

Knob Creek Farm

DRAWER 3 BIRTH-KENTUCKY

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Abraham Lincoln before 1860

Knob Creek Farm

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Knob Creek Farm

Drawer

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BIRTH-KENTUCKY

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Number 411

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February 22, 1937

THE KNOB CREEK FARM—PLAYGROUND OF LINCOLN

The Knob Creek farm was the Kentucky home which Abraham Lincoln remembered when he was interviewed about his childhood days. In writing to an old acquaintance of his father's he said, "The place on Knob Creek, I remember very well." Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln moved to this farm in 1811, when Abraham was but two years old and remained there until the late fall of 1816.

Under what terms Thomas Lincoln gained possession of this 238 acre farm we have not been able to discover. He was taxed for a portion of it at least, and was also made a defendant, and later a co-defendant, in a suit of ejectment brought against him. The most likely supposition is that George Lindsey assigned 238 acres to Thomas Lincoln for a money consideration and was to hold the deed until such a time as the payment would be completed. Before a deed had been made, however, the land was in litigation. Following is the boundary calls for the tract:

Knob Creek, 228 Acre Tract

1. Beginning with two sugar trees North 19 degrees, East 141 poles to a dogwood tree and ash tree corner to a 100 acre tract.
2. North 48 degrees, West 74 poles to a beech tree.
3. North 29 degrees, West 65 poles to a popular tree on the east side of a hill.
4. North 58 poles to an ash tree.
5. South 76 degrees, West 105 poles to a white ash tree.
6. South 117 poles to a stake.
7. South 31 degrees, East 168 poles to a sugar tree.
8. South 70 degrees, East 54 poles to the beginning.

On the first day of January, 1815, a Bill of Ejectment was brought against Thomas Lincoln and nine of his neighbors who were occupying tracts of land within a ten thousand acre survey. The plaintiffs, who lived in Philadelphia were Abraham Sheridan, Thomas Stout, and Hannah Rhodes, heirs of Thomas Middleton, under whom they claimed a prior right to the property. Out of the nine defendants, Thomas Lincoln was selected as the one against whom litigation should be

taken first for a test case. In the bill of exceptions filed with this suit, it is apparent that Thomas Lincoln did not have a clear title to all this land as George Lindsey was made a co-defendant and is called the "Landlord of said Lincoln."



KNOB CREEK FARM

x—Site of cabin.

Numerals—Corners of survey noted in text.

River—Knob Creek.

Road—Old Cumberland Road, Louisville to Nashville.

Thomas Lincoln moved from the place to Indiana in the late fall of 1816, while the land was still in litigation and just before leaving he paid his lawyer for services rendered in the suit. The case continued in the courts until the June term, 1818, when a jury with Robert Bell as foreman brought in a verdict in favor of Lincoln and Lindsey for \$17.89½, the costs in the suit, and which also revoked the claim that had been brought against their property. Failing to get the plaintiffs' representative, Kennady, to pay the claim, Lincoln probably through his Kentucky attorney, brought suit against the original plaintiffs, May 17, 1819. In September, 1820, a verdict was rendered and I. W. Larue was foreman of the jury which found for Lincoln and his damages were placed

at \$21.36. This suit also dragged on until May, 1821, when an endorsement shows the Philadelphia defendants to be non-inhabitants. It is doubtful if Thomas Lincoln, then living in Indiana, ever was able to collect any of the expenditures. The story about his having sold the farm for several barrels of whiskey, while the title to the farm was in question, is undoubtedly pure fiction.

With the claim of Mr. Middleton's heirs disposed of, the changes in title to the Knob Creek farm can now be traced from the original patent to the present owner.

By virtue of a treasurer warrant No. 13319, James Love, on June 1, 1790, became the possessor of two hundred and thirty-eight acres of land on Knob Creek. He assigned this piece of property to George Lindsey on May 24, 1802. Lincoln probably acquired the property in May, 1811, but after the litigation over the title evidently it reverted to Lindsey.

Lindsey attempted to sell the property to John Price but it was again thrown into litigation and was finally sold by a court commissioner to William Bush.

Charles Boone later secured the property from Bush but the date on which the transaction took place has not been learned. In 1846, Boone sold three tracts of land to Nicholas Rapier, among them the Lincoln tract. Nicholas Rapier disposed of the large area of land including the Lincoln tract to Charles Rapier. John W. Crady purchased three hundred and eight acres including the Lincoln tract of two hundred and thirty-eight acres from Charles Rapier on March 23, 1911.

