

**LINCOLN'S FIRST
LOVE: A TRUE
STORY, PP.9-50**

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Lincoln's First Love: A True Story, pp.9-50 by Carrie Douglas Wright

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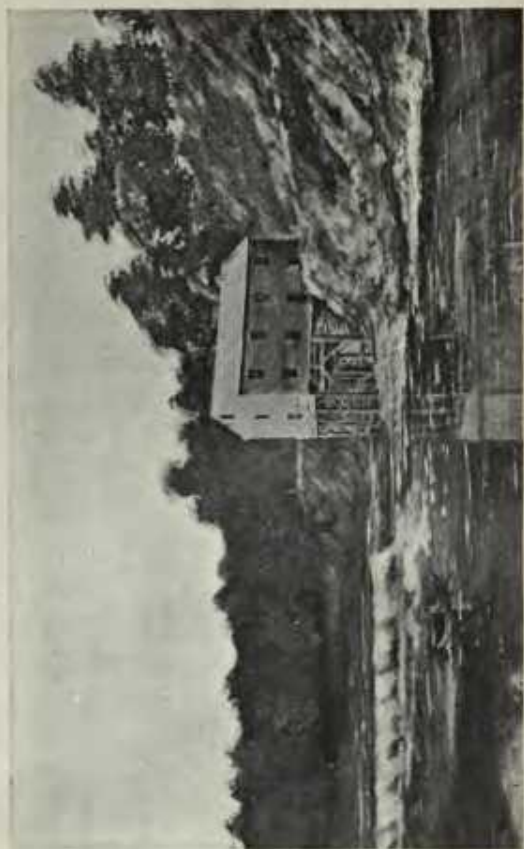
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CARRIE DOUGLAS WRIGHT

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THE OLD MILL AT NEW SALEM

LINCOLN'S
FIRST LOVE


A True Story

BY
CARRIE DOUGLAS
WRIGHT



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Lincoln's First Love

WO miles south of Petersburg, in the state of Illinois, are the hills of New Salem, picturesque and beautiful; yet with all their picturesqueness and beauty, they would probably never have gained more than local fame had not Abraham Lincoln there spent his early life and met his first love.

Just west of the Sangamon River is the hill on which the little town of New Salem was built. It is very steep and rugged until you reach the summit, where it is comparatively level. The view from this hill is one of the most beautiful in Illinois. At its foot stands the old mill, long since still, as are the

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hands that there changed the golden grain into snowy flakes of flour. The noisy dam rushes and roars, disturbing the quiet and peace of the forsaken place. Not a vestige of the little town of New Salem remains. Two forest trees spread their protecting arms over the sod where once stood Abraham Lincoln's little store. Upon one of these trees some skillful hand has carved his firm, kind features.

Lift up your heads, O stately trees ;
Flow on, O shining river !
Your fame shall live with Lincoln's name,
In freedom's breast forever.

Early in the thirties, when Indians roamed the prairies of Illinois, and herds of deer lapped the sparkling water of the rivers, a young man who was destined to become one of the greatest, if not the greatest man this country

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has produced, came to New Salem to dwell among the hills. He was a most unattractive lad, with trousers of jean, and homespun jacket, not well fitted to his lean, lank form. One of the first persons to make friends with Lincoln was Mintor Graham, the village school-master. This man was fond of books and learning, and he was not long in interesting Abe, who was most grateful for the instruction Mr. Graham freely and gladly gave him. Lincoln was very fond of arithmetic, and to his teacher's delight, mastered the tables and learned to do sums as well as the brightest scholar in his school. Grammar was the next study taken up by the young student, and he was seldom seen without a book in his hand. Abe, as he was familiarly called, opened a store of general merchandise and groceries. His

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genial manner and his honesty won for him many friends, and he was quite successful in his business.

* * * * *

Each morning, with neatly braided hair, a frock of homespun reaching to her ankles, a plain waist of the same brown material buttoned down the back, a little blue sunbonnet tied under her chin, Ann Rutledge tripped away to school. She was a general favorite, and lucky was the lad who discovered the first wild rose on the hillside to pin on the border of her little bonnet.

Ann was full of sentiment; in the wild flowers that grew on the hillside, in the song of the thrush, in the gold of the sunset, she read lessons that afforded her delights of which her companions knew nothing.

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Mintor Graham was a tall, sinewy man, with sandy hair, and small, sharp features. He was rather stern; any scholar who was guilty of idleness or levity was recalled to a sense of duty by a single glance of the master's eye.

The schoolhouse was a primitive structure of logs and mud plaster, with a huge chimney and a great fireplace. Often when the hickory logs burned bright, fantastic shadows of the master were reflected on the walls, causing the smaller boys to nudge each other in great merriment. Each window contained but four small panes of glass, the seats were slabs supported by four wooden pegs, the only desk was the teacher's one, a rudely constructed affair, at which the pupils took turns at writing. Abe Lincoln was greatly interested