

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: Boiling Springs Road.

Date of original construction: 1866.

Name of original owner: John Hanks.

History: The brick walls outside and the room partitions inside reach from the top down to a foundation below ground level and are 10" to 12" thick. There is a floored basement under part of the house, and when a furnace was being installed, the workmen encountered real problems, for the sills are of such thick and heavy oak that ordinary tools were impotent in putting ducts through them."

(THIS FOLLOWS DATA WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE SIDE AND IS FROM THE SAME SOURCE)

Note: Edwin Davis's book, The Lincolns, the Hanks, and Macon County, contains much more information about the Hanks family.

Present owner's name: Paul Whited.

"John Hanks was a cousin of Abraham Lincoln's mother, Mrs. Nancy Hanks Lincoln. He and his family came to Macon County from Kentucky in 1828 or 1829. He lived near Boiling Springs until his death July 1st, 1889.

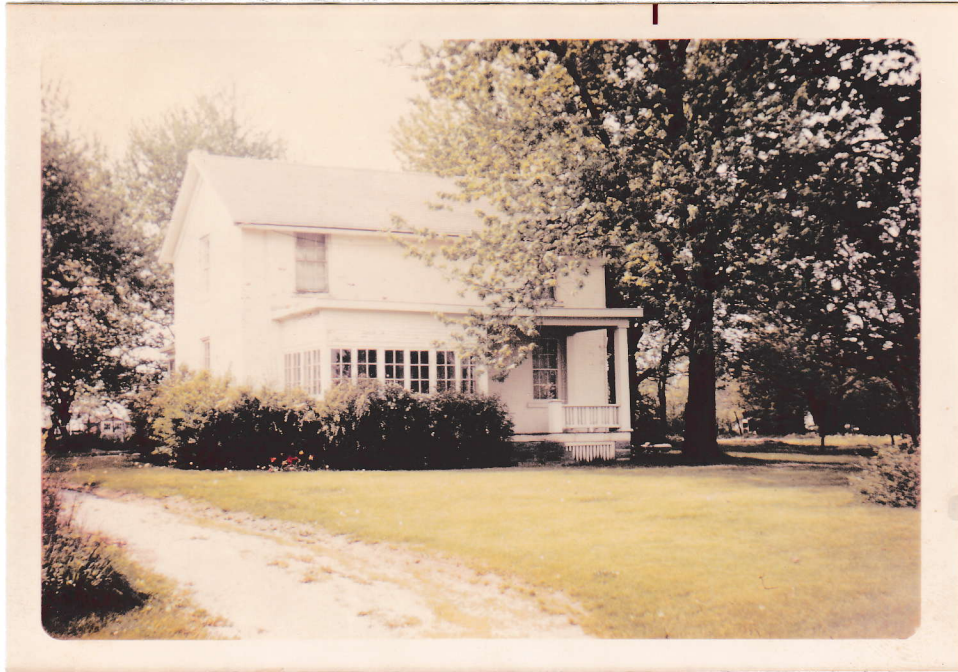
"Besides John Hanks' connection with A. Lincoln, he was one of the county's busiest early citizens. He served on the first and second grand juries and was a ranger in Captain Johnson's company during the Black Hawk War. He daubed and chinked the log courthouse in Decatur and was paid \$9.87-1/2 for his work. He made numerous trips to New Orleans by flat boat and went to California during the gold rush. He remained in California two or three years on the first trip, and in later years made several other trips west. During the Civil War, he was wagon master in U. S. Grant's regiment. He wanted President Lincoln to appoint him as an Indian Agent, but it doesn't appear that he did serve in this capacity, or that of a Postmaster which he also asked for, because he could neither read nor write."

(From a mimeographed guide sheet: Points of Interest on a Macon County Historical Society Tour, July 8, 1973)

"When John Hanks first settled in Macon County, he built a log cabin in what is now Hickory Point Township. After his trip to California, he came back - flush enough that he built a seven room log house with a stairway and an ell. Mrs. Mary Ellen Hanks Manon, John's daughter, remembered this house with real pleasure after many years. There was even a cookstove in it. This home burned in 1866, and Mr. Hanks built the brick house now standing. Bricks were burned by Charles Lewis on the farm and it appears that John paid Mr. Lewis for his work by deeding him 10 acres of land."

"Two items re: The construction of the house are interesting. (See front of this sheet). Same sources are as above - Points of Interest on a MCHS Tour July 8, 1973.

