HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BULLETIN

Elizabethtown, Ky. February 1962 Volume 1 Number 2

EATIN' MEETIN'S

At our February meeting it was decided that the January, May and October meetings will be dinner meetings. An out-of-town speaker is planned for each of these meetings and it is hoped that more of us can get together more frequently.

Committees Named. The following standing committees were named: Marker--Claud Wiseman, Lewis Hall, W. B. Cowley, Jed Miller and Mrs. Brooks Montgomery; Program--Jim Jones, Jim Collier, Howard Olson, Mrs. Kate Nelson, and Mrs. H. P. Richards; Exhibits--Mrs. Wilbur Terry, Mrs. Ernest Wright, Mrs. L. B. Hoke, Mrs. J. W. Edmondson, and R. R. Thomas; Publications--Mary Jo Jones, Imogene Ryan, Randall Hart, Graham Egerton, and H. P. Richards; Membership--Miss Margaret Patterson, Mrs. Eliza Leonard, Mrs. W. H. Nance, Mrs. Starling Wells, and Mrs. F. J. Snider; Civil War Centennial--Byron Pirtle, W. B. Cowley, F. D. Quisenberry, Richard Briggs, and Leonard Slusher. (The first named on each committee is to serve as chairman of the committee and is a member of the executive committee along with the elected officers.)

Program. Dolores Behen read Mrs. Margaret Muir's paper on Mary Todd Lincoln. (This paper is reproduced beginning on page 19.)

THANKS

The expenses of this issue are being paid by Mr. and Mrs. J. Ray Jenkins.

Printing by courtest of the Elizabethtown-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce.

THE WOMEN IN LINCOLN'S LIFE

"There is no new thing to be said about Lincoln. There is no new thing to be said of the mountains, or of the sea, or of the stars. The years go their way, but the same old mountains lift their granite shoulders above the drifting clouds; the same mysterious sea beats upon the shore; the same silent stars keep holy vigil above a tired world. But to the mountains and sea and stars men turn forever in unwearied homage. And thus with Lincoln. For he was a mountain in grandeur of soul, he was a sea in deep undervoice of mystic loneliness, he was a star in steadfast purity of purpose and service. And he abides."

Thus Abraham Lincoln appeared to Homer Koch of Kansas as he spoke before the House of Representatives on Lincoln's Birthday 1923. Thirty-nine years have passed since that day. If there was no new thing to say that day, there certainly is not today. Yet men still turn in unwearied homage to this man from Kentucky.

(Continued on page 24)

MARCH MEETING

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1962
BROWN-PUSEY HOUSE
7:30 P.M.

BE THERE!

WE WELCOME

Mrs. Hobart Gordon
Mr. & Mrs. A. H. Jenkins

MEMBERSHIP

Fifty-three have paid dues for this year. Let's get in all our old members, plus some new.

PROJECT MERCURY

Every American stands a little bit taller since Astronaut John H. Glenn, Jr. got his ride into space on February 20th. The stamp on your copy of the BULLETIN is the PROJECT MERCURY commerative stamp. Three hundreed selected post offices across the country received these stamps in sealed packages, some time ago, with instructions not to open them until told to do so by the Post Office Department. These three hundred offices were allowed to place them on sale late Tuesday afternoon; most other offices had them for sale on the 21st. To my knowledge the Cloverport Post Office was the only nearby office in the original three hundred.

BROWN-PUSEY HOUSE

Our thanks to the Board of Directors of The Brown-Pusey House for the generous offer of their facilities for the meetings of our organization. Dr. William Allen Pusey, one of the cofounders of The Brown-Pusey House spent signifigant amounts of his time and money in historic research and writings and in Marking historic sites. I Believe it to be entirely fitting for us to continue the work he so nobly started in the historic residence which he and Dr. Brown Pusey chose as their major project in restoration.

Our thanks also, to the Kentucky Utilities Company for their generosity in letting us meet in their comfortable new conference room.

