

Nancy Hanks Lincoln

Little Pigeon Creek Settlement, Spencer County

February 5, 1784 – October 5, 1818

Nancy Hanks Lincoln is best known as Abraham Lincoln's mother. Although she had no formal education, Nancy stressed the importance of learning and reading, shaping the man who would become the sixteenth United States President. She educated him, taught him virtues of honesty and compassion, and instilled in him a sense of intellectual curiosity that would make him one of the most respected leaders of the country.

Nancy was born to Lucy Hanks in Virginia. It is believed that she was born illegitimate to Lucy Hanks and was raised by her grandparents, Ann and Joseph Hanks, until Joseph's death in 1793. After his death while the family lived in Kentucky, Nancy moved in with her aunt and uncle, Elizabeth and Henry Sparrow. She became an excellent seamstress and was employed as such by the Richard Berry family in Mercer County, Kentucky. It was there that she met Thomas Lincoln who was employed by the Berry's as a carpenter. In 1806, she and Thomas married. In addition to Abraham, they had a daughter named Sarah and a son, Thomas, who died in infancy. After ten years of marriage, the family moved from Kentucky to Spencer County, Indiana.

Nancy Lincoln died on October 5, 1818, at the age of 34. It is believed that she died of milk sickness, a poisoning that affects individuals who ingest milk, other dairy products, or meat from a cow that has fed on white snakeroot plant. Days prior to her death, she had been caring for her aunt and uncle who had also died of the illness. Her son, Abraham, was nine years old and helped his father make her coffin. Her daughter, Sarah, cared for the house, her brother, and their cousin who had moved in with them after his parents had died until their father remarried the following year.

Nancy Lincoln is buried at in the Cemetery near the Lincoln homestead in southern Indiana. The cemetery is located on the grounds of the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, a National Historic Landmark District managed by the National Park Service in present-day Lincoln City, Indiana.

For more information about Nancy Lincoln, go to:

<http://www.nps.gov/libo/learn/historyculture/nancy-hanks-lincoln.htm>.

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: Ostendorf, Lloyd (12 February 1963). Depiction of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Retrieved from: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/family/>.




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