

**Volume 4**

**Number 010**

**First Ladies - Eliza Johnson**

**Lead: "We are a plain people from the mountains of Tennessee." So said the daughter of Eliza Johnson, wife of the seventeenth President of United States.**

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

**Content: In the summer of 1865, following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln when her husband was leading the nation in mourning and the refreshing adjustment to peacetime pursuits, Eliza Johnson arrived**

**in Washington with a load of relatives: daughter Mary Patterson and her husband and three children, daughter Mary Stover and her two children. The White House resounded once again to the youthful shouts of grandchildren. The First Lady found a small second floor room across from her husband's office, established herself there and, rarely left that sanctuary, filled her time knitting, sewing, reading, but most of all entertaining her grandchildren**

**Mrs. Johnson was almost an invalid and only twice in four years left her retreat to go downstairs for a public function, therefore daughter Mary assumed the responsibilities for White**

**House entertaining. In the wake of the Lincoln assassination souvenir hunters had stripped the executive mansion and the place was a mess. Mary Patterson supervised the redecoration, surprising a skeptical capital with the elegant results despite the shortage of budget devoted to restoration. She even acquired a couple of jersey cows to graze the White House grounds, keeping the grass cut and supplying fresh milk and butter to the Johnson brood.**

**During the great crisis of her husband's administration, the attempt to run him from office through impeachment, Eliza kept his faith alive with personal encouragement. He was**

**stubborn, short-tempered and bore the chip on his shoulder with Tennessee pride, but she stood with him offering him moral support even though unlike some First Ladies she avoided policy and politics.**

**The Johnson's returned to East Tennessee in 1869, but came back to Washington in 1874 when he was once again elected to the Senate. The former President was warmly greeted by his colleagues on the Senate floor, but shortly thereafter he died of a stroke. Eliza survived him by only six months.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

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## **Resources**

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