

Schools

DRAWER 4 EDUCATION

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# Abraham Lincoln and Education

## Schools

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

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# LINCOLN AND HIS RELATION TO I. C. TALKED TO LIONS

Dr. C. H. Rammelkamp Tells Clubmen  
Many Incidents of War President's  
Connection With Local  
College.

"Lincoln and Illinois College" was the theme of an interesting address delivered last evening at the regular meeting of the Lions club by Dr. C. H. Rammelkamp. The speaker was introduced by Orville Foreman, chairman of the club program committee. Dr. Rammelkamp stated that Lincoln was one of those rare individuals who tower above their environment and accomplish great things in spite of it. There is no doubt that the college on the Hill had some influence on his life, tho he never attended the institution.

Lincoln knew many of the college students of the early days, and later in life he was acquainted with members of the faculty. They must have given him some of the ideas regarding slavery and the preservation of the Union which later became cardinal principles in directing his career. Lincoln bore a more or less intimate relation to the school because of its short distance from New Salem and Springfield, and because of the anti-slavery stand taken by its faculty and students, an attitude which was also dear to his own heart.

#### Considered College

It is held by at least two Lincoln biographers, Dr. Barton and Carl Sandberg, that Lincoln intended to enter Illinois college, but was prevented from doing so by the death of his sweetheart, Anne Rutledge. It is fairly well established that Anne was planning to attend the Jacksonville Female academy, and some believe that Lincoln would have come to Illinois at the same time. The fact that Anne intended to come is set forth in a letter written to her by her brother, David, a student here, the original of which the college possesses. However, Lincoln was 25 years old and a member of the legislature at the time, and it is hard to believe that he might have yet come here to school.

However, Lincoln must have used the textbooks of Illinois students whom he knew. Harry Lee Ross, who carried the mail between Springfield and Lewiston and who knew Lincoln well, tells how the latter asked William Green who was home at New Salem on vacation from the college, if he brought his books with him. Lincoln asked their use and the assistance of Green in the study of grammar and arithmetic, as he wished to qualify for the post of deputy surveyor. Green did assist Lincoln and he got the position.

Richard Yates, the war governor of Illinois, tells how he once saw Lincoln "spread all over a cellar door reading a big book, which proved to be Blackstone." This was when Yates

went home with his friends. Green during one of the student vacations. Lincoln worked in the harvest field at the Green farm and was said to be able to pitch more hay than any other man in the field.

Lincoln was a friend of Jonathan Baldwin Turner, who was an occasional visitor at the white house during his presidency. Lincoln once told Turner that he had gained his knowledge of English from students who studied Rhetoric under Prof. Turner at Illinois. Lincoln was also a friend of President Sturtevant, and in 1856 wrote Dr. Sturtevant a letter explaining why he did not care to run for congress, a position for which the college president had evidently urged him to make the race. Dr. Rammelkamp read the letter in question to the club.

#### Lincoln Defends I. C.

Lincoln once defended the college in a lawsuit which grew out of the gift of lands which had been acquired by Gideon Blackburn. The trustees of Blackburn's estate found the 15,000 acres of good Illinois land he had acquired for the founding of a college, too much of a burden. They had to dig down in their pockets and pay taxes on the land.

They therefore gave the big holdings scattered throuot the state and including town lots in Chicago, Springfield and other cities, to the trustees of Illinois college on condition that they establish a Blackburn chair of theology. The Illinois trustees accepted the land and had sold most of it when the heirs of Blackburn who found a clause in the will which said the college must be established at Carlinville, started suit for recovery of the land. Lincoln defended Illinois, but lost the case in the high court, which ordered the college to return the land to the Blackburn heirs.

Lincoln also once defended a former Illinois college student in a murder case. He was Quin "Peachie" Harrison, who had an altercation with his brother-in-law. Harrison thought his relative was going to hit him with a heavy weight and proceeded to defend himself with a knife. He cut his antagonist so badly that he died. Lincoln cleared Harrison of the murder charge.

The law partner of Lincoln, William H. Herndon, was a student at Illinois for two years. He made a protest speech against the killing of Lovejoy in 1837 at a mass meeting on the campus, and for this his father ordered him home from school. There is no doubt that Herndon influenced Lincoln somewhat. He often gave him advise, tho Lincoln often used his own judgment about following it.

