

For the People

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The Other Side of Mary Lincoln Part 1

By Jewett E. Ricker Jr.*

At the very beginning I wish to make it clear that I feel it presumptuous of me to talk on the subject of Mary Lincoln. I certainly make no claims of being qualified to do so. Indeed, there is only one thing that impelled me to accept Mrs. Wilhelm's kind invitation. That was a desire to set right—as far as it is possible for me to do so—some of the erroneous ideas that are prevalent today in regard to the wife of Abraham Lincoln. Some historians have dealt very maliciously with the character, and particularly with the eccentricities, of this lady who presided over the White House during the most troublous period of our history. There had unquestionably been some basis for the criticisms that have been leveled at her, but—as is usually the case—the good qualities of Mrs. Lincoln have been almost ignored. Fortunately in recent years some historians—such as Carl Sandburg, William E. Barton and Dr. William A. Evans—have taken the trouble to explore the facts concerning Mrs. Lincoln and have brought forth some very excellent, and very fair biographies about her. It was my good fortune to know Mr. Barton very well and to talk with both him and Dr. Evans about their findings. While they both admitted her frailties and eccentricities, they both agreed that there were many fine points in her character and they both expressed the opinion that few women in history have been more unjustly maligned. I feel it safe to say that Mr. Sandburg also shares this opinion.

The tragic fact remains that Mrs. Lincoln is still the target of attacks

which in many cases are entirely without foundation, and in others are so distorted as to be almost criminally libelous. Some of you may have read the article entitled “The Woman in Lincoln's Life” which was published in the January issue of THE READERS DIGEST. This article is condensed from the larger work by Dale Carnegie entitled, “Lincoln, the Unknown.” This appraisal of Mrs. Lincoln is so terribly unfair that I wish I had the time and the ability to take it up item by item and refute—or at least challenge—many of the statements it contains. It is true that there is basis for some of the charges, but, as a whole, it is totally devoid of the sympathetic understanding which any person must have who attempts to deal fairly with the trials and tribulations of Mary Lincoln. I hope, in the course of my remarks, to disprove some of the statements made in this one-sided biography.

To my mind the laws of the United States should be strengthened to make it impossible for writers to hand down to posterity statements concerning the lives, character and personality of persons who have passed from this earthly scene—unless such statements are fully and completely supported by documentary proof. We are entirely too free these days with our criticisms of the great public characters of the past—and statements that would be criminally libelous if uttered against living people are accepted and condoned if uttered against those who cannot rise in defense of their own honor and reputation.

In talking of Mrs. Lincoln, it is probably well—first of all—to find out

something about the stock from which she sprung. This is desirable because a surprisingly large number of people have the idea that Mrs. Lincoln was an uneducated social upstart. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is doubtful if many persons of her period possessed such sterling ancestry and certainly few—if any—had such opportunities both from a social and educational standpoint. Moreover, certain facts about her ancestry seem to make it easier to understand, if not excuse, some of the characteristics and eccentricities which she developed in later life.

The family tree of Mary Todd Lincoln goes back to Scottish Covenanters who, strong in their faith, stubbornly fought the King and defied the established Church of England. In the famous clash at Bothwell Bridge, it will be remembered that several hundred Covenanters were captured and deported to America. Two hundred of these were shipwrecked off the Orkneys. Two of those drowned were Robert Todd of Fenwick and James Todd of Dunbar. This was in 1679. In the same year, John Todd—their surviving brother—fled from the persecutions of Clavershouse in Scotland to find refuge in the north of Ireland, where he became a wealthy landowner. This John Todd and his wife had quite a large family, and each of their sons and daughters had many children. One of these was Robert Todd, who was born in Ireland in 1697, and this marriage, David and John. David, though he came to America with his father and mother, was born in Ireland and there married Hannah Owen. Their third

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Lincoln Never Said That

A By Thomas F. Schwartz
 n e-mail query recently sent asked: “Is this quote from Abe Lincoln: No President, by any measure of incompetence or deceit, can do great harm to the republic in the short span of four years.” While Lincoln never said it in this way, he did convey the essential meaning in a brief speech given to well wishers in Steubenville, Ohio, on February 14,

1861, as president-elect on his way to Washington, D.C. Lincoln told the crowd: “By your Constitution you have another chance in four years. No great harm can be done by us in that time—in that time there can be nobody hurt.” Extolling the virtues of elections, Lincoln saw in them the self-correcting mechanism for failed leadership. He went on to add: “If anything goes wrong, however, and you find you have

made a mistake, elect a better man next time. There are plenty of them.”

