

Lincoln

The name “Lincoln” was coined in medieval times in England, and it is difficult today to understand the pronunciation.

Ownership of land was primarily the domain of the royal family, or those who were in the favor of the Royals. A community ideally consisted of several dwellings with their support buildings of barns and sheds. As this was long before the age of industrialization, agriculture and animal husbandry occupied most of the inhabitants. Birth rates (or at least survival rates) were low and did not fluctuate a great deal. Sometimes, for one reason or another, the population of a community would increase to the point that there weren’t any unoccupied dwellings, and the surplus had to emigrate to other regions. Remember that the King held title to the land, which precluded erecting a cottage in the corner of your cow pasture for your adult children.

This is the situation that faced the medieval hamlet of Lindun, a group of cottages and fields surrounded by miles and miles of forest, all of which was legally the hunting grounds of the King. A delegation was dispatched to London to ask permission to establish a new community several miles away in the vast forest. This wish was granted, and a road (more likely a path) was established between Lindun and the new opening in the forest, where the surplus population set up housekeeping. No doubt for tax purposes, London wanted a name for this new community, which the residents referred to as “Lindun Colony”. Over time, the name was simplified to the beginning of Lindun and the end of Colony, or “Lincoln”. As this was prior to the general use of family names, the residents, whenever they left home to venture out into the world, would identify themselves as “Robert of (or from) Lincoln”, and if he stayed in another community, eventually would be known as simply “Robert Lincoln”.

Generations later, the descendants of this community emigrated to the New World, settling in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony. From there, like so many of their peers, they spread out over what was to become the United States. Abraham Lincoln’s forefathers went south, making stops in Kentucky, North Carolina and Illinois.