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# LINCOLN LORE

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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S SCHOOL DAYS

Abraham Lincoln's formal education has been given very little consideration by those interested in studying his life; and, when his achievements are discussed, his school days are seldom mentioned as contributing factors in his training. Lincoln himself is partly responsible for the glossing over of the short but very important periods during which he received instruction from Kentucky and Hoosier school-masters. As a nominee for the presidency he had occasion to write about his early days, and, observing the many advantages enjoyed by the school children of 1860 over those of 1820, he drew a very gloomy word picture of the pioneer schools on the western frontier. Somehow biographers concluded from this and other statements that Lincoln was denied even the meager educational opportunities then available.

It can now be shown that Lincoln's formal instruction was not inferior to that of the majority of other boys who grew up in the wilderness. He went as far in his reading, writing, and arithmetic as the pioneer school was able to carry him. The school-houses occupied, the school terms attended, the school-teachers who instructed, and the school-books read are subjects of interest in considering Abraham Lincoln's school days.

### School Houses

Abraham Lincoln attended four different log cabin schools; one less than a mile from his home, two different ones about one and one-half miles away, and one nearly four miles distant. A photograph of the first log building where Lincoln went to school with his sister, Sarah, is still extant. The log school-house which served as a gathering place and shelter allowed Abraham Lincoln to enjoy the valuable social contacts made with both teacher and pupil, and in this respect at least his education was not deficient. In one of these rough buildings a course in manners or pioneer etiquette was taught.

### School Terms

On one occasion Lincoln wrote that "the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year." yet he attended at least five different terms of school. This would allow approximately two months for each term, which was not an unusually short period for a pioneer school. The court established a ruling that a child bound out to a guardian should have "one year's schooling in the English language."

Lincoln attended two terms of school in Kentucky during 1815 and 1816 when he was six and seven years old respectively, and three terms in Indiana during the years 1820, 1823, 1826 at the ages of 11, 14, and 17 respectively. During the latter period, from 1820 to 1826, there were two boys and three girls in the Lincoln home, and it is likely that the indirect influence of the school continued to play an important part in Lincoln's life for many years.

### School Teachers

We are not left in doubt as to who had the honor of instructing Abraham Lincoln, as he remembered the names of those who assisted him in his formal education. His Kentucky teachers were Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel; the Indiana instructors were Andrew Crawford, (James) Swaney, and Azel W. Dorsey. No one of them

was an itinerant pedagogue, but each one resided in the community where he taught.

While they were not versed in the higher branches, they were all sufficiently educated to instruct Abraham Lincoln during those periods in which he was under their tutorage. Riley was educated in St. Mary County, Maryland, and Hazel in Virginia. Both were good scribes, and the latter, who lived on the farm adjoining the Lincoln's in Kentucky, "had many fine leather bound books."

Crawford, aside from following the teaching profession, was a justice of the peace in Indiana, but little is known about Swaney except that he was a young man and a resident of the county in which he taught. Dorsey, aside from acting as treasurer of Spencer County, also served in other official capacities. At one time he was proprietor of a store. He lived to see his distinguished pupil achieve fame. It would appear from evidence available about these men that they were pioneer teachers of more than average intelligence.

### School Books

*Dilworth's New Guide to the English Tongue* was Lincoln's first school-book. While it was a speller, it also contained "a short but comprehensive grammar" and "a useful collection of sentences in prose and verse."

Although the Bible was probably used in the pioneer schools as a reading book, Lincoln told Herndon that *Murray's English Reader* was "the best school-book ever put in the hands of an American youth." It outlines in great detail: Proper Loudness of Voice, Distinctness, Slowness, Pronunciation, Emphasis, Tones, Pauses, and Mode of Reading Verse. The author claimed the selections in his book to be extracted from "the works of the most correct and elegant writers."

*Pike's Arithmetic* is the text Herndon claimed Lincoln used in Dorsey's school and which enabled him to "cipher through the rule of three." The rule of three is the method of finding a fourth term of a proportion when three are given. This was the most advanced course offered in mathematics. Many pages of Lincoln's own arithmetic copy book have been preserved which prove his efficiency as a mathematician.

