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Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States, was born in Kentucky on February 12, 1809, one hundred and seventy two years after his great-great-great-grandfather, Samuel Lincoln, had settled in Hingham, Massachusetts. From Massachusetts one generation after another of the Lincoln family made its way westward, from Massachusetts to New Jersey, from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, from Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, from Virginia to Kentucky. They were all daring and industrious men acquiring land and combining with their farming a trade - weaving, iron-making, forging or carpentry.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of the little boy who had now come into the world, was a farmer and a carpenter. He had not had as fair a chance as the Lincolns who had gone before him for his father, the grandfather of the new baby, had been killed by the Indians when Thomas

was a boy and he had had to make his own way. He had done well considering the pioneer conditions under which he lived for at the time Abraham Lincoln was born he owned two farms, had mastered the grade of carpentry and what was rare for a pioneer living usually by barter, ~~he~~ even had money in his pocket ~~at the time the baby came~~ ^{collected} having shortly before collected three pounds and ten shillings, close to twenty Dollars, ~~due him for a~~ police service in the county.

The new baby grew up to be ^a sturdy, big-boned child. He was taught and willingly practiced all the activities of a child in a pioneer family. It was he who kept the water bucket full, brought in the wood, ^gdr^opped the corn for his father at planting time. When old enough he went to school and he enjoyed all of the games and experiences of a farmer boy, learned to know the animals, birds and trees.

The Lincolns lived close to a highway which ran from the South up to Louisville on the Ohio River. Here passed soldiers dismissed from the War of 1812; here came pioneers from the East and South. Often they stopped to talk so that the boy heard of past wars and what was

going on in the great world. He was stirred listening to things he did not understand and early made up his mind that he was going to find out the meaning of what people were talking about, a determination that he never lost.

When he was seven years old the Lincolns *remained for*
~~on what to the boy must have been a wonderful journey.~~

His father, Thomas Lincoln, had reason to be dissatisfied with Kentucky because of the difficulties over land titles, besides Kentucky was a slave state and he did not like slavery. Years later when the boy had become a man and people all over the country were interested in knowing where he had come from and why his father moved from Kentucky into Indiana he said in an autobiography that it was "partly on account of slavery."

Kentucky into Indiana The journey took them over land to the Ohio River. It must have looked to the boy like a sea, so wide is it where they crossed. From their landing place on the Indiana shore not far from the present town of Troy the family made its way some sixteen miles to the Northwest where on a previous trip Thomas Lincoln had taken up land.

It was October of 1816 when the Lincolns cut their way through the forest to their new home. The first

4

winter they were obliged to live in what was called a half face camp. But they were too busy cutting wood for their fire, hunting game for food and skins, chopping timber for a cabin, clearing fields for corn, planting in the Spring, to think over-much of discomfort. In all this work little Abraham shared. He was big and strong for his age and chopped timber, ploughed and planted by the side of his father.

Two years after the Lincolns came into Indiana the country was swept by ^a malaria fever which carried off his Mother, Nancy Hanks, and left Abraham and his sister, Sarah, desolate. It was not until months afterwards that they knew what a home really was for Thomas Lincoln went back to Kentucky where he married a fine woman ^{whom} that he had known in his youth. She came with more furniture than young Abraham and his sister had ever seen before and she brought along two sons, older, but giving companionship and help in their undertaking.

As young Abraham grew older he not only worked on his father's farm but on the farms of neighbors. As time went on his work brought him adventure. One winter he ran a ferry boat back and forth across the Ohio River

and saw all the wonderful traffic that went up and down the River in those days - days before there were railroads and highways. Later he made a trip to New Orleans down the Ohio into the Mississippi as a helper on a great flat boat loaded with cargo. He was nineteen when this trip was made, old enough both to enjoy and to learn.

One adventure on that trip he always remembered. It came at night when their boat was tied up and 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 then cut cable, 'weighed anchor' and left."

