

## IS LINCOLN'S GRANDFATHER BURIED IN JACKSON COUNTY, TN?

Cumberland Tales

By W. Calvin Dickinson

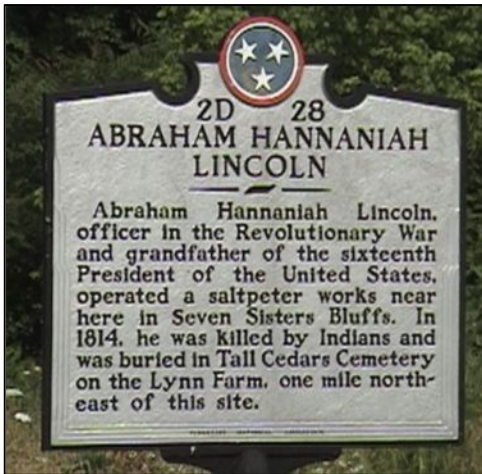
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, 24 August 2008, pg. C-7  
Special to the Herald-Citizen

In 1987 a group of Jackson County residents gathered at High Cedars Cemetery near the Clay County line to mark the grave of Abraham Lincoln's grandfather. This is a beautiful hilltop cemetery near the Cumberland River in the Tinsley's Bottom area. In 1990 the Tennessee Historical Commission, acting upon an application and the recommendations of Sen. Tommy Burks and Rep. Les Winningham, erected a marker on Highway 53 denoting the location of the grave.

We now know that this was an expensive historical mistake. Historical markers then cost \$1,000 each; this one was financed by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Tennessee Historical Commission is usually very careful to authenticate the information on historical marker applications, but several mistakes have been made. The Lincoln marker may have been the most grievous mistake.

The historical maker has the following inscription:

*ABRAHAM HANNANIAH LINCOLN. (2D 28)*



Abraham Hannaniah Lincoln, officer in the Revolutionary War and grandfather of the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, operated a saltpeter works near here in Seven Sisters Bluffs. In 1814, he was killed by Indians and was buried in Tall Cedars Cemetery on the Lynn Farm, one mile northeast of this site.

Research shows that most of the "information" on this marker is false. The only correct fact is that he was an officer in the Revolution.

On the other hand, even his name is incorrect. The President's grandfather was "Abraham Lincoln," not "Abraham Hannaniah Lincoln." The grandfather did have a cousin named "Hananiah," and the President had a half-second-cousin named "Hananiah." But "Hananiah" was not part of the grandfather's name.

Second, none of Lincoln's biographers mentioned that the President's grandfather operated a saltpeter works in Jackson County. He was a farmer, he lived in Jefferson County, KY, and he operated a farm consisting of several thousand acres. He had no time to operate a "works" in Tennessee.

Third, the grandfather was not killed by Indians in Jackson County. He was killed by Indians on his farm in Jefferson County. President Lincoln, as a boy, heard the story many times from his father, who was present at the killing.

Fourth, the grandfather was not killed in 1814. He died in the 1780s. Biographers disagree concerning the exact year of his death, naming most of the years in the decade, but the most probable date for his death was 1786.

Fifth, the grandfather is not buried in Jackson County. Biographer Townsend noted that he was buried "on the slope of a little hill near Hughes Station in Jefferson County," KY.

There was no reason to transport his body to Tennessee and bury him in a strange land.

So who is buried in Jackson County? One of the relatives named "Hananiah" is probably interred at High Cedars Cemetery. Remember that the President's grandfather had a cousin named "Hananiah." Born in Pennsylvania, he served in the Revolutionary War; then he moved in 1758 to an area in Virginia that later became Cumberland County, KY. In 1814 he was killed by an Indian and was probably buried at High Cedars Cemetery in Tinsley's Bottom. Note that Abraham and Hananiah Lincoln had several common experiences in their lives, but they were not the same person. I can't prove that Hananiah Lincoln is buried in Jackson County, but the evidence seems to point toward that conclusion. Would you want to bring your shovel and help me prove it?

*This article first appeared in The Trace: Newsletter of the Jackson County Historical Society.*

*The editors, Calvin Dickinson and Michael Birdwell, invite anyone to submit a story of 800 words concerning the history/folklore of the Upper Cumberland region. Send stories to the editors at History Department, Box 5064 TTU, Cookeville 38505. e-mail addresses are [cdickinson@tntech.edu](mailto:cdickinson@tntech.edu) and [Birdie@tntech.edu](mailto:Birdie@tntech.edu).*

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