

# Mischief in the White House

by Jeanie Ransom

Abe Lincoln's son gave a troubled nation something to smile about.

Would your parents let you drive a cart pulled by goats through the middle of the living room? Or squirt visitors with a fire hose? You'd probably be grounded for decades.

But not Tad Lincoln, the youngest son of America's 16th president. Tad, who was 8 when the Lincolns moved into the White House in 1861, built forts on the White House roof, held plays and puppet shows in the attic and ran a lemonade stand in the White House lobby.

## Animals Everywhere

Since his dad, Abraham Lincoln, was the first president with young children living in the White House, people sent lots of gifts—ponies, dogs, rabbits, even a pair of goats. Tad became particularly attached to a turkey that was meant to be the Lincolns' holiday dinner.

Tad named the turkey "Jack" and trained the bird to follow him all over the White House grounds. But when the day came to turn Jack into the main meal, Tad pleaded for his pet's life and his father relented. Jack got a stay of execution from the president.

## Keeping Spirits Up

Tad's antics were more than fun and games. They served a useful purpose. The country was in the midst of the Civil War, and stories about Tad helped keep up people's spirits during dark times.

They also helped cheer the president and Mrs. Lincoln, who had lost one son before Tad was born and another boy just a year after the family moved into the White House.

Once, Tad drove his pet goat, Nanko, right through an important party his parents were having. Women dressed in hoop skirts screamed as Tad raced his goat in one door, circled the room, then drove him back out.



**Tad Lincoln in a soldier's uniform that the Secretary of War allowed him to wear.**

Another time, Tad jokingly waved a Confederate flag out the window while his father drilled Union soldiers on the lawn below.

Then there was the day the youngster gave some important visitors an unexpected bath with a fire hose.

With so much energy, Tad was very much like the wiggly tadpole his father had nicknamed him after.

## **Inseparable Friends**

Tad's playful nature was a help to the president, who could relax and forget his troubles when he was with his son. They loved to have wrestling matches on the expensive Oriental carpets that were Mrs. Lincoln's pride and joy. Tad and his dad also enjoyed riding horses around the White House grounds.

Tad was often at his dad's side, whether it was to meetings or to visit troops in their camps.

Tad died in 1871 from tuberculosis when he was 18, six years after his father was assassinated.