

# Hidden Gem cont.

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impregnated servant was the same Nancy Hanks that was Lincoln's mother. Also, others familiar with the story contended Nancy stayed in western North Carolina for some time after giving birth. There are issues with dates as copies of Thomas Lincoln' and Nancy Hanks's marriage license would have made little Abe 2 years old at the time of their marriage. Tax records show that Thomas Lincoln was a well established resident of Kentucky before and during the time Abraham Enloe supposedly paid him to marry Nancy Hanks.

However, the anecdotal examples of this "Murphy" theory about Abe's paternity sure make it seem like it is in fact the correct one. First, it is known that Lincoln did not talk about his mom publicly, so perhaps he knew of the scandal surrounding his birth. Second, it is not so much the verbal, passed down history of the events that makes the case, but rather it is the pictures of Abraham Enloe's youngest son, **Wesley**, and Wesley's daughter, **Julia**. Both have strikingly similar facial features when compared to Abraham Lincoln, but perhaps the most uncanny of all physical features is the resemblance in frame and build: extremely tall and lanky. As much as the anecdotal evidence tries to convince the world that the Enloe-Hanks version of Abraham Lincoln's paternity is true, the inconsistencies are just too great, especially given the fact that they are supported by legally recorded documents. But, folks talk, and the story of Abraham Enloe being Abraham Lincoln's biological father was bandied about in the area for years, even before Abraham Lincoln had become a household name.

Some say the Murphy version claiming Abraham Enloe is indeed Lincoln's biological father is all conjecture. Who really knows? Too bad Ancestry.com wasn't around back then. No matter what the truth is, it certainly makes for a spectacularly sensational story about one of the most prolific presidents in all of America's history. But don't tell the Enloe clan that it's conjecture. For them, the story is the gospel truth.

Now, the question that remains is why has Murphy taken a claim to this story when the Enloes were residents of Swain County, not Cherokee? As Mr. Palmer continued to explain, it's because Mr. Abraham Enloe is buried in Harshaw

Cemetery in Murphy. This part of the story goes that Mr. Enloe had decided to push on into the fairly recently formed state of Tennessee (Anyone remember the date of Tennessee's statehood?) to establish yet another residence and further extend his wealth for his family and him. Along the way, he and his family stopped in Murphy, and this is where he caught a cold and died. Mrs. Enloe apparent-



Harshaw Chapel



Abraham Enloe headstone

ly chose not to have her husband's body returned to their previous residence as she and her children stayed in Murphy, leading to the generations of Enloes who to this day call Murphy home. Today the tale is told of a local's ability to spot an Enloe from the "proverbial" mile away as the lumbering gait, slightly sloped



JD Harper at the Daily Grind

posture, lanky body and dark features are a dead give away. Some might even say it's as though Lincoln is walking around town himself. Who knows, maybe it is the ghost of old Abe and not an Enloe.

To see the headstone of the man with whom this whole story starts is quite mesmerizing, as is hearing the story told while standing in the cemetery next to it! "Abraham Enloe: Born 1770 Died

1840." Harshaw Cemetery sits up on a hill behind the First County Bank on Church Street. As time passed, Harshaw Chapel was erected on the grounds of Harshaw Cemetery, and its story goes something like this: **Joshua Harshaw** arrived in Murphy around 1835. Being the wealthy man that he was, he purchased

a considerable amount of land. In 1844, he granted some of his land to three trustees in order to construct a place of worship for those of the Methodist faith. On May 1, 1869, after construction was complete, the Methodist Episcopal Church South was presented a meeting house by Joshua Harshaw which was to be known as Harshaw Chapel. The chapel still sits on the original site and was constructed of locally produced brick. It is the oldest building in Murphy, as well as the oldest brick building in the county. It is also one of the oldest church buildings in Cherokee County. Sadly, time has taken a toll on Harshaw Chapel. The steeple was leaning badly, the steeple roof timbers were sagging and a 2019 inspection revealed the wood timbers in the attic and bell tower were beyond repair and warned the First UMC of Murphy, the chapel's current trustee, not to ring the bell for fear the shifting weight would bring the whole thing down. Fortunately, the church was able to safely remove the bell and keep it stored away till the day it can be returned to its rightful place atop Harshaw Chapel. Restoration efforts are underway to return the chapel to its original glory.