A very popular attribution to Abraham Lincoln is easily found on Internet sites as well as greeting cards: “And in the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.” It was even used in First Lady Laura Bush’s remarks at the memorial service for Frankie Hewitt,

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son, Levi Todd, married Jean Briggs. They also had a large family. Their seventh child, Robert Smith Todd, married Eliza Ann Parker. Eliza Parker was seventeen years old, and a daughter of Major Robert Parker, a Revolutionary War officer. She was a first cousin of Levi Todd, and therefore the second cousin of her own husband, Robert Smith Todd. To this union seven children were born. The fourth of these was Mary Ann Todd, who became the wife of Abraham Lincoln. The seventh, a baby brother of Mary Todd, was born on July 4, 1825, but the mother did not live to see him. Thus, in the loss of her young, 31-year old mother—Mary Ann Todd, who was then seven years of age, met the first great tragedy of her life. Later her father remarried. His second marriage was to a very estimable lady, Elizabeth Humphreys of Staunton, Virginia, but—as is so often the case—the family of the first Mrs. Todd was never reconciled to this marriage. Meanwhile, Ann Maria Todd—younger sister of Robert S. Todd—had come to take care of Mary and her five brothers and sisters.

Now, in passing, please note that Mary Todd's mother and father had the same great-grandfather, Robert Smith Todd. Also that on both her paternal and maternal side there were exceedingly large families nearly all of the Todds and Parkers having from seven to twelve children. These facts, it seems to me, have never been given sufficient attention by historians, but—in considering the mental make-up of Mary Todd Lincoln—I feel sure they would be given very great weight by the eugenicists and psychiatrists of today.

The ancestry and family connections of Mary Todd Lincoln are so interesting and important that I wish it were possible to dwell upon them at greater length. However, about all that can be said in a brief talk is that nearly all of the ancestors and relatives of

Mary Todd Lincoln were cultured, refined, able men and women. In fact, they were unusually successful—outstanding leaders of their day. James Henthorn Todd was one of the great Irish scholars of this day. Henry John Todd edited Johnson's Dictionary, the authority of its time. Robert Bentley Todd was a physician of great renown—the Charles Mayo of his day. His statue may be seen today at King's College Hospital. David Todd won world-wide fame as an astronomer. The "Mary" of Cooleridge's verse was Mary Evans Todd. Among the Pilgrim Fathers from Yorkshire was Christopher Todd. He was one of the founders of New Haven, and Yale College—its entire campus—was originally a part of his estate. Sarah Todd was the wife of the original John Jacob Astor. Eben, Thomas and George Todd were all ranking officers in the American army under Washington. Timothy Todd was a member of the Revolutionary Council. David Todd was one of the first governors of Ohio. John Todd helped found Mt. Holyoke Seminary.

And so it goes—Mary Todd's great-grandfather on her mother's side was General Andrew Porter, close friend of Washington. An uncle was governor of Pennsylvania. Her uncle—John Todd—became so distinguished as a Presbyterian minister that he is regarded as one of the pillars of this church in America; he was founder of Transylvania University. Colonel John Todd, another uncle, was appointed by Patrick Henry to be the first civil governor of what is now our own state—Illinois. His son—another Col. Todd—was appointed by Thomas Jefferson, then governor of Virginia, as colonel of Fayette County, Kentucky—his lieutenant colonel being Daniel Boone. Throughout the pages of early American history—to say nothing of the history of Scotland and Ireland—you will find written in large letters the

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names of the ancestors and relatives of Mary Ann Todd. They were nearly all leaders in their fields of activity. More important still, they were all patriots. Practically every male member of the Todd, Porter and Parker families fought in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Many of them gave their lives for their country.

