

**First Ladies: Mary Todd Lincoln II**

**Lead: Already the subject of much public abuse, Mary Lincoln began to come unglued with the death of the couple's young son, William.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: Not until Eleanor Roosevelt did a First Lady have to endure the carping of critics as did Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. She was vilified as being generous, stingy, energetic, retiring, patriotic and treasonous, all at the same time. But it**

**was the death of her middle son, Willie, which set Mary Lincoln on the path to emotional disintegration. Willie contracted typhoid fever, and died in February 1862. Both of the Lincolns were shattered, but Mary seemed close to mental collapse. She had convulsions, stayed in bed for days, and began attending séances in hopes of making contact with him.**

**Only as Lincoln was re-elected and the War began to wind down, did Mrs. Lincoln regain her composure. Then came Ford's Theatre, and she was undone. Creditors hounded her, salacious but untrue stories insisted the Lincolns had an unhappy marriage.**

**In the 1870s her youngest son, Tad, died, her behavior became erratic, and she lost a bitter court sanity dispute with son, Robert. Congress finally voted her an annual pension, but that could but little ease the pain. Mary Lincoln was lonely, half blind, and paralyzed, when she suffered a stroke and died in 1882.**

**At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

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