That is, if Lincoln labored hard and continually in these years they carried with them adventure and companionship and an increasing knowledge of the world outside of Southwestern Indiana.

Lincoln He had little schooling, not over a year in all, but he was too interested in learning to depend on school teachers. He had discovered two great sources of knowledge - one books and the other people older than himself.

Whenever he heard of a book he borrowed it; whenever he met a stranger he questioned him. Not able to own books he stored away their contents in his mind,

memorizing long passages, working out the argument of the book and putting ^{them} into words so clear that he, himself, could explain them to his companions. The books in which he was early interested and which he learned to know and about which he thought a great deal were, Weem's, "Life of Washington," the Statutes of Indiana containing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, "Aesop's Fables," Robinson Crusoe," Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress," and most particularly the Bible. ~~He knew the Bible thoroughly. It was one if not the only book which Tom Lincoln, himself, owned. Moreover, it was the book about which the people knew, talked most about. That is, Lincoln may be said to have grown up with the Bible.~~

In 1830 when Lincoln was twenty-one years of age his father decided to move from Indiana into Illinois. It was the early Spring when the Lincoln family, thirteen in all, left Indiana in wagons drawn by ox teams - Abraham driving one of the teams. As a side line on this trip he took a pack of thread, needles, calico, forks, knives and other small articles which he peddled on the way. It was on this journey that Lincoln first saw a printing press, first watched a juggler perform.

The new home chosen by Tom Lincoln was on the bluffs of the Sangamon River about eight miles from the town of Decatur. Although Abraham was now of age and according to the practice of the time free to start out for himself he remained with his father for another year helping to build a cabin and to fence the fields for crops.

Having hired out to take a load of produce to New Orleans he left home in March of 1831. This trip turned out to be an eventful one for Abraham, for on the way down the Sangamon to the Illinois River the boat was caught on a dam near the town of New Salem and it looked as if both the boat and the cargo would be lost, but Lincoln's ingenuity saved them. The owner of the boat was so pleased that he declared to the inhabitants of New Salem that he was going to bring Lincoln back, open a store there and put him in charge of it. As a matter of fact this he did. ~~In the Summer of 1831 Lincoln became a clerk in his employers store.~~ The store failed but Lincoln and a friend bought out three other failing stores, ^{though} they never made a success of their merger. When the enterprise finally "petered out," as Lincoln said, it left him with a debt of several

hundred dollars. The "National debt" he called it, but he finally paid it in full.

The next six years were extraordinarily busy and successful ones for the young man. His intelligence, his industry, his good humor, his strength and honesty made him soon one of the most respected and valued men in the little community. His popularity was shown in 1832 when the Black Hawk War broke out and he was elected Captain of a Company of volunteers which had answered the governor's call for men to defend Illinois against the Indians. It was shown in 1833 when he was elected to the Illinois Legislature. It was shown by the offer of a position as Deputy Surveyor of the district of Illinois in which he lived if he would qualify. This he did. Lincoln became a good surveyor; it is said that no line that he laid has ever been changed.

In the meantime he had made up his mind to read law. He began by mastering Blackstone, a set of which had accidentally fallen into his hands. Later he used to walk or ride to Springfield, the nearest big town sixteen miles away, there to borrow books.

Admitted to the bar in 1837 Lincoln slowly but steadily built up a law practice. At that time lawyers

rode a circuit, going from County Seat to County Seat. The circuit Lincoln covered included ¹⁴seventeen counties. Everywhere he practiced he became increasingly popular both as a lawyer and a man. People trusted him for the integrity of his thinking and speaking and they liked him for his friendliness and good humor. He was not only a good lawyer but he was the best story-teller on the circuit.

Practically all lawyers were interested in politics at that time. Lincoln was anxious to go to Congress and in this ambition he was encouraged by his wife whom he had married in 1842 - Mary Todd ~~Lincoln~~ - a woman of an excellent Kentucky family whose relatives in Springfield were people of education and position.

