



THE COTTAGE COURIER

Vol. 15

www.lincolncottage.org

Spring 2012

From the Director



Dear Friends,

This has been a thrilling spring and is shaping up to be a year of great change and excitement for us at President Lincoln's Cottage. From milestones reached to high-profile endorsements, the Cottage is quickly overcoming the decades of obscurity and isolation before our 2008 grand opening. It's hard to believe that 150 years ago, on May 29th, Mary Lincoln wrote with anticipation of their first move to the Soldiers' Home. You can find more about their move in the featured article on page four.

In the past few months, we were honored to have former First Lady Laura Bush publicly support our latest exhibit, "Can You Walk Away?" which looks at slavery today in the United States as we mark the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The exhibit was also referenced by the New York Times, NPR, and CNN. We hosted a major event marking the 150th anniversary of the DC Emancipation Act with the support of the Lincoln Group of DC and the Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia. Penn Mutual held a volunteer day here, supporting landscape restoration with new native plantings (including blueberry bushes). We welcomed our 100,000th tour visitor, a gentleman from San Francisco. And, on April 24th, we hosted a Youth Naturalization Ceremony in the Cottage. Twenty-one children from sixteen different countries became U.S. Citizens in the very room that Lincoln is said to have developed the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. As a memento, we gave each child a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation.

On May 21, Harold Holzer comes back to discuss his newest book, *Emancipating Lincoln*, for our last Cottage Conversation of the season. And on Memorial Day, May 28th, we will partner with the Armed Forces Retirement Home for wreath laying ceremonies and tours of the USSAH National Cemetery (predecessor of Arlington). We hope you can join us!

It is encouraging to all of us that every day, more and more people learn about the deep connection Lincoln had with the Cottage, and how pivotal this place was to his development of the Emancipation Proclamation during his first summer in residence. We could not do this work alone, and we are pleased to also announce a new partnership with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Also, for years, we have had close ties with scholars who assisted on various committees prior to opening to the public. We decided it was high-time to formalize that arrangement, and are pleased to announce our new Scholarly Advisory Group, with 11 inaugural members, who will help advance our mission through expert advice and written scholarship.

Your support has been so critical to our success.

Thank you!

Erin Carlson Mast
Director



On April 24, 2012, we hosted our first Naturalization Ceremony at President Lincoln's Cottage. Twenty one children from sixteen countries were sworn in as United States citizens during this special ceremony in the Emancipation Room.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Cottage Conversation

May 21, 2012 with *Harold Holzer*

6:00pm Reception (\$10) / 6:30pm Lecture (\$10)

Tickets: sahand_miraminy@nthp.org

or (202) 829-0436

More Info: www.lincolncottage.org

The May Cottage Conversation is supported by the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation and the Lincoln Group of DC.

Memorial Day at the Cottage

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

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2013 Ornament Now Available!

Lincoln's Presidential Guard

In honor of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, President Lincoln's Cottage proudly presents a five-ornament series commemorating President Lincoln's time at the Soldiers' Home. The third ornament in the series (1863/2013), which commemorates Lincoln's Presidential Guard, is now available for purchase in our online Museum Store.

When President Lincoln first came to live at the Soldiers' Home, there was no guard to protect him. But it quickly became apparent that the President would need protection during the Civil War. Three groups would eventually guard him during his presidency - 11th New York Cavalry; 7th Ohio "Union Light Guard;" and Company K, 150th PA "Bucktail" Soldiers.

[CLICK HERE](#) to order the 2013 ornament!



