



Last Lincoln Photograph, April 10, 1865

LINCOLN REMEMBERED IN UPPER MERION

by Ed Dybicz, 1986 article

Upper Merion Township, as well as the nation, was in a state of shock one hundred and twenty-one years ago, April 14, 1865, when President Abraham Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. by assassin John Wilkes Booth. The president died the next day.

Newspapers of that era reported Upper Merion residents "sobbing openly throughout the township. At first there was universal silence, and then grief prevailed. Many houses were draped with black cloth with rosettes of black and white satin."

Another newspaper account reported "Upper Merion people are weeping upon hearing of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States. Born February 12, 1809, died April 15, 1865. The remains have been embalmed. A few locks of hair were removed from the president's head for the family before he was placed in a coffin."

Sallie Louise Roberts of King of Prussia, who was field nurse with the Union Army during the Civil War couldn't believe "how anyone could shoot the president who held out the olive branch of peace and exhibited so great a desire to forgive." One of her most cherished recollections of the Civil War was seeing President Lincoln when he came to visit and review the Union forces at Sharpsburg.

Sallie Roberts was one of three women in Upper Merion who were first to respond to President Lincoln's call for nurses to care for wounded soldiers. She married William Wills, Jr., a Civil War veteran, in 1866 and lived to be ninety-four years old. Her stories about the war and seeing the president always captivated her audience.

There were other locals who had seen Lincoln at one time or another. They were also field nurses, Alice H. Holstein and Anna Carver of Upper Merion and Rachel P. Evans and Sarah Priest of Bridgeport.

A short time later, Anna Morris Holstein of Upper Merion also became an army nurse. She frequently saw President Lincoln and wrote of her exploits in a book, *Three Years in the Field Hospitals of the Army of the Potomac*. She took care of the wounded at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, South Anna, Gettysburg, The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Gold Harbor, and others.



(Pictured above are the field nurses who served in Sharpsburg after the Battle of Antietam. Sarah Priest spent ten months caring for the wounded at Sharpsburg.)



Anna M. Holstein

Elizabeth Ellis Deliberato of Upper Merion has in her possession a vivid newspaper account about Dr. Charles A. Leale, an army surgeon who, with the president's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, was at the bedside when the president expired.

Leale, a twenty-three year old physician from New York, was an eyewitness to the tragedy, and the first surgeon to reach the stricken president. He did what he could but, he later wrote, "perceived evidence of brain injury and no hope. The bullet entered the president's head behind the left ear. His wound was mortal, and it was impossible for him to recover." The young army surgeon was with Lincoln the entire time and grasped his hand until he died.



Dr. Charles A. Leale

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