Good evening and welcome to oximeter farm. I'm Mark Wetherington, senior research fellow at the Filson Historical Society. And I want to welcome you all to Ox more for our program tonight, Mary Lincoln's assassination with Professor Katherine Clinton. Before I introduce our speaker, let me say that our mission is to collect, preserve and tell the significant stories of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley region's history and culture. And our program tonight is certainly one of the most significant stories and episodes and our region in nation's history. I also want to invite you if you're not a member to consider joining us. Sara Dennison is holding a membership brochures, the back of the room, and she would be happy to tell you all about membership benefits. So well also let me welcome the Atherton High School history class. We're delighted to have you here. We're sorry, we couldn't give everyone a front row seat. But it's, you're here and you gotta say no, we really do appreciate you. Coming docks more and being with us tonight for this program. Professor Clinton holds the Denman, Chair of American History at the University of Texas San Antonio. She is the author and editor of over two dozen books, including Harriet Tubman, the road to freedom, and the penguin classic edition of Mary chestnuts diary. She also wrote the plantation mistress, woman's world and the old South, and terror revisited women war and the plantation legend. She served as a consultant on Steven Spielberg's Lincoln, and is currently studying and researching Civil War soldiers and insanity. Beginning in November 2015. She will serve as president of the Southern Historical Association, and in 2016 LSU Press will publish her Fleming lectures, stepdaughters of history, Southern women in the Civil War. And that Lecture Series is a significant series. So please join me in welcoming Professor Clinton talks more.

Well, I want to thank you all for coming out. And this lovely evening. And I want to thank Mark for getting me back to Ox more, because I do remember when the Filson was first starting its association and some of us historians came here and looked around and don't take the books off the shelves. But we do enjoy very much the beauty and the history represented in this place. So I do want to thank Judy Miller for her arrangements. And certainly my host, Mr. And Mrs. Thomas black, and thank you for appointing my good friend Lee and whites to Director of
oldest son Robert had just returned home from active duty. She and her husband had fought

