

Lincoln's Hoosier Schoolmasters

BY LOUIS A. WARREN

Abraham Lincoln needed but forty-seven words to prepare a sketch of his life for the *Dictionary of Congress* published in 1858. Although less than seventy-five years have passed since this autobiographical note appeared, the accumulated mass of literature about him now surpasses that of any other man who has lived since the beginning of time, certain biblical characters excepted. In that first biographical effort of forty-seven words only one of them was used to summarize the status of his education at that time. The word was—"defective".

Inasmuch as four of the world's outstanding contributions to literature, the first Inaugural Address, the Gettysburg Address, the Bixby letter, and the second Inaugural Address, came from his pen within a comparatively short space of time after he reported that his education was "defective", it may be worth while to make a somewhat detailed study of one phase of his early educational processes.

Some light is thrown on the character of his Indiana schooling by a brief excerpt from another biographical sketch that he prepared in 1859:

There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher, beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin'" to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.¹

Two statements with reference to his scholastic progress should be noted here. At the time he became of age he says he did not know very much but could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three. In referring to the knowledge he acquired between the time he became of age and his nomination for the presidency, he writes that he made little advance dur-

¹ Sketch prepared for Jesse W. Fell, Dec. 20, 1859.

ing that period. We do know that between the ages of twenty-one and fifty-one he succeeded in mastering a great many books which called for wide reading and concentration. These books treated such subjects as the science of grammar, the theory and practice of surveying, ancient history, natural law, biography, essays, drama, poetry, theology, law, theories of government, and the mathematical problems presented in the six books of Euclid.

Unless one is familiar with the style of Lincoln's writings, he might conclude after reading the above exhibits that there was something irregular about Lincoln's acquisition of knowledge. The apparent lack of harmony in the statements of Lincoln and his actual accomplishments is due to what we might term today an inferiority complex.

When he was first asked to prepare a sketch of his life he quoted a line from Gray's *Elegy*, "The short and simple annals of the poor," and said that best described it. After receiving the nomination for the presidency he wrote these words to a friend, "Holding myself the humblest of all whose names were before the convention."²

In all of his letters and speeches one observes the very humble estimate which Lincoln placed upon his own ability. The tremendous store of information which he built up during his Illinois years, couched in his own words, was but a "little advance" over that gathered through the meagre opportunities of the early years. Thus his own humble appraisal of this stock of knowledge gathered during these latter years may also indicate that by the time he was twenty-one he knew considerably more than the alphabet and multiplication tables.

About the time of Lincoln's nomination for the presidency he was urged to prepare another autobiographical sketch. This appeared written in the third person and the following mention was made of his Indiana school days: "While here Abraham went to A B C schools by littles, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, ———— Swaney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year."³

² Letter written to Salmon P. Chase, May 26, 1860.

³ Sketch prepared for John L. Scripps.

This sketch introduces us to the main theme of this paper, Lincoln's Hoosier schoolmasters. A brief discussion of Abraham Lincoln's preliminary training will reveal the type of lad with whom the first of these three Hoosier schoolmasters came in contact.

We have the testimony of William Herndon to the effect that Abraham's mother was "a ready reader," and what we have learned about the environment in which she was brought up supports this fact. As there were but two children in the Kentucky home of the Lincoln's the mother had time to start her son in the most elementary phases of his education. Possibly she should be considered as his first instructor.

Closely associated with her as a teacher of the boy, and in a short time even supplanting her efforts, was Sarah Lincoln, Abraham's sister, who was two years older than he. It is not necessary to develop this phase of Lincoln's natural education. Anyone who is familiar with child psychology, has observed the teaching methods at work in any family group of children. It is not uncommon that younger children in the home assimilate the knowledge acquired by their older brothers or sisters quite as readily as if the information had come to them through a formal course of instruction. This was especially true where there were long recess periods extending over many months between the terms of pioneer schools. Undoubtedly Abraham Lincoln's primary education was stimulated by this sister two years older than himself, who not only accompanied him to school, but also served as his unsalaried teacher at home. To her, more than any one else, Abraham owed his early start in the field of knowledge. By the time he was seven years old, he had attended two terms of school. It is doubtful if there were many children in the pioneer country who had enjoyed so much formal instruction at so early an age.

The most fruitless season in Lincoln's mental development must have been the four years in southern Indiana between 1816 and 1820, when he was passing from seven to eleven years of age. The removal of his parents into this community where there was no school, together with the death of his mother during this period, disrupted any systematic plan for his instruction. During this interval he acquired as much

knowledge as his sister was able to impart so that she no longer could contribute much to his store of information.

