

*Abe Lincoln at Loafer Station: A Novel Based on Hoosier Legends.* By Anet Garrison. (New York: Exposition Press, 1951, pp. 216. \$3.00.)

Concerning her novel about her ancestors' relations with Abe Lincoln, the author writes: "I haven't gone by dates or history books—only what my ancestors have told me down through the years. Even if what my ancestors have told me isn't true to history, I can't help it, and to me, I would rather think that some of the history is wrong, than to think my ancestors were wrong. They were there, and knew. And I don't care what the critics say. My ancestors were right!"

If Mrs. Garrison's ancestors were right, then Beveridge, Sandburg and other scholars are wrong about a number of things and even Lincoln's own recollections of his Indiana years are not to be trusted. To accept the Garrison legend, we must not only create a new image of Lincoln's backwoods haunts in Spencer and Warrick counties but we must also create a new image of the young Lincoln himself. We must imagine him spending most of his idle hours not among people named Grigsby, Gentry, Turnham, Crawford, and Pitcher in Gentryville and Rockport but among people named Garrison, Hart, Weaver, Ingram, and Harper at Loafer Station, identified as the present village of Tennyson, Indiana. What is more, we must picture him there hanging out in a saloon, taking at least an occasional drink; we must disregard all other reports that he was not fond of hunting and go along with him and Tommy Garrison on frequent hunting expeditions; and perhaps most difficult of all, we must discard our previous concept of Tom Lincoln as a teetotaler, and accept him in the company of Isaac Garrison "more than half full" and on his way to visit a woman of ill-repute.

But it would be unwise to quarrel with Mrs. Garrison's truculent preface. As she says, her ancestors "were there, and knew." Whether their memories were more or less accurate than the memories of Dennis Hanks, John Pitcher, Mrs. Josiah Crawford, and Abe Lincoln himself is something that no critic can now determine.

A much safer approach to this novel is to consider it as folklore, apart from the Lincoln story; for, in that department, the author has indisputably made a contribution to Hoosieriana. The best elements in her book are her recall of log-cabin life among the pioneers and her recounting of the tall tales her

male characters told round the bottles in the saloon at Loafer Station.

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*The Plank Road.* By Anna E. Kelley. (Greenfield, Indiana: The Old Swimmin' Hole Press, 1951, pp. 141.)

In *The Plank Road*, Mrs. Kelley relates the story of her ancestors. The first of these to settle in Indiana was Virgil Soper who came to New Harmony about 1830. Approximately three miles south of New Harmony he erected a home which was on the east side of the Plank Road when the latter was completed years later.

The fall of 1833 proved eventful for Virgil Soper as he returned to East Cranby, Connecticut, for his bride, Martha Deborah Thrall. Since she was a young woman of culture, the adjustment to pioneer life was very difficult. As the years passed the family increased and it seemed desirable to move to Mt. Vernon to ensure better educational advantages for the children.

Various events of family life are noted among which was the annual trip made by Soper during the winter on the flat-boat to New Orleans to market his produce. Here he was introduced to the slave market which made an indelible impression on him.

The Thrall lineage indicated ability to write verse and a number of pages are devoted to display lines from their pens.

Virgil and Martha Soper returned to live in New Harmony and in December, 1859, died of pneumonia.

The remaining chapters are devoted to the descendants of the Virgil Soper family. Mrs. Anna Elliott Kelley was a granddaughter of Virgil and Martha Soper.