declared it was an exuberant patriotic occasion. Lincoln, by the way, was a very devoted theater
role in our American cousin. The play was a popular standard, but Lincoln's presence turn this
evening into an exuberant patriotic occasion. Lincoln, by the way, was a very devoted theater
goer, having attended more than 100 nights of plays during his presidency. But with peace declared it was even more jubilant evening, Mrs. Lincoln was particularly relieved because her
oldest son Robert had just returned home from active duty. She and her husband had fought
bitterly over his enlistment, but harmony was restored with this safe return. Lincoln had written his wife a playful note, to invite her on their drive earlier in the day, a gesture which really hark back to the days of their youth. They're talking the carriage was full of chair, a quality that too often eluded them and the previous four years, the President's courtly attentiveness, the young engaged couple accompanying them to the theater, enhanced Mary Lincoln's romantic mood while watching the play. She had been clinging to her husband's arm, and she teased him about what their guests might think, to which Lincoln replied, they won't think anything about it. These words were his last. John Wilkes Booth had crept into the Presidential box fired his pistol directly into the back of the president's head. Then he attacked Henry Rathbone with a knife before leaping onto the stage shouting, sic semper tyrannis. Thus always to tyrants. The Virginia state motto, weather booth heard is like in the fall, or during his escape on horseback remains a matter of dispute, as do so many events that evening, dissolving into chaos, blood, and noise. Everything went out of focus for Mary, except her husband's had slumped forward, on his chest, his limbs slack and the rocker witnesses all agreed that it was Mrs. Lincoln screams that alert to the audience. She saw blood shrieked they've shot the president watching a doctor unable to find her husband's pulse, attempting mouth to mouth resuscitation, followed by Lincoln's revive breathing proved traumatizing, particularly to Mary. She felt helpless as the soldiers lifted her husband onto a litter, carrying him across the street into a private house owned by William Peterson. During the ghastly scenes which unfolded, Mary wondered aloud, why it was not she who was shot. But Lincoln alone was wounded and doctors agreed there was no expectation of recovery. Almost everyone, members of the Cabinet doctors, everyone knew the outcome ahead, but Mrs. Lincoln was being protected from this. The National Park Service preservation of the Peterson home allows visitors to reimagine Lincoln's last hours as they enter the cramped bedroom at the rear of the house. Although many portraits include mrs. Lincoln kneeling or sitting by the bed during Lincoln's final moments. The truth was that she had been banished from the room. She wanted to remain by her husband side, but she began to sob hysterically. She was taken to a nearby parlor, near Dawn, Mrs. Lincoln realized her husband was not getting any better. But worse, she collapsed onto the floor and a faint, Edwin Stanton barked, take that woman out do not let her and again the deathbed of a loved one involves the most hallowed of 19th century rituals. Mary's ancestors were Scots Irish women, who might kneed for hours if not days over the body of a departing loved one. In Victorian America, attending a dying husband was a wife's most sacred duty and obligation to press into your memory the final moments to be there at the end. Everyone crowded in that room last that last night knew a wife's privilege. But when Lincoln's breathing became so halted, and shallow and labored around 7am No one summoned his wife. Instead, Reverend Phineas girlie suggested a prayer and the dozen men encircled their beloved leader at 7:22am. Lincoln, the 16th, president of the US, was pronounced dead. And Stanton uttered his famous tribute. Now he belongs to the ages. But forgotten are the words of Mary Lincoln, the wife kept from her husband's bedside. When informed of his passing, she cried, why did you not tell me he was dying? Her crying could be heard throughout the house, and it was her Wales of grief that alerted those gathered outside, Abraham Lincoln was gone. And it was in that moment, the circle of men surrounding Lincoln, expelling his wife from his dying bedside. That Mary's betrayal began, she became an exile within her own historical experience. With her husband's death, Mary was cast adrift, only able to imagine assuming her rightful place along her husband's side in death. She actually did not want to leave her husband. She stayed on in the Peterson house, another two hours after Lincoln died until Robert persuaded her to take a carriage back to the White House, where tad was waiting. Mary was only able to rouse herself as a mother, having been so cruelly cheated as a wife. Well, Abraham Lincoln's reputation soared and has only grown more revered over the years, perhaps immortal in the American Historical imagination. His wife's reputation tumbled into deeper decline. Following his death, She has been condemned all too often as infernal. She became an object of pity consigned to
the sidebar of her husband's narrative text. She did survive to attend one of her son's weddings, to see grandchildren born to visit the European capitals of which she and her husband excused me both dreamed. She tried to establish rhythms to keep his legend burnished his halo polish, but simultaneously, she herself endured a series of crippling humiliations, losses during widowhood attacks magnified by her vulnerability, contemporaries and scholars alike debate the relationship between Lincoln and his wife. Perhaps no other occupants of the White House have endured such media attention until the Kennedy White House of the 1960s and the media industrial complex which followed, but even this has been surpassed by the storms of speculation that frequently engulf the 42nd President William Jefferson Clinton, and his wife Hillary, the lamp scandals about which I've been called as an expert on First Lady's. Mary Lincoln's relationship with her husband continues to fascinate. And perplex, even in the immediate wake of his death. Did he love her first, that he loved her best? Did he love her at all? Were she the only woman who could cajole him from his crippling and frequent bouts of melancholy, redirecting him toward his destined greatness in