

Slauter 10/14 22

Dear Mr. Phillips:

I told you something when I last wrote about Eshleman. I did not tell you, however, in my interest in his work that he had never heard of John Lincoln in Lancaster County. He went with me to the court to help me go through the records. So far as we could find John Lincoln was never assessed in Lancaster nor is there any record of a deed given here. Neither death, marriage or birth, or appearance in court has been found and yet we have his own word that he was ^{of} Caernorvan township. It bothered us both that he should have passed through and left nothing behind and it puts up a nice problem to a man like Eshleman. He simply cannot rest when he hears that there was a man who lived in Lancaster Co. even two hundred years ago and he has nothing about him.

It bothers me too, and this passing through a country, living in it, having children born in it, and leaving nothing behind. This kind of work gives me ~~a~~ more and more a sense of the transientness of human beings. They come, do something which counts for the future, go, and that is the last of them. That is why I am so keen, I suppose, on gravestones and old houses.

There is a Mrs. J. B. Lincoln in Lancaster. I found her in the telephone book, and was delighted to find she had a daughter and keenly interested in talking with me, so I went to see them. They do not come from John, but from one of his half brothers. The interesting thing to me, however, is that they are such fine people. This Mrs. Lincoln was altogether the lady. Her husband, J. B., ^{was dead} was a doctor. They had the taste for antiques and her apartment was overrun with mahogany, pewter,

old luster, blue and white china, much of it had come from the Lincolns; some pieces from White Hall. They had Lea's book. I think he must have been to see them, but they knew nothing at all about John. Curiously enough, they gave me a pamphlet by Dr. Lincoln, published by the Historical Society on Caernarvon, and though it tells many things about the important people of that neighborhood, it never mentions John Lincoln.

We left Lancaster Monday night. I had intended to follow the probable route that John did, coming down into this valley, but it poured in rain - no weather for motor, and I thought it wiser to come by train to Harrisonburg. That took up Tuesday, and Wednesday morning I was out bright and early to look up the Harrisonburg historical society and library. There weren't any such things, but ~~they had a library~~ they had a normal school. I sometimes feel as if I were being conducted by Providence, I run on such useful people so unexpectedly. I did here. The head of the historical department is a Dr. J.W. Wayland. He is the chief authority on the Shenandoah Valley, having published at least two excellent books and several pamphlets on the region and its history. The library laid herself out. Dr. Wayland promised to help me, but I had to pay for my advantages by speaking in chapel to the girls. I found some excellent books, one which I think you would have real fun in looking over. It is a history of the Valley of Virginia by Samuel Kercheval. From what Dr. Wayland says, I think it must be one of the famous local histories of the country. It was written in 1833.

When you look that up - if you do - see if there is a copy of the autobiography of Henry Sangmeister, published by J. Bauman in 1825. It must be an astonishing book. It is a frank

account of life at the celibate colony at Ephrata.

I raised the question of John Lincoln with Dr. ^{Waggoner} ~~Waggoner~~ and he knew all about ^{his} ~~the~~ land; said he would go there with me the next day, so I went out skirmishing. Of course, looking in the court records at Harrisonburg for what there might be and right away I ran into the Civil War and the ^{ravages} ~~realities~~ in this Valley. There is an interesting story which I must tell, I think. Everybody tells it to me here who is interested in court records. As the Yankees approached Harrisonburg some excited person suggested carrying off the records. Quantities of things, probably including most of the deeds and wills, were packed into a wagon and started across country. A detachment of Federals overtook them and set fire to the wagon. An officer discovering that it was books that were being burned put a stop to it, but many records were destroyed. They have been busy trying to piece out the scorched remnants ever since. I have what they call "poor picking" in the court records, and I must say I resented the Yankee invasion as much as any Southerner could.

That afternoon I was called up by a woman, a Mrs. Lincoln, married to a descendant of one of John Lincoln's sons, the one who had stayed at home. I spent the evening with her and as I entered was introduced to a little boy of three or four - Abraham Lincoln. She is one of the most enthusiastic students of the Lincoln family history that I ever met because of the two boys. Both of the boys and her husband have the Lincoln forehead and something of the eyes, but nothing of the lower face. Two Lincoln men, her father-in-law, and uncle in law, live near Harrisonburg and we went to see them the next day, and got some picturesque material on the Lincolns in the Civil War. One of these men was a lad of ten years when the Valley was invaded and had thrilling tales to tell. Their fathers and uncles carried on a big business

