

**THE LITTLE LIFE OF
LINCOLN IN
SHORT STORIES**

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The Little Life of Lincoln in Short Stories by Wayne Whipple

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WAYNE WHIPPLE

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LINCOLN IN
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THE LITTLE LIFE OF LINCOLN

In Short Stories

BY

WAYNE WHIPPLE

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The Story-Life of Lincoln The Lincoln Story-Calendar
and the Lincoln Story-Annual

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STORY I

BIRTH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

LINCOLN'S grandfather's name was Abraham. He came to Kentucky in the earliest pioneer days with his friend Daniel Boone. One day, in 1784, while he and his three sons were out in the clearing, Grandfather Lincoln was shot down by Indians in ambush.

The oldest boy, Mordecai, rushed into the cabin to get a gun. Josiah, the next in age, ran to the fort for help. Just as a huge Indian was stooping to pick up Thomas, a boy of six, Mordecai, aiming through a crack between the logs, shot the savage dead, and saved little Tom to become the father of Abraham Lincoln, the greatest man America has ever produced.

Thomas Lincoln married Nancy Hanks and they lived a year or so in a log hut at Elizabethtown, where their daughter, Sarah, was born. Then they moved about fourteen miles to Rock Spring Farm. In 1860 Lincoln wrote the following brief account of his birth:

"I was born February 12, 1809, in then Hardin County, Kentucky, at a point within the now county of Larue, a mile or a mile and a half from where Hodgen's mill now stands . . . It was on Nolen Creek.

"A. Lincoln."





THE HOME IN INDIANA

STORY II

TOM AND NANCY LINCOLN'S BABY BOY

DENNIS Hanks was Nancy Lincoln's cousin. He was several years older, and was young Abe's almost constant companion. Here is his account of Abe's early infancy (from *The American Magazine*):

"Tom an' Nancy Lincoln lived on a farm about two miles from us when Abe was born. I ricollect Tom comin' over to our house one cold mornin' in Feb'uary an' sayin' kind o' slow, 'Nancy's got a boy baby.' . . . I cut an' run the hull two mile to see my new cousin. You bet I was tickled to death. Babies wasn't as common as blackberries in the woods o' Kaintucky. . . .

"Folks often ask me if Abe was a good-lookin' baby. Well, now, he looked just like any other baby, at fust. . . . An' he didn't improve none as he growed older. Abe never was much fur looks. I ricollect how Tom joked about Abe's long legs when he was toddlin' 'round the cabin. . . .

"Abe never give Nancy no trouble after he could walk, except to keep him in clo'es. Most o' the time we went barfoot. . . . Abe was right out in the woods as soon as he was weaned, fishin' in the crick, settin' traps and drapplin' corn fur his pappy. Mighty interestin' life fur a boy, but there was a good many chances he wouldn't grow up."

STORY III

IN THE "OLD KENTUCKY HOME"

AUSTIN Gollaher, an old, old man, still living twenty years ago, at Knob Creek, to which the Lincolns moved when little Abraham was four, used to tell how he once saved Lincoln's life. Austin had been brought by his mother, one Sunday, on a visit to Mrs. Lincoln, and the little boys wandered nearly the whole day along the creek. In trying to "coon it" across on a small log, Abe fell in and would have drowned if his play-fellow had not reached a stick out to him, which he "grabbed with both hands." Old Mr. Gollaher continued:

"He clung to it and I pulled him out on the bank almost dead. I got him by the arms and shook him well, and then I rolled him on the ground, when the water poured out of his mouth. He was all right very soon. We promised each other that we would never tell anybody about it, and never did for years."

Mr. Gollaher also told that Abraham, even at that early age, was "an unusually bright boy at school. Though so young, he studied very hard."

Lincoln was once asked what he remembered of the War of 1812.

"Nothing but this," he replied. "I had been fishing one day and caught a little fish, which I was taking home. I met a soldier on the road, and having been always told at home that we must be good to the soldiers, I gave him my fish."