RECENT & READABLE AT THE OXBOW LIBRARY

The OXBOW LIBRARY has the following recent acquisitions which will be of interest to students of history:

1. This Is The South
   by Robert West Howard

2. Remember The Raisin:
   by G. Glenn Cliff

3. Historic Families of Kentucky
   by Thomas Green

4. The Emerging South
   by Thomas Clark

5. The Coming Fury
   by Bruce Catton

MARY TODD LINCOLN
by
Margaret R. Muir

Mary Todd was born in Lexington, Kentucky, December 13, 1818, the daughter of Robert Todd and his first wife, Elizabeth Parker. Robert Todd was a prosperous land-owner, president of a bank, state senator and influential citizen. She was educated in the select boarding school of Madame Mentelle where she learned to read, write and speak French fluently. She had a quick mind, excellent vocabulary and a good literary style.

Mary Todd was a born politician. Since her earliest recollection, her father's home had been a meeting place for the leaders of the Whigs in Kentucky. Having heard discussions here among jurists, governors, members of Congress, cabinet members and other political leaders, she was familiar with the important issues of the day.

When Mary Todd was about seven years old, her mother died. Her father remarried, and a second large family followed. An older sister of Mary Todd, Elizabeth, had married Ninian W. Edwards, the son of the governor of the Territory of Illinois, and was living in Springfield, Illinois. In the autumn of 1839, having finished her work at Madame Mentelle's School, Mary Todd left Lexington for Springfield to make her home with her sister.

Mary Todd had many admirers in Springfield, including the gay, brilliant Stephen A. Douglas and the tall, gaunt Abraham Lincoln. To the surprise of many people, the vivacious, well-educated daughter of an aristocratic Bluegrass family preferred Abraham Lincoln to admirers of more polished manners.

Just how or when Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd became engaged, we do not know, but between December, 1839, when they were first introduced, and the date of their marriage, they had courted, quarreled and made up more than once. However, on Friday, November 4, 1842, at the home of Mrs. Ninian W. Edwards, Mary Todd became the wife of Abraham Lincoln.

Mrs. Margaret R. Muir, mistress of Edgewood, home of Ben Hardin and birthplace of Ben Hardin Helm, is the wife of Bardstown banker and historian John W. Muir. She is stenographer for the Nelson Circuit Court, and for several years was employed by one of that county's leading legal firms. Last year when her daughter entered the first grade, Margaret resigned from her job at the law firm to enter Nazareth College as a freshman. This paper was her freshman research paper, and we are not surprised that she got an "A" on it. We have omitted her footnotes, but those interested in her sources may contact the society's secretary or president. --Ed.

After their marriage, the Lincolns resided at the Globe Tavern until after the birth of their first child, Robert, August 1, 1843. They then purchased a home located at Eighth & Jackson Streets in Springfield, where they lived until their departure for Washington. In this house Mary Todd Lincoln bore her husband three more sons; and while living here on February 1, 1850, she and Mr. Lincoln buried their second son, Eddie Baker, then four years of age, who had died in his mother's arms.

In the year 1844, Lincoln chose William H. Herndon as his law partner. Mrs. Lincoln was not happy over this choice. She was an excellent judge of people and she had good reason to worry about Mr. Lincoln's connection with Herndon. She had seen his weaknesses from their first meeting, and she knew that he drank too much, used drugs and was lax with women. It was Herndon who, as a biographer, later fixed Mary Todd Lincoln in history as a shrew.

There was much gossip throughout Springfield about Mary Lincoln, including the fact that she had a terrible temper. The fact that she was often sorry and full of regret after an outburst of temper did not get into the gossip. She was accused of economizing in the kitchen in order to have fine clothes. The fact that her husband was in debt when they married; that he was careless about money; and that she managed the household so well that her husband let her have her own way about household economies did not get into the gossip.

However, there were those who knew that Mr. Lincoln's manners and habits distressed his wife. Even Herndon admitted: "Mrs. Lincoln was not a . . . wildcat without cause." If anyone knocked at the door, Lincoln would answer in sock-feet and coatless. He would sometimes go to the neighbors in flapping carpet slippers with one suspender holding up his trousers.

Although Lincoln was a good husband in his own peculiar way, he had none of the tender ways that please a woman, and his utter disregard of the conventions would have worn on a far more tranquil patience than Mary Todd's.

