

ILLINOIS HISTORY

A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Lincoln's Family

Volume 42 ■ Number 5 ■ February 1989

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On the cover: Abraham Lincoln and young son, Tad

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Composite portrait of Abraham, Mary, and Tad Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln's Family

John S. Goff
Department of History
Phoenix College

Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States, has to date had somewhat over one hundred descendants, a rather small number for someone who lived a century and a half ago. However, with the passage of time, that number will increase until it perhaps one day equals Thomas Jefferson, who has had over two thousand. On the other hand, Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, had a total of ten descendants, and that number is final. That sad story is further supplemented by the fact that there are no descendants of the Great Emancipator's siblings. His sister Sarah married, died young, and left no children; his brother Thomas died in infancy.

Everyone agrees that Lincoln was a wonderful father. His law partner, Herndon, remembered how he regarded his children: "He loved what they loved and hated what they hated." Also if they "wanted a dog—cat—rat or the Devil it was all

right and well-treated—housed—petted—fondled &c &c." Mr. Lincoln rarely if ever used corporal punishment on his boys. He never preached or lectured them. Years later when one of his sons was asked what advice he got from his father about drinking, the reply was that the subject was never mentioned, "my father simply set an example of being a near teetotaler." Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln was as devoted a mother as her husband was a father. It is true that she sometimes lost her temper, tended to be a screamer, and had difficulty in coping with life's day-to-day problems, but she dearly loved her children. It is also true that she had the day-to-day responsibility of tending to the boys because her husband was often away from home.

The Lincoln's eldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln (1843–1926), was named for his maternal grandfather; the second son, Edward Baker Lincoln (1846–1850), for a political friend of his father; the third son, William Wallace Lincoln (1850–1862), for an uncle on his mother's side of the



Willie (center) and Tad (right) posed with their mother's cousin Lockwood Todd about 1860.

family; and the youngest son, Thomas Lincoln (1853–1871), for his paternal grandfather. Within the family they were known as Bobbie, Eddie, Willie, and Tad. There are many delightful stories about their childhood. Once Mr. Lincoln was seen with a crying and screaming boy under each arm. A neighbor asked what was wrong. The reply of the father was “just what was troubling the whole world; he had three walnuts and each of the boys wanted two.” Lincoln compared their troubles to what was happening between the states on the eve of the war. Willie was told to give Tad a particular toy in order to keep him quiet. The older child said he could not because he needed the toy to keep himself quiet. Tad had a lisp and did not like to be teased about it. Eddie did not live long enough to become a part of the legend. Tales typically involve Robert and his friends or Willie and Tad and their friends.

By the time the family went to Washington in 1861, Robert was of college age. He had been schooled in Springfield, Illinois. When he first attempted to enter Harvard he was unsuccessful and had to attend the famous preparatory school, Phillips Exeter, for a year before enrolling in the college of his choice. The first months in the White House were a wonderful time for the other boys and their friends, “Bud” and “Holly” Taft. They had many adventures. The boys made imitation snow out of the accumulation of calling cards left at the White House over the years and hauled their sled—a chair with barrel staves for runners—through it. The Taft boys’ sister, Julia, came to get

her brothers one day and found the four trying to hold the President down on the floor. Tad yelled for her to come and sit on his stomach, but she decided that would not be proper for a young lady of sixteen. In those adventures, while Willie always took a full part, it was noticed that he was more quiet and thoughtful than the others. He not only most resembled his father physically but also mentally and emotionally. It seemed that when he grew up he would probably become a clergyman. He never attained adult status; some kind of fever struck him down in February 1862. One of his last requests was that the family’s minister, Dr. Gurley, take six dollars from his bank and give it to the missionary society.

The family was devastated, especially Tad. Things were never quite the same again for him. He continued his adventures, but he was the boy alone in the great mansion and drew closer and closer to his father. One day the family was getting settled in their carriage to go to the Soldiers’ Home when Tad was heard loudly saying: “I have not got my cat.” The President of the United States replied: “Then you shall have your cat,” and a search was launched. A turkey intended for Thanksgiving dinner instead became another family pet. When his father was murdered, Tad noted that there were six members of the family, three in Heaven and three on Earth. It was Tad who shared his mother’s mourning period and wanderings in Europe. He grew up to speak with a slight German accent owing to his years of schooling there. Just as he was about to start a life of his own,

and his brother Robert said he was a very promising young man, he died in Chicago in 1871. He had caught cold on a return ocean voyage and it turned into pneumonia. Thomas Lincoln was perhaps the most unfortunate one in the tragedy-ridden family.

Of the four children of Abraham and Mary Lincoln, only Robert lived a full life. Today he is



Robert Todd, Abraham and Mary Lincoln's first-born, was in his early twenties when he posed for this portrait.

referred to as Robert Todd Lincoln to emphasize his relationship to his mother's family, but he never at any time used his middle name. Generally he was R. T. Lincoln, but sometimes he signed his name Robert T. Lincoln. Throughout his long life, no matter what the occasion, the great President was always simply "my father." No man ever had a more devoted and loving offspring. Robert graduated from Harvard in 1864, briefly served in the army, and then became a highly successful Chicago lawyer. Secretary of War from 1881–1885, he could easily have become president but was not interested. After serving as United States Minister to Great Britain, he headed the Pullman Company. A strange coincidence in his life was that he was at the White House when his father was shot in Ford's Theatre, about to enter the railroad station in Washington when Garfield was struck down,

and was at the Buffalo Exposition when McKinley was assassinated.

Mrs. Robert T. Lincoln was Mary Eunice (Harlan) Lincoln (1846–1937), the daughter of Secretary of the Interior James Harlan of Iowa. Married in 1868, she was then proud of the fact that she weighed under one hundred pounds. Later this Mary Lincoln was so camera shy, that she cut her picture out of family snapshots. It may have been because she nearly tripled her weight over the years. The couple lived for many years in Chicago on Lake Shore Drive but in the early 1900s built a home, Hildene, near Manchester, Vermont. Both came to love what Robert Lincoln jokingly called "my ancestral estate." At the time of World War I they also acquired a winter home in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. Robert Lincoln eventually inherited a sum of money just under two hundred thousand dollars. By hard work and careful investment he expanded his estate to several million dollars.

The eldest grandchild of President and Mrs. Lincoln was another Mary Lincoln (1869–1938), who was raised in Chicago. When her father was Minister to England, his private secretary was Charles Isham, a bachelor in his thirties, who was a Harvard graduate, lawyer, and historian. He and Miss Lincoln were married in London in 1891 and later lived in New York City where he was a real estate investor and broker. They also had a home in Vermont. Mary Lincoln Isham, widowed in 1919, did charitable work and was choir mother for her local church. It was noted that she was petite and did not resemble her famous grandfather. Oddly enough, her sister, Jessie Lincoln (1875–1948), did—at least she was tall, but whereas he was by all accounts homely, she was very beautiful. They shared a dark complexion. She eloped with the captain of the Iowa Wesleyan College football team, Warren W. Beckwith, in 1897, while visiting her grandfather Harlan. Afterwards divorced, she twice remarried and was in later life Mrs. Robert J. Randolph, owner of a home in Georgetown near her parents' Virginia plantation, and a town house in Charleston, South Carolina.

The President's only grandson was Abraham Lincoln II (1873–1890), called Jack by the family. He learned to imitate the famous signature A. Lincoln perfectly. Jack was very interested in ships while the family lived in Washington, and his father obtained a pass for him so that he could visit the navy yard in his spare time. He was also interested in military history, especially that of the Civil War. His father planned that he would go to Phillips Exeter, Harvard, and then enter the law firm of Isham, Lincoln, and Beale in Chicago. When the family went to England in 1889, Jack went on to France for his studies. He was in Versailles when an infection developed under one arm. For months he suffered, until he died in London,

March 5, 1890. With modern antibiotics Abraham Lincoln II would easily have survived; many saw in him a re-creation of his grandfather, and at seventeen he was already mentioned as a future presidential candidate.

The last generation of the family consisted of Lincoln Isham (1892–1971), Mary Lincoln Beckwith (1898–1975), and Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith (1904–1985). Isham was tall and bespectacled, lived early in New York and later at Dorset, Vermont. A talented musician and an investment broker, at the age of thirteen his grandfather's chauffeur allowed him to drive the 1904 Thomas, which was "upset" with a bent frame near the carriage house at Hildene. "Peggy" Beckwith, as she was called, inherited Hildene from her aunt and turned it into a working farm. She was interested in flying, earned her pilot's license when young, and was also a talented photographer and had studied art. Of her brother "Bob" Beckwith, it was said that he had three main interests in life, boats, fast automobiles, and beautiful women. He lived in the Washington, D.C., area and on a Virginia plantation, and spent his last years distributing the Lincoln family artifacts to museums and historical societies.

