

# President Lincoln: A N.C. Native?

Three former U.S. Presidents—James K. Polk, Andrew Jackson, Andrew Johnson—were born in North Carolina. However, thanks to the efforts of The Bostic Lincoln Center (BLC) in Bostic, NC, it may be proven there was a fourth president with N.C. roots—Abraham Lincoln.

On June 13, 2005, over 40 community members, calling themselves the “Friends of the Bostic Lincoln Birthplace” began a grassroots effort to form the Center. Its mission is to preserve, study, and centralize the collection of stories that relate to Abraham Lincoln and the claim that he was born in Western North Carolina. The Center is collecting, documenting, researching, and preserving the generational lore of the area.

## WHAT IS THE REAL STORY?

In the late 1700s, Nancy Hanks (Lincoln’s mother) came to N.C. from Virginia with her mother, Lucy Hanks, and sister, Mandy. They lived for a time on the South Fork of the Catawba River with Uncle “Dicky” Hanks near Belmont. This is the area that now compris-

es Gaston County, N.C. A marker at the former Hanks cabin site now preserves the lore of this region. After “Dicky’s” death, it became apparent that Lucy could no longer support her girls. Nancy was “bound out” to the Abraham Enloe family and Mandy to the Pratt family, both of Rutherford County. The Enloes were landowners and well regarded. They occupied a significant log home which is still intact on Puzzle Creek near Bostic and farmed the bottom lands surrounding it.

The Enloes later moved their homesteads to the Oconaluftee area near Cherokee, N.C. For whatever reasons, Nancy Hanks’ presence was no longer welcomed by Mrs. Enloe and Nancy moved elsewhere. Here, the accounts diverge—whether Nancy worked for a while at her uncle’s tavern near what is now Clemson, S.C. and met a young attorney named John C. Calhoun, or whether she returned directly to Puzzle Creek where she bore a son named Abraham.

Evidence corroborates her time at Puzzle Creek. Nancy was listed on the rolls of the Concord Baptist Church, near Bostic, along with friends Polly Price and

Nancy Holli-field. Both of these women spoke of their friendship with Nancy and of holding Nancy’s baby before she left with a wagon train headed west. Because of Nancy Hanks’ situation, a team

of horses, a wagon, and a sum of money approximating \$500 were provided to Tom Lincoln for taking responsibility for Nancy and Abraham. It has been confirmed that they spent the first winter of their move west at a home in Oconaluftee.

## WHERE’S THE PROOF?

You may find yourself asking “why does the BLC so firmly believe in the Western North Carolina birth story?” We turn to the origins of the stories and the authors who have dedicated countless hours of research. We look first at *The Genesis of Lincoln* written by James H. Cathey and published in 1899. It provides evidence of Lincoln’s birth in Western North Carolina

*Right:* Caption on the bottom of the photo reads: Community meeting at “Lincoln Hill,” birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, near Bostic, October 30, 1926. Here Nancy Hanks grew to womanhood and her child was born about 1805. Tradition says “this child was hidden in the basement when company came.” Photo from the *Forest City Courier* (earliest known issue: Oct. 9, 1919).

*Below:* Bostic Lincoln Center President Keith Price leads a tour group to Lincoln Hill following the opening of the museum in April.



Community meeting at “Lincoln Hill,” birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, near Bostic, October 30, 1926. Here Nancy Hanks grew to womanhood and her child was born about 1805. Tradition says “this child was hidden in the basement when company came.”



Continued from page 7

based upon countless local interviews and affidavits from those citizens who knew Nancy Hanks and her first born child. *The Eugenics of Abraham Lincoln* was published in 1940 by James Caswell Coggins, a Rutherford County educator who established the Puzzle Creek "Lincoln Hill" site as the true birthplace of Nancy Hanks' baby boy named Abraham.

Former resident of Rutherford County, Jean Tisdale, wrote *Dear Companion*, published in 1997. The book contains Civil War letter accounts, written by Tisdale's Dycus ancestors, as to the community wide knowledge as "Old Abe's" birth in the county's Concord/Puzzle Creek/Cherry Mountain area. Even

Lincoln's law partner, "Billy" Herndon, recorded first-hand compilations of Lincoln's "put offs" when questioned about his origins by not claiming Kentucky yet stating "... you don't want to know ... the most humble of ..." beginnings, etc. These reflections can be found in Herndon's *Life of Lincoln*.

There are many other accounts and books that support the story of Lincoln's Western North Carolina roots as well, housed in the BLC Museum. One such account is the historical novel *Booth* by David Robertson, which is written with quotes from John Wilkes Booth's own personal diary. These diary entries detail where and how he learned of "Lincoln's origins" at which was most likely Amos Owens' Cherry Bounce tavern on Cherry Mountain that stands near the Enloe place on Puzzle Creek in Bostic.

#### HOW WILL THE BLC PROVE THEIR STORY?

The first official BLC event was the Lincoln Origins Forum in April 2007. The cumulative result of the Forum was to seek local, state, and national support to request the definitive determination of Lincoln's lineage, through DNA testing. It is important to note that Ernest Lincoln of Virginia, the last living Lincoln male descendent, attended the Forum and supports this quest, as he eagerly volunteers for participation in DNA testing by the U.S. Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP). The AFIP currently has in its possession Lincoln's DNA materials (part of the public domain) and is a tri-service Army, Navy, and Air Force facility funded by the Office of Health Affairs within the Department of Defense. The BLC is supporting multiple families' (Lincoln, Calhoun, Enloe, etc.) in their quest for DNA matching with Abraham Lincoln by petitioning the AFIP.

#### NEXT STEPS

Thus the center prepares to meet its next challenges — one, to add more elements to the museum's collection (rotating and/or permanent collections) and two, to attain more involvement, interest, and to support the families petitioning the government to determine Abraham Lincoln's lineage through DNA matching by the AFIP. This testing is the only way to determine the accurate beginnings of the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

For more information, please visit [www.bosticlincolncenter.com](http://www.bosticlincolncenter.com). 



For over half a century, Cherokee National Life has built successful relationships with banks throughout the Southeast based on our integrity and focus on our clients' long-term interests. And we've continued to grow.

As a member company of Securian Financial Group — one of America's largest product providers to financial institutions — we've branched out to offer the resources of a national company, yet still provide the personal touch of a locally operated business.

Cherokee National Life's continued success is based on excellent service. When it comes to people, we go above and beyond what is expected.

We partner with Securian to offer quality products that help you meet the needs of your customers while improving revenue.

- Credit life and disability insurance
- Group mortgage products
- Debt protection
- Collateral protection and credit property insurance
- GAP
- MBP
- Bond

Call 1-800-826-9384, ext. 55230 to learn more.



**CHEROKEE™**

**Cherokee National Life Insurance Company**

A Securian Company  
[www.cnlf.com](http://www.cnlf.com)

2960 Riverside Drive, P.O. Box 6097, Macon, GA 31208-6097  
478.477.0400 • 800.849.4265  
478.477.1177 Fax

Products issued by Minnesota Life Insurance Company, Securian Life Insurance Company, Cherokee National Life Insurance Company, Securian Casualty Company and CNL/Insurance America, Inc. and distributed by Allied Solutions, LLC.

©2008 Securian Financial Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

F64550-6 5-2008  
A01206-0408