The present owner, Chester Howard, acquired the property from Crady and has built a log cabin on the traditional site of the Lincoln home.

This is now the only tract of land on which Abraham Lincoln lived for any considerable space of time which has not become in part at least, a national shrine. This was the playground of Lincoln and by far the most picturesque of all of the Lincoln homes. It is hoped that some day this farm, too, may become a national reservation.



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

Number 1619

Fort Wayne, Indiana

January, 1973

Re-Discovering The Supposed Grave Of Lincoln's Brother

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

R.G.M.

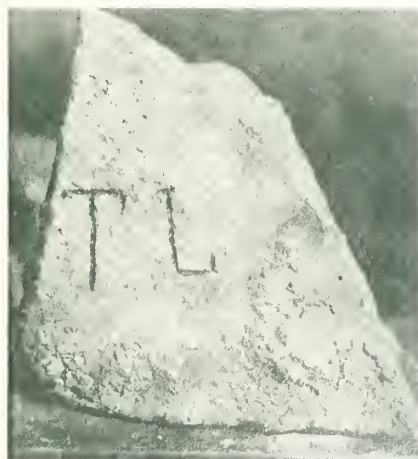
Since the fall of 1933, a grave in the Redmon family cemetery, in the Knob Creek section of Larue County, Kentucky, has been marked as being that of Thomas Lincoln, Jr., the infant brother of Abraham Lincoln. In fact, all the evidence now available, which consists merely of a tradition and a crudely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

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

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

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

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



From *The Herald Post*, Louisville, Kentucky

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

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

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

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

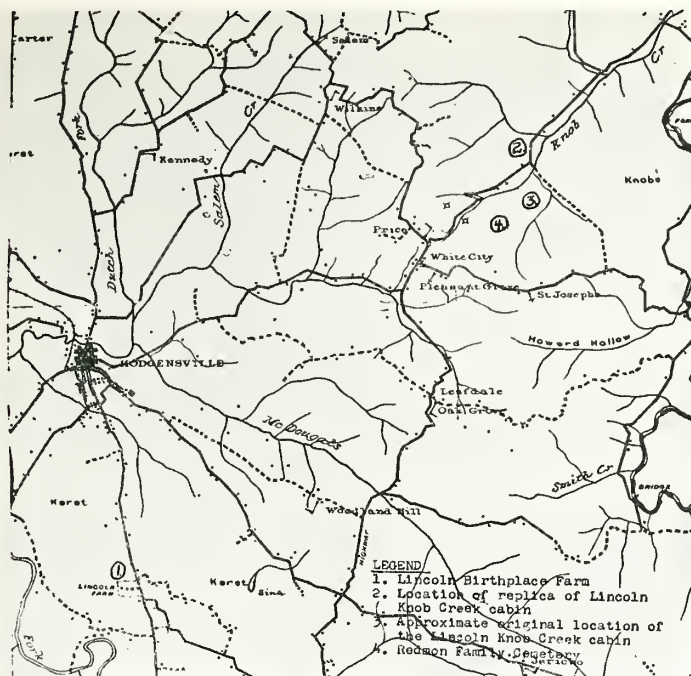
a credit to Thomas Lincoln for \$1.46. The services rendered by Dr. Potter were certainly between his arrival in Hardin County in 1811 and his death in 1814. Likely the doctor's bill was rendered for services in the years 1811 or 1812, during the illness of the boy baby.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lincoln Remembered A Stone House In Kentucky