The Lincolns were essentially a tragic family. Their story continues to interest people and its chief theme is to wonder what might have happened if Eddie, Willie, Tad, and grandson Jack had lived full lives. As it is, the nearest living blood relatives of Abraham Lincoln are the descendants of his aunts and uncles.

Suggested Readings

Professor John S. Goff recommends the following as the core of literature about Lincoln's family.

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Lincoln's Cousin, Dennis Hanks

Renee Schall

Melvin-Sibley Junior High School, Melvin

Dennis Friend Hanks was born May 15, 1799, in Hardin County near Elizabethtown, Kentucky. At the age of one, he was placed in the home of his aunt and uncle, Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow. They lived in Plum Orchard, on the South Fork of the Nolin River, two miles from Thomas Lincoln and his family.

Dennis Hanks was ten years older than his second cousin, Abraham Lincoln. They grew up together in Kentucky and Indiana. Dennis's foster parents, the Sparrows, died of "milk sickness" the same week in 1818 as Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Eighteen-year-old Dennis moved in with Thomas Lincoln and his children, Sarah and Abraham, who

had moved to Spencer County, Indiana. In his later years, Dennis was the primary source of information about the childhood of the Sixteenth President.

Many years later when Dennis was asked for information about the martyred president, he recalled the story of how he saw Abraham a few hours after he was born.

I cut an' run the hull two miles to see my new cousin . . . I was so tickled to death. Mother came over and washed him an' put a yaller flannen petticoat on him. . . . I rolled up in a b'arskin an' slep' by the fireplace that night, so'st could see the little fellar when he cried and Tom had to get up an' tend to him. Nancy let me hold him, purty soon.

In the fall of 1817 Dennis and his foster parents moved to Indiana from Kentucky. A year

later the milk sickness struck the Lincoln and Sparrow families, and Dennis's foster parents both died from the disease. In Thomas Sparrow's will he left all his belongings to his wife, Elizabeth, and after her death everything was to belong to Dennis. Nancy Hanks Lincoln died from milk sickness the same week as the Sparrows. After their deaths, Thomas, Abraham, and Dennis made their coffins.



Though ten years his senior, Dennis Hanks was a close childhood companion of Abraham Lincoln. Hanks, who was Lincoln's second cousin, was an important source of information on Lincoln's early life.

Dennis was one of the most educated in the Hanks family. When he was twenty years old and Abraham was ten, Dennis made ink from blackberry briar root so Abraham could practice writing his name. Years later, in an interview with William Herndon, Dennis stated:

I taught Abe his first lesson in spelling, reading, and writing. I taught Abe to write with a buzzard's quill which I killed with a rifle and, having made a pen, put Abe's hand in mine and moving his fingers by my hand to give him the idea of how to write . . . Lincoln's mother learned him to read the Bible, study it and the stories in it and all that was moral and affectionate in it . . . Lincoln went to school about three months with his sister, all the education he had in Kentucky.

On June 14, 1821, Dennis married Elizabeth Johnston, the daughter of Abraham's stepmother. They had thirteen children, but only eight lived to adulthood.

In 1830 Dennis Hanks and his family came to Illinois with the Lincoln family. Dennis had made an earlier trip to Illinois in the spring of 1829 and visited his cousin, John Hanks, who lived west of Decatur. His children who made the journey of more than 200 miles to Illinois were Sara Jane, eight; John Talbot, seven; Nancy, six; and Harriet,

four. They settled in Macon County near their Lincoln-Hanks-Hall relatives. After one year in Macon County, however, Dennis moved his family to Coles County, where they made their home on Goose Nest Prairie, near present-day Janesville.

Dennis and his family moved to Charleston in 1834, where he built a cabin on what is now Jackson Street. They lived there for about ten years. In Charleston, he worked as a cobbler and shoemaker.

Dennis was the only relative to go to Washington, D.C., to visit President Lincoln in the White House. While changing trains at Altoona, Pennsylvania, a "pickpocket" stole Dennis's money and his pocket watch. He told Abraham of his loss and was given a silver watch by the president. Dennis kept that watch until he died.

Dennis's wife, Elizabeth, died on December 18, 1864, after being ill for six months. After her death he spent most of his time with his daughters.

When recalling Abraham Lincoln's tragic death, he stated:

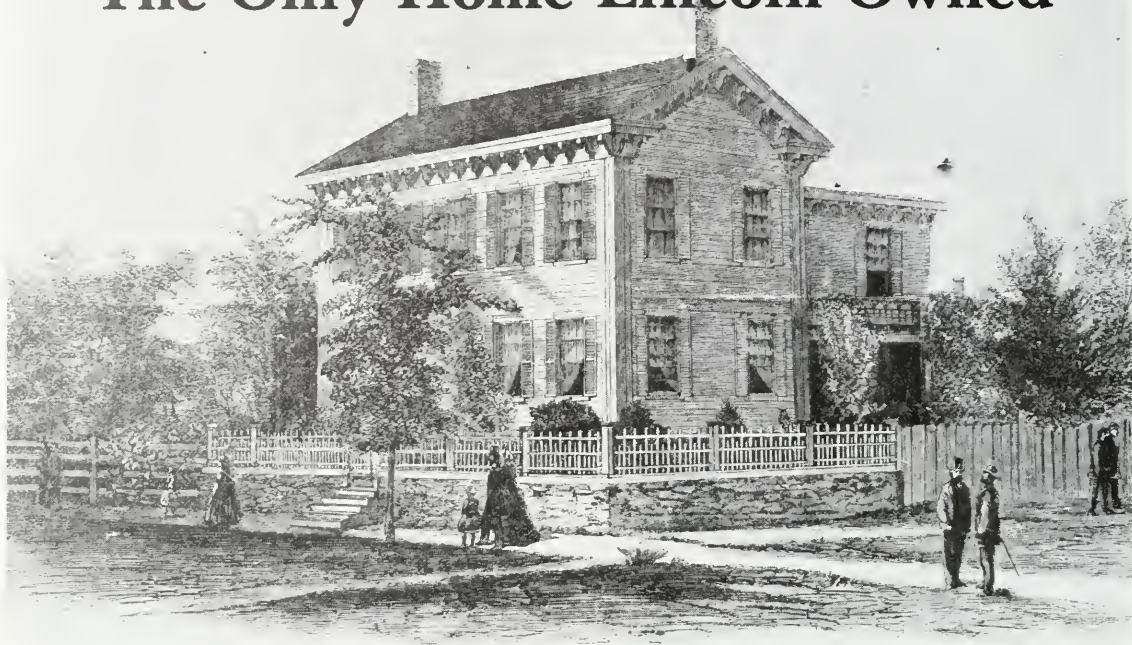
I was settin' in my shop peggin' away at a shoe when a man came in an' said: 'Dennis, Honest Abe is dead!' 'Dead, dead. Old Abe dead!' I kep' saying' to myself. 'My God, it ain't so!' I went out to see Aunt Sairy, where she lived all alone after Tom died, and said, 'Aunt Sairy, Abe's dead.' 'Yes, I know,' sez she. 'I've be'n awaitin' fur it. I knowed they'd kill him.'

After the assassination of the president, Dennis and John Hanks disassembled the log cabin west of Decatur and took it to Chicago to be exhibited at the Chicago Sanitary Fair.

Dennis visited his daughter, Nancy Shoaff, in Paris, Illinois, on the thirtieth anniversary of Emancipation Day. Hanks was ninety-three years old and nearly blind. Since he was a relative of Abraham Lincoln, the blacks of Paris invited Dennis to attend the celebration and to sit on the platform, which he did. While walking home alone from the program, a team of runaway horses ran over him. Dennis was fatally injured and died almost a month later on October 21, 1892.

