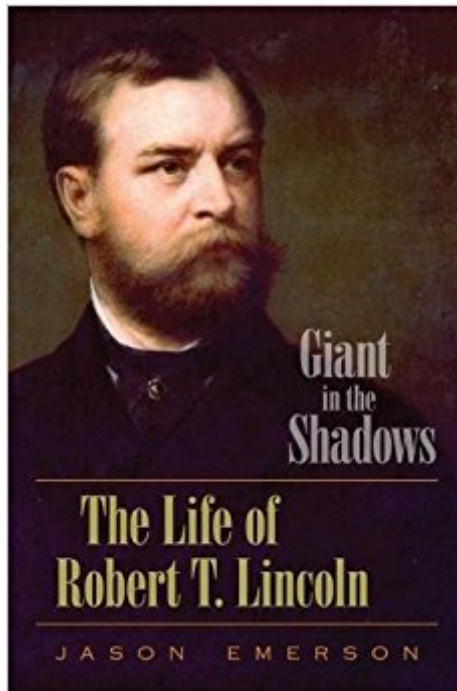


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# Giant In The Shadows: The Life Of Robert T. Lincoln



## Synopsis

Although he was Abraham and Mary Lincoln's oldest and last surviving son, the details of Robert T. Lincoln's life are misunderstood by some and unknown to many others. Nearly half a century after the last biography about Abraham Lincoln's son was published, historian and author Jason Emerson illuminates the life of this remarkable man and his achievements in *Giant in the Shadows: The Life of Robert T. Lincoln*. Emerson, after nearly ten years of research, draws upon previously unavailable materials to offer the first truly definitive biography of the famous lawyer, businessman, and statesman who, much more than merely the son of America's most famous president, made his own indelible mark on one of the most progressive and dynamic eras in United States history. Born in a boardinghouse but passing his last days at ease on a lavish country estate, Robert Lincoln played many roles during his lifetime. As a president's son, a Union soldier, an ambassador to Great Britain, and a U.S. secretary of war, Lincoln was indisputably a titan of his age. Much like his father, he became one of the nation's most respected and influential men, building a successful law practice in the city of Chicago, serving shrewdly as president of the Pullman Car Company, and at one time even being considered as a candidate for the U.S. presidency. Along the way he bore witness to some of the most dramatic moments in America's history, including Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse; the advent of the railroad, telephone, electrical, and automobile industries; the circumstances surrounding the assassinations of three presidents of the United States; and the momentous presidential election of 1912. *Giant in the Shadows* also reveals Robert T. Lincoln's complex relationships with his famous parents and includes previously unpublished insights into their personalities. Emerson reveals new details about Robert's role as his father's confidant during the brutal years of the Civil War and his reaction to his father's murder; his prosecution of the thieves who attempted to steal his father's body in 1876 and the extraordinary measures he took to ensure it would never happen again; as well as details about the painful decision to have his mother committed to a mental facility. In addition Emerson explores the relationship between Robert and his children, and exposes the actual story of his stewardship of the Lincoln legacy—including what he and his wife really destroyed and what was preserved. Emerson also delves into the true reason Robert is not buried in the Lincoln tomb in Springfield but instead was interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Meticulously researched, full of never-before-seen photographs and new insight into historical events, *Giant in the Shadows* is the missing chapter of the Lincoln family story. Emerson's riveting work is more than simply a biography; it is a tale of American achievement in the Gilded Age and the

endurance of the Lincoln legacy. University Press Books for Public and Secondary Schools 2013  
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## Customer Reviews

“It has never been easy growing up or living in the public eye. To do so under the enormous shadow cast by our 16th president would test the resiliency of even the toughest character. As historian Jason Emerson details in this richly informative biography, Robert Todd Lincoln, the only one of Abraham Lincoln’s children to survive into adulthood, bore his peculiar burden with quiet grace and admirable dignity.” — Ron Reagan, political commentator and author of *My Father at 100*