Herndon claimed that Lincoln's domestic troubles were the cause of his periods of depression for which he was known. Henry B. Rankin, a young law clerk in the office of Lincoln and Herndon, stated that Lincoln sometimes lapsed into mysterious periods of silence, but it would be false and cruel to say that they were caused by Mrs. Lincoln. They were characteristic of him long before he met her and remained part of his personality all of his life, and Mrs. Lincoln often was able to bring him out of these moods with her keenness of wit and brightness of mind.

Some historians, including Herndon, have claimed that Lincoln left home on every excuse to escape the nagging of his wife. Rankin, declaring this also to be a cruel and false charge, stated that Mary Lincoln encouraged her husband's tours of the Eighth District to extend his law practice and to swell their

slim finances, as well as to promote his political influence. While he was away, she was at home attending to its every interest. She steadfastly inspired him and pushed him toward the political front. Some accused her of being meddlesome and said cruel, hard things about her. This annoyed her greatly, and she made life-long enemies with her stinging replies.

Mary Lincoln watched her husband's career from the time of her earliest acquaintance with him and followed every step of it. She did not attempt to influence him for the benefit of her friends or family, but she did interfere when her husband's and her own interests seemed to be involved. With the election of Zachary Taylor, Lincoln expected to be appointed Land Commissioner of the United States. He and Mrs. Lincoln were greatly disappointed when Mr. Lincoln failed to obtain this position. Upon the death of Taylor, Millard Filmore promptly offered Lincoln the Secretaryship of Oregon. Lincoln was so discouraged that he was tempted to accept. It was Mrs. Lincoln who prevented Lincoln from accepting this consolation prize. She had faith in her husband's political future after he, himself, had lost it.

Nothing happened in the political field in the spring before the presidential election that passed Mrs. Lincoln's observant eye. Of all those who had faith in her husband, she was naturally the most interested. In all the ups and downs of his career, she steadfastly believed in him. On the last day of the Chicago Convention, when news came to the grocery store where Lincoln sat, that he had been nominated as President of the United States, he excused himself saying: "There is a little woman down on Eighth Street who is interested in the result of this Convention. I want to go and tell her."

In Washington Mrs. Lincoln needed all her practical wisdom, as no wife of any president ever met such a situation or was so little prepared for it. It is no wonder that she made mistakes in trying to meet such a complicated situation. Having been Southern born, Mrs. Lincoln found herself declared a traitor by the South and a spy by the North. Before the war her sympathies were more or less Southern, but there can be no question about her entire loyalty to her husband's cause. She gave up her friends and family for this cause. Her three brothers and beloved brother-in-law died, one by one, in the Confederate Army, and she did not dare to shed a tear for them where she would be seen. When news of a Union victory brought joy to official Washington, she participated in the rejoicing in spite of loss of life in her own family. During the months that Lincoln was making up his mind to free the slaves, no one backed the Emancipation Proclamation more ardently than Mrs. Lincoln.

Mary Lincoln was a Christian woman, but she did not have the temperament to bear the strain of anxiety and grief that became her lot. After the death of her son, Willie, in the White House in February, 1862, of typhoid fever, she was almost frantic and too ill to attend the funeral. She finally won control of her own grief in order to comfort her husband, who was almost prostrated by grief.

After the death of Willie, Mrs. Lincoln was persuaded to turn her ability to the crowded and ill-organized hospitals around Washington. The hospitals soon began to feel the results of her helping hand. Her husband's secretary, young Stoddard, tried to persuade her to let the reporters go with her and publish the story of her hospital work in order to help counteract the talk against her; but Mary had had enough of publicity, good or bad, and the story of her hospital service was never told. The hospital work and her keen interest in the political situation helped to restore her balance.

Peace came to the country at last, and Abraham and Mary Lincoln had a brief interval in which they were permitted to build castles in the air. On the last day of Mr. Lincoln's life, while on their daily drive, he told Mary that upon termination of his term of office, they would have the facation in Europe that Mary had dreamed about all her life; but that night in Ford's Theatre came the assassin's bullet.

After the funeral Mary could not bring herself to go back to Springfield to the home on Eighth Street, as it was too full of memories; she returned to Chicago with her two sons, Robert and Tad.

