

D. LEIGH HENSON, VIDEO OF OLD UNION CEMETERY, LINCOLN, ILLINOIS (August 22, 2018)

NOTES, including corrections, supplemental information, sources, and notable omissions. For even more information, access findinglincolnellinois.com.

CORRECTIONS

White oaks, not black oaks, can live up to 600 years.

Boston Hoblit was the brother of my Great, Great Grandfather Washington Hoblit, not great, great, great grandfather.

William Maxwell's mother is buried in the Old Union Cemetery, not in the New Union Cemetery.

Charles C. Maxwell was the son of William Creighton Maxwell, not William Maxwell's father, William Keepers Maxwell, Sr.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND SOURCES

I am indebted to Pat and Gary Freese of Lincoln for giving me an obscure article in a 1953 *Lincoln Courier* edition several years ago that told about Samuel Evans and his role in the origin of Old Union Cemetery.

Samuel Evans: a pioneer who built his home in what now includes Old Union Cemetery sometime in the 1830s. He farmed and operated a ferry across Salt Creek. When members of his family died, Mr. Evans buried them in his backyard, and he allowed neighbors to bury their relatives there, too. Mr. Evans donated a portion of his land to establish what is now the Old Union Cemetery. He was buried here in 1847.

Frank Frorer: at the beginning of the 20th century, Frank Frorer was one of Lincoln's wealthiest and best-known businessmen. In 1908 Mr. Frorer died two months after he was attacked and robbed in broad daylight on the streets of Lincoln. He was born in Germany in 1832 and came to Lincoln at its founding in 1853. Mr. Frorer began as a clerk in a hardware store. Later he owned and operated a similar store. Through hard work and smart investments, he gradually accumulated considerable property. At the time of his death, he was President of the First National Bank and part owner of the South Coal Mine. His entombment here testifies to the high esteem in which he was held by the community.

Robert Latham (1818--1895) was one of three land speculators who founded Lincoln, Illinois, in 1853. This town is known as the First Lincoln Namesake Town because it was named for him before he became famous. Early in 1853, the Chicago and Alton Railroad hired Mr. Latham, the Logan County sheriff, to purchase land so that the railroad could expand north from Springfield toward Chicago. Latham and his partners John Dean Gillett, the Cattle King from Elkhart, and Virgin Hickox of Springfield bought land thirty miles north of Springfield, because they knew the railroad would need to build a station there so that its steam locomotives could replenish their water supply.

The speculators were all previously acquainted with Abraham Lincoln, and they hired him to obtain a state charter to establish a new community where the watering station would be located. As part of Lincoln's reward, the three founders offered to name the town for him as their attorney. According to legend, Mr. Lincoln joked that nothing named Lincoln ever amounted to

anything, but he accepted their offer anyway, and he christened the town with watermelon juice in his name August 27, 1853. In 1860 Mr. Latham was elected to the state legislature. At the beginning of the Civil War, Latham organized a Union regiment and served as its colonel. After the war, he was one of the founders of Lincoln University in Lincoln--now Lincoln College--and donated land for that purpose. He helped develop other railroads, and the town of Latham, Illinois, was named in his honor.

The Scully Family Section: Since the mid 19th century, the Scullys have been a family of national and international significance in agriculture. The patriarch was William Scully, an aristocratic Irishman who immigrated to the US in the early 1850s and who bought approximately 300,000 acres of rich farmland in the Midwest at little more than a dollar per acre. In later decades, he leased most of this farmland, thus becoming the largest landlord in the US. He is buried in London, England, but his two sons, Frederick and Thomas, are buried here, as are Thomas's two sons, Michael and Peter, along with other family members.

Lord William Scully rode on horseback throughout Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska to buy farmland. He used a spade to sample test the soil. He mainly lived in Great Britain and Washington, D.C., and was severely criticized for being an absentee landlord and for requiring tenants to construct their own buildings and pay property taxes.

In 1910 William Scully's son Thomas (1878--1961) inherited almost 32,000 acres of the richest farmland in Logan County. In 1941 Thomas and his second wife, Violet, built a 19-room mansion on 80 acres a few miles northwest of Lincoln. In 1942 when Thomas's brother Frederick died, Thomas became the trustee of his brother's estate, including 154,000 acres in Kansas, Nebraska, and Louisiana.

Thomas Scully continued his father's business of leasing for cash rents, not a percent of the crops. Thomas continued and expanded the conservation methods that his father had begun. Those methods included installing field tile for drainage and requiring tenants to plant clover, rotate crops, and keep livestock. Thomas liked to say that "60 acres of 80-bushel corn brings more profit than 80 acres of 60-bushel corn."