which she firmly believed? Did she NAG and abuse him and give him no peace? Wishing a partner only for proprietary sake, a requisite vessel to produce the children he so cherished? was Lincoln's desire for male companionship purely spiritual, or was there a physical component, claims and counterclaims shake, rattle and roll Lincoln scholars? If we try to examine the facts of the Lincoln courtship, naturally disputes erupt? Who was more invested in the marriage? Did Mary flirt with one too many rivals and force Abraham to call it off? Does this attraction to Matilda Edwards cause Lincoln to get cold feet? Concerning his attachment? Did the reminders of a previous proposal to Mary Owens delay the nuptials did the disapproval of Mary's relatives become an obstacle to their romance? All of this kind of minutia is is I hope you'll just take my word for it. I can give you chapter and verse and what you can sneak in and find in the archives at the at the Filson on this but historians paint very vividly different portraits of Lincoln and his courtship. However, once the gold ring was slipped on Mary's finger during a ceremony in November 1842 The to entwine their fates, Mary was her husband's sounding board. For every speech, she was deeply partisan, blindly loyal, held fierce grudges. Advice flowed freely as they read the papers aloud to one another on a daily basis. Mary firmly believed she had married a diamond in the rough, and she spent a good deal of her energy polishing him. In 1858, Lincoln confided laughingly to journalist Henry Vuillard that his wife insisted he would eventually be President of the United States, and even Mary's critics give her credit for playing a crucial role in the rise of Lincoln's political fortunes during the 1850s. Her scheming helped Lincoln attain his nomination as a Republican presidential candidate. They were both jubilant at his election. When New England aristocrat Edward Everett spoke at Gettysburg during during Lincoln's famous 1863 address. He enjoyed getting to meet the president and Mary would have loved Everett's estimation that the Polish Abraham Lincoln had acquired quote, may be credited to the influence of his wife. Yet her husband's election put her under the microscope. One reporter describes the entire female population or Nick statics of curiosity to know who she was, what she was, what she looks like, what her manner is, but those who wish to set a house on fire, my friend Doris Goodwin suggests we'll begin with the Fache so Mary Lincoln was in a way the thatch That fire was set to she felt herself in a fishbowl when journalists were called if she drove down Pennsylvania Avenue, the electric wire trills the news to every hamlet in the union. When the Lincoln's arrived at the White House, Harriet Lane, President James Buchanan's niece wrote casually mrs. Lincoln is awfully Western, loud, unrefined. At one of Mrs. Lincoln's first receptions, British journalist William Howard Russell found the attendance was very scanty, the Washington ladies have not yet made up their minds that Mrs. Lincoln is the fashion they miss their southern friends and constantly draw comparisons between them and the vulgar Yankee women who are now in power. Some of the earliest press reports portrayed Mary is incapable of measuring up to refined Eastern standards. Mrs. Lincoln was offended by these cold shoulders, hoping to prove her critics wrong. The new First Lady believed that the White House should be a shining
symbol of a great nation, especially when peril was abounding at the Executive Mansion was a
shabby place Springfield relations described it as no better than a second rate Hotel. Congress
had appropriated 20,000 for White House refurbishing, which is very paltry when you see that
congressional appropriations at the time. Were $20,000 for a painting for the Capitol. And
actually when Andrew J. Johnson and his family came in Congress gave them 125,000 For
redecoration. But Mary Lincoln sought the advice of the Commissioner of Buildings of the
district and William Wood was a former hotel manager and tour organizer. His combination of
 shameless flattery and smooth manner ingratiated him so she championed him during the
spring of 1861. But instead of safeguarding her reputation on shopping expeditions to
Manhattan, he Wheedle for a permanent position peddling influence and soliciting kickbacks in
May 1861. One particularly outraged New Yorker reported she's spending 1000s and 1000s of
dollars for articles of luxurious taste. Her kinswoman Lizzie Grimsley on the trip to Manhattan,
was adamant in her cousin's defense that Mary did not indulge in 100th part of the
extravagance with which she and I were credited. Mary did select a fine Havilland dinner
service in Solferino with gilt decor for state occasions, designating the seal of the United States
on each piece. Presidential China was nothing new. And this very same pattern, by the way,
was selected by First Lady Michelle Obama at the inauguration luncheon for her as her husband
in January 2009. What is remembered is neither Mrs. Lincoln's taste nor her patriotism, but that
she ordered a second set of the China and put her own initials on it, and there was a great
dispute over who had paid for it. The newspapers were full of allegations and controversy. The
First Lady may have been compromising ethics, to which her husband subscribed, he was
certainly very frugal. However, there's no evidence to suggest that she participated in criminal
conspiracy, which some scholars have suggested, rather bad judgment. Critics would continue
to spread stories to such a degree that the editor of the New York Herald complained in
October about the abuse heaped on the first lady, and she replied with her things, but she
remained remained the center of media controversy. Her husband's own staff referred to their
boss's wife as Hellcat. She suffered very severe mood swings, first after the death of Willie in
February 1862, and then following a head injury, and this head injury was from a carriage
accident in June 1863. Actually, a carriage accident that evidence demonstrates was no
accident, but rather was interference with the carriage and Lincoln was the intended target of
this accident. The following year, April 1864, when she went on another shopping spree in
Manhattan. The papers took sharp aim, Mrs. Lint, Mrs. Lincoln ransack the treasures of the
Broadway dry goods stores. Washington political hostess Mary Clemmer, ame said, Well, her
