

TEAM OF RIVALS

Lincoln's Cabinet at the Crossroads of War

A Civil War Sesquicentennial Exhibition

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Civil War 150th Anniversary exclusive exhibit opens October 14 at Lincoln Presidential Museum

“Team of Rivals” features original Fort Sumter artifacts, brand-new research illuminating the days leading up to the Civil War

SPRINGFIELD – The brand-new President and his cabinet were in disarray, hundreds of federal installations were being seized by rebellious states, and no one could agree where to make a military stand that might touch off a war. These dangerous and confusing days during late 1860 and early 1861 are the focus of a new exclusive Civil War 150th Anniversary exhibit at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois that opens October 14, 2010.

Titled *Team of Rivals* after the book by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and renowned presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, the exhibit will feature many original artifacts, including several from Fort Sumter, some of which will be publicly displayed for the first time. It will also use innovative video components and creative productions to immerse visitors in the tumultuous days leading up to the Civil War. Goodwin will act as the personal tour guide throughout the exhibit with recorded videos that narrate each section. She will also be on hand to open the exhibit and deliver a public program October 14 – for ticket information, visit www.presidentlincoln.org.

The exhibit will feature an electronic presentation of brand-new research that documents each of the federal installations seized by southern states in the months leading up to the Civil War. The presentation will graphically demonstrate the huge dollar figures and sheer volume of United States property at stake whose seizure virtually assured the country would plunge headlong into an armed conflict.

“It is difficult for most modern Americans to imagine the confusion created by South Carolina and other Southern states leaving the Union,” said Illinois State Historian Tom Schwartz. “The seizure of federal property angered people in the North who viewed the illegal act with a sense of both helplessness and a need for revenge. Americans awaited Lincoln’s inaugural remarks, hoping to avert an armed conflict that few desired.”

The federal installations and assets seized by Southern states between the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860 and the firing on Fort Sumter on April 15, 1861 totalled

hundreds of millions in 1861 dollars, or billions of dollars today. These included forts, barracks, arsenals, customs houses, docks, shipyards, islands, commissary depots, ordnance depots, naval hospitals, federal mints and the gold and silver bullion they contained, circuit and district courts, land offices, post offices, and light houses. The *Team of Rivals* electronic display, funded by JPMorgan Chase, will show this cascade of seizures as the Southern states took what they thought should be theirs and the Federal government's losses continued to mount until open hostilities began. The electronic display will be available for purchase as a DVD in the Museum Store and will be distributed to schools courtesy of JPMorgan Chase.

Fort Sumter and the strategies leading up to that fateful day of April 15, 1861 will be examined in detail. Original Fort Sumter items to be displayed in *Team of Rivals* include:

- A small section of red brick wall from Fort Sumter, and a mortar shell and friction primer wire from Fort Sumter, all loaned by Fort Sumter National Monument.
- A personal letter from Major Robert Anderson, Union commander at Fort Sumter, that reveals his deep interest in religion (Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum).
- A piece of fireplace mantel from Anderson's room at Fort Sumter (Museum of the Confederacy).
- Documents belonging to the Confederate commander at the Battle of Fort Sumter, Major P.G.T. Beauregard, including his commissions in the U.S. Army as a Captain and a Major (Louisiana State Museum), and pages from his Mexican War diary (Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum).
- Beauregard's epaulets, straw hat, sword and scabbard (Louisiana Civil War Museum), and egg cup and spoon from his mess kit (Museum of the Confederacy). All of the items were used at Fort Sumter.
- A walking stick made for Beauregard from the Fort Sumter flag pole (Louisiana Civil War Museum), and a weaver's tool shuttle (Museum of the Confederacy) made from the same flag pole.
- A remnant of a South Carolina flag that flew over the fort (Museum of the Confederacy).

Original Abraham Lincoln items in the exhibit include the original desk and inkwell Lincoln used to draft his First Inaugural Address, as well as the galley proofs of the speech; and a Lincoln signed original April 19, 1861 authorization to blockade Southern ports, a document many feel was the first official declaration of war by the Union. Also included is a letter Lincoln wrote to New York school boy George Patten in March 1861, as the entire nation was plunging toward war, to confirm for George's skeptical schoolmates that he had indeed met the President-elect.

The *Team of Rivals* exhibit will first demonstrate how Lincoln chose his initial Presidential cabinet, composing it of men with differing viewpoints, some of whom were his opponents for the 1860 Republican Presidential nomination. They include William H. Seward of New York, Secretary of State; Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, Secretary of the Treasury; Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, Secretary of War; Gideon Welles of Connecticut, Secretary of the Navy; Caleb B. Smith of Indiana, Secretary of the Interior; Edward Bates of Missouri, Attorney General; and Montgomery Blair of Maryland, Postmaster General. Seward, Chase, Cameron and Bates all vied with Lincoln for the Republican nomination.

Visitors will learn that the Cabinet was far from united about what should be done as the Secession Crisis worsened in March and April 1861. President Lincoln asked each Cabinet officer to write his opinion about provisioning Fort Sumter in South Carolina after numerous federal installations had been seized by the seceding Southern states. Here are each Cabinet member's replies:

- Attorney General Edward Bates: "I am willing to evacuate Fort Sumter, rather than be an active party in the beginning of civil war...the more Southern forts,-- Pickens, Key West, etc.—should, without delay, be put in condition of easy defense."
- Postmaster General Montgomery Blair: "No men or people have so many difficulties as those whose firmness is doubted...I believe Fort Sumter may be provisioned...with little risk...This would completely demoralize the Rebellion...[and] initiate a reactionary movement throughout the South which would speedily overwhelm the traitors."
- Secretary of War Simon Cameron: "I am greatly influenced by the opinions of the Army officers...As a practical military question, the time for succoring Fort Sumter...passed away nearly a month ago."
- Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase: "If the attempt will so inflame civil war as to involve an immediate necessity for the enlistment of armies...I cannot advise it...But it seems to me highly improbable that the attempt...will produce such consequences...I return, therefore, an affirmative answer to the question."
- Secretary of State William Seward: "It would provoke combat, and probably initiate a civil war...Fraternity, if practiced by this administration, will rescue the Union from all its dangers."
- Interior Secretary Caleb Smith: "The effect of such an attempt, whether successful or not, would be the early loss of the Fort, and the destruction, or capture, of Maj. Anderson's command. It would therefore in my judgment be unwise to attempt to supply the fort."
- Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles: "By sending or attempting to send provisions into Sumter, will not war be precipitated? It may be impossible to escape it under any course of policy...but I am not prepared to advise a course that would provoke hostilities."

Visitors entering *Team of Rivals* will also learn about Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, and follow a corridor that traces the military and political path toward war as some of Lincoln's own Cabinet members work behind his back to undermine his authority. Fort Sumter will be examined before, during and after the battle that started the Civil War. The final section will feature in-depth information about Lincoln's Cabinet members along with displays of some of their personal possessions.

Team of Rivals will open October 14, 2010, just prior to the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's election as President in November 2010, his Farewell Address to Springfield as President-elect in February 2011, and the start of the Civil War in April 2011.

For more information about *Team of Rivals* or other programs and exhibits at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, visit www.presidentlincoln.org.

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