With Lincoln's death, Dennis became an important source of information about Lincoln's early life. Dennis was the only one who had known Lincoln from the cradle to the grave. He had "chopped with him, hoed with him, ridden with him, loafed with him, eaten with him, slept with him, attended camp meetings and horse races and lawsuits and political gatherings with him," wrote historian William E. Barton.—[From Adin Baber, *Hanks Family Legacy, 1643-1889*; William E. Barton, *Lineage of Lincoln*; Charles H. Coleman, *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois*; Bess V. Ehrmann, *Missing Chapter in the Life of Abraham Lincoln*; Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*; Benjamin Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*; Louis A. Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*; Rufus R. Wilson, *Lincoln Among His Friends*.]

The Only Home Lincoln Owned



The only home Abraham Lincoln owned—at the corner of Eighth and Jackson streets—was pictured in Harper's Weekly following Lincoln's assassination.

Deana Zink

Harrison Elementary School, Wonder Lake

Lincoln's home at Eighth and Jackson Streets in Springfield, Illinois, was the only home that Lincoln ever owned, and it stood as a memory of the successful years that Abraham Lincoln spent in Springfield as a legislator and lawyer. The Lincoln home was known to be well kept. A reporter once commented that even though there was no priceless furniture in the house, it was still fabulous. Flowers were always seen on the tables, and there were pictures on the walls in keeping with the early Victorian style of the period. Also, the house was homey and comfortable for the Lincoln family. The structure that served Lincoln as his home now serves the American people as a national historic site to "enshrine the memory of those happy Springfield years of Lincoln," according to a site brochure about the house.

The house was built in 1839 by a man named Charles Dresser. Dresser was the Episcopal rector who married Lincoln and Mary Todd three years after the Lincoln house was built. On May 2, 1844, Charles Dresser sold the property and structure to Abraham Lincoln for the sum of \$1,500. The house was originally a story and a half in height, but in 1856 an addition to the second story was added at a cost of \$1,300. In the change, the north front room on the second floor became Mr. Lincoln's bedroom.

The home had oak floors, hickory lathes, and black walnut doorframes and weatherboarding. The lot was fifty-two feet long and also contained a wood house, privy, and carriage house. The entire structure was not showy but in keeping with Lincoln's status as a successful Springfield lawyer.

During his years in the house, Lincoln held many social gatherings in his formal front room. Those gatherings were often used by Lincoln as political meetings for his supporters to plan and outline future political courses. Mrs. Lincoln took charge of the social part of those gatherings since she was known among Springfield ladies to be good in such matters.

The Lincoln house also held a sad memory for the Lincoln family. One of the four Lincoln boys, Edward Baker Lincoln, died after living only four years. In spite of this sadness the house also held fond memories for the Lincolns, who lived in the house from May 1844 to February 1861. The only exception was the two-year term (1847-49) that Lincoln spent in Washington D.C. as a member of Congress. During that two-year period, the house was rented to Cornelius Ludlum for \$90 a year. During that time, Mrs. Lincoln and her two sons, Robert and Edward, spent part of the time in Washington with Lincoln and the remainder at her father's home in Lexington, Kentucky. After his election to the presidency, Lincoln retained ownership and rented the house to Lucian Tilton, head of the Great Western Railroad for \$350 a year. Tilton and his family continued to live in the

house after Lincoln's assassination. From 1869 until 1880, the house was occupied by George Harlow, who was the private secretary to Governor Richard Oglesby. The house then passed on to other private parties.

The house was later owned by Gustav Wendlandt, a local physician and editor of the city's German-language newspaper. In 1883 Osborn Oldroyd rented the home and converted it into a museum for his extensive collection of Civil War relics and Lincoln mementoes. It was Oldroyd who persuaded Robert Lincoln to give the property to the State of Illinois. That was done in a deed recorded in Sangamon County on July 29, 1887.

By that action, the Lincoln home became a state park and remained so until the United States Department of the Interior took charge of the property in 1971 as part of the National Park Service.

The Department of the Interior has just completed a large-scale renovation of the house, and it was re-opened to the public in the summer of 1988. Today the house appears as it did in Lincoln's day because it was restored according to historical records.—[From "Home of Abraham Lincoln," Division of Parks and Memorials, State of Illinois; Harry Pratt, *Lincoln's Springfield*; Geoffrey Ward, *Illinois: Lincoln and His Family*.]

Nancy Hanks's Early Life

Mike Wilson

Eldorado Junior High School, Eldorado

Nancy Hanks, Abraham Lincoln's mother, is very mysterious because her childhood can be traced only by bits of tradition.

She was born on February 5, 1784, in Hat Creek, Campbell County, West Virginia. Her father, a blacksmith and gunsmith, served in the Revolutionary War. Nancy was the first daughter in the family to reach nine years of age even though she was the sixth child born. Her brothers and sisters were: Abraham Hanks, Jr., Luke, William, George, Fielding, John, Sarah, and Polly. Her parents died when Nancy was nine, so she went to North Carolina to live with her uncle, Richard Berry, Sr.

Nancy had an arduous journey from Virginia to Kentucky through the Hickory Nut and Cumberland gaps. It is not known exactly whom she came with, but her son, Abraham, claimed his mother came to Kentucky with some of her relatives. She could have come to Kentucky with members of the Hanks family or her uncle Joseph Hanks. Nancy lived at the Berry settlement in Kentucky until her marriage.

Nancy's Aunt Phebe taught her the art of cooking, and her Aunt Rachel had an apple orchard, so she helped make cider. She also helped her aunt make soap, candles, slaw, pickles, and sauerkraut.

Today her uncle's house has a marble stone that says:

THIS STONE MARKS THE SITE
of the log cabin home of
DICKY HANKS
uncle of
NANCY HANKS
mother of
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Nancy spent much of her childhood
here with her Uncle Dicky.

Erected in 1900 by descendants of C. T. Stowe.

Nancy learned to hackle flax, card wool, spin linen threads and woolen yarns, and weave them into cloth. She learned to milk the cows, and make cheese, cottage cheese, butter, and buttermilk. When winter came, she helped butcher the hogs, salt hams, smoke hams, flavor sausage, and turn sidemeat into bacon. In early spring she tapped the maple trees to make maple syrup, molasses, taffy, and sugar. She also learned how to set out fruit trees. Unfortunately, however, she never stayed in one place long enough for the trees she had planted to produce. She used strawberries, wild June berries, blackberries, and plums for preserving and making jam. Harvesting those wild fruits was a time-consuming job. When warmer weather began she warmed some soil and planted the seeds to get an early start. As the season progressed, she fought insects with soot and ashes, planted castor beans to safeguard against moles, and laid tobacco leaves to protect plants from moths. All during the summer and fall her crops were healthy.

On June 12, 1806, she married Thomas Lincoln in a ceremony in the Berry home. She died twelve years later on October 5, 1818.—[From Adin Baber, *Nancy Hanks, the Destined Mother of a President*.]

Abraham Lincoln and His Family

Renee Buettner

Waterloo Junior High School, Waterloo

How did the early death of Abraham's mother and his father's remarriage affect him? What was his family like? Have you ever wondered?

On June 12, 1806, when Thomas Lincoln was twenty-eight, he married Nancy Hanks, who came from what Abraham Lincoln later described as an "undistinguished" family.

Thomas and Nancy lived in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, for the first eighteen months of their marriage. Their first child, Sarah, was born there on February 10, 1807. About one year later, Thomas bought a farm on the south fork of the Nolin River, about five miles south of Elizabethtown. Abraham Lincoln was born on this farm on February 12, 1809. A third child, Thomas, died in infancy.

The Lincoln family lived there two years, then moved to Knob Creek, ten miles away. Many people think that since Abraham was born in a log cabin he was born in poverty, but actually the Lincolns were as comfortable as many of their neighbors. Abraham and Sarah were well-fed and well-clothed for the times.

Thomas Lincoln had trouble with property rights, so in 1816 he moved to Indiana. The Lincolns loaded their possessions into a wagon and started traveling northward to the Ohio River where they were ferried across. They traveled through thick forests to Spencer County. There, Thomas Lincoln began the task of changing one hundred and sixty acres of forest into farm land.

Life in Indiana was harder than life in Kentucky. The family arrived in early winter and needed shelter at once. Thomas and Abraham built a three-sided log structure where a fire on the fourth side burned day and night. After finishing this shelter, they started building a log cabin and moved into it in mid-February 1817.

Slowly life became easier on the farm, but on October 5, 1818, Nancy Hanks died of "milk sickness." Milk sickness was caused by the milk of cows poisoned with snakeroot. Thomas Lincoln built a coffin and buried his wife among the trees on a nearby hill. Young Abraham was greatly distressed, but several months later when a traveling preacher performed a burial service over his mother's grave, he was comforted.