The John Hanks Farm



Taken by Margaret Meyer
April 19, 1974

Personal notes - John Hancock

1800

Personal notes - Subscribed

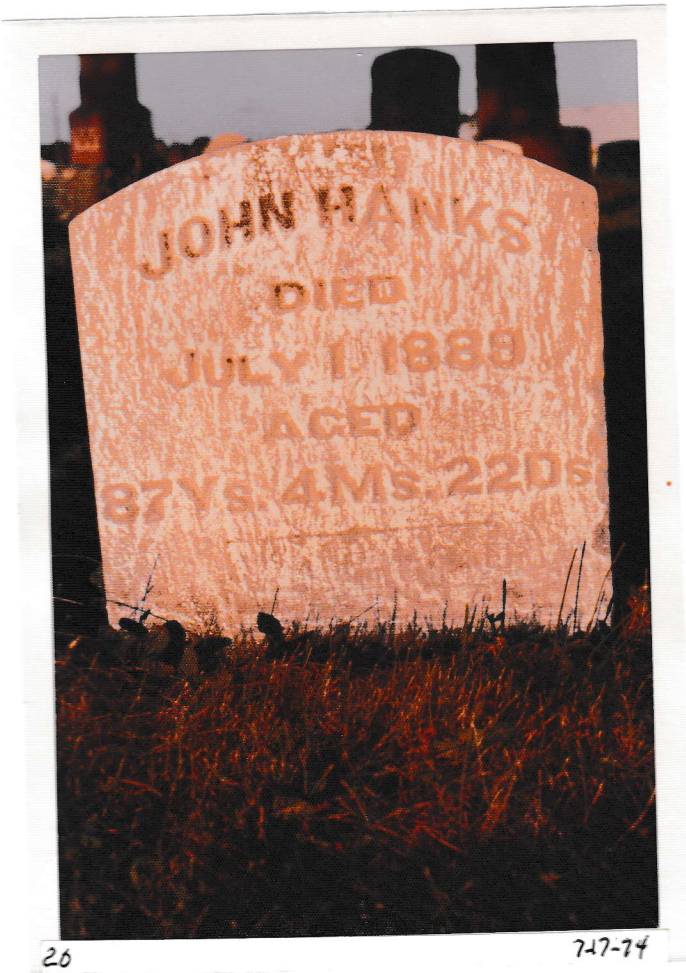
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Library of Congress
1800



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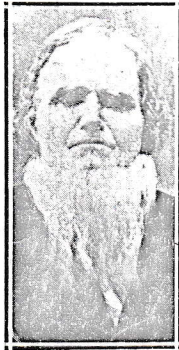
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also went along. They were to be paid 50 cents a day, and \$60 to be divided at the end of the trip.

From Decatur to Springfield, where they were to meet Offut, they made the trip in a canoe over the Sangamon. This was just about a year after Lincoln had arrived in Macon county. Never again did Abraham Lincoln come back to call Macon county his home. On his return from the trip south Lincoln was offered a job in Offut's store in New Salem. That ended his connection with Macon county, as a home, and opened a new chapter in his life, his career at New Salem.

JOHN HANKS

John Hanks, who was so intimately associated with his cousin, Abraham Lincoln, and who induced Lincoln to make his first public speech, was a picturesque figure. He was one of the earliest settlers in the county, and lived here until his death July 1, 1889.² His body lies in Boiling Springs cemetery.

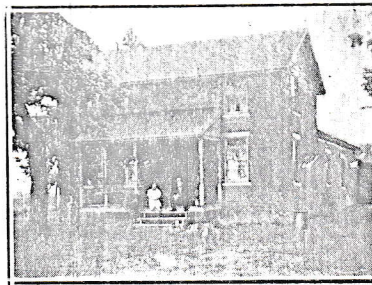


JOHN HANKS

Outside of his connection with Lincoln, he was one of the county's busy citizens.⁵ He served on the first and second grand juries, was a ranger in Captain Johnson's company during the Black Hawk war, made numerous trips to New Orleans by flatboat, and in the Civil war was a wagon master in Grant's regiment. During the gold rush he made a trip to California, remaining three years, and after the Civil war made several trips west. He was appointed as Indian agent by President Lincoln.