STORY IV

LINCOLN LOSES HIS MOTHER

WHEN Abraham was seven his father moved again—this time to Indiana. When they arrived at Little Pigeon Creek, near Gentryville, Thomas Lincoln put an ax in the boy's hands to help clear the brush and build a "half-faced camp," or shed made of poles throughout, and enclosed only on three sides. They lived under this poor shelter a year, until he, with the lad's help, had built a more comfortable log cabin.

Then Dennis Hanks came, with Thomas and Betsy Sparrow, his foster parents, to live in the half-faced camp until these relatives and Nancy Hanks Lincoln were stricken with a strange, malignant disease, called "milk-sick," which attacked the early settlers. In their crude, primitive way, Thomas and Nancy Lincoln were religious. Thomas Sparrow and his wife died and were buried first. Nancy Lincoln felt that her days were numbered. Calling little Sarah and Abraham to her bedside she told them to be good and take care of their father, and meet her in Heaven. With his whip-saw Thomas Lincoln made the three coffins from forest trees, and they were buried "without benefit of clergy." This troubled little Abe, and it is said that the first letter he wrote was to an old preacher who came the following summer and held funeral services over the lonely mounds in the woods.

Abraham seldom spoke of his own mother, but when he did it was with deep tenderness. He once exclaimed, "All I am or hope to be, I owe to my sainted mother."

STORY V

"WHAT IS HOME WITHOUT A MOTHER?"

EVERYTHING that a girl of eleven could do, little Sarah Lincoln did for that desolate family. Dennis, after losing his foster parents, came into the cabin to live with the motherless Lincoln children. But "what is home without a mother?" Thomas Lincoln became moody and restless. He went back to visit the scenes of his childhood, in Kentucky. After several weeks he returned, bringing his children a stepmother. She "made them look a little more human," as she expressed it. She induced her husband to lay a floor in the cabin, hang a door and cover the one window with oiled paper. She brought feather beds and other luxuries, and a bureau worth \$40. She spread and hung bearskins and deerskins, and made the cabin quite cosy and comfortable.

Between Sarah Bush Lincoln and her stepson, Abraham, there sprang up a feeling of mutual understanding and sympathy. She persuaded her husband, much against his will, to let the lad go to school a month or two now and then. Abe never ceased to be grateful to her for her kindness to him. After her own son and stepson were dead, Mrs. Lincoln said of Abraham:

"I can say what scarcely one mother in a thousand can say, Abe never gave me a cross word or look. I must say that Abe was the best boy I ever saw or expect to see."

STORY VI

THE BOOKS YOUNG LINCOLN READ

ALTHOUGH Thomas Lincoln could see no use in "edication" and thought Abe's hunger for reading was only a sign of laziness, Abraham devoured every book he could borrow within a circle of fifty miles. He learned the Bible almost by heart, and read the "Revised Statutes of Indiana" as eagerly as boys nowadays read "Sherlock Holmes." He read and re-read "Æsop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Arabian Nights," "Pilgrim's Progress," and Weems's "Life of Washington." He had a strange experience in connection with this last named book. He had borrowed it from Josiah Crawford, who, for obvious reasons, was called "Old Blue-Nose." Young Lincoln read this book far into the night, and tucked it into a chink between the logs in the wall, before falling asleep. During the night a driving rainstorm soaked the mortar and book together, ruining the precious borrowed volume. Abe was almost in despair; "Old Blue-Nose" would be very angry. But the boy made a clean breast of the affair, and "Old Blue-Nose" graciously permitted him to work for the book three days, "pulling fodder," at the rate of 25 cents a day.

-This Josiah Crawford must not be confused with Andrew Crawford, the schoolmaster. Abe always felt that Josiah took an unfair advantage of him, and had his revenge in writing doggerel rhymes about Josiah Crawford's nose.