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois (Springfield: Edwin A. Wilson, 1876), 62-65; Harvey Lee Ross, The Early Pioneers and Pioneer Events of the State of Illinois (Chicago: Rastman Brothers, 1899), 50-51; John W. Smith, History of Macon County, Illinois, from its Organization to 1876 (Springfield: Rokker’s Printing House, 1876), 144-46.

cdlviii Thayer, Pioneer Boy, 221; Scripps, Lincoln, ed. Basler and Dunlap, 50.

cdlix R. D. Miller, Past and Present of Menard County, Illinois (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1905), 24.

cdlx Charles Hanks to the editor, Decatur Magnet, July 1860, copied in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, 25 July 1860; Davis, “Lincoln and Macon County,” 103; reminiscences of sheriff Warnick’s son, Robert Warnick, Decatur Review, 22 March 1903, Decatur Herald, 5 June 1910, and in an unidentified clipping, reproducing an undated article from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne; statement of Mrs. S. P. Ross, in Holmes, Lincoln Traveled This Way, 46-47.

cdlxi William C. Smith, in Joseph Stevens, History of Macon County, Illinois (Philadelphia: Brink, McDonough, 1880), 145.

Discouraged by mosquitoes and snowstorms, Thomas Lincoln retreated toward Indiana in the spring of 1831. En route, he stopped at the Coles County home of his sister-in-law, where she and other relatives, including John Sawyer, a good friend of Thomas from Kentucky, persuaded him to settle in their neighborhood.^{cdlxii} Thomas and his family built a cabin in nearby Buck Grove, where they stayed till 1834, when they moved to Muddy Point, also in Coles County. Three years later they migrated to yet another location in that county, Goosenest Prairie, near Farmington; there Thomas remained for the rest of his life.^{cdlxiii} His wife, unhappy with such a nomadic existence, told the neighbors “that they moved so often that it reminded her of the children of Israel trying to find the Promised Land.” When Thomas suggested yet another transfer of locale, she refused.^{cdlxiv}

Lincoln did not accompany his family as they headed back to Indiana. In March 1831, his stepmother “tied up all his earthly possessions in a bundle, and Lincoln, running a stick through it where the knot was tied, threw it over his shoulder” and struck out on his

cdlxii Sarah Bush Lincoln’s sister Hannah married Ichabod Radley; their daughter Hannah married John Sawyer, whose family tradition is the source of this assertion. “Lincoln Unwritten History,” address by Clarence W. Bell in Mattoon, Illinois, 11 February 1931, Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 27 February 1931; Dennis Hanks Dowling to Jesse W. Weik, Charleston, Illinois, 5 March 1915, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 353-54; Dennis Hanks Dowling to Charles M. Thompson, 1 January 1913, in Thompson, Lincoln Way, 39; J. K. Rardin, editor of The Charleston Daily News, communication dated Charleston, 10 September, Charleston, Illinois, Daily News, 12 September 1912, ibid., 64-65; William F. Cavins, “The Lincoln Family – Neighbors of Our Fathers,” pamphlet (Mattoon: Mattoon, Illinois, 80th Anniversary Lincoln Day Committee, 1934), 3; Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 2-3, 22. In 1828, the Radleys left Elizabethtown, Kentucky, for Paradise, Illinois, where John Sawyer had settled two years earlier. Joining them were John and Dennis Hanks, coming from Indiana; the Hankses soon moved north to Macon County. John Sawyer and his wife had two sons (John and Isaac) and two daughters (Lydia and Ann), one of whom married Elisha Linder. Also settling in the Paradise area were several other migrants from Hardin County, Kentucky, including the Trembles, Knabs, Slovers, Richmonds, and Hansons. Clarence W. Bell’s testimony, 18 September 1930, in “Proceedings of Hearing Held before the Special Committee Appointed to Recommend the Proper Routing of the Proposed Lincoln National Memorial Highway,” typescript, pp. 21-40, Abraham Lincoln Association reference files, folder “Lincoln Memorial Highway,” Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. John Sawyer was “the best friend that Thos. Lincoln ever had, both in Kentucky and Illinois.” Clarence Bell’s talk of 18 September 1930, “New Lincoln History,” Lerna, Illinois, Eagle, 7 November 1930. See also Carmen Weir, “The ‘Lost’ Lincolns,” Illinois Magazine, supplement to the Decatur, Illinois, Herald and Review, 11 February 1934.

cdlxiii Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 240-41.