It was not until 1846 that Lincoln's ambition to go to Congress was gratified. But he was not a popular Congressman; the country had gone into the Mexican War. Mr. Lincoln felt that this ^{War} was not justified and though he voted supplies he would never vote the approval for which the Administration asked. It made him unpopular at home. Moreover, he was not skillful in securing offices for his political friends, being over-careful so they thought - to state their qualifications or disqualifications for positions.

The result was that he was not re-nominated. He came back to Springfield determined to give up politics entirely and by study and work make a first class lawyer of himself. He not only studied law as never before, but German, mathematics, mastering six books of Euclid.

Lincoln was in the way of achieving this ambition to become a first class lawyer when in 1854 he was aroused politically as he had never been before. This was by the repeal by the Congress of the United States of what was known as the Missouri Compromise, an act adopted in 1820 making ~~he intended to settle forever the dispute between the North and South over the admission of slavery into the Louisiana Purchase, as the territory the United States had bought in 1803 from France was called. by this~~ ~~Compromise all territory North of the line 36 deg. 30 min. - Missouri excepted - free forever.~~

After the Mexican War a new struggle broke out between those for and against slavery over the territory won by the winning of that War. ~~The North generally insisted that all this new territory must be free, but the South insisted that since it had shared in the cost of the War, at least half of it should be open to slaves. This quarrel~~

ended in a new series of compromises - the Omnibus Bill or the Compromise of 1850.

Lincoln was deeply disturbed after the passing of the compromises of 1850 because they did not settle the matter. He came to believe that there was a determination on the part of slave owners to make the country all slave and he saw the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, an agreement all the North regarded as sacred as the terms of the Constitution itself as a step in that direction.

The repeal caused a particular uprising in Illinois because it was fathered by the most popular man in the State, Senator Stephen A. Douglas, a Democrat, who most of his party expected to be the next president of the United States.

When Douglas appeared in Springfield, Illinois in 1854 to defend his doctrine there was a general feeling that there was no one on the other side that was able to answer him. Mr. Lincoln agreed to try and he had not spoken long before those who doubted realized that this was a new Mr. Lincoln. Never had he shown such a mastery of material, never so serious, so eloquent. Mr. Douglas was arguing that each State made out of territory set aside to be free should be allowed to decide what kind of property it wanted when it came into the Union.

"What Mr. Douglas means," retorted Lincoln, "is that as you do not object to my taking my hog to Nebraska therefore I must not object to your taking your slave. I admit this is perfectly logical if there is no difference between hogs and negroes The doctrine of self-government is right, but it has no application as here attempted. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is not self-government, that is despotism. No man is good enough to govern another man without that man's consent."

Lincoln's arguments created state-wide interest, and made him the natural leader of the men and women in Illinois opposed to the further extension of slavery. Two years later he joined a new party formed to keep back the spread of slavery - the Republican Party - and at once became its leader in Illinois.

In 1858 the Republican Party nominated him for the Senate of the United States against Mr. Douglas whom the Democrats had named for a third term. The campaign was strenuous from the start, but Mr. Lincoln thinking that Mr. Douglas was evading the real points at issue challenged him to a series of seven joint debates.

These debates took on almost at once a National character; they were reported, printed and discussed all over the country. Lincoln had gone in practically an unknown man but although he was defeated for the Senate he came out known to all thinking people. The whole country

wanted to know more of him and he was invited for speeches at various places. The most important of these was a speech made in February 1860 at Cooper Union in New York City. ~~Here he was introduced by Henry Ward Beecher to one of the most distinguished audiences the city had ever seen.~~

The next day the whole speech appeared in the New York Evening Post of which William Cullen Bryant, the poet was the editor and Harper's Weekly printed a full page portrait/ It showed that he was by no means the awkward, ill-dressed, badly mannered man that those who had begun to fear him politically were already saying.

