



# Lincoln Lore

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## Some Intimate Glimpses Into The Private Lives of the Members of the Robert Lincoln Family

Editor's Note: I am indebted to Larry L. Bells of Iowa Wesleyan College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for bringing to my attention the book "Pictures On My Wall" by Florence L. Snow. Mr. Bells is in charge of the Harlan-Lincoln House on the Iowa Wesleyan College campus, and also serves as assistant to the president. The only known copy of this book, which undoubtedly had a limited distribution, is to be found in the P. E. O. Memorial Library Building of Iowa Wesleyan College.

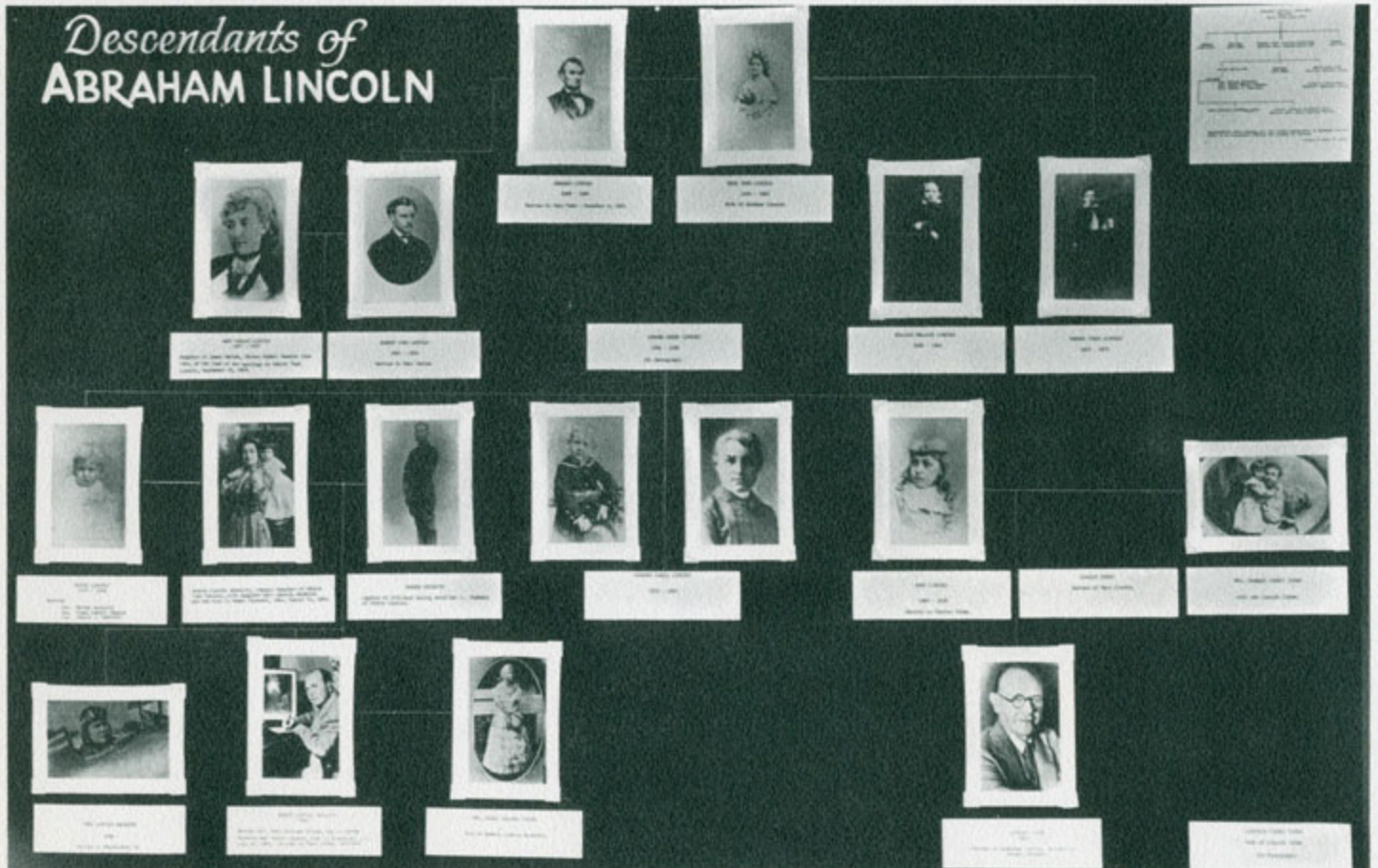
For additional information on this subject the editor will be happy to send interested students free copies (while the supply lasts) of his 20 page pamphlet "The Harlan-Lincoln Tradition at Iowa Wesleyan College" published in 1959.

