

Mrs. Lincoln Didn't Steal the Manure, Says New Book by Kevin Orlin Johnson

Lincoln Studies Just Likes to Fling It at the First Lady

DALLAS, TX, U.S.A., February 21, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- One of the favorite — and most bizarre — tropes in the literature on Abraham Lincoln is that Mrs. Lincoln stole cartloads of manure from the White House and sold them to buy personal items for herself. That's not true, says Kevin Orlin Johnson, Ph.D., author of [The Lincolns in the White House: Slanders, Scandals, and Lincoln's Slave Trading Revealed](#), published this month by Pangaeus Press.

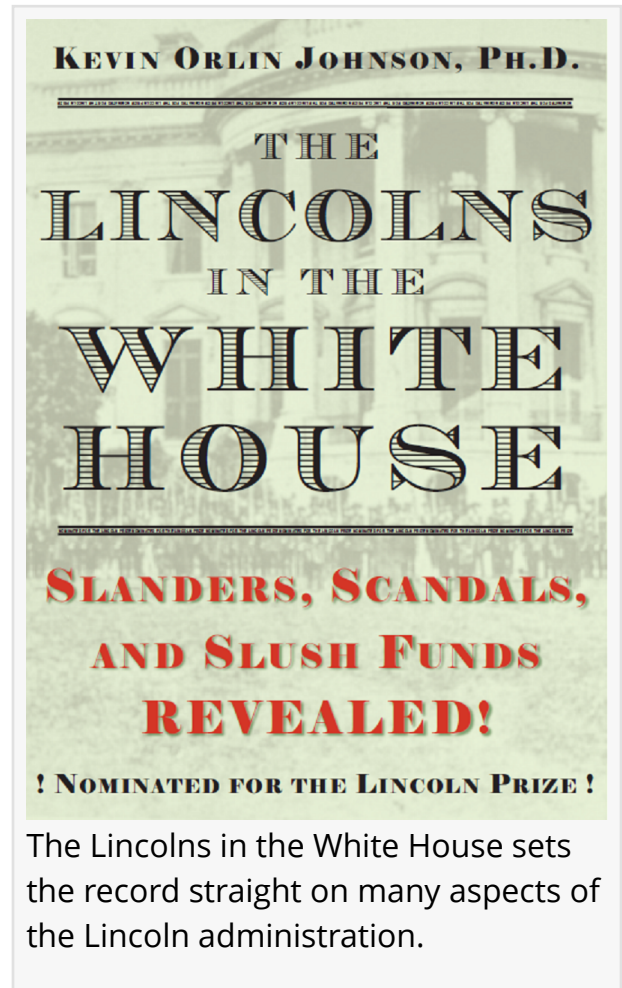
It shows a really hateful attitude toward Mrs. Lincoln, Johnson says, and a lamentable lack of knowledge generally. "Actually, she put a stop to the groundskeepers' theft of the manure and put the money back where it belonged."

In Lincoln's time and half a century after, the White House grounds were home to a lot of horses — it wasn't until 1910 that William Howard Taft converted the stables into a garage.

The Lincolns' horses produced an endless supply of manure, but "there'd also be a cow or two, and chickens — poultry — for the table." Woodrow Wilson's flock of sheep is remembered as part of his wartime economy drive, but he'd had them there since before we entered World War I, and he wasn't the first to keep sheep at the White House anyway. In fact, the sweeping lawns of the Executive Mansion were usually planted to hay and clover to feed the livestock.

That's where the manure comes in. Like gardeners today, Johnson says, "the groundskeepers didn't think of it as waste but as fertilizer." On the open market in Washington, a cartload of manure could fetch as much as \$16.00 — nearly \$500.00 in today's money, about what you'd have to pay for it today.

Lincoln Studies likes to say that [Mary Todd Lincoln](#) commandeered all of the estate's manure and sold it to pay for her personal ice-cream parties. Some let their imaginations take flight and



The Lincolns in the White House sets the record straight on many aspects of the Lincoln administration.



Actually, she put a stop to the groundskeepers' theft of the manure and put the money back where it belonged."

Kevin Orlin Johnson, Ph.D.

book the proceeds to her madly extravagant wardrobe and whole trunks full of jewelry, none of which actually even existed.

They base these fables on a single sentence in the diary of one William Wilkins Glenn. "That alone disqualifies it from serious consideration or even repetition," Johnson says. Glenn was the immensely rich son of a prominent Maryland judge, but as a fierce supporter of the

Confederacy he had no direct access to the Lincolns or to the White House.

As soon as the War broke out Glenn bought the Daily Exchange of Baltimore, opposing the administration so passionately that Lincoln shut the paper down and threw Glenn into prison. When he was released, Glenn agitated more energetically, even smuggling Maryland volunteers across Yankee lines into the South. By 1863 he fled to Europe to escape more severe punishment.

He's largely dismissed today as a traitor and a crank, Johnson says. "But Glenn kept a sort of diary, or really a notebook of rants about how rotten the Lincoln administration really was." Glenn snatched up any defamation, the more venomous the better, as long as it would bring Lincoln and his Party into disrepute, "which, predictably, makes him attractive to Lincoln Studies. He particularly hated Mary Todd, but nothing that he wrote can be used without confirmation, and very little that he wrote can be confirmed, or even traced."

Glenn's diary simply says that Mary Lincoln "appropriated the manure piles which had always been the perquisites of the gardener and devoted the proceeds to the payment of her ice cream bills."

That overlooks the fact that, coming from the President's livestock, the manure at the White House was federal property. Coming from the Lincolns' personal horses, and Tad's pony, it was the family's personal property. Either way, it didn't belong to the gardeners.

The story may have been in circulation at the time. Maunsell Field of New York said that he'd heard "from a Senator, who was appointed chairman of an investigating committee upon the subject at a secret session of the Senate, that a state dinner was paid for out of an appropriation for fertilizers for the grounds connected with the Executive Mansion." But notice that Field, one of Lincoln's high officials in the Treasury, had no direct knowledge of such a transaction. "And he didn't mention this story until 1875," Johnson says.

As you see, Field's note takes the money out of the manure heap into direct federal appropriations and escalates the transaction from ice cream to a whole state dinner: but even then it only confirms that the money went to a public purpose. "In fact, that would've been a

perfectly normal cash flow at the White House then," Johnson says. "It still is."

So, as far as Glenn's statement means anything at all it just indicates that after Mary Todd Lincoln set things to rights the money derived from the White House's livestock went to pay expenses at the White House, which is where it was supposed to go.

Indeed, if you consult the actual documents of the matter, Johnson says, "you see that what really happened is that the groundskeepers were selling the manure for their own benefit and then buying manure to use on the estate — and charging that expense to the government."

Evidently previous incumbents didn't notice or didn't care, but Mary Lincoln was an excellent manager, and nobody's fool. She inspected the White House from top to bottom — the first First Lady to set foot in the kitchens in decades — and busied herself setting the whole place to rights. "She was ridiculed for rolling up her little sleeves and showing the staff how to cook and clean," Johnson says, "but somebody should have done that before the people were hired." Taking on the groundskeepers' embezzlement was just part of her program.

But what about the ice cream? "Well," Johnson says, "what do you think the cows were for?"

The Lincolns in the White House is available for pre-order exclusively at [Pangaeus.com](https://www.pangaeus.com).

Kevin Orlin Johnson

Pangaeus Press

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/563484916>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.