sister women's scraped lint, the wife of the president of the United States spent her time rolling
to and fro between Washington and New York, the New York Times reported austerity
campaigns were afoot. Among the well heeled ladies were boycotting imported fabrics for the
duration of the war. But Mrs. Lincoln said it was important to keep Import Export up. So she
encouraged everyone to actually participate in the purchase of these goods in order to keep
the economy robust. I don't think it worked at the time and I think it continues to have a little
bit of problem. Her idea of balance of trade, I think was not adopted by any of the economists
of the time. But with her husband's death, and on the heels of surrender, Mrs. Lincoln became
notorious eccentric, derided, most prominent claims by her husband's former partner that
Lincoln sweetheart from New Salem, and Rutledge was the former president's one true love.
Equally damaging were claims by Lincoln's business associates, that the President's widow was
a blackmailing harridan besmirching her husband's memory in 1867 by trying to pawn her
jewelry and wardrobe with the old clothes scandal as the press dubbed this episode, she was in
a state of very severe dislocation following her husband's death. Once her older son Robert
married in 1868, she took her son tad to Europe for his education, home sick the to return to
Roberts home in Chicago in 1871. But shortly thereafter, Tad fell ill and his death had his
mother and brother very hard. The Great Chicago Fire hit later in that year. A few years later,
we know that Mary endured Odin and bittering alienation from her only remaining son Robert,
in 1875. He had her committed to an asylum against her will ostensibly for her own safety, but an act which caused incalculable damage to her esteem. This also created a permanent stain on her historical reputation. When she crazy, continues the most common query biographers encounter in the 1920s while Lincoln biographers gathered momentum in the wake of really his centennial. Honor a Morrow claimed it began to look as if there were concerns You're a sea of silence about Lincoln's wife. Morrow began research on a biography and discovered Mary Todd Lincoln to be one of the most lied about women in the world. Her biography of the malign First Lady appeared in 1928. The same year the true story of Mary wife of Lincoln, by Catherine Helm, Mary's nice, and these volumes were intended to try and counterbalance and contradict the very harsh unsympathetic portrayals. They took negative images protected by William Herndon, and tried in many ways to whitewash them but Herndon is reverberations are still with us. The personal antipathy between Herndon and Mrs. Lincoln has been well documented, and following Lincoln's death when Mary consented to an interview. Afterward, she denounced him as a liar. The hostilities broke out into the open when he began collecting information and on November 16 1866, gave his famous public lecture on an Rutledge and ushering in the Rutledge industry was perhaps Herndon this most enduring legacy. For mrs. Lincoln. This was a full frontal assault, a shattering blow, more balanced and sympathetic accounts of Mary would counter these charges. The aforementioned volumes by Mauro and helm were joined by rehabilitative work, including studies by Carl Sandburg in 1932, Ruth painter Randall in 1953, Justin and Linda Turner in 1972 ish Bell Ross in 73, and Jean Baker in 1987. However, during the late 20th century, Michael Burlingame rejected any revisionist interpretations, and replaced Herndon as Mary Lincoln's harshest critic, Burlingame clearly places blame for misery within the marriage, which is a given in his estimation on Mary. In his thoughtful and important studies of Lincoln, Burlingame frequently introduces Mary shortcomings and the alleged disastrous effects on her husband beyond the confines of marital relations. For example, he suggests, quote, in order to avoid conflict with his difficult wife, he spent an inordinate amount of time away from home. Such a tactic may have made his unfortunate marriage tolerable, but it deprived his children of contact with their father. Lincoln's absenteeism may seem striking, but it might have been not only a strategy for success, but more of a norm than we realize. Burlingame comments the few surviving letters between the Lincoln's do not suggest a love on either side, and then goes on to state the most remarkable feature of the correspondence is his it sparseness, he could have added that it's well known that the Lincoln's burned much of their personal correspondence before leaving Springfield for the White House, the famous burn pile. Even more to the point, Robert Todd Lincoln, painfully reticent about family matters, sealing his father's papers until 25 years after Robert Todd Lincoln's own death, he sought out and he collected his mother's letters. These letters have not been found. letters between the Lincoln's offer rich material for mining producing Laird and very nuanced multiple interpretations although Berlin Gan Burlingame claims that his interpretation is paramount and others are sadly flawed. In the 21st century, see a trip the author of the intimate world of Abraham Lincoln has surpassed Burlingame as Mary Lincoln's most rabid detractor, as Jean Baker argues he uses the familiar rants of previous historians and employs selective evidence to eviscerate Mary Lincoln as someone who can do no right trip compares her to Hitler. Trip proclaims that the marriage of Abraham and Mary ranks is one of the worst marital misfortunes in recorded history, and goes on to suggest Mary was Lincoln's cross to bear trips flair for hyperbole presents as much of a problem, as does his death before his book was published. This discussions of Lincoln's private life remain unresolved. Mary Lincoln is her husband's cross to bear is a popular refrain echoing down through the generations of Lincoln scholars. I would suggest that if Mary Lincoln had also died in 1865, and to be counterfactual again, I did write an article for the Abraham Lincoln Association Journal about how would we judge her as a wife? How would we judge her as a First Lady? If it was actually she not her husband, who died that particular night? I don't really enjoy that much counterfactual, but I think it does present us