During the latter part of this barren four-year period, a youth by the name of Dennis Hanks, related to Lincoln's mother, had taken up his residence in the Lincoln cabin. He was ten years older than Abraham and although his education was limited he assisted the Lincoln children in their self-assigned studies.

Sometime before Christmas of the year 1819, Thomas Lincoln brought to the Indiana cabin a new mother for the Lincoln orphans. He married the widow Johnston at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on December 2 of that year.⁴ While she was a good mother to Abraham and encouraged his study habits, it cannot be said that she was superior, either intellectually or spiritually, to Abraham's own mother. It is very doubtful if she could write her name and she did not affiliate with a church until after her marriage to Thomas Lincoln. Her own direct contribution to Abraham Lincoln's education must have been negligible. The three children of this widow, who came to make their home in the Lincoln cabin, were, however, real contributors to Abraham's early educational efforts in Indiana. Elizabeth Johnston, the oldest child was two years older than her step-brother and of the same age as his own sister. Undoubtedly she had had the privilege of attending the Elizabethtown (Kentucky) Academy at different periods between the time she was five and twelve years of age.

Elizabeth Johnston came under the instruction of at least one noted man, Duff Green, who taught at this Academy from 1812 to 1816. One of his assistants was Rhodes Van Meter who had attended Transylvania Seminary at Lexington and may have been Elizabeth's first teacher. The successor to Green was William Glascock. Aside from the regular primary courses taught in the school, Mr. Glascock offered the following courses: "For the English language, grammatically, and use of the Globes, Arithmetic, etc., \$15.00. Geometry, Plain and Spherical Trigonometry with their application to Surveying, Navigation, and Astronomy, Dialing, Gauging, etc. Algebra and Fluxions, \$30.00."⁵

When Elizabeth Johnston came to Indiana in 1819, although

⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, Marriage Register.

⁵ Elizabethtown Academy's Trustee Book.

not old enough to have acquired an understanding of higher mathematics, she had a much better formal education than either Abraham Lincoln or his sister. That they immediately began to appropriate what knowledge she had is an assured fact.

It was the year after the arrival of the new mother and her children that Abraham's formal schooling in Indiana began. The three children of Sarah Johnston and the two children of Thomas Lincoln would be incentive enough to encourage some teacher to start a subscription school in the Little Pigeon Creek community.

Our modern school programs, built up around the needs of the individual child, are in exact contrast to the pioneer schools which were guided entirely by the availability and qualifications of the prospective teachers. As both the schoolmaster and pupils were restricted from school attendance during periods when crops needed attention, or when the winter season became so severe that travel was impossible, the school term usually simmered down to about a two-months session each year.

Orphan children who were bound out were assured by court order that they would have at least a year's schooling. This did not mean that they were to be sent to school some time during a certain year, but that the aggregate of their schooling, during their apprenticeship should amount to a year or the equivalent of six two-month terms.

The school attendance of Abraham Lincoln in Indiana did not begin until the year 1820 when he was eleven years old. His first Hoosier schoolmaster was Andrew Crawford, who taught what was known as a subscription school. Crawford was not an itinerant teacher, but for some time had lived in the Lincoln community. We discover his name first in the columns of the *Western Sun* as a justice of the peace of Spencer County, who on December 19, 1918, signed an estray notice. Jesse Hoskins, one of the neighbors of Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham, had "taken up" an estray horse, valued by George Lee and William Hoskins at forty dollars, and Crawford had proceeded to advertise it.

The fact that Crawford was the justice of the peace for Carter Township is proof enough that he had some qualifications above the average pioneer. The thirty-eight closely

printed pages of laws in the published statutes of Indiana which set forth the procedure for a justice of the peace, imply that it was necessary for Crawford to know some law. Lincoln's first Hoosier school teacher may have influenced, unconsciously, the choice of profession which the son of Thomas Lincoln made in after years.

