

LINCOLN LORE

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THE CLOSE OF ANOTHER LINCOLN GENERATION

The last surviving grandchild of Abraham Lincoln, Mrs. Jessie Lincoln Randolph, passed away last Monday at a hospital in Rutland, Vermont, where she had been moved about a month ago from her nearby home at Manchester. She was the youngest of three children born to Robert T. and Mary Harlan Lincoln. Her death brings to a close another generation of the Lincoln family and there survives but one other family group, the three great grandchildren of the President.

Mrs. Randolph's sister, Mrs. Mary Lincoln Isham, died in New York nearly ten years ago and left an only son, Lincoln Isham, who still survives. Mrs. Randolph leaves a daughter, Mary Lincoln Beckwith, and a son, Robert Lincoln Beckwith, children of a former marriage. There are no other direct descendants of President Lincoln now living.

The tragedies which have befallen this family contributing so much to its near extinction began with the disaster which befell Pioneer, Abraham Lincoln, who was massacred by the Indians in Kentucky in May, 1786. They closed with the untimely death of another Abraham Lincoln, grandson of the President who died at seventeen years of age in London, England.

Indian Massacre

Abraham Lincoln in 1854 wrote to one of his relatives about the massacre of his grandfather in these words, "The story of his death by the Indians and of Uncle Mordecai then fourteen years old killing one of the Indians, is the legend more strongly than all others imprinted upon my mind and memory." The grandfather was only about forty years old and his widow was left in the wilderness with five children of whom the fourteen year old Mordecai was the oldest.

Little Brother's Grave

Abraham Lincoln could not have realized the full significance of his younger brother's death but he undoubtedly experienced a season of loneliness by the loss of his playmate. The death of Thomas Jr. at about two or three years of age might be considered the first tragedy in Abraham Lincoln's childhood experience. The grave of this third child of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln was discovered in 1933.

Poison Snake Root Victim

The major tragedy in the Lincoln family history, as it relates more directly to the life of the boy Abraham, was the death of Nancy Hanks Lincoln in 1818 when her son was but nine years of age. The horror with which the terrible malady struck the community would never be forgotten and it swept away Abraham's "angel mother." Her burial place, not far from the cabin home, was a constant reminder of this family catastrophe.

Childbirth Tragedy

Lincoln had a sister Sarah, named for his mother's cousin Sarah Shipley Mitchell. But two years separated the birthdays of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln's two children, Sarah being the oldest. She married Aaron Grigsby, one of the neighbor boys in Spencer County and a year and a half later she died in childbirth. It was very difficult for Abraham to be reconciled to the fateful occurrence. He was then but 19 years old nevertheless he had lost his mother, his only brother, his only sister and her baby.

Diphtheria Claims Eddie

The second child of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln was named Edward Baker, named for the famous Illinois statesman and friend of the parents. We know little about him except that he died at four years of age of the dreaded Diphtheria. Mr. Lincoln commented in one of his letters how greatly they missed him.

A White House Calamity

Calamity is not too strong a word to use in relation to the death of Willie, the third son of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. Not only was there the loss of a brilliant child but also the mental anguish of a mother which was largely responsible for her start on the road to complete collapse. Mr. Lincoln himself was in deep grief for many months after Willie's demise. Willie was described as of "great mental activity, unusual intelligence, wonderful memory, methodical, frank and loving." Willie died on February 20, 1862, at eleven years of age.

The Assassination

Without the need of any comment on this tragedy, the reader is able to summarize the tremendous loss occasioned by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the most sensational personal tragedy in the history of the nation. The loss to the family and especially as it aggravated the mental ailment of the widow; the loss to the nation in sterling leadership at the very beginning of a second presidential term, and the tremendous loss to the southland in the removal of its best friend in Washington, were factors which contributed to the nation's wide mourning.

Tad Follows His Dad

No child of the White House has become more endeared to the American people than Tad Lincoln. After the death of the President, Tad was the almost constant companion of his mother. At eighteen years of age, the time he was showing marked improvement in his education, he was stricken with what his physician called "dropsy of the chest." During this illness his mother wrote to a friend, "With the last few years so filled with sorrow this fresh anguish bows me to the earth." Tad died in Chicago on July 15, 1871.

Lincoln's Widow Passes

The story of Mary Todd is a tragic one in itself. Her own mother died when she was but seven years old. She lost her second son at four years of age from diphtheria, her third son at eleven years of age from malaria. Three years after the death of this child her husband was assassinated seated by her side. Six years later she lost her youngest son and within four years after his death she was declared insane and placed in an asylum. Released the following year as a harmless woman, she spent her last years in both physical and mental anguish until she passed away on Sunday night, July 16, 1882, in her sixty-fourth year.

The Last Lincoln Succumbs

Robert T. and Mary Harlan Lincoln had but one son named Abraham Lincoln for his illustrious grandfather. He was also the only grandson of Senator James Harlan. He was in every respect a worthy descendant of these two fine families. At the time his father was minister to England, Abraham had an abscess which became infected and he passed away after a delicate surgical operation on March 5, 1890, at seventeen years of age.