

*Abraham Lincoln at the age of thirty-seven. This is believed to be the first time that Lincoln sat for a picture.*

*It was taken during his campaign for Congress or shortly after he was elected, from 1846-1848*

# Where Lincoln Made Love

*Intimate glimpses of Salem where he worked, studied and loved Ann Rutledge*

By  
Jane E. Higbee

ONE April afternoon in 1831 a group of people stood on a bluff overlooking the Sangamon River twenty-three miles northeast of Springfield, Illinois, watching a flat boat stuck on the mill dam, its bow in the air, water coming in over its stern. There was a great deal of excitement. The whole population of New Salem was lined up along the bank, giving advice on how to right the boat. The only one who seemed to be doing anything was the boat's pilot, a long lanky youth of twenty-two, wading around in the water with his trousers rolled high above his knees. He unloaded the water-soaked cargo from the stern where it had slid, bored a hole in the flooring and called for volunteers to stand in the tilted up bow, so that their weight might slowly tip the boat forward over the dam. As the stern rose, the water ran out the hole, which was then quickly plugged up and the boat righted once more. The excited owner, one Denton Offut, rushed up to the resourceful young giant and heartily shook his hand.

"Abe Lincoln," he said, "when you get

back from taking this cargo down to New Orleans, I'll have a job ready for you here in New Salem clerking in a store I figure on opening."

Three months later Lincoln returned to this little town on the bluff to make his living. It was less than a year since he had come with his father from Indiana to Illinois and after helping him clear the land and build his cabin, Abe had decided that as there were his stepmother's sons at home to run the farm and he had now come of age, he was free to take this step. Thus he entered New Salem, an unlettered, penniless, rail-splitter, with little to recommend him on first sight except a powerful physique. When he left four years later he was a member of the state legislature and respected wherever he was known for his keen mind, kindness, and common sense. This picturesque backwoods village was the stage on which Lincoln laughed and loved and dreamed long dreams and then passed on to conquer larger fields. Soon after he left, the Sangamon River traffic was diverted to Petersburg, two miles north, which had a

better harbor, and the curtain was rung down on New Salem. For eighty years this townsite was a pasture land. But in 1921 plans were started which have resulted in the restored New Salem visited today, now an Illinois State Park and Lincoln shrine.

On the left up the hill is the Offut store, scene of the famous wrestling match. Lincoln's employer had a habit of boasting that his clerk could lift more, throw farther, run faster, jump higher, and wrestle better than any man in the county. The bullies of the town were the "Clary's Grove Boys," a bunch of good-natured roughnecks who often initiated a newcomer by beating him up or nailing him into a hogshead and rolling it down hill. When they saw Abe Lincoln's long legs and arms they carefully let him alone, but Offut's boasting led to dispute, contradiction, and finally a challenge to wrestle Jack Armstrong, the champion of Clary's Grove. Lincoln hated this "wooling and pulling" as he called it, but Offut's indiscretion had left him no choice but to fight. The betting ran high, but as a





Rutledge Inn in foreground, Lincoln and Berry store to right. It was here that Lincoln courted Ann Rutledge

Interior of Lincoln Museum as it appears today, the mecca of hundreds of thousands in the course of a year

whole there were more jack knives, tobacco plugs and drinks placed on the ox-like Armstrong than on his sinewy opponent. At a signal they started wrestling and at once Armstrong realized he had met his match. Suddenly he abandoned honest tactics and bringing his heel crashing down on Lincoln's instep, nearly succeeded in throwing him. At this Lincoln saw red and picking up the pride of Clary's Grove in his arms he tossed him back over his head onto the floor. For a moment a general battle seemed inevitable but Lincoln looked so ferocious in his anger and so ready to take on more, that defiance turned to admiration and the Clary's Grove boys called off the fight.

From this time on Lincoln became the hero of the community and was chosen umpire for all the cock fights, wrestling matches, or horse races that took place. It was also while clerking at Offut's store that he came to be called "Honest Abe."

Once, after having discovered he had overcharged a woman six and a half cents, he walked three miles that evening to return the money. On another occasion he found that while weighing tea he had overlooked a four-ounce weight that lay on the scales. When this was discovered he closed up shop and hurried off to deliver the four ounces lacking. According to Thomas Reep a store of those times sold "tea, coffee, sugar, salt, and whiskey in the grocery line, and blue calico, brown muslin, home made jeans and gloves, cotton chain, and straw hats, with a few ladies' hats, and other ornamental feminine apparel in their dry goods department." A store was also the social center of the settlement and around its wood stove and cracker box were discussed all the affairs of the nation. Story telling was a favorite pastime and in this Lincoln excelled. At Rutledge Tavern in the evenings he would stretch his long legs from a chair in front of the fireplace and keep the listeners in an uproar with his quick wit and humor. There were five girls in the Rutledge family and Ann Rutledge, just nineteen when Lincoln met her, was the eldest and fairest. She had Titian blonde hair, simplicity of manner, and great natural charm. Everyone in the village liked her and three men loved her.—Samuel Hill, whom she quickly re-

jected; his business partner John McNeil, a rich settler from New York with his fine city ways; and Abraham Lincoln, who in spite of his crude clothes and noticeable lack of good looks, unconsciously attracted her from the first. Lincoln worshipped Ann but she was promised to John McNeil and his sense of honor would not let him tell her how much she meant to him.

