HISTORY OF THE LINCOLN CORNER CUPBOARD.

Abraham Lincoln, as a boy, often worked as a farm hand amongst the neighbors of his father in the little frontier settlement in what afterward was Spencer County, southern Indiana.

The neighbor in particular for whom he was most willing to work was Josiah Crawford who, in those early days was considered "well to do" and who was the owner of several volumes of books which, in those days, and especially in that frontier district, were very rare and valuable.

Young Abraham Lincoln was very much inclined to read and study and was accorded the privilege by Mr. Crawford of making use of his stock of books. The future president took advantage of the opportunity and often read and studied far into the night up in his little room and frequently took one of the books with him to his work in the fields and woods, snatching a few minutes when resting from his arduous labors to devour its pages.

It was this habit of his which led up to the making of the now famous "corner cupboard" for one day when in the employ of Mr. Crawford he "cached" a book (Weem's Life of Washington) under a log for safety where it was overlooked and temporarily forgotten and was damaged by a storm. When he finally remembered it and discovered its damaged condition young Abe was dismayed.

However, he went to Mr. Crawford, and displaying that trait (honesty) which afterward earned for him his well-known sobriquet of "Honest Abe" he explained the mishap and offered to pay for the damage in the only way he had of doing so -- by offering to work without recompense until its value was liquidated.

Even though the book was valuable Mr. Crawford assured the boy that the loss of one book did not matter. The boy was insistant, however, so Mr. Crawford allowed him to cut corn for three days without pay. Then, to square things he presented the damaged book to the boy.

Not entirely satisfied with this arrangement, young Lincoln went to his father, Thomas Lincoln, who was a cabinet-maker and who had also taught Abraham the trade, and asked his help in making a "corner cupboard" for Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, explaining the circumstances and also mentioning the fact that he had heard Mrs. Crawford on one or two occasions make the suggestion to Mr. Crawford that she wished she had one of the "corner cupboards" which, at that time, were somewhat in vogue. Thomas Lincoln willingly consented and, working together during what little spare time they had, they made the cupboard which, hen completed, young Lincoln proudly and triumphantly presented to his delighted employers.

After he grew to be a young man and had removed to Illinois he never forgot the Crawfords and on his first, and only, trip back to his Indiana boyhood home he made their home his home during his brief stay. From that time on he began to gain in prominence and after he became president the Crawfords' naturally considered the "corner cupboard" as a "gift beyond price .

Upon their death it was inherited by their daughter, Mrs. Ruth Crawford Jennings, who was a little girl at home when young Abe was employed on her father's farm, "Aunt Ruth" as she was familiarly and lovingly known throughout the entire district, was a very popular figure and was always asked to be present at all public gatherings and on all patriotic occasions and was generally the principal speaker of the day, recounting incidents of her girlhood days and of the Lincoln's.

Upon the breaking up of her home in her widowed old age she went to live with her son, Samuel Hatzel Jennings of Rockport, Spencer County, Indiana, who purchased the old cupboard from her and had it removed to his home in Rockport. There it remained until the death of his mother, and for several years thereafter, and until after his death in 1916. Since that time it has become the property of his daughter, Mrs. Maude Jennings Cryderman of Greenacres, Wash. In 1918 it was tken out of Spencer county for the first time in its long life-time, being carefully and solidly crated and shipped by express to her home in Greenacres.

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However, realizing its great historical value and knowing it was in danger of destruction by fire if kept in an ordinary residence, it new owner decided to place it in some fire-proof structure and it was finally again carefully crated and insured against loss and re-shipped by express to Los Angeles, California where it was exhibited, by special request, at the National Old Soldier's Home for the benefit of the old Civil War Veterans on the occasion of the 110th birthday anniversary of its illustrious maker, being exhibited from the stage of the Government Theatre where it was inspected and admired by the several thousand old veterans of the "Home". From there it was carefully removed to the Museum of History, Science and Art, in Exposition Park, Los Angeles and given the place of honor in the Antique Room and where it has since been seen by approximately half a million people.

The cupboard is massive, being over seven feet high and weighing approximately three hundred pounds, being made of solid native walnut out of lumber sawed with a "whip-saw" from trees on the old Lincoln farm in Spencer county.

It is so constructed as to fit into the corner of a room, hence its name -- "corner" cupboard. The front is fastened together with walnut pegs, while hand-made wrought-iron nails were used in the back. It is nicely paneled. One lower panel, however, contains a knot which was evidently so hard that it tried the patience of its maker and, in working down the board from its original thickness to the thin-ness necessary for a panel, he cut around the knot in question and left it the original thickness of the original board. This is in the lower right-hand door, but the projecting knot is on the inside of the door and therefore is not noticeable excepting when the door is opened, the knot on the outside of the door panel having been worked down "flush" with the balance of the panel.