*Aesop's Fables*, *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, *Weems's Washington*, *Barclay's Dictionary*, *The Kentucky Preceptor*, *Weems's Marion*, *Ramsey's Washington*, *The Columbia Class Book*, *Scott's Lessons*, and a history of the United States are some of the other books which were read and studied by Lincoln during his school days.

Abraham Lincoln's early training was made more valuable by a sympathetic home atmosphere. Both his own mother and his step-mother encouraged him, and one of the Lincoln's neighbors in Indiana claims that Abraham's father seemed to be proud of his son's ability to learn. A schoolmate of Abraham has left this reminiscence of Lincoln's school days: "Abe was always at school early and attended to his studies, always at the head of his class and passed us rapidly."

The achievements of Lincoln would have been impossible without the primary formal education which he received in log cabin schools.

Note—Reprints of this issue are available. Form No. 2399.

## Lincoln's Schooling

According to a recent "Lincoln Lore Bulletin" of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, the notable feature of the meager pioneer education of the future President was not its meagerness after all, but the solid foundation of educational growth that was crowded into the short and few school terms possible in those early days.

Lincoln was a good scholar and made the best of what opportunity was given him, but what schooling he had was no less than that of the ordinary boy of his time and place.

Between the years of six and seventeen, the boy Lincoln went, for a term of two or more months, each, to five different schools, making about a year of formal school study.

The classes of course were small and the teachers earnest and devoted men, one of them educated in Maryland and one in Virginia, with both of these "good scribes," with the Virginian, who lived on the next farm, the possessor of "many fine leather books."

These, with the other two or three teachers, all of whom Lincoln remembered well and by name, were spoken of as men of unusual intelligence and ability.

The little log schools were centers not only of learning, but of social contacts of their day, with one of them carrying on a course of pioneer manners and etiquette for its young scholars.

Lincoln himself is quoted as enumerating his school books.

First mentioned among them was his beginner's book, "Dilworth's New Guide to the English Language," a spelling book, but containing also "a short but comprehensive grammar," and "a useful collection of sentences in prose and verses."

It is supposed that the Bible, after the custom of the time, was used as a reading book, but Lincoln's most intimate biographer, Herndon, quotes him as saying that Murray's "English Reader," which he had studied at school, was "the best school book ever put into the hands of an American youth."

In this volume were extracts from "the works of the most correct and elegant writers," with instruction to the young reader on "Proper Loudness of Voice, Distinctness, Slowness, Pronunciation, Tones, Pauses, and Modes of Reading Verse."

There was Pike's Arithmetic, too, which carried its young student through the rule of three, and there were also Aesop's Fables, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Weems's Washington, Barclay's Dictionary, The Kentucky Preceptor, Weems's Marion, Ramsey's Washington, The Columbia Class Book, Scott's Lessons, and a History of the United States.

This list was enough to inspire an ambitious and eager young mind, and if deeply absorbed, could easily become of more value than the offerings of ten years of schooling carelessly accepted.

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## Schooling For The Young Lincoln

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"ABE," SAID Tom, after a moment of hesitation, "how would you like to have some more schooling?"

Abe was so startled that he was unable to answer.

"I mean it, boy," his father said, squinting at him in the pale early light of the morning. "How would you like to get some more book-larning?"

"Where would I get it?" Abe asked.

Tom Lincoln hesitated again, and Abe could see that, whatever he was about to propose, it was not coming out easily.

"Your mamma tells me," he said at last, "that Azel Dorsey is fixing to start him up a blab school next winter." . . .

Abe scrutinized his father's face for a moment.

"But you were always dead set against schooling, Pappy."

"Not altogether, I wasn't," Tom replied uncomfortably, . . . avoiding his son's eyes. "Of course you've had your quarter at Andy Crawford's already. You can read some and cipher a little. A feller would think that was enough. Now you take me, I've always kept my accounts by making marks on a rafter with a wood coal and then rubbing the marks out when I was through with them. Yeah—you would think that was good enough, wouldn't you?" . . .

"But you think I ought to go to Azel Dorsey's school for a little more, just the same," Abe put in hastily, seeing that he was losing ground.