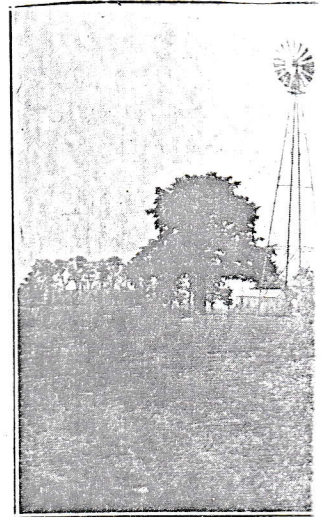
It is thought that John Hanks was the only one of the Hanks family invited to Abraham Lincoln's wedding. Once after Lincoln was elected president Hanks visited him at the White House.

When John Hanks first settled in the county he built a log cabin in Hickory Point township. That cabin burned about 1866. Mr. Hanks' second home was a brick house. That house is still standing, and is herewith reproduced.



JOHN HANKS' HOME

John Hanks came into the world and split the rails for the fence. This fence—two of which were at the Decatur convention at the Decatur the world.



LINCOLN

James Hanks, brother of John Hanks, located eighty acres of land north of his brother's cabin where the H. I. Baldwin home from that cabin were used.

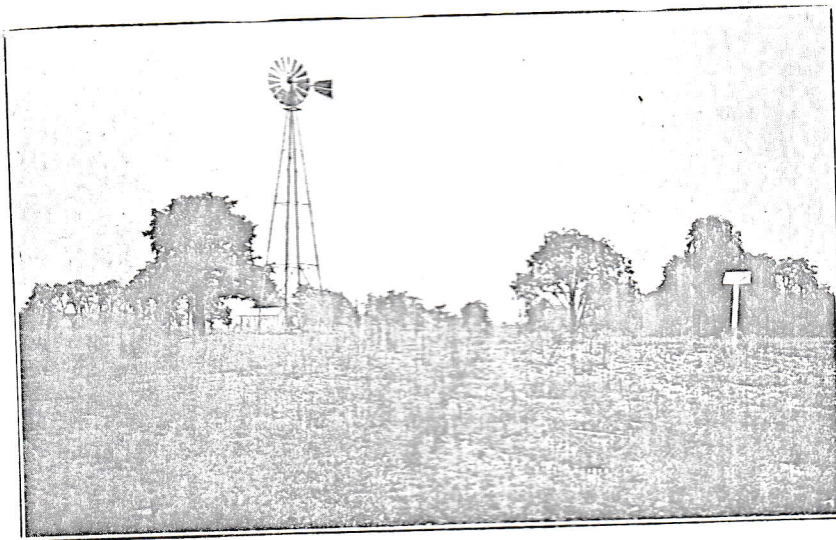
It is said that Lincoln visited there when he made his first trip to William T. Crawford's wife would not sign the petition.

William Hanks also fought in the Black Hawk war. He was killed several years after Macon county was organized.

William Hanks, Sr., was a member of the grand jury in 1851 or 1852.

Richmond, Mabel E., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, published by the Decatur Review, 1930

John Hanks came into the limelight by helping Abraham Lincoln split the rails for the fence for the Lincoln homestead. The rails from this fence—two of which carried the banner at the state Republican convention at the Decatur Wigwam in 1860—became known all over the world.



LINCOLN CABIN SITE (as it appears today)

