

The Robert Hodgen Line

Robert Hodgen was born August 7, 1742¹. As an adult, Robert Hodgen first settled in Pennsylvania and married Suzannah Adkins, by whom he had four children:

Robert Hodgen, born April 23, 1765

Susannah Hodgen, born October 3, 1767

Joseph Hodgen, born January 8, 1770

William Hodgen, born May 14, 1772

Following Suzannah's death, Robert Hodgen married second, Sarah LaRue², who was born September 6, 1755 to Isaac LaRue and Phebe Carman. Robert and Sarah Hodgen had twelve children:

Margaret Hodgen, born 1776, married Joseph Vertrees

Phebe Hodgen, born October 10, 1777, married Jacob LaRue

Isaac Hodgen, born August 8, 1779, married Phebe Trabue

Sarah Hodgen, born April 7, 1781, married William LaRue

John H. Hodgen, born April 27, 1783, married Diedamia LaRue

Rebecca Hodgen³, born November 4, 1784, married Jacob Keith

Elizabeth Hodgen, born January 26, 1787, married Horatio Wintersmith

Mary "Polly" Hodgen, born October 23, 1788

Samuel LaRue Hodgen, born April 30, 1791, married Elizabeth Montague

Jacob Hodgen, born 1793

James Hodgen, born 1795

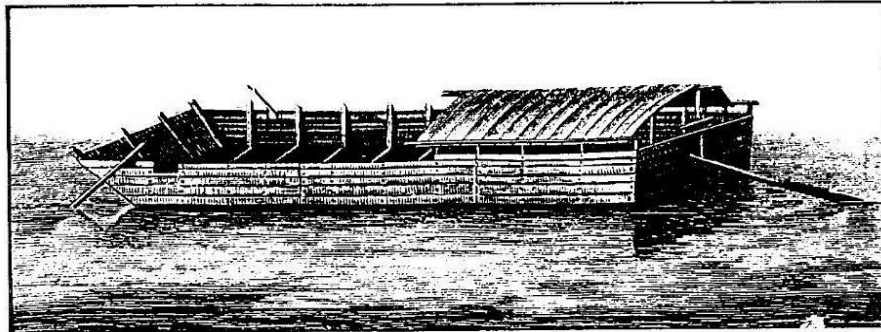
Jabez Hodgen, born 1800

¹ It is unlikely that Robert Hodgen was a sea captain as reported by several sources. Instead, after some research into the conflicting stories of Robert Hodgen's origins, Ragnhild "Randy" Bairnsfather in her book, *some Descendants of Robert Hodgen (1742-1810) of Virginia and Kentucky*, in 1991 believes that Robert Hodgen's father was John Hodgen, possibly a sea captain and his mother, Anna Stranaland of Dutch descent. Further research by this author questions even that assertion.

² Sarah LaRue's sister (and distant Great Aunt of all descendants of Robert and Sarah Hodgen) was Mary LaRue Brooks Enlow. As related in *Six Generations of LaRues and Allied Families*, Mary Enlow was most probably the mid-wife that helped Nancy Hanks Lincoln deliver her son Abraham.

³ Rebecca Hodgen Keith, daughter of Robert and Sarah Hodgen (and distant great aunt of all current living descendants of John H. and Diedamia Hodgen,) lived with her family less than a mile from the Lincoln cabin. As related in *Six Generations of LaRues and Allied Families*, Rebecca Keith along with her cousin Margaret LaRue (Mary Enlow's daughter) was almost certainly present along with Mary Enlow to help with Abraham Lincoln's birth.

In 1784, Robert Hodgen moved his family, probably by flatboat down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers



Ohio River Flatboat. From a drawing in 1796 in Victor Collot's *Voyage dans l'Amerique Septentrionale*, published in Paris, 1826. Reproduced from Archer B. Hulbert's, *The Paths of Inland Commerce: A Chronicle of Trail, Road, and Waterway*, "Chronicles of America" series, Vol. 21, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920.

and into Kentucky, on the banks of the Nolynn River. They arrived with other pioneer families, the LaRues, Keiths, Walters and others, many of who are connected with the Hodgen name, not only by association but also by marriage. Due to Indian hostilities, the pioneers spent their first year in and around Philips Fort, the first permanent settlement in what would become LaRue County. The fort was located about one mile north of what would later become Hodgenville, Kentucky. By 1785 the pioneers ventured outside the fort to stay and build homesteads in the area.