Lincoln left no will, and by the time his estate was divided into three parts, Mary received only $1,700 for herself and a like amount for Tad. This, she soon found, was insufficient for her needs. In the fall of 1865, Mrs. Lincoln began what was to result in a five-year contest for a modest pension. During this time she suffered merciless attacks of the press with the exception of a few newspapers that urged her right to the pension. In 1866 Congress finally agreed to pay Mrs. Lincoln the equivalent of a year's presidential salary to enable her to buy a proper home and furnish it. Mary, thereupon, bought a house in Chicago but soon found that she could not keep up the costs on her income. She had to sell the house and go back to boarding.

Mary Lincoln thought that she had endured all the grief her heart could bear, but, of all the charges levied against her by her enemies, the hardest one was that Mr. Lincoln had never loved her. William H. Herndon, the instigator of this claim, gave a public lecture; in it he said that Lincoln had been so much in love with Ann Rutledge that her death caused him to lose his mind and implied that Abraham Lincoln had never loved Mary Lincoln. This information is not supported by any known facts and is in opposition to what we know of Lincoln's conduct and correspondence.

On October 1, 1868, a little more than three years after her husband's death, Mary, with her son, Tad, sailed for Europe. For a full year before, Mary had been under a doctor's care, suffering from migraine headaches, fainting spells, near blindness from weeping, and obsessive worries about money. The moment she set foot on European soil, her illness and despondency disappeared.

After living and traveling in Europe for three years, Mary, at long last, received the news that Congress had passed a bill to grant her a pension of $3,000 a year for the rest of her life. In March, 1871, she and Tad sailed for America.

A few weeks after Mary and Tad returned to Chicago from Europe, Tad became ill with a severe cold, and on July 15, 1871, Mary Lincoln lost the third of her four sons.

After the death of Tad, Mrs. Lincoln began to act irrationally. She spent money extravagantly and was overcome by hallucinations. Robert was fearful that she would waste her estate, and in May, 1875, he felt compelled to apply to the County Court of Chicago to have her declared insane so that he could get control of her estate in order to protect her interests. After four months, Mary Lincoln was released in the custody of her sister, Elizabeth Edwards, and on June 15, 1876, she returned to Chicago for a second trial and was declared sane.

Again Mary Lincoln traveled in Europe until October, 1880, when she returned to the home of her sister, Elizabeth Edwards. She died here July 16, 1882, of paralysis. A post-mortem examination showed that for years she had been the victim of a cerebral disease; this discovery, perhaps, should be an explanation for her violence of temper and her unfortunate words and actions.

If Lincoln's life is to be considered heroic, Mary Lincoln must receive some of the credit for his greatness. Although she had her weaknesses, her faults, and shortcomings--as do all of us--she never ceased to love Lincoln and to encourage and to believe in him when he had lost faith in himself.

****

THE WOMEN IN LINCOLN'S LIFE (Continued from page 17)

I for one am no "hagiographer" but enjoy the Lincoln story as being ever interesting, ever new and ever refreshing. The story is known, in varying degrees, to all of us. No phase of it is so widely mis-known as that of the relationship of Lincoln to the women in his life.

The pioneer, Joseph Hanks, was in Kentucky as early as 1876 and on February 28, 1787 purchased 150 acres of land not far from where, in 1811, Thomas Lincoln was to settle on Knob creek. Mr. Hanks died some time between January and May, 1793. His widow and son returned to Virginia from where they came. Nancy, a daughter, went to live with her sister, Polly, who had married Jesse Friend. Nancy gave birth, out of wedlock, to a son, but shortly thereafter married. Mrs. Elizabeth Middleton, daughter of Rev. Alexander McDougal, who performed the ceremony, gives us, in part, this report of the wedding:

"Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married at a Mr. Todd's who at that time lived about three miles southeast of Hodgenville on the Little South Fork," she continues, "Nancy Hanks at that time was working for and living at Hodgen's Mill."

There are a few things wrong with this story. The child was born May 15, 1799. The wedding took place in, probably, August, 1800, when the husband, Levi Hall, was under peace bond.