Tom looked startled.

"Me?" he said.

"Her, then. She thinks so."

"Her," Tom said. He nodded slowly, his face once again troubled.

"So? . . ."

Tom sighed.

"She's got the fool notion," he said, "that your head is like Mizz Reuben Grigsby's flowerbed, or something of the sort. She keeps saying that flowers can grow in it or weeds can grow in it. Says it will be weeds if we don't do some cultivating." . . .

"Well, Pappy, I reckon we oughtn't to disappoint her," Abe said. "I'd sure hate to sprout weeds outen my ears."

Tom Lincoln's shoulders slumped as he nodded again.

"'Course you'll have to pay for it outen your own earnings," he said.

"'Course I knowed I'd have to do that," Abe said.

So he was going to school again! As he rode along through the woods that June morning, Abe's heart was lighter than it had been in a long time; and everything about him seemed exciting and wonderful. —From "Abe Lincoln of Pigeon Creek," by WILLIAM E. WILSON. Copyright 1949. Used by permission of Whittlesey House, a division of The McGraw-Hill Book Company.

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# Abe Lincoln Learned Three R's in Indiana

By FRED D. CAVINDER

**INDIANAPOLIS (NANA)—** Somehow, it is felt here, Lincolniana has passed Indiana by.

Kentucky has well publicized Abe's log-cabin birth and who doesn't know that Lincoln split rails in Illinois? Yet it was among the Hoosiers that Abe Lincoln's formative years were spent. He came here as a boy of 7 in 1816 and stayed for 14 years.

A COMMISSION has now been set up in Indiana to catch up with the publicity lead won by the two other states. Among several projects planned under way, the commission is digging up some interesting facts about the little known careers of Andrew Crawford, James Sweeney, and Azel W. Crawford. It was this Hoosier trio who gave eager Abe his only formal schooling.

Two years after Abe came to Indiana, Andrew Crawford opened a log schoolhouse three miles from the Lincoln family hut. Tuition was in the form of animal skins and farm produce.

**CRAWFORD RULED** his "blab" schoolhouse, where the pupils studied vocally, with the whip and dunce cap while the youngsters sat stiff-backed on wooden benches.

The 10 or 12 children learned little more than their three R's, using pens of turkey quill dipped in pokeberry ink.

It was here that Abe won his reputation as a speller, and because of this skill suffered the pangs of his first schoolboy love. She was Ann Robey, and she thought quite a lot of Lincoln, especially after he helped her in spelling class when the teacher wasn't looking. Legend says he once pointed to his eye to help her remember the "i" in "defied."

In Crawford's school Abe began writing his first compositions—against cruelty to animals. One of his prize essays was an attack on placing live coals on turtles' backs.

**CRAWFORD ALSO** tried to teach his backwood's pupils social graces and he had them practice cavalier - style bows and formal introductions. Lanky Abe, in low shoes, short socks and buckskin britches that left six inches of his shinbone bare, was the brunt of many jokes in his clumsy attempts to learn "city manners."

Crawford gave up his school after one season, but along came Sweeney in 1822, and this teacher set up shop in a cabin just like Crawford's except that it had two chimneys. Sweeney was supposed to get \$1 or \$2 for tutoring each of his nine or ten scholars, but he soon settled for skins and grain, the only things the parents could afford.

**MORE LITERARY** campaigns against cruelty to animals and a dabbling in poetry occupied Lincoln here, but the distance to school made his attendance sporadic and he soon stopped going. A short time later Sweeney gave up the school.

Then came Sweeney's foster father, Dorsey. He was by far the most competent and best remembered of the trio.

**DORSEY WAS** considered an educational marvel. Not only was he a popular leader and an office holder, but his competence in arithmetic, gained in the mercantile trade, placed him at the pinnacle of intellectual achievement in the backwoods.

Seventeen-year-old Lincoln developed his clear, distinct handwriting skill under Dor-

sey and clinched the title as the state's top speller. He delved into the "higher branches" of learning—arithmetic—in an ancient text.

