

Volume 3

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First Ladies: Mary Todd Lincoln I

Lead: Mary Lincoln was the first Presidential wife to be center of ill-deserved, widespread, and sometimes bitter controversy.

Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts

Content: When Mary came with her husband to Washington, the city was gloomy with the prospect of civil war. Lincoln's election in November had provoked the deep South to secession. She was hopeful that she and her husband might help reduce tension, but she was disappointed. Not until Eleanor Roosevelt was a First

Lady subjected to the abuse Mary Lincoln was forced to endure.

She was born in Lexington, Kentucky, into a socially-prominent family, the daughter of a banker. She was charming, witty, articulate, and spoke passable French. After the family moved to Springfield, Illinois, she was sought out by numerous suitors, but it was the tall, gangly, rather ugly Lincoln who won her affections, and in 1842 they married.

In the White House, she could seem to do nothing right. She was criticized as cheap for cutting out White House dinners during wartime, but was called wasteful for arranging entertainment to boost the morale of wounded soldiers.

Born in a border state, Mary had relatives who were Confederate sympathizers, but she was stoutly pro-Union, and even before her husband, advocated Emancipation. Next time: The disintegration of Mary Lincoln.

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