

Henry and Vashti Sears daughter Elizabeth Sears married into my Estep line in Sangamon County, Illinois, and their only surviving child, Lawrence Sears, is my first cousin.

While I have not researched the parents of Henry Sears, I thought you might be interested to know that both he and his wife Vashti (a common nickname for Bathsheba) are mentioned in the book "Life of William McKinley, our martyred president, with short Biographies of Lincoln and Garfield."

Henry and Vashti Sears knew Abraham Lincoln quite well when he kept a store on the banks of the Sangamon in the New Salem region of Sangamon County, Illinois, as the Sears traded in that store. They are called Uncle Henry and Aunt Vashti Sears by the author Rt. Rev. Samuel Fallows, who published his book in 1901, shortly after Henry and Vashti passed away in Mason County, Illinois. They probably knew Abraham Lincoln in Mason County as well, since the young Lincoln became a surveyor and surveyed parts of Mason County as well as Sangamon County.

To quote from this book, page 326: Uncle Henry Sears and his wife, Aunt Vashti, say that they were well acquainted with storekeeper Lincoln and his lady-love Ann Rutledge. They attended her funeral and think that such a nice girl as Ann was, deserved such a handsome tombstone. "Young Lincoln took her death awful hard," they said. "He strolled moodily around the neighborhood for the next three or four weeks, humming sad songs, and writing with chalk on fences and barns. It was generally feared that the death of Ann Rutledge would drive him insane."

Ann Rutledge died in a typhoid epidemic of 1835 in Sangamon County. It was Lincoln's early friends and acquaintances from Sangamon County that spilled the beans about his deep love affair with Ann Rutledge; which went down in history as severely upsetting his wife Mary Todd. Among said bean spillers were Henry and Vashti Sears. There are other stories about the young man Abraham Lincoln as told by some of the other early settlers of the Old Salem region of Sangamon County, Illinois (formerly called New Salem) in this book also.

Here's a link to this book on line:

http://www.archive.org/stream/lifeofwilliammck01fall/lifeofwilliammck01fall_djvu.txt

Kindest regards,
Cheron Gibon

Correction, Elizabeth Sears and Martin Estep's only surviving child was named Lawrence Estep, not Lawrence Sears. His full name was Lawrence Constantine Estep, b. 7 Sep 1861 in Walker's Grove, Mason County, Illinois.

I also forgot to mention that Henry and Vashti's first two children, Harriett Sears b. 1831 and John Sears b. 1835 were born in New Salem in Sangamon County, Illinois. New Salem was mostly abandoned by 1840, with most moving into nearby Petersburg or Springfield, just a few miles away. In 1839 Menard County was formed out of Sangamon County, which included the New Salem area, and the rest of their children were born in Menard County before they moved to Crane Creek, Mason

County, Illinois. It may well be that Henry and Vashti had children born between Harriett and John who were also lost to the typhoid epidemic of 1835 in New Salem and it would be interesting to check the cemetery records there.

Lincoln arrived in New Salem in 1831 when he was 22 years old by way of a flatboat and stayed for about six years. As he was unmarried, he often boarded with the local families of New Salem and performed odd jobs for them. Lincoln was close to the same age as Henry and Vashti Sears, and since there were only 20 to 25 families in the area at the time, of course they would have been well acquainted with him.

It would be interesting to visit New Salem, as the town has been re-constructed as close to original as possible and placed on the National Register of Historic Places due to Lincoln's 1831 homestead there.

-Dan Sears