

Rose Whipp Northrup (1850-1944)

Rose Whipp Northrup was born on September 27, 1850 in Beardstown, Illinois. She was the daughter of John Whipp and Elizabeth VanNess Whipp. Sometime between 1850 and 1860 her father John moved their family to Bloomington where he was a banker. It was while in Bloomington that he was appointed to become an assistant state treasurer for the state of Illinois. It is not known exactly when this happened in the 1850s but the family was living in Springfield by 1860 where John's occupation was listed as a clerk.

It was while living in Springfield that Rose met and became acquainted with Abraham Lincoln. As an older woman, she recalled that her family lived on the same block as Lincoln's family in Springfield. Her father also worked in the Illinois State House where Lincoln spent much time since he was a lawyer on the Eighth Judicial Circuit. She often went to work with her father. Rose remembered that Lincoln was a great friend of children and was always kind to her. While she was at work with her father, she would often play with Lincoln's youngest child Thomas, called Tad for short. They became great friends and would often chase each other down the halls of the Illinois State House. She stated that she would run in and out of Lincoln's office as if she were his own child. She also recalled that Lincoln often took her on his legs and stroked her blonde hair. Because of her blonde hair, he gave her the nickname of "Silverhair."

Sometime after Lincoln became President (between 1861-1865), Rose and her family moved back to Bloomington where her father once again took up the trade of banking. It was while they were living in Bloomington that Lincoln was assassinated. Rose later recalled the day her family received the news that Lincoln had been assassinated on Friday, April 14, 1865. The people of Bloomington did not find out about what happened until the next day when the President had died. Rose was about fifteen years old at the time. She had come home and found her mother was crying. When she asked her mother what was wrong, her mother replied, "Oh, they have assassinated our dear President."¹ The next day, (April 16th) following Easter Sunday church services, a crowd estimated at 5,000 to 7,000 area residents gathered on the courthouse square in downtown Bloomington to officially mourn the brutal death of President Abraham Lincoln.

Rose recalled that she and her mother went down to the courthouse where hundreds of others were streaming in the same direction. At the square a great crowd had gathered and men like Jesse Fell, Ashael Gridley, and Leonard Swett were making speeches. This meeting was known as an "indignation meeting," which is a mass meeting of people who were angered and outraged about some injustice, in this case Lincoln's brutal assassination. Lincoln had been "so well known personally to so large a number of people and had so long been regarded as" a citizen of McLean County, "that his death seemed to fall with the most crushing severity upon" the people of McLean County.² She stated that many men were cursing and swearing vengeance of the perpetrators of the murder of Lincoln. She and her mother stayed at this meeting until it ended later in the day. A photograph of this meeting was taken showing a great crowd gathered around the

¹ "Mrs. Northrup recalls vision of Lincoln at his old desk," *The Daily Pantagraph*, February 12, 1942

² "Tremendous excitement! Rebel sympathizers at a discount. The popular heart affected! Immense meeting on Sunday. A Sabbath well spent. 6,000 people present. Patriotic Resolutions," *The Daily Pantagraph*, April 18, 1865

courthouse. This photograph is thought to be one of the few photographs of such meetings (which were held in hundreds of cities and towns across the country) after Lincoln's assassination.

Rose also remembered that while she and her mother were at the meeting, near where she was standing "some man who had just heard of the death of Lincoln threw up his hat and shouted 'Hurrah' or something like that. In a moment, a crowd gathered and threatened him and he ran like a scared deer to get away."³ Other accounts of this same incident reported that this man, who was thought to have been a man named John Hinzey, (who was staying at the Ashley Hotel located across the street from the courthouse), was said to have been heard rejoicing the day before the indignation meeting when news first arrived about Lincoln's assassination. The crowd of people around him went mad with anger hearing his cheers and set out to hang him. He was only saved when a few cooler heads spirited him away in a carriage heading towards Peoria.⁴

