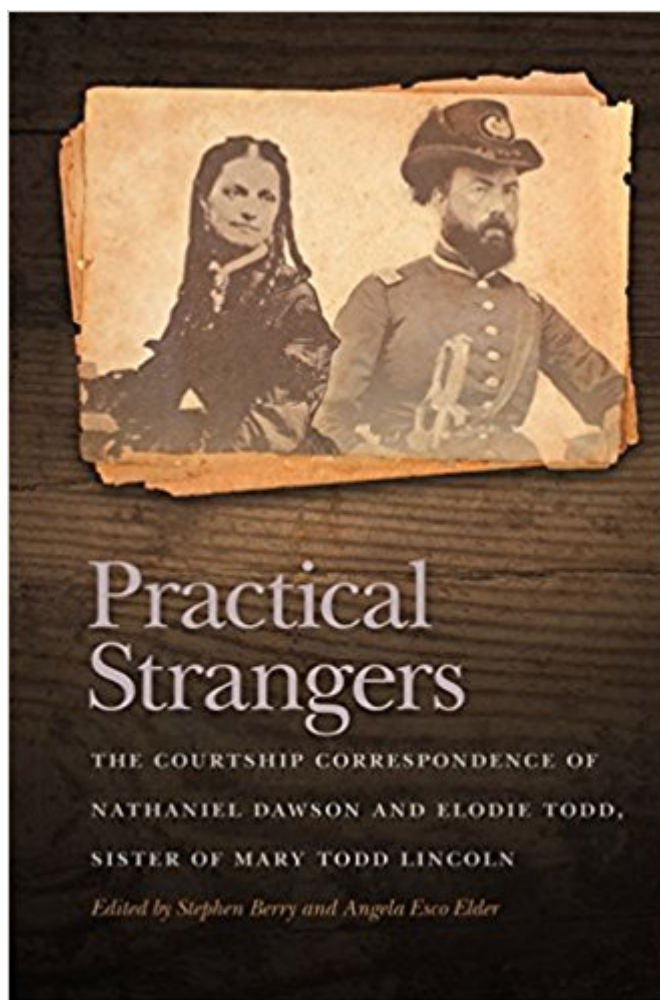


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Practical Strangers: The Courtship Correspondence Of Nathaniel Dawson And Elodie Todd, Sister Of Mary Todd Lincoln (New Perspectives On The Civil War Era Ser.)





Synopsis

These letters chronicle the wartime courtship of a Confederate soldier and the woman he loved— a sister-in-law of Abraham Lincoln. It is a relative rarity for the correspondence of both writers in Civil War letter collections to survive, as they have here. Rarer still is how frequently and faithfully the two wrote, given how little they truly knew each other at the start of their exchange. As a romantic pair, Nathaniel Dawson and Elodie Todd had no earlier history; they had barely met when separated by the war. Letters were their sole lifeline to each other and their sole means of sharing their hopes and fears for a relationship (and a Confederacy) they had rashly embraced in the heady, early days of secession. The letters date from April 1861, when Nathaniel left for war as a captain in the Fourth Alabama Infantry, through April 1862, when the couple married. During their courtship through correspondence, Nathaniel narrowly escaped death in battle, faced suspicions of cowardice, and eventually grew war weary. Elodie had two brothers die while in Confederate service and felt the full emotional weight of belonging to the war's most famous divided family. Her sister Mary not only sided with the Union (as did five other Todd siblings) but was also married to its commander in chief. Here is an engrossing story of the Civil War, of Abraham Lincoln's shattered family, of two people falling in love, of soldiers and brothers dying nobly on the wrong side of history. The full Dawson-Todd correspondence comprises more than three hundred letters. It has been edited for this volume to focus tightly on their courtship. The complete, annotated text of all of the letters, with additional supporting material, will be made available online.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Practical Strangers is a remarkable compilation of letters from 1861 and 1862 that present a nearly complete record of Elodie Todd – the sister-in-law of Abraham Lincoln – and Nathaniel Dawson’s courtship via mail, as well as of their commitment to the confederacy during the Civil War. . . . This volume is edited to focus on the courtship, with the entire correspondence available online. What do the rest of [the] letters reveal of the couple? Wanting to know more is a testament to the power of these documents – Dawson and Todd’s burgeoning romance ignites curiosity. (Meredith Grahl Counts ForeWord Reviews)

An atypical wartime courtship, conducted entirely through letters

A wonderful mix of romantic memoir and history pulled from the saved letters of this couple who courted by way of letters during the war of the North and South. She was the sister of the wife of Abraham Lincoln and he was a twice-widowed man who was going off to fight for the South. He stopped by and asked her to marry him and she accepted, and then off he went. They got better acquainted through writing while waiting for the war to be over. I love the old fashioned way they spoke and wrote back then, it made reading their letters to one another very enjoyable for me. The letters were edited for the book to mostly cover just the courtship, but there is also a link to a website where the letters are posted in full for those interested in seeing them.

Practical Strangers looks at the letter courtship of Elodie Todd and Nathaniel Dawson. The letters were sent between 1861-1862 while they were separated by the Civil War. Elodie, a younger half sibling of Mary Todd Lincoln, despaired of ever marrying, but soon caught the eye of twice widowed Dawson. Their letters are effusive and detailed. The authors provided thorough details of the backgrounds of the two before the reader is introduced to the letters. Anyone who is interested in family history or is a Civil War buff will enjoy this book.

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