

Nancy Hanks

Nancy Hanks (Lincoln), the mother of Abraham Lincoln, was probably born February 5, 1784. Though primary records relating to her early life do not exist, she is believed to have been born in Hampshire County, Virginia, on Mikes Run at the bottom of New Creek Mountain in what is now Mineral County, West Virginia. Around the time of her birth her grandfather, Joseph Hanks, acquired 108 acres of land and moved to that location. The Hanks family later moved via the Wilderness Trail into Kentucky. Nancy, apparently illegitimate, lived most of her life with her mother Lucy's family.



On June 12, 1806, Nancy Hanks married Thomas Lincoln in Kentucky. They had three children together, including Abraham. In 1816, the Lincolns moved to Spencer County, Indiana. There Nancy died from "milk sickness," an illness contracted by drinking milk from a cow that has grazed on snakeroot, October 5, 1818. She was 34 years old.

In 1929, Governor [William Conley](#) appointed a committee to investigate the claim that Hanks had been born in West Virginia on Mikes Run. On September 21, 1929, the commission concluded that she had, based on the evidence of Lincoln biographer William E. Barton of Massachusetts. By 1933, the state had erected a replica cabin and stone memorial identifying the site as the birthplace of Nancy Hanks. In 1966, questions once again were raised about the site's authenticity and Governor [Hulett Smith](#) concluded there was no concrete evidence to determine with any certainty where Nancy Hanks was born.

Written by [Cathy Hershberger Miller](#)

Citations

1. Baber, Adin. *Nancy Hanks*. Kansas, IL: Adin Baber, 1963.
2. Briggs, Harold E. *Nancy Hanks Lincoln: A Frontier Portrait*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1952.
3. Steers, Edward Jr. "Nancy Hanks, West Virginian." *Lincoln Herald*, (Summer 1998).