“Mr. Emerson’s impressive research and eye for detail yield dozens of ... interesting though little-known historical tidbits. His writing is enjoyable and accessible...” — *Wall Street Journal*

“A fine addition to shelves of historians and Lincoln aficionados.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

“Well written and well researched, this book should . . . become the go-to book on the life of this interesting son of a former president. Highly recommended.” — *Choice*

“I found this book gripping, ingeniously argued, and exhaustively investigated. I could not put it down. . . . And I suspect that every reader with an interest in Lincoln will feel exactly the same way.” — For me, and for them, this book will become an essential item in the history of the era in a way that Robert himself, try as Emerson does, can never be. Emerson reminds us at the outset that Robert Lincoln never wanted to be the subject of a biography. Well, like it or not, he has one now — and a fine one, too.”

Robert T. Lincoln's life is a fantastic journey through a rich period of American history, writes Jason Emerson. And it is to his great credit as a biographer and historian that he so successfully brings Robert T. Lincoln out of history's shadows and the times in which he lived back to vivid life. The American Spectator Emerson's biography of Robert Todd Lincoln is set within the context of Gilded Age culture, which was vastly different from that during the Civil War. His extensive and fresh research, as well as his inclusion of many never-before-seen photographs, should make this account one of choice for both scholars and Lincoln enthusiasts. America's Civil War Jason Emerson, the premier young Lincoln scholar today, has written the definitive biography of one of America's neglected and misunderstood leaders in both 19th- and 20th-century industry, law and politics. Beautifully written and illustrated, this is one of the best Lincoln books to appear in many years. Wayne C. Temple, author of Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet "Here at last is the biography Lincoln aficionados have been waiting for. Historian Jason Emerson sweeps away a century of myths and misinformation about Robert T. Lincoln, including the musty old canard that he had no respect for his famous father and no sympathy for his emotionally fragile mother. This is an intimate, in-depth portrait that will be praised, quoted, and consulted for years to come. Thomas J. Craughwell, author of Stealing Lincoln's Body "This path-breaking biography tells the story of Lincoln's only surviving son: a man utterly unlike his father in talent and temperament, yet who nonetheless found his own way to national prominence. Contemporaries of this reticent yet extraordinarily successful figure often referred to him as Lincoln's Silent Son. Now, thanks to Emerson's thorough scholarship, Robert T. Lincoln is silent no more. Nora Titone, author of My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin and John Wilkes Booth That Led to an American Tragedy

Jason Emerson is a journalist and an independent historian who has been researching and writing about the Lincoln family for nearly 20 years. He is a former National Park Service park ranger at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, in Springfield, Illinois. His previous books include The Madness of Mary Lincoln (SIU Press, 2007 named Book of the Year by the Illinois State Historical Society), Lincoln the Inventor (SIU Press, 2009), and The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln's Widow, as Revealed by Her Own Letters (SIU Press, 2011). He lives near Syracuse, New York.

Historians frequently debate how the images of historical figures are often shaped after the person's death by their wives or descendants. Historians also look to the children of great men and women to see a legacy of greatness. James Emerson does some of both in his aptly named biography - GIANT IN THE SHADOWS - THE LIFE OF ROBERT TODD LINCOLN. In this well written and easy to read biography Emerson chronicles the life of Abraham Lincoln's only son who survived to adulthood. At the time of his death in 1926 Robert Lincoln was the last living witness to the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. He was a man that could easily have been president or vice president, senator or any other office, but he chose to pick his positions. And those he selected he did with great pride and often with great achievement. Like his father, who never recovered from the death of his son Willie, the death of Robert's son Jack was a turning point in his life. Having been connected with the assassinations of his father, and Presidents Garfield and McKinley, it is ironic that he was ultimately buried in Arlington National Cemetery in view of the JFK gravesite. For Lincoln scholars, students of the Civil War or readers who are interested in America during the late 19th and early 20th century, this book is well worth reading. It reveals a very different side of the legacy of Abraham Lincoln and how Robert sought to create an image of his father that maintained his dignity and honor. Had Robert Todd Lincoln been a different person, we might all be seeing a different image of Abraham Lincoln.