Robert Hodgen set up his grist mill, tavern and Inn on land near Gum Springs on the Nolynn River. The mill quickly became the major waypoint for commerce and for travelers between Bardstown and Louisville. A French traveler named Micheaux stayed at Hodgen's Inn in 1796 and found "good lodgings," and young prince Louise Phillipe, future King of France from 1830 to 1845, spent the night at the Inn on April 19, 1797 and wrote of the experience in his personal diaries.⁴

By the time Thomas and Nancy Lincoln moved to the Sinking Spring farm in 1808, just a couple miles from the Hodgen Plantation, the plantation was the center of activity for the area. It is certainly conceivable that the Hodgens took notice when Thomas and Nancy Lincoln moved onto the Sinking Spring Farm.

Robert Hodgen was one of the first justices of the Hardin County Court and later served as Sheriff of Hardin County and as a member of the legislature. He was a deacon in the Severn Valley Baptist

⁴ See "The Mather Papers, published in commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Settling of LaRue County and the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Hodgenville, KY., in the year 1968.

Church for many years. In Collins' History of Kentucky, speaking of Robert Hodgen and his brother-in-law John LaRue:

"They were both noted for uprightness and sterling moral worth, both members of the Baptist Church, and beloved for their unobtrusive and devoted piety."

Robert Hodgen died on February 5, 1810. Following his death, Sarah LaRue Hodgen continued to live on the plantation while her sons Isaac and John operated the mill. It is likely that Sarah Hodgen (known by the boy Lincoln as "Missus Sarah") played some role in the early childhood education of the future President, and in fact the boy Lincoln attended Sarah Hodgen's blab school.⁵ According to Austin Gollaher in the book *The Boyhood of Abraham Lincoln*⁶:

From his mother and from Mrs. Hodgen Abraham learned his A B C's. Indeed, these two women created in him the first thirst for knowledge – that thirst which grew as a boy, until it became his first concern, his one great passion. With pencils of soapstone, upon smooth boards scorched black over a backlog fire, Mrs. Hodgen spelled and figured and explained, never losing patience in her effort to teach the boy – and give him the fundamental three R's.

On February 18, 1818, Sarah Hodgen and her sons Isaac and John filed a petition in the Hardin County Court for the establishment of a town "on the lands of Robert Hodgen, agreeable to a plan submitted, to be called and known by the name of Hodgenville." Two days later, on February 8, 1818, the county court made the Order for the establishment of the town.

Sarah Hodgen died July 27, 1825. Both she and Robert Hodgen are buried at The Nolynn Church Cemetery.

John H. Hodgen (1783-1859)

Robert Hodgen's son John was born on April 27, 1783. On December 30, 1802 he married his cousin Diedamia LaRue, who was born April 24, 1785 to Jacob LaRue and Mary Frost.

⁵ The Lincoln Country, Carl and Rosalie Frazier, Hastings House Publishers, New York, 1963, page 11. A blab school is a school common in the 19th century where books and other teaching materials were uncommon, but consisted rather of a teacher speaking content and the class reciting it back.

⁶ While many Lincoln historians dismiss Gollaher's stories as ramblings of an old man, it is certainly conceivable that there is much truth in his stories, and the stories do speak to the importance of the Hodgen family in the area.

John and Diedamia had twelve children:

Robert Hodgen, born March 12, 1804, married Nancy Catherine Miller

Polly Hodgen, born October 14, 1805

Parmelia Hodgen, born December 10, 1806, married Dr. ? Elliot

Adkin Hodgen, born November 15, 1808

Elizabeth Hodgen, born April 1, 1811

Isaac Horatio Hodgen, born April 25, 1813

John J. Hodgen, born, March 25, 1815, married Sarah Leonard

Jacob Samuel Hodgen, born June 10, 1817, married Elizabeth Combs

Jabez Washington Hodgen, born April 1, 1819

Sarah Adeline Hodgen, born October 17, 1821

William Anderson Hodgen, born August 2, 1824

Amanda Adelia Hodgen, born January 25, 1827

After his father died in 1810, John Hodgen owned and operated the family's grist mill and often interacted with Thomas Lincoln and his young son Abraham ("Abe"). According to Austin Gollaher, John Hodgen was Abe Lincoln's hero:

*Every boy has a hero. John Hodgen, the miller, was young Abe's The miller was big, and gentle, kind and courageous.*⁷

*To the boy Lincoln, John Hodgen, , was the biggest man in the World, and when boys teased him and told him that was trying to be like "Mr. John," he said: "Well, if all of you would try to be like Mr. John there wouldn't be any need for your parents to watch you to try to keep you from doing wrong."*⁸

John Hodgen was baptized into the Fellowship of the Severns Valley Baptist Church in 1802, the same year that he married Diedamia LaRue. He helped organize the Nolynn Baptist Church in 1803, and a few years later he was licensed to preach. He soon, however, became a controversial figure. In 1820, he was invited to preach once a month at the South Fork Church and became a member there. When it was time for him to be ordained, he was denied ordination by the Nolynn Church on account of his "Arminian sentiments." Nevertheless, he did become the pastor of the South Fork Church,

⁷ page 77 of The Boyhood of Abraham Lincoln

⁸ page 79 of The Boyhood of Abraham Lincoln

which caused dissention between the two neighboring churches, and this dissention continued until 1828 when John Hodgen was replaced.