with an interesting puzzle. Her early demise would have spared her. Of course, the old clothes scandal and no pension battles on the floor. or of Congress, were congressional debates, which I know we now think are very, very childish and difficult are even more. So when you read some of the 19th century accounts. We'd have no spiritualist photograph of her with her husband. We'd have no confinement to Bellevue, this not being the infamous New York City asylum, but the private asylum in Batavia, Illinois, where Mrs. Lincoln's involuntary confinement took place in 1875. I encourage you to visit it. I was greatly shocked when I took a tour there and I was on the highway and I saw crowds and crowds of people getting off at the Tavia exit and hopefully thought it was a great revival of interest in Mrs. Lincoln. And it was in a slightly different way and that that was where the shopping outlets were. So I found it really quite interesting. Mrs. Lincoln's reputation would fade with death, but biographers would resurrect her, only to knock her down again. And it is the series of indictments leveled against her that seem to suggest an endless loop of character assassination. A 2013 headline in New York Magazine anoints Mrs. Lincoln, the First Lady of debt. Certainly the first exhibit at the at the Springfield presidential library on Mrs. Lincoln was called Mary Lincoln first lady of controversy. The indictments historians have leveled against her appear disproportionately harsh, and they all employ the distorted lens of hindsight. For example, when a scholar of Romans Mary Lincoln's shopping spree in the months leading up to Lincoln's assassination, he and in the most egregious cases, it has been a he is being unfair to his subject as the language betrays. Mary did not have a timeline when her husband would die. Unlike Imelda Marcos with whom she was compared by the American press in the 1980s, Mary Lincoln was not addicted to shoes. However, I do have to confess that her serial multiple glove purchases were nothing short of a mania. Incredible indictments continue that she was scheming, criminal, even diseased in 2003 of volumes suggested that Mary Lincoln's physical ailments at the end of her life stem from the effects of syphilis. There was a harsh 19 century's cure for venereal disease, but this was not Mary's problem. Instead, her back her eyesight, and many other attributes began to fail. But equally debilitating was the estrangement from her only remaining son the fading memories of happier days, the long drawn out deterioration of her physical stamina and mental faculties. Barry Lincoln's character had undergone relentless, repeated assaults, Lincoln was killed by a bullet and gone within hours, Mrs. Lincoln suffering stretched for another 16 years, she was so miserable that she could not overcome the oceans of grief and floods of sorrow that engulfed her clearly many times. When she was able to find some light at the end of the tunnel, beating back her despair, new obstacles would intervene, she embraced a final escape of death, anticipating a reunion with her husband, and that might have been the end of it if Mary Lincoln could join the company of Sarah Polk and Florence Harding. Strong well first ladies who fade into obscurity, but because of the meteoric rise of her husband's reputation, she like left luggage is periodically retrieved, unpacked, investigated again and again in the court of public opinion. Her character has been proverbially toasted on the coals, and yet she continues to fascinate and foil those who want to consign her to the dustbin. I'm always puzzled when scholars feel that Lincoln's elevation is in direct proportion to his wife's denigration, or why historians praise Lincoln's keen insight astute judgment, but suggest he was a hapless victim on the subject of marriage. Many of his own words contradicts this interpretation and suggests that he recognized Mary's central role to his stability and to fostering political prosperity. After they moved into the White House. Whatever liability she presented during the Civil War, Mary Lincoln was a lifelong companion, with whom he hoped to pursue dreams to share the rest of his life. I attempted to make some sort of historical restitution with my 2009 biography, which was written on the foundations of work like Ruth painter Randall Jean Baker, to whom I'm indebted, but I took this project up during a time of what I thought was a hostile work environment. The lead up to the Lincoln Bicentennial, when it seemed that Mary Lincoln haters were out in full force, we can never truly restore a reputation. If you're smeared in the headlines, the correction is on the inside pages in small type. But assassinations in American
history have complex dynamics which reflect tenacious patterns of folklore and storytelling. In this second Swiss Centennial season, we should recognize their layer upon layer of truths remaining for us to excavate. Not all truths will be self-evident, and certainly few will be equal to the fictions we all tell ourselves. So I've come to accept that not all truths will be politically correct. But as historians, we need to strive toward awkward intersections. It's my fervent hope that more than a century and a half after this tragedy, we can create some new specs, 3D specs, to take in the fact that discrediting Lincoln's wife. A Bloodsport is long, long past itself. So today, can we recognize our battles hell bent to destroy or to be equally committed to rebuild are important. And as a biographer, I say, let us now praise Difficult Women. Thank you very much. And I'm happy to take any questions, particularly from any in our student audience who might I do want to dispel any rumors that when I met with Secretary of the Treasury Lou last month that I proposed Mary Lincoln for the $10 bill. That's, that's not true at all. I had other other candidates for that. And I'm very much welcoming the campaign of trying to put a woman's face on American history through this folkloric, but very effective means I was in the UK, actually, when they had quite a battle. They were gonna put a woman on the money, course the Queen's on the money, and hats off to her. But it was historical figures were being selected. And the Bank of England was slowly integrating them from Winston Churchill forward, and there was a very vicious campaign. And there were death threats. They warn Secretary Lew, you know, and who did they emerge with Jane Austen. So, you know, it is a time I think, for us to see that women can be honored this way. So here we are, I have a hand in the back. If you don't mind standing up and just asking your question

