

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES ATLAS JONES ON THE LINCOLN CABIN IN SPENCER COUNTY

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This interview with James Atlas Jones will be based entirely on Mr. Jones's experience while living in the Thomas Lincoln cabin in Spencer County during part of the year 1862.

On February 4, 1928, I visited Mr. Jones's home at Rockport, Indiana. The conversation became so interesting that I missed several cars. Mr. Jones was born in 1844, below Rockport, Spencer County, and in 1861, at the age of seventeen, the patriotic impulse moved him to volunteer for service in the army. Being very small for his age as well as young, he was made drummer boy and, with his company, shipped off to Indianapolis. "Here," said Mr. Jones, "they weeded out the runts and I was shipped back home."

In the spring of 1862, James Atlas Jones, Thomas Wilmot, and Lewis Morgan, all of Rockport or the vicinity, were engaged by Atwell Morgan (called Boone Morgan) to work on his farm, which was the Thomas Lincoln farm where Lincoln City now stands. These three young men, owing to the shortage of beds, were compelled to sleep in one bed. They got along very well and felt justly proud of the fact that at night they were sleeping in perhaps the same corner of a cabin where Abraham Lincoln, then president of the United States, had many nights rested his tired body.

Mr. Jones recalled that many visitors came at that time to take a look at the cabin and carry away some of the walnut rails on the fences. He said: "Old Sam Graham, of Rockport, came, and as he placed a walnut rail on his wagon, said that he was going to make a cane out of it." Judge Lemuel Q. DeBruler and his brother, Dr. James P. DeBruler, and many others came to get rails.

Atwell Morgan had bought the land from the Gentrys, and not being able to pay for it, the land later reverted to Mr. Gentry. Mr. Jones's description of the "Lincoln Cabin"

agrees with the photographs I have in my collection, and which most people have seen printed at different times.

It was a hewn-log cabin and might be called a "Mansion" (was so called in that day), but it was not a two-story cabin. At that time it had two windows on the south side. There was a door on the south side and another opposite on the north side, so that when both doors were open you could see through the house into the back yard. There was a porch on the south side facing the hill about a quarter of a mile away, where now rests Nancy Hanks Lincoln. As Abraham Lincoln freed many souls, his mother might be called the "Mother of Liberty."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Jones describes the interior as having two rooms; in the east room on the north end was a kitchen, and on the east side was the fireplace. When the outside doors were open it was possible to see from the front of the log cabin into the back yard, and glimpse part of another smaller cabin of unhewn logs. It was about 10 by 12 or 12 by 14 feet, about half the size of the larger cabin, standing with about five feet of ground between the two buildings. This smaller cabin was on a line with the east side of the cabin and stood directly north of it.

At this point I asked Mr. Jones if this smaller cabin was not the first cabin built by Thomas Lincoln and the one in which Nancy Hanks lived and died. Mr. Jones did not know for certain, but was inclined to think as I did, that Nancy Hanks died in the smaller cabin, and when Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush it was necessary to build the larger cabin, called at that time a "mansion." As Abraham Lincoln's new stepmother brought her children along, the family of Thomas Lincoln now numbered eight persons, including Dennis Hanks.

John Hevron, a relative of Mr. Jones, lived in this Lincoln cabin during 1866, 1867, and 1868. In 1867, Mr. Jones married Miss Lydia Snyder, and at this time he and his wife visited the Hevrans. As to the disappearance of the Lincoln cabin, Mr. C. C. Schreeder will give us a splendid story for our program when we meet at Gentryville for the spring meeting.

In 1862, James A. Jones reenlisted in the army and served until 1865. At the present time, February 4, 1928, he is enjoying the best of health, and has a keen mind. Mr. and Mrs.

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1. Said by W. W. Webb, May 30, 1874, as he stood at the grave of Nancy Hanks; published in the *Evansville Journal*, June 2, 1874.

Jones, with their daughter, Miss Bonnie, live in a fine old home, the only house in that block, and located on the top of a small hill facing the college building, which was built about 1857.

Mr. Jones's statement helps to throw a new light on the spot or location of the cabin which was the second of the three homes that Thomas Lincoln had in Spencer County. The first home was an open-faced camp of leaning poles, covered with straw and dried leaves, with three sides to it. Have we located the spot where the cabin stood in which Nancy Hanks Lincoln lived and died? In the photograph which I have, taken about 1860, the west end of a cabin can plainly be seen through the two open doors. This leads me to believe that we have found the spot where Nancy Hanks Lincoln died.