

Mary's Velvet Rose

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ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS



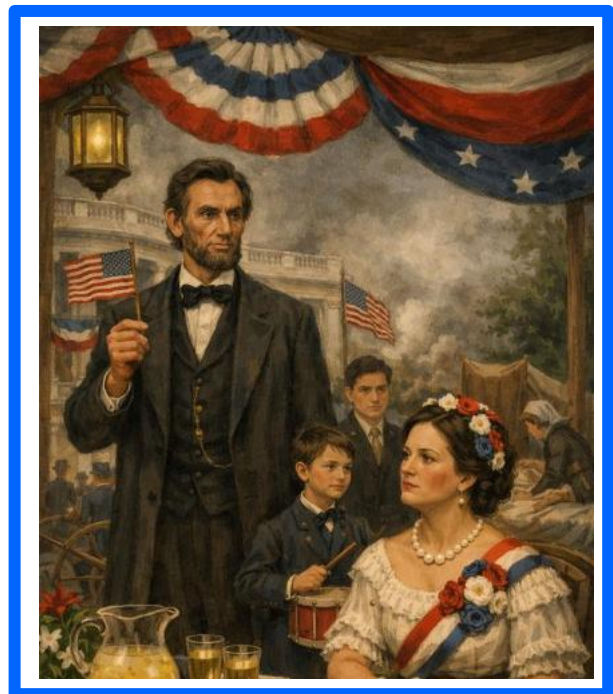
America's 250th anniversary invites us to look back at the nation's long, complicated journey—from its bold declaration in 1776 to the present moment. When Abraham and Mary Lincoln lived in the White House (1861–1865), the United States was still young, only **85 to 89 years old**, a nation fighting to preserve the very ideals born in its first century.

Abraham and Mary Lincoln Celebrate the Fourth of July: A Historical Look at an Unofficial Tradition

While Abraham Lincoln never left behind a formal record of elaborate Fourth of July celebrations, the holiday threaded quietly but meaningfully through the lives of Abraham and Mary Lincoln. A closer look at their habits, letters, and public appearances paints a vivid picture of how the couple likely marked America's birthday—with reflection, family, and a deep sense of national purpose.

A President Who Carried the Holiday's Spirit Year-Round

For Abraham Lincoln, Independence Day was less a single date and more a constant reminder of the nation's founding ideals. He frequently invoked the Declaration of Independence in speeches, grounding his presidency in the belief that the Union must survive because liberty itself depended on it.



During the Civil War, Lincoln often spent the Fourth of July working—reviewing dispatches, meeting with cabinet members, or visiting soldiers. His presence among the troops was, in its own way, a celebration: a reaffirmation that the nation’s promise was worth defending.

One of the most famous Lincoln-era Fourths came in **1863**, when news of the Union victory at **Vicksburg** reached Washington on July 4. Lincoln called it “a great day,” seeing the triumph as a turning point in the war and a symbolic renewal of the nation’s founding principles.

Mary Lincoln’s Fourth: Patriotism, Hospitality, and Kentucky Flair

Mary Todd Lincoln, raised in Lexington’s civic-minded Todd household, approached the holiday with a blend of patriotism and social grace. Her upbringing emphasized public service, celebration, and community—values she carried into the White House.

While no single diary entry details her Fourth of July rituals, contemporary accounts and letters suggest:

- **Decorated White House rooms** with patriotic bunting and fresh flowers
- **Small gatherings** featuring music, conversation, and refreshments
- **Visits to hospitals**, where she brought fruit, books, and comfort to wounded soldiers
- **Quiet family moments**, especially when the war weighed heavily on her

Mary’s Kentucky roots meant she understood the holiday not just as a national celebration but as a personal reminder of the country’s fragile unity. Friends recalled her speaking passionately about the Declaration’s ideals and the sacrifices being made to preserve them.

A Holiday Marked by Duty, Not Fireworks

Unlike modern presidents who host large public festivities, the Lincolns' Fourth's were shaped by wartime realities. Washington was often tense, mourning, or bracing for the next battle. Yet the Lincolns probably found ways to honor the day:

- Abraham Lincoln issued proclamations and messages reinforcing national unity.
- Mary Lincoln supported soldiers and families affected by the war.
- The White House grounds occasionally hosted modest musical performances.
- The couple spent time with their sons, grounding themselves in family amid national turmoil.

Their celebrations were understated but deeply symbolic—quiet acts of patriotism during one of the nation's darkest chapters.

□ A Legacy That Endures

Today, historians view the Lincolns' Fourth of July observances as reflections of their character: Abraham's steadfast devotion to the Union and Mary's compassionate commitment to those suffering in its defense.

Their celebrations may not have included fireworks or parades, but they embodied the holiday's truest meaning—renewing the promise of liberty, equality, and national purpose.

Happy 250th 4th of July
Susan Miller