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farming, millers, Wayside Inn,; one of these men, Jacob, looked enough like Abraham Lincoln, judging from his photograph, to pass for him. The grandfather of these men, David Lincoln, was in correspondence with A.L. when he was in Congress in 1848 about his family and I am going to get fac similes of the letters. The thing that interests most is the quality of the people. One of these men has the simplest, gentlest, firmest natures that I have met for a long time. What it amounts to is that these descendants of John Lincoln through his youngest son Jacob are the finest kind of people, and they ought to be for I found when I went with Dr. L. the next day to see the land on which John had settled in 1768 (I have seen the deed of it here today) was one of the loveliest pieces that man ever took up. He had 600 acres for which he paid, I believe, ² three hundred pounds, Without the buildings that 600 acres would easily be worth \$120,000 today. You never saw more beautiful fields, and the view across the rolling valley to the Alleghenies one could feed on forever. You know John bought this. No mistake about it and lived there, and brought up the children that had been born to him somewhere, but not there, but, so far as I could find, there is not a stick or stone on the place that you can say positively came from John Lincoln. Jacob, his son, to whom 180 acres of the land finally came, built a beautiful house, really beautiful, of brick, 30 x 40 hall, ten feet wide through the center, divided into four rooms, 15 X 30; big fireplaces, every room wainscoted, with pine boards that must be ²⁴ two inches in width; excellent staircase; bricks were undoubtedly made on the place. From end to end two long iron braces hold the walls together. Jacob must have built this house somewhere along about 1800. He was a good deal of a man, a captain in the Revolutionary War, and I found his name frequently in the records. Jacob Lincoln is buried on the place.

All up and down the Valley I found it was the custom to have little private burying grounds . They have one here in which several Lincolns and relatives were buried, and undoubtedly John was laid away here, but he never had a headstone. There is no doubt, too, that Jacob's fine house was built on the site of his father's original house. There seems to be no tradition about what that was.

I find down here that Abraham Lincoln, John's third son, was given 210 acres of the original, or 600., In 1873. So that is all right. He sold this later, and the deeds of that sale are all right. The thing that really interested me most, I think, was realizing that A. L.'s ^{Pyridant} father, Thomas, was born on this beautiful piece of land, looking out on the beautiful mountains, and that he lived on that hillside until he was six or seven years old at least. So ^{Thomas} Abraham had a taste ^{at the time} of what it was to live on a fine place, to have an uncle who was a captain in the Great War, and to have been old enough to have had a keen boy's interest in the wonderful journey out of this Valley, across the mountains to Kentucky. If I were a bit younger and had more time, I should put a knapsack on my back and take that journey on foot. I cannot think of anything more exciting to do.

There are traditions in the neighborhood," many of them, of the Lincolns. They are kept alive by one of the most spirited women I have met in many a day, Miss Kate Pennypacker. Her grandfather was a Lincoln. Through him she came into the 180 acres I have just been talking about, so that ~~only a few years ago, that is,~~ until a few years go, Lincolns had possession of much of John Lincoln's original tract. If I were a millionaire I would pay any price for this land just as a monument. I would buy this and I would go to Penna. and buy Mordecai's home, and then to Seituante and buy that house and then to Hingham and get Samuel's land and restore his house.

Miss Kate had it in for me because of an interview that had appeared in the Harrisonburg paper that morning. The interviewer did make me say something I had no idea of saying, but explanations did not help me at all. However, I had my revenge, because I think she told me more things that weren't so than anybody I have met, though I didn't dare to be too firm in my contradiction. She really was a wonderful person.

I think really that I have gotten certain ideas that are worth developing. The quality of these descendants I am meeting. The kind of people that settled this Valley, with whom John Lincoln had come into the country, with whom he associated. I think there was every form of religious dissent, separation, freakishness, brought together down here. The Lincolns moved with these radicals, but seemed never to have tied up to the many forms. They were really liberal. They^{re} are the most interesting things recorded of the early preachers and missionaries who passed through the Valley.

I am more and more interested in what must have been the life of these women and the way they have stood up to it. One thing is sure: they never shirked big families. All these Lincoln women bore from three to five sons and as some of these Lincoln men had two wives, there certainly was no chance of the Lincoln name dying out, but the Lincoln women of today are not carrying on. There are a few young Lincoln men in the line. The little woman in Harrisonburg is the first one I have found with boys.

I have found here nothing excepting the deeds which I expected to find. I spent a long time yesterday going through the court proceedings of the years when this was a county seat, to which the Lincolns came. I not only looked at every plaintiff, but at

every defendant named over the period from 1768 to 1778. Some job, and a dusty one, I assure you, but I never found the Lincoln name once. A proof that they were peaceable, at least, or so far away from court, -something like twenty-five miles, and not a macadamized road in those days, -that they settled their troubles without going to law.

This gives you an outline only. I really have a lot of material to enliven the story with, material from such books as Wayland, et cetera.

I leave tomorrow (Saturday) night for Louisville, and Sara goes Monday to New York. We are going to motor down to Natural Bridge tomorrow. I have always wanted to see the place, since my first geography, when I was about nine years old, when they had a picture, which I have never forgotten, of the bridge.

It is, of course, not necessary for you to read all this, but by looking it over you may get some suggestions which will be helpful - to me!

Very sincerely yours,