After his mother's death, the cabin became dull and cheerless. Sarah, now twelve, kept house as well as she could. Then Thomas returned to Kentucky for a visit and married Sarah Bush Johnston on December 2, 1819. The new Mrs. Lincoln brought along three children whose ages were

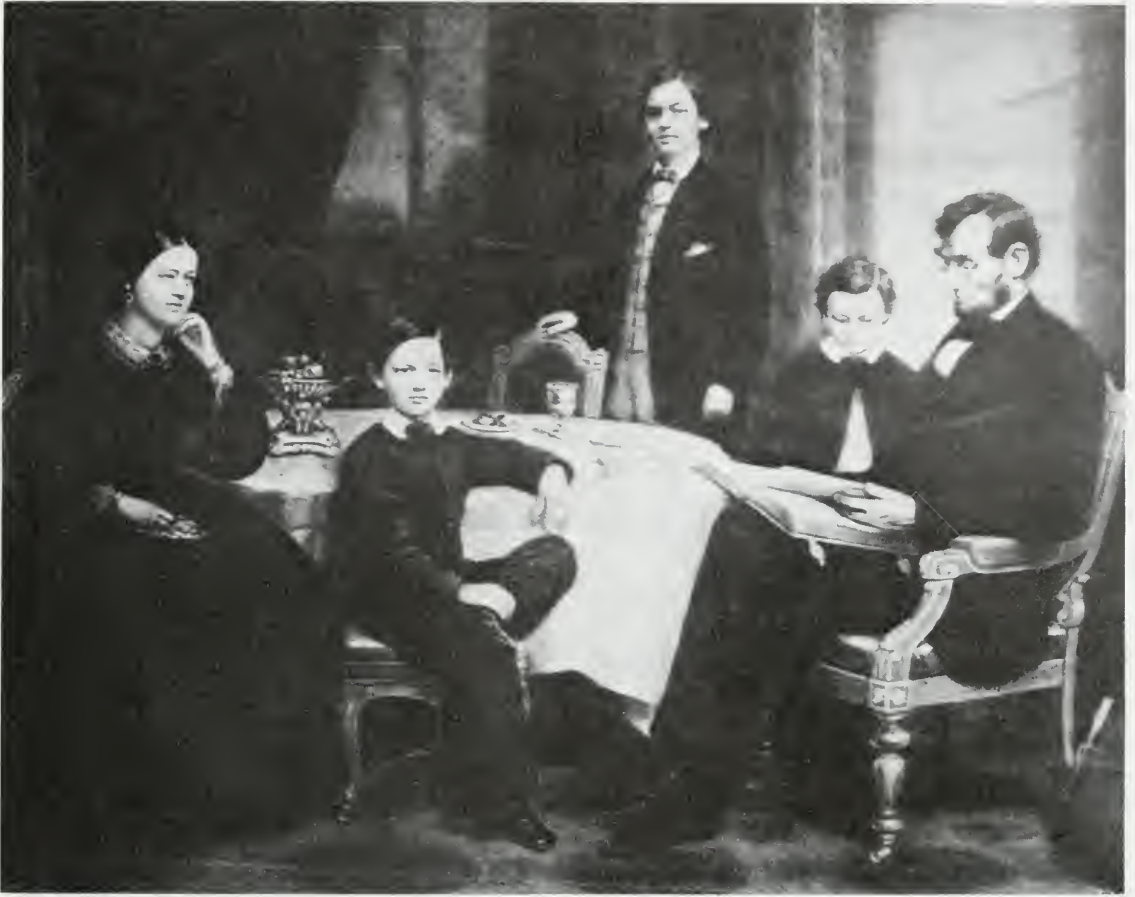
twelve, eight, and five. Her arrival at the cabin ended the long months of loneliness. Years later, Abraham Lincoln remembered little of his own mother. He may have been referring to his stepmother when he said, "God bless my mother; all that I am, or ever will be, I owe to her." [Historians have never been able to agree whether this remark was a reference to his natural mother or to his stepmother.]

In 1830, two years after his sister died in childbirth, his stepmother and father moved to Coles County, Illinois, where they lived until they died. Thomas Lincoln died in 1851 and Sarah Bush Lincoln died in 1869.

While in New Salem, Abraham met a woman named Ann Rutledge who died in the summer of 1835. Abraham grieved so deeply the people thought they were planning to be married, but less than eighteen months later he proposed to Mary Owens, a Kentucky girl. The relationship was not ardent on either side, and she rejected him.

This daguerrotype of Mary Todd Lincoln was made in 1846, four years after her marriage to Abraham Lincoln.





Artist Frank B. Carpenter created this painting from a steel engraving and presented the original to the New York Historical Society in 1909. Portrayed here is the Lincoln family as it appeared in 1861. Left to right are: Mrs. Lincoln, William, Robert, Thomas, and President Lincoln.

After moving to Springfield, Abraham met Mary Todd. They had a stormy courtship and even broke their engagement once, but finally on November 4, 1842, when Abraham was thirty-three and his bride was twenty-three, they were married.

Mary Todd, a lively, dark-haired girl from Kentucky, was high strung and socially ambitious, while Abraham tended to be moody and absent-minded. Their contrasting personalities caused friction, but their marriage was not bad.

Lincoln and his bride first lived in a Springfield boardinghouse, where they paid rent of \$4 a week. Eighteen months after their marriage, Lincoln bought the plain but comfortable house where they lived until he was elected president. Lincoln often cared for his own horse and the family cow, but there was frequently a servant to help Mary Todd with the house work.

When he bought the frame house his first son, Robert Todd, was nine months old. His second son, Edward Baker, was born in 1846, but died in 1850. William Wallace, his third son, was born in

1850, but he too died at age eleven in the White House. Their fourth son, Thomas, was born in 1853. He became known during his father's administration as "Tad." He fell ill and died at age eighteen.

Out of four children only Robert lived to adulthood. Robert had three children, Mary, Abraham Lincoln II (called Jack), and Jessie. When Jack died in 1890, unmarried, the hope of the Lincoln name being carried on died with him.

On the evening of April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was shot in the back of his head by John Wilkes Booth while he was watching a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre in Washington. After his death and the death of her third son, Mary Todd was said to be insane. When she died in 1882, she was buried in the tomb that holds the body of her husband.—[From "Abraham Lincoln," *World Book Encyclopedia*; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie and The War Years*.]

Lincoln's Confederate Brother-in-Law

Eric Schuchard

Challand Junior High School, Sterling

A young Kentucky lawyer arrived in Springfield, Illinois, in 1857 to present a case in court there and also to meet members of his wife's family for the first time. That was the beginning of a friendship between Abraham Lincoln and Ben Hardin Helm that would last until events changed both their lives.

Emilie Todd, half sister of Mary Lincoln, and Ben Hardin Helm were married March 20, 1856, in Frankfort, Kentucky. Helm was born in Kentucky only a few miles from the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. Both were interested in law and politics and discussed those issues during the week that Helm visited the Lincolns in Springfield. Helm was a southern Democrat who believed in states' rights while Lincoln was a Republican. Despite their political differences, the two men were good friends by the time Helm left Springfield.

Three years later Helm was helping to form the Kentucky State Guard into a group of soldiers and Lincoln was running for President of the United States. After Lincoln's election, Helm went to Washington to ask for a commission in the army. However, he was still hoping that the Union would not divide.

In April 1861 Helm received an invitation from President Lincoln to come to Washington again. When Helm arrived at the White House, Lincoln gave him an envelope containing a commission for Paymaster of the United States with the rank of Major. Lincoln knew that this would be a tempting offer for his young brother-in-law, and said, "Ben, here is something for you. Think it over by yourself and let me know what you will do." To Lincoln's offer Helm replied, "The position you offer me is beyond what I had expected in my most hopeful dreams. You have been kind and generous to me beyond anything I have known. I have no claim upon you, for I opposed your candidacy and did what I could for the election of another . . . I wish I could see my way. I will try to do what is right."

In Washington, Helm asked for advice from his southern friends, including Robert E. Lee, who had just resigned his commission in the United States Army because he felt he could not go to war against the southern states. Lee did not offer Helm any advice, but he did read the offer Lincoln had made. Both men knew the decision would be a difficult one.

When Helm left for Kentucky he was still undecided. Mary Lincoln expressed hope that Ben and Emilie would come to Washington and live with them in the White House. Abraham Lincoln

and Helm shook hands, not knowing that this would be the last time they would see each other.

