

The men, who, in the first days of this country scattered themselves up and down the Atlantic coast quickly established there all the essential features of society as they had seen it carried on in England, particularly where they were careful about their records. Births and deaths and marriages were recorded with fidelity, as well as land deeds. But when, a hundred years later, the great Western movement began and the Atlantic coast settlers went into Kentucky and the lands north of the Ohio River, this respect for records was lost. If a man had the necessary deeds of his land it was all of which he thought. In the frequent movings which occurred in many families, not only were records slighted, but traditions were distorted or even lost. The result is that now, after a hundred years, many families in the Western part of our country find the greatest difficulty in getting any well authenticated genealogy of their families. This indifference to securing records which prevailed for so long, has resulted in another difficulty beside that of preventing of clear genealogical line. It has stimulated the growth of traditions, and not always pleasing traditions. Frequently it has made it impossible to overthrow petty gossip and malicious lies.

In none of the families of our West has this been better shown than in that of the Lincoln family. The parents of Abraham Lincoln were pioneers; they moved frequently and they had all the pioneer's carelessness about exact records. When, in 1861, Abraham Lincoln came the candidate for the Presidency of the United States, it was very very difficult to tell exactly where he came from. The lack of the exact information gave an opportunity for the bitter partisan spirit of the time to invent the most malicious stories. Two in particular were spread broadcast, and ~~was~~ until very recently it has been impossible to prove that they were not true. The first of these stories said that Abraham Lincoln was an illegitimate child; the second that his mother was an illegitimate child. The first of these stories was completely exploded in 1886 by the discovery of the marriage certificate and records of Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln, and by the convincing argument that Abraham Lincoln was Nancy Hanks second child, not her first. But with the curious persistency of evil rumors, the first

explanation of his origin is still believed by many people, and even in the present year there has appeared a book entirely devoted to proving that Abraham Lincoln was not Thomas Lincoln's son. It would no doubt be useless to point out documents to the writer of this work. He has the traditions of a number of persons, most of them born long after Abraham Lincoln, almost none of whom ever saw him or his parents, and none of whom ever heard the story until after his nomination to the Presidency. It may be said that if any man can prove to be his father's son Abraham Lincoln can. Yet these traditions are held to by large numbers. While the first story has been completely disproved, it is not until now that the documentary evidence of the falsity of the second has come to the historian. No genealogy of the Hanks family in America is in print, but in 1888 a member of that family, Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock, of Cambridge, Mass., undertook to prepare it. Starting from her own family Mrs. Hitchcock traced it back to the family of Benjamin Hanks, who, in 1667, came with his wife to Plymouth County, Mass. where he settled. This Benjamin Hanks had children. In tracing the history of the families of these various children Mrs. Hitchcock found that one son, William, settled in Virginia, near the mouth of the Rappahannock River, and that from there he moved with his family to Amelia County. There was a large settlement of the Hanks family in this place. Complete records of their land exist now in Richmond, Virginia. Towards the last of the 17th century a number of the Hankses with their relatives sold their Virginia lands. These people next appear in Kentucky according to the land records still in existence. Joseph Hanks, who went with his relatives into Kentucky, had a large family of twelve children, the seventh of which was a little girl named Nancy; she was about five years old at the time of the migration into the new country. In 1793 Joseph Hanks died and left a will, in which he recognizes Nancy, this seventh child, as he does all of the others. This will, which Mrs. Hitchcock discovered in 1893 in Bardstown, Kentucky, proves beyond any question that Nancy Hanks was a legitimate child. Illegitimate offspring, especially of they are the seventh or eighth in the line, are not recognized in wills. Now, it was this Nancy Hanks who, in 1806, Thomas Lincoln married. Mrs. Hitchcock has in her genealogy which is not yet ready for publication, the complete line of his descent established. It shows conclusively that Nancy Hanks was honestly born as was her son.