As a matter of fact the Cooper Union picture as it is known shows Mr. Lincoln as a carefully dressed, dignified, a certain rugged elegance about him. One has only to examine a full set of the photographs of Abraham Lincoln from the earliest one known to his death to realize that the descriptions of his appearance are frequently ^{deliberate} caricatures ~~deliberately~~ made sometimes for the sake of coloring a story and sometimes out of sheer political ill-will.

Mr. Lincoln was large, six feet three, big bones, spare, not an extra ounce of flesh. Examine his photographs and you will see that in almost none of them does he take a position that is awkward. This is partly due

to his unconsciousness, ~~of his appearance.~~ His mind was not on appearances it was on ideas and on the people with whom he talked.

~~He was given to brooding, his temperament was melancholy. He had had a hard life and was deeply conscious of advantages that other men had had that he had not had, but he never let this lack of advantage stand in always to his death his way; he did his utmost to make up for them.~~

When his friends in Illinois who already were talking of him as the next president found how deep an impression he had made upon the ablest men of the East by his Cooper Union Speech they went enthusiastically at work to persuade the Republicans of Illinois to name him their candidate for the presidency. This was done in May 1861 at a convention at Decatur, the town near which he had lived when he first came into Illinois. Rails said to be from those he had split for his father's first fence were paraded around the Convention Hall and from that time Lincoln was known as "the rail candidate."

A few days later the Republicans gathered in Chicago for their National Convention. New York came expecting
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to name William/Seward the most eminent man in the party,

but when on the third ballot Lincoln's vote had risen to such a number that it was obvious Seward was beaten a landslide to Lincoln began and he was quickly nominated. In all the history of noise in the United States up to this time there never had been such a joyous outbreak as now followed. All Chicago and rapidly all Illinois went wild with excitement and when the Republican delegations returned to their towns they came with the new suits and the silk hats they had bought for the great occasion battered to pieces by work and excitement.

The campaign which followed was as exciting and as picturesque as the Convention itself. Lincoln would have had little chance of election if it had not been that his opponents were divided - four parties in the field, and if it had not been that William H. Seward prevented the break from Lincoln that his supporters advised.

"The Republican party was not made for William H. Seward," he told them, "but Mr. Seward for the Republican party" and he as well as Mr. Chase, of Ohio, Lincoln's second strongest opponent, turned all their efforts to electing him.

The campaign was enlivened by the Wide-Awakes - generally organizations/made up of boys ~~generally~~ carrying coal oil

torches and wearing oil cloth coats and caps. They manoeuvred in zigzag formation - an imitation of the rail fence.

In November of 1860 Mr. Lincoln was elected and in the following March inaugurated. No President has been inaugurated since Washington who had anything like as serious a condition on his hands as Mr. Lincoln. Seven States of the South had seceded from the Union and set up a separate Government. - the Confederate States of America. ~~had adopted a Constitution, elected a President, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, had chosen Montgomery, Alabama as their capital and had taken over all the property of the United States within their limits including forts and military supplies.~~

Mr. Lincoln refused to recognize this Confederacy and warned the seceding States in his inaugural that the property of the United States ^{in this territory} including the forts along the Atlantic Coast would be held.

While Mr. Lincoln was sincere and determined in saying this he ended his inaugural by a plea to the States not to force their attempt to dissolve the Union.

"The government will not assail you," he said, "You can have no conflict without being yourselves the

aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend it."

Mr. Lincoln's plea had no effect on the South. A few weeks later he found that the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter at Charleston was without supplies. He notified the Governor of South Carolina that he proposed to send unarmed ships with provisions. When the ships appeared they were fired upon and Sumter reduced.

This was a declaration of War to the North and the President at once called for 75,000 men to put down the rebellion.

Mr. Lincoln's handling of the terrible problems, the attempt to dissolve the Union had created, soon convinced those about him that he had both the intelligence and the determination to direct National affairs. Many of his own party had doubted this and when he called William H. Seward, his chief rival for the presidency, to his cabinet as Secretary of State it was said that undoubtedly Mr. Seward would be the acting President. Mr. Seward thought so himself, but at the end of three months he knew better. "The President is the best of us," he wrote Mrs. Seward.

