



ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM

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FIRST LADIES CONVERGE ON SPRINGFIELD IN *MRS. PRESIDENT: FROM MARTHA TO LAURA* BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBIT

Many rare artifacts on display for the first time beginning this May

SPRINGFIELD, IL: On May 13, Springfield's Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) will unveil *Mrs. President: From Martha to Laura*, a one-of-a-kind exhibit on American first ladies. The exclusive exhibit will only be seen at the ALPLM, and will include more than 100 artifacts, some more than 200 years old, all holding a significant place in history as do the first ladies who owned them.

"This exhibition brings to life the individual stories of the first ladies in a way that has yet to be told, providing insight into the collective story of women in America and how their roles have evolved over the past two centuries," said Dr. Thomas F. Schwartz, interim executive director of the ALPLM.

Each first lady brought her own imprimatur to the White House as they all struggled to balance and manage home life with public life; private concerns and sorrows with public responsibilities. *Mrs. President: From Martha to Laura* will be presented in an engaging, immersive manner highlighting captivating aspects of American first ladies through a colorful array of personal effects, apparel, letters, and film and radio interviews that represent the spirit of independence, style, creativity and strength of these dynamic women. Several unique items to be featured in the exhibit include:

- **Abigail Adams' bullet mold:** Although John Adams successfully defended the British soldiers who killed American revolutionaries in the Boston Massacre, he would later become one of the great leaders of the American Revolution. Often referred to as "Mrs. President" because of her influence and feminist outlook, Mrs. Adams aided the cause by offering her husband advice in their correspondence and by making lead bullets for soldiers.
- **Mary Todd Lincoln's coral necklace:** Mrs. Lincoln believed that in order to gain support from European nations for the Union cause during the Civil War, she must first gain their respect, which she did by keeping up an extravagant appearance, including wearing expensive clothing and jewelry. Her hand-carved coral necklace, on display to the public for the first time, is part of a larger ensemble of coral jewelry worn by the charming yet temperamental first lady.
- **Lucy Hayes' college essay:** Mrs. Hayes was the first woman to be accepted and enroll at Ohio Wesleyan University. Her college experience and deep interest in public affairs led her to conclude,

"Woman's mind is as strong as man's—equal in all things to his and superior in some."

- **Caroline Harrison's hand-painted fan:** The daughter of a Presbyterian minister and a gifted artist, Mrs. Harrison was encouraged by her father to engage in educational and cultural pursuits. She designed many items used in the White House, including a unique pattern of official White House china and a hand-painted fan.
- **Grace Coolidge's Girl Scout uniform:** The warm and outgoing former teacher became one of America's most popular first ladies. Active in the Girl Scout organization, Mrs. Coolidge also was a teacher of the deaf. Like her husband, "Silent Cal," she was reticent in public, and gave but one public speech—in sign language.
- **Lou Hoover's rifle:** Herbert Hoover's early career as an international engineer and businessman frequently placed his family in troubled parts of the world. Mrs. Hoover became an expert markswoman and also sported a brace of pistols that protected her in many of the world's hot spots. She was reported to have swept spent shell casings off their front porch when they lived in China during the Boxer Rebellion.
- **Lady Bird Johnson's beautification and Head Start materials:** As a young girl, Claudia Alta Taylor received the moniker "Lady Bird" from a family cook. Mrs. Johnson is best known for her efforts to beautify the American roadside landscape by restricting the blight of billboards. She also took a great interest in the Head Start preschool program to help disadvantaged youth receive a quality education.
- **Barbara Bush's literacy/childhood AIDS materials:** A tireless advocate for children and literacy, Mrs. Bush promoted an interest in reading at an early age. She also authored a best-selling children's book about the family dog, Millie. Additionally, recognizing that AIDS was more than an adult disease, she worked diligently to raise awareness of the growing number of children born infected.

To celebrate the exhibit opening and offer first-hand insight into the role of the American first lady, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation will present a conference and luncheon on May 11 at the Presidential Library. The event will feature a keynote address by Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of President Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower, and a panel discussion led by social secretaries of several administrations including Johnson, Ford, and George H. W. Bush. The cost is \$50 per person. Reservations for the event will be accepted beginning April 20 by calling (217) 558-8881.

Mrs. President: From Martha to Laura is sponsored by A&E Television Network, and will run from May 13 through October 29, 2006. Exhibit access is included with a general admission ticket to the museum.

For more information on *Mrs. President: From Martha to Laura* and related events, visit www.alplm.org or call (800) 610-2094 or (217) 782-5764.

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