

Something About Mary – Rehabilitating Mrs. A. Lincoln

Mr. President, Mr. Treasurer, fellow Presenter, and Athenaeum members:

April 14, 1865 was a day that changed America forever. On that day, only 5 days after Lee's surrender to General Grant, John Wilkes Booth entered the Presidential Box at Fords Theater where Lincoln and Mary were watching a play called Our American Cousin, and, well, we all know what happened after that.

Mary Lincoln was in utter shock, with blood and brain matter splattered on her dress, screaming, crying, and utter chaos ensued. Nearby doctors tried to find Lincoln's pulse, but could not. They performed mouth to mouth resuscitation. He was hurriedly carried across the street to a home owned by William Peterson, where he was laid diagonally across the bed where he clung to life throughout the night. Lincoln's oldest son Robert was summoned, and dozens of concerned friends gathered for an all-night vigil.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton was in charge of the room. He purposefully did not let Mary know that her husband would not recover. Because by this time Mary was beyond consolable. She loudly and frantically shrieked and cried. Mary wanted to remain near her husband's side but her wailing unnerved the men, and all but her were men. Secretary Stanton famously said "Get that woman out of here and do not let her back again." She was not actually present when Lincoln took his last breath. That moment was the beginning of Mary's Exile and she would remain in exile for the rest of her life.

EARLY LIFE

Mary was one of 6 children born of Robert and Eliza Todd in Lexington, and she was only 6 when her mother died giving birth to her younger brother George. The Todd family was one of the wealthiest in the Kentucky. A minor scandal broke out when Mary's father Robert set about finding a new wife only a few months after Eliza's death. But he was a widower with 6 children to raise, and he needed some help. Robert surely loved all his children but he was a businessman, and was more interested in getting along with his life than raising his kids. From Robert's second marriage, Mary's list of siblings grew by another 8. So between her full siblings

and half-siblings Mary grew up as one of 13. She had a distant relationship with her stepmother Betsy, to say the least, Betsy didn't care much for Robert's first brood of children. For 14 years after marrying Robert she had a baby every other year until she mercifully entered menopause. I mention Mary's large family because it does a lot to explain Mary's personality. A mostly absent father, frail and distracted step mother, an enslaved servant-nurse and too many kids meant that Mary and her siblings grew up – a bit on the wild side. It was dealing with her siblings that Mary developed her famous sharp tongue, willfulness and sarcastic wit. In the Todd home, there was no peace, and little parental guidance. Like many large families, they loved and hated each other at the same time. The kids teased each other unmercifully, and each gave as good as they got. No one cut each other any slack, and there was essentially no parent to cry to. Sharp tongues and quick tempers were required for survival. Mary later said it was like living in a boarding house with everyone either coming or going.

MARY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SLAVERY

Mary grew up in a home that benefitted from Slavery. One of her most important motherly figures was the slave Mammy Sally. Sally was head of the domestic staff. She was the "authority" figure but could do little to control the wild Todd kids. They likely loved her, but did not submit to her authority. After all she was one, and they were many, she was black and they were white. They knew she was a slave.

Mary and her siblings teased her as they did each other. Mary was known to put salt in her coffee and hid her slippers, and teased her about falling asleep at church, but she did have warm feelings toward her Mammy Sally.

It could not have gone unnoticed to Mary that she grew up in one of the largest slave markets in the country. She lived close to the infamous Pullam slave trading firm, near the corner of Broadway and Short streets, only a couple blocks from current day Rupp Arena. And Slaves were a common sight in Lexington streets. And later on most of her siblings would either join the Confederacy or marry into it. But Mary resisted, for her it was more complicated. She was a sensitive girl, and she hated the cruelty she saw and heard on the Lexington Streets.

Mary's fondness toward Mammy Sally was evidenced when she looked the other way when Sally assisted other slaves as part of the underground railroad, surreptitiously feeding runaways as they tried to cross the Ohio River to relative safety in the North. It was a very dangerous undertaking to assist slaves, and the penalties for helping slaves were severe, but Mary not only looked the other way but wanted to help. Sally would leave a mark on the fence in front of the mansion as an indication help was available. "I fed many a one, Sally told Mary". While Mary wanted to feed the slaves herself, Sally would not allow her to help. "A runaway would hide from you like a scared rabbit, nothing but a black hand can give a runaway cornbread and bacon" Sally said. Mary relented and never gave away Sally's secret.