Mrs. Middleton, aside from being confused in the name of the groom, also had the wrng Nancy Hanks for the bride. The young lady whom Thomas Lincoln was to make his bride six years later was then living in Washington County where she was married June 12, 1806. The unsavory reputation which had been associated with "the other Nancy," mother of Dennis Hanks, was ascribed to Lincoln's mother.

Not only has "the other Nancy" been confused with the mother of Lincoln in the wedding ceremonies but Nancy Hanks Hall is said to be interred by the side of Lincoln's mother in the burial lot in Indiana. Two of her sons, Dennis Hanks and Squire Hall, married Elizabeth and Matilda Johnston, the two daughters of Lincoln's stepmother. According to Dennis, Elizabeth Hanks Sparrow and her husband were buried on one side of Lincoln's mother and Nancy Hanks Hall and her husband, about six years later, were buried in the same cemetery lot on the other side of Nancy Lincoln. All five people are said to have died of "milk sickness."

Due to the lack of direct information about the early life of Nancy Hanks, who married Thomas Lincoln, we can best approach her early years indirectly through the relatives of her mother, Lucy Shipley Hanks, the widow of James Hanks.

The story of the Kentucky migration of some of the cognate families has been preserved and relates that eight families were

emigrating from North Carolina, in 1790, and were attacked by Indians. Mrs. Naomi Mitchell, a sister of Nancy's mother, was tomahawked and killed. Her daughter, Sarah Mitchell, was taken prisoner and kept for five years. The father, Robert Mitchell, was drowned a short while after, when searching for Sarah. Other sisters who were evidently in the party in addition to Lucy and Naomi, were Ann, who had married David McCord, and Rachel, who was married to Richard Berry.

The families settled in the Beech Grove community of Washington County. The tax records for 1792 show Richard Berry, uncle of Nancy, to have owned two slaves, ten horses and thirty-four cattle. He was appointed guardian of Nancy and she and her mother made their home with him. Upon her release from captivity in 1795, the orphan, Sarah Mitchell, joined the household and was under the guardianship of her uncle. These two girls grew up together, attended the same church together, went to school together, and became known as sister-cousins. Sarah married John Thompson and named her first daughter Nancy. Nancy Hanks married Thomas Lincoln and named her first daughter Sarah. It is generally aceepted that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks grew up together in the same neighborhood and were childhood sweethearts.

October 5, 1818, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died. The family made all the preparations for the burial, and conducted the simple funeral service, for no minister resided in the neighborhood.

A hard year followed with twelve-year-old Sarah as housekeeper and cook. Harder still and more lonesome days came when their father went away, promising to come back. He headed for Elizabethtown and the home of the widow Sarah Bush Johnston. It is reported his proposal was straightforward and to the point. "I have no wife and you no husband. I came a-purpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal and you knowed me from a boy. I've no time to lose; and if you're willin' let it be done straight off." She answered, "I got a few little debts," gave him a list and he paid them. They were married December 2, 1819.

The new wife and mother had three children by her first husband. She was a strong, large-boned, rosy woman, with a kindly face and eyes, a steady voice, steady ways. From the first she and the Lincoln children got along well. Tom improved their cabin by putting in a floor. The family and neighbors spoke of her sagacity and gumption, her sewing and mending, how spick-and-span she kept her house, her pots, pans and kettles. Her faith in God shone more in works than words, and hard as life was, she was thankful to be alive. She understood Abe's gloomy spells better than anyone else and he named her as a deep influence in him. When Abe's sister, Sarah, died in childbirth in 1828, it was Sarah Bush Lincoln who spoke comfort to the nineteen-year-old son of Nancy Hanks.

Time passed, Abe had his own family, and Sarah was again a widow. Events had moved to where he was President-elect of the United States. The House was dividing. As he prepared to face the great adventure there was one pilgrimage he had to make. He rode the train to Mattoon, missed the connection with the passenger train, and took the caboose of a freight to Charleston. With a shawl over his shoulders, and his boots in slush, mud and ice, he picked his way in the late evening dusk alongside the tracks the length of the freight train to the station. He spent the night with friends. Next day he drove eight miles to an old farm. Sarah Bush Lincoln and he put their arms around each other. They held hands and talked, they talked without holding hands. Each looked into eyes thrust back in deep sockets. She was all of a mother to him. He was her boy more than any born to her. He gave her a photograph of himself, stroked her face a last time, kissed goodbye and went away.