The Lincolns had offered Helm and his wife the opportunity for high position, wealth, and future fame. It was a difficult choice for the young couple to make, but on April 27, 1861, Helm wrote a letter to Lincoln turning down the commission.

From 1861 to 1863 Helm served in the southern army as a recruiter and a scout, and later as a brigadier general. On September 20, 1863, he was killed in the Battle of Chickamauga. The Lincolns were stunned and saddened by the news.

In December, Emilie Todd Helm, who was returning to Kentucky, was stopped by federal officers at Fort Monroe and ordered to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Mrs. Helm refused to do so, and the officer in charge sent a telegram to Lincoln telling him of the situation. The President replied with the message, "Send her to me." Mrs. Helm arrived in Washington, but her visit caused such criticism of the Lincolns that she returned to Kentucky in mid-December.

In the summer of 1864, Emilie Todd Helm returned to Washington to ask permission from Lincoln to remove her cotton from the South and sell it. Lincoln could not give her this permission because she still refused to take the oath of allegiance.

Ben Hardin Helm, shown here with wife Emilie Todd, declined a military commission from his brother-in-law and instead joined the Confederate army.



With bitterness between them, Mrs. Helm left the Lincolns and returned to Kentucky. Even though Lincoln loved Emilie Helm, he remained loyal to the Union, and she remained loyal to the

South and to her husband.—[From "Brig. Gen. Ben Hardin Helm, Mrs. Lincoln's 'Rebel' Brother-In-Law," *Lincoln Lore*, Jan. 1972; Ruth Painter Randall, *Mary Lincoln, Biography of a Marriage*.]

Abraham's Stepmother, Sarah



Sarah Bush Johnston became Abraham Lincoln's stepmother when she married Thomas Lincoln in 1819. She is credited with encouraging her stepson's education.

Kenton T. Ferrell
Eldorado Junior High School, Eldorado

Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died on October 5, 1818, at the age of thirty-six. Her husband, Thomas Lincoln, made a wooden coffin, and the family made preparations for her burial. They conducted a simple funeral service and then buried Nancy Lincoln on a nearby knoll.

In the winter of 1819, Thomas Lincoln returned to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and on December 4, 1819, married a childhood sweetheart, Sarah Bush Johnston. They returned to his cabin on Little Pigeon Creek, Indiana, and

brought with them Sarah's three children. Sarah also brought a feather mattress, feather pillows, a walnut bureau, a clothes chest, a table, and chairs. It was the first time young Abe had seen such nice things.

Although his stepmother could not read or write, she valued education. She insisted that all of the children go to school, which not only pleased Abe but greatly endeared her to him. Thomas Lincoln wanted Abe to be a carpenter, but Mrs. Lincoln stressed his studies and the advantages of an education.

During the winter of 1820, Mrs. Lincoln had Abe schooled for several weeks. His teacher was Andrew Crawford. Public education was unknown, and school teachers derived their livelihood from tuition fees that parents paid them. Teachers never stayed long in one place, and schooling was sporadic. Two years later Mrs. Lincoln saw to it that Abe attended school again. This school was four miles from home and was taught by James Gwaney. Abe had to walk to and from school each day. After about another year's interval, Mrs. Lincoln again sent Abe to school where he had several more weeks of instruction under a man named Azel Dorsey. Those early frontier schools were called "blab" schools because the students studied out loud. Not only discipline, but learning was encouraged by the rod. The sum total of Abe's formal education was less than a year.

At home Sarah Lincoln encouraged Abe to read out loud and learn even though books on the frontier were scarce. The Bible was the only book owned by the Lincolns. Although Abe did not read many books, those he did read were worthwhile works of literature. Books that he read were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrims Progress*, *Aesop's Fables*, and Grimsham's *History of the United States*. One book he was really fond of was Parsons Weem's *Life of Washington*; of this book he said, "There must have been something more than common that those men struggle for."

Sarah did not criticize and was not impatient. However, she did encourage Abe to study, for she knew he was eager to learn. She was a great positive influence on her stepson's development.—[From Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*; "Abraham Lincoln," *Compton's Encyclopedia* (1965).]

The White House Terror

Steve Keller

Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale

By the time President Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, young Thomas "Tad" Lincoln had become the popular terrorizing toddler of the White House. Staff members recalled Tad's freedom to wander the halls and his ability to interrupt cabinet sessions. Although his father's assassination and his own struggle with numerous illnesses matured him in later years, he will always be remembered for his time spent playing mischievous pranks in the White House.

Thomas Lincoln was born in Springfield, Illinois, on April 4, 1853, and was named after the president's father. He received the nickname "Tad" soon after his birth because of the tadpole-like appearance of his head. From the day he took his first steps, Tad was volatile and temperamental. His father was the most successful in handling him and Tad's sincerity towards his father, even when being punished, created a solid bond in their relationship. An example of Tad's interest in his father is the campaigning Tad and his brother Willie performed. After learning of his father's presidential nomination, Tad encouraged people to vote for "Old Abe" by dancing in the streets and singing:

Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness, out of the wilderness,
Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness
Down in Illinois.

On November 6, 1860, Old Abe was elected president, and the Lincolns traveled to Washington, where Tad's pranks started immediately. Tad and his brother Willie were fascinated by the bell system whose cords came together in the attic. The bells were used to summon the servants. On one occasion, Tad yanked away at the cords causing the servants considerable confusion.

Tad appreciated his father's power as president and often asked him for help. Once Tad asked his father to pardon a doll Tad had sentenced to death because it fell asleep while on picket duty. His father wrote, "The doll Jack is pardoned. By the order of the President A. Lincoln." Tad also had a turkey named Jack. The turkey was pardoned by his father so it would not be slaughtered for dinner. Other officers in Lincoln's administration humored Tad too. Secretary of War Stanton appointed Tad a lieutenant in the army. While dressed in his uniform, the young lieutenant relieved the regular White House guard of duty and replaced them with cooks, doormen, and other servants. The president thought it a

wonderful joke and did not relieve them of duty until Tad had gone to bed.

Secretary of War Stanton had other problems with Tad. Tad disliked the man for arguing with his father, the president. Once Tad got revenge on Stanton by spraying him with one of the only hoses in America. Complaining afterwards to the president about the incident, Tad's father simply replied, "Stanton, you had better make friends with Tad."

In 1862 Tad's older brother, Willie, died. After his death Tad's behavior became somewhat more somber and he and "Paw" became much closer. To cheer young Tad, the number of trips to Stutz's toy shop to buy Tad's favorite tin soldiers increased. Although Tad was somewhat calmer during that period, he continued to interrupt important cabinet meetings with his personal concerns, and Lincoln almost always received him. Lincoln's indulgences became so great that he once paid Tad five dollars to take his medicine when he was sick. Many thought that Lincoln spoiled his

Photographer Mathew Brady made this portrait of young Thomas "Tad" Lincoln.





Already permissive parents, the Lincolns indulged Tad after Willie died in 1862. He was rarely disciplined, and he had a number of pets, including this pony, at the White House.

son, but in reality he tried to comfort Tad and perhaps give to Tad what he was no longer able to give to Willie.

Although Lincoln was extremely gentle in his handling of Tad, he was concerned with the intellectual as well as the emotional development of his son. Special tutors were hired to instruct Tad, for during the White House years Tad had remained illiterate. Lincoln also assigned a variety of errands and special jobs to Tad.

That special relationship with his father ended abruptly on April 14, 1865, with the President's assassination. Tad and his mother then returned to Illinois, where Mary Lincoln had great difficulty with her finances and the education of her youngest son. Although Tad had many tutors and enrolled in a variety of schools, he never had any real interest in education until he traveled to Frankfurt, Germany, with his mother. There he quickly broke the language barrier and made up the years of education that he had missed.

His time in Germany was educationally rewarding but physically and emotionally difficult. It was a time of maturation for Tad as he assumed the responsibility of taking care of his mother, who

was often sick. The cold climate, however, did not help his own health, and after struggling through many illnesses, Tad and his mother returned to the United States to visit Tad's brother, Robert, and his family. On July 15, at the age of 18, Tad's short life ended.