**Question 37:50**

about your research. Do you absolutely love doing the research? Is that the best part? And did you go into this research with one idea about her and come out with?

**Cathleen Clinton 38:03**

Okay, the process the process? Yeah, I really do love researching, you can fall in love with your research so much that you, you don't ever get to the end of it. And I just finished a book this summer, which is coming out in its lectures that I started many, many years ago and then had to deliver, you know, in person, and then you need to deliver it to the publisher. And I did tell people you know, you never actually complete a book, you just stop. And you're never really ready to give up on it. You just masked it's very much unfortunately, like the birth process. And for me, it was a heavy labor getting this book out. Many, many years. I like to say that the research process. If you're working on someone in the field of Lincoln, you can spend years and years I am very much you know, learning. I'm on a Prize Committee. And I'm reading right now, Fortune spool the life of John Wilkes Booth. And I'm so glad that my good friend Terry offered after 20 years was willing to stop and bring this out in the year of the sesquicentennial of the of Lincoln's assassination and to do booth justice in a way that I thought was wonderful. But he I think, you know, in many people get so involved in their research and new books coming out. So I always tell people, I'm very chronological, and they say, oh, did you stop in 1830 or 1850? And I said, No, I stopped for my dissertation. On September 1, a, you know, I won't give you the date. But, you know, early, late 70s, and I stopped there because I felt I had to finish. So I do enjoy it. And of course, part of it is going to the archives and getting to look at the actual documents and really being absorbed by the voices, the voices that speak to you. So I'm reaching and finding a voice that perhaps hasn't been discovered before. For or needs to be
recast. That's, I think, very intense and, and very wonderful. I'm sorry, the second part of your question I got lost in the research. So when I do have marry, and well, let me put it this way that my family gave me a, we had a tradition for New Year's Eve, and that is that you would put whatever you wanted to get rid of, and you'd write it on a plate, and then you'd smash the plates. And they gave me Mary Lincoln on a plate, because they felt that she was a very difficult woman and working on her. I became very exasperated working with her. And I will say the experience was, of course that I was writing to a deadline of this, the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth in which there was a Lincoln book a week coming out. And there are always many biographies. And when I was working on my biography, there hadn't been a new biography of Mrs. Lincoln in over 20 years, and I thought it was time that she be reexamined. And since I'd worked on Southern women, I was quite interested in her views on race, her views as a woman of the South, what how that might differ from the way she had been treated before. But it was difficult because I, I'd finished, I took up my Mary researchers, I was finishing my book tour for Harriet Tubman, who is a very different personality. And I think when you're working on biography, you often become absorbed, you don't have to like the person you're working on. You're a historian, you're a scholar, you're a researcher, and your job is trying to bring their voice to the fore, but also to contextualize it. And that I think is an important thing.

Yes, sir. No? Yes, you sir. If you don't mind standing up. There you go. Thank you,

Question 41:55

as a historical writer, yes, you feel like the subjectivity in history forces you to kind of put your own stamp on the books that you write, in terms of the history that you choose to put into your books in history. She's not quite here. But

Cathleen Clinton 42:12

good, good question. Am I being selective and putting certain things in and putting other things that I think that I remember a really great scholar at Yale, John Boswell, who said, we all pick our subjects, I don't open my mailbox and say, Oh, look, I got Mary Lincoln. This is my new assignment. I mean, we tend to gravitate toward a subject because we think that the voice that that we have, we have as writers and I left formal academic teaching for about 15 years to write full time. And during that period, I wrote books for young readers. I wrote textbooks, I wrote a graphic novel, I wrote biography, you know, I wrote, but to me, the one thing was to make the past come alive in an engaging way. So I hope that it was my voice. And I picked people who I thought really could speak to the present day and someone like Mary Lincoln really did. And someone like Harriet Tubman did and my biography before that was a fanny Campbell, who I thought was a very engaging figure who wrote passionately about abolitionism, as the wife of a plantation owner. So you find voices that you think, aren't really aren't really important. I do remember when I was telling you something the other day when I discovered that Fanny Campbell had lied about something I worked on my master's thesis on her, I returned to her, you know, 15 years later, and I was working in the archives in Pennsylvania, and I found an outright lie. And I was really shocked. I consulted with an historian who told me words of wisdom that, you know, I've come to know, unfortunately, which was that, what was she lying about? Well, she was tracking down the character of her nanny who she believed was having an affair with her husband. And it was a very contentious divorce case in which she lost custody of her children. So she had told people that this was something she wouldn't do and she didn't do when she actually did do it in this very senior scholar said act
divorce people always lie. And I, you know, that that wasn't appropriate, but I now see that he was making a point to me. So did I include that yes, I thought it was important to say here was someone who had such integrity, but was so desperate that she violated her own ethics and told the FBI so, you know, I chose to include it in because I think you do try to include the defects as well as as well as the the exalted part of the character so people you work on, I mean, people without any kind of flaws, I think are characters that maybe you can identify with, but most of us grownups, you know, are looking at all the flaws and think You know, I think for for, for me, it was important to include wheat and chaff all together mixed up. But keep your own voice. That's what you have is the selection process, not selecting what you do select what goes in and out. But you also were picking your subject, I think very much. Yes, sir. Yes.

