

What A. L. knew of his family

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tell about the other members of the family, his uncle Mordecai, his uncle Josiah - what had become of them? And then to ask something that always had interested him very much, as I have said - "What was your grandfather's Christian name?" We know it was John. "Was he not a Quaker?" "About what time did he migrate from Berks County, Pa., to Virginia? Do you know anything of your family (or rather I may now say our family) farther back than your grandfather?" That is, as early as 1848, Lincoln had traced his family to John in the Shenandoah Valley, and was in communication with his relatives there.

These letters that he wrote are still treasured possessions of David Lincoln's descendants.

The family became important, establishing not far from where John Lincoln had lived at Lacey Springs, on the old turnpike or Pennsylvania road, perhaps 12 miles north of Harrisonburg, a variety of country industries which they carried on under the name of B. F. Lincoln and Company. They had a tavern - famous in its day - a mill, a farm of some 700 acres. Here they raised tobacco and corn and cattle, cut timber, entertained travelers, traded in a variety of produce, were thrifty people, the backbone of their locality when the Civil War brought its devastation upon the Shenandoah.

Few, if any of them sympathized with their relative, the President, in his position on slavery and afterwards on the Union, though a few of them did try to remain neutral. The spring on their place - one famous for generations in the country - became a visiting place for Federals and Confederates, in the long skirmishing that went on before the Valley was cleared. They knew of course through the letters of their father David who the President was and their relationship to him; but it seems to have made little or no difference with their opinions.