One of the chief functions of a justice of the peace in communities where preachers were not available was the uniting of people in matrimony. In January 1819, Crawford married Joseph C. Wright and Dinah Pierce. During the following two years he presided at a series of weddings in which the Parkers, Gordons, Randalls, Angels, Turnhams, Syscons, Smiths, Hutchinsons, Masons, Zans, Joneses, Thorps and Lamars, were the contracting parties. The last wedding he is known to have performed in Spencer County was on March 14, 1821, at which time Robert Angel and Polly Richardson were married.⁶ Crawford's name disappears from the records after the date of this wedding so he probably left Spencer County about this time. His removal in the spring of 1821 fixes the date of Abraham Lincoln's first Hoosier schooling. It was in the midsummer of 1820, after the corn had been laid by; in the early part of the winter of the same year, after the harvest had been gathered, this term reaching into the early part of 1821.

Aside from the implications which may be drawn from Crawford's service as justice of the peace little is known about his qualifications as a teacher. Examples of his handwriting indicate that he was a good penman and traditions which have come down to us throw further light on his teaching methods. He is said to have taught etiquette or "manners" as the subject was then called, and he pursued this course by practical demonstrations. One of the pupils would be asked to withdraw from the schoolroom and then re-enter, being received at the door by one of the other members of the class. The guest was then escorted from bench to bench, by the pupil acting as host, and introduced to each one present. Much has been made of Lincoln's appearance at this time and a jocular rather than serious aspect has been given this valuable backwoods training.

Another widely circulated story of an incident in the Crawford school is the famous spelling match, in which Lin-

⁶ Spencer County, Indiana, Marriage Register.

coln helped one of his classmates to spell "defied." Katy Roby was asked to spell this word and continued as far as "d-e-f" when she paused, not knowing whether to use a "y" or an "i." Looking over toward Lincoln she saw him point his finger at his eye and immediately took the hint, spelling the word correctly.

It was at the Crawford school, also, where the teacher observed that one of a pair of antlers, which had been fixed to the wall, was broken off. Upon inquiry as to who was responsible for this, Lincoln immediately rose and explained that he did not intentionally break it but thought the antler would hold his weight. He found out that it wouldn't. The teacher is said to have commended him for his honesty.

Possibly the greatest contribution which Andrew Crawford made to Abraham Lincoln was the placing in his hands of a copy of Weems' *Life of Washington*. Practically all of the early biographers are in agreement that this book belonged to Lincoln's school teacher, Andrew Crawford. This fact is supported by Lincoln's own testimony made in Trenton, New Jersey: "Away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, . . . Weems' *Life of Washington*."⁷ This book has often been confused with Ramsey's *Life of Washington*. Lincoln borrowed Ramsey's work some time after the year 1825 from Josiah Crawford, a neighbor. It was damaged by rain while in Lincoln's possession and he pulled fodder to pay for it. One cannot overestimate the influence exerted on Abraham Lincoln by Andrew Crawford and this famous book by Parson Weems.

When Lincoln prepared his autobiography for Scripps he mentioned his Indiana school teachers, but could not remember the full name of the second one whom he called Swaney. This name has often been confused with Sweeney and it is sometimes so spelled in the public records. There is no question, however, but that the correct spelling was Swaney. The given name, which the President had forgotten, is left blank in most biographies.

For several years the writer had been on the lookout for some document which might give a clue to this unknown pedagogue. Recently he was rewarded by finding in the War-

⁷ Speech before New Jersey Legislature, February 21, 1861.

rick County Courthouse, a public record which he is quite sure, refers to the Swaney mentioned by Lincoln. His first name was James.

The record in question is a guardian's bond, which not only gives us the name and age of Swaney, but presents the coincidence that Azel W. Dorsey, another school teacher of Lincoln, was his guardian. A copy of the document dated October 20, 1817, at Darlington, follows:

Azel W. Dorsey appeared in court with James Swaney and Charlotte Swaney, orphan children of Michael Swaney Dec. [—] and being appointed guardian of said children and on application to the court that the said James of the age of 17 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years bound to him for and during the term of four years and six months upon the following conditions: The said boy is to have at the expiration of the said service a horse, saddle and bridle to be worth seventy dollars and learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three and furnish him with good wearing apparel and a good decent suit of clothes at the expiration of his said apprenticeship; and the said Charlott at the age of fourteen years and six months is also bound out to the said Dorsey for and during the term of three years and six months from the date hereon on the following conditions: as the said Azel W. Dorsey agrees to learn her to read and write a legible hand and find her meat, drink, washing and lodging and also find her good decent wearing apparel suitable to the seasons and a good feather bed and furniture at the expiration of her said servitude and one decent suit of clothes at the expiration of three years and six months aforesaid and it is further ordered by the court that the said Dorsey enter bond in the clerk's office in the sum of \$1000 with William Ross security for his true and faithful performance aforesaid.*

The fact that there seems to have been but one family by the name of Swaney in Spencer County, contemporaneous with the Lincoln's, is strong evidence that we have the school teacher mentioned in the record above. It will be noted that Michael Swaney, the pioneer, was dead by 1817, so that he can not be confused with the Swaney who taught Lincoln.

