

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

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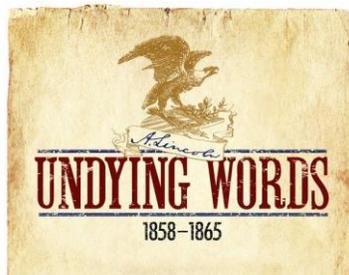
Remembering Lincoln's 'Undying Words'

Lincoln Presidential Library, Chicago History Museum join forces for exhibition on Lincoln's greatest years

SPRINGFIELD – Abraham Lincoln uttered some of the most famous words in history. He spoke out against slavery, urged his countrymen to reject war and defended “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Now those words are the focus of a major new exhibition presented at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and mounted in cooperation with the Chicago History Museum. The exhibition commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Civil War's end and Lincoln's death.

“Undying Words: Lincoln 1858-1865” opens Nov. 22 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill., and runs throughout 2015. It is presented with the assistance of Archer Daniels Midland Co.



Visitors will see more than 120 documents and artifacts related to Lincoln and his biggest speeches. The items on display include a copy of the constitutional amendment ending slavery, the bloody gloves Lincoln carried when he was shot, a carriage used by the president and his wife in Washington and the bed where Lincoln died after lingering for nine hours.

“Undying Words” is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum’s celebration of its 10th birthday. More than 3.6 million people have visited the ALPLM over that time.

“The staff of the library and museum are honored that people have responded so enthusiastically to our efforts to tell the Abraham Lincoln story. We wanted to thank them – and to honor Lincoln – with an exhibition worthy of his impact on history,” said Amy Martin, director of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which operates the presidential library.

Gary T. Johnson, president of the Chicago History Museum, said: “We are delighted to have contributed to this exhibition, which explores Lincoln’s ideas through five key speeches made during the most critical chapter in our nation’s history. Today, those speeches continue to challenge and inspire people everywhere.”

FIVE SPEECHES

The heart of “Undying Words” are five momentous Lincoln speeches: his “House Divided” speech of 1858, his First Inaugural Address in 1861, the 1863 Gettysburg Address, his 1865 Second Inaugural and his final speech, on Reconstruction, given just three days before his assassination.

Historic phrases from those speeches are familiar to almost everyone.

“I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free,” Lincoln said in 1858. And when he was sworn in as president, he pleaded, “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.” Four bloody years later, he said, “Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.”

The exhibition will help visitors understand what Lincoln was trying to accomplish with each speech, what was going on in the world around him and what impact his words ultimately had on the nation.

“Undying Words” also includes dramatic objects that have never before been seen at the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Among the highlights:

- The model for Daniel Chester French’s sculpture in the Lincoln Memorial
- Beautiful and touching letters of condolence to Mrs. Lincoln

- Items from African-Americans the Lincolns knew in Washington
- A 5-foot-tall Lincoln campaign banner from 1860
- What is believed to be the largest oil portrait of Lincoln
- A cane the Lincolns gave to the minister who conducted their son's funeral

Three documents that are key to Lincoln's legacy will also be on display when "Undying Words" opens. To minimize damage to the documents, they will be removed at different times during the exhibition's run and replaced by a facsimile or illustration.

Visitors will get to see a handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address until Jan. 20. A signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation (which declared that "all persons held as slaves within said designated States ... are, and henceforward shall be free") will be displayed until Feb. 16.

A signed copy of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, will be included until March 16. Lincoln signed that document below a phrase he helped fashion: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude ... shall exist within the United States."

Together, these speeches, documents and artifacts illustrate the evolution of Lincoln's ideas on equality, from simply taking a personal stand against slavery to helping develop a national majority that favored permanently ending slavery and preserving the Union as a free republic.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will offer a variety of related programs and events related to "Undying Words."

They include:

- Arborist Guy Sternberg discussing the "last living witness to Lincoln's funeral" – a large tree in Oak Ridge Cemetery
- History professor Richard Wightman Fox giving an illustrated presentation called "Living and Dying for the Nation: Lincoln on Screen, 1915-2012."
- A special display in the museum's Treasures Gallery of items concerning Lincoln's death

- Public readings of Lincoln’s major speeches on their anniversaries, each accompanied by a Q&A with ALPLM historians.
- A look on Nov. 19 at items from the ALPLM collection that relate to Illinois legislators, including Lincoln.

For more on “Undying Words” and the ALPLM’s 10th anniversary, visit www.TenYearsLincoln.com.

JOINT EFFORT

“Undying Words” is a joint effort of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and the Chicago History Museum. Both institutions contributed expertise, artifacts, money and staff time.

The exhibition was curated by Olivia Mahoney, senior curator at the Chicago History Museum, and James Cornelius, curator of the presidential library’s Lincoln Collection.

Mahoney has been with the Chicago History Museum since 1980, curating many exhibitions, including “Abraham Lincoln Transformed” and “Chicago: Crossroads of America.”

Cornelius has been curator of the Lincoln Collection. In addition to planning exhibits, he edited and co-authored the museum’s Official Commemorative Guide and its publication “Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made in America.”

Eileen Mackevich, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, thanked the Chicago History Museum for helping create the exhibition.

“We hope it generates widespread discussion about Lincoln the president and the master politician,” Mackevich said. “What qualities made his leadership unique? What forces shaped his views on equality? These are questions worth weighing as important anniversaries draw near.”

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