

CINCINNATI LITERARY CLUB

SUPPER WITH MR. LINCOLN

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T. STEPHEN PHILLIPS

April 8, 1865.

He sat astride a silver dappled Morgan, a horse too small for his lanky form, and his legs near touched the ground. He wore his customary – a white shirt and black bow tie, black vest, frock coat, trousers, and a felted black beaver stovepipe top hat which added 10 inches to his six foot four frame. All elements showed signs of trail dust which blew up with occasional wind gusts. The men later described his countenance as somber, sad, careworn.

Surgeon in charge, Dr. George Park, rode alongside him, and they were preceded and followed by members of an escort guard from Sheridan's cavalry, as the cortege slowly made its way toward the rows of field tents and temporary buildings making up the 200-acre Depot Field Hospital, near City Point, Virginia.

His mission had become known the day before. The War seemingly won, he would come to this place, one of the largest of the field hospitals, to thank the 5,000 union soldiers under his ultimate command who had borne the worst of the War. Most were casualties of battles at nearby Quaker Road or White Oak Road or Five Forks or of the siege at Pinesville. Before the long day was through he would stand at the beds of hundreds of war wounded.

As word traveled down the line that he was near, those able rose and came close to the trail, some leaning for support on a crutch or on the man next. A few cried out, whether from pain endured or simply for being in his presence. As he passed silently along the line, he nodded toward the men in a gesture of gratitude, and they rendered back salutes of respect and affection.

Edmund stood with a group at the edge of the compound awaiting assignment to a bed and physician, and as the President approached, Edmund also drew close to the trail, supported by his crutch. He yearned to see whether he might divine in the President's face some vestige of their first meeting, and whether the President might likewise see in him some recognizable feature. Edmund removed his cap to increase that possibility, and drew his hand in salute. The President stared at Edmund as he approached and kept staring as he passed and for a distance after, evidence enough for Edmund to conclude and later report that the President had indeed recognized him

And then Lincoln was gone and in just a week the great man, the Great Emancipator, would be gone forever.

October 1830, Thirty-Five Years Earlier.

It was nearly noon on Saturday, when, his chores finished and with his father's blessing, Edmund left the cabin with one of his father's Kentucky rifles, a horn of black powder, and a leather shot pouch containing wadding and lead rifle balls which he had molded with his father.

As they watched the 12-year-old leave, Angus and Jessie howled woefully, stretching the tethers binding them to locust posts set near the barn. The blue tick hounds knew where Edmund was going and that they weren't going with him. Both were still recovering from a week-earlier encounter with a marauding panther which had slipped into the farm yard. The dogs had saved a pig or a calf, but at the cost of severe injury to themselves. Their howling continued until Edmund had walked across the cleared field lying next to the cabin and disappeared into the woodland.

Edmund walked on for a quarter mile until he reached an area his family called simply "the Woods", some forty acres of virgin timber. The wildlife yield from the Woods, deer, turkey, squirrel, and wild hog, was nearly equal in importance to the captive bred livestock and cultivated crops upon which the family depended.

Edmund's quarry this day was squirrel, and he went direct to "Old Shagbark," a hickory tree some three feet in diameter, estimated by his father to be 100 feet tall with a crown of 70 feet. Old Shagbark and its hickory nuts drew squirrel from all parts of the Woods and beyond. Deer and wild hogs were seen eating nuts under the tree, but those animals generally preferred acorns which were also plentiful in the Woods. Old Shagbark's hickory nuts were mostly shared by squirrels and Edmund's family, who gathered hickory nuts and walnuts in fall and early winter.

Edmund approached quietly and sat within shooting distance of the tree. He saw three newly-built nest beds, one in a crotch created by small branches coming out from the tree, and two situated further out on strong limbs. A shot through a nest was likely to yield a squirrel, but Edmund's father had instructed his sons that a hunter should never shoot through a nest. "You never shoot a critter in his bed," John Phillips had said.

Soon, Edmund heard the sound for which he listened. Like the gentle patter of rain, he heard a squirrel's cuttings from the outer husks of a hickory nut as the cuttings fell through the broad leaves of the tree. Edmund lifted his head, and he saw the sway of a limb as the squirrel moved out to gather another nut. A big fox squirrel. Edmund slowly lifted the rifle and took aim. The squirrel froze, its eyes squarely catching the eyes of its assassin in the last moment of life. Edmund squeezed the trigger, and the squirrel crashed through the tree branches and leaves, hitting the ground with a thud.

