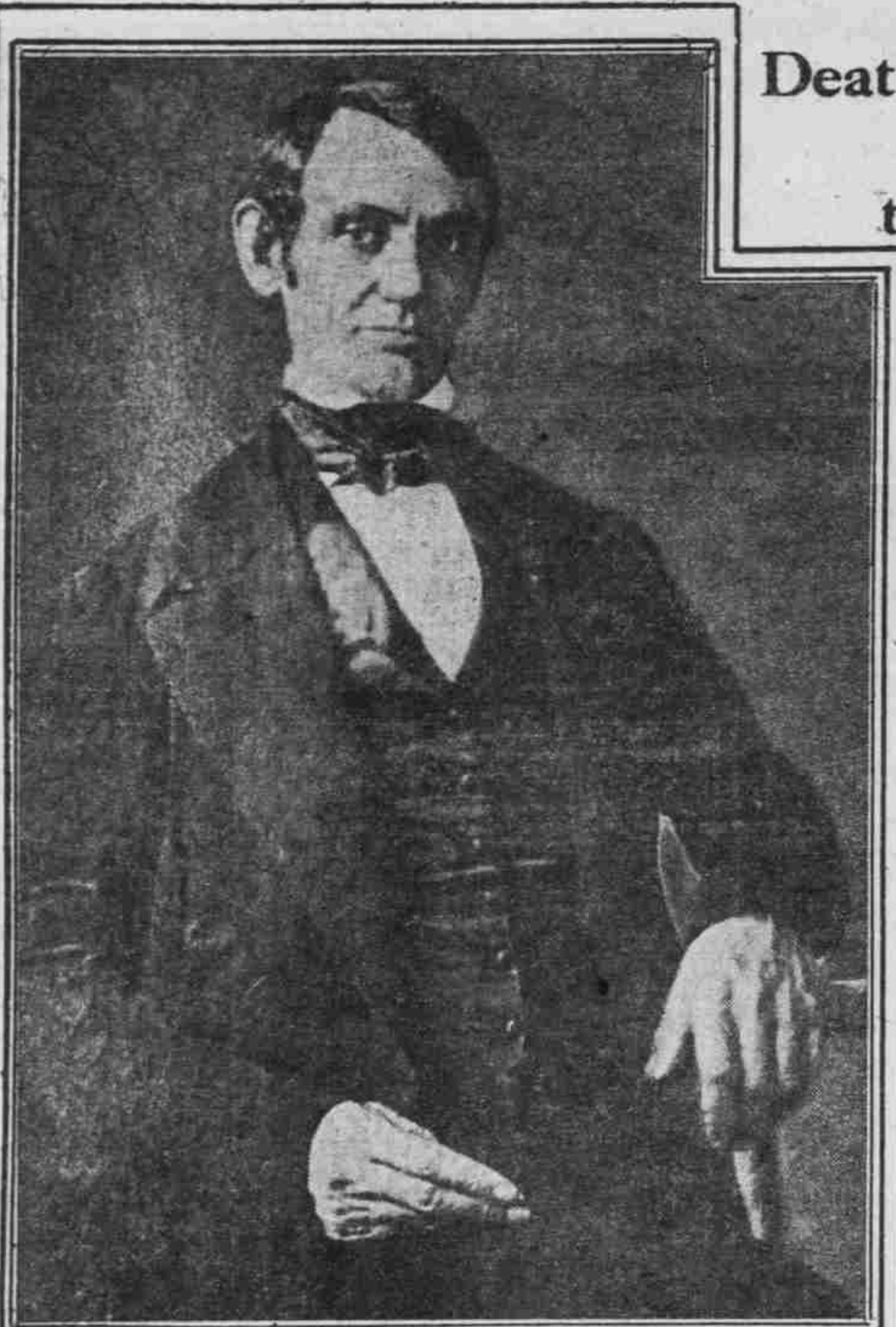
# LINCOLN'S THREE LOVE AFFAIRS

## His First Tragic Love, Ending With the Death of Beautiful Ann Rutledge; the Second, When Mary Owens Threw Him Over; the Third, When He Married Mary Todd.

