

There has been an effort to dismiss Thomas Lincoln as a "Poor White." Now, what is a Poor White? Fish defines it in his "Old Virginia", Vol. II, page 316:

"Many of these Poor Whites," Fish declares, "are descendants of convicts, degraded freedmen. (p. 159) There can be little doubt that the white freedman of degraded type were the progenitors of a considerable portion of what is called "white trash" of the South.

It is probably true that many of the pirates that infested the shores of North Carolina in the 17th and early 18th centuries escaped to the mountains. Thus the "poor white trash" were largely those who went to the mountains, for a reason, and stayed. It should be noted that Tom Lincoln's course was quite a different one. He was a pioneer of civilization. He was not escaping. He was pushing ahead, and he always was pushing ahead with the best group of his locality. When he left Kentucky for Indiana, he joined a migration which included the Lamars, the Crawfords, the Gentrys. When he went to Illinois, he went with the migration that settled the western middle part of that state, Decatur, Charleston, etc. He was in the van guard, never in the back wash; and if caught there, through lack of communication with the outside world, threatened by disease, he forged ahead.