

"I Would Still Be Drowned in Tears": Spiritualism in Abraham Lincoln's White House

Michelle L. Hamilton



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In 1862, in the midst of a bloody civil war, President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary, suffered unspeakable heartache when their young son died. To combat her grief, First Lady Mary Lincoln became a devotee of Spiritualism making the White House a center for Washington, D.C.'s Spiritualist community. For decades historians have maintained that President Lincoln only attended a few seances in an attempt to protect his mentally unstable wife. This narrative is incorrect, using a host of previously neglected primary sources, historian Michelle L. Hamilton documents the numerous seances President Lincoln attended and the interest he had for the religion. Michelle L. Hamilton's "I Would Still Be Drowned in Tears" sheds new light onto the Lincolns' interest in Spiritualism and proves that Mary Lincoln might not have been the only Spiritualist in the White House. "Perhaps now we can frankly admit, without ridicule or condemnation, the role Spiritualism played in the lives of Abraham and Mary,"--William Weeks, Ph.D., San Diego State University

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