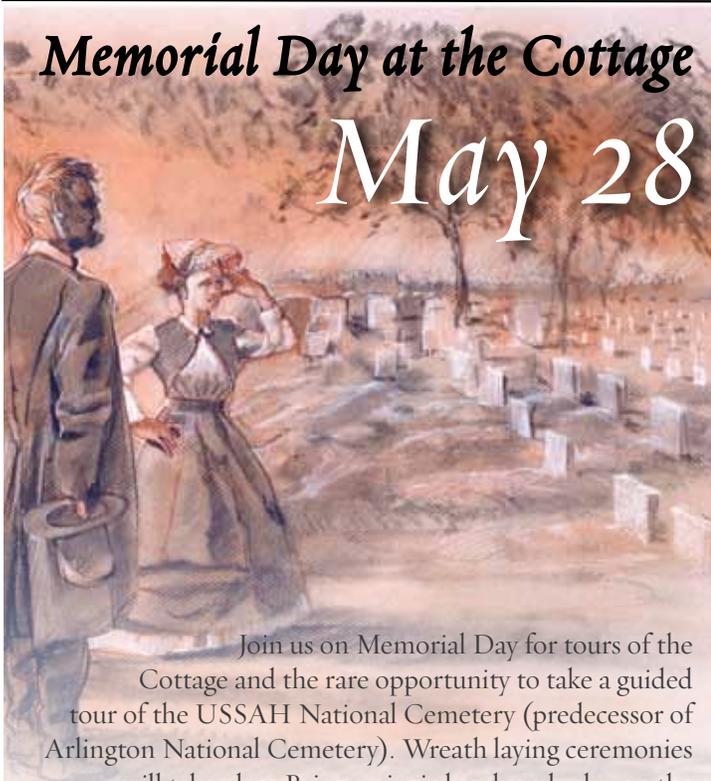
Come Celebrate With Us!



Birthday Parties at President Lincoln's Cottage

With access to free onsite parking, a highly-trained education staff member, and a private party room, having a birthday party at President Lincoln's Cottage is something you and your child will not forget. This guided birthday experience includes a 40 minute interactive tour of the house Abraham Lincoln lived in when he was president, a 40 minute hands-on activity with a take-away for each child (their own Lincoln hat!), and 40 minutes of party time. Have a seat in the library where Lincoln worked, hear accounts from people who visited him here, and take a load off on the porch where he would sit and play checkers with Tad. Come celebrate with us and see why Lincoln spent so much time at this "hidden gem."

[MORE INFORMATION - CLICK HERE](#)



Memorial Day at the Cottage May 28

Join us on Memorial Day for tours of the Cottage and the rare opportunity to take a guided tour of the USSAH National Cemetery (predecessor of Arlington National Cemetery). Wreath laying ceremonies will take place. Bring a picnic lunch and relax on the south lawn or at our picnic tables.

This is a FREE event!
[Click here](#) for more information and to register.



Thank you to Penn Mutual

We would like to give a big thanks to Penn Mutual for sponsoring our March 31st Preservation Day and for making it such a big success! Dozens of Penn Mutual volunteers took time out of their weekend to help with an array of projects including laying sod, planting, mulching, paving, waxing, and painting.

Is your company, organization, or group of friends interested in sponsoring a preservation project at President's Lincoln's Cottage? For more information contact Sahand Miraminy - Sahand_Miraminy@nthp.org.

CAN YOU WALK AWAY?

MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES



"This is the ideal year to visit President Lincoln's Cottage, the very place where Lincoln nurtured and developed the Emancipation Proclamation 150 years ago. The Cottage's current exhibit, *Can You Walk Away?*, provides an invaluable lens through which the public can view our country's ongoing struggle with slavery, both in the historical context and in present day trafficking. Exhibits like this are evidence of the way historic places can shape the way we live in the present."

- Former First Lady Laura Bush

OPEN THROUGH AUGUST 2013

A Very Charming Place

By Zachary Klitzman

T.S. Eliot's groundbreaking 1922 poem "The Waste Land" begins with the gloomy line "April is the cruellest month." This sentiment certainly applies to the life of Abraham Lincoln: Mary Owens rejected his wedding proposal on April 1, 1838; the Civil War started on April 12, 1861 with the bombardment of Fort Sumter; the Battle of Shiloh, which had more casualties -- including Mary Todd Lincoln's half-brother -- than all previous American Wars combined, took place in early April 1862; and of course Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865, dying the next morning.

