



News Release

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Illinois answers the call

“Boys in Blue” Civil War 150th anniversary exhibit opens April 12 at Lincoln Presidential Library

SPRINGFIELD – The faces, letters, sketches and songs of the men who fought in Illinois regiments during the Civil War will be featured in the new “Illinois Answers the Call: Boys in Blue” Civil War 150th anniversary exhibit that opens Tuesday, April 12 and runs through December 30 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in downtown Springfield. The exhibit on the first two floors of the Library will be open daily, including Saturdays and Sundays, through September 4, and thereafter on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., for free public viewing.

The original materials from the Presidential Library’s vast Civil War collections cover select members of the 7th through 55th Illinois Infantry, 1st and 2nd Illinois Light Artillery, and 1st through 17th Illinois Cavalry which were quickly raised after the outbreak of hostilities in April 1861. A collage featuring at least one image from each of these units will be included. Jacksonville, Illinois native General Benjamin Grierson’s commission, which is signed by Abraham Lincoln, will be part of the exhibit from its opening until June 1. This exhibit is the first of four which will commemorate the Civil War – a new one will be mounted in early 2012.

Visitors will see Illinois soldiers depicted in original albumen prints, lithographs, tintypes, cabinet cards, and *cartes-de-visite*. Original letters, sheet music, artifacts (including a cannon), diaries and sketches created by the soldiers themselves will also be displayed. The exhibit will present an individual, human side to the conflict that forever changed the course of United States history. The displays will be organized by brothers who served, killed in action, chaplains, Andersonville POWs, Elmer Ellsworth and the Zouaves, Illinois generals and recruitment, soldiers who became political leaders after the war, and for the love of the flag.

“This exhibit reminds us that every one of these ‘Boys in Blue’ has a story to tell—from the soldier who returned home to a grateful family, to the casualty who left behind loved ones who never forgot him,” said Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Director Eileen Mackevich.

These Illinois “Boys in Blue” were often truly *boys*; some had not yet reached their teenage years. Visitors will meet some of them, and their stories told by original materials will speak from the walls. Brothers often fought side-by-side, and many died that way – their images in the exhibit will show the family resemblance. Illinois troops captured by Confederate forces endured unimaginable atrocities at the hands of their captors; their heroism will be documented in the exhibit. Scores of Illinois soldiers, buried where they fell, would never again sleep beneath the Illinois prairie, and visitors will hear the aching sorrow in letters from their families.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, the home to nearly 13 million items pertaining to all aspects of Illinois history, has one of the nation’s largest and richest Civil War collections. The facility is open free of charge on weekdays for anyone interested in researching the state’s history. The adjacent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, which requires paid admission, brings to life Abraham Lincoln’s story through immersive exhibits and displays of original artifacts. Its current “Team of Rivals” exhibit chronicles President Lincoln’s selection of his first cabinet through the attack on Fort Sumter. The Museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visit www.presidentlincoln.org for more information about programs and exhibits at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

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