James Swaney was born in the year 1800. After four years of apprenticeship, spent under the direction of Dorsey, he evidently remained in the home of his benefactor and, while residing there, taught school. We have evidence that Swaney became the teacher of Lincoln not earlier than 1822 and not later than 1825. He was, therefore, during this period, between the ages of 22 and 25 but nine years older than

* Warrick County, Indiana, Probate Court Book, p. 1.

Lincoln himself. He was the only teacher Lincoln ever had whose age was anywhere near his own. His school, like Crawford's, was probably a subscription school.

Swaney's preparation is set forth in the court record, which states that Dorsey should "learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three." This bears out Lincoln's own testimony as to the qualifications of his early teachers. Swaney had at least a horse and a fairly good suit of clothes at the expiration of his apprenticeship in the fall of 1821, but there is no evidence that his father had left an estate in which he shared.

Shortly after Swaney taught the school which Lincoln attended in Spencer County, he married Sarah Jane Crannon (or Cranmore). This wedding took place on December 18, 1825, and is recorded in the Spencer County marriage register. He was then twenty-five years old. His sister Charlott was but eighteen when she was united in marriage to Charles Myers on January 19, 1821.⁹

In the Spencer County census for the year 1830, James Swaney and his wife are listed as being between twenty and thirty years of age. They also had one child, a boy, who was under five years of age. The census shows that at this time they were living at Rockport, the county seat of Spencer County.¹⁰

Of the three men who taught Lincoln in southern Indiana, Swaney seems to have been the only one who continued to make his residence there. Spencer County deedbooks show him to have been in possession of two quarter sections of land in 1830: one in section four, township seven, range one, the other in section sixteen, township six, range one.¹¹ While Lincoln is said to have mentioned Swaney many times in later years none of these reminiscences seems to have been preserved in a form which makes it dependable.

Most biographers have followed the story of Lincoln's schooling as told by Ward Hill Lamon in his *Life of Lincoln*. He states that the Swaney school was the last one which Lincoln attended in Indiana. This is in disagreement with Lincoln's own testimony. A reminiscence of John Hoskins appears to be about the only accurate description of the school

⁹ Spencer County, Indiana, Marriage Register.

¹⁰ Photostat copies of census in Indiana State Library.

¹¹ Spencer County, Indiana, Tract Book.

house which was torn down and a stable built with the logs by Hoskins:

To get there he had to travel four and a half miles; and this going back and forth so great a distance occupied entirely too much of his time. His attendance therefore was only at odd times, and was speedily broken off altogether. The schoolhouse was much like the other one near the Pigeon Creek meeting-house, except that it had two chimneys instead of one Here, we would choose up, and spell as in old times every Friday night.

John Hoskins entered land in Spencer County as early as September 2, 1818. This property was in Jackson Township section twenty-three. If this was the land on which the school stood, the distance Abraham Lincoln had to walk to reach it has not been exaggerated. It is two miles from the site of the Lincoln home to where Gentry's store once stood, and Hoskins' place was at least two and one-half miles to the south. Nicolay and Hay conclude that Lincoln had been attending this school but a brief period when his father, feeling that there was too much waste of time, took him out and put him to work. It is not likely that Abraham Lincoln was much the wiser from his contact with James Swaney.

An act of the Indiana Legislature, approved January 31, 1824, provided for a more general development of the school system. The last school Lincoln attended may be called a public school. Twenty freeholders in a township could authorize the building of a school house. After the site had been selected as near the center of the township as possible all freeholders over twenty-one years of age were required to put in one day each week in the construction of the schoolhouse until it was completed.

The statute specified that all of the schoolhouses constructed under the direction of the school trustees were to be "eight feet between the floors, and at least one foot from the surface of the ground to the first floor, and finished in a manner calculated to render comfortable the teacher and pupils."