It was the blood of these early patriots—these American leaders—that flowed through the veins of Mary Ann Todd. By the time she was born, December 13, 1818, nearly all of the Todd family had emigrated to America. Her father and mother were living in a great, spacious home in Lexington, Kentucky—a home that had been built by Mr. Todd next to the house of his wife’s parent’s Major and Mrs. Robert Parker. Not far off—on the Richmond Pike—was the ample estate of Mary Ann’s grandparents—General and Mrs. Levi Todd. This estate, known as “Ellersly,” was one of the showplaces of Lexington, and was the birthplace of Mary’s father.

Close to “Ellersly” was the “Helm Place”—the beautiful, rolling estate of Mary Ann’s older sister—Emilie Todd, who became Mrs. Ben Hardin Helm. Nearby, also was the ivy-covered mansion, and it was a mansion, of Henry Clay.

Mary Ann Todd early in girlhood formed a great liking for Henry Clay. He was her councillor and friend, and she his. One day, having been given a new white pony, she galloped over to “Ashland” to show her new pet to Mr. Clay. The butler told Mary that Mr. Clay was very busy—that he was entertaining five or six important officials.

Mary, however, would not be denied. She insisted on seeing Mr. Clay. She informed the butler that she had ridden over especially to show her friend the new pony and that she was certain Mr. Clay would gladly excuse himself from his gentlemen friends.

She was so persuasive that the butler finally told the great statesman that Mary Todd was outside and insisted on seeing him.

Mr. Clay came out, bringing his friends with him. Mary, delighted, put the pony through its paces—and, always an expert in such matters, she and the pony put on such a creditable show that Mr. Clay insisted she remain for dinner.

At the table—during a lull in the conversation—Mary exclaimed suddenly: “Mr. Clay, my father says you will be the next President of the United States. I wish I could go to Washington and live in the White House. I begged my father to be President but he only laughed and said he would rather see you there than be President himself. My father is a very peculiar man, Mr. Clay. I don’t think he really wants to be President.” There was so much disappointment in her voice, that Mr. Clay said, reassuringly: “Well, Mary, if I am ever President of the United States I shall expect you to be one of my first guests. Will you come?”

Mary’s face lighted up with enthusiasm. “Yes, I will. If you were not already married, I would wait for you.”

This anecdote was always one of Henry Clay’s favorite stories. I relate it just to show how such an innocent childhood story can be twisted into a malicious yarn by a modern “debunker” of history. For, oddly enough, this simple incident is the basis for the fabulous take that from girlhood Mary Todd had possessed an almost insane ambition to someday live in the White House and that it was to gratify this desire that she later laid siege to the heart of Abraham Lincoln.

As a girl in Lexington, Kentucky, Mary Todd was high-spirited, impetuous, high strung. She was often very willful, but all unbiased accounts of her childhood state that she was well liked and unusually popular. Her sisters claim that she was somewhat of a tomboy. After the tragic death of her

mother, she was, of course, under the jurisdiction of her father’s second wife, Elizabeth Humphreys Todd. Her step-mother was, on the whole, good to Mary and her sisters, but Mary was so much in the company of the Parkers—the parents of her own mother—that her mind was probably poisoned somewhat against her step-mother. While they never had any serious clashes, there seems to be little doubt that Mary and her step-mother failed to see eye-to-eye on many subjects.

However, Mary had great admiration for her new grandmother—Mrs. Mary Humphreys, at whose home, in Frankfort, she often visited. The elder Mrs. Humphreys, while not an abolitionist, had decided views on slavery. She owned eight slaves, and in her will granted freedom to all of them. She was in many ways a remarkable woman—a free thinker, a prodigious reader of Voltaire and Volney. Mary once witnessed her grandmother Humphreys, who was 73, lead a grand march at Franklin. She was so dignified, so regal, that Mary afterwards said: “If I can only be, when I am grown up, just like Grandmother Humphreys, I will be perfectly satisfied with myself.” And—in dress and deportment—she was, as all historians seem to agree.