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

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

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

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

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

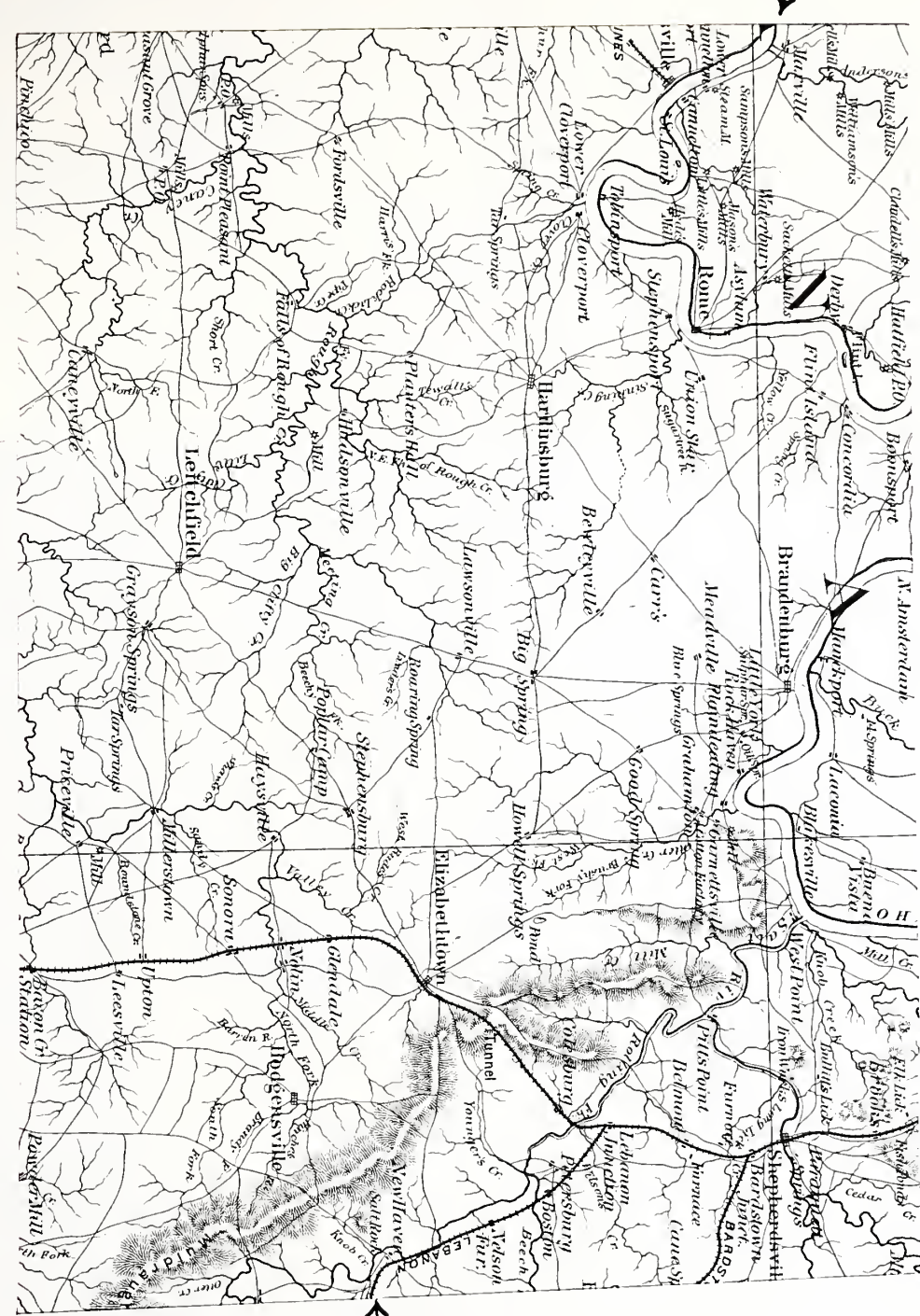
Louis A. Warren in his article, *Living Lincoln Memorials*, 1929, made the following statement about the "great tree somewhere on Nolin River":

