

June 1806

MARRIAGE BOND FOR MARRIAGE OF
THOMAS LINCOLN AND NANCY HANKS



Witnessed by their parents that we Thomas Lincoln and
Richard Berry are both and jointly bound unto his
excellency the governor of Kentucky with full and necessary
fifty pounds current money to the payment of which we do
and truly to be made to the said governor and his successors
be bound our selves our heirs &c. jointly and severally jointly
by these presents sealed with our seals and dated this 10th
day of June 1806 The condition of the above
obligation is such that whereas there is an alleged & shortly
intended between the above bound Thomas Lincoln and
Nancy Banks for which alleged this said
now if there be no lawful cause to which the said
marriage then this obligation to be void and to remain
in full force & virtue in law
Witness my hand &c.
John W. Parrott
Thomas Lincoln
Richard Berry
Garden

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N. 2
MAR 24
APPROPRIATE

Know all men by these presents that we Thomas Lincoln and
Richard Berry are held and firmly bound unto his
Excellency the Governor of Kentucky his heirs Just and full sum of
fifty pounds current money to the payment of which we do
and truly to be made to the said Governor and his Successors
doe bind our selves our heirs & Jointly and severally firmly
by these presents sealed with our seals and dated this 10th
day of June 1806. The Condition of the above
obligation is such that whereas there is an marriage shortly
intended between the above bound Thomas Lincoln and
Nancy Hanks for which license has issued
now if there be no lawful cause to obstruct the said
marriage then this obligation to be void else to remain
in full force & virtue in Law
Witness my hand & seal this 10th day of June 1806
John H. Carroll
Thomas Lincoln
Richard Berry
Garden

moribund partnership. The tavern was never opened, for about this time Lincoln and Berry were challenged to sell out to a pair of vagrant brothers named Trent, who, as they had no idea of paying, were willing to give their notes to any amount. They soon ran away, and Berry expired, extinguished in rum. Lincoln was thus left loaded with debts, and with no assets except worthless notes of Berry and the Trents. It is greatly to his credit that he never thought of doing by others as others had done by him. The morality of the frontier was deplorably loose in such matters, and most of these people would have concluded that the failure of the business expunged its liabilities. But Lincoln made no effort even to compromise the claims against him. He promised to pay when he could, and it took the labor of years to do it; but he paid at last every farthing of the debt, which seemed to him and his friends so large that it was called among them "the national debt."

He had already begun to read elementary books of law, borrowed from Major Stuart and other kindly acquaintances. Indeed, it is quite possible that Berry and Lincoln might have succeeded better in business if the junior member of the firm had not spent so much of his time reading Blackstone and under the shade of a great oak just outside the tavern, where the senior quietly fuddled him-

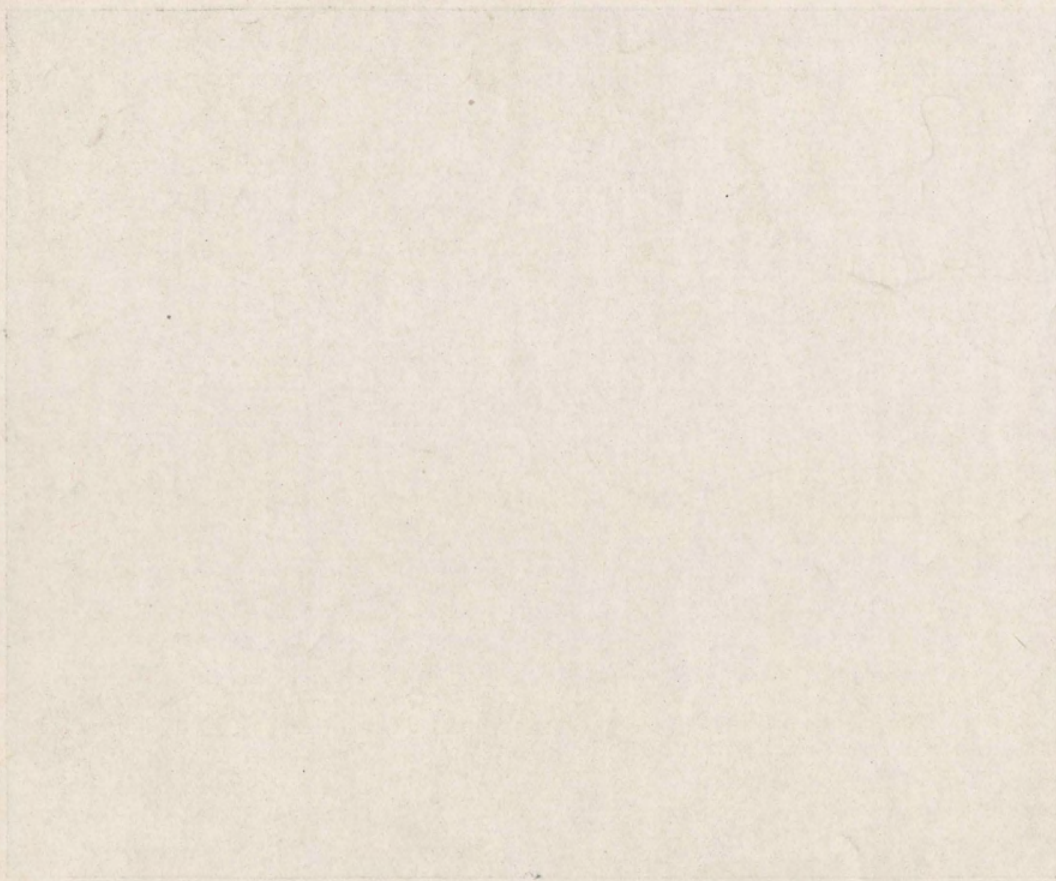
other compensation, and his hearty friendliness and vivacity, as well as his industry in the field, made him a welcome guest in any farmhouse in the county. His strong arm was always at the disposal of the poor and needy; it is said of him, with a graphic variation of a well-known text, "that he visited the fatherless and the widow and chopped their wood."

In the spring of this year, 1833, he was appointed Postmaster of New Salem, and held the office for three years. Its emoluments were slender and its duties light, but there was in all probability no citizen of the village who could have made so much of it as he. The mails were so scanty that he was said to carry them in his hat, and he is also reported to have read every newspaper that arrived; it is altogether likely that this formed the leading inducement to his taking the office. His incumbency lasted until New Salem ceased to be populous enough for a post-station and the mail went by to Petersburg. Dr. Holland relates a sequel to this official experience which illustrates the quaint honesty of the man. Several years later, when he was a practicing lawyer, an agent of the Post-office Department called upon him, and asked for a balance due from the New Salem office, some seventeen dollars. Lincoln rose, and opening a little trunk which lay in a corner of the room, took from it a cotton rag in which was tied up the

I, Richard Henry Lee, of the County of York, State of Virginia, do hereby certify that the within and family bound into his
 service the person of Elizabeth Smith and her
 fifty pounds during many of the payments of interest
 and truly told made to the said person and his
 the said person as her husband and family bound
 by these presents dated with our State and dated the 10th
 day of June 1806. The condition of this above
 obligation is such that whether there is or is not a
 intended between the above named Thomas Lincoln and
 Nancy Hanks for which should this
 now if there be no lawful cause to which the said
 the said person this obligation to be void and to remain
 in force and effect in law
 Witness my hand and the seal of the said
 Richard H. Lee
 Thomas Lincoln
 Richard Henry Lee
 Gordon

MARRIAGE BOND FOR MARRIAGE OF THOMAS LINCOLN AND NANCY HANKS
 Photographed for this work

June 1806



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
COLLECTION OF THE
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20540