At fourteen Mary Todd—she had dropped her middle name “Ann”—entered the boarding school of Madame Victorie Charlotte LeClere Mentelle, which was located just outside of Lexington. Madame Mentelle was a scholar, musician, dancer, and stylist. Her husband had been “Historiographer” to the King of France, but—following the French Revolution—the Mentelles had fled to America, and Madame Mentelle had opened her famous school.

The Mentelle school was entirely aristocratic in tone. Its proprietors lived on memories of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette, and the atmosphere of the school was that of

the royal court of France. It was here that Mary became such an expert dancer and gained her love for exquisite clothes and jewelry—a fad that cost her dearly in later years.

Madame Mentelle taught class, breeding and manners from the standpoint of feudal Europe, and her own objective was to bring up ladies of charm, culture and accomplishments. In this she had good raw material in Mary Todd, who became her most brilliant pupil—an expert dancer, and, as Madame Mentelle later said: “The star actress of the school,” for Mary took the leading part in most of the school plays.

One of her fellow students at the Mentelle school described Mary Todd in these words: “She was a merry, companionable girl with a smile for everybody. She was really the life of the school, always ready for a good time. She was also one of the brightest girls in the school, always had the highest marks and took the biggest prizes.”

After she had completed her education at the Mentelle school, Mary Todd entered actively into the social life of Lexington, and became one of the most popular young ladies in that part of Kentucky. We can best appraise the Mary Todd of that day by quoting from two sources. The first as Mrs. Margaret Stuart Woodrow, one of her intimate friends, who wrote: “Mary Todd was very highly strung, nervous, impulsive, excitable, having an emotional temperament much like an April day, sunning up all over with laughter one moment, the next crying as though her heart would break.”

William H. Townsend, a Lexington man who devoted many years to searching all existing records and interviewing scores of people concerning this period in the life of Mary Todd says this: “Brilliant, vivacious, impulsive, Mary Todd possessed a charming personality marred only by a caustic, devastating wit that cut like the sting of a hornet.”

There you have the Mary Todd who was soon to enter the life of a young man who had been sobered by misfortune and tragedy—a man of the plains who had given himself what lit-

tle education he had, and whose outlook on life was anything but cheerful and optimistic—a young, flaming fire about to encounter a pile of smoldering ashes!

For many years the siren voice of the rich prairie state of Illinois had been calling out to the sons and daughters of Kentucky. Indeed, there had been such an exodus from the blue grass region that—by 1836—Illinois was two-thirds composed of Kentuckians. Two of the Todd sisters, Elizabeth and Frances, had settled in Springfield. Elizabeth, at sixteen, had married Ninian W. Edwards, and Frances, at a somewhat older age, had married William Wallace, one of the leading physicians and druggists of the town.

So, at twenty-one, it was only natural that Mary Todd should accept the invitation of her sisters to come to the thriving, bustling city where they had found such pleasure and happiness. Almost instantly—living with her sister, Mrs. Edwards—she became one of the “belles” of the town. Her sister describes her appearance at this time in these words: “Mary, although not strictly beautiful, was more than pretty. She had clear blue eyes, long lashes, light brown hair with a glint of bronze, and a lovely complexion. Her figure was beautiful and no Old Master could have modeled a more perfect arm and hand.”

The male viewpoint was probably best expressed by Mr. Edwards, who once said of her: “Mary could make a bishop forget his prayers.”

In any event, Mary had not been long in Springfield when she began to hear of the town’s rising young lawyer and politician—Abraham Lincoln. John Todd Stuart, her first cousin, was living in Springfield, and it was he who had persuaded Lincoln to study law. They had lodged at the same house, even occupied the same bed, had served in the Black Hawk War together, and—just before Mary Todd came to Springfield—Stuart had formed a law partnership with his protegee, Lincoln. Mary had been hearing many stories of the charm and ability of his law partner from her uncle. And, as Stuart

was always comparing Lincoln to Henry Clay—and Mary fairly idolized her old neighbor, Henry Clay—it was natural that she was pretty much prepared to admire Lincoln even before she met him.