cdlxiv John J. Hall, paraphrased in Dr. W. H. Doak, Martinsville, Illinois, to his nephew, Dr. W. D. Ewing of Cambridge, Ohio, [1 February 1923], Terre Haute, Indiana, Star, 11 February 1923.

own.^{cdlxv} No longer could Thomas rent him out to neighbors and attach the wages he earned in the abundant sweat of his brow. Though unsure exactly what he wanted to do, young Lincoln knew for certain that he did not wish to lead the crude life of a subsistence farmer, mired in poverty, superstition, and ignorance. At the age of thirty-two, he told his best friend: “As to your farm matter, I have no sympathy. I have no farm, nor ever expect to have.”^{cdlxvi} He had had his fill of primitive backwoods agriculture and culture. Later, as a politician, he would not pander to farmers.^{cdlxvii} Despite his enthusiasm for measures promoting economic growth and opportunity, he paid little attention to homestead legislation offering people free farms on government land, which many Republicans considered the best means to end poverty.^{cdlxviii}

In abandoning farm life, Lincoln was hardly unique. An antebellum Ohioan observed that the male offspring of many farmers “acquire such a disrelish for the occupation of their fathers that as soon as they are old enough they leave for some town or city.”^{cdlxix} In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville observed: “The first thing that strikes one in the United States

cdlxv Leonard Swett, recalling what Lincoln had told him in the fall of 1853, in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 459-60.

cdlxvi Lincoln to Joshua Speed, Springfield, 27 March 1842, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 1:282.

cdlxvii See, for example, his speech of 30 September 1859 to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society: “I presume I am not expected to employ the time assigned me, in the mere flattery of the farmers, as a class. My opinion of them is that, in proportion to numbers, they are neither better nor worse than other people. In the nature of things they are more numerous than any other class; and I believe there really are more attempts at flattering them than any other; the reason of which I cannot perceive, unless it be that they can cast more votes than any other. On reflection, I am not quite sure that there is not cause of suspicion against you, in selecting me, in some sort a politician, and in no sort a farmer, to address you.” Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:472-73.

cdlxviii Macomb Eagle, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 18 September 1860; Quincy Herald, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 7 August 1860; Gabor S. Boritt, Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1978), 79-91; Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27-29.

cdlxix Kenneth J. Winkle, The Politics of Community: Migration and Politics in Antebellum Ohio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 19.

is the innumerable crowd of those striving to escape from their original social condition.”^{cdlxx}
 Echoing that French visitor, Horace Greeley said: “Our farmers’ sons escape from their fathers’ calling whenever they can, because it is made a mindless, monotonous drudgery.”^{cdlxxi}

Fleeing that drudgery and what he called “parental tyranny,” Lincoln strove to distance himself from the world of his father, who embodied the indolence, ignorance, and backwardness that his son disliked.^{cdlxxii} His adult life represented a flight from the frontier. Once he left the paternal home, Lincoln would never invite Thomas to visit him. Never would he give Thomas the satisfaction of knowing that his name would be carried on by a grandson. Never would Thomas see his grandchildren or his daughter-in-law. Never would Lincoln perform Thomas’s work as a farmer and carpenter. Never would he pursue Thomas’s favorite forms of recreation, hunting and fishing. As he stepped from the Macon County cabin, Lincoln was free at last, free at last.^{cdlxxiii}

^{cdlxx} Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 603.

^{cdlxxi} Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 60.

^{cdlxxii} James Hurt, “‘All the Living and the Dead’: Lincoln’s Imagery,” American Literature 52 (1980): 351-80; David Herbert Donald, Lincoln (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1995), 36-37. Mary Todd Lincoln told Herndon that her husband frequently said, “[i]t [is my] pleasure that my children are free – happy & unrestrained by parental tyranny. Love is the chain whereby to Lock a child to its parents.” Mary Todd Lincoln, interview with Herndon, [September 1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 357.

^{cdlxxiii} Jesse W. Weik concluded that Lincoln’s “family were indeed a sorry lot – his father poor, inert, and void of ambition and the other members equally dull, improvident, and shiftless. To spend his days amid such unpalatable surroundings was a proposition from which he recoiled with feelings akin to horror. Therefore not long after reaching Macon county Illinois where the emigrant party from Indiana made their first settlement, he very discreetly left them behind, pushing on to a point in the adjoining county far enough away to escape the burden of their companionship.” Weik, manuscript of The Real Lincoln, Weik Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. A toned-down version of this passage appears in the published edition of that that volume.