Question 45:22

Earlier in your question and answer session, you mentioned the women on Tinder, that formerly called the window employees. I'm a strong proponent, putting First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on the $10 bill, not only because of Miss Roosevelt's accomplishments, but illustrate more the art of compromise, which seems to get lost in our era of politics.

Cathleen Clinton 45:45

And what would that compromise be? Well,

Question 45:48

this summer, I was in Washington, I was attending an event at the White House and the gentleman at the White House. And I said, Well, that seems to me that a good compromise. And a good way to honor a particular strong woman in American history would be to put first lady Roosevelt on the supply. And I said, Well, if you think about it, Alexander Hamilton is on a $10. Bill now. So if you were to put Mrs. Roosevelt on the 10, take Hamilton, or excuse me take FDR. Incorporate on the reverse of the $10 bill, in the image of FDR and Mrs. Roosevelt together, and then you put Hamilton on the die. I don't want to speak to her.

Cathleen Clinton 46:29

Well, I will say to you, Ben, what I usually say is, and your question is, but I won't, I'll say that there is a campaign put a woman on the 20. There is a campaign called the new 10, which the Treasury is rolling out, and it rolls out to migrate distress not to celebrate putting a woman on, but who's going to be removed. Now being an American historian, and certainly being in women's history and being at many universities and national standards, curriculum or form, you know, there is this balance. But interestingly, the decision is made by one person alone. And that is the Secretary of the Treasury, who has two directives, you can't touch the $1 bill. And you also must not put a living person on it. At the discussion that I was at, which was not confidential, but it isn't open, there was discussion of Eleanor Roosevelt, and it was pointed out by a scholar that she would be the second woman on currency because actually, Martha Washington appeared. And that maybe it might set the wrong precedent to say that, even though Eleanor Roosevelt was a very accomplished pioneering important woman in her own
right, our attention to her accomplishments is accompanied by the fact that she had a role and a platform as First Lady. So maybe it might be an exciting departure for our 21st century campaign to actually have someone who earned a place in history. Now that place is going to be, you know, contentious, and certainly there's the Hamilton versus Jackson, which does to me sound a bit too much like a boxing match. You know, I mean, and I do feel the competition is really a negative kind of thing. Lou has stressed that he is planning to have a family of bills, he uses that term, in order to talk about the way in which we are changing, and we are broadening our definition. But it has been a very concerted effort on the part of a grassroots campaign of women. And the current treasurer, Rosie Rios has made it a campaign. And so I do hope that one of the things is everyone started looking at their bills and figuring out who's on them and looking at the back and seeing that there was, quote, real estate on the back of the bills, but coins are one thing, bills are another. And they also it's also important to remember these two things that I had to learn in my investigation is that US paper currency is a vibrant part of international economies, that there are many countries where that is very dominant. And it's also important to think that Liu is serving the American people and currency and the most counterfeited bill, I was surprised to learn was the $10 bill, not the 20. So I mean, I'm just I'm just passing along information, but you can go to the new 10 at the Treasury, put that suggestion in there and you'll be 1.5 million and when because they have no they have really solicited this and it's an ongoing debate, which I think I very much welcome I do remember my first recognition of presidents was coin collecting when I was a child, so I don't really know You know, so I do welcome up. But I also think that I am, you know, thinking about the fact that my concern is that we think about actually honoring the 50% of the population who have indeed contributed to history, and there was a lot of discussion about shared space. And I said, giving a woman 77% of a bill would be a very, very unwelcome compromise. So, you know, we've all got our ideas. Yes. If you stand up, and I'm sorry, there's so at the back, I'll get you.

**Question 50:35**

How did you go about like, how do you go about structuring your research, history to make it sound like you're representing everything that you researched? And that you want to explain?

**Cathleen Clinton 50:49**

Well, luckily, you often have a lot of footnotes, which are wonderful apparatus, that that that you can use. And you You know, I am interested, I was thinking about how I, the other day looked at my proposal for Mrs. Lincoln and my chapter structure and how much it changed as it went along. Because you find material and I became more interested not just in her life, but the interpretation of her life and the way different people. But if you keep putting everybody's interpretation, especially into a biography, you tend to get bogged down. I mean, you want to get to the next chapter of a person's life. When I was working on Harriet, people got quite upset because I used many, perhaps, maybe suggestions because we don't have as much evidence, and I was trying to contextualize her life. But But I think that part of this is, you can't always, you know, anticipate a counter argument. But the strongest books that I read, especially in judge and work on are those which present a range of arguments and allow you the reader to actually come to your own conclusion. And I can tell you working on Mrs. Lincoln that some letters were discovered in the middle of, of my working on it, and they were letters that Mary Lincoln wrote from the Batavia asylum, and the scholar who discovered them, Jason Emerson had found letters that were supposed to be destroyed by the lawyer who negotiated a deal with
Mary Lincoln's daughter in law, who bought these letters away from someone who was planning to publish a study of Mary Lincoln, using the letters that she'd written to her mother, a lawyer asking her to free her. Now, I was so happy to get these letters. And Jason Emerson was happy to get these letters. And he's written two or three books out of these letters and other issues. And he very much interpreted them one way. And I read them interpret them another way. So if you ever are working on a topic, and you're thinking, Oh, someone else has written about it, you have something to say, and your interpretation can be 180 degrees. I mean, I frequently have had to say, I think you're mistaking sarcasm for sincerity. And you know that I know this person because I've read so much of their material. So getting to know your subject is important. There's a hand way the back Yes, you.