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

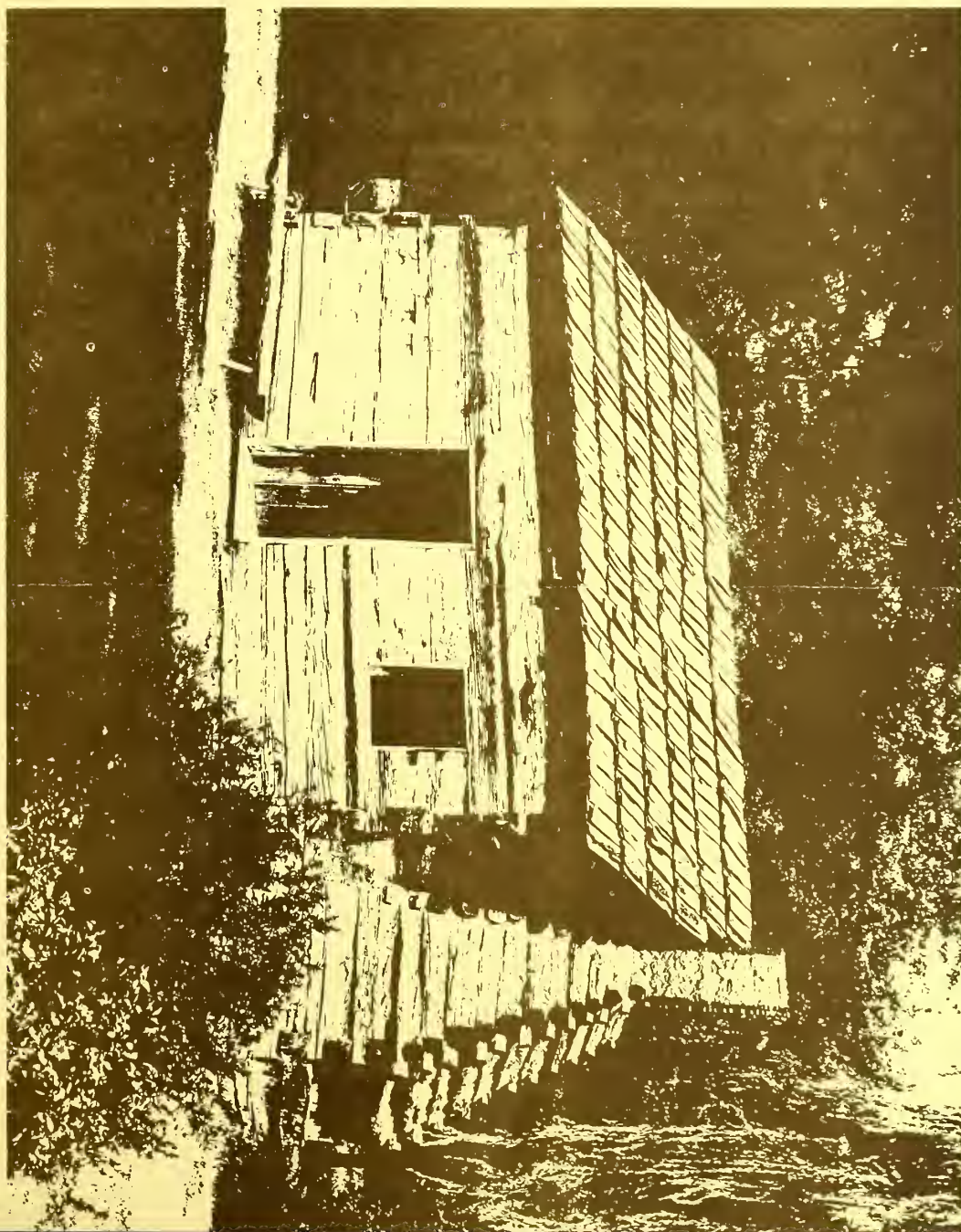
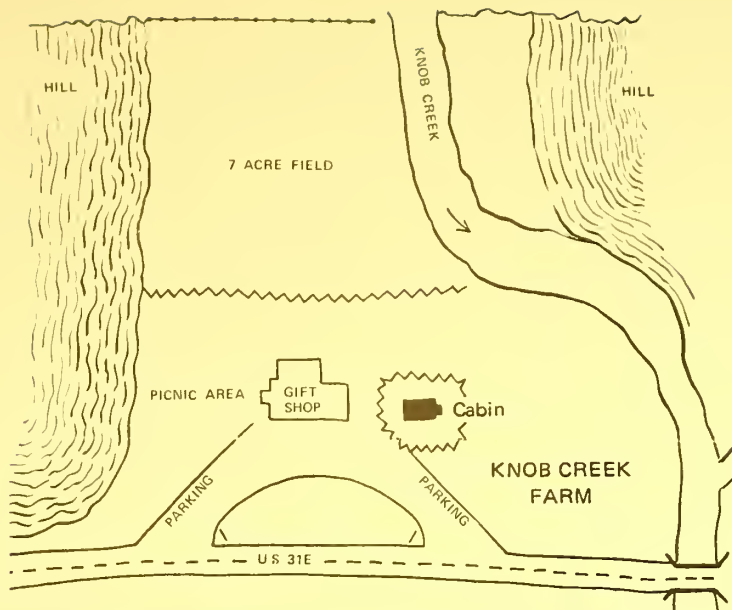
Warren continued: "This is undoubtedly the tree which Lincoln remembered and it has not been difficult to locate the place where it stood. It was near the old mill site at Buffalo, on one of the branches of Nolin River. It is difficult to imagine the enormous growth which these old trees achieved."