Against the admiration of Stuart, Mary heard other folks telling of Lincoln’s plainness—his sadness—his moodiness—his uncouthness. She heard others telling of his homely eloquence; of his ability as a story-teller. Probably the thing that interested her most were the reports of his shyness. In any event, it is doubtful if any young lady was ever more curious to meet a young gentleman than Mary Todd was to meet Abraham Lincoln.

But, during the three months she visited her sister, Mary Todd failed to meet Abraham Lincoln. When he wasn’t away making speeches or trying law cases, he was too tired to go to social gatherings. However, it was not long after Mary had returned to Lexington before she was besieged with letters from her sisters and others urging her return. She had—they told her—made a place for herself in Springfield; everybody wanted her to come back. Some historians claim—probably to be sensational—that Mary had quarreled with her step-mother and was desirous of leaving home anyway, but the more careful biographers have been unable to find any such reason for her return to Illinois.

In any case, gaining the consent of her parents, Mary Todd returned to Springfield in 1839—this time for the purpose of making an even more extended visit at the home of her sister, Mrs. Edwards.

Soon after her arrival, Mary made her appearance at a cotillion. She was, as we have explained, an exceptionally graceful and expert dancer and was soon surrounded by young men begging for dances.

It was during one of these dances that she saw—for the first time—a tall, spare but powerfully built man in conversation with her cousin, John Todd Stuart. She had guessed at once that he must be the much-discussed Abraham Lincoln.

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Naturally, girl fashion, Miss Todd contrived to have her partner lead her by the place where her cousin and Lincoln were standing, and naturally, too, she made certain that she did her fanciest steps under his gaze. Hardly had the music stopped before her cousin brought Mr. Lincoln across the floor to meet her. After being presented he said:

“Miss Todd, I am very anxious to dance with you.” Miss Todd accepted but he danced so badly that her program was “filled”—for him—during the remainder of the evening. But this fact only made Mr. Lincoln the more anxious to know her better. So, before they left the hall, he asked if he might call the following evening. She said she would be delighted to receive him.

For two years after this, Mary Todd haunted Lincoln. They quarreled and made up. They clashed bitterly, savagely, and then smoothed things over. He told himself time after time that he and Mary Todd were absolutely unsuited to each other. She told herself the same thing. Yet, somehow, they couldn’t give each other up. During this period Lincoln was racked with misgivings. He became a victim of hypochondriasis, and was under treatment of two or three physicians. At times it seemed as though his career was over; that his life was broken. Never before had Abraham Lincoln been so perplexed. He confided his doubts and fears to many of his friends. And yet—Mary Todd still had a tremendous power over him.

Some time toward the end of 1840, Lincoln and Mary became engaged. But, hardly had the arrangement been made, than both of them again became doubtful. The quarrellings and misunderstandings continued. They grew even worse. Miss Todd, in letters to friends, said—without mentioning her betrothal to Lincoln—that she was much puzzled

about the desirability of marriage; in one she asks the question, “Why is it that married folks always become so serious?”

Lincoln, on his side, was far from happy. He, too, was anything but certain that he and Mary would be congenial.

In a letter to her friend, Mercy Levering, Mary Todd tells of her own imperfections and shortcomings. Of a sudden she seemed to have acquired an inferiority complex. Lincoln, during the same period, was equally afraid.

Finally, on January 1, 1841, there came the break-up of their engagement.

Historians differ on what occurred. Dale Carnegie, in *The Readers Digest* article, tells graphically how this date had been set apart for the wedding, how the guests were all assembled for the ceremony, and how Mr. Lincoln failed to put in an appearance—of how Abraham Lincoln literally left his bride-to-be waiting at the church. It is a graphic, picturesque story, as this historian, and a few others tell it.

