

Excerpts from the Diaries of Caroline Barrett White (1828-1915)

From the collections of the American Antiquarian Society

April 1865

Monday 10th

Hurrah! Hurrah! "Sound the loud Timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea" – Early this morning our ears were greeted with the sound of bells ringing a joyous peal - & a paper sent home by Frank announced the glad tidings that Gen. Lee had surrendered with his whole Army to Gen. Grant! Surely "This is the Lord's doings, & it is marvelous in our eyes" – The city has been given up to rejoicings all day & this evening there was to have been a great illumination – with music fireworks & such other demonstrations as are usual in a time like this – but a steady rain will dampen the ardor of the jubilee, I fear – April 9th! Will long be remembered as a day of triumph – just one week ago came the thrilling intelligence of the Fall of Petersburg & Richmond - & today the greater triumph still of the surrender by Gen. Lee of the Army of Northern Virginia – This crowns a week unparalleled in the annals of this war - & I doubt if a parallel could be found in all history. The booming of cannon & the pealing of bells, the blazing of fire works at this moment, announce that rain is no conqueror of enthusiasm – I wish I could be near to join in the general jubilation – it is stupid enough to be sitting alone in a quiet room – where only the faint echoes of a city's burst of joy reach me – Ah! Well! I can be grateful to the Lord who has made bare His Arm to save this people - & who has brought them through great tribulation – through sufferings not to be described – through battle fields, red with the blood of the best of their sons – to see this belled day – step by step has He led this people up even higher & higher – on to the great plans of righteousness – justice & freedom - & now the dawn of peace begins to illumine the horizon – soon we hope to be merged in the effulgent day – I think we ought to know what patriotism means – and shall realize more fully than ever what it is to have a Country – and our children will have an inheritance greatly to be desired. Let our starry banner wave – from sea to sea and no slave shall look upon its glorious folds – no chains shall clank beneath it – but every where, & to all people, of every color, shall it be the loved emblem of liberty.

Saturday 15th *

The darkest day I ever remember – This morning the sun rose upon a nation jubilant with victory – but it sets upon one plunged in deepest sorrow – As the glad morning light had merged into full midday – came the shocking intelligence that our beloved President Abraham Lincoln was dead – shot by a brutal assassin – last evening – as he was sitting cheerfully chatting with his wife & other friends in a box at the theatre – he lingered unconscious till about eight o'clock this morning - & died without a word or sign – Secretary Seward was also attacked near the same time by another, or the same blackhearted traitor's hand, as he lay on his sickbed - & also two sons & one or more attendants were wounded, in endeavoring to stop the murderer from reaching the Secretary's room - & (?), (Sec.) & his son Frederic both lie in an unconscious & critical condition – Later in the day came rumors of having secured the murderer – who it is affirmed by Miss Laura Kieve to be J. Wilkes Booth; Oh! where will treason end? & What shall we do with such as fall into our hands. The Vice President has been inducted into the Presidential chair - & assumed the reins of government. The rapidity with which events crowd upon one another is

* This entire entry, which spans three pages, is outlined in a box of dark lines, indicating mourning.

perfectly bewildering. Frank is away & it (?) hard to be alone – Mrs. Goddard came in in the morning – I went down to Mr. May's & to Fred's this P.M. & this eve, since tea, sister Caroline has come out to spend Sunday with me - & Miss J. Goddard has been in – So “I have had supporters. I sent a letter to Frank this P.M. When will our cup of punishments be drunk to the dregs? Merciful Father, help us.