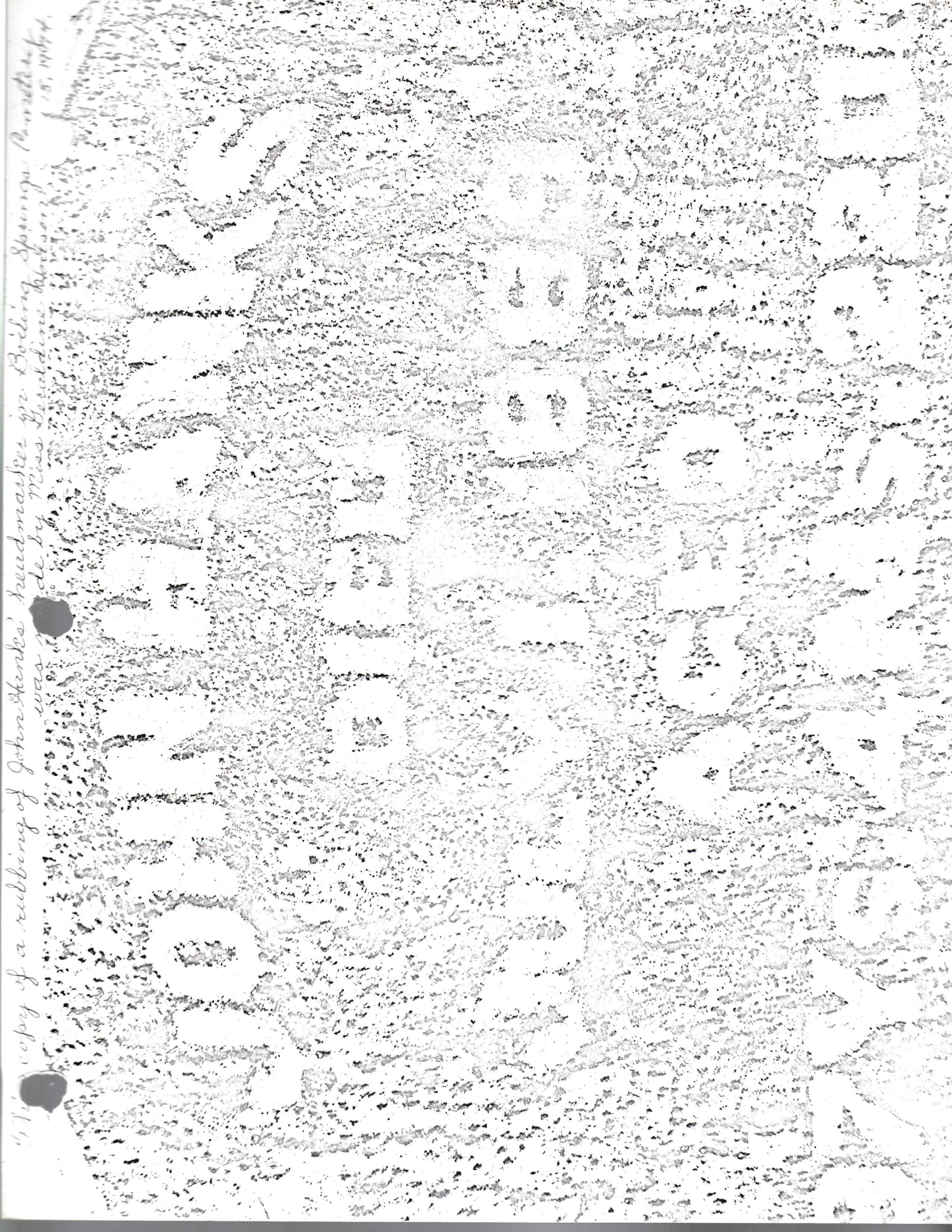
James Hanks, brother of John, built his cabin about a quarter mile north of his brother. William Hanks, Jr., another brother, entered eighty acres of land west of the quarter section on which Decatur was located. His cabin stood on the lot which is now the site of the H. I. Baldwin home, 452 West Main street. Some walnut logs from that cabin were used in the Baldwin house.

It is said that Lincoln often sprawled in the shade of the trees there when he made trips in to town. This land was sold by Mr. Hanks to William T. Crissey. There is a story to the effect that his wife would not sign the deed until she received a new dress.

William Hanks also was a ranger in Johnson's company in the Black Hawk war. He was supervisor of Road District No. 1 for several years after Macon county was formed. He died in January, 1836.

William Hanks, Sr., brother of the grandmother of Lincoln, Lucy Hanks, entered land in Section 22 in Harristown township. He was a member of the grand jury in 1832. He is thought to have died about 1851 or 1852.

Richmond, Mabel E., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, published by The Decatur Review, 1930.



411
A copy of a rubbing of John Stankes' headmaster in Boiling Springs, Carolina
was made by Miss Geraldine Johnson, 15, 1904.

By the Way — by Otto R. Kyle 5/25/65

E. K. KILPATRICK, 865 W. Waggoner St., believes he is the only man alive who lived with, worked and talked with John Hanks, the close friend of Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Kilpatrick, 87, is keen of mind and alert. When I went to see him last week he was just getting ready to go to Boiling Springs cemetery to visit the grave of Hanks that I had written about earlier in the week.

In his latter years John Hanks was living with A. T. Mettlin whose home was in what is now Greenridge addition to Decatur, north of Pershing Road and west of MacArthur Road. Mr. Mettlin's first wife was John Hanks' daughter, Milanda Jane, who died in August, 1874.

Mr. Kilpatrick's mother in 1886 went to work in the Mettlin home taking her eight-year-old son (E. K. Kilpatrick) with her. Later she married Mr. Mettlin. Soon after their arrival at the Mettlin home, Hanks was brought back to Decatur from California.