The other version—the version of the Todd family—is entirely different. Their story is that on this same day there was a big family gathering at the Edwards home; that Lincoln was supposed to call for Mary and take her to a New Year’s party; that—being in one of his brooding moods—he had pulled himself together too late for the appointment; that, when he finally arrived at the Edwards home, he found that Mary had gone; that he followed quickly to the scene of the party, and there—much to his surprise and chagrin—he found her dancing happily with Stephen A. Douglas, his arch political rival.

According to this version, Mary—noting the tardy arrival of Mr. Lincoln—not only ignored him, but flirted a little with Mr. Douglas. Seeing this, Lincoln was so humiliated that he

turned abruptly and left the house. Later he went back to the Edwards home sought out Mary—and told her that, as she had made her choice, he intended to release her from her engagement. Mary was furious, and stamping her foot, ordered him to leave and “never, never, come back again.”

There you have the two diametrically opposite versions of this affair. The first, the story about the wedding that did not take place, originated with Herndon, Lincoln’s law partner, and has been repeated and embellished by later historians. In fairness to Mrs. Lincoln, it should be borne in mind that Herndon loathed her and that many of his stories have since been proved to be without any foundation whatever. Careful historians have been unable to find the slightest proof that Lincoln ever failed to show up at any wedding alleged to have been arranged prior to the time—early two years later—that they were actually married.

A third version, and probably the correct one, is that Lincoln did endeavor to break his engagement to Miss Todd on this memorable first of January, 1841, that she broke down and cried, that he took her in his arms,

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comforted her, and the engagement was on again; that about two weeks later—both having considered the matter carefully—Mary Todd released him, both agreeing to go their separate ways. There are many letters from both Lincoln and Mary Todd that seem to confirm this version.

In any case, they did not meet again until late in 1842. Meantime, Mary Todd, though greatly concerned about Lincoln’s health, remained active and even saw quite a lot of Stephen Douglas. But, in letters to her best friend, she confided her sadness over the turn of events. In addition to Douglas, Miss Todd received some attentions from Edwin B. Webb, a widower, but, in letters, she told her intimate friends that there was not, and could not be, anything serious between them.

Lincoln, following the breaking of the engagement, became consumed in gloom. Indeed, for many months he was in a precarious mental condition and his best friends feared that he would never again be himself. He became an even worse hypochondriac than he had been, and was practically unfit for work of any kind. But, after he recovered from his period of mental depression, he too began to see life in a brighter light and to seek companionship elsewhere.

The fact seems to be that Lincoln had serious doubts of his ability to make any woman permanently happy.

This is indicated by the manner in which he asked and obtained release from his tentative engagement to Mary Owens, as well as in the reasons he gave for wishing to be released from his engagement to Mary Todd. His earlier love affair with Anne Rutledge was—without the slightest doubt—the great romance of his life, and proved a sobering influence on all of his later relationships with women. Certainly it was no ardent lover who courted Mary Owens, nor was it an ardent lover who courted and eventually married Mary Todd. That side of Abraham Lincoln was buried with his first love, Anne.

It was in the fall of 1842—twenty-two months after their estrangement—that Lincoln again saw Mary Todd. They were brought together at the home of Mrs. Simeon Francis, wife of Lincoln’s friend, the editor of the Sangamo Journal. It was a pleasant surprise for both. The meeting with Mary Todd and their mutual friend, Julia Jayne, in writing pieces for the Journal satirizing James Shields, state auditor, who challenged Lincoln to a duel, which, fortunately, ended in apologies on both sides.

It was not long after this—on November 4, 1842—that Lincoln and Mary Todd were married at the Ninian W. Edwards home. The Reverend Charles Dresser performed the ring ceremony for the groom, thirty-three years old, and the bride, twenty-three years old.