Question 53:18
You paid in various very solitary alone after the assassination. Did you have any relationship with the Todd family back and

Cathleen Clinton 53:29
she had erratic relations with her stepmother. She her sisters, who were Todd's but each of them was Mary. Her sister Elizabeth had practically raised her because she left the Kentucky home feeling that she was pushed out by the parade of half brothers and sisters that followed. She only renewed any kind of acquaintance with the Todd family on her way to Washington when Lincoln was elected to the House and she came to beautiful Lexington to the house that you can go visit the first actually home of a of a First Lady to be made into a historic home. And she went there and she renewed some acquaintances met some cousins. But during the Civil War, the alienation was so extremely deep, even little sister that she was so attached to Helms. Bride who had three children came to the house after members of Congress came in and thought that there was a rebel in the house and no rebels should be in the White House and Lincoln disagreed over who got to dictate the terms of guests in his own home and quite a bit was sad about that. But I think both of them saw that the Civil War had created such an abyss between them that they actually had a hard time communicating after the war. We don't have any evidence of a Todd embrace. However, however, I would say in the early years of the 20th century, Todd descendents seem to very much embrace Mary, they commissioned a portrait of her, which is hanging in the White House today. And I suggest that she's now known as Mary Todd Lincoln. I mean, actually, when I told people I was writing on Mary Lincoln, they would say who, and I would have to say, Mary Todd Lincoln. And then they would know, just as dolly Todd Madison, rather than Dolly Madison became her more popular triples tripled name in the early decades of the 20th century, when the Todd family seems to have in a way, you know, re-embraced, its historical legacy and branched out and done a very good campaign, I think, of talking about its connections to the White House to the first families to Washington. And so those would be the connections. I think, that very much were made. I can recommend the house of Lincoln book by Stephen Berry, which does look at the Tod family. And at the end, he has a kind of a glossary of where the Todd's were and no real connections. There were so many clashes during the war that I think after the war, no, no, she didn't get embrace, we do now have from those letters that I mentioned, we do know that Elizabeth was ill. When Mary had a breakdown, in 1875, it was 10 years after the anniversary of her husband's death. And during that break down, Robert was beside himself didn't know what to do wanted to put her with her sister. We now know from these letters that she was having an operation. And she didn't feel
physically able to take her sister in at that time. But we do know that as soon as she realized
the distress her sister was in. And that's because Mary got her pen out and started writing quite
strong letters about where she wanted to be. And what helps you when she went to her sister's
right away. So we can see Elizabeth Edwards as someone who did really take her in and I
believe, yes, one more question. One more question. I'll take your question. And I'll be here a
little bit afterwards. But I think the room and the parking and the traffic. So

**Question 57:19**
what was your financial life, like after the assassination, and the impact of perhaps have not
having or having money, and how she was able to to deal with?

**Cathleen Clinton 57:33**
Well, I do borrow Stephen Berry's very apt coinage that she was a financial believing that she
had very serious illness with money. And it was something that her son Robert commented on.
However, I very carefully looked at the issue of her being a widow not being aware of finances.
And we look at Lincoln, certainly one of the great presidents, with his uncashed salary checks in
the drawer. He was also you know, financially, in terms of domestic finances. That was not his
strong point, either. So there were the circle of men in Chicago, who had, in many ways
influenced and put Lincoln into office, and they were handling his estate. And Mrs. Lincoln
became more and more frantic, as she had to move out of the White House, find a new home,
go to Chicago. Indeed, she was carrying with her. It was reported 45 to 50, trunks 45 to 50,
trunks. And then in Chicago, it occurred to her she was never going to wear anything with black
again, which is why she was auctioning but I'm saying her desperation over finances was
intense. And she then she began to lobby for a pension in a way and she looked to Charles
Sumner to help her and he was but there was this issue that Oh, was was Lincoln, a
commander in chief. Was he a military? Did she deserve a pension, and she did eventually
become the first First Lady to get a pension. But she always was, I think, quite unnerved and
paranoid about finances, and that really created a bigger breach between her and her son. But
as they would say, you've been a lovely audience. And thank you so much for coming out to
Oxford bar. Please come back.