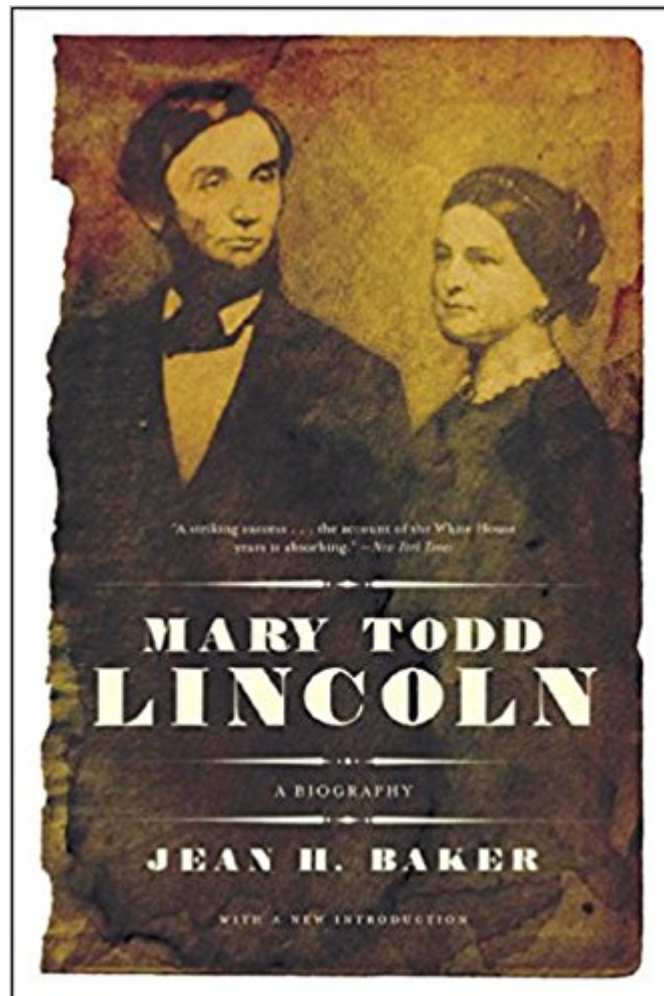




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Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography



Synopsis

"A complex and moving character study of a woman tragically out of step with her time and place." •Chicago Tribune This definitive biography of Mary Todd Lincoln beautifully conveys her tumultuous life and times. A privileged daughter of the proud clan that founded Lexington, Kentucky, Mary fell into a stormy romance with the raw Illinois attorney Abraham Lincoln. For twenty-five years the Lincolns forged opposing temperaments into a tolerant, loving marriage. Even as the nation suffered secession and civil war, Mary experienced the tragedies of losing three of her four children and then her husband. An insanity trial orchestrated by her surviving son led to her confinement in an asylum. Mary Todd Lincoln is still often portrayed in one dimension, as the stereotype of the best-hated faults of all women. Here her life is restored for us whole. 9 pages of illustrations

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Customer Reviews

A revisionist's view of the maligned Mary Todd Lincoln, usually portrayed as a shrew of doubtful sanity, is offered by Goucher College history professor Baker (Affairs of Party, etc.) in this richly documented and sympathetic study. Mary, an orphaned, well-educated, but socially unpopular, Lexington, Ky., aristocrat, was vulnerable to the suit of the outwardly uncouth Lincoln. During their Springfield years she bore him four sons and, despite their opposite natures, appears to have provided a comfortable home life and support for his political ambitions. As first lady, she was much criticized for her alleged extravagances on clothes, entertaining and redecoration of the shabby White House. A dedicated spiritualist, Mary made mourning for her dead husband and two sons a permanent condition, causing some to conclude that excessive grief had deranged her mind.

Several months of her last tormented years were spent in an asylum to which her son Robert had her committed, unjustly, according to the author, followed by four years of voluntary exile abroad, from which she returned shortly before her death in 1882 in Springfield. Photos not seen by PW. BOMC, History Book Club and QPBC alternates. (August 17pditto?Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In the thriving cottage industry of Lincoln studies Baker's readable and sympathetic biography is easily the definitive account of the troubled former First Lady. Baker's principal contribution is in recognizing Mary Todd Lincoln on her own terms. Although we can never separate her from Abraham Lincoln, Mary Todd Lincoln's importance derives less from her marriage than from her personal suffering as a woman. Politics, tragedy, and poverty denied her the family comfort and identity she craved. Baker's chapters on her last years of alleged insanity and real loneliness reveal a jealous and proud 19th-century American woman trapped by the conventions of Victorian domesticity. Recommended for major libraries and universities. Randall M. Miller, History Dept., St. Joseph's Univ., PhiladelphiaCopyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I always wondered about the rumors I heard re Mrs. Lincoln. This goes into a great deal of detail, including the time when her son, Robert, got her committed and how she got out. I'm sure most people don't realize how many years after the President's death that Mary lived overseas. Mrs. Lincoln liked spending money (which got her into trouble) and she really hitched her star to Abe's. She felt really entitled, especially after his death and she made a lot of enemies. A really well written and interesting book.

I appreciate the fact that the author stated her bias in the beginning. She did not think Mary Todd was crazy, more than a little strange perhaps but not crazy. I was shocked to learn of the way the civil war tore the Todd family apart, with some of the sons fighting in the Union army and some fighting in the confederate army. Also I was shocked to find out how easy it was for a male relative to have a female committed to an asylum. The book is filled with little known details of the life of Mary Todd and I came away with a clear sense of the suffering she endured. I am now reading The House of Abraham which goes into more detail about how the civil war split this family in particular and the country in general.

Bought as a gift. My mother LOVED it. It was a little dry for me, but biographies are not really to my taste. I give it a good review because the gift recipient was very enthusiastic (and she is quite honest about these things).

Lots of information. Enjoyable and easy to read. Great account of Mary Todd Lincoln's life. Despite Mrs. Lincoln's narcissism, she was a very intelligent and passionate woman. From the stories in the book it seems very obvious that Mary and Abe Lincoln loved each other very much.

When trying to understand a public figure it helps to have some understanding of their background. This book delves deeply into her background and into Lincoln's also. Sometimes a little wordy but in the long run explains much about Mary and the times she lived in and the attitude towards women at the time. I feel I understand her and the problems she encountered due to the prevailing attitudes at that time. I enjoyed this book ! I would highly recommend it to anyone studying the Lincoln's and the time that they lived in. Who knows what would have happened to her in a different more enlightened era. Understanding history is a wonderful way to explore our own attitudes and the paths we choose to take in our lifetime. This book helps in our endeavors to understand our past.

A very complete review of Mary Todd Lincoln's life and times. This book was very well written and the research was exhaustive. I learned more about Mrs. Lincoln than her standard story of tragedy. I was told this was the best biography of Mrs. Lincoln. I agree with the assessment. Historical figures are not just the product of one event. You will learn much about her character and ambition. If you love history, you will have much to discuss with your history buff friends and relatives.

While there are several biographies of Mary Lincoln, to me this is the most comprehensive. Filled with background, this gives you more insight to who she truly was. Most already know her history in general terms. However; I truly enjoyed reading more detail about why she was how she was. This book turns Mary into a true human, not just the wife of a President, but as a daughter, sister, mother and woman.

I must admit I found Mary's earlier and later life less interesting without Lincoln in it. I also find Yoko's story more interesting with John in it. But what you get is the story of a woman who was in many ways ahead of her time, with strong political views and talents and a strong will. Also enlightening are the details behind her son Robert's consigning her to a mental institution. Reading

this book filled in some gaps in my understanding of Abraham Lincoln.

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