

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 660

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 1, 1941

SIXTEEN TRADITIONAL LINCOLN SWEETHEARTS

Abraham Lincoln moved to Springfield, Illinois, on April 15, 1837. Three weeks later on May 7, 1837, he wrote this line to Mary Owens, "I have been spoken to by but one woman since I've been here, and would not have been by her, if she could have avoided it." Yet this bashful swain is supposed to have courted to at least sixteen women before his one true love, Mary Todd, accepted him.

Covered Wagon Girl

Once when Abraham was a small boy, a wagon broke down near the Lincoln cabin in Indiana. There was a little girl in the family detained by the accident of the vehicle. Lincoln told a friend of the incident and said he "took a great fancy" to her. As he thought of her as the years passed, he concluded that his affection for her "was the beginning of love" for him.

Polly Richardson

Polly claimed to be Abraham's first sweetheart and once remarked, "Abe wanted me to marry him, but I refused. I suppose if I had known he was to be President some day I'd a' took him." The marriage records of Spencer County show that Polly married Robert Agnew on March 15, 1821, when Abraham Lincoln was but twelve years of age.

Elizabeth Tulley

Elizabeth Tulley was born in Mercer County, Kentucky and came to Spencer County in 1824. She met Lincoln at church and from then on the courtship continued for several months. She claims she was Lincoln's "first regular company." Elizabeth was asked if Lincoln ever proposed to her and she replied, "No, he never proposed, but I could tell from his chat that he wanted to marry me." Miss Tulley later became Mrs. Hession.

Sarah Lukins

We do not know what Sarah's maiden name was, but later she married a Lukins. She told a friend, "I could a' been Abe Lincoln's wife, if I'd wanted to be. Yes sirree, I could a' been the first lady of the land." On being pressed for further particulars about her acquaintance with Lincoln in southern Indiana she said, "Well, Abe took me home from church oncet."

Caroline Meeker

When Abraham Lincoln was working on the Ohio as a ferryman, at the mouth of the Anderson River, he is said to have crossed over to the Kentucky side quite often to call on Caroline Meeker, niece of Squire Pate, whom Lincoln knew. Caroline is one of the seven of Lincoln's sweethearts nominated by Dr. Barton in his book *The Women Lincoln Loved*. About all there was to this affair was the discovery by Caroline of a red ear at a husking bee, and she shyly slipped it to Abraham. Caroline later married Eli Thrasher.

Katy Roby

The name of Katy Roby is more often associated with Lincoln during the Indiana days than any other young lady outside the Lincoln family. She is the one Lincoln befriended in the spelling match and later instructed about astronomy on one moonlight night. However, just about the time Lincoln and Allen Gentry made the flat boat trip to New Orleans, Gentry married Miss Roby on March 19, 1828.

Julia Evans

Julia was the daughter of James Evans, of Princeton, Indiana. In 1828 Abraham took some wool to the town to be carded in the Evans Mill and Julia bowed to him. According to Jesse Weik, "Lincoln was captivated by her beautiful face and figure." One version of the story claims that "Lincoln was repulsed because of his ungainly and awkward appearance."

Hannah Gentry

Hannah was the belle of the community and "a beauty noted for her amiable disposition, and her father was the

richest man in the community." According to the reminiscences of the neighbors in Spencer County, she would have become Mrs. Lincoln, if Abraham had not been "too fond of onions, as she could not endure them." Hannah married John Romine on April 2, 1829.

Elizabeth Wood

This young lady, the daughter of one of Abraham Lincoln's best Indiana friends, was very sure that Lincoln "wanted to become better acquainted with her." Miss Wood claimed that she declined his company because of "his awkwardness and large feet." Elizabeth Wood later married Samuel Hammond on January 10, 1833.

Polly Warnick

Mary Dellard Warnick, called Polly, was the daughter of Mayor Warnick, of Macon County, Illinois. If only the courtship with Polly had taken place during the winter of the deep snow, when Lincoln made his home with the Warnicks for four weeks, there might have been a romance. Polly, however, married Joseph Stevens on June 17, 1830, the summer before the big snow and within three months of the time the Lincolns established their home in Macon County.

Martha Wilson

Miss Wilson was a native of Buncombe County, N. C., where she was born in May 1816. Her parents moved to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1830. It was in the autumn of 1832 that Abraham Lincoln made Martha "a formal offer of marriage." Miss Wilson claimed "a previous attachment" led her to decline his offer.

Ann Rutledge

There does not seem to be any reason for approaching the Rutledge episode with any more seriousness than the stories of the other sixteen "would be" wives of Lincoln. Ann was the daughter of James Rutledge, of New Salem and Sand Ridge, mostly of Sand Ridge, when Lincoln is supposed to have been courting his daughter. We know this for a fact, that when Ann Rutledge died, she was living with her parents in a house owned by John McNamer to whom she was betrothed.

Mary Owens

There was but one young woman, as far as we can learn, who received a proposal of marriage from Abraham Lincoln, previous to his betrothal to Mary Todd, and which can be confirmed by Abraham Lincoln's own writing. The name of this girl was Mary Owens, of Kentucky, sister of Mrs. Bennett Abel, of New Salem, to whom she was paying a visit at the time she was courted by Lincoln in 1836.

Mary Frances Vanderberg

This Mary was a granddaughter of Henry Vanderberg, who was appointed the first judge of the Northwest Territory by President Washington. Miss Vanderberg claimed that it was in 1839 that Abraham Lincoln proposed marriage to her at Quincy, Illinois, where she was then living, but that she rejected him and later married a Mr. Riley. She died in Sioux City, at eighty-five years of age.

Matilda Edwards

Matilda was the charming sister of Ninian Edwards, brother-in-law of Mary Todd. Herndon claims that while courting Mary Todd "a counter attachment to Miss Edwards," who was visiting her brother in Springfield, was partly responsible for Lincoln breaking his engagement with Mary. This is just another one of those Herndon myths, as is clearly revealed in contemporary writings. Matilda later married Newton D. Strong.

Sarah Rickard

Miss Rickard was a sister of Mrs. William Butler, where Lincoln is said to have boarded before his marriage. Herndon made some inquiries about the relationship of Abraham and Sarah and is said to have received a letter from Miss Rickard, then Mrs. Barrett, which contained this statement: "Mr. Lincoln did make a proposal of marriage to me in the summer, or perhaps later, in the year 1840."