The doors are hung with old-fashioned brass hinges but are considerably worn on account of the doors having been opened and closed so many thousands of times during its long (and useful) lifetime.

There is a strip of hand carving across the front of the cupboard near the top, above the upper set of doors. There are two sets of doors, the lower set opening to shelves for pans, dishes, &c., while the upper (and larger) set opens to shelves for eatables, chinaware, &c.

Despite its great age, the old cupboard is still in an almost perfect state of preservation and is a really handsome article of "furniture" and one of which the youthful Lincoln may easily have been proud when finally completed.

NOT SOMETHING LINCOLN OWNED. NOT SOMETHING LINCOLN BOUGHT OR SOLD. BUT SOMETHING CONCEIVED BY HIS YOUTHFUL MIND AND MADE BY HIMSELF, WITH HIS FATHER'S HELP, IN ORDER TO SATISFY HIS CONSCIENCE -- HIS INNATE LOVE OF RIGHT AND JUSTICE -- AND BY HIM PRESENTED TO HIS EMPLOYER AND BENEFACTOR.

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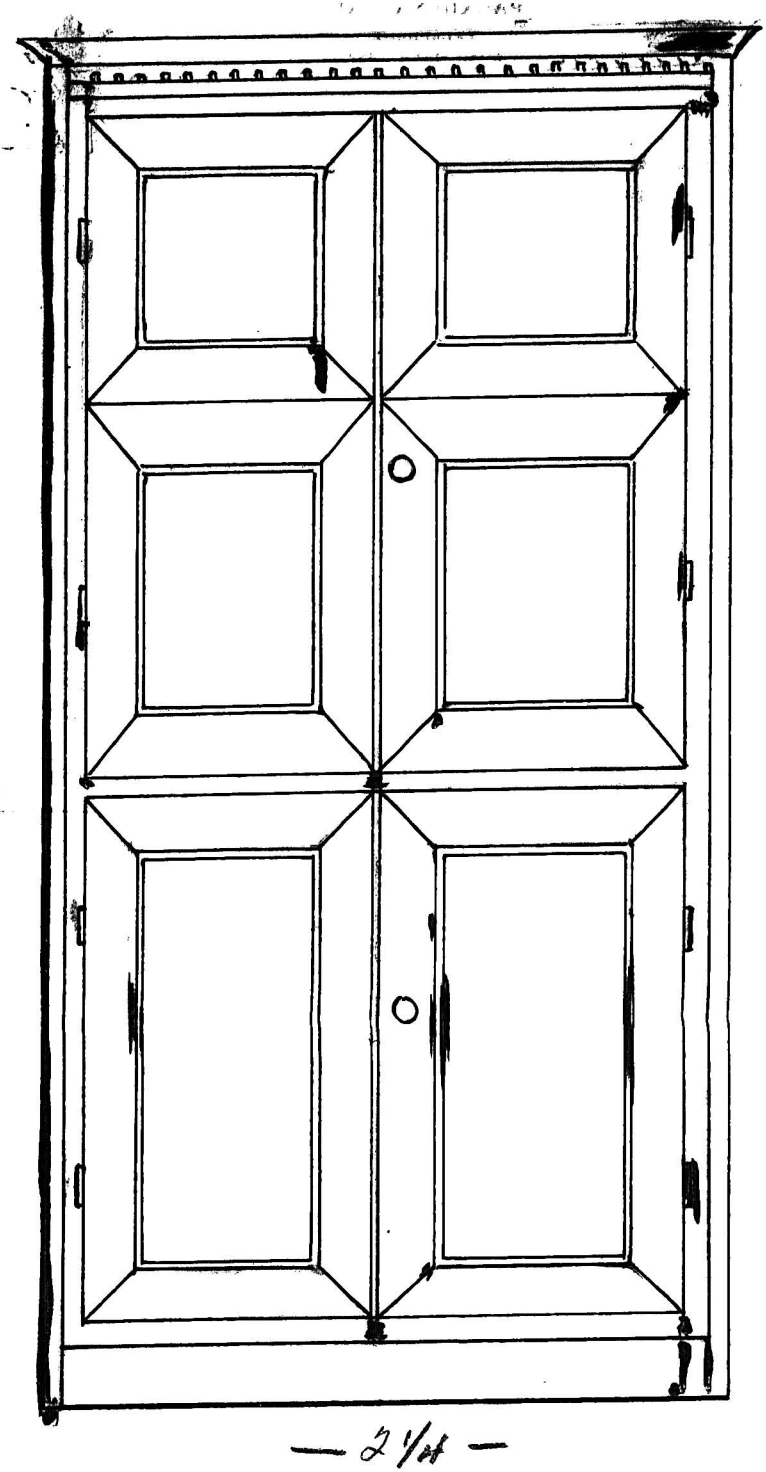

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Museum of History, Los Angeles, at Exposition Park — S. M. — Sept. 1920

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