After her husband's death in 1961, Violet Scully became a locally renowned philanthropist in Lincoln. She made large, financial contributions to Lincoln College, and she donated much of the land for the 450-acre private Kickapoo Creek Park. It is located on the north edge of Lincoln. Scully Park in downtown Lincoln is named in honor of this family. Thomas and Violet's sons, Michael and Peter, managed separate land-leasing operations in Illinois away from Logan County--Michael's near Springfield, Peter's north of Bloomington-Normal. Generations of the Scullys have used shrewd estate planning and government loans to pay inheritance taxes so they could keep their holdings in the family far longer than most large landowners.

Blinn Family Section: On the brow of a rise at the edge the flood plain of Salt Creek and right below this drop-off in the first decade of the 20th century the Lincoln Chautauqua Association constructed a lake in the creek bottoms. The Blinn family section includes the graves of William Maxwell's maternal grandparents, Annette Youtsey Blinn (1848--1914) and Edward Dunallen Blinn (1844--1913), and his Uncle Edward "Ted" Blinn (1888--1952) and wife, Edna Skinner Blinn (1895--1966).

William Maxwell (1908--2000), the award-winning author, long-time fiction editor of the *New Yorker* magazine, and native of Lincoln, Illinois, was the second of three sons born to Blossom Blinn Maxwell (1881--1918). William was ten years old when his mother died in

January 1918 from the Spanish flu. She died just two days after giving birth to her third son on New Year 's Day. William Maxwell's biographer Barbara Burkhardt describes the impact of this tragedy on William: "His mother's death was the defining event of Maxwell's life and, later, of his literature. He often recalled that in that moment 'the shine went out of everything.' He learned that day that happiness is fragile, that no one is safe" (*William Maxwell, A Literary Life*, p. 22).

Maxwell recalls his mother's death in various ways in several of his works, from his breakout novel *They Came Like Swallows* in 1937 to his mid-career family and social history titled *Ancestors* (1971) to his last and most famous novel, *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, published in 1971. In *The Folded Leaf* (1945), the main character, Lymie Peters, is based on the author as an undergraduate at the University of Illinois. Chapter 19 is devoted to an account of Lymie's annual return to his hometown to visit the grave of his mother, accompanying his father, on the anniversary of her death. The father character eulogizes his wife: "Your mother was a wonderful woman. . . . I didn't know what I was getting when I married her. She was just young and pretty and always laughing and tying ribbons in her hair and I knew I had to have her. But that wasn't what she was really like at all, and it was quite a while before I found out" (*Folded Leaf*, p. 90). In *Ancestors*, William Maxwell writes that his father told him that while sitting in church he looked around at others and "was so proud of your mother--of the way she looked and all that she was--and I broke out in a sweat at the thought of how close I'd come to marrying another woman" (*Ancestors*, p. 193).

In *Ancestors*, Maxwell describes going to Old Union Cemetery with his mother when he was a child: "From the winding cinder drive I read the names on the tombstones. The cemetery was a replica in a few wooded acres of the town, for the names that constantly occurred in the conversation of my elders were all here. The graves were not neglected, and the dead were not forgotten, but only a little removed from the heart of things. My mother let me fill the vases with fresh water from the nearest faucet, and as she arranged the flowers she had brought from the garden at home, she would talk to me in a voice pitched a little lower than ordinary, making me feel the presence of the people all around us in their graves. Throughout the cemetery there were flags, some bright, some faded, in star-shaped metal standards, marking the graves of those who had fought in the Spanish-American War or the Civil War. I loved all the flags" (*Ancestors*, p. 208).]

Edward Dunallen Blinn was a well-respected lawyer in Lincoln and Logan County. He participated in high-profile cases in the Logan County Court. For example, he was a prosecuting attorney in the 1883 murder trial of Orin Carpenter, a local grain merchant accused of killing a maid named Zura Burns. She had worked for the Carpenter family. An autopsy revealed she was pregnant. Many citizens believed Carpenter killed her to conceal an adulterous relationship. If you Google the name Zura Burns, you will find an article by Professor Beverly Smith of Illinois State University that tells the outcome of the trial. Mr. Blinn was an attorney in a 1904 trial in which John D. Gillett's daughters disputed the will of their father over the division of his vast real estate holdings. The trial, costing \$70,000, was the most expensive to date in Logan Co. History. More on that trial below. Edward Blinn also became a Logan County judge.