Should you find yourself heading on over to Murphy, N.C., perhaps hoping to spot an Enloe about town to decide for yourself if there truly is any resemblance to the 16th president, just remember, if it's not your day to see a Lincoln doppel-

## Some Things to See and/or Explore in Murphy, NC

**Cherokee County Historical Museum**  
Perhaps call ahead and see if Mr. Billy Ray Palmer will be working the day of your visit because the man truly is the Indiana Jones of Cherokee County. No kidding, he is a real life archaeologist! (828-837-6792)

**Murphy River Walk**  
(The leech "spot" can be found on the Murphy River Walk on days when there is not three to four feet of flood water covering the trails.)

**Murphy Visitor's Center**

**L&N Depot**

**Cherokee County Courthouse**  
Built in 1927 in a Beaux Arts Style architecture (same as Chattanooga Choo Choo's lobby and The Tivoli Theatre) with a roof that consists of locally sourced blue marble

Areas Around the Area:  
Field of Woods, Ten Commandments on the side of a huge hill

Hiwassee Dam

Gem mining

Firecreek Falls

ganger, there are a whole host of other fun things to do in the area. And, as always, make sure to check out all the unique shops, venues and restaurants The City Of Flowers has to offer. In particular are The Daily Grind Restaurant with its unbelievably extensive menu and Mimo's Ice Cream and Twisted Treats Shop.

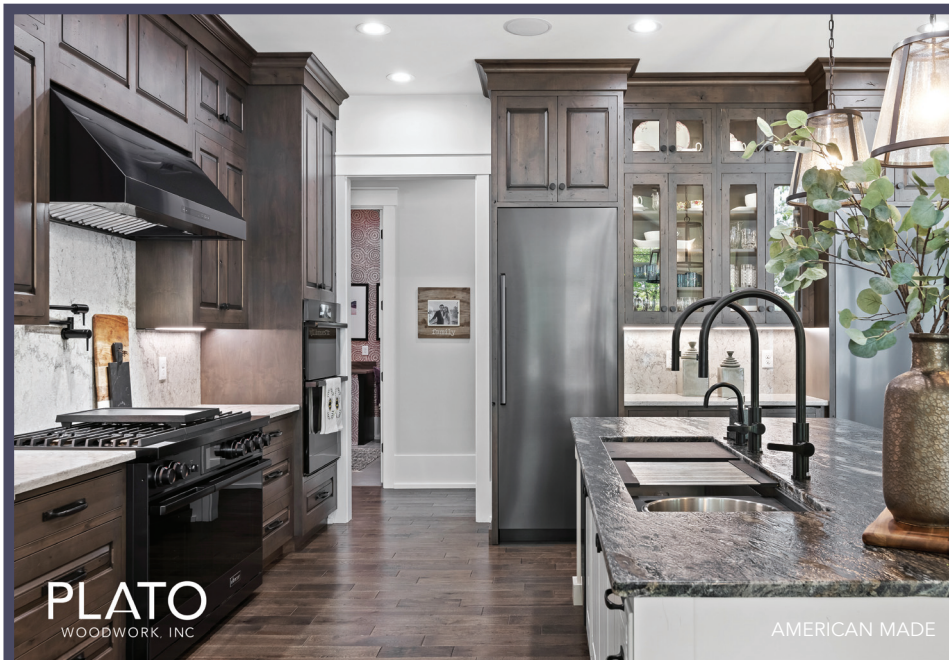
Hmm, guess this story was about mining after all, just a different kind of "digging deep" to uncover the story hidden within Murphy!

For information on making a donation to the Harshaw Chapel Restoration Project, please contact: Rev. **Wil Posey** with First UMC, Murphy, N.C. (828) 837-2718, pastor@murphyumc.org.

*\*Tennessee entered statehood June 1, 1796.*

**by JD Harper**

*JD Harper is a local author. GLINT, her debut novel, is set in Chattanooga amid its rich Civil War history and rock climbing culture. Her email is: jdharp@epbf.com.*



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