Edmund retrieved the squirrel, returned to his spot, and reloaded the rifle. The sequence was repeated several times as squirrels moved onto Old Shagbark. In little more than two hours, Edmund had taken three fox squirrels and a smaller grey squirrel, nearly enough to provide a nice dinner for the family. Just one more, he thought.

Another fox squirrel approached Old Shagbark from the east. Edmund watched the bounce of tree limbs as the squirrel moved from tree to tree toward him. The squirrel jumped to a branch on the side of the tree nearest Edmund. He

drew aim for his last shot, but as he was about to squeeze the trigger, he and the squirrel heard a shout, and the squirrel was gone.

Edmund lowered the rifle and sat quietly. Some 100 yards below the hill ran the Troy-to-Vincennes road, a trailway some twenty feet wide cut through the woodland, which connected Indiana settlements between Troy, on the Ohio River, and Vincennes on the Wabash River.

Edmund watched through the trees as there appeared in sight first one and then two more wagons, a traveling party headed west. The first and third wagons were drawn by pairs of oxen, the middle wagon by two horses. In the driving bench of each wagon sat a woman and a man holding the straps to his team. Four young children sat quietly in the bed of one wagon, one child in another, their heads bobbing with the movement of the wagons. A horseman rode in front of the wagons, and a younger man walked alongside. The wagon beds were filled with sundry items of household and farming nature. Wooden and metal tools hung from the wagon sides and made banging and clanging noises as they fell against each other and the wood of the wagon.

As the party moved past Edmund, he gathered his squirrels and followed along, out of sight. After about a half-mile, the party stopped and began to make camp, near a spring on property belonging to Edmund's father, about half way between his family's home and Little Zion Baptist Church. Edmund now recognized one of the men and a woman as having attended camp meeting at Little Zion. He left with his squirrels to report to his father about the travelers.

"Well, that's Tom Lincoln's family," his father said. "I heard at the Association meeting that he was pulling out for Illinois. How many are with him?"

"I counted eight grown-ups and five young'uns," Edmund said.

"I'll bet they're bedding down so that they can go to services at Little Zion tomorrow," said his father. "You go down there and tell them that we'd be pleased to share supper and that they're welcome to bed at our place tonight without cost."

Edmund hustled the half mile down to the encampment, to identify himself and deliver his father's invitation.

"Tell your Pa that's a mighty fine offer and we'd be pleased to join him, just as soon as we get set up," Tom Lincoln said, as he and the others continued with unharnessing and settling the animals.

Little more than an hour later, Tom Lincoln and his fellow travelers arrived at the John Phillips homestead with their contributions for supper and quilts for sleeping.

Tom, a stoutly built man of average height, with a dark complexion, introduced members of the three families which made up the Lincoln caravan. Traveling with Tom in one wagon were his wife, Sally, his son, Abraham, and Sally's son, John D. Bush. This was a second marriage for Tom and Sally.

Traveling in the other wagons were Sally's two daughters and their families. Daughter Elizabeth, her husband, Dennis Hanks, and their four children traveled in one wagon. Daughter Matilda, her husband, Squire Hall, and their son traveled in the other.

John Phillips then introduced his family, which included his wife Agnes and six children, including Edmund, ranging in age from 6 to 21, one of whom, a nine-year-old, was also named Abraham. Agnes added that they also had three other children who had married and left the farm.

John Phillips asked Tom about their travel that day.

"We started early this morning but had problems with a wheel crossing the creek," Tom said, referring to Little Pigeon Creek which was located about half way between the Phillips and Lincoln homesteads. "Tomorrow being Sunday, we decided just to spend our first night by the spring and attend services at Little Zion tomorrow. Then, light out early Monday." It was just as John Phillips had thought.

"Mighty good," said John. "We'll join you tomorrow for the service."

After a few pleasantries, the group broke up. The women and older Phillips girls set about preparing for supper. "John, you bring meat from the smokehouse," Agnes instructed her husband. "Sureenough," he said, and he and Tom Lincoln headed for the smokehouse.

The children left to see and play with the month-old litter of pups that Jessie had whelped and a pet raccoon, Blackeyes, orphaned when its mother was killed by the panther.