It was not an altogether happy marriage. Some historians claim it was tempestuous throughout. Others, more discerning, claim that Abraham and Mary Lincoln were better suited and far happier together than the world has been willing to believe. I think I have read very nearly all of the books, and many of the articles, that have been written about Mary Lincoln and about her married life both before and during the White House years. A great many of these, the majority, are cruel in their denunciation of her. These claim that she was nothing but a shrew—that she made the life of her immortal husband almost unbearable.

There is no doubt that Mary Todd was highly temperamental. There is no doubt that she was super-critical. There is no doubt that she was often devoid of tact. There is no doubt that she was—during a large portion of her married life—a nervous and mental invalid, subject to violent fits of anger, and almost childish tantrums. There is no doubt that she was almost insanely jealous. There is no doubt that—at time—she nagged her patient husband outrageously.

But, against these traits, it is only fair—I think—to contrast her almost fanatical loyalty; her excellent judgment in times of great stress; her unswerving love and devotion both to her husband and to her children;

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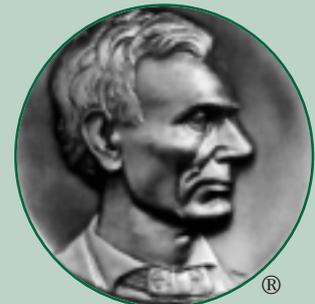
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The Other Side of Mary Lincoln Part 1

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and—from a practical point of view—her driving ambition which forced Lincoln to make the most of his ability and his opportunities. Even those who have most bitterly assailed the disposition and temperament of Mrs. Lincoln, have been forced to admit that—except for her indomitable will—Abraham Lincoln never would have been president of the United States. It was she who drove him forward and upward. It was she who pulled him out of his despondent moods and gave him the proddings which he so often required.

*This is transcribed from a typescript presentation by Jewett J. Ricker Jr., who delivered it to the Joliet Illinois Women of Rotary in February 1937. Ricker is the grandson of Mary Todd Lincoln's friend, Reverend David Swing. For additional information, see Ann Ricker's "Mary Lincoln and the Swings," which was published in the spring 2000 issue of this newsletter. This article will be concluded in the spring 2007 issue.

Lincoln Never Said That

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the women who spearhead the effort to restore Ford's Theatre. But where did Lincoln say it and in what context? Lincoln uses the phrase "in the end" seventeen times in his writings but never followed by the rest of the quote. Nor can one find the phrase "years in your life" or "life in your years" in any of Lincoln's writings. John Hay noted that the defeat of two of Lincoln's congressional critics brought him a sense of satisfaction. The president did not share Hay's joy. Rather Hay noted in his diary that Lincoln mused: "You have more of that feeling of personal resentment than I. Perhaps I may have too little of it, but I never thought it paid. A man has not time to spend half his life in quarrels. If any man ceases to attack me, I never remember the past against him."

Lincoln's religious sentiments remain a great mystery in spite of a recent wave of new studies. Many Web sites have attributed to Lincoln the following statement: "I care not for a man's religion, whose dog and cat are not the better for it." Not surprisingly, the words are more frequently found on vegan and animal-rights sites. While

Lincoln makes separate references to dogs or cats throughout his writings, he never uses the phrase "dog and cat." The phrase "dog and" appears once in his poem "The Bear Hunt": "Now man and horse, with dog and gun."

Finally, some confusion exists on what people are calling "Lincoln's forgiveness speech." In point of fact, it is the fictional musings of famed storyteller and motivational speaker Andy Andrews. In his best selling book, *The Traveler's Gift: Seven Decisions that Determine Personal Success* (2002), Andrews devotes the eighth chapter to a story about Abraham Lincoln's discussion with Andrews's main character, David Ponder, at the Gettysburg National Cemetery shortly before Lincoln delivers his famous address. Lincoln talks about forgiveness and hands Ponder a folded paper that contains Lincoln's address on forgiveness: "The Sixth Decision for Success: I will greet this day with a forgiving spirit." Andrews reflects not only on Lincoln's notable forgiveness of enemies but also includes the forgiveness of one's own personal failings. An inspirational piece, the words are entirely those of Andy Andrews, not Abraham Lincoln.

For the People

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