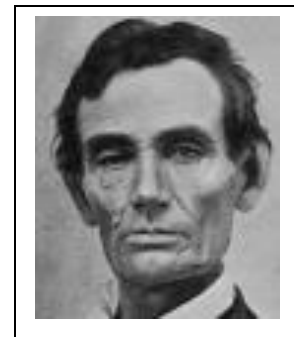


Lincoln's Autobiographical Sketch (1859)

J.W. Fell Esq.

Springfield, Dec: 20. 1859



My dear Sir: Herewith is a little sketch, as you requested-- There is not much of it, for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me-- If anything is made out of it, I wish it to be modest, and not to go beyond the materials-- If it were thought necessary to incorporate any thing from any of my speeches, I suppose there would be no objection-- Of course it must not appear to have been written by myself-- Yours very truly A. Lincoln

I was born Feb. 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families -- second families, perhaps I should say-- My Mother, who died in my ~~ninth~~ tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams, and others in Macon counties, Illinois-- My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky, about 1781 or 2, when, a year or two later, he was killed by indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest-- His ancestors, who were quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania-- An effort to identify them with the New-England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite, than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like--

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age; and he grew up, literally without education-- He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer county, Indiana, in my eighth year-- We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union-- It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods-- There I grew up-- There were some schools, so called; but no qualification was ever required of a teacher, beyond the ~~reading, writing, and Arithmetic~~ "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 wizzard-- 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~~ have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity--

I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty two-- At twenty one I came to Illinois, and passed the first year in ~~Illinois~~— Macon County -- Then I got to New-Salem (~~then~~ at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard County, where I remained a year as a sort of Clerk in a store-- then came the Black-Hawk war; and I was elected a Captain of Volunteers -- a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since-- I went the campaign, was elated, ran for the Legislature the same year (1832) and was beaten -- the only time I ever have been beaten by the people-- The next, and three succeeding biennial elections, I was elected to the Legislature-- I was not a candidate afterwards. During this Legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to ~~make~~ practice it-- In 1846 I was once elected to the lower House of Congress-- Was not a candidate for re-election-- From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before-- Always a whig in politics, and generally on the whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses-- I was losing interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again-- What I have done since then is pretty well known --

If any personal description of me is thought ~~desired~~ desirable, it may be said, I am, in height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on an average, one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and grey eyes -- no other marks or brands recollected--