The prospective teacher of the public school was to be examined by the trustees "touching his qualifications, and particularly as respects his knowledge of the English language, writing, and arithmetic." His salary was to be provided by taxation based on the value of the improved land in possession of the freeholders. The school was to be "forever open for

the education of all children within the district without distinction."¹²

Azel Walter Dorsey was the only school teacher of Lincoln, as far as the writer can learn, who later lived contemporaneously with him in the Illinois country. When Lincoln prepared his autobiographical sketch for Scripps and named his five school teachers successively, he named Dorsey last. The only personal reference in his sketch relating to any one of the teachers was to the latter, of whom he said: "The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois." The first information we learn about Dorsey, in the court records, is the fact that he married Eleanor Spriggs in Nelson County, Kentucky, on January 4, 1807.¹³ Three days later he and his brother Greenberry Dorsey went on a note payable to Abraham VanMatre, for the sum of \$225. We would infer that coming so close to the date of the wedding it had something to do with the matrimonial venture. Whatever the need for the money, it is evident that the Dorseys did not meet the payment when it came due in the following December, since it was in May of the next year before any payments were made.¹⁴

The year Abraham Lincoln was born, Azel Dorsey and Greenberry Dorsey, his brother, were farming a piece of ground in Hardin County, Kentucky, close by the Mill Creek farm purchased by Thomas Lincoln. Dorsey must have been well acquainted with Lincoln's father and his aunt, Mary Lincoln Brumfield. The Brumfields were close neighbors of the Dorseys. During this same year, 1809, Azel Dorsey, George Burkheart, and Greenberry Dorsey had rented some land from Michael Reuch on Clear Creek. The fate of the venture is best told in the answer to the bill of the suit which Reuch brought to recover damages:

They (Dorsey, Burkheart, and Dorsey) did cultivate the ground in a farmer-like-manner under the term leased . . . they did pay the plaintiff 1/3 part of the corn raised on the said farm, stacked the hay in three or six stacks and gave the plaintiff one-third thereof . . . on that day there was a great tremendous freshet and flood in Clear Creek, running through the leased premises, which swept and carried off from the said premises, all the rails and fencing thereon, by means of which

¹² *Revised Laws of Indiana*, 1824, 381-382.

¹³ Nelson County, Kentucky, Marriage Register.

¹⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, Circuit Court Ordinary Bundle, No. 9.

irresistable act of nature or God the defendants were disabled from leaving the farm in the repair required by the covenant.¹⁵

By the year 1813, however, the tax lists show that Dorsey owned 100 acres of land and three horses. The same year he was appointed a commissioner of the revenue tax. This was a responsible office and kept Dorsey busy several weeks with a fair remuneration. His brother, Greenberry, owned slaves but there is no record to show how Azel stood on this question, which was a live subject of debate in pioneer Kentucky.¹⁶

Dorsey arrived in the Indiana country as early as May 13, 1816, where he served as clerk of an election at the home of William Berry in Ohio Township, Warrick County. In the year 1818 he was serving as treasurer and coroner in what is now Spencer County, Indiana. Such responsible positions as these indicate that Dorsey was a leader in the affairs of the community. His good standing may have been responsible for his decision to enter the mercantile business as set forth in this agreement filed in the Spencer County Courthouse at Rockport on March 10, 1819:

A covenant and particular bond between A. W. Dorsey and M. B. Snyder. We do agree to and have this day entered into co-partnership in the mercantile business for the term of 5 years trading under the firm of Dorsey and Snyder. . . .

As early as 1820, Dorsey began to purchase lots in Rockport near where he then lived, but by March seventh of the following year he had moved to an adjacent county, Dubois. The census for 1820 shows him to have been a resident of Dubois County at that time. He and his wife are listed as between twenty-six and forty-five years of age. Three sons under ten years of age and one boy between ten and sixteen are also listed. By May 10, 1823, the family had returned to Spencer County but continued to sell some of their Rockport land holdings. It appears that their last Rockport real estate was sold in June, 1824.¹⁷ What became of the partnership venture with Snyder in the mercantile business is not known.

It seems most likely that it was during the early months of 1826 that Lincoln attended Dorsey's school. On March 1

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Order Book c.

¹⁶ Hardin County, Kentucky, County Court Tax lists, 1813.

¹⁷ Spencer County, Indiana, Deed Book, No. 1.

of that year, Lincoln copied into his manuscript book of examples several items under these headings: first,

"A definition of discount"; second, "Rules for its computation"; third, "Proofs and various examples."