Tad left behind a history with a mixed record. During his first years in the White House he was considered a terror. However, as he matured he began to show some signs of the special talent that his father had always seen. In 1867 Tad testified at the trial of John Stuart, who had conspired in the President's murder, and a year later he had cared for his ailing mother in Germany. Perhaps the photograph taken by Mathew Brady, of Tad and his father reading a book, best captures Tad's character and serves as a reminder of Tad's often unseen tame side. It also illustrates the great love between a patient and loving father and his special son.—[From Eugenia Jones Hunt, *My Personal Recollections of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln*; Ruth Painter Randall, *Lincoln's Sons*; Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*; John D. Weaver, *Tad Lincoln*; Michael K. White, "Tyrant in the White House," *Illinois Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 1988.]

Robert Todd Lincoln

Kim Meister

Washington Grade School, Peoria

Robert Todd Lincoln, the eldest son of President Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln, was a shy man. He did not have the magnetism of his father or the spirited friendliness of his mother. Robert had a nervous temperament and was upset easily. Despite his bad temper, he was a thoughtful friend to those he knew well.

Robert applied for admission to Harvard at the beginning of the fall term in 1859 and set out for the East in August. He took his entrance examinations and failed fifteen out of sixteen subjects. His failure to pass the Harvard entrance examinations was probably Robert Lincoln's first serious defeat. He must have been disheartened and, no doubt, very homesick. But Robert, like both of his parents, did not give up easily.

Robert stated, "I was resolved not to retire beaten and acting under the advice of President Walker, I entered the well-known Academy of Exeter, New Hampshire." He enrolled at Exeter on September 15, 1859. Robert went to Exeter to prepare himself for Harvard College. During the summer of 1860, Robert received good news. He had succeeded in passing the Harvard entrance examinations. Now Robert was going to the famous law school.

Robert entered Harvard as a member of the class of 1864. During the first two years at college he studied Greek, Latin, mathematics, chemistry, religion, elocution, rhetoric, and themes and composition. He took part in many activities. He was a member of the Institute of 1770, a social club for sophomores to promote public speaking. Robert was elected Vice-President of the Hasty Pudding Club. He was also elected Vice-President of the Harvard Law School Alumni Association. Robert successfully completed his four years at Harvard, and he graduated in June 1864. He returned home from college after his graduation. President Lincoln would not allow him to join the army, so he went back to Harvard and re-entered on September 5, 1864.

Meanwhile, President Lincoln was frequently criticized because Robert was of military age and he was not in the army. On New Year's Day 1865, Robert was at a reception at the White House. A few days later President Lincoln wrote a letter to General Grant asking if Robert could "go into your Military family with some nominal rank." Grant replied that he would be most happy to have him on his staff. Robert was appointed Captain and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers on Feb-



Robert Todd Lincoln was a college student when he posed for this portrait. After attending Phillips Exeter Academy young Lincoln went on to Harvard, graduating in 1864.

ruary 11, 1865. He was present when General Lee surrendered to Grant. Robert returned home from the last campaign of war on Friday morning, April 14, 1865, the day his father was shot.

Robert Todd Lincoln might have become President of the United States if he had sought office. Instead he was a successful corporation lawyer and the president of the Pullman Company. Robert was an interesting and capable person. His life was one of great accomplishment.—[From Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 8; John S. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln, A Man in His Own Right*; Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt, *Twenty Days*; Ruth Painter Randall, *Lincoln's Sons*.]

Secretary of War Lincoln

Amy Lyn Murphy

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"To be the son of a great man can be a hard thing, for a boy can never be sure whether he is judged on his own merits or because he is his father's son," wrote the historian J. Anderson. For Robert Todd Lincoln, eldest son of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, the task was even harder. Living up to the image of Abraham Lincoln would be as hard as living up to the image of George Washington; yet Robert Lincoln was among the few sons of presidents who achieved a national reputation. His work in office won him the gratitude and appreciation of his countrymen.

Although Robert Lincoln grew up immersed in politics, his first formal position was not until April 1876, when he ran for supervisor of South Chicago. In 1880 he moved from this position to

Robert Todd Lincoln was appointed Secretary of War in 1881, the same year this photograph was made.



trustee of the Illinois Central Railroad. However, Lincoln held that position for only a short period, for in February 1881, newly elected President James Abraham Garfield selected Robert Lincoln as Secretary of War. On March 2, 1881, to the delight of most of the nation, Robert Todd Lincoln formally accepted the position.

Unfortunately, Lincoln had barely settled into his new-found job when tragedy struck July 2, 1881. President Garfield was shot by Charles J. Guiteau. For the second time in his life, Robert Todd Lincoln was closely involved with a president who was assassinated.

After Garfield's death, Vice-President Chester A. Arthur took office and removed every cabinet member appointed by his predecessor with the exception of Lincoln. As Secretary of War, Lincoln settled in to his work.

During his years in the War Department, the majority of work Lincoln was involved with was routine. An official day began with interviews with senators and heads of bureaus or departments. Twice a week Lincoln attended cabinet meetings at noon. His position also involved loans of army supplies, the authorization of inspection tours and political junkets, approval of plans for military buildings, aid to disaster victims, and a large amount of paper work. Along with those duties, Lincoln had the responsibility of making changes within the office.

Soon after Lincoln entered the War Department, it came to his attention that a number of army officers were on special or detached service and had been assigned posts within the department. Quietly and efficiently Lincoln cleaned out those men who never attended to the assigned post. For those aides found competent, he requested raises. In time that handling of the War Department earned Lincoln the respect of many.

As Secretary of War, Lincoln was in charge of twenty-five thousand members of the United States Army. In his annual report of 1882, Lincoln noted most of the army's work was concentrated in the Apache uprisings in Arizona and southwest New Mexico. General Drum was quoted as saying, "He (Lincoln) is the best Secretary of War we have had since Jefferson Davis."

Not all of Lincoln's time was spent in routine work, however. In 1878 Lincoln had to appear before the court to stand trial against Fitz-John Porter, who was court-martialed in 1863 for refusing to obey the orders of his superior officer, General Pope. Lincoln's testimony was quite damaging to Porter. In December 1881 Porter tried to have



A distinguished looking Robert Lincoln posed for the camera at Hildene, his Vermont summer home.

the court-martial annulled, but once again Lincoln stood in his way.

As Secretary of War, Lincoln ran into one problem with the army's commanding general. Although Lincoln's relationship with William T. Sherman, commanding general until late 1883, was satisfactory, his relationship with Sherman's successor, Philip Sheridan, was rocky. Sheridan issued orders without the Secretary's approval, and the trouble was reported by the press when Lincoln threatened to take the matter directly to the president. That statement settled the issue in Lincoln's favor.

During the Garfield and Arthur administrations, Lincoln had little time for rest and relaxation. His last official act was to tour the country with President Arthur in a political junket for the 1884 election. The boy who wanted to grow up to be a credit to his father had become a credit not only to his father but to his nation.—[From J. Anderson, *Robert Lincoln, Son of a President*; John S. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln, A Man in His Own Right*.]

Another Lincoln-Booth Encounter

Robert Todd Lincoln and Edwin Booth

Jim Walsh
St. Bede Academy, Peru

One ironic occurrence involving Abraham Lincoln's oldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln, is unknown to most people. About one year before his father's assassination, Robert was involved in a near fatal accident on a train while coming home from Harvard University on a school vacation. If it had not been for the alertness of his rescuer, Robert might never have reached his destination. The name of his savior was Edwin Booth, a well-known Shakespearean actor and the brother of the notorious John Wilkes Booth, his father's assassin.

Letters which give details and verification of the event were collected in a story called "Memories and Letters of Edwin Booth" by William Bisphan published in *Century Magazine* in November 1893. The letters were acquired by the Illinois State Historical Library in 1948.

In one of the letters found in "Memories and Letters of Edwin Booth," Booth describes what happened on the train from his memory of the incident. He recalled that one day he had started out for New York from Philadelphia. While he was standing on a platform of a railroad car at the Jersey City railroad station waiting for the train to move, a young man moving from one car to another lost his balance. The young man would have fallen between the cars had Edwin not been there to catch him by the collar of his coat and bring him up safely by his side. That young man, whom Booth did not know, seemed to recognize him, and held out his hand to Booth saying, "That was a narrow escape, Mr. Booth."