In Mary's later years, her attitudes toward slavery were remarkably progressive. She was arguably the driving force behind Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and she had a warm and genuine friendship with her longtime dressmaker African American and former slave, Elizabeth Keckley. After the assassination, Elizabeth Keckley was one of the very few who Mary would allow close to her. Mary's mindset toward African Americans, was also evidenced by a quiet behind the scenes gesture of respect to Frederick Douglass, the famous black abolitionist, by giving him Lincoln's walking cane after the assassination. She also gave hundreds of dollars of her personal money to help African Americans made destitute by dislocation after the war. Mary Lincoln was a product of her time, and it's unlikely she ever saw blacks as truly equal, but it is clear that she came a long way from her privileged youth, and in her later years, came to see African Americans more than servants, but rather worthy of empathy and respect.

When Abraham met Mary he was 31, and she was 21. At first glance they seemed an unlikely pair, at 6 foot 4 he was a giant of his day, an uncouth frontiersman, not well educated, unconcerned with etiquette, or the social graces. But they had common interests. They both lost their mothers at an early age, they both loved Whig politics, huge fans of Henry Clay, they loved literature, poetry, Shakespeare, and children. And although she had 10 more years of formal education than he had, she had the good sense to realize he was a diamond in the rough.

They had an on-again, off-again courtship, and eventually married in the parlor of the home of her older sister Elizabeth on November 4, 1842. She was 23, he was 33.

First child Robert was born pretty much 9 months after they were married on August 1, 1843. From this point in their marriage Lincoln referred to Mary as 'mother', or his "child bride" and she like that a lot, She in turn referred to him as Mr. Lincoln.

Mary was always Lincoln's biggest fan, often going to the courthouse to watch him speak when she could. She would read newspaper clippings to him, and they would exchange ideas. When he was on the circuit, she would fill him in on the town gossip, and served as a key sounding board for him. He would practice his speeches on her. And she would give him pointers on how to connect with a crowd or a jury. Mary would provide her undivided rapt attention and sharp critiques on his speaking style. That support was invaluable to his rise to power. When she expressed her opinion, Abraham knew she was usually right. Lincoln said that he did not have to read a single book if she was there to summarize it for him. He had great respect for her judgement, and rarely made an important move without consulting her first.

After Lincoln was elected president, Mary endured the intense snobbery of the Eastern Elite. One White House guest said Lincoln looked like an "Irish doorkeeper" and Mary was "western, loud and unrefined". This was galling to Mary because she was among the most educated, and cultured women of her day. Northerners distrusted her because she was from the South, and Southerners despised her a traitor.

The civil war drove a wedge between the large Todd family. Almost all her siblings disowned her as they joined Confederacy or married into it.

So the deck was stacked against Mary from the start.

Brother Sam died in the battle of Shiloh, her half-brother Alexander died in the battle of Baton Rouge. Her sister Emilie married Ben Hardin Helm, a confederate who rose to the rank of General before being killed at the battle of Chickamauga. Brother David Todd was known for his brutality and cruelty against Union Soldiers while he was a POW Commandant. While she never *publically* mourned the deaths of her confederate siblings, she did mourn them in private.

As is well known, Mary had her problems. While in the White House she exhibited exceedingly bad judgement. For one, she spent too much money, causing great embarrassment to Abraham, and herself. She was gullible, and susceptible to flattery. She needed constant attention, and sought it from others if she could not get it from Abraham. And she allowed herself to be manipulated by those who did not have her best interests in mind. She had a volatile temperament, often lashing out at those who she felt wronged her.

So, after the assassination, when she most needed friends and support, there was precious little of it.

It took Mary 5 weeks to leave the White House after the assassination, where she was unable to function or take comfort from the few friends she had left. She resented having her loved ones taken from her, and did not take much solace in the thought of her family members being at peace and rest in Heaven as was the Christian doctrine.