Naturally, April wasn't the only cruel month in Lincoln's life; May had its share of sorrowful moments for the President and his family. On the national front, the Union suffered major casualties at the Battles of Chancellorsville (1863) Wilderness (1864) and Spotsylvania Courthouse (1864). On the personal front, on May 24, 1861, a good friend and former law clerk to Lincoln, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, was shot after taking down a Confederate flag from a hotel roof during the successful capture of Alexandria, Virginia. Lincoln was visibly affected by Ellsworth's death, ordering his body to lay in state in the White House, where the funeral took place the following day on May 25. Writing to Ellsworth's parents the day of the funeral, Lincoln said "In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here, is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one's country, and of bright hopes for one's self and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed, as in his fall... In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend, and your brave and early fallen child. May God give you that

Section from Mary Lincoln's letter, highlighting the Soldiers' Home. Image courtesy of Seth Kaller, Inc.

consolation which is beyond all earthly power. Sincerely your friend in a common affliction -- A. Lincoln."¹

However, May also offered moments of happiness and welcomed change. On May 19, 1860, a committee from the Republican National Convention informed Lincoln that he had won the Republican nomination for President. After months of watching his supporters advocate on behalf of his campaign -- back then it was considered uncouth for Presidential candidates to actively campaign themselves² -- Lincoln was quite grateful for the honor of the nomination, responding to the delegation with utmost thanks. With the nomination secure, he was one step closer to becoming the 16th U.S. President. Unbeknownst to him at the time, he would spend more than a year of his administration living at the Soldiers' Home.

In fact, the initial move to the Soldiers' Home in 1862 also offered a greatly anticipated change for the Lincolns in May. Exactly 150 years ago this month, Mary wrote that she needed to make a major change in order to cope with the grief that had enveloped her ever since the Lincolns' middle son Willie died in February at the age of 11. In a response to a letter of condolence sent by former Springfield neighbor Julia Ann Sprigg, Mary wrote that soon the family would move from the White House to a location more suitable to their needs: "The 1st of July, we go out to the 'Soldiers' Home,' a very charming place 2 1/2 miles from the city, several hundred feet, above, our present situation, to pass the summer."³

The Lincoln family was moving to the Cottage.

Mary Lincoln first visited the Soldiers' Home on March 6, 1861 just two days after her husband was sworn in as President. She had come at the recommendation of James Buchanan, who had used the grounds as a summer home. (However, he most likely did not live in what is today "President Lincoln's Cottage" but instead Quarters 1, which was built over a decade after the Cottage was.) President Lincoln soon followed, taking a horseback ride to the site before breakfast on March 7, as reported by the New York Times the following day.

Following their first visit, the Lincoln's intended to move out to the Soldiers' Home in July of 1861. Writing to a close friend, Hannah Shearer on July 11, 1861, Mary encouraged Hannah to visit Washington since "there is no place in the country, so safe & well guarded as Washington. No matter what your state or feelings are, you will have a pleasant

time. We expect to go out to the "Soldiers' Home" a very beautiful place 2 1/2 miles, from this, in about three weeks. We will ride into the city every day, & can be as secluded, as we please."⁴ However, ten days after that letter, the Union suffered an embarrassing defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run. Washington was anything but "safe & well guarded." Lincoln decided to stay at the White House, to be closer to his top political and military aides. Meanwhile, Mary eventually took a vacation with her younger sons to New York City and then Long Branch, New Jersey in August. In the end, the Presidential family did not take up quarters at the Soldiers' Home that year.

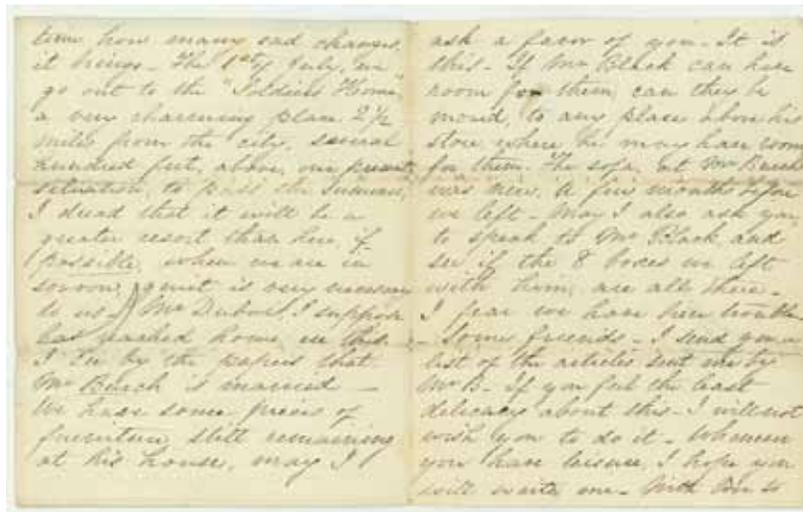
By the next summer, however, a profound tragedy in the Lincoln family would give Mary all the reason to move out to the Home. On February 20, 1862, just a few weeks after the President's 53rd birthday,