Knob Creek Ky.

Thomson's Ferry



Knob Creek



LINCOLN'S BOYHOOD HOME

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April 1 through Nov 1

WELCOME TO KNOB CREEK

THE KNOB CREEK FARM

"My earliest recollection is of the Knob Creek place." So wrote Abraham Lincoln on June 4, 1860 to Samuel Haycraft, of Elizabethtown, Ky., who had invited him to visit the place of his nativity. The family lived on the Knob Creek Farm from the time "Abe" was two until he was almost eight years old. Here he learned to talk and soon grew big enough to run errands such as carrying water, and gathering wood for the fires. He recalled in later years numerous memories of his childhood here; a stone house he had passed while taking corn to Hodgen's Mill; a certain big tree that had attracted his boyish fancy; the old homestead; the baby brother who was born and died here; the clear stream where he fished, and the surrounding hills where he picked berries were impressed on his mind. He could remember how he stayed by his mother's side and watched her face, while listening to her read the Bible. It was here that Abraham Lincoln first saw slave dealers on horseback, whip in hand, driving Negroes along the old road to be sold down South. He remembered that on one occasion he planted pumpkin seed in every other hill and every other row while others planted the corn. The following night a big rain in the hills sent water through the fields and washed both corn and pumpkin seed away.

Lincoln never forgot the time he fell in the swollen Knob Creek while playing on a footlog near his home. Had it not been for Austin Gallaher, a schoolmate, "Abe" would probably have drowned. Austin, with a keen sense of pioneer knowledge, grabbed a long pole from the bank and held it out like a strong arm to the struggling boy. Lincoln spoke of the incident after he became President.

two years after the removal to Indiana. She died Oct. 5th, 1818.

THE CABIN

The cabin was re-built in 1931 with logs taken from Austin Gallaher's cabin. It contains many interesting historic items and antiques.

ABOUT THE LINCOLN FAMILY

"Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, lived five years, 1811-1816, in a log cabin built on this site. He was brought here at two years of age by his parents, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Abraham had a sister, Sarah, who was two years older than he, and a younger brother, Thomas, Jr., who died in early childhood.

"Referring to his Kentucky homes, Abraham stated: "My earliest recollection however, is of the Knob Creek place . . . Our farm was composed of three fields, it lay in the valley surrounded by high hills and deep gorges." These bottom lands were the most fertile acres Thomas Lincoln ever owned and a degree of prosperity, not equaled elsewhere, was enjoyed by the family while residing here.

"On May 13, 1816, Thomas Lincoln was appointed by the Hardin County Court as supervisor of the Nolin-Bardstown road "Between the "Big" Hill and the Rolling Fork." This road passed by his cabin and also the school house, two miles north, attended by Sarah and Abraham.

"The Lincolns left this place for Indiana in the late fall of 1816."

—Louis A. Warren

On December 12, 1808, Thomas Lincoln bought, for \$200.00, the Sinking Spring Farm, three miles south of Hodgen's Mill (Hodgenville, Kentucky). Before moving to this farm, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln had made their home in Elizabethtown after their marriage on June 12, 1806. It was in Elizabethtown where their first child, Sarah, was born in 1807.

Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln brought little Sarah to a one-room cabin on the Sinking Spring Farm, and it was here that Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809.

The Lincolns lived on the Sinking Spring Farm for about two years before it was lost to them in the spring of 1811 because of a defective land title. Thus, in 1811, they moved 10 miles north to Knob Creek.

Lincoln once wrote that while living on Knob Creek he and his sister, Sarah, were sent for short periods, to A, B, C school—the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazle. These were subscription schools and lasted only a few months. Free schools did not come to Kentucky until late in the 1830's.

The Lincoln family left Kentucky in December, 1816 and arrived in the Little Pigeon Creek section of Indiana after winter was well under way. There Thomas Lincoln hurriedly constructed a "half-faced" cabin more primitive than the home of most cows and chickens. Abe's mother lived only about