When she finally did leave, no one was there to say good bye or wish her well. She was accompanied by her family physician, and 2 white house guards to escort the family back home to Chicago. One of the guards reported Mary appeared to be in a stupor for the entire journey, and considering how Laudanum was liberally prescribed, in the 1860's it is likely she was heavily "medicated" for her trip back home. (Laudanum is a very powerful opiate.)

When Lincoln's body left Washington for its trip back to Springfield, it became the longest most elaborate funeral in the history of the nation. The train made stops in 12 cities with overflowing crowds everywhere. The train traveled only 5 to 10 miles per hour to allow those along the tracks to express their grief.

Mary probably anticipated an outpouring of sympathy and favorable attention, but there was none. When she arrived in Chicago, there was no welcoming party.

Lincoln died without a will in place, but Mary and her 2 sons each inherited a third of Lincoln's considerable estate of \$85,000. People thought of Lincoln as a mere rail splitter, but forget he was a successful corporate lawyer before being elected. She could have lived on that for the rest of her life in her modest Springfield home, but Mary had burned too many bridges there, there was too much gossip, too many people knew her, so she settled on Chicago.

In Chicago Mary took stock of her situation. Her husband was gone, her beloved son Willie died the first year they were in office. Her influence and social status was gone, her friends had disappeared, most of family had disowned her and now she believed her financial security was at risk as well. And it is true that while Lincoln's estate was considerable, it was intestate, meaning that she did not have immediate access to it, and had to be split 3 ways between herself, Tad and Robert.

She made elaborate pleas to Congress that she be given compensation for her husband's death. She rightfully argued he was a civil war casualty, and deserved a pension like other civil war widows. She contacted men who became rich and powerful under Lincoln's presidency, and she reminded them of that. But no one stepped forward to help her.

To add salt to the wound, one of the betrayals that was most hurtful to Mary was the characterization of her by Lincoln's long-time law partner William Herndon. Mary and Herndon were never friendly and Mary never approved of him, even in the early days of his association with Lincoln. In the 17 years Herndon was a law partner with Lincoln, Mary never once invited him to dine with her and the Lincoln family. In fact, Herndon once called Mary a "She-Wolf" and "The female wildcat of the age", and Mary in turn denounced him as a "drunk" and a "dirty dog". So there was never a warmth between the two.

But Mary knew that, even though they disliked each other, Herndon loved and idolized Lincoln. After the assassination, Herndon took it upon himself to undertake an oral history of Lincoln. When Mary heard that Herndon was compiling a history of Lincoln she agreed to be interviewed because she believed that Herndon would write favorably of Lincoln.

During the interview with Mary in September, 1866, she remarked that while Lincoln was a true Christian Gentleman, never formally affiliated with a church. Herndon later used Mary's remarks to claim that Lincoln was an atheist. Another insult was when Herndon claimed that Lincoln never loved Mary, and that his only true love was with Ann Rutledge from his New Salem Days. Ann Rutledge died of typhoid in 1835 at the age of 22. Lincoln would have been

26. Mary knew that she was the woman Lincoln loved, but here was Herndon claiming that Mary was but a poor substitute for his one true love Ann Rutledge. He claimed Lincoln's life was a "domestic hell" and that for the past 23 years of his life, he had no joy." These claims by Herndon didn't just upset Mary, but devastated her. He essentially claimed that Mary's life with Lincoln was some kind of fraud.

Ever since Lincoln's death one of the few comforts that Mary clung to was her firm belief that she was Lincoln's "One true love" and "the only one he ever thought of and cared for". Herndon publically stripped that from her and it infuriated both Mary and Robert.

Mary's world was crashing around her. First, her son Willie died, then her husband was murdered before her eyes, then Herndon claimed that her husband never loved her. She was vulnerable and exhausted, angry and humiliated. And she still had money problems.