R. G. M.

In 1945 the University of Kansas published a book written by Florence L. Snow of Lawrence, Kansas, entitled "Pictures On My Wall—A Lifetime In Kansas." The author moved to Kansas with her family from Indiana, in the Spring of 1862, at the age of one year. Her book consisting of eight chapters takes the form of a series of letters addressed to "Dear Brother," "Dear

Lydia and Jane," "Dear Dr. Ebright" etc. The letter of particular interest to Lincoln students is the one addressed to "Dear Rosemary Ketcham," dated at Lawrence, Kansas, in July, 1939. Miss Ketcham was chairman of the Department of Design at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Kansas.

Florence Snow, through her relation with the Harlan family, was a first cousin of Robert Lincoln's wife, Mary Harlan, and of course, a second cousin of his children, Mary (1869), Abraham "Jack" (1873) and Jesse (1875). After her graduation from Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas, Miss Snow returned to Neosho Falls to reside with her family. Shortly thereafter (1884) the Snow family received a letter from "Uncle James Harlan." In her book, the author made the following comments about this favorite relative: "This story-book brother of Mother's, and Father's heart-friend, who had written me since I was six or seven of his rich life wrought out



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

### Descendants of Abraham Lincoln

A photograph of an exhibit in the Lincoln National Life Foundation's Library-Museum.



Senator James A. Harlan  
1820 - 1899

Harlan served intermittently as a United States Senator from Iowa from 1855 to 1873. On May 15, 1865 he assumed the position as Secretary of the Interior but resigned that post on July 27, 1866. For awhile he served as editor of the *Washington Chronicle*, and upon his return to Iowa took an active interest in local politics. Some years later he received further national recognition as presiding judge of the Second Court of Commissioners of Alabama Claims (1882-1885) by appointment of President Arthur. He served as president of Iowa Wesleyan College from 1853 to 1855 and again from 1869 to 1870.



*From the Collection of Iowa Wesleyan College.*

#### The Harlan Home in Mount Pleasant, Iowa

This historic house now known as the Harlan-Lincoln Home is located on the campus of Iowa Wesleyan College. It has been partially restored with certain modifications, such as the removal of the original porches, chimneys etc., and it houses collections of material on the Harlans and the Lincolns.



*From the Lincoln National Life Foundation*

Mary Eunice Harlan  
1846 - 1937

Miss Harlan, the daughter of Senator Harlan, married Robert Todd Lincoln on September 24, 1868 at her father's home in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Abraham Lincoln described her daughter-in-law as "A young lady, who is so charming and whom I love so much." This photograph was taken in 1868, the year she married Robert Todd Lincoln.

of the Indiana pioneer conditions, had been my constant inspiration. We had not heard from him since his commencement gift and felicitation, but we always realized his countless interests. Consequently, the surprising announcement that he was coming to make one of his infrequent visits was all the more delightful. Moreover, he was bringing with him his granddaughter, the first of the three children of his daughter Mary and Robert Todd Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's only surviving son. Uncle James had been the close friend and Secretary of the Interior (appointed March 9, to assume office on May 15, 1865) to the Civil War president. This connecting link had been a source of pride in our individual house of Snow and we continued to be very proud and happy in his Congressional record and his present position as senior judge in the Court of Alabama Claims. He referred to young Mary Lincoln most attractively as 'a good armful of lively girlhood' and he 'hoped we would like her.' Really to know this special Mary, named for her mother and her grandmother Harlan, was going to be very much more than just 'liking her.'

"We were so glad of the short notice, because we should have less time to wait. There was plenty of time for our method of preparing for guests, and should we not become a part of their lives as they entered into ours?"

"James Harlan, of Iowa and Washington, could never fail to be as genial as he was deep and calm and steadfast. Considerably older-looking than when we saw him last, the sturdy well-nourished frame was still the picture of competence and integrity. Not as handsome as Father, who was half a head taller and just as notable-appearing in his own way, Uncle Harlan in his dress and manner,



Original Photograph from the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Mary Lincoln  
1869 - 1938

This photograph of Robert Lincoln's elder daughter was made by H. Rocher, photographer, 724 Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, in 1878. Mary at this time was 9 years old.

his more musical voice and distinctive English, was the type of leader that all sorts and conditions of Americans love to elevate and honor. The two of them were very dear together, with Mother so well-beloved of them both. I wanted to do nothing but think about it, hoping that in some far-off day I might be able to write about it.