In 1828 Dorsey moved to Shuyler County, Ill., where he became patron of the Rushville post office and taught school again. Years later the Rev. Chauncey Hobart of Red Wing, Minn., wrote:

"IN THE FALL and winter of 1828-29, Dorsey taught school in our neighborhood which I attended. From Mr. Dorsey I first heard of Abraham Lincoln, who had been one of his pupils the winter previous. Mr. Dorsey remembered the young Lincoln kindly, spoke of him frequently and said 'Abraham Lincoln was one of the noblest boys I ever knew and is certain to become noted if he lives.'"





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By MARIE FRASER  
Managing Editor

# Lincoln's Indiana School Days

SCHOOLMASTER DORSEY pushed the crudely-made plank door open and peered inside the new Jackson Township school. The room was dim. Poor light came from one window covered with greased paper. The split-log puncheon benches were hardly more than silhouettes.

At one end of the cabin was the fireplace which, in the two or three winter months ahead, would provide not only the heat but also the light for the small "destrict" school. A platform for the master's desk was at the other end. Dorsey would have his older scholars help him move the heavy oak desk he had brought with the rest of his plunder from Hardin County, Kaintuck, in 1816.

The desk was battered now, having been moved from the Mill Creek (Ky.) community to Ohio Township, Warrick County, where Dorsey had served as election clerk. In 1818 he moved the desk to Spencer County to serve as his only "official" piece of furniture during the years he was county treasurer and coroner.

In 1820 he had moved on to Dubois County, but he and his family returned in 1823 to set up a real estate business in Rockport for a year, followed by his two-year try at the mercantile trade. Now it would serve as the schoolmaster's desk.

Dorsey put his Murray's *English Reader* down on a bench, rubbed his chilled hands together, and studied the fireplace momentarily. He reckoned the Jackson Township freeholders had done a "right smart job" of the stone fireplace. The rocky hills of Spencer County had yielded a plentiful crop of stones which, mixed with the clay and straw of the Little Pigeon Creek area, were used by the 20 or 25 men who were mandated by the new law of 1824 to provide a *public* school for their community.

The schoolmaster stepped outside to pick up some shavings and logs to start a fire. The young-uns, who had watched their pappys at work on the new school, had piled the logs up outside. The autumn air was raw and the heavy frost clung to the long, brown grass. Harvest was over; his younger scholars were free now to come to school—weather permitting. The freeholders had been reminded to place the schoolhouse on a site as near the center of the township as possible. Still, some of the young-uns had to walk four or five miles.

Once the fire was burning brightly, Dorsey looked around the cabin more closely. Sure, nuff, there were pegs for coonskin caps, probably enough benches for the Gentry, Grigsby, Hall, Forsythe, Brooner and Lincoln young-uns, and a gourd for pokeberry juice. Maybe some

of his "scholars" would have turkey buzzard quills for writin'.

## DONATED BUILDING TIME

Azel Walter Dorsey, then 42, knew something of the law. As he looked around his school, he uttered a silent "thanks" to the legislators who had met at the state capitol in Corydon and on January 31, 1824, had passed an act providing for the general development of the school system in Indianny.

The law said that 20 freeholders in a township could authorize the building of a schoolhouse, centrally located, and that all freeholders over 21 years of age were required to put in one day a week on the construction of the schoolhouse until it was completed.

This school was an improvement over the hard dirt-floor school his ward, James Sweeney, had kept during the winter of 1822. Young Sweeney, 22, had a subscription school with about nine or ten scholars. He was supposed to get \$1 or \$2 a quarter per young-un, but they were pinching times and he usually settled for skins or produce.

## PUNCHEON FLOOR

The 1824 statute specified that all of the schoolhouse construction had to be done under the direction of the school trustees and, in the case of two-story log schools, there were to be eight feet be-



tween floors. This ruling wasn't necessary at the Jackson Township school, a one-story structure, but the ruling that the first floor had to be one foot from the surface of the ground had been observed in school construction at Little Pigeon Creek for the first time. Yes, Dorsey agreed that the puncheon floor had helped finish the cabin "in a manner calculated to render comfortable the teacher and pupils" as the law specified.

Dorsey had figured he could handle the schoolmaster's job between harvest and plantin' time in the spring. He had had no trouble qualifying. All the law said was that the prospective teacher was to be examined by the trustees "touching his qualifications, and particularly as respects his knowledge of the English language, writing and arithmetic."