Her desire to ease her financial concerns - however unwarranted - led her to undertake an unfortunate and ill-considered scheme to sell some of her gowns and dresses. She made it known that she had rich and beautiful material with which she was willing to part. She knew that Lincoln mementos were being auctioned off at a high price. Mary had embarked upon a plan to sell some of her old clothes to make money to stave off debts and help secure her retirement. But she had no luck in the scheme, and people were beginning to gossip. Instead of quietly selling her clothes for quick cash, it became nationally known as the "Old Clothes Scandal" and ended up being a major embarrassment to Mary and Robert. Robert wrote to his fiancé at the time "The simple truth which I cannot tell anyone, is that my mother on one subject is not mentally responsible" That subject was of course Money. The press called her a "common peddler lacking grace and self-respect".

Post assassination, Mary tried to walk a tightrope between being allowed her privacy while at the same time being loved acknowledged and comforted by the public as America's first Widow. She had neither. By this time the press was openly questioning her sanity declaring she has been deranged for years, and will end her life in a lunatic asylum. When Mary read accounts of people questioning her sanity, she was deeply embarrassed (again), and felt the

need to finally escape. She and Tad would take a long-awaited trip, the same trip that she and Abraham had discussed years before, to visit the Capitals of Europe.

Mary landed in Germany in October 1868, and it appears to have been a good move for her. In Germany she was finally granted the deference she felt she deserved as the widow of a beloved president. Her son Tad, who was born with a cleft palate, and had difficulty speaking clearly, was enrolled in an academy learning both German and French.

From Europe, she complained to her friends in Washington of her medical needs, and her precarious financial position and was openly lobbying Congress for a Widow's pension. It was finally granted in July of 1870. Congress awarded her a pension of \$3000 per year. Not as much as the \$5000 she wanted, but she was relieved nonetheless.

She visited Paris, London, South of France, and the Scottish Highlands. She enjoyed the sight seeing in Europe with Tad probably more than almost anything she had ever done before. Despite her earlier tragedies, these were probably some of her happiest years. She and Tad explored Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and she said Scotland, her ancestral homeland, spoiled her for all other countries. She pleaded with Robert to join her in Europe, but family obligations and his young law career kept him home. After 4 years wandering Europe Tad was homesick. He missed his brother, and wanted to meet his new niece. Robert's wife had given birth to a baby girl that he had named after Mary, but nicknamed Mamie.

Both she and Tad had health issues and his constant pleading to go back home finally convinced her it was time. Heading back to America on the steamship Tad contracted a chest ailment, that concerned Mary greatly.

Tad made it back to Chicago, but unfortunately his illness did not improve. His doctor said he suffered from "dropsy of the chest". He spent the last 2 weeks of his life strapped upright in a chair, as it was the only way he could draw a breath. He died, July 15, 1871, at age 18, in Chicago 6 years after the assassination. [Show Tad age 18]. We now know it was either pneumonia or pleurisy that was the cause of death. Easily treated today with penicillin or antibiotics.

As you might imagine, Mary took the death exceedingly hard. She was able to attend a small service at Robert's home in Chicago, but she could not bring herself to attend the burial in Springfield. There was finally an outpouring of sympathy for Mrs. Lincoln, who had to now face burying her third child. Tad was a popular figure in the press during the war. And he was a constant companion to his mother in his final months and gave her strength during her difficult times after the assassination.

Now 52 years old, Mary said "There is no life for me without my idolized Taddie".

Tad's death sent Mary into a depression from which she would never fully recover. But she was able to take some comfort in her friends. One couple that played an important role in her life was James and Myra Bradwell. The Bradwells were one of Chicago's power couple. James Bradwell was a former judge and State Legislator and Myra was the first American woman to graduate law school. But was not allowed to practice law because the law forbade it.

The next few years after Tad's death, Mary became a nomad. Her anxieties and fears multiplied. She wandered the country spending time in resorts in Wisconsin, Florida, Illinois, and Canada. But most concerning to Robert was her full-on embrace of spiritualism, that is belief in actual physical communication with the dead. For Mary, it was a source of comfort to speak with Eddie, Willie, Tad and Abraham. But for Robert it was evidence that she was not in her right mind. Spiritualism was not unique to Mary, it was a fast-growing national phenomena across Civil War America. This belief in contact with the dead flourished because of enormous number of recent dead from the war.