John's 17-year-old son Matthew led the rest of the men toward the barn. Edmund chose to follow the men rather than the children.

The smokehouse was half full of meat hanging from ceiling hooks. John pulled from a hook and handed Tom a salt-encrusted ham, and he pulled a venison quarter from another hook. On the dirt floor in the center of the one-room structure was a rock-lined pit with a slow burning hickory and cherry hardwood fire that filled the room with sweet smelling smoke. John and Tom talked about their preferences for wet and dry cures and hot and cold smoking methods.

After delivering the meat to Agnes, John and Tom joined the other men and Edmund at the barn. As was customary with visitors, John took the group around the farm to show his livestock and rail fence enclosed fields. Next to the barn was a pasture, where two Red Devon oxen, a calf, and three horses grazed. Further away was a field with a sounder of swine, a farrowing pen with a sow and litter, and a holding pen, where four hogs were being fattened for slaughter.

They visited the large fruit and vegetable patch where only pumpkins could now be seen, other vegetables and fruits having been harvested and preserved. They saw the wheat and oat fields, and the seven-acre corn field, where ears of corn awaited picking for the mill and the animals and perhaps for trading.

Then they returned to the barn and sat on milking stools and benches or on the ground.

While the others listened, John and Tom talked about having both come to Indiana from Kentucky, Tom in 1816 and John in 1817. "Why'd you come over," John asked Tom.

"Land titles and slaving," Tom said. John Phillips nodded his head to signify that he understood.

"Three times I lost property in Kentuck I'd paid fer" Tom said. "Bad surveys and cheats. The first time, on Mill Creek, when I went to sell I was told that my description was bad and the survey didn't close. Cost me 38 acres."

"The second time was at Nolan's Creek. We'd been there two years when I learned that the feller from whom I bought had a debt for which he'd given a mortgage I didn't know about. He skipped, and I lost half what I paid."

"The third time was the end. A man named Middleton claimed he had prior title to my place on Knob's Creek. Said he'd bought 10,000 acres, including my place, from Virginia before Kentuck split off. He just sat on his deed while I cleared the land and built, then he steps in and claims title. I'd had it by then," said Tom. "I wuz told that 21 speculators like Middleton owned a quarter of Kentuck that way."

"Indiana territory was done the right way," Tom went on, "good surveys and you buy direct from the government. You can depend on your deed," Tom said. "I bought 160 acres on credit for \$2 an acre and made two payments before the 1819 Panic. I had to give back 80 to make a go of it, but ended up with 80 clear, and then I added another 20. Sold the farm to Charles Grigsby, and my hogs and corn and such to David Turnham. I'm leaving with almost \$500 in my pocket."

"And, I couldn't take the slaving any more in Kentuck " continued Tom. "It just ain't right to treat those black creatures of God like they's dogs, and besides, being a carpenter and free laborer, I couldn't compete for work what with the blacks doing all the work for their owners and being hired out to work for next to nothing. Just wasn't enough work for me, and I couldn't make it from farming alone."

Slavery was prohibited by the ordinance creating the Northwest Territory, of which Indiana was part, and was prohibited by Indiana's Constitution which was adopted in 1816 when Indiana became a state.

"Well, we'll be sorry to see you leave, Tom," John said, "and I'm sure the Church will miss you and Sally."

Tom and Sally Lincoln were members of Little Pigeon Baptist Church. John and Agnes Phillips were members of Little Zion Baptist Church. Both churches and a few others were members of the Little Pigeon Association of United Baptists. Tom and John had each represented their churches in Association meetings.

"We'll miss the Church but not entirely," said Tom. "We're leaving on a sour note." He pulled from his pocket a document titled "Church Letters of Dismission" signed by the Clerk of the Little Pigeon Church and indicating that Tom and Sally were members of the Church in good standing and would be dismissed from membership as soon as they were able to unite with a new Baptist church. The document would permit the Lincolns to join a new church "by letters" rather than by the more cumbersome "experience and baptism."

Tom said that a Church sister, Nancy Grigsby, had objected to issuance of the Church Letters for Tom and Sally because Nancy Grigsby wasn't satisfied that the Lincolns subscribed to church doctrine regarding predestination. According to church rules, when such an objection was made, a committee of church members was formed to investigate. "After all I'd done for the church," Tom noted, "including Abe and me doing much of the building of the church house and my contributing pork and corn for paying the preacher." The objection was found to be without merit. "There weren't anything to it," said Tom.

