

## 2. THE MOTHER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of Abraham, died in 1818. She was probably 35 years old. Neither the time nor place of her birth is definitely known. Hers were the short and simple annals of the poor. Only a few obscure people had ever known Nancy Hanks Lincoln. It was not until 30 years after her death that her son reached sufficient fame to cause anyone to inquire after his mother. By that time nearly all of the few people who had known or seen this woman in life had died or disappeared. Only one or two remained to give their scanty recollections of Abraham's mother. Among them was William Wood, an industrious and reliable man, who moved from Kentucky to Indiana in 1809. He settled in Perry County in a region that subsequently became part of Spencer County at a place that later proved to be one and a half miles north of the Indiana home of the Lincolns. For over 2 years Wood knew Nancy Hanks Lincoln and was her neighbor in that then sparsely settled region. He sat up all of one night with Mrs. Lincoln during the period of her final illness. The testimony given below is an excerpt from a statement Wood made to William Herndon in 1865 when he was 82 years of age.*

Abe got his mind and fixed morals from his good mother. Mrs. Lincoln was a very smart, intelligent, and intellectual woman; she was naturally strong-minded; was a gentle, kind, and tender woman, a

Christian of the Baptist persuasion, she was a remarkable woman truly and indeed. I do not think she absolutely died of the milk sickness entirely. Probably this helped to seal her fate.

WILLIAM WOOD'S STATEMENT TO HERNDON,  
SEPTEMBER 15, 1865.

## 3. HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH

*Abraham Lincoln's physical strength has become legendary. One of his fellow townsmen at New Salem, R. B. Rutledge, a brother of the storied "Ann," recalls this quality of the young Lincoln.*

Trials of strength were very common among the pioneers. Lifting weights, as heavy timbers piled one upon another, was a favorite pastime, and no workman in the neighborhood could at all cope with Mr. Lincoln in this direction. I have seen him frequently take a barrel of whisky by the chimes and lift it up

to his face as if to drink out of the bunghole. This feat he could accomplish with the greatest ease. I never saw him taste or drink a drop of any kind of spirituous liquors.

R. B. RUTLEDGE TO HERNDON, OCTOBER 1866.