Lincoln Gossip:

Attached in this Lincoln Sketch is an example of the kind of Lincoln discoveries which every now and then make their appearance. The New York Herald publishes as a contribution to Lincoln's Birthday of 1938 a Sketch of Lincoln's early career which has been published and republished since it first appeared in 1860.

This is like the perennial discovery that Lincoln made an address on Washington in 1839, the discovery that he called prohibition a kind of intemperance in itself - something of which we have no record but which constantly comes up.

Also the remark on corporations/of which there is no proof. the authenticity

Rex

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

The New York Herald Tribune

February 13, 1938

Lincoln Sketch Of Early Career Is Made Public

Short Work Penned in 1859 for Friend Is Taken From Vault After 70 Years

Owned in Malden, Mass.

Covers His Life Up to Missouri Compromise Repeal

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BOSTON, Feb. 12. — The manuscript of a brief autobiography of Abraham Lincoln, brought out of a bank vault where it lay for more than seventy years, was published today for the first time, throwing additional light on Lincoln's early years.

The document, penned by Lincoln in 1859 for his friend, James W. Fell, as a terse account of his life until he entered national politics in 1854 after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. It concludes with the remark that he was "six feet four inches early" tall, weighed 180 pounds, had a "dark complexion, coarse black hair and gray eyes" and adds that "no other marks or brands are recollected."

Parents Born in Virginia

The document was removed from the bank on the 129th anniversary of Lincoln's birth—February 12, 1809—by the Rev. Robert Dale Richardson, of the First Parish Unitarian Church at Malden, Mass., who is the great-grandson of the man for whom it was written.

The biography follows:

"I was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families — second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams, and others in Macon County, Illinois.

"My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky about 1781 or 2, when, a year or two later, he was killed by Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. His ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania. An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham and the like.

"My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age; and he grew up literally without education. We removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in my eighth year.

His Schooling Limited

"We reached our new home about the time the state came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required for a teacher beyond 'readin', writin' and cipherin', to the rule of three.

"If a straggler, supposed to understand Latin, happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three, that was all. There was nothing to excite an ambition for education. I have not been to school since. What little advance I now have I picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

"I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, and passed the first year in Illinois, Macon County—then I got to New Salem, at the time in Sangamon, now in Menard County, where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store. Then came the Black Hawk Wars, and I was elected a captain of volunteers, a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I ran for the legislature in 1832 and was beaten by the people. The next, and three succeeding biennial elections, I was elected to the legislature. I was not a candidate afterward.

"During the legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to practice it. In 1841, I was once elected to the lower house of Congress. Was not a candidate for re-election.

"From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before—always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses. I was losing interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again. What I have done since then is pretty well known.

"If any personal description of me is thought desirable it may be said I am in height 6 feet 4 inches nearly, weighing an average of 180 pounds, dark complexion with coarse, black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected."

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