Abe Lincoln offered no comment as his father went on about the Church. When asked by John, Abe said that he hadn't joined the church, but he attended services fairly regularly, and he had read the Bible through and knew it well.

"I do believe there's a Divinity that shapes our ends," said Abe, but he also said that he couldn't subscribe to a church such as Little Pigeon with long and

complicated statements of Christian doctrine and so fixed on the notion of eternal punishment.

“Oh, Abe could be a preacher,” Dennis Hanks said. “He’s a real speechifier.” Dennis recounted that, often, after Abe attended church service, he would take to a stoop and deliver to anyone around a mocking impression of the preacher whose sermon he had just heard and which he could remember nearly word for word. The men and Edmund chuckled at this description of Abe.

“And, Abraham, what will you carry with you to Illinois from Indiana?” John Phillips asked. Abe paused and then rose from his seat as if he was about to give a speech. Edmund took close note of this outsize twenty-one-year-old, a head taller than the next tallest among them. He had a dark-complexion like his father, and was thin but with sinewy forearms that came from swinging an axe. He had large ears and a prominent nose with a great shock of uncombed black hair that appeared to jump from his scalp when he removed his coonskin hat. He wore a blue patched shirt and buckskin britches which ended about ten inches from the top of his socks, displaying a bony shin.

“Well, first, I’ll take with me sadness,” he said,

“It was a hard time when my mother, Nancy Lincoln, died 12 years ago. We’d been in Indiana not two years when she got the milk sickness and died. I was nine, my sister Sarah eleven, and her death hit us all hard.”

By 1818, because of the concurrent illness among cows which was called the “trembles,” it had become accepted that the illness of which Nancy Lincoln died was caused by bad cow’s milk. Many years would pass before it would be determined that cows became ill and milk tainted because of the cows eating poisonous white snakeroot plant.

Abe spoke about how kind and loving his mother had been to him and that her dying words were an instruction to him and his sister to be good to their father. He recounted how he had helped his father and Dennis Hanks make his mother’s coffin. Dennis Hanks chimed in, “Yes, I seen little Abe whittle pegs for his own mother’s coffin.”

Dennis added that Nancy Lincoln had attended to Elizabeth and Thomas Sparrow when they came down with milk sickness. "She went right over and took care of them to their deaths," he said, "and then she died not a week later. I'm sure she got the milk sick at their place, for none of us got it," referring to Abe, Tom and himself.

Abe continued. "My sister tried to keep house after our mother died, but being only 11 it was too much. Our sadness lifted when Pa went back to Kentucky and brought us mother Sally. She's been a second mother to me and as fine a woman as I ever hope to know," he said, "We've never had a cross word."

Within a year of Nancy Lincoln's death, Tom had realized that a woman was necessary to keep the household together, and he returned to Kentucky for Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow who was called Sally. He had squired Sally before his marriage to Nancy. But, Sally chose Daniel Johnston to marry, a poor choice, and after a difficult 10 years of marriage and three children, Daniel died, leaving Sally with considerable debt. The marriage for both Tom and Sally was one of necessity because of their separate predicaments. Tom settled Sally's debts, and they were married within a few days.

"Jest as hard as was my mother dying, though," said Abe, "was my sister dying. We were close and looked out for each other, having gone through so much together. She was good hearted and sweet. And, the way she died - in childbirth on account of the Grigsbys not sending for a doctor." Abe's sister had married Aaron Grigsby, but she died in childbirth just 18 months into their marriage.

Moving discussion away from these sorrowful episodes, Abe turned to Edmund and asked if he attended school. "Sure do," said Edmund, "at least part of the time. Where'd you get your education, Abe?" Edmund asked back.

"Well, I went to school 'by the littles'," Abe said. "Before we left Kentucky, I learned my ABC's and a little ciphering at schools of Ms. Riney and Ms. Hazell. Here in Indiana, Pa paid for me to go short terms to schools kept by Mr.