#### PRACTICED CIPHERIN'

Actually, most of the settlers 'round the Little Pigeon Creek community 'lowed as how Master Dorsey, with his background of public official and merchant, was much better qualified to teach than the two masters before him—Andrew Crawford and James Sweeney. Leastwise, his knowledge of cipherin' was greater than his predecessors.

Dorsey had heard the settlers talkin' in Gentry's store about the other two schoolmasters. Take Master Crawford. He wasn't an itinerant teacher like some. He had lived in the community several years, served as justice of the peace of Carter Township in 1819, and had taught "subscription" school one winter in 1820. Crawford, not related to Josiah Crawford, however, was considered above the average pioneer because he had had to read the 38 pages of closely-printed state laws in the published statutes in order to be a justice of the peace.

#### MANNERS A MUST

His other claims to fame as a teacher were that he was a good penman and that he taught the young-uns manners. The scholars took turns playing "visitor" at the school, being greeted at the door by a classmate with a "howdy" and introduced properly to the master and others in the class who bowed or curtsied.

Folks in Jackson Township also were still talkin' 'bout the spellin' matches that Master Crawford held every Friday night at the schoolhouse. The young-uns took great delight in out-spellin' the oldsters three times their age. Dorsey soon "took the hint" that it might be wise to revive the spellin' matches at Little Pigeon Creek.

Crawford operated a "blab" school with all the scholars studying aloud.

Those who mumbled or forgot their sums were cracked with his heavy whip.

Crawford left Spencer County presumably in 1821 after he performed the marriage ceremony for Robert Angel and Polly Richardson.

#### MASTER AND THE PUPIL

Sweeney, sometimes called Swaney, and his sister Charlott were orphans. Azel Dorsey and his wife had posted a \$1,000 bond as guarantee that by the time James had reached the age of 22, the end of his apprenticeship, Dorsey would give him "a horse, saddle and bridle worth \$70 and learn him to read, write and cipher to the rule of three."

When Dorsey's scholars seemed defective in their larnin', they were quick to tell him that they "ain't never heerd that-there afore" which caused Dorsey to squirm. After all, the little that Master Sweeney was able to pass on to his scholars he had picked up from Master Dorsey!

#### WASTED TIME

Speaking of one of Sweeney's scholars — Abe Lincoln — John Hoskins told Dorsey that Tom Lincoln's young-un had to walk four and a half miles to school—two miles beyond Gentry's store. This going back and forth occupied entirely too much of his time. Tom Lincoln was unhappy because he reckoned that a big boy like Abe could be earnin' 25¢ a day for his Pa, hired out to cut logs, during the time he was wastin' on eddication.

Hoskins said: "Sweeney's schoolhouse was much like the other one near the meetin' house 'cept that it had two chimneys instead of one. . . . Here, we would choose up and spell as in old times every Friday night."

Sweeney married Sarah Jane Crannon in 1825 and moved to Rockport. He was the only one of the teachers of that period who continued to live in Spencer County.

**Y**EARS later, just before his death on September 13, 1858, in Schuyler County, Illinois, Dorsey had occasion to reminisce about his teaching days at Little Pigeon Creek and his scholars there. There was one in particular he couldn't forget.

Dorsey rolled back the years and recalled the first day the gangling, six-foot-three Abe Lincoln ducked his tousled head as he came in the door and said "howdy" to the new master. He had come to get some larnin' because, as he put it, "I aim to be somebody some day — maybe President. I must study and get ready."





## LINCOLN'S SCHOOL DAYS.

Little Abe was first sent to school when he was about seven years of age. His father had never received any "book learnin'," as education was termed among such people, and it was with difficulty that he could write his own name. One day about four weeks after Abe had been sent to school, his father asked the teacher: "How's Abe getting along?" The teacher replied that he was doing well; he wouldn't ask to have a better boy. He had only one lesson book, an old spelling-book.

During the school hours he was attentive to his task, and at night he would study over the lesson he had been engaged upon during the day; the highest ambition of his life at this time was to learn to read. He believed if he could only read as well as his mother, who read the Bible aloud to the family every day, the whole world of knowledge would be open to him, and in this conjecture he was about right. As the old Baptist minister told him one day: "When you can read you've got something that nobody can get away from you."

