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Naturalization Ceremony at President Lincoln's Cottage

New American citizens take their oath at Lincoln's presidential home

Washington, D.C. – President Lincoln's Cottage welcomed the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to the summer residence of Abraham Lincoln to naturalize 20 new American citizens. Representing 17 different countries around the world, these new Americans took their oath at the residence where President Lincoln developed the Emancipation Proclamation and steered the United States through the Civil War.

Erin Mast, Executive Director of President Lincoln's Cottage, noted the poignancy of having the ceremony at the Cottage, "Living here, Lincoln saw the hope, struggles, and contributions of immigrants; his neighbors were retired veterans of the U.S. Army, most of them German and Irish immigrants." On July 4, 1864, the same day the Lincoln family moved to the Cottage for their third and final summer in residence at the home, Lincoln signed into law An Act to Encourage Immigration. This act was the first comprehensive immigration law in American history.

Historian Jason Silverman, author of the newly published *Lincoln and the Immigrant*, was the ceremony's keynote speaker. "Today we celebrate the American dream," Silverman began his address. "Surely it was Abraham Lincoln's dream. The dream of a nation where all people are created equal and all are endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This idea was deeply personal for the 16th president, Silverman noted. "Lincoln not only advocated the American Dream; he lived it. No president ever began life in more abject poverty or with less likelihood of success, much less fame."

Silverman firmly placed these new citizens in a long, important arc of American history. “It was Lincoln’s sincere hope that his country would make its mark on immigrants from around the world, and immigrants would make their mark on this great country. I feel pretty certain that he would be delighted to be standing before you today. I know you will make your mark, too. I can feel that same dedication and sense of civic responsibility in this group of new American citizens.”



Attendees of the USCIS naturalization ceremony sing the National Anthem at President Lincoln’s Cottage. Photo: Courtesy President Lincoln’s Cottage, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation © 2015.

President Lincoln’s Cottage, “the Cradle of the Emancipation Proclamation,” is located on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, DC. While living here for more than a quarter of his presidency, Abraham Lincoln bonded with soldiers and veterans, made crucial decisions about the Civil War, and, most notably, developed the Emancipation Proclamation his first summer in residence. His daily commute put him in regular contact with

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wounded soldiers and self-emancipated men, women, and children. Today, the site offers an intimate, never-before-seen view of Abraham Lincoln's presidency and private life, and new perspectives on the influential ideas Lincoln developed while living here.

Hours of operation: The Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center is open 9:30am-4:30pm Monday-Saturday and 10:30am-4:30pm Sunday. Cottage tours are on the hour, 7 days a week. For more information on President Lincoln's Cottage, visit: www.lincolncottage.org or call 202-829-0436.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately-funded non-profit organization, works to save America's historic places. President Lincoln's Cottage is a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, visit: www.preservationnation.org.

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