Crawford and Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Dorsey. But, put together, all my schooling didn't amount to a year. Attending the last school meant four miles of walking, and what with the work to be done, I just couldn't go much. So, I'd say my education is defective, and I'm mostly self-taught. My two mothers and Pa gave me some encouragement, and mother Sally brought a few books from Kentucky, and since then I've read every book I could get into my hands. Books are hard to come by, and I've walked several miles to borrow a book. I became acquainted with a lawyer in Boonville, John Breckinridge. It was a twenty mile walk, but I'd go to hear him plead in court, and seeing me there a time or two, he began talking to me. He was highly educated and had a library of books, and when he learned of my interest, he started lending me books. So, I'd tell you, Edmund, if you want to be educated, just as soon as you get your chores done, you sit down with a book."

Edmund nodded in appreciation for this advice.

"But, I'll also take adventure with me to Illinois," said Abe.

"Tell 'em about the flatboat trip with Gentry," said Dennis.

Abe's eyes brightened. "Yes sir, that was an eye-opener and a life changer," he said. "My sister had died, and I was feeling mighty low. James Gentry knew I needed some perking up."

James Gentry was a prosperous farmer who also ran the general store for the Little Pigeon community of which the Lincolns were part. He traded with the farmers, exchanging store goods for the products of their farming and hunting - corn, oats, hogs, venison, tobacco. Gentry slaughtered the hogs he took in trade or that he had raised, and stored the cured pork, corn and other farm products until there was cargo enough for a flatboat float down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans for the southern market.

Abe had worked at Gentry's store and on his farm and, with Tom Lincoln's permission, Abe accepted Gentry's offer of employment to help build the flatboat and to serve as oarsman for the trip. He would be paid \$8 a month and

expenses, including for a short stay in New Orleans and return passage. The trip would take two months.

Gentry's son, Allen, 21 and two years older than Abe, would be in charge of the trip. Allen had made one flatboat trip to New Orleans with his father, but he was still relatively inexperienced.

"We built the flatboat and left off at Gentry's Landing in Rockport with a full cargo," said Abe. "It was a fine boat, 65 feet from bow to stern, 18 feet wide, 4 feet high on the sides, made of good poplar except the overhead which was made of gum. Nary a drop of rain got through."

"Allen handled the steering oar. I handled the gouger and the pole. I was a beginner, but I learned fast, as we steered around islands and rocks and snags. We counted up that we were more than 1,200 miles on the waters."

"And, what a river is the Mississippi," he continued. "The Father of Waters it's called. We wuz on the Ohio about 4 days before it connected with the Mississippi. The Ohio seemed like it didn't want to join, like it was fighting the Mississippi. For near two days you could tell the clear water of the Ohio from the dark and thick water of the Mississippi. Then, gradually, the Ohio gave in, and the waters mixed, and it was all Mississippi."

"And that river was full of curves and bends and turns. In a single hour, as the river meandered, you could feel the sun on the front of your face and on the back and every other part of your head."

"We'd tie up at night, and sometimes during the day, at towns and plantations, and try to sell. We had good luck that way and sold near half our goods by the time we reached New Orleans."

"I'm lucky to be a'standing here, though, on account of one incident. We'd tied up below Baton Rouge, at what we thought was a plantation. Turned out to be a convent of some sort for young women. Just about dark, we were set upon by a pack of black men, I think seven, carrying hickory clubs. We figured they were runaways. They aimed to rob us and maybe kill us and take the boat. We

fought hard as we might, but we were on the losing end, till Allen yelled 'Lincoln, get the guns and shoot them'. Course, we didn't have any guns," Abe chuckled, "but they must have thought we did, because they were off the boat like a shot. Just as quick, we pulled anchor and got back out in the waters. Next day we got to New Orleans, banged up but there nonetheless."

"Pulling into the wharf was quite a sight. We counted 150 flatboats like ours tied up at the wharf, stretching most of a mile. And beyond the flatboats were steamboats and great ocean-going sailboats from foreign countries. Allen and I felt like the amateurs we were, though he'd been there once. Allen paid the tie-up fee, and I stayed with the boat while he visited around to find out prices. Our goods were appealing, and we sold out by the end of the second day. And then we tore apart the boat and sold the wood to a man who said that he was buying for the City itself."

"We stayed a full week in a rooming house and walked day and night, taking it all in. I saw people of all nationalities. The mixture of languages and costumes and manners left me dumbstruck. I left with a whole different outlook."