By Ida M. Tarbell.

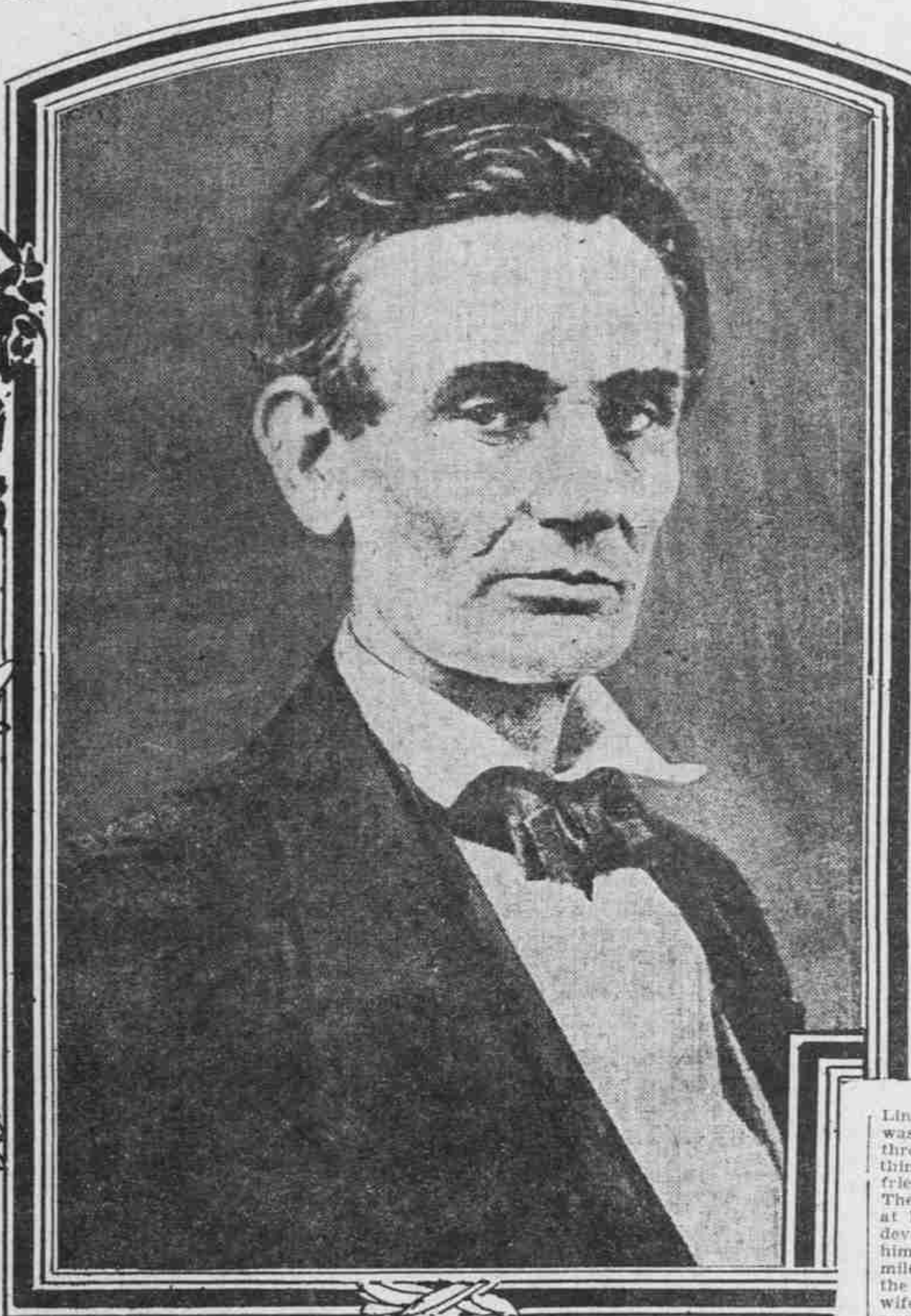


LINCOLN'S EARLIEST PHOTOGRAPH, SHOWING LINCOLN THE LOVER.