Mary paid an infamous visit William Mumler's Boston studio where she had this famous photo taken. [10. Mumler photo]. Mary very likely believed Mumler as he pretended to be surprised when after the photo was developed, without warning, there appeared the ghostly figure of Abraham himself standing behind Mary with his hand on her shoulder.

Another incident that concerned Robert happened while she was in Jacksonville Florida visiting another spiritualist sanctuary. Mary was always attuned to anniversaries, especially sad ones, and she was nearing the 10th anniversary of her husband's assassination. Mary became absolutely convinced (by either dream or hallucination) as that her sole surviving son Robert had become deathly ill. She was sure he was dying, and insisted on leaving for Chicago to be

with her dying son. She sent him a telegram telling him to hang on until she returned home. She made her way to Indianapolis where a very healthy Robert was able to track her down. She was amazed that he was healthy.

Robert on the other hand could see first-hand that his mother was not in her right mind. He wanted to take her home to his house, but that was not feasible because of an estrangement between Mary and Robert's wife. So he took her to the Grand Pacific Hotel and stayed with her for 2 weeks, to prevent any mishaps. It was during this time that Robert confided to his circle of friends that Mary had the ability to appear perfectly coherent one minute and delusional the next. Robert feared that she was coming apart with the upcoming anniversary of her husband's death. He hired the Pinkerton Detective agency to follow his mother whenever she left the hotel. A couple days later Mary tried to go to the Hotel Lobby only half clothed. She had to be restrained, she screamed at Robert that he wanted to murder her - causing Robert extreme embarrassment.

Robert was also concerned that his mother was carrying around very large sums of cash in her pocket, and had and \$60,000 worth of bonds sewn into her undergarments. She also had contacts with sketchy individuals who Robert feared might hurt her or murder her to get to her money.

Robert determined that something had to be done. He consulted friends, family and doctors. Dr. Willis Danforth had been treating Mary's migraines for years. Her constant state of medication (probably opiates combined with alcohol) had caused her a variety of ailments and irrational behavior. Mary described her symptoms to Dr. Danforth of "Indians pulling wires from her head". Dr. Danforth concluded she had become a danger to herself and needed to be confined. Many family friends who knew Mary for years and doctors he consulted told Robert that they were concerned about possible suicide. Robert would surely be blamed for not ensuring her safety. Robert worried about what he had to do, but also worried about the consequences of inaction. Mary was a national figure, and if she committed suicide, it would be another tragedy for Robert and the nation.

Robert paid Dr. Robert Patterson a prominent local authority on medical insanity - as it was called - to consult on his mother's case, but he had not personally examined her. Patterson ran

a facility called Bellevue Place Sanatorium in Batavia Illinois. A facility that helped elite families deal discretely with their "problem females". Robert was worried about the publicity, and the mechanics of moving his mother into such a facility. Robert knew he could not commit his mother without publicity. In fact, Illinois was one of the few states in the county that required a hearing or a trial before being involuntarily committed. In the 1870's in many states a husband could simply declare his wife to be insane and have her locked up on scant or no evidence. In Illinois however, any involuntary confinement had to pass the test of an open court proceeding.

So Robert hatched his plan. He conferred with a group of legal and medical experts including Leonard Swett and Doctors Danforth and Peterson. He filed an affidavit to have his mother brought to trial on charges of insanity. Once charges were filed, Robert had his mother escorted to the courthouse that very day. He moved without warning, and without Mary having the chance to prepare any sort of defense. It was in fact a sort of legal kidnapping. She was legally entitled to notice but was given none. In addition, the hearing was open, which meant that reporters were scribing the details, further destroying Mary's already problematic reputation.

She asked for her son, but was informed that he was already at the courtroom ready to testify against her. Mary considered this the most bitter betrayal of her life. Isaac Arnold, one of Lincoln's old friends was assigned to represent Mary, but he tried to get out of it because he too thought she should be confined. He did not bring any witnesses to the stand to argue on Mary's behalf and offered no defense of any of her actions. Mary saw that Robert was one of 18 witnesses (all men of course) arrayed against her. Robert argued tearfully that he felt he had no choice to have his mother confined. Within 10 minutes the jury, again, all men, returned the verdict of insane. The newspapers had a field day, as they printed sensational headlines regarding the need for Mary's safety.