"And, I witnessed the worst of man's nature. At the rooming house I saw newspaper notices of rewards for the capture of runaway slaves and of slaves being offered for private sale or auction right alongside livestock and other chattels. Allen and I attended a slave auction at Hewlett's Exchange and the memories of it will always haunt me. Black people penned up awaiting auction, cleaned up to show their best. Bidders inspecting them as if they were animals – checking teeth, looking for signs of infirmity or of the lash. I saw families begging to be kept together and cries of anguish when they weren't. The saddest of all to me was that of a mother whose boy was bought without her, she clinging onto him and begging that his buyer take her as well, and wailing when he claimed not to have money for her. And that little boy, as he was led away, saying to his mother, 'Don't cry, mama. I'll be a good boy.' It brought much tear to my eye, and I told Allen right there that 'if ever I get a chance, I will hit this thing hard.'"

Abe's father nodded in agreement. Although Tom Lincoln's objection to slavery lay in considerable part on the way it affected him economically, he likewise had a moral objection, as did his church.

Abe continued. "We passengered back to Rockport on a steamer as deck passengers. For cheap fare, we slept on the deck and worked to load and unload cargo at stops along the way. We lived and slept among other flatboatmen and roustabouts who drank and gambled day and night. Allen kept a tight grip on his money pouch."

"What'd you get total for all that trip," Edmund asked.

"\$18," said Abe. "But, excepting for it was Pa's money, I'd done it for free," Abe said with a glimpse at his father which betrayed some resentment. Until a son reached age 21 or was emancipated, his labor belonged to his father. Not only was a son obliged to work his father's farm, the father could hire out the son, and all that the son earned belonged to his father. Abe worked a lot of jobs at his father's direction, and all of the earnings belonged to his father.

Tom Lincoln's insistence on having Abe's earnings wasn't surprising. The Lincoln family, like most, lived in poverty, and it was Tom Lincoln's duty to see to the survival of his family, and for that it was necessary that all family members contribute as they could.

Tom had started with nothing. His father, also named Abraham, had been a successful farmer in the area of Virginia which became Kentucky, and he had accumulated considerable acreage. But when Tom was only 8 and while he was helping his father put up rail fencing, his father was killed by an Indian's rifle shot. When the Indian grabbed Tom and began to steal away with him, Tom's older brother, Mordecai, shot the Indian dead from the front door of their cabin. According to the law of primogeniture, Mordecai received all of their father's landholdings and became head of the family. Tom became itinerant at an early age, picked up carpentry, and, later, with a little assistance from Mordecai, was able to acquire his first bit of land on Mill Creek.

“Why are you leaving Indiana now?” John asked Tom Lincoln. “You owned your farm clear and were well settled in Little Pigeon.”

“It’s the trembles again,” Dennis Hanks interjected. “I lost three cows this summer, and it’s jest a matter of time before the milk sick takes one or all of us, just like it took Nancy and the others.”

Tom nodded in agreement. “We just don’t want to take no more chances after what we’ve been through,” he added.

John Hanks, a cousin of Dennis, had lived in the Little Pigeon community for a while but had gone on to Illinois and had reported back that Illinois was a good place to live, with good ground for farming. Dennis hadn’t been all that successful farming in Indiana, and with an outbreak of the trembles, he and his brother in law, Squire Hall, had decided to leave. Sally Lincoln didn’t want to be apart from her daughters, and she influenced Tom into deciding that moving was the right thing for them as well.

At that point, the men and the children heard Agnes call for supper, and everyone headed for the cabin. It was a fine supper, preceded by the goodly prayer of John Phillips, expressing thanks for God’s graces and asking for safe passage for the travelers. In addition to the cured ham and venison, there were potatoes which had been encased in clay and fire-baked, carrots, beans, squash, and sassafras tea made from roots which Edmund and his brothers had recently dug. Supper conversation was lively, and for a time all troubling concerns were set aside.

And, then, John Phillips announced “tomorrow’s church,” a signal for end of the meal and bed time. After cleanup, sleeping spots were assigned in the cabin for the adults and children, and the older boys headed for the barn.

It was a cool October night in southern Indiana, and the crickets and coyotes made music as the candles were blown.

Everyone was up early Sunday, to prepare for Little Zion services. Sunday Church was a most-of-the day affair, and this Sunday was no different. There

was a visiting preacher who railed through the morning hours about the evils of drink and debauchery and depravity and indulgence and lasciviousness, and about the damnation which surely awaited the unchaste. At any pause, there could be heard a shout of "Amen," it appearing that the depth of the shouter's religiosity would be measured by the timbre of his voice.

