

Springfield Ill
11/22
2

Dear Mr. Phillips:

I had carried my story up to Louisville, I believe. There were three episodes there of very genuine interest. The first concerns Abraham Lincoln's Grandfather and is a good illustration of how tradition, much despised by historians, will sometimes, and I think in this case certainly, lead to documentary evidence; set you on a trail by which you can prove a thing. It seems that some time ago either the Rev. Mr. Barton or my Mr. Warren, wrote to the Filson Club asking them if they knew where the old Gentleman was buried. The Filson Club just laughed- but a young man born out near what is known as "The Long Run Church", heard about it, and said, "Why ever since I can remember they said out our way that A.L. was buried in the churchyard. That started the search. They got out their old deeds and found that the land the church is located on was an acre included in the 400 acres that A.L. took up, somewhere about 1783, I believe. They began to stir up traditions. Not very far away was a spring which, from the beginning of things in the vicinity, had been called "The Lincoln Spring." They looked up the old timers, and without exception they had stories of hearing their grand parents tell how old man Linkhorn was buried up there.

There is a story told of a visitor to the region, who asked one of the old timers where his grandfather was buried, & reported he said "they were keeping company with old man Linkhorn there"

There is another story of war times, in which one of the inhabitants, speaking of Lincoln said, in contemps "His old Grandpap is lying right out here in this yard.

There were so many of these traditional evidences that the Filson Club began a methodical search. They have a great deal of material that they have turned up, in their files, and one day while I was in Louisville, a party, including Mr. Fisher, and a Mr. Veetch, took me over the ground. We picked

up on the way out, an old timer, a curious, wandering type, who knows about digging up Indian relics and locating boundaries and sites. The old church has an interesting location. At the termination of a high bluff, where ~~two~~ streams unite in Long Run, here is the churchyard which formed the northwest corner of the 400 acres on Floyd's creek. See map. There are old, old grave stones here and a number of long graves, marked only with pieces of uncut stone. The belief is that A.L. lies in one of these graves. Each one of the investigators has his favorite grave, and not to be left out in the cold, I chose mine, and suggested that the Filson Club should excavate. Old Mr. P. was skeptical; nothing there, he said. They would not have time to make a coffin with the Indians around; they wrapped them in a deerskin or a blanket, and everything has disappeared long before this - dust to dust. It sounded convincing at the moment, but since I have returned to the first notion and I have been urging the Filson Club to dig up at least two or three of the graves. If one found a skull with an arrow hole in it, it would be safe to call it A.L.'s skull. But there is more. Morecai Lincoln was a big chap at that time. He would undoubtedly try in some way to mark his father's body. If its there, I am onclined to think that there be a rough A.L. scratched on something durable.

From the graveyard we went to the site of the cabin, known in these parts as the Lincoln Cabin. It has been located by the spring, but if you scratch the dirt a bit, you find bits of pottery; the site of the chimney is still plain. But what excited and interested me most, was that just across the little ravine, on the side on which the spring lay, is the remains of what I believe to be a stockade, where the L's were living when he was killed. I say remains, though they are nothing but bits of stone, ~~chipped~~ *dunf* stone, as they call it, used between logs. You can trace here a square of 100 feet, with a court within it. I would be willing to wager almost anything that this is the stockade, about which there has been so much fuss, and which we located when we had our map made, about four miles away. It was a beautiful place for a stockade. You could see anybody coming in all four directions, and they did not see you until they were over the ridges. At all events, we got so excited over the investigation that the moon came up before we left, and when we got back to the road, we found that

half of the party had returned to Louisville and poor Mr. and Mrs. Martin were sitting by the roadside patiently waiting.

I carried home more burs and mud from this trip than any I had yet made, but it was worth all it cost. Its going to be a very nice little story to work out, I think.

The other important episodes in Louisville concern Nancy Hanks. A woman called on the telephone one day and said I should certainly see a Mrs. Gough, who knew all about the birth of Abraham Lincoln. She also said it was something that was not very nice. As I have already, on this trip, heard detailed stories of six different births and six different fathers, I thought I could stand another, so I went to see Mrs. Gough (F. Birdie). I have seen some tough customers in my time, but I never saw a woman who equalled this one. She was taller than I, about 70, with the hardest, most disreputable eyes I ever saw. She has been a midwife, I take it, She called herself a practical nurse, and I don't think there is much of the seamy side of life that she has not contributed to. Alice was with me and helped ask questions. Did she know about A.L.'s birth. Certainly she did. Knew all about his mother. She was a wandering woman, a kind of woods hound. Slept a night in a hay stack; tomorrow night in somebody's corn house. You know how dogs follow--a she dog. Well, that's the way men followed Nancy Hanks; that's nature. You know nature. Well, we came up there from Tennessee when I was a little girl and Uncle Wilson Thompson told us how one day he came into the sheep house and there in the corner, on a pile of leaves, was a woman with a new born babe. He got out his women folks and they took care of her and then they sent her, when she was able to travel, to Tom Lincoln. That baby was Abraham Lincoln. Don't ask me if T.L. was his father (this with as dreadful a smirk as I ever saw) you know nature; nobody knows who his father was. Altogether it was the most sickening form of scandal which I have heard and so obviously an old wife's tale. It is only useful in emphasizing the malice and lying of these story tellers.

We went from this old hag to the other extreme of sentimental presentation of Nancy Hanks. This time there was some foundation. The lady was a Mrs Curry; she too had been introduced by telephone. A music

teacher, sentimental, anxious to imoress us with her cultivation and family. Her mother was named Mary Ann Berry, and she was a granddaughter, who was a son of Richard Berry. Mrs. Curry says that her grandmother was a first cousin of Nancy Hanks. This requires some figuring, which I am not going to do right now. She showed us a miniature of her, a charming person. Evidently Mrs. Curry was brought up in the old fashioned way. She tells a wonderful yarn of her own education. She says my mother reared me like a white lily, and tells how one of her lessons was drawn from Louis XIV, to whom a lady in waiting said, when he made ~~proper~~ improper advances, "Sire (she pronounced it Seer, with a gesture of refinement which would have convulsed you) Seer, the way to my boudoir is through the church door." I don't know how much there is in what Mrs. Curry has to say, but I think there is something. She has the same story as Mrs. Davies uses in her book, and I am inclined to think that there is much more in it than I did when I read the Matrix.

I stayed in Louisville for the unveling of the Barnard statue. It is interesting to see the town slowly giving in, forced to recognize. There was a great crowd, and though one heard rumors of bitter remarks, the tide certainly has turned. Kentucky is accepting A.L., but not a little of the acceptance, particularly outside of Louisville, is due to the fact that he is a strong commercial asset, bringing good roads and tourists.