"Mary was a good deal like him, Mother thought, doubtless a bit jealous for the Harlan strain. She was one of the people who never waste time in getting acquainted, having intuition as well as breeding. She was a well-grown, substantial girl of fifteen, medium brunette in complexion, with abundant hair in two braids wound about her shapely head. Her eyes were either brown or violet according to the light. She had a generous mouth, a lovely chin and throat, and a sensitive nose. Her hands apparently were ready for whatever might come, and withal she possessed the appeal of a simply nurtured fortunate child on the brink of a womanhood already surprisingly expressive.

"Speaking of Abraham Lincoln one day and what it meant to be the progeny of such unique lineage, she said, 'Yes, but it means so much to live with Grandfather Harlan.' And once she told her Great-aunt Lydia how glad she would always be to think of her along with her mother's mother whom she had known as Aunt Eliza Harlan, very much Mother's type, as shown by her pictures. She did not speak of her Grandmother Lincoln, and I wonder now what the child's idea was of that inexplicable Mary Todd whom so many writers of the advancing years have sought to reconstruct and explain as the wife and widow of the Great Emancipator."

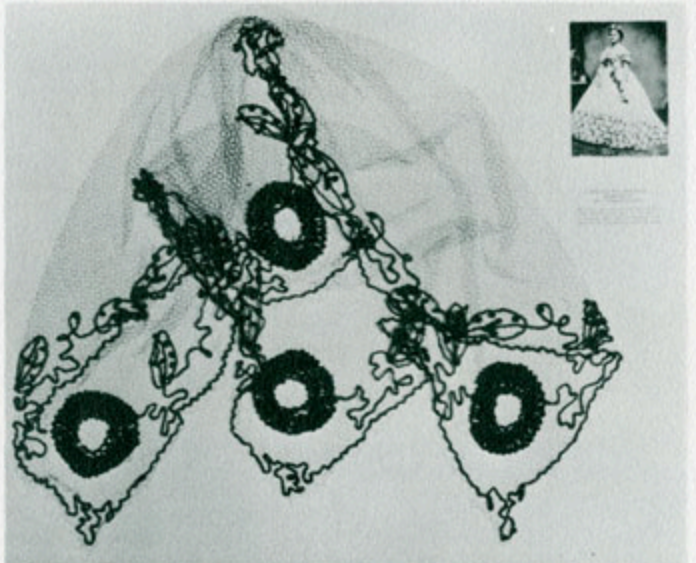
One evening, midway in the visit, Miss Snow's father and uncle announced that it had been decided that Florence should return with the Senator and Mary to Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for a visit to last until the beginning of the New Year, if, of course, she cared to.

While the announcement came as a great surprise, the invitation was immediately accepted. Their itinerary included a stop for one week in Mount Pleasant; and then, to use the Senator's phrase, "slipping over to Chicago for a bit of his Court concerns and to show Mary the city in my companionship."

Miss Snow found the Harlan home (now a historic shrine on the Iowa Wesleyan College campus) quite pleasant. She described it as follows: "The Harlan home had a distinctive place on the broad streets with their splendid arching trees. It was considerably larger than I had thought, with wide porches on the three sides of its ell-front. There were two parlors, front and back, a wide hall and a big, alluring library. A generous dining room, with a butler's pantry, breakfast room and kitchen, finished the first floor, except for my uncle's bedroom adjoining the library. The upper storey I thought especially charming with its roomy chambers and many windows for gazing far away. Mrs. Robert Lincoln loved to spend the summer here. 'So very restful,' she said, 'and so good for the children growing up.'"