Stephen Andrew Foley (1840--1918), born in Logan County, was a prominent lawyer, judge, banker, industrialist, and church and civic leader. He built and owned Lincoln's first gas utility company, and he was a part owner of the Citizens Coal Mine. He is most often remembered today for his work of nearly 30 years to establish and develop a public library. In 1901 Mr. Foley spearheaded the successful initiative to obtain an Andrew Carnegie grant, which resulted in the

construction of the Lincoln Public Library. In 1980 the Lincoln Public Library was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Margaret Dunlop (1886-1927): WWI Red Cross nurse. The back of her stone tells her story.

The Cemetery Chapel was constructed in 1912 and was designed by the local architectural firm of Joseph Deal and Roland Ginzel. For several years in recent history, this building served as the records office of the Union Cemetery Association (the Logan County Cemetery Association is located at the Zion Cemetery north of Lincoln). Part of this 1912 building continues to serve as a chapel, and it contains the ornate, solid oak pews that were salvaged from the chapel of the 1950s Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital before its demolition.

The Robert Creighton Maxwell Family Plots include the graves of Robert C. Maxwell (1849--1904) and his son, Charles C. Maxwell (1872--1898). William Maxwell's Grandfather Maxwell was a successful, respected lawyer in Lincoln and Logan County. William Maxwell wrote that his Grandfather Maxwell "was a very competent office lawyer--that is, he examined abstracts, wrote wills, and was engaged in the probate practice" (*Ancestors*, p.142). The Robert C. Maxwells sold the farm that Mrs. Maxwell had inherited from her mother, and they used the money to move from a small house on Pekin Street behind the county jail to a larger house on north Kickapoo Street that still stands.

The Robert C. Maxwells were devout members of the Christian Church, also known as the Disciples of Christ, not to be confused with the Church of Christ. William Maxwell wrote: "The controversies that the Disciples of Christ were expending so much heat and energy on during this period were all thrashed out at the family dinner table, especially when some visiting preacher was bedded down on the couch in the parlor. . . My grandmother Maxwell never stopped talking about immersion, or thinking about it. She kept track of who was and who wasn't. She had the makings of an evangelist" (*Ancestors*, p. 144). William Maxwell implies that the strictness and religious intensity his father knew as a child alienated him from organized religion. As lawyers, both of William Maxwell's grandfathers crossed paths at least once, as they were on opposite sides of the famous Gillett estate dispute case mentioned earlier. William Maxwell estimated the estate was worth the equivalent of five to six million dollars in the early 1970s, when *Ancestors* was published (p. 161).

Several children of John D. Gillett divided into two factions: One faction was led by Emma Oglesby (wife of the three-time Illinois governor Richard J. Oglesby); the other faction was led by Miss Jessie Gillett. Maxwell says the details of the case were so complicated as to defy comprehension: "Grandfather Maxwell represented Jessie Gillett, and Grandfather Blinn represented Mrs. Oglesby. My grandfather Blinn won the case, who didn't need to win it. . . ." Even so, "it was the first case my Grandfather Maxwell ever had where the fee was substantial, that the part he took in the trial considerably enhanced his reputation, and that if he had continued to be Miss Jessie Gillett's legal advisor he would no longer have worried about the bill from Boyd's Dry Goods Store [from his wife's expenses that he considered excessive]. Instead his health broke down" (*Ancestors*, p. 161).

Both Robert C. Maxwell and Charles C. Maxwell died early, tragically: the son at just 26 of typhoid, preceding the father. The father passed away in 1904 at the age of 54. Charles C. Maxwell had become first a law partner with his father and then an insurance underwriter. William Maxwell's father, William Keepers Maxwell, Sr., took over his older brother's insurance activity, which led to a successful career in the insurance business. In *Ancestors*, Maxwell quotes the published obituary of his Uncle Charles C. Maxwell: "The death of Charles C. Maxwell

removes from Lincoln one of its most promising young men, one widely admired by all who knew him. Full of energy, pluck, and stick-to-it-iveness, he had begun a foundation that was, even in early life, a marvel in itself" (*Ancestors*, p. 157).

William Maxwell wrote of his Grandfather Maxwell: "Every human life is a story, and my grandfather's story as his wife and children understood it, was that he was taken ill just as he was about to make a killing. They didn't use this vulgar modern expression, but nevertheless it was what they meant. He hadn't been as successful as he deserved to be. And to the end of their lives, whenever they spoke of him, their voices were tinged with an unfading regret" (*Ancestors*, p. 166).