MARY ANN RUTLEDGE, MOTHER OF ANN RUTLEDGE.

MARY OWENS, WITH WHOM LINCOLN HAD HIS SECOND LOVE AFFAIR.

THE GRAVE of ANN RUTLEDGE.



THE PHOTOGRAPH OF LINCOLN THAT MRS. LINCOLN ALWAYS DECLARED WAS THE TRUEST LIKENESS OF HER HUSBAND.

MRS LINCOLN IN THE DRESS IN WHICH SHE WAS MARRIED.

REV. CHARLES DRESSER, WHO MARRIED THE LINCOLNS.

IN THE Spring of 1835, when Lincoln completed his first term in the Illinois Legislature and returned to New Salem to take up his duties as postmaster and deputy surveyor, and to resume his law studies, New Salem held all that was dearest in the world to him at that moment. He loved a young girl of that town, and now for the first time, though he had known her since he first came to New Salem, was he free to tell his love.

One of the most prominent families of the settlement in 1831, when Lincoln first appeared there, was that of James Rutledge. The head of the house was one of the founders of New Salem, and at that time the keeper of the village tavern.

The third of the nine children in the Rutledge household was a daughter, Ann Mayes. When Lincoln first met her she was 18 years old, and as fresh as a flower. Many of those who knew her at that time have left tributes to her beauty and gentleness. So fair a maid was not, of course, without suitors. The most determined of those who sought her hand was one John McNeill, a young man who had arrived in New Salem from New York soon after the founding of the town. He was understood to be merely one of the thousands who had come West in search of fortune. That he was intelligent, industrious and frugal, with a good head for business, was at once apparent; for he and Samuel Hill opened a general store and they soon doubled their capital. In four years from his first appearance in the settlement, besides having a half-interest in the store, he owned a large farm a few miles north of New Salem. His neighbors believed him to be worth about $12,000.

John McNeill formed the acquaintance of Ann Rutledge, then a girl of 17. It was a case of love at first sight, and the two soon became engaged. But Ann was only a young girl; and it was thought very sensible in her and very gracious and considerate in her lover that both acquiesced in the wishes of Ann's parents that, for some time at least, the marriage be postponed.

Such was the situation when Lincoln appeared in New Salem. He naturally soon became acquainted with the girl. She was a pupil in Mentor Graham's school, where he frequently visited, and rumor says that he first met her there. However, that may be, it is certain that in the latter part of 1832 he went to board at the Rutledge tavern and there was thrown daily into her company.

During the next year John McNeill became restless and discontented. He wanted to see his people, he said, and before the end of the year he had decided to go East for a visit. To secure perfect freedom from his business while gone, he sold out his interest in his store. To Ann he said that he hoped to bring back his father and mother, and to place them on his farm. "This duty done," was his farewell word, "you and I will be married."

In the Spring of 1834 McNeill started East. On the way McNeill fell ill with chills and fever. It was late in the Summer before he reached his home, and wrote back to Ann, explaining his silence. The long wait had been a severe strain on the girl, and Lincoln had watched her anxiety with softened heart. It was to him, the New Salem postmaster, that she came to inquire for letters. In a way the postmaster must have become the girl's confidant; and his tender heart, which never could resist suffering, must have been deeply touched. After the long silence was broken, and McNeill's first letter of explanation came, the cause of anxiety seemed removed; but, strangely enough, other letters followed only at long intervals, and finally they ceased altogether. Then it was that the young girl told her friends a secret which McNeill had confided to her before leaving New Salem.

