

On page 99 of McClure's Lincoln, is a statement that, "All the possessions which the three families had to take with them were packed into a big wagon--the first one that Thomas Lincoln ever owned; it is said--to which four oxen were attached, and the caravan was ready."

In this statement you follow Herndon, (vol. I. p. 67); and, Nicolay & Hay, (vol. I, p. 45), who doubtless followed Herndon, also, without question. Now with all deference to the writers referred to, I desire to say that the statement, in the very nature of the case is an error. All other settlers will agree with me that it would have been very difficult indeed for "four oxen" to have drawn even an empty wagon entirely without loading through the deep mud of a wet Illinois March, two hundred miles in fifteen days. ^{Now} I remember well that in the forties it was impossible for four good horses to draw the usual mail coach in the muddy spring-time, on the mail-route from Springfield to Terrehaunte. So, in March and part of April the coach was usually abandoned, and the leather letter bags only, were taken through on a two wheeled cart, drawn by four good horses, with relays of fresh horses every twelve to fifteen miles. The sacks of newspapers and similar matter were stored up at the stations until the roads got better.

In the spring of 1851, I, myself, had occasion to send a load of nursery stock from a point in Macon County, to several points in Shelby and Coles Counties, South-eastward from Decatur. I selected a very strong light wagon, usually known as a two-horse lumber wagon, and loaded it with about fifteen hundred pounds of plants. And it required seven yoke of oxen in the hands of two experienced drivers to make the trip. These are examples. I spent forty seven years of my life (1825 to 1872) in Sangamon and

Macon Counties, and it was no uncommon thing to see men "stuck in the mud" with four horses attached to an empty wagon. Sometimes wheels were abandoned for weeks at a time, and traveling was done on foot or on horse-back. The use of two tall wheels, surmounted by a light pine box, drawn by two horses, was not uncommon for several weeks during muddy weather.

So, then, a team of "four oxen" to that Lincoln wagon would have been a very helpless team indeed; and, to have started it on a journey without any other team to help it through the worst places, would not have been attempted by sensible people.

Then, again, with only that ^{# wd.} one wagon, filled with cooking utensils, bedding for the people, feed for the cattle, (there was no grass in March) Thomas Lincoln's carpenter's tools, nails for the new house, and Abe's goods which he peddled along the road, where would those three families of thirteen persons lodge of nights? There were very few settlers along the route. The movers would usually be compelled to rely on their own resources for rest during the night. And when traveling where would the women and children ride when tired, or, when passing through the deep streams and the wide shallow swamps and ponds? The situation would be desperate in the extreme and the trip utterly impossible.

Evidently, there must have been more wagons than one, and the teams, in part at least, must have consisted of more than "four oxen" each. To prove this I refer to "Lincoln's Complete Works" (vol. I, p. 640) where Mr. Lincoln himself speaks of "Wagons drawn by ox-teams," and that he drive "one of the teams." In Arnold's Lincoln, (p. 28), we find that the ox-team driven by the future President, consisted of "four yoke of oxen."

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Holland's Lincoln, (p. 39) says, "The ox-teams dragged the wagon," etc., and that "one of these teams was driven by Abraham."

This matter should be properly understood as a vindication of the financial condition of Thomas Lincoln. There are many things to prove that he was not the worthless vagabond painted by Herndon.