The Civil War Monument is described by historian/Judge Lawrence B. Stringer: "In Union Cemetery at Lincoln, there has also been mounted on a carved stone carriage, a large field piece, contributed by the government, with a pyramid of 100 shells [balls], the whole resting on a stone slab, upon the lot owned by Leo W. Myers, Post, G.A.R. The cost of transporting and mounting the cannon was borne by the local Post. This memorial was dedicated September 16, 1900" (Stringer, *History of Logan County*, Vol. I, p. 209). I recall the cannon balls from my youthful visits to this cemetery, but the cannon balls and the cannon were stolen long ago. Locals have speculated on the identities of the thieves, including the owner of a loal junk yard.

Edgar H. Lukenbill (1888--1978), known as EH Lukenbill, was repeatedly re-elected as the Logan County Superintendent of Instruction over a period of several decades at mid-20th century. He was a history buff with a particular interest in Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Lukenbill sometimes visited my fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classes at Jefferson School in the early 1950s and told stories of the Lincoln legend from his New Salem years (1830s).

Old Union Cemetery's northern boundary, where a streetcar track that ran from Lincoln to the Chautauqua Grounds. In the early decades of the 20th century, a streetcar ran on several of Lincoln's main streets. The track from Lincoln to the cemetery and Chautauqua ran south on State Street past the east side of the Lincoln State School and Colony and turned west parallel to the south fence of that institution. At the cemetery the streetcar stopped at a depot with a red-tile roof and open walls. After the discontinuation of the streetcar, at some point the sides of the depot were bricked in when the cemetery association began using this building for storage. The streetcar tracks ended at the Chautauqua entrance, near the wading pool. The streetcar ran either forwards or backwards and required no special track alignment to turn around. After the discontinuation of the streetcar, its alignment was a cinder road, as were the roads in the cemetery. The cinders came from the nearby power plant of the Lincoln State School & Colony.

The Niebuhr family plots include the graves of the parents of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892--1971), one of the 20th century's most influential Christian theologians and social critics. Reinhold is buried in MA. Reinhold's father, Gustav (1863--1913) came to Lincoln in the first decade of the 20th century to serve as pastor St. John's Evangelical Church and head administrator of its affiliated Deaconess Hospital. Gustav died from a diabetic coma at the age of 50, and his son Reinhold took over his father's ministerial duties for short time. Reinhold's younger brother, Helmut Richard, also gained success as a Christian thinker, writer, and professor. Richard is buried in Connecticut. Before WWI Reinhold's older brother, Walter, was the managing editor of the *Lincoln Daily News-Herald* and then became a successful producer of documentary films during and after the war. The location of his grave is unknown.

The Niebuhr burial plot in this cemetery includes the grave of Reinhold's older sister, Hulda (1889--1959). She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in theology from Boston University and worked toward a PhD at New York University. From 1930 to 1945, she was the Director of Religious Education at the Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church in New York, publishing two books on Christian education. In 1953 she became the first female full professor at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. She died in 1959.

Hoblit Family Plots, behind the Bates Mausoleum, include the grave of Helen Hoblit Morrow, my great aunt. Helen Morrow moved to California after her husband died and worked as a skilled laborer for an airplane manufacturer. Her brother Ed had moved to California, too, and worked as a golf pro. He is not buried here, but Helen's younger brother, John, and other brother, George, are buried here.

The African-American Section includes the grave of William "Billie" Dyer, one of the first black physicians in the US. His family lived in Lincoln on Elm Street between 8th and 9th Streets near the homes of William Maxwell's parents and maternal grandparents, the Edward Blinns. Billie Dyer's sister, Hattie, worked as a cook for many years for the Maxwells. Dr. Dyer was the first African-American drafted from Lincoln during WWI. After the war, he practiced medicine in Kansas City, where he died in 1958. While serving abroad during the war, he kept a diary and later self-published it. In 1975 a copy of the original, 100-page manuscript of the diary, dedicated to his wife, was discovered in Texas and donated to the Lincoln Public Library. As a result, William Maxwell somehow learned of this diary and studied it (most likely his Lincoln cousin Tom Perry had told him about it). This diary was the main source Maxwell used for the title story of his collection titled *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*, published in 1992--the next to his last book. Maxwell noted that Billie Dyer and he attended grade school at Central School at about the same time but didn't know one another. Maxwell's biographer Dr. Barbara Burkhardt writes that the story "Billie Dyer" "holds up a life that risked being forgotten, halts the thieving of time by conserving Dr. Dyer's legacy in a public and permanent way . . . and creates a fully resonant African American character, something he regretted not having done decades earlier in his work titled *Bright Center of Heaven*" (*William Maxwell: A Literary Life*, p. 265).