Business was poor at Offut's store and when volunteers were called for the Black Hawk War Lincoln enlisted and was elected Captain of his company. In turn he appointed Jack Armstrong as sergeant. The "soldiers" wore buckskin breeches and coonskin caps, and carried flintlock rifles with powder horns slung over their shoulders. But the nearest Captain Lincoln came to fighting a battle was to help bury some men who had been killed in one the day before. There were several months of hunger and hardship and on July 10, 1832, the company was disbanded in Whitewater, Wisconsin, leaving Lincoln, whose horse had been stolen, to return home on foot except for such few

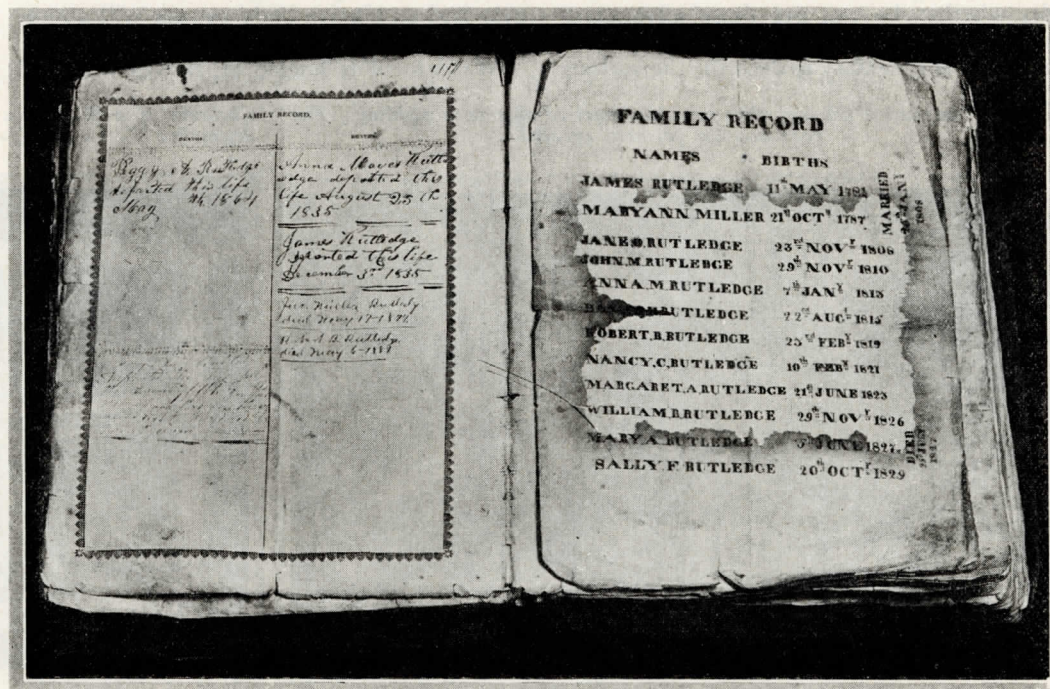
"lifts" as were offered. On his arrival he took up residence at the Rutledge Tavern and was thrown into daily contact with Ann.

Although the election was only ten days off, he announced his candidacy for the legislature as a Whig, the party then out of favor in Illinois. There was no time left to canvass the county and he was defeated, though New Salem voted for him almost to a man. His ideas were often far ahead of his time. He never drank and was in favor of temperance, and four years later his political platform included woman's suffrage. This defeat for the legislature was the only one he ever suffered directly at the hands of the people.

Lincoln and a man named Berry signed promissory notes and bought a store. Berry spent his leisure time drinking and gambling while Lincoln during his free hours pored over his law books alone. One day John McNeil, Ann's fiance, came to him and asked him to draw up some

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Tourists linger long over the old family Bible of the Rutledge family, now a sacred relic in the Lincoln Museum, recently erected by the state of Illinois at New Salem. This Bible, now yellowed with age, carries the birth and death record of Ann Rutledge, Lincoln's first love, with whom he was engaged to marry. Her untimely death brought the melancholy to Lincoln's face that remained until his death





# Where Lincoln Made Love

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deeds to land holdings as he was going back to New York for a visit. He told Lincoln his real name was McNamar but that he had changed it in order to surprise his family back East when he returned with a fortune. After he left he wrote Ann from Ohio that he had been detained there by an attack of fever, and once again from New York he sent word his father had died and it would take some time to settle the estate. Then his letters ceased altogether.

In May Lincoln was appointed Postmaster which pleased him because it gave him the privilege of reading all the newspapers as soon as they arrived in town. Mail came twice a week and Lincoln would stick the letters in the band of his hat and go out and deliver them. The postage on a letter in the United States was  $6\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $12\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $18\frac{3}{4}$ , or 25c according to the distance it had to go, and was always collected at the place of destination. If the recipient did not have the price of postage neither did Abe Lincoln have the heart to refuse delivery.

