

Abraham Lincoln

EDITED by ROY EDGAR APPLEMAN
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1942 • (Revised 1956)

p. 43

A STEPMOTHER'S RECOLLECTION

Sarah Bush Lincoln, second wife of Thomas Lincoln, and stepmother of Abraham, was a real mother to the young boy during the hard years in Indiana and on throughout his life. Each had genuine love and respect for the other. One of the last things Lincoln did before leaving Illinois for the White House to take up the responsibilities that lay ahead of him was to visit "mother," as he always called her. Her recollection of Abraham given below is from a statement she made to William Herndon on Friday, September 8, 1865, at her humble home 8 miles south of Charleston, Ill.

Abe slept upstairs, went up on pins stuck in the logs, like a ladder; our bedsteads were original creations, none such now, made of poles and clapboards. Abe was about nine years of age when I landed in Indiana. The country was wild, and desolate. Abe was a good boy; he didn't like physical labor, was diligent for knowledge, wished to know, and if pains and labor would get it, he was sure to get it. He was the best boy I ever saw. He read all the books he could lay his hands on. I can't remember dates nor names, am about seventy-five years of age; Abe read the Bible some, though not as much as said; he sought more congenial books suitable for his age. I think newspapers were had in Indiana as early as 1824 and up to 1830 when we moved to Illinois. Abe was a constant reader of them. I am sure of this for the years of 1827-28-29-30. The name of the Louisville *Journal* seems to sound like one. Abe read history papers and other books, can't name any one, have forgotten. . . . He duly revered old age, loved those best about his own age, played with those under his age; he listened to the aged, argued with his equals, but played with the children. He loved animals generally and treated them kindly; he loved children well, very well. There seemed to be nothing unusual in his love for animals or his own kind, though he treated everybody and everything kindly, humanely. Abe didn't care much for crowds of people; he chose his own company, which was always good. He was not very fond of girls, as he seemed to me. He sometimes attended church. He would repeat the sermon over again to the children. The sight of such a thing amused all and did especially tickle the children. When Abe was reading, my husband took particular care not to disturb him, would let him read on and on till Abe quit of his own accord. He was dutiful to me always; he loved me truly, I think.

MRS. THOMAS LINCOLN'S STATEMENT TO
HERNDON. SEPTEMBER 8, 1865.