In the Kentucky home there were but three books in the family—the Bible, a catechism, and the spelling-book which Abe Lincoln studied. He had not been long in Indiana before he had read the "Pilgrim's Progress," his father borrowing it from a friend who lived twenty miles away. He was very fond of reading "Æsop's Fables," a copy of which came in his way. A young man taught him to write.

As writing-paper of any kind was very scarce and expensive, Abe used to practice his writing exercises with bits of chalk or a burnt stick, on slabs and trunks of trees. Sometimes he would trace out his name with a sharp stick on the bare ground. When, finally, he was able to write letters, he was called to do the correspondence of many of his neighbors, for very few grown persons in that region could write even a simple letter.

As Abe Lincoln grew older he became a great reader, and read all the books he could borrow. Once he borrowed of his school-teacher a "Life of Washington." His mother happened to put it on a certain shelf, and, the rain coming through the roof, the book was badly damaged. Abe took it back to the school-master, and arranged to purchase it of him, paying for it by three days' hard work in the cornfield; and he was entirely satisfied with the bargain at that.

At the age of eighteen his library consisted of the "Life of Franklin," "Plutarch's Lives," the Bible, the spelling-book, "Æsop's Fables," "Pilgrim's Progress," and the lives of Washington and Henry Clay. A boy might have a much larger private library than this, but he could scarcely find an equal number of books better calculated to impart wholesome lessons as to correct living and right thinking.—*Harper's Young People.*

## LINCOLN'S SCHOOL DAYS.

### How Little Abe Acquired a Knowledge of Reading and Writing.

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As Abe Lincoln grew older he became a great reader and read all the books he could borrow. Once he borrowed of his school-teacher a Life of Washington. His mother happened to put it on a certain shelf, and, the rain coming through the roof, the book was badly damaged. Abe took it back to the school-master and arranged to purchase it of him, paying for it by three days' hard work in the corn-field; and he was entirely satisfied with the bargain at that. At the age of eighteen his library consisted of the Life of Franklin, Plutarch's Lives, the Bible, the spelling-book, Æsop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress, and the lives of Washington and Henry Clay. A boy might have a much larger private library than this, but he could scarcely find an equal number of books better calculated to impart wholesome lessons as to correct living and right thinking.—George J. Manson, in Harper's Young People.

## THE SCHOOL THAT LINCOLN ATTENDED

Did you ever hear of a "blab" school? That is what the settlers of southwestern Indiana called the school that Abraham Lincoln attended when he was a boy. If you had lived there you could not have passed the log schoolhouse without knowing that the name fitted, for as you approached you would have heard a steady hum of voices, growing louder as you passed by, which you would have known could only have come from everybody talking together. And so it was. The pupils were studying out loud. There were so few books that the teacher was obliged to read each lesson aloud and the boys and girls repeated it after him. It is probable that Abraham Lincoln never owned a schoolbook in those days. The habit he learned in the "blab" school stayed with him, for all his life he loved to read aloud, and when he was preparing a speech he would repeat over and over the argument and struggle with sentences until he had them in a form where they *sounded* right.

The schools were as poor in furniture and conveniences as in books. Everything that the pupils used was homemade. The benches were made of puncheons, set in rough logs, so were the tables. And as for blackboards, globes, reference books and pictures—there were none. The only branches that the teachers attempted were reading, writing and arithmetic.

But this poverty of books and furniture did not prevent the schools being full of life and variety. If they had little they made much of what they had. There might be but one reader, but it was packed with interesting selections, meant not only to give a good vocabulary, but to teach history, natural science, geography, as well as to arouse a love of generous actions and a contempt for meanness and injustice. Many of the selections chosen dealt with the men that had formed the United States and with their hopes that in this new land there would be freedom and a chance for all that were oppressed.

The very problems in the arithmetic often aimed to teach facts about the country, as those given Abraham when he was studying subtraction:

"General Washington was born in 1732. What is his age in 1787?"

"America was discovered by Columbus in 1492 and its independence declared in 1776. How many years elapsed between these events?"

Having no books, and eager to have copies of the examples given out, Abraham made himself copybooks by fastening together sheets of paper.