But Robert's reputation was not untarnished as some accused him of trying to get his "crazy" mother out of the way so that he could have her money and so that she would not stand in the way of his promising political and legal career.

Mary later conceded that she might have appeared deranged because of her over use of chloral hydrate to induce sleep as a result of her insomnia. And I've already suggested that opiates of different varieties freely prescribed in the 1870's. Those powerful drugs mixed with alcohol could easily have presented as confusion or derangement. Mary would not have been the only Civil War widow to drink or take drugs alone or clandestinely.

On, May 20, 1875 Mary was involuntarily placed at Bellevue Sanatorium in Batavia IL. Mary was both terrified and humiliated at the thought of publically being linked with lunacy, shipped unwillingly to a place she did not know, cut off from her friends, and stripped of her liberty, money and possessions, and deposited in a rural home, a place she had never heard of.

By all accounts Bellevue place, 40 miles outside Chicago was a nice facility, well managed, it looked like a resort, it had 20 acres of well-maintained gardens. But to Mary it still seemed like a well-manicured prison. And she was bound and determined to get out as soon as she could.

Even though Mary was legally declared insane, she was able to write rational and convincing letters, pleading that she had been wrongfully committed, and deserved reconsideration and release from Bellevue Place. She very shrewdly undertook a letter writing campaign to friends and members of the press urging them to try to get her released. Mary had managed to get a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Post and Mail* complaining about her confinement. They produced an article about Mary that enraged and humiliated Robert, and he rightfully feared more bad press to come.

Mary enlisted the help of her friend Myra Bradwell who not only versed in the law, but was also a great publicist. Bradwell ensured Mary's condition was well covered in the local press and argued that she was much improved, and that if she was ever actually insane, her sanity was restored. Other newspapers were joining the "Free Mary" chorus. This was all too much for Robert. Even before the insanity episode, he disliked and distrusted newspapers, and considered most reporters liars and hacks. But now he was losing control of his mother's confinement. With Mary herself behind the whirlwind of publicity and gossip, Robert clearly had underestimated what a considerable adversary his mother was. Robert was losing control

of the situation, he was afraid for his mother's safety but was also afraid public opinion would soon turn against him.

By late summer, 1875 Mary's older sister Elizabeth (the only family member with which she still had a relationship) had agreed to take her into her home in Springfield as an "experiment". Mary was on her best behavior and soon convinced everyone that if she had been "insane" she was now fully recovered. Mary continued to fume about the treatment she received from Robert and the betrayal of her only remaining son. Mary now completely distrusted and openly despised her son and told anyone who would listen. In the end, Mary only spent 3 months confined at Bellevue Place. Mary petitioned the court to have her sanity restored and all her money returned. It was granted exactly 1 year after she was declared insane. For years Mary maintained a furious rage against Robert for the indignity he caused her. She called him a "Monster of Mankind". Even after being "restored" to sanity, she remained suspicious of Robert, and was concerned – perhaps for good reason – that he would seek to have her recommitted, to keep her out of the way of Robert's rising political career.

Mary was determined remove herself of any possibility of recommitment. She would return to France to prevent it. She would "go in exile – and alone!"

Mary was now officially alone in the world. Most of her siblings were either dead or estranged, Her husband was murdered before her eyes, she lost one son at age 3, another son at age 11, and a third son at age 18, just as he was blossoming into a fine young man, and was estranged from her only remaining son Mary would spend the next several years in her newly adopted southern resort town of Pau, France about 20 miles from the Spanish border. She was not in good health, but In Pau, she liked the moderate climate, health spas, and the fact that many of its residents spoke English, even though she was fluent in French.

Amazingly, while living in Pau, she continued to travel. Nice and Paris were frequent destinations. She also visited Rome and Naples. The fact that she was alone, in ill health, and still chose to travel, shows her toughness of character and spirit. Mary was a determined woman.