Dorsey's qualifications to teach are evident as he was able to instruct James Swaney, a former teacher of Lincoln. It may be accepted without doubt that Dorsey was by far the best-equipped tutor of the two Kentucky and three Indiana teachers, who instructed Lincoln at different times. He fortunately came in contact with the boy at a time when some advanced training in mathematics would be helpful to him. When Lincoln became the pupil of Dorsey the latter was about forty-two years of age, as he was born on November 5, 1784. Dorsey migrated to the Illinois country two years before the Lincolns left Indiana where he taught a term of school in the fall and winter of 1828-29.

The late J. B. Oakleaf contributed an article to the *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* in which he tells of Dorsey's residence in Schuyler County, Illinois. Mr. Oakleaf was convinced that Dorsey was in the War of 1812 and that he received his land grant in Schuyler County in recognition of that service. In 1840, Dorsey entered two tracts of land in that county.¹⁸

Mr. Oakleaf was successful in discovering the grave of Dorsey and on the tombstone the date of his death was clearly inscribed as of September 13, 1858. The date of his death would not allow the acceptance of the tradition which claims that Dorsey was living at the time of Lincoln's election to the presidency. It does not invalidate, however, his reminiscences as they relate to his Indiana pupil, of whom Dorsey said:

Lincoln was then marked for the eagerness and diligence with which he pursued his studies, came to the log cabin school house arrayed in buck skin clothes, a raccoon-skin cap, and provided with an old arithmetic, which had been found for him to begin his investigations into the "higher branches."

It is to be regretted that the other two Indiana teachers of Abraham Lincoln did not leave some testimonies relative to his progress while attending their respective schools.

¹⁸ J. B. Oakleaf, "Azul W. Dorsey," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XXII, 447-50.

The main object of this paper has been to touch upon the qualifications of those who might have been expected to influence Abraham Lincoln in his studies at home and at school in Indiana, with the emphasis placed on his contacts with his Hoosier schoolmasters. There has been no attempt to present the opportunities and advancement which were open to him through the availability of books and newspapers. An account of his acquaintance with many of the distinguished men of the southern Indiana country, and the influence exerted over him by lawyers, preachers, and other men in public places has also been omitted. In other words this paper has not aspired to be an exhaustive study on Lincoln's early education.

Before this paper is brought to a close, one other incident should be mentioned which may serve as a sequel to his formal schooling. The modern educational maxim, "There is no impression without expression," found a fruitful field for fulfillment in Lincoln's own experience. The fact that there were two children in the Lincoln cabin home younger than Abraham invited the development of the expressional phase of his education which was responsible for the lasting impressions of his early days. Lincoln on one occasion referred to this feature of his training as one of the most valuable of all contributions to his early educational process. John Daniel Johnston, step-brother of Abraham, and six years his junior, was the chief object of Lincoln's expressional training. Daniel was a constant companion of Abraham, from 1820 to 1830. While Johnston was the main benefactor of this association, Lincoln's own improvement was assured by putting his remarks in such simple language that his younger associate could comprehend them.

One of the best evidences of this coöperative educational venture, by which both Lincoln and Johnston, profited is revealed in the part which they played in the Illinois elections of 1831 and 1832, less than two years after they left the same cabin home in the Hoosier state. Although Abraham Lincoln had been in the town of New Salem, Illinois, but a month he was asked to serve as a clerk of the election held on August 1, 1831. The following year he was on the ticket himself as a candidate for the Legislature from Sangamon County. Over in Coles County, Illinois, at the presidential election of 1832, John D. Johnston, step-brother of Abraham Lincoln, then but

seventeen years of age, was serving as clerk of the election as the following entry of November 10, 1832, in the county order book reveals: "Ordered that the treasury pay John D. Johnston or bearer the sum of sixty-two cents, for serving as clerk of the last presidential election, out of money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated."¹⁹ These two former inmates of the Indiana Lincoln cabin, invited to serve in remunerative offices, because of their educational qualifications, suggest a home atmosphere which must have been equal or even superior to the average cabin of the pioneer country.

When Abraham Lincoln stated that his education was defective he was comparing his early training with the more advanced educational opportunities of 1859. When he wrote his autobiographical sketch that the aggregate of his schooling would not amount to over one year, it should not be implied that his educational facilities suffered by comparison with most of the other pioneer boys and girls of early Indiana. His opportunities were only excelled by small groups of children who may have been living in the few centers of population where academies were established. Abraham Lincoln may not have known very much when he became of age, but there is plenty of evidence to show that he knew more than most of his contemporaries not excluding his Hoosier schoolmasters.

¹⁹ Coles County, Illinois, Order Book, I, 28.