Five days after this meeting Lincoln's funeral train left Washington D.C. on April 21st and followed a circuitous route through 15 states and about 180 cities and towns. It made many stops along the way including New York, Cleveland, and Indianapolis. All along the train route, especially the final leg of the journey from Bloomington to Springfield, people lined the tracks to pay their final respects to Lincoln as the train passed. In the days leading up to the funeral train passing through Bloomington, the *Daily Pantagraph* carried news about the reception of the train in other cities across the country. Finally, at about 5 a.m. on May 3rd, (two hours later than scheduled) the train stopped in Bloomington for about ten minutes to take on wood and water before continuing on to Springfield. Bloomington had the honor of being the only stop of the funeral train between Chicago and Springfield. The people of both Bloomington and Normal had erected funeral arches to span the Chicago and Alton Railroad tracks. However, those people who wished to attend Lincoln's funeral in Springfield could not stay to greet the funeral train when it arrived in Bloomington. If they did, they would not have been able to make it to Springfield in time for the funeral. People had to choose to either stay to greet the train or travel to Springfield for the funeral. Rose, her father, and an uncle made the choice to attend the funeral in Springfield on May 4th, 1865. While it was estimated that between 3,000-4,000 mourners gathered at the train, it was said it would have been larger if people did not have to choose between going to the funeral and staying to greet the train.

Upon reaching Springfield on May 3rd, Lincoln's body was taken to lie in state at the Capitol Building where it was reported that 75,000 people filed past his coffin from 10 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. that day. The next day, the funeral procession began at 11:30 a.m. The day was hot and humid. It was 2 ½ miles to Oak Ridge Cemetery, north of the city. Bands played dirges and hymns, (four funeral marches had been composed for the occasion). At the cemetery, Lincoln's 2nd inaugural address was read. Methodist Reverend Bishop Matthew Simpson, a friend of Lincoln's, gave the oration which surely left many in tears. It was said that 100,000 people were present in Springfield for the funeral with at least 1,000 of those people from Bloomington.

³ "Lincoln's 'Silverhair' Tells of City's Grief at Death of Lincoln," *The Daily Pantagraph*, February 12, 1938

⁴ John Burnham. "Lincoln and Douglas in Bloomington: History of Bloomington, Illinois," (Bloomington, 1897) 12

About twelve years after this tragic event Rose married Charles Northrup on September 27, 1877. Northrup was a local merchant from Lisle, New York. He came to Bloomington in 1868 and established himself as a dry goods clerk first and eventually opened his own mercantile store. The couple was married at her parent's home in Normal and it was attended by family and intimate friends. Their wedding announcement in the *Daily Pantagraph* recorded those people who attended and the gifts which they received. One such gift was a case of silverware from the congregation at Second Presbyterian Church where Charles and Rose would be long time, active members. It was also reported by the *Daily Pantagraph* that Rose was "held in high esteem for her womanly virtues and her natural gifts and accomplishments." For some years she had held "a leading place among the singers of the city, and, with a disposition as sweet as her voice, has drawn her many warm friends and admirers."⁵ Rose and Charles would go on to have four children: Fred, Charles, Lyle, and Julia and their home was located at 510 East Front Street.

Sadly, Rose's life was struck by tragedy once again. On Sunday, July 8, 1898 Rose's eldest son, Fred, went on a camping trip with two of his friends. They stopped at the town of Kappa, (a short distance from the town of Normal) to rest and after dinner, Fred went out hunting by himself. A short time later, one of his companions heard a gunshot and went looking for him. His friend found him dead from a gunshot wound to the face. Fred's breech-loading shotgun had accidentally discharged while he was carrying it, killing him instantly. He would have been 20 years old later that fall.

Her husband Charles was a well known and highly respected merchant in McLean County. His store, *C.J. Northrup Dry Goods, Carpets, Notions, and Fancy Goods*, was located at 118 N. Center Street first and then expanded to include 208 W. Washington Street. It opened in 1878 and remained in business for the next 32 years until Charles' retirement in March of 1930. Sadly, just over three years after his retirement Charles passed away on November 18, 1933. *The Daily Pantagraph* reported that the city had lost "a pioneer merchant and business man."⁶

Rose would continue on for another 11 years after the death of her husband. She led a relatively quiet life during her remaining years. However, she did gain some fame locally having been interviewed by *The Daily Pantagraph* first in 1938 and again in 1942 about her memories of Abraham Lincoln from when she was a young girl and her memories of the famous indignation meeting held after news of Lincoln's assassination reached Bloomington in 1865.

On July 23, 1944 at the age of 93, Rose died quietly at Brokaw Hospital, where she had spent the last few years of her life in failing health. She was the oldest member of Second Presbyterian Church, the church which she and her husband had been life long members and supporters. Rose was buried next to her husband and their oldest son at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington.

By: Candace Summers, 2009

⁵ "Love Among The Roses: Cupid laid aside his bow and arrows and conquered with a Whipp," *The Daily Pantagraph*, September 28, 1877

⁶ "C.J. Northrup, Merchant, Dies," *The Daily Pantagraph*, November 19, 1933