He had told her that John McNeill was not his real name, but that it was John McNamar. Shortly before he came to New Salem, he explained, his father had suffered a disastrous failure in business. He was the oldest son, and in the hope of retrieving the lost fortune he resolved to go West, expecting to return in a few years and share his riches with the rest of the family. Anticipating parental opposition, he ran away from home, and, being sure that he could never accumulate anything with so numerous a family to support, he endeavored to lose himself by a change of name. All this Ann had believed and not repeated; but now, worn out by waiting, she took the story to her friends. With few exceptions they pronounced the story a fabrication and McNamar an impostor.

It was not until McNeill, or McNamar, had been gone many months that Lincoln ventured to show his love for Ann, and then it was a long time before the girl would listen to his suit. Convinced at last, however, that her former lover had deserted her, she yielded to Lincoln's wishes and promised, in the Spring of 1835, to become his wife.

But Lincoln had nothing on which to support a wamily. As for Ann, she was anxious to go to school another year. It was decided that in the Autumn she should go with her brother to Jacksonville and spend the Winter there in an academy. Lincoln was to devote himself to his law studies; and the next Spring, when she returned from school and he was a member of the bar, they were to be married.

A happy Spring and Summer followed, and all would undoubtedly have gone well if the young girl could have dismissed the haunting memory of her old lover. The possibility that she had wronged him, that he might reappear, that he loved her still, though she now loved another, wore upon her until she fell ill. Gradually her condition became hopeless; and Lincoln, who had been shut from her, was sent for. The lovers passed an hour alone in an anguished parting, and soon after, on August 25, 1835, Ann died.

The death of Ann Rutledge plunged Lincoln into the deepest gloom. He was seen walking alone by the river and through the woods, muttering strange things to himself. He seemed to his friends to be in the shadow of madness. They kept a close watch over him; and at last Bowling Green, one of the most devoted friends Lincoln then had, took him home to his little log cabin, half a mile north of New Salem. Here, under the loving care of Green and his good wife Nancy, Lincoln remained until he was once more master of himself.

But though he had regained self-control, his grief was deep and bitter. Ann Rutledge was buried in Concord cemetery, a country burying-ground seven miles northwest of New Salem. To this lonely spot Lincoln frequently journeyed to weep over her grave. "My heart is buried there," he said to one of his friends.

When McNamar returned (for McNamar's story was true, and two months after Ann Rutledge died he drove into New Salem with his widowed mother and his brothers and sisters in the "prairie schooner" beside him) and learned of Ann's death, he "saw Lincoln at the postoffice," as he afterward said, and "he seemed desolate and sorely distressed."

In later life, when Lincoln's sorrow had become a memory, he told a friend who questioned him: "I really and truly loved the girl and think often of her now." There was a pause, and then the President added:

"And I have loved the name of Rutledge to this day."

### Lincoln's Judicial Love-Making.

Lincoln was thinking vaguely at the time of his removal to Springfield (1837), that perhaps he best marry a Miss Mary Owens, with whom he had become intimately acquainted in 1836 in New Salem; but Springfield society and the impossibility of his supporting a wife in it, discouraged him.

"I am often thinking of what we said about your coming to live in Springfield," he wrote her in May. "I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing it. You would have to be poor, without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine, should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented; and there is nothing I can imagine that would make me more unhappy than to fail in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. What you have said to me may have been in the way of jest, or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten; if otherwise, I much wish you would think seriously before you decide. What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now imagine. I know you are capable of thinking correctly on any subject, and if you deliberate maturely upon this before you decide, then I am willing to abide your decision."

This decidedly dispassionate view of their relation seems not to have brought any decision from Miss Owens, for three months later Mr. Lincoln wrote her an equally judicial letter, telling her that he could not think of her "with entire indifference," that he in all cases wanted to do right and "most particularly so in all cases with women," and summing up his position as follows:

"What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster, if I can be convinced that it will in any considerable degree add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable—nothing more happy than to know you were so."

Miss Owens had enough discernment to recognize the disinterestedness of

(Continued on Page 5.)