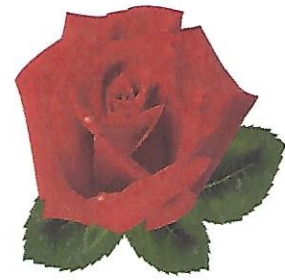


Mary's Velvet Rose
March, 2006
ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



"Four Marys and a Jessie" Described as "Wonderful Tribute" to Lincoln Family

"An Evening with Peggy Beckwith" was the headline of a small article in a local weekly paper. The Manchester (Vermont) Historical Society was sponsoring a first-person historical presentation by local author C. J. King the next evening. I immediately decided that Steve and I would be in the audience. Without knowing anything about King's book, I was intrigued by the prospect of listening to someone speak in the persona of Abraham and Mary's great-granddaughter. We had that evening free (a rarity!), and Manchester is just a 90-minute drive from our New Hampshire home.

Born Mary Lincoln Beckwith in 1898, Peggy was the last female descendent of Abraham Lincoln to live at Hildene, Robert Todd Lincoln's home in Manchester, Vt. Author C. J. King traces her family back to Mary Harlan Lincoln, Robert's wife, and her book "Four Marys and a Jessie: The Story of the Lincoln Women" is a wonderful tribute to her family heritage.

King's presentation as Peggy, though only her second performance, was well done and intriguing. Even though I went desiring to hear about Abraham, Mary and Robert, I left appreciating that the program was about Peggy, a woman who deserves recognition in her own right.

King's book is a delightful combination of familiar historical research and obscure family stories. As I began to read, I was prompted to run to my computer to buy copies of "Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters" by Turner & Turner and Neely & McMurtry's "Insanity File," because of the many footnotes referencing them. The early chapters on Mary Todd Lincoln (King's Mary #1) were well-researched, and I enjoyed reading her account of the Mary I'm most familiar with.

Marys #2, 3 and 4 are Robert's wife, Mary Harlan Lincoln; their oldest child, Mamie; and Peggy, daughter of Robert and Mary's second daughter, Jessie. Several chapters are devoted to the life of each "Lincoln woman." King's writing style made for fascinating reading, and I was enthralled by the many personal anecdotes that brought these women to life.

One of the family stories that King used in her presentation tells of Hildene's head gardener complaining to Robert Lincoln that his granddaughter, Peggy, had picked some of the prize roses in his formal garden. Robert's reply was, "Well, I don't know who has a better right."

Another feature of the book that I especially enjoy are the many family photos, including one of an elderly Robert holding his newborn granddaughter, Peggy; young Peggy and her cousin, Linc Isham, sailing toy boats in a reflecting pool at Hildene; and family portraits of Peggy; her brother, Bud; and their

mother, Jessie. As I write this review, I have not yet finished reading the book, but am truly savoring each new chapter. It's a pleasure to meet the Lincoln descendents for the first time.

"Four Marys and a Jessie" was published by The Friends of Hildene and is available in paperback at Hildene's online gift shop for \$19.99. If you'd like a copy, go to <http://www.hildene.org/> and click on Museum Shop. You can either buy online or download a mail order form. Anyone planning to attend the ALP conference in Cincinnati and who doesn't mind waiting until then to get a copy can let me know (sharon_wood@pobox.com). I'll pick up a copy for you and save you the cost of postage. --Submitted by Sharon Wood, New Hampshire