Shortly thereafter, John Hodgen moved to Sangamon County, Illinois and joined the Campbellite Order (Disciples of the Christ Christian Church.) He remained there for seven of eight years before removing to Iowa, where he would spend the balance of his life. It appears that both John and his wife died about 1859.

Jacob Samuel Hodgen (1817-1864)

Jacob Samuel Hodgen (one of the sons of John Hodgen and Diedamia LaRue) married Elizabeth Combs in February, 1840.

In an 1890 biography of Mary D. Hodgen Frederick, sister of Philip Oscar Hodgen:

“In the family of Jacob and Elizabeth Hodgen were twelve children, of whom seven, four sons and three daughters, are yet living. One of the sons, P.O. Hodgen, entered the service of his country during the late war as a member of an Illinois regiment, and being captured was confined in the loathsome Andersonville Prison. His discharge was secured by his mother, who made a personal appeal to President Lincoln with whom she was intimately acquainted. Her petition was signed by the President on the day of his assassination.”

The timeline of events make it clear that Elizabeth Combs Hodgen had no idea that Philip Oscar Hodgen had escaped from Andersonville Prison and had probably already found his way back to his company by April 14, 1865, the date of Lincoln’s assassination⁹.

Philip Oscar Hodgen (1845-1894)

Philip Oscar Hodgen was the the son of Jacob Samuel Hodgen and Elizabeth Combs and grandson of John and Diedamia Hodgen. He was born on November 19, 1846 near Burlington, Des Moines county, Iowa. As a young man, barely seventeen, he enlisted in the Union Army on February 24, 1864 and served in Company F of the 114 Regiment of the Illinois Infantry. He was captured at the Battle of Guntown, Mississippi on June 10, 1864 and taken to Andersonville prison. On September 22, 1864 he escaped from

⁹ There is no official record of Lincoln signing this petition, yet it is conceivable that there wouldn’t be either.

Andersonville, and eventually found his way back to Company F, but not before developing scurvy from his ordeal. He was honorably discharged from the army on August 26, 1865.

On March 28, 1872 Philip Hodgen married Emma Elizabeth Harrison, who was born April 27, 1849, the daughter of George M. Harrison and Mary Ann Megredy. Together Philip and Emma would have nine children:

William O. Hodgen, born 1873, died June 1, 1912 unmarried

Clara M. Hodgen, born September 27, 1874 married Sidney Barnes

Cora Elizabeth Hodgen, born March 9, 1877 married Henry Hanson

Phillip Arthur Hodgen, born August 8, 1879 married Susan Mae Morrison

Mary Mable Hodgen, born 1881, died 1882

Clifford Claud Hodgen, born September 17, 1882

Fredrick Hodgen, born October 24, 1884 married Myrtle ?

Ella Florence Hodgen, born February 21, 1888 married Thomas Curtis Miller

Eva Louisa "Lulu" Hodgen, born January 28, 1891 died 1905 unmarried

Philip Hodgen had a large farm just on the outskirts of Pleasant Plains, Illinois. In addition he sold farm implements and managed a grain elevator. He was known as a conscientious and fair businessman, however, he lost much of his fortune, and the last couple of years of Philip's and his family's lives were strained. Emma and Philip separated due to his apparent affair with Mollie Jones, a neighbor in Pleasant Plains. Emma Hodgen moved her family to Afton, Iowa to be close to her siblings. Philip continued to obsess about Ms. Jones, following her 1st to Chicago and then back to Sangamon County. After being spurned by Ms. Jones numerous times, Philip Hodgen, apparently penniless, took Ms. Jones' life and then his own on June 5, 1894. A transcript of the Illinois State Journal article describing this event can be found in the Appendix. Emma Hodgen died on October 8, 1894 in Afton, Iowa, leaving behind a handful of young orphans.

Ella "Elinor" Florence Hodgen

Ella "Elinor" Florence Hodgen was born February 21, 1888, presumably at her parent's farm just outside Pleasant Plains, Illinois. She was the second youngest of nine children born to Philip Oscar Hodgen and Emma E. Harrison.

Following her parents' deaths in 1894, Elinor traveled by wagon train from Iowa to Costilla County, Colorado, and lived there for several years with the James G. Watterson family.



By 1910, Elinor was back in Sangamon County, living as a "private residence" servant in the home of her first cousin one generation removed Millard F. Megredy and his wife Arabelle. In 1912 Elinor was living in Taylorville, Illinois. Elinor married Thomas Curtis Miller on August 11, 1915.