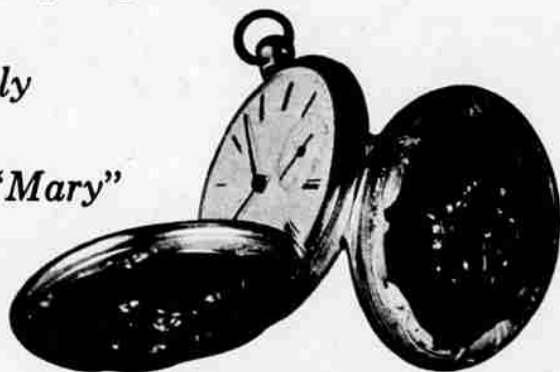


The watch was beautiful,  
but its inscription pledged Abe's  
love to an entirely  
different young "Mary"



Lincoln's wedding present for Mary Todd cost him \$300. The case is gold and blue enamel, set with sprays of rose diamonds.

came ill and dispirited. His close friend, Joshua Speed, persuaded him to take a trip. But Joshua, himself a bachelor and also fearful of matrimony, did little to reassure his friend.

Lincoln returned to the Springfield home of William Butler, where he boarded, on the evening of Jan. 14. Miss Curtis, who was visiting there, tried to distract him. She described the balls and parties she had attended, the people who had been present. The Butlers discreetly disappeared and left Mary to entertain their unhappy boarder.

Lincoln, always polite and gentle with women, sat quietly as Mary chattered, but it was obvious even to Miss Curtis, who later described him as "pale and nervous," that he was not really listening. Suddenly Lincoln rose and putting his hand in his waistcoat pocket, said, "Mary, I've got something for you." Handing her the blue watch, he walked out without another word and went upstairs to his room.

**H**ISTORIANS have speculated as to why Lincoln gave the watch he had chosen so carefully to the wrong Mary. Did he give it away because he wished to rid himself of a memento that reminded him so poignantly of what might have been? Or did the very name Mary confuse him so that he gave the watch he had carried next to his heart for many weeks to the wrong girl?

Mary Curtis returned home to Louisville, Ky., the next morning. She took the watch with her. Is it possible that Mary Curtis, who knew Mary Todd and was courted by some of the same men, thought herself engaged to Mr. Lincoln as a result of the extraordinary gift? She later revealed that not until she opened the watch to wind it did she see the inscription to Mary Todd.

Lincoln and Miss Todd remained estranged for more than a year, but they were still in love. Friends managed to bring them together during the summer of 1842. There had been so much talk over the

broken engagement that Lincoln and Mary decided it best to keep their plans to themselves. For the next several months they met secretly, and on Nov. 4, 1842, they were married in an impromptu ceremony with only a few friends present.

Mary Curtis, who never married, kept the watch hidden in a trunk for 31 years. Not until after Lincoln's death did she reveal the incident in which she became the recipient of a wedding gift meant for the other Mary.

Shortly before her death, Miss Curtis presented the watch to a girlhood friend, Miss Elizabeth DeWitt, then living in Washington. In a letter which has been preserved with the watch, Mary Curtis wrote:

July 7, 1872

My Dear Elizabeth . . .

Your birthday is on the 29th. You see, I remember it always, and I want you to make me very happy this year and accept a present that will give me much happiness in the giving, as it was a very happy and sad remembrance.

Do you remember the beautiful blue watch with the diamond stones our beloved President Lincoln gave me that memorable afternoon of January, 1841, with the inscription inside: "To Miss Mary Todd from A. L., 1841"? Well, I want you to accept it from me and keep it as a remembrance of me, when I pass to the great beyond, dear Elizabeth.

I feel sure you will do this for me as it will make me very happy. I will send the watch by Harry upon his return. Doctor White feels that my cold is improving and I will be well again this summer.

Good-bye, dearest faithful friend. I so hope to see you soon.

With all my love,  
Mary

Today, the beautiful Lincoln watch is part of a collection in the Lincoln library in Shippensburg, Pa.

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