

Lincoln's Religious Foundation

A House Divided: Anti-Slavery Sentiments and the Baptist Faith

In 1807, the **Little Mount Separate Baptist Church** split from the South Fork Baptist Church in Hardin County over the issue of slave ownership. This rift is recorded in the minutes of the South Fork Church. The question of slavery was dividing many congregations as they disagreed over the matter in an area where the practice was prevalent.

The log structure of the Little Mount Meeting House stood about 3 miles east of Hodgenville and 500 yards west of current day Leafdale Community off 31E in LaRue County. It was destroyed by a windstorm in 1909. The church was three miles from the Knob Creek farm of Thomas Lincoln. The Lincolns were members of this anti-slavery congregation while living in Kentucky. Thomas Lincoln, in 1823, joined the Pigeon Baptist Church in Indiana by letter from this congregation.

This affiliation and upbringing may account for Abraham's later statement in a solemn letter of April 4 to A. G. Hodges of Kentucky: "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel."

Slavery was the opposite of opportunity and mobility, and Abraham Lincoln stated his political opposition to it as early as 1837.

ACCORDING TO THE 1811 CENSUS RECORDS OF HARDIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY, WHEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS ONLY 2 YEARS OF AGE AND LIVING AT KNOB CREEK, THERE WERE 1007 SLAVES AND ONLY 1627 WHITE MALES OVER THE AGE OF 16 LIVING INSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE COUNTY. IT WAS AGAINST THESE SLAVES -- WAGELESS WORKERS -- THAT THOMAS LINCOLN, A CARPENTER, FARMER AND LABORER OF THE LAND, WAS FORCED TO COMPETE FOR A LIVING.

Songs from Little Mount Baptist Church



Courtesy of the Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort, KY

A New Kentucky Composition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs is a collection of the verses of musical worship used by the congregation the Little Mount Meeting House while the Lincolns resided at their Knob Creek farm. Several copies of this anti-slavery church hymnal printed by Gerard and Berry Printers of Frankfort, Kentucky, have been found. Publication dates of 1814 and 1816, years that the Lincolns attended the church, have been preserved.

Reverend William Downs, born in 1782 in the old fort at the site of Hartford, Kentucky. He was an orator, debater, minister, teacher, Bible scholar and hymn composer. He is the author of *A New Kentucky Composition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* sung at the Little Mount Church in Hardin County, Kentucky as well as an early minister for the congregation. While preaching at the church, Downs baptized Thomas Lincoln when he joined the flock at Little Mount.

The Lincolns Neufchatel Bible

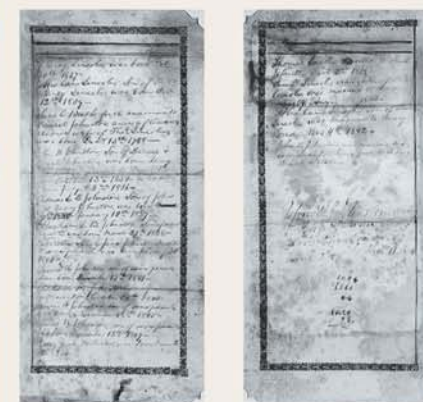


Courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln National Birthplace, Hodgenville, KY

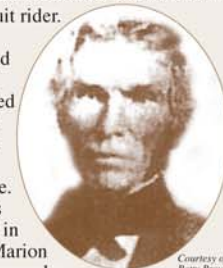
Pages in the Bible contain some Lincoln family history. Many of the recorded names and dates appear in the handwriting of Abraham Lincoln.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS NOT A MEMBER OF ANY CHURCH GROUP; YET HE WAS A MAN OF PROFOUND FAITH IN GOD.

As a young child, **Abraham Lincoln** often heard the scriptures read in the Lincoln household from the Holy Bible known as the "Neufchatel Bible." This bible was printed in 1799 in Great Britain and contains books of the Apocrypha between the Old and New Testaments.



Parson David Elkins, born about 1779 in Virginia. After serving in the South Carolina 2nd Militia in the War of 1812, Elkins relocated to Kentucky and became a Baptist preacher and circuit rider. He ministered at several churches in the area but in particular the South Fork Baptist Church and Little Mount Separate Baptist. There he had the distinction of being a friend and neighbor to Thomas Lincoln and a man whom the young Abraham respected and admired. Elkins was first in Abraham's thoughts when his beloved Christian mother died in Indiana and had to be laid away without religious service. This inspired him to send for the old family friend, the circuit rider, the preacher of the gospel. Out of the depths of his sorrow Abraham wrote his first letter to Elkins who resided near Mt. Sherman, Kentucky, imploring him to come and conduct a memorial service at his mother's grave. Elkins answered the summons and preached the service while on a visit to his two sons who lived in Indiana. Elkins eventually relocated to Indiana as well. David Elkins died in 1857 and is buried in Connelly Cemetery on the heights above White River Valley in Marion Township, Lawrence County, Indiana. His grave is designated an Indiana landmark because he conducted the last requiem for the beloved mother of Abraham Lincoln.



Courtesy of Betty Brown, Terre Haute, Indiana



LINCOLN - FAMILY and FRIENDS

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