Congregants left the log cabin church as needed to visit the privy, some taking an inordinate amount of time. Children 12 or older, including Edmund, were expected to stay for the full service, but those younger were permitted to leave after an appropriate length of time. One church member had the much sought after duty of sitting outside the church in order to keep eye on the youngsters.

As a way of enduring the sermon, Edmund's practice was to sit in the back and watch as those in front of him nodded off and then jerked up when the preacher hit a high note. He noticed that Abe sat with a sort of bemused look throughout the service.

The parishioners brought food, and there was a mid-day meal break when everyone moved outside. Gravestones surrounded the church, and if a family member was buried there, the relatives sat near the grave as if sharing a meal with the departed. Much of this time was devoted to evaluating the content of the preacher's message and the vigor with which it was delivered.

After lunch, there was a business meeting at which church elders would report on the condition of the church and on any complaints of church members against others, such as the complaint to which Tom and Sally Lincoln had been subjected by Nancy Grigsby. Minutes of the proceedings were kept for church records.

A highlight was the afternoon baptisms of two sisters, Diane and Linda Broshears, which took place in a small creek that ran near the church and eventually emptied into Little Pigeon Creek. The small creek wasn't naturally deep enough for the total immersion called for by church doctrine, and there had been excavated by hand one spot to a depth of five feet or so. The

preacher conducted the baptisms there to the hallelujahs and applause of those who gathered at the creek bank.

It was late afternoon when services finally concluded. Although John Phillips repeated his offer of accommodation to the Lincoln family, Tom said that they would make an early start and it would be just as well if they ate and slept at the spring that night.

Monday morning, Edmund awakened early and walked down to the spring, wanting to see off the Lincolns, and particularly Abraham in whom he'd taken great interest. He was too late. The family was gone. However, he found left by the spring a book, titled *Robinson Crusoe*, on the inside page of which was inscribed in pokeweed berry ink, "Keep reading, Edmund, from A. Lincoln."

September 1951.

The three slipped into the Woods shortly before sunrise and maneuvered themselves toward the large hickory tree. The boys, 8 and 10, sat on either side of their father, each with a firm grip on his .410 gauge shotgun. As the sun broke, life in the woods began. There was a thrashing in the trees as a wild turkey left its perch and crashed through the limbs. Between trees, in the distance, a doe could be seen with her fawn. The three watched intently the upper branches of the trees. And, then, there was movement in a tree some distance away, as a squirrel jumped from branch to branch and tree to tree on its way to Old Shagbark. A big fox squirrel.

The squirrel moved to a branch on the side of the tree nearest them. As earlier agreed about who would take the first shot, Mike slowly lifted his .410, took aim, and squeezed the trigger. The squirrel came crashing to the ground. "Good shot," his brother Steve said. "I'll get it for you." He retrieved the squirrel, and the three sat back down, listening to an early morning chorus of wood thrush, mockingbird, bobwhite quail, and woodpecker. As they awaited restoration of order in the Woods following the shotgun blast, the boys peppered their father with questions about his hunting at their ages.

