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While Abraham Lincoln was serving his first term in the Illinois legislature, he met the beautiful Ann Rutledge. No known image of Ann survives, but—according to Ann's own family members—she greatly resembled Minnie Harms (later Mrs. Herbert H. Reed).

Not  
Double



"SHE IS THE VERY PICTURE OF ANN RUTLEDGE."

So declared McGrady Rutledge, cousin of Ann, Lincoln's first sweetheart, of Miss Minnie Harms, of Petersburg, Ill., now of Oak Park., Ill., The lady is now Mrs. Herbert H. Reed. The picture ~~was taken~~ was taken in 1898, when she was about twenty. Ann Rutledge's own sister, who reached an advanced age, also said that Minnie Harms looked like Ann Rutledge.

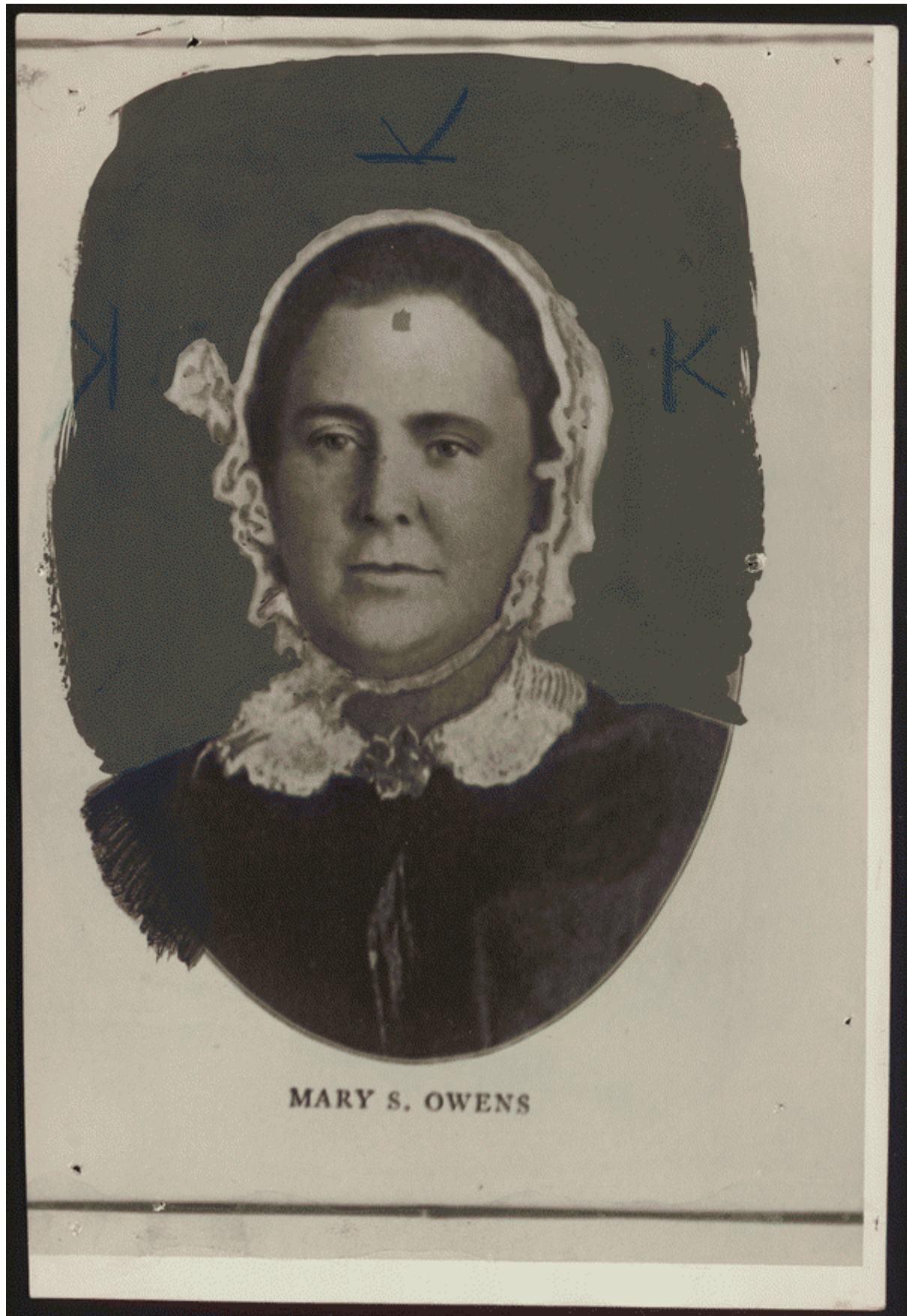
Lincoln and Rutledge became romantically involved although, according to historical reports, they were never formally engaged. Ann, however, suddenly died—likely of typhoid fever—in the summer of 1834. She was 22 years old.

Ann's sister, Nancy, was in the house when Lincoln saw Ann for the last time. Nancy said this about their last meeting:

*I can never forget how sad and broken-hearted Lincoln looked when he came out of the room from the last interview with Annie. No one knows what was said at that meeting, for they were alone together.*

Abe was inconsolable when Ann died. He fell into a deep depression, telling friends that he had doubts whether he would ever have a happy marriage and family.

During his second legislative term, Abe agreed to an arranged marriage with a Kentucky woman (named Mary Owens) whom he had met about three years earlier. Then Abe had second thoughts.



Why did Lincoln have second thoughts? We can look to his own unflattering words as he describes Mary Owens to his friend, Eliza Caldwell Browning:

*I knew she was over-size, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff [a Shakespeare-created character]; I knew she was called an "old maid," and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation [sic]; but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother [meaning his step-mother, Sarah Bush Lincoln]; and this, not from withered features, for her skin was too full of fat to permit its contracting in to wrinkles; but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head, that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy, and reached her present bulk in less than thirtyfive or forty years; and, in short, I was not all pleased with her. (See Lincoln's letter of 1 April 1838 in *Speeches & Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832-1865*, by Abraham Lincoln, compiled by Mario Sanchez, PhD and edited by Merwin Moe), at [page 21](#).)*

Although Lincoln was agreeable to uphold his part of the deal, he wrote an offer-to-end-it [letter to Owens on the 16th of August, 1837](#). Among other things, in that letter, Abe told "Friend Mary" he wouldn't blame her if she ended their relationship:

*I want in all cases to do right; and most particularly so, in all cases with women. I want, at this particular time, more than any thing else, to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it.*

When she never wrote back, the Lincoln-Owens relationship was effectively over. It isn't surprising that Mary didn't write back, given the words with which [Lincoln ended his August 16th letter](#):

*If it suits you best to not answer this farewell - a long life and a merry one attend you.*

These events did not help Abe's self-confidence. He reportedly told friends that he'd resigned himself to being a bachelor forever. In fact, he wrote to one friend that a woman would have to be a "blockhead" to marry him:

*I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason; I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me. (See letter to Eliza Caldwell Browning, referenced above, quoted at [page 22 of Speeches & Letters](#).)*

Abe, as it happens, had judged himself too harshly.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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## Media Stream



Ann Rutledge

Field of Vision,

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