The editor of *Century Magazine*, Watson Gilder, later asked Robert Todd Lincoln about the truth of that story. Gilder asked because he had been searching for suitable material to publish in his magazine during 1909, the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Robert, then president of the Pull-

man Company in Chicago, wrote a letter of reply to Gilder. In his letter of February 6, 1909, Lincoln confirmed the truth of the story, but corrected some minor details. Although Booth had said that Lincoln had been walking between two cars when the accident occurred, Lincoln explained:

The incident occurred while a group of passengers were late at night purchasing their sleeping car places from the conductor who stood on the station platform at the entrance of the car. The platform was about the height of the car floor, and there was of course a narrow space between the platform and the car body. There was some crowding, and I happened to be pressed by it against the car body while waiting my turn. In this situation the train began to move, and by the motion I was twisted off my feet, and had dropped somewhat, with feet downward, into the open space, and was personally helpless, when my coat collar was vigorously seized and I was quickly pulled up and out to a secure footing on the platform. Upon turning to thank my rescuer I saw it was Edwin Booth, whose face was of course well known to me, and I expressed my gratitude to him, and in doing so, called him by name.

Some biographers of the Lincoln family have placed the incident in 1863 when Robert Todd Lincoln was working on his Bachelor of Arts degree at Harvard University (1860–1864). Others say it happened in 1864 when he was attending Harvard Law School, where he remained for only about four months. Not only is the year of the event uncertain, but so too is the answer to the question of whether Robert told his father of the incident. Booth's account reveals that two weeks



Troubled by his brother's heinous deed, Edwin Booth took some comfort in his rescue of Robert Todd a year earlier.

Edwin Booth, John Wilkes Booth's brother, was a celebrated Shakespearean actor.



after the incident, Booth received a letter from General Adam Badeau who mentioned that Robert had told him about how his life had been saved by Booth. It was also said that the memory of his rescue gave Edwin Booth some comfort in the troubled times that followed the assassination of Lincoln's father at the hand of Edwin's brother, John Wilkes Booth.—[From: S. L. Carson, "The Second Tragic Lincoln," *American History Illustrated*, Feb. 1985; John S. Goff, *Robert Todd Lincoln, A Man in His Own Right*; "Lincolniana," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Mar. 1948; Ruth Painter Randall, *Lincoln's Sons*; Henry E. Scot, "Hon. Robert Todd Lincoln, L.L.D.," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, July 1927.]

A Much-Criticized First Lady

Curtis Oldfield

Farmington Junior High School, Farmington

Mary Todd was born December 13, 1818, to Robert S. Todd, a banker at Lexington, Kentucky, and to Eliza Parker Todd, who died when Mary was eight. She was brought up by an aunt. Her sisters said she was something of a tomboy, although she showed a passion for French fabrics, bright ribbons, and rare laces, which her father bought for her. Like other rich families in that time, she went to boarding school.

When she was twenty-one she went to live with her married sister, Elizabeth Edwards, in Springfield, Illinois. It was there that Joshua Speed introduced Mary to Abraham Lincoln. On November 4, 1842, they were married. They had a modest income, and they lived in a room at the Globe Tavern in Springfield. After the birth of their first son, Robert, they moved to what is now the historical Lincoln home. The same year, Lincoln was elected to Congress, and they had their second son, Edward. Lincoln's long absences from the home in Springfield left Mary with most of the responsibilities. Many illnesses would cause her to lose her temper.

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as President. Even in the White House

she could not hold her temper. She grew worse after the death of two young sons. Eddie died at age four in 1850, and Willie died at age twelve in 1862. Thereafter, she often stayed in her room and wept.

She redecorated the White House with the finest rugs, paintings, and curtains. They were more than the budget would allow.

When the troublesome Civil War was over, the President, her husband, was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. Soon after that her son Tad died. That was a final blow to Mary. Afterward, she was tormented by memories of the assassination and fear of poverty.

Mary's only surviving son, Robert, took her to a mental hospital in Batavia, Illinois. Her sisters worked to get her out of the hospital. In 1876 she got out of the hospital and went to Paris. In 1880 she fell and broke her spine. She had to come back to Springfield. There she lived in the same room where she lived when she was married to Abraham Lincoln. Finally, on July 16, 1882, she suffered a stroke and died. She was buried beside her husband in Oak Ridge Cemetery, in Springfield, Illinois.—[From Jane McConnell, *Our First Ladies*; Katherine E. Wilkie, *Mary Todd Lincoln, Girl of the Blue Grass*; Mary Ellen Kulkin, *Her Way*; "Mary Todd Lincoln," *World Book Encyclopedia* (1979).]

Mary Todd Lincoln and the Old Clothes Scandal

Todd M. Adams

Lexington High School, Lexington

More than two years after President Abraham Lincoln's death, his widowed wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, lived in Chicago, in a house at 375 West Washington Street. She was a sad, sedate woman who sat alone in her room and tried to focus her attention on how she would pay her long list of debts. She had used most of the \$22,000 that Congress had given her out of a year's presidential salary to purchase and furnish her beautiful two-story house. She saved every penny she could at the time, but seemed not to put a dent into her terrible debt.

What could she do? She finally concluded that she must sell some of her expensive clothes and jewelry. She reasoned that she would not need them anymore and that even when she was in the

White House she had considered them as sort of insurance just in case she was ever in need.

At the time, Chicago did not have much of a market for such an elaborate wardrobe. Mrs. Lincoln wrote Elizabeth Keckley, a friend in the state of New York, to meet her in New York City in the middle of September. Because of a mix-up as to the time of the meeting, Mrs. Keckley showed up two days late. When she did, she discovered that Mrs. Lincoln, under an assumed name, had already visited a commission broker named Brady & Company. Mrs. Lincoln's identity was quickly revealed though when she showed Brady a ring that had her name inscribed in its side.

When Brady found out who he was dealing with, he was full of suggestions, all of which would result in advertising for the firm. He assured Mrs. Lincoln that if she would place her clothes and jewelry in his firm's hands, his company would



Mary Todd Lincoln enjoyed fashionable, expensive clothes as shown in these portraits. She posed at left for the president's second inaugural. At right is a profile taken in 1861. When she tried to sell her old clothes following her husband's death, she was embarrassed by the resulting scandal.

raise at least \$100,000 in a few weeks. Brady also wanted Mrs. Lincoln to write letters for his company to show prominent politicians to help raise money for her. Mrs. Lincoln agreed to write a letter degrading the men of the Republican Party so that those men would give her money to be quiet during the following year's elections. The results however, upset her. When she saw a man reading a copy of the *New York World* in which Brady had printed the letters, she heard humiliating comments on the subject. She returned home and wrote Mrs. Keckley to ask her to persuade Brady not to have any more of her letters printed.

The next day however, the *New York World* printed another letter of Mrs. Lincoln's that claimed that certain members of her husband's administration had gotten where they were through bribes to Mrs. Lincoln. During the next couple of weeks, many accusations were made against Mrs. Lincoln, including one that caused a great deal of resentment because it claimed she had been a traitor to the Union.

Robert Lincoln, abnormally sensitive to publicity, was frantic. He was quoted as saying that his

only explanation of his mother's comments was that she was insane.

In the spring of 1868 the book *Behind the Scenes* was published over the name of Elizabeth Keckley. Mrs. Keckley wrote the book with the intention of making people understand Mrs. Lincoln and her good intentions, but the plan backfired. The volume resulted in more humiliation for Mrs. Lincoln because of a vicious parody entitled *Behind the Scenes* by Betsey Kickley, which was published that same year.

That was the last straw. Mrs. Lincoln had been planning to move to Europe for some time, and the embarrassment caused by the book finally did it. On October 1, 1868, after her son Robert's wedding, she and her young son, Tad, set sail for Germany.

Before she left though, Mrs. Lincoln and her son Robert paid off about \$70,000 worth of debts, including an \$800 bill to Mr. Brady.—[From Thomas Montgomery, "Lincoln's Memorial," *Life*, July 1987; Ruth Painter Randall, *Courtship of Mr. Lincoln*; Irving Stone, *Love is Eternal*.]



Lincoln's First Mary

Tara Ooms
Brookwood Junior High School, Glenwood

Mary Owens was Lincoln's Mary before his marriage to Mary Todd. In 1833 Miss Mary Owens traveled to New Salem from her home in Green County, Kentucky. At that time Lincoln also lived in New Salem. Mary was well educated and came from a wealthy family to visit her sister, Mrs. Bennet Abell. She was "plump faced, with a head of dark curly hair, large blue eyes, and stood 5' 5" high," as described by Sandburg, the Lincoln biographer. On her visit Lincoln became interested in her. Mary stayed in New Salem for only a month, but that was long enough for her to make her mark on Lincoln's mind until her next visit, three years later.