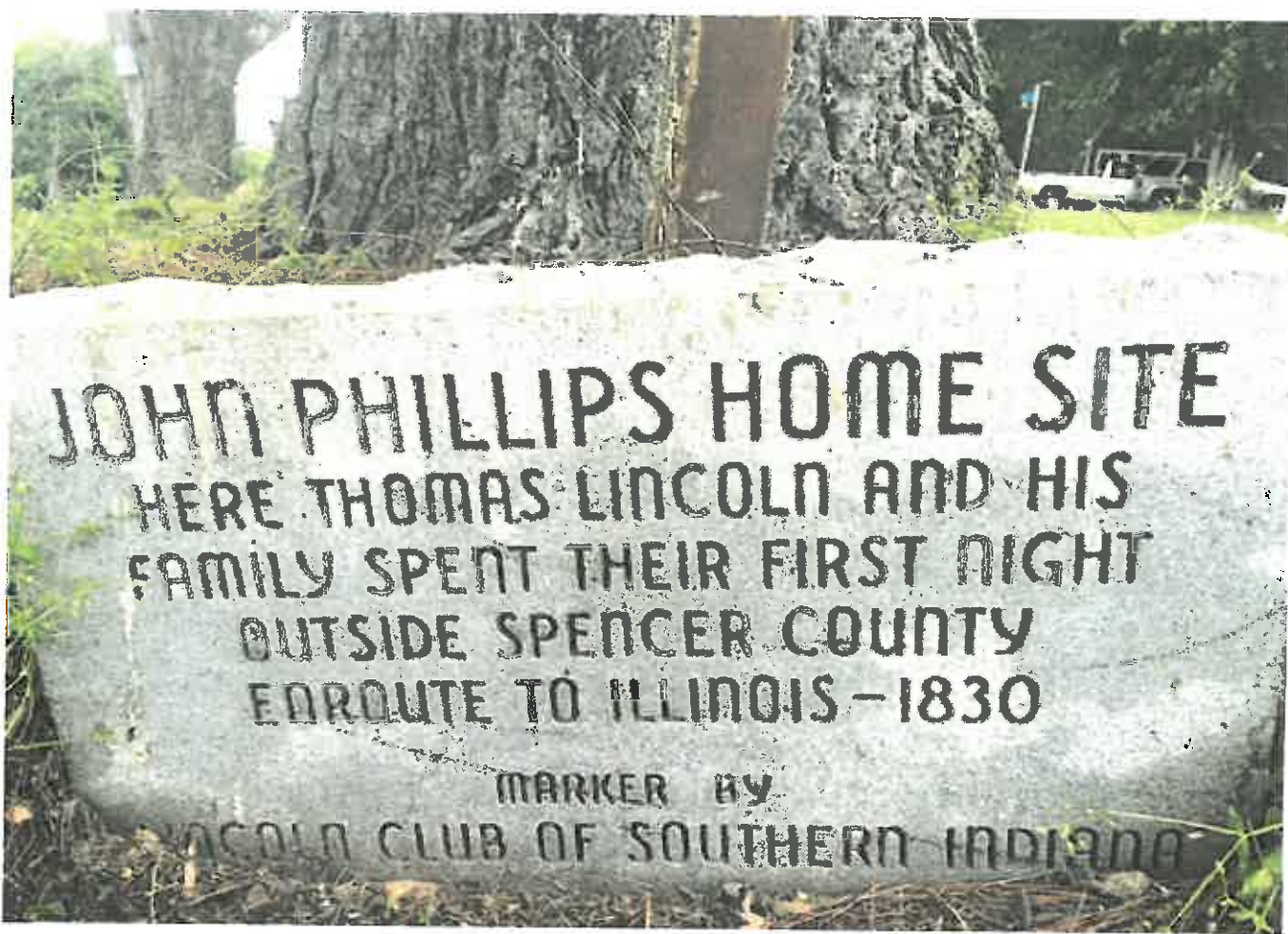
“I hunted here in the Woods,” he said, “as did your grandfather and four great-grandfathers before him. At one time Indians hunted in the Woods, and bears and panthers lived here.” Wide-eyed, the boys took in every word.

“And, you know, boys, more than 100 years ago, Abe Lincoln came through the Woods with his family. They followed a trail just down the hill there,” he pointed, “on their way to Illinois.” The boys looked down the hill to a narrow stretch which stood out from the surroundings. They pictured early settlers moving in wagons drawn by oxen, and they imagined what life might have been like.

They left the Woods with Mike’s squirrel but also with a sense of connection with their ancestors and with a bit of American history. “Someday,” Steve, said, “I’m gonna write a story about the Woods and Abe Lincoln.” Once back in their car, the father drove north a short distance from the Woods and pulled into the dirt and gravel driveway of a small dilapidated house, next to which stood, and which still stands today, a stone marker that reads:

**JOHN PHILLIPS HOME SITE
HERE THOMAS LINCOLN AND HIS
FAMILY SPENT THEIR FIRST NIGHT
OUTSIDE SPENCER COUNTY
ENROUTE TO ILLINOIS –1830**

A photo of the marker appears at the end of my Paper.



JOHN PHILLIPS HOME SITE
HERE THOMAS LINCOLN AND HIS
FAMILY SPENT THEIR FIRST NIGHT
OUTSIDE SPENCER COUNTY
ENROUTE TO ILLINOIS - 1830

MARKER BY
WAGLER CLUB OF SOUTHERN INDIANA