At a time when her son Robert still considered her to be insane, her letters show keen intellect, sharp focus, empathy to her friends and family, and her continuing passion and interest in American politics. Her letters to and from her banker in the United States from the period indicate that she had a steel trap mind of her finances. Her letters show incredible precision and attention to detail which belies any notion of an onset of dementia as it was rumored. She wrote with deep appreciation for those who helped with her release. She also kept in touch with her sister Elizabeth who took her in when no one else would. She was also thrilled when her old friend Myra Bradwell, perhaps more than any other person helped to secure her release, visited her in Pau. Surprisingly, despite her bitter feelings toward Robert, she was excited when she heard his name being rumored as a candidate for president and she tracked his career in the international papers.

After 4 years wandering Europe, and with increasing bad health, her hard feelings against Robert began to soften and she developed a case of homesickness and returned to the United States in 1880. Perhaps she sensed the end was near and wanted to be around those she loved, especially Elizabeth, her savior and older sister. All told, she spent 7 post assassination years in Europe living as an American Expat.

Elizabeth was finally able to broker a tentative truce between Mary and Robert. Robert brought young Mamie with him and it seemed to finally soften Mary, as her various illnesses began to take her eyesight and mobility away.

She died at the age of 63 in July of 1882. The day before had been the 11th anniversary of Tad's death. Those kinds of anniversaries always brought special sadness to Mary. She survived Abraham by 17 years and 3 months. During those 17 years, she wore only black clothing. In the end, she welcomed death because she believed it would reunite her with her beloved husband, and her 3 dead sons.

Her corpse was laid into a coffin and displayed in the front parlor of the home belonging to her sister Elizabeth. The very place where she was married to Abraham 40 years prior - The most defining moment of her life.

Robert's life

Robert inherited his mother's estate of almost \$80,000. He served under Garfield's successor Chester Arthur until 1885, he was mentioned as a possible presidential candidate, but he never sought the office. He was ambassador to England, and rose to become president of the Pullman Palace Rail Car Company and died at age 83 a multi-millionaire in Manchester Vermont, the same town his mother took him to in 1860 to escape the oppressive Washington climate. He made his last public appearance in Washington, D.C. at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in May, 1922.

Robert's wife did not want him buried with Abraham in Springfield. She felt he deserved his own place in the sun not to be over-shadowed in death by Abraham as he had been in life. Instead she chose to bury him in Arlington National Cemetery.

Before I close I want to mention a few factoids about Mary that a lot of people don't know:

1. She never used the name Mary Todd Lincoln, she was just Mary Lincoln, or Mrs. A. Lincoln. Some of her siblings kept the Todd middle name, Mary never did.
2. She was the first to be called "First Lady" in the press.
3. Her education was extraordinary, much more than her peers, and much more than most men of her day.
4. She was ahead of her time regarding child rearing. She indulged her kids, and showered them with love and affection. She gave all her sons elaborate birthday parties, that often spilled into the front yard and into the streets. Not a common practice in mid 19th century Victorian America.
5. She had a reputation of being imperious, but she was a devoted volunteer in Union Hospitals during the war. She would bring flowers and write letters on behalf of bedridden Union soldiers. And as I mentioned previously, she donated significant sums of personal money to assist the African Americans who were displaced during the war.

What can we say about Mary?

She was always the driving force behind Lincoln and may have been the tipping point behind the Emancipation Proclamation.

Mary is often portrayed as a one-dimensional figure perhaps one of the most maligned women in American history. One biographer said, she loved with her entire heart and soul, and she hated with her entire heart and soul.

Probably there was no other married couple where one spouse so revered and the other so reviled. But without Mary, there might not have been Abraham as we know him. She was his wife, his champion, political consultant, his sounding board, chief strategist and mother to his children. She was absolutely faithful to him and his memory until she died..

She was a complicated woman. She was smart, curious, insightful, and brilliant. And yet at the same time, insecure, jealous, and gullible and vicious. She failed miserably in the court of public opinion, but did not let public opinion change who she was.

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