On the Fourth of July he closed his store and took a long walk in the woods with Ann Rutledge. He asked her if she wanted him to trace McNeil but she answered, "No, he knows where I am, if he does not care to write to me I do not care to hear from him." Then she asked him questions of the world outside Sangamon county and he told her of his two trips to New Orleans; of the stately southern colonial homes, and the crowded thoroughfares, of the slave markets where children were torn from their mothers, and chained men and women were sold like animals. "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing," he said, "I'll hit it hard."

Later on he summoned his courage to ask Ann the question he had been longing to ask for two years, and when she answered he sat down and carved on a stone "A. Lincoln and Ann Rutledge were betrothed here July 4, 1833."

In the Museum at New Salem can be seen the Rutledge family Bible and the grammar which Ann and Abe studied together. In the bill making New Salem a state park the legislature agrees to "complete the restoration of, as far as possible, all buildings which were standing thereon at the time that Abraham Lincoln resided in the town of New Salem." This program has not yet been completed. The Lincoln League, since the time the state took over the property, has restored the Offutt store, the Rutledge Tavern, and the Berry & Lincoln store, and the Hill & McNamar store; and partially restored the house of Dr. Allen, a country physician and close friend of Lincoln's. It has also bought and removed from Petersburg the original Onstott Cooper Shop, and replaced it some distance away from the other buildings on the spot formerly occupied by it in the village. Here it was that Lincoln walked from the flat boat stuck on the mill dam to borrow an auger to bore his hole, and in front of the fireplace of this shop he later pored over books on law and surveying hour after hour. As soon as the state restores these old buildings the Old Salem Lincoln League proposes to furnish them as nearly as possible in the manner and style of Lincoln's time. Could any memorial be more fitting?

During the years 1833 and 1834 both good fortune and bad came to Lincoln. Berry died, leaving "Honest Abe" to live

up to his name and shoulder the burden of Berry's bad debts. Soon after he was offered a job if he would learn surveying, and he lost many nights of sleep until the subject was mastered. The following Spring when he was twenty-five years old, he ran again for the legislature and won. This meant leaving Ann and New Salem and going to live in Vandalia. His salary was three dollars per day. Ann had written McNeil she wished to be released from her promise and as no answer had come in return she felt she was free from any obligation to him. She decided to attend the Jacksonville Female Academy the following fall and Lincoln planned to register for some courses at Illinois College in the same town, leaving his studies to be present at legislative sessions whenever necessary. The Rutledge family were now living in Concord, a little north of Petersburg.

August came, and with it an epidemic of typhoid fever. Ann fell victim to the disease and grew steadily worse day by day. Finally Lincoln came for what was to prove his last visit with her. They had a few hours alone together and not long after, she died. Visitors to Petersburg always go out to the cemetery near there to see her grave and to read on its headstone a sonnet written to her by Edgar Lee Masters. Though Lincoln's horizon widened after her death, and he held the fate of a great nation in his hands, his friends and neighbors at New Salem were at all times as welcome in the White House as were kings and queens. These backwoods folk were his own people and he never forgot this log cabin village to which American travelers are flocking today, where he loved Ann Rutledge.

# Cars I Have Owned

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but one o' them dern things made my hoss skittish one day," came his decree. I hesitated, and then grandly told him to go ahead. We coasted more than a mile, and then a friendly electric car motorman and conductor allowed me to hitch on behind for the remainder of the trip; we wore the same sort of pin.

The mounting cost of upkeep began to chill my ardor, and it plainly was time to kiss the car a permanent farewell.

I decided to advertise the vehicle; the description was chaste, with no undeserved claims. I adhered rigidly to facts, but not all of them were detailed as advertising cost so much a word.

Response number one came from a sedate professor of Harvard. He inspected the car with a critical eye, and then observed that he might essay a ride—his first. I had just had the battery charged and the tires were good, so off we went.

Silently we rolled along by the classic

Charles and my prospect gradually emerged from fear to seeming enjoyment. "And how rapidly are we moving," he asked. I told him—twelve miles an hour. He turned Nile green. "I fancy I have

gone far enough, kindly stop," he whimpered. "I fear such speed may cause disaster."

Response No. 2 wasn't. Not a bite.

I drove along the river, wondering if I wouldn't be money in to cast her away, when I came upon a man howling with rage, and cursing his car. I stopped to seek the cause of his wrath.

"Burned my hand on that cursed motor," he snarled.

Then—"Say, how'll you trade," he anxiously demanded. I got out to inspect his cart—an Orient buckboard.

It was almost new, but I shook my head and started back to my electric agony. He overtook me. "Say," he yelled, "I'll give you fifty dollars boot."

"Make it a hundred and I might consider," I replied.

Naturally, we compromised on \$75, and each of us secretly fancied our troubles were over, and both of us erred grievously in that supposition.

## Be Careful

Too many old  
folks are being  
killed by autos  
while crossing  
the street.

Watch Out for Them