The military problem that Mr. Lincoln had on his hands in the Civil War is not difficult to understand. The eleven states now in the Confederacy - four the firing on went in after/Sumter-had an Atlantic coast line running from the mouth of the Potomac South to the Gulf - a Gulf line running to Mexico. Supplies must come in through the ports on this water front, therefore the forces of the North must close, blockade these ports which finally they did. The Mississippi River cut the Confederacy in two. Therefore the River must be controlled so that there would be no communication between the two ports. Along the Northern border of the Confederacy lay what was called the Border States - Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky. Both sides now struggled to win them over.

For two years the South out-generalled the North in the contest on land. By the end of June 1863 the Confederate Army had actually broken into Pennsylvania and the Northern troops pursuing them gave Battle at Gettysburg in the early days of July. After three days terrible fighting the Confederates were forced back into Virginia. At the same time the last link in the control of the Mississippi River was forged. General Grant for

several months had been besieging Vicksburg, capturing that city and the Confederate Army which had been defending it. By this time the Navy of the United States had succeeded in making an effective blockade of Ports on the Atlantic and Gulf coast, as well as shutting the Potomac from the Confederates. It was obvious that it was only a question of time before the rebellion would be put down.

In the meantime Mr. Lincoln had gained strength for his cause in the North and in Europe by issuing a proclamation freeing all the slaves in those States which should still be in rebellion on January 1st, 1863 and declaring that the United States would maintain this freedom.

In November 1863 the dedication of the Battle field of Gettysburg as a National cemetery Mr. Lincoln stated in the clearest terms that he had yet used his idea of what the War was all about. It was, he said, "that Government of the people, by the people, for the people, should not perish from the earth." That is, what he was fighting for was the Union and what he did about slavery was only as he believed it would help save the Union. He had issued the Emancipation Proclamation to help save the Union.

But although the Confederates were confined and their sources of supplies were practically closed by the summer of 1863 it was not until the Spring of 1864 when the President made General U.S. Grant Lieutenant General and he personally took command of the Army of the Potomac which had been now for three years vainly attempting to reach Richmond, the Capital of the Confederacy, that Lee the distinguished head of the Confederate Army began slowly but surely to be driven back. It took over a year and an awful slaughter of men for Grant finally to capture Richmond, but on April 3rd, 1865 the Confederate Armies abandoned the city and on April 9th Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

Five days later Mr. Lincoln held a Cabinet meeting. He talked much at this meeting about the necessity of letting the Confederates down easy, as he expressed it. They couldn't expect him, he told them, to take any part in hanging the leaders. The Confederates who had surrendered were fellow-citizens now and they must be so treated. His mission was to restore the Union to what it was before the war-without slavery. That was done with forever by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution secured in January of 1865 to his great joy.

It was in this spirit of rejoicing and mercy of the 14th that in the evening he went with Mrs. Lincoln to Ford's Theatre to see a play, "Our American Cousin." It was an amusing play and Mr. Lincoln was highly entertained. In the third act as he sat smiling at some sally a pistol shot was heard and the moment afterwards the puzzled audience saw a man leap from the box in which the President and his party sat. As he leaped the flag with which the box was draped caught on the spur he wore, broke his leap and as he struck the stage the bone in his leg snapped. Springing up he rushed out behind the scenes and into the street where a horse awaited him. The actors on the stage and many people in the audience recognized the man whom soon they knew to be an assassin. It was a famous actor - John Wilkes Booth.

The President still sat in his chair, his head dropped on his breast. They carried him out of the theatre into a lodging house across the street. Here all night he lay unconscious, heavily breathing. At twenty-two minutes past seven on the morning of April 15th, the attending physicians pronounced him dead. Secretary Stanton who had sat beside the dying man throughout the night said solemnly and prophetically, "Now he belongs to the ages."