Before her next visit, her sister talked to Lincoln and asked him, "If my sister returns to visit me, will you court and marry her?" Perhaps Lincoln thought she was kidding, but he agreed. They anxiously awaited her arrival.

When they met again Mary had changed a lot. He later described her as being "weatherbeaten, oversized, and lacking teeth." Mary often felt neglected in the presence of Lincoln. Once while riding to a party they crossed a dangerous river on horseback. While the other men stopped to help their female companions, Lincoln rode ahead leaving Mary to get through it alone.

After seeing her for a while, Lincoln went to Springfield to become a lawyer. While in Spring-

Mary Owens rejected Lincoln's formal proposal of marriage in 1837, writing later that "Lincoln was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of woman's happiness."

field, Lincoln wrote to Mary three times. Those letters were written on December 13, 1836, May 7, 1837, and August 16, 1837. In his May letter he told Mary, "Living in Springfield is rather dull business . . . I am quite as lonesome here as I have ever been in my whole life." He also wrote, "I am often thinking about what we said about your coming to live in Springfield . . . I am afraid you wouldn't be satisfied . . . you would have to be poor without means of hiding your poverty."

In his next letter he said to her, "I now say that you can now drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts (if you ever had any) from me forever,

and leave this letter unanswered. . . . [If you] do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. . . . If it suits you best to not answer this farewell, a long life and a merry one attend you. But if you do conclude to write me back speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me anything you think, just in the manner you think of it."

After writing that letter he must have still felt something for her because in the fall of that same year he met Mary and formally proposed to her. But Mary did not say yes to young Lincoln. Instead she was pronounced Mrs. Jesse Vineyard in 1841. She and her husband had five children and lived together until she died in 1877.

On April Fool's Day 1838, Lincoln was up late going over his relationship with Mary. He said this regarding the second time he met her: "I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was oversized but she now looked like a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an 'old maid' . . . but now . . . for the life of me I could not stop thinking about my mother . . . from her want of teeth and weatherbeaten appearance in general."—[From David D. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln*; Paul M. Angle, *The Lincoln Reader*; David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered*; William H. Herndon, *Herndon's Life of Lincoln*; Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*; Ralph G. Newman, ed., *Lincoln for the Ages*; Ruth Painter Randall, *Mary Lincoln, Biography of a Marriage*.]

Check 11d for History!

Tax Checkoff Supports Illinois Preservation Effort

The historic preservation community in Illinois—and that includes every one with a commitment to the preservation of the past for the benefit of the future—has been given a unique opportunity and responsibility with the creation of the Heritage Preservation Fund and Tax Checkoff. For the first time ever taxpayers can donate \$10 or \$20 (if filing jointly) to the fund by checking 11d on the back of the IL-1040 tax form. Supplemental tax-deductible donations may be made by writing a check and mailing it directly to the Historic Preservation Fund.

Illinois has the opportunity to establish a prototype for preservation efforts nationwide. The

the preservation and continued interpretation of our heritage.

The chief vehicle for donating to the Fund was created with the addition of the Heritage Preservation Tax Checkoff to the Illinois income tax form. **11d for history!** Anyone receiving a refund may donate up to \$10—\$20 if filing jointly—to the Fund by checking line 11d on your IL-1040. Remember, your donation can be reported as tax-deductible on next year's federal tax form.

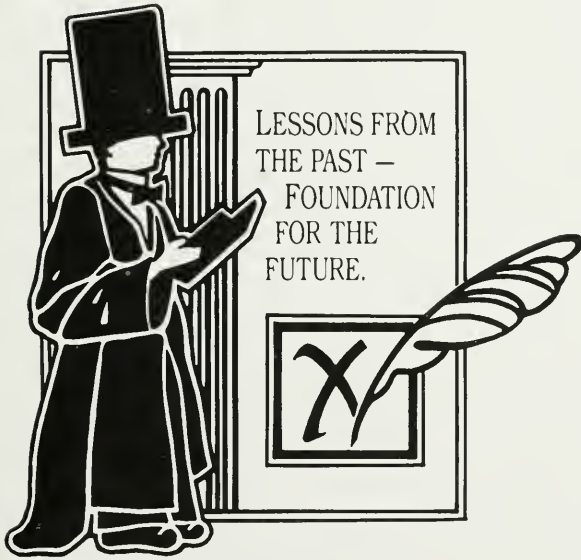
Additional tax-deductible donations may also be made by writing a check and mailing it directly to the Heritage Preservation Fund, Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701.

But . . . in order for the "historic" checkoff provision to remain on the state income tax form, the Heritage Preservation Fund must raise \$100,000 each year. It is important to note that the checkoff for preserving our precious heritage is not the only choice on the tax form. It appears alongside such worthy causes as child abuse prevention, Alzheimer's disease research, and non-game wildlife. It won't be easy raising the necessary \$100,000, but it is possible. It's an opportunity we can't afford to let slip through our fingers. And it can't be done without you!

Your contribution to the Heritage Preservation Fund can make the difference between the rescue or ruin of Illinois' historical and cultural resources. Those irreplaceable resources include ancient Indian lands, letters and documents in Abraham Lincoln's hand, landmark buildings, historic books, photographs, and works of art. Together they are Illinois—its heritage and her future. Without those resources, the story cannot be told.

How will money from the fund be used? It can support brick and mortar grants; finance the conservation of historic books, newspapers, photographs, and works of art; expand educational programming at historic sites; provide scholarships and internships; and fund the creation of new educational material to aid in the teaching of Illinois history and culture. The possibilities are limitless.

If those who believe in the power of the past to influence the future donate just \$10 to the Heritage Preservation Fund, the \$100,000 goal can be reached and Illinois made a leader in nationwide preservation efforts.



***CHECK 11d FOR HISTORY.
HERITAGE PRESERVATION FUND.***

Heritage Preservation Fund and Tax Checkoff can supplement a sagging budget for statewide preservation efforts by providing a funding source for worthy historic preservation projects that would otherwise go unfunded. During the Eighty-fifth General Assembly, lawmakers gave Illinoisans the means, through the legislative institution of the Heritage Preservation Fund, to provide for



1988–1989 Topics for *Illinois History*

Here are the topics for this year's issues of *Illinois History*:

NOVEMBER Illinois in the Great War, 1917–1919

Deadline for papers: September 1, 1988

How did Illinois assist with "preparedness"? How did citizens react to the declaration of war or the final armistice? Were there local liberty loan campaigns? Does your town have memorials or veterans' groups from World War I?

DECEMBER Springfield, Third Capital of Illinois, 1837–1988

Deadline for papers: October 1, 1988

This school year marks the 150th anniversary of the move of state government from Vandalia to Springfield and the 100th anniversary of the current Statehouse. Why was the capital moved? What stories do you know about the Old State Capitol or the Illinois Statehouse?

JANUARY The New Deal in Illinois

Deadline for papers: November 1, 1988

Both President Franklin Roosevelt and Illinois Governor Henry Horner campaigned in 1932 with promises to relieve the suffering of the Great Depression. What were some of their programs? How did families in your area cope with hard times?

FEBRUARY Lincoln's Family

Deadline for papers: December 1, 1988

What have historians written about the Lincoln family? What do you know about the Todds or the Lincoln sons, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren? Where did they live, and what did they accomplish? Limit your paper to one incident or one person.

MARCH Civil Rights in Illinois

Deadline for papers: January 1, 1989

Various individuals or groups have worked for political, economic, or social equality. Who have been the leaders in movements to protect the rights of minorities?

APRIL An Oral History of Working People in Illinois

Deadline for papers: February 1, 1989

Our jobs affect our lives. How has work changed over the years? What occupations have interesting traditions or histories? Research an occupation, and then conduct an oral history interview with someone who has that occupation.

MAY The Illinois State Historical Library

Deadline for papers: March 1, 1989

This month is the centennial of the Illinois State Historical Library, a division of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. How is it different from other libraries? What benefits does the Library provide for the people of Illinois?

Papers should not exceed 1,000 words in length. They should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper. Give your complete name, as well as your school, city, and the name of your teacher.

All work must be the original work of the student. Copied material should be indicated as direct quotations.

Each paper should include footnotes and a list of other sources used. Papers chosen for publication will be thoroughly checked for accuracy and originality.

Papers should be submitted by the teacher to: Keith A. Sculle, Editor, *Illinois History*, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701.