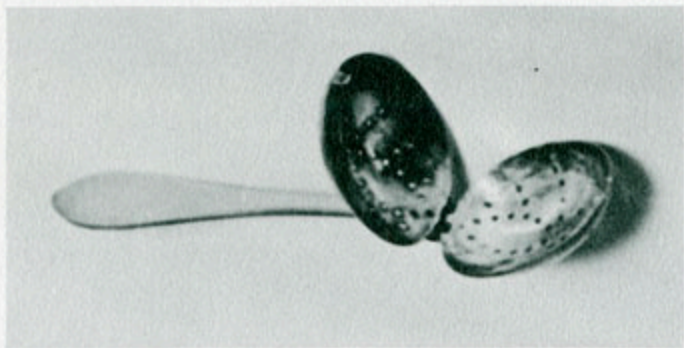
The trip to Chicago was likewise enjoyable when the Senator showed Mary the city in company with Florence Snow: "Her father was attorney for the Pullman Company, and her home was in the suburbs, but this would be 'something special for her as well as for me.' How we did respond to his understanding! What magic there was in the enormous buildings and the limitless life and color of the crowded streets. How beautiful the Lake with its many kinds of shipping, only a little less wonderful than the ocean must be. There were the enchanting parks, miles of residence streets, and best of all, the Art Institute bringing the wealth of nature and its human nature into the spacious rooms. There was one surpassing Shakespearean play in a tremendous theatre, then, at the last, the cyclorama of the Battle of Gettysburg in its triumph of realism. One gained an impression in walking around the reproduction, as he would have done in the actual locality, that no cinema ever gives one."

Returning to Mount Pleasant, Miss Snow described her visit with her relatives: "The accustomed life went on in the old Harlan home as any good home proceeds through such hopes and fears. Uncle Harlan was closely occupied with a case that would come before him soon after his return to Washington, though there were splendid moments for me and the 'other children.' One day he took plenty of time to show me over the Wesleyan College that was so much a part of him, and to listen to all my comparisons with Baker. The two girls did all sorts of nice things for me and made me lonesome for the younger sisters that I might have had. There was always the great library. Books and books, and still more books, ready to satisfy one's hunger through the longest life, with the many symbolic 'baskets left over.' The special tiers of mighty law books on one side



From the Collection of Iowa Wesleyan College

A veil found in one of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln's trunks which was given to the housekeeper by Mrs. Robert Lincoln.

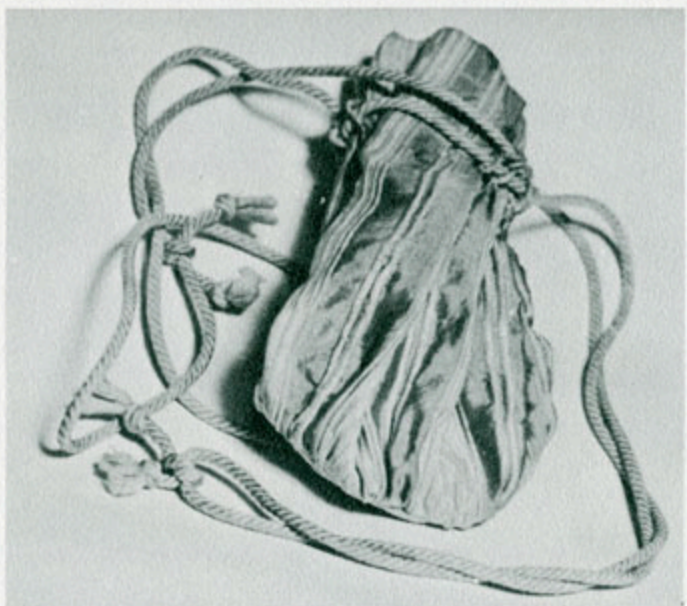


*From the Collection of Iowa Wesleyan College*

**A silver teaspoon that was found in one of the sixty-odd trunks belonging to Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.**

had been the collection of Uncle's only son, who had not lived (William Aaron Harlan died in 1876 at the age of 24) really to enter upon his profession. It was in this place one day that I discovered Robert Todd Lincoln searching for one of those same law volumes. I knew him at once, for we had all looked forward to his coming over the weekend; and I liked him immediately. It meant much to me that he said, 'And this is our little Kansas cousin,' with an extra smile as I made myself still taller than I was. In our slight opportunity for acquaintance during his short stay, his appearance and manner and evident character impressed me more and more, measured with my notion of what such a man should be. One could well believe that he had wrought out his gift of individual life with no undue regard to parental attainment, and was happy in his success.