Hanks had been visiting his daughter, Mrs. John Manon (Mary Ellen Hanks). Mr. and Mrs. Manon stayed only briefly and then returned to California. From then on until Mr. Hanks died July 1, 1889, Mr. Kilpatrick, as a boy, was a close companion of John Hanks, aiding him in every way he could. Mr. Hanks had swollen legs due to rheumatism and was otherwise physically ill.

It was during the three years he was with him that Hanks told Kilpatrick many stories about Lincoln. He insisted that Lincoln never split rails although Lincoln said that he had. Hanks also told the oft repeated story about Hanks' visit to the White House.

Mr. Kilpatrick repeated it to me with some new angles that I had not read about, particularly his being thrown to the ground by White House guards. Hanks had arrived at the White House grounds and was stopped by a soldier. He told the guard that he wanted to see Abe Lincoln and was told by the soldier that he had to have a pass.

Hanks insisted he was from Decatur and a cousin of Lincoln's. The guard stood firm and

when Hanks got mad and a bit noisy and unruly, the guards threw him to the ground and held him down. Hanks insisted they call Lincoln. One did and Lincoln came out.

The President started laughing and Hanks got madder. Lincoln walked over to Hanks, joked with him and finally told the guards to let Hanks up. By this time there was a crowd watching. They let Hanks go and he stayed around Washington a few days.

Mr. Kilpatrick confirmed that Hanks could neither read nor write but that he was a shrewd man. He and others called Kilpatrick "Bud." When Hanks got back from California he said they would not let him chew tobacco in the house out there. Mr. Mettlin gave Bud a dollar and told him to go to the store and get Hanks some tobacco.

Kilpatrick got on a horse, rode to a store in the Gebhart block on N. Water St., and got a dollar's worth of assorted tobacco for Hanks. A cuspidor was provided and Hanks resumed his chewing.

Hanks, although in poor con-

dition, could saw wood. Kilpatrick put the cord wood on a jack and Hanks would saw it with a one-man cross saw. However, there were times when Hanks would get sleepy and he would go to sleep wherever he was.

Mr. Kilpatrick was born in McConnellsburg, Pa., and came to Macon County in 1884. Last March 15 he was 87 years old. The three years he was living in the same home with Hanks was when he was 8 to 11 but his memory is still keen about those years.

Mr. Mettlin built a new home closer to what is now Pershing Road and Frank M. Beal moved into the old Mettlin home. Mrs. Beal was a granddaughter of Hanks. Hanks in 1889 was getting pretty feeble but went to the Beal home to visit and there became ill.

He died in the Beal home at 3:30 p.m., July 1, 1890. The funeral was held at the Boiling Springs church with Rev. T. W. Pinkerton officiating. Hanks was buried in the Boiling Springs cemetery with others of his family.

THE DECATUR REVIEW

"The Community Paper"

May 19, 1965

Decatur Should Honor John Hanks

A SUGGESTION that it is time to give special honor to John Hanks and list his grave as a Decatur Lincoln historical place is made by Otto R. Kyle, in his familiar column "By the Way" which appears elsewhere on this page. Hanks, a first cousin of Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, is buried in Boiling Springs Cemetery northwest of Decatur. He died July 1, 1889, at the age of 87 years, 4 months and 22 days according to the inscription on the grave stone.

With Memorial Day approaching, Kyle paid a visit to Hanks' grave. And he raises a question whether there has ever been any special memorial service for the man who is credited with being responsible for Thomas Lincoln bringing his family, which included his son Abe, to Macon County. Kyle, of course, is a Lincoln authority and he would likely know the answer to his own question if it were affirmative.

Hanks lived with the Thomas Lincoln family in Spencer County, Ind., one of the Ohio

came to Macon County in 1823, cleared the land and settled on a farm four miles northwest of Decatur. He later wrote to the Lincolns in Indiana saying that Macon County was superior to the Indiana area where the Lincolns lived. Two years later they moved to Illinois.

Another marker on John Hanks' grave is a reminder of his Civil War service. He was a wagoner in Co. A, 21st Illinois Volunteer Infantry, serving two years under Col. U.S. Grant.

Kyle raises two questions. First, has there ever been any special memorial service for the man. Apparently none has been held recently, if ever. One of the patriotic organizations could remedy that situation, for this Memorial Day if there is sufficient time, or later. The Hanks grave in nearby Boiling Springs Cemetery should, by all means, be included among the listed local Lincoln historical spots. The suggestion perhaps will induce Decatur and area residents to visit the Hanks burial place this Me-