

# Mary's Velvet Rose

## October 2023

### ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



## LINCOLN DAYS, HODGENVILLE

Lincoln Days in Hodgenville was October 8-9, 2023. ALP members that attended were Vern Risty, Larry Elliott, Whit McMahan, Rick Yarbough, Dennis Bogs, Patrick Gifford, Conner Baete, Tom Wright, Joan Howard, Susan Miller, and Sue Wright. Winners of the Look-Alike contests were Susan Miller and Larry Elliott. The weather was perfect and there were thousands along the parade route.....

And the good news! There were several contestants that are potential ALP members. Larry Elliott will mentor!



## NEW !!!! MARY LINCOLN PATCH

ALP Mary Lincoln members will receive a new patch at the Dayton Conference April 25-28, 2024. It was designed by Susan Miller. Joan Howard and Dianne Broski paid for the patch. It will be for sale at the Dayton Conference for \$5 each, the proceeds to go into the ALP Treasury.



## MILK SICKNESS IN THE EARLY 1800S

Life was difficult in the early Kentucky settlements. Each passing year, there seemed to be some new illness or disease brought by the thousands of settlers crossing through the Cumberland Gap or floating down the Ohio River into Kentucky.

In the early 1800s, a deadly new illness arrived on the Kentucky frontier. It was so powerful that, in some instances, it wiped out entire families and devastated rural farming communities. This illness, known today as milk sickness, was then called “the trembles” or “the slows” in farm animals such as cattle, horses and sheep that also caught the disease. In humans, it was characterized by loss of appetite, vomiting, severe intestinal discomfort, muscle stiffness and eventually coma. Recovery was often slow, if at all. Most often, the illness resulted in a painful death.

This deadly sickness was not isolated to Kentucky. It was found in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Tennessee. In 1818, it took the life of Abraham Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, when an outbreak of milk sickness struck her home at the Pigeon Creek settlement in Indiana.

In 1809 that a Bourbon County physician, Dr. Thomas Barbee, made the first diagnosis. He called it milk sickness. The most popular cure of that day was bloodletting. Unfortunately, this procedure did nothing for those who became afflicted with milk sickness.

By 1830, the illness was so prevalent in Kentucky that the state General Assembly offered a \$600 reward to anyone who could discover its cause. Although many physicians and scientists took up the challenge, the discovery would not come easily. When it was discovered, it came at the hands of a female physician, Dr. Anna Pierce Hobs Bixby of Illinois.

When Anna was 16, her parents crossed over the mountains into Kentucky from Philadelphia. From there, they continued on to southeastern Illinois, where they settled. Eventually, Anna returned to Philadelphia and studied to become a physician. Always concerned about the health of her family and community, she returned to southeastern Illinois, where she was the only physician.

After losing her mother and sister-in-law to the dreaded milk sickness, Anna was determined to find the cause. Research led her to discover that the illness seemed to be caused by drinking milk or eating butter. She also discovered that the illness appeared to be seasonal, at its worst during the growing season and falling off dramatically after the first frost.

With these clues, she began a study of farm animals and discovered that, while horses and sheep became infected, cattle seemed most likely to be the carrier. An interesting detail concerning the cattle was that the adult cows did not die of the disease, but their calves did.

Anna reasoned that the illness came from a plant or an herb that cows ate but other farm animals didn't typically consume. Still, she had no idea what that herb was.

As can be the case with great discoveries, an outside individual expectedly gave a bit of information that solved the puzzle. In this case, it came from an odd but fortuitous encounter with an unlikely person.



One day, Anna followed a small herd of cattle as they grazed in the woods. She was interested to see for herself what the cattle were feeding upon. During this foray, she happened upon an old Shawnee medicine woman who had been left behind by her tribe when they relocated west of the Mississippi. Anna, feeling sorry for the woman, took her back to her home to care for her. After learning that Anna was trying to find out what caused the milk sickness, the old woman took her back to the forest and showed her a plant called white snakeroot. She said that the herb was the cause of the illness.

Anna conducted several test and found that the rather common flowering plant growing in the shade of the boundary line between pasture and forest was indeed the cause of the deadly illness that had killed so many.

The solution was to simply destroy the plants and manage the cattle better in their pasture. The deadly milk sickness began to wane once its source was known. It wasn't until 1928 that the American Medical Association formally recognized the cause of milk sickness to be the white snakeroot plant. Anna died of a heart attack in 1869 at age 61, never having received recognition for her contribution to medical science and the prevention of milk sickness.

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By Roger Keith, Clearwater, Florida

## 2024 Conference – Dayton, Ohio

Save the Date!! The Annual Conference will be held in Dayton, Ohio next April 25-28, 2024. Teena Baldrige is the host. The information about the conference will be posted soon on the website. She has planned a relaxing, enriching conference. This year there will be a consignment shop after the silent auction. This is for clothing and accessories only. More details to come.

## HANDKERCHIEFS

Handkerchiefs could be handmade or bought ready-made. Godey's Lady Book in 1864 stated *"In pocket handkerchiefs there are a great many pretty and inexpensive styles. Some have tiny a scallop on the edge, entirely filled in with a dot the same color as the scallop and in one corner a pretty design on the initial, worked in colors. When the handkerchief is bought ready worked, but one initial is on it, but when worked to order several initials may be very prettily interlaced."*

But hankies were not to be taken lightly by the lady of fashion. Godey's in 1860 warned women that *"In our days dress, as well as cookery has become a science, as much as an art; even the minutiae of a lady's dress such as the purse, pocket- handkerchiefs, etc. and now objects of care and labor."*