This is a terrific book! It is a well researched, balanced look at an interesting and influential character in American history. The author, as admiring he may be of Mr. Lincoln, is in no way unwilling to explore his less attractive attributes. What is remarkable is the great events to which he was a witness, or was otherwise significantly involved, events which shaped the destiny of this country during the late 19th century and early 20th century, events which have repercussions even up to the present time. It is also edifying to know how much effort Robert Lincoln put into his NOT trading off the reputation or accomplishments of his famous father. He was politically involved but not for his own aggrandizement or enrichment (how refreshing, nay desirable, that would be today!) This is a must read for anyone interested in the core events of history. (By the way, I purchased a used copy of this book through Amazon and I must say that the physical quality of the book itself is outstanding. One could hardly think it a "used" volume. The cover was practically pristine, the pages themselves unmarked and unmarred, and what indications that it was a used book--a retired library book--are hardly noticeable. Bravo for Amazon's used book suppliers!)

Only one of Abraham Lincoln's sons live long enough to marry and have children. Christened Robert Todd Lincoln, he was Robert T. Lincoln in business and Bob to his friends. He was born in a boarding house in the 1840s and died in a mansion in the 1920s. Robert Todd Lincoln saw much of and made some of America's history in the late Nineteen Century. Jason Emerson gives us a scholarly and readable biography of a remarkable person. The book concentrates on Lincoln's public life in business and politics. The author tells us about his private life but never descends into gossip or speculation. The only real exception is Lincoln's relationship with his mother. For very good reasons, Robert T. Lincoln committed Mary Todd Lincoln to a sanitarium (asylum). The press had a field day at his expense creating a very public embarrassment that still colors the public's views. The part of the book is very detailed. The events leading up to the hearing, the hearing, the press' reaction, the solution and Mary's feelings to Robert are treated fairly. Protecting his father's memory and managing the public record consumed large amount of Lincoln's time. He was very protective of his father's papers, working to control what is said and who said it was not an easy task. Part of this work was managing Lincoln's body. From the burial site, the structure of tomb and protecting the body from kidnapers is a constant effort. While doing this, Lincoln managed to become a well-respected Chicago lawyer, Secretary of War, Minister to England and chairman of the Pullman Car Company. An active Republican, he is mentioned as a possible candidate for President at multiple conventions. Through all of this, he refused to use his father's fame to advance himself. This is a look at our history that few can hope to duplicate. Robert T. Lincoln is in the room at Appomattox. He sees his father die, on the platform when Garfield is shot and sees McKinley hours after he is shot. In an odd twist of fate, you can see JFK's grave from Lincoln's grave. The book captures the complex character of Robert T. Lincoln. In his professional life, he is intensely formal and somewhat unforgiving. In his political persona, he gives a good speech but lacks his father's warmth. As "Bob", he is a warm caring close friend that tells excellent stories. The book contains a full set of illustrations, Bibliography, endnotes and index. It is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in Lincoln or America from the Civil War to the Roaring Twenties.

Great read. I only wish I could give more stars. This book is full of ironies and it painted a picture of the people and the times. The 421 pages of actual text held my attention and were enjoyable. I have always been told what a young country this is and this book reminded me of that. Robert went to DC with his father when Abraham won his first congressional seat in 1847. A year later John Quincy Adams, born in 1767, died two days after he collapsed on the House floor. Robert died two years after George H.W. Bush was born. This man met and was associated with some of the most

influential men in history. It is said that his name may have opened doors but his hard work, moral character, and common sense, kept the door open. The amount of tragedy in this mans life are over whelming, yet he over came it all. Truly a great man in his own right.

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