Much was made of spelling in the pioneer schools, the pupils choosing sides and spelling down almost every day. One of the excitements of the neighborhood was the public spelling bee. Lincoln was so much better speller than most of his friends that the side which had him for a leader at these bees nearly always won.

—From "Boy Scouts' Life of Lincoln," by Ida M. Tarbell.

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## YOUNG ABRAHAM'S SCANTY SCHOOLING



O when the father could not find a pretext for keeping Abe at home he was allowed to go to school. Part of the time he had to walk four and a half miles each way, but what of that? Nine miles a day in snowy or muddy winter weather was nothing to the joy of learning something—something his teacher, a wonderful man who knew everything, could tell him. Although Abraham never went to those poor schools a whole year in his life, all told, there are many stories about his school days.

The schoolhouses were built of logs, of course, with floors of "puncheon" or split logs, and windows of oiled paper, if there was any substitute at all for glass. They "trapped" up and down and spelled down every week. Abe became so proficient in spelling that he was always chosen in the "spelling-bees," which formed the social dissipation indulged in, somewhat as dancing and "bridge" are in modern society. He so excelled in spelling that the side lucky enough to choose Abe Lincoln always "spelled down," and matters came to such a pass that they had to leave him out of their spelling matches. Then he made himself useful in giving out words for the others to spell, or acted as referee or umpire in cases of dispute, being the authority instead of "Webster," "Worcester" or the "Century," which are the court of last resort to-day.

They did have a book of authority, though. It was Webster's Speller. Webster's Dictionary existed only in the fond imagination of the indefatigable Noah Webster. That great work was not published until many years later.

"Nat" Grigsby, who afterwards married Abe's sister Sarah, or Nancy, as she was now called, once told of Abe's conduct at school in the following enthusiastic terms:

"He was always at school early and attended to his studies. He was always at the head of his class and passed us rapidly in his studies. He lost no time at home, and when he was not at his work was at his books. He kept up his studies on Sunday, and carried his books with him to work, so that he might read when he rested from labor."



They "trapped" up and down



*Restored Schoolhouse, New Salem State Park*

## EDUCATION, 1832

When they laid out New Salem village above the Sangamon, there was already a log schoolhouse on the next hill. And there in the woods Mentor Graham tried to instill into the young minds of a pioneer community some of the practicalities of reading, writing, and ciphering, and, to a receptive few, some of the elegancies of the classics. However well he succeeded, he nevertheless was part of the young school system of Illinois in the days shortly after it became a state. And the old log schoolhouse, today restored on the same old hill, stands as a living relic of a past in which, in spite of physical hardship in a raw new land, men got the wanted education for their children.

Schools in the 1830's, however, were haphazard affairs and teachers were too poorly paid to encourage many really good teachers to come out of the east. There were those who, like Mentor Graham,

taught because they were dedicated to teaching, and there were others who, without much more education than their pupils, taught till something better came along.

In 1825 a law was passed in Illinois by which the schools would be supported by a new tax levy, but it met with so much opposition that it was shortly afterward repealed, and folk continued to send their children to the nearest log school house if there was one handy or, if they could afford it, to other private schools, or to no school at all. Colleges and academies were springing up in Illinois; by the 1840's there was higher learning at Jacksonville, Kaskaskia, Alton, Lebanon, Macomb, and Galesburg. The one-room schoolhouse still lived on, however, and children got educated under conditions that seem crude and primitive today. And young men who could not afford to go to

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(EDUCATION, 1832: Continued from page 259)

school, yet who contained within themselves the burning urge for learning, still found a way to get an education. That was the secret of the new democracy. There was nothing to prevent anyone from getting as much education as he craved, provided he had the urgent desire for it and the courage to surmount the obstacles of poverty, family indifference, ridicule, or the absence or poorness of the schools themselves.

And so it was that an Abraham Lincoln emerged from the prairie with an education that stemmed from the basic learning which he found in drafty little log schools on the hills of Kentucky and Indiana. From his six years in New Salem came new knowledge of law, surveying, Shakespeare and Burns, village culture, and a broader outlook on life. From this same log-cabin beginning arose the high standards present in the Illinois school system of today.