The Kirk Family Plots include the graves John H. and Ruby C. Kirk, who moved to Lincoln from Texas early in their married life. They bought the original Postville Courthouse in Lincoln in 1910 and the city block where it was located, paying \$1,350 for it and making the former courthouse their home until 1913, when they sold the entire property for \$2,000 to Timothy T. Beach and his wife, Grace. Mr. Beach was a Union Army veteran of the Civil War who had fought in the Battle of Gettysburg among other battles. After the war Mr. Beach became a lawyer and judge. In 1929 the widow Beach sold the courthouse property to Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, and his wife Clara for \$8,500--over the objections of some local citizens. She later had seller's remorse. Henry Ford had the courthouse carefully photographed, dismantled and reassembled at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.

Aaron Dyer was the great grandfather of the Billie Dyer and Hattie Dyer Brummel featured in the writings of William Maxwell. In a 1953 interview published in the *Lincoln Courier*, Mrs. Brummel explained that her Grandfather Dyer "was born a slave in Richmond, Virginia, and received his freedom when he was 21 years old. Aaron Dyer settled in Springfield, Illinois, a center for the Underground Railroad, and Aaron Dyer worked for it. He drove his horse and wagon at night, taking runaway slaves from one underground railway station to another, including Springfield. There, the feeling against slavery was strong, and the runaways were fairly safe, although there were times when masters and bounty hunters traced runaways there and then

the Underground Railway conductors would keep them in hiding for as long as three weeks. Once the escapees reached Chicago, their freedom was virtually assured."

NOTABLE OMISSIONS FROM THIS VIDEO

I know where Wilson Russell's family stone is but forgot to film it.

Wilson Russell (1856--1938) was the African-American coachman employed by the Frank Frorer family for 22 years. William Maxwell wrote that "The late Wilson Russell used to recall a raid by Yankee soldiers on the Logan County, Kentucky, plantation where he was born in slavery in 1856. His mother hid him in a manger in the barn until the Union soldiers had departed. Mr. Russell also recalled when his father Wilson Russell, Sr., took his family overland to Kansas and how a sister died enroute and was buried behind a log on the roadside." William Maxwell also wrote that the whites of Lincoln were willing to share doctors, the drinking water, and the cemetery" ("Billie Dyer," p. 9). From what I've learned, the sharing was more limited.

The grave of Judge Stringer is somewhere in the area of Aaron Dyer's grave, but my brief search failed to find it.

Lawrence B. Stringer (1866--1942) was a graduate of Lincoln University and served in the Illinois state legislature as assemblyman and senator. He also served in the US Congress from 1912 to 1918 and was then repeatedly elected as the Logan County judge until his death in 1942. Judge Stringer was an avid Lincoln buff and local historian. His 1911 two-volume *History of Logan County* includes a chapter on Abraham Lincoln that featured information from interviews that Stringer conducted with citizens who had known Lincoln, including Robert Latham, one the founders of the First Lincoln Namesake town. A typescript of Judge Stringer's unfinished biography of Mr. Lincoln titled "From the Sangamon to the Potomac: More Light on Abraham Lincoln," is in the Edgar Dewitt Jones Papers at the Detroit Public Library.

I briefly looked for DF Nickols's grave but didn't find it.

Daniel Franklin "DF" Nickols, Sr. (1880--1951) was a prominent educator and civic leader in Lincoln and Logan County in the first half of the 20th century. Mr. Nickols began his teaching career in the rural schools of Logan County. From 1905 to 1916, he was the county superintendent of schools; and from 1919 to 1942, he was superintendent of the city of Lincoln's elementary school system. From 1918 until his death in 1951, he was the manager of the Illinois Pupils Reading Circle. He was a collector of Lincolniana and in 1929 worked against Henry Ford's removal of the Postville Courthouse. From 1943 to 1946, Mr. Nickols also helped negotiate the repurchase the Postville Courthouse block in Lincoln. In 1944 Nickols coauthored a biography of Mentor Graham, who was Lincoln's tutor at New Salem. Nickols's interest in the history of Lincoln and Logan County led to the formation of Logan County Historical Society, and at the time of death he was its president and also one of the vice-presidents of the Illinois State Historical Society.

In his 1971 *Ancestors*, William Maxwell describes Old Union Cemetery as "situated in a grove of oak trees on a bluff looking out over the rich farmland--a serene and timeless frame for lives concluded and beyond grieving over" (*Ancestors* 1971, p. 208).

I suggest that while the lives may be beyond grieving over, surely some of them are not beyond our remembrance.