"Cousin Mary had spoken of her special need of him in voicing her regret when I first came that she should be so unusually busy that she could do so little to entertain me. Entertain! When there was such a world of vital thought in everything about, and I had my eyes to see. Just to look at her was perhaps the best delight of all. Her father's own child, she had a certain gift of Southern grace which I knew so well in so many novels, and which those same masterpieces would have credited to her Kentucky mother, the Eliza Peck (Died 1884) who, like my own mother, had attended the Green-castle, Indiana, Ladies' Seminary when our James Harlan was a student in the celebrated College (later DePauw). She wore very well the French princess house-dresses in which I usually saw her. It was evident that she was heavily burdened in the immense work of going through



*From the Collection of Iowa Wesleyan College*

**A handbag made from one of the gowns of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln by Jessie Lincoln. The colors are lavender and oyster white. A number of these purses were made from the dress and distributed as souvenirs.**

the sixty-odd trunks that her mother-in-law, Mary Todd Lincoln, had left when she passed on. When I ventured a bit of my admiration, she said very simply that this was her task. She would accomplish it like the Harlan she was and the Lincoln she had become.

"Another time when a quick spark flashed between us, she took me into the big room upstairs that had been dismantled to accommodate these multiple possessions that this conscientious daughter-in-law said 'only indicated a kind of collector's mania that might have been immensely more attractive.' This Grandmother Lincoln had bought lot after lot of children's clothing, dresses and coats, hats and shoes, and all sorts of trinkets that might be nice for Mary or Jessie or Jack, or maybe for the children of friends or servants. Then they were packed away to be ready when the time came and were forgotten. 'And here am I,' said my Cousin Mary, 'deciding what to do with this unconscionable accumulation.' Many of the woolen things were sprinkled with red pepper to keep the moths out. 'It's mighty lucky I could have this room with so many windows.' I felt mighty lucky that I knew enough to appreciate the splendid way she carried on, and said so, and it seemed to relieve the tension a little bit.

"There were long trestle tables filling all the space left by a number of trunks still against the walls, and the worst of the work was apparently over. Piles of the various articles were checked with cards indicating families in different places and institutions in the town and state that would receive them, for this present Mrs. Lincoln would not have them wasted. What a strong generous lady she has always been in my memory of her, a modern Saint Elizabeth 'loaf-giver' spelled in terms of clothing. At another propitious moment she showed me in her own room some of the lovely gowns worn upon state occasions by the Civil War 'First Lady,' speaking of this or that which Mary and Jessie would treasure. What would I not give now in these Lawrence years if I might have just one of them to put in our Spooner-Thayer Art Museum beside the white lace shawl worn by one of our Lawrence ladies at the second Lincoln inauguration ball!"

In her letter to Rosemary Ketcham, the author concluded her account of her visit with her uncle and the Robert Lincoln family by stating that "Knowing the Robert Lincolns, even in so slight a way, has etched its own lines upon my life and thought. On leaving Mount Pleasant, I could feel a certain reality in the great beckoning before me that was impossible before."

## STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS PUBLICATIONS

(Continued from the February Issue)

Speech/of/Senator S. A. Douglas,/on/The Invasion of States;/And/His Reply to Mr. Fessenden./Delivered In The Senate Of The United States, January 23, 1860 (Caption Title).

Pamphlet 6 x 9½, 15 pp.

Printed by Lemuel Towers.

Admission of Kansas Under The Wyandott Constitution./Speech/Of/Hon. Stephen A. Douglas,/In Reply To/Mr. Seward and Mr. Trumbull./Delivered In The Senate of The United States, February 29, 1860 (Caption Title).

Pamphlet, 5¾ x 9, 32 pp.

Non-Interference By Congress With Slavery/In The Territories./Speech/of/Mr. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois,/In The Senate, May 15 and 16, 1860. (Caption Title)

Pamphlet, 6 x 9¼, 40 pp.

Non-Interference By Congress With Slavery In The Territories/Speech/of/Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois,/In The Senate, May 15 and 16, 1860 (Caption Title).

Pamphlet, 5½ x 8¾, 40 pp.

Variant.

Speech/of/Senator S. A. Douglas,/of Illinois,/on/The State Of The Union./Delivered In The Senate Of The United States, January 3, 1861. (Caption Title).

Pamphlet, 6 x 9½, 16 pp.

Remarks/Of/Hon. Stephen A. Douglas,/In The Senate Of The United States, March 6, 1861/On The Resolution of Mr. Dixon To Print The/Inaugural Address of President Lincoln. (Caption Title).

Pamphlet, 6 x 9, 7 pp. (M. 96).

Written in pencil at the top of the caption title page is the following statement: "From Mr. Douglas, 11 March 1861." All efforts to determine the name of the original owner of the pamphlet have failed.