In May, 1865, William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, visited in Mernard County, Illinois, and while attending court in Petersburg, the county seat to which many of the inhabitants of New Salem had moved, began to ask old-timers about Mr. Lincoln's life during "the New Salem days." David Donald, author of Lincoln's Herndon, reminds us: "They were sentimental years, and everybody was reading George Eliot or the Bronte sisters, or their American cousins, Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Jane Wilson. The feminine fifties were gone, but they were followed by the sentimental sixties and the saccharine seventies. These were the days of the romantic novel with its stereotyped plot of true love that never did run smooth."

Lincoln had always seemed, to the effervescent Herndon, singularly reticent about his early life. Perhaps there was some secret shadow over his soul, some tragic romantic blight that had settled over his spirit in his youth. He wondered if it could be love. Herndon thought he discovered the solution to the problem. W. G. Greene of Tallula gave him the story in detail: "He (Lincoln), in the years....1833 and 4, was in love with a young lady in New Salem by the name of Miss Ann Rutledge. She accepted the overtures of Lincoln and they were engaged to be....married. This young lady was a woman of exquisite beauty, but her intellect was quick - sharp - deep and philosophic as well as brilliant....A short time before the marriage was to be she took sick with the brain fever and died in four or five days. Lincoln went and saw her during her sickness - just before her death. Mr. Lincoln's friends, after this sudden death of one whom his soul and heart dearly loved, were compelled to keep watch and ward over Mr. Lincoln, he being from the sudden shock somewhat temporarily deranged. We watched during storms - fogs - damp, gloomy weather, Mr. Lincoln for fear of an accident. He said, 'I can never be reconciled to have the snow - rains and storms to beat on her grave.'" Donald suspects that Greene, like Herndon, was a reader of novels. One letter of inquiry followed another, and the more often old men and women repeated their tales the surer they became of the whole story. The

hundreds of papers, letters and interviews on the Ann Rutledge theme preserved in the Herndon-Wick Collection show that the legend grew in color and in detail and that over the years the story crystalized from a floating rumor into a fixed romance.

Mr. Herndon unearthed another story only slightly less romantic than the Lincoln-Rutledge affair. If this tale lacked something of the sentimental appeal of the legend of blue-eyed Ann, its authenticity was perhaps a compensation. "None of the Poets or Romance writers have ever given to us a picture of a heroine so beautiful as...Miss Owens in 1836" warbled one informant. Mary Owens was polished, well-educated and superior to anything ever before seen on the bluffs of the Sangamon. Another reported: "She had large blue eyes with the finest trimmings I ever saw."

The letters to Lincoln's "other Mary" turned over to Herndon showed him as a rather unimpassioned suitor who half-wished, half-feared, to link his shaky fortunes with a lady so accustomed to culture and refinement.

He also unearthed Kate Gentry, who had been Kate Roby. She tells how Abe, when they were in school together, had pointed to his eye when she hesitated, after beginning "d-e-f" in the spelling of "defied." There was supposed to be some attachment between Kate and Abe though she assured Mr. Herndon that they were never in love. She did describe, with self-evident pleasure, the delightful experience of an evening's stroll down to the river with him, they sat watching the moonrise and dabbled their feet in the water, as many a fond pair before them had done and will continue to do until the end of the world. Their conversation and thoughts turned to the movement of the planets. "I did not suppose that Abe, who had seen so little of the world, would know anything about it," she said, "but he proved to my satisfaction that the moon did not go down at all; that it only seemed to.---I once dubbed him a fool, but later developments convinced me that I was the fool, not he."

****

(The above is from a talk delivered by John P. Behen before the Jacob Van Metre Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, January 26, 1962. That portion of the talk concerning Mrs. Lincoln has been omitted as Mrs. Muir's paper on this subject is included in this issue. ---Ed.)

Brown-Pusey House
128 N. Main St.
City