William "Willie" Lincoln, the second oldest living Lincoln son, died, succumbing to most likely to typhoid fever contracted via contaminated water drawn from the Potomac River. Mary, who had already buried a son, Eddie Lincoln, in 1850, was inconsolable with grief. She had lost her favorite son, according to historian Jean H. Baker, and was so beside herself she did not even attend her son's funeral.⁵ It didn't help that Tad Lincoln was also deathly ill, eventually recovering about

— needed the relative quiet of the Soldiers' Home. "I dread that it will be a greater resort than here, if possible, when we are in sorrow, quiet is very necessary to us."⁶ Though Mary Lincoln had written Sprigg that the family would be going to the Soldiers' Home the first of July, the family moved earlier, sometime in June, 1862. (Contemporary sources did not record the specific date of the Lincolns' move to the Soldiers' Home, though at least two sources indicate the

family was situated at the Soldiers' Home no later than mid June. Lincoln family friend and Senator Orville Browning noted that the family had left the White House by June 13, and on June 15, 1862, Lincoln's secretary John Nicolay wrote a friend that "Mrs. Lincoln moved out to the 'Soldiers Home' ... this past week."⁷)

What greeted the Lincoln family when they arrived in early June 1862? About a week before the Sprigg letter,



Section from Mary Lincoln's letter to Julia Ann Sprigg, May 29, 1862. Image courtesy of Seth Kaller, Inc.

a week after Willie's passing. For the next six weeks Mary barely left her bed, and only started to correspond again in earnest in mid-May 1862.

With the specter of Willie's death looming, the White House with all its memories of her dear son was just too much for Mary to bear. "Our home is very beautiful, the grounds around us are enchanting, the world still smiles & pays homage," Mary wrote in the same letter to Julia Ann Sprigg in which she announced the move to the Soldiers' Home. "Yet the charm is dispelled—everything appears a mockery, the idolised [sic] one, is not with us, he has fulfilled his mission and we are left desolate." Instead, she thought that the whole family — including "Dear little Taddie who was so devoted to his darling Brother" and Robert who "has grown & improved more than any one you ever saw"

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton received a report from the Soldiers' Home Board of Commissioners indicating that the Home was running smoothly with 130 "cheerful and contented" veterans (called "inmates" at the time) living on the 200-acre property. "They are all well clothed, and fed, and every means taken for their comfort," the Commissioners reported to Stanton. "The sick and aged are supplied with whatever their respective cases require. A Farmer and some work hands are employed to till the grounds; and in this way ample provender is provided for the necessary horses and cows, and an abundance of vegetables for the Inmates. Those of the Inmates who desire to work on the farm, receive extra pay for their service."⁸ The 200 acres were also quite remarkable. One eager citizen who ventured out to the Home in the summer of 1862, reported that "I have seen nothing in Washington that has charmed me

more than this quiet and beautiful retreat.”⁹
 A newspaper recounted that the Home’s landscape was “delightfully diversified by old woods, open cultivated fields, ornamental grounds and gardens, and has an undulating or high rolling surface that gives ravishing views of rivers, hills and dales.”¹⁰

The move had a profound, positive impact immediately on Mary. Benjamin Brown French, the Commissioner of Public Buildings reported in his journal on June 16 that Mary “seemed to be in excellent spirits and delighted at getting out of the city.” Though she would never forget Willie – “in the loss of our idolised [sic] boy, we naturally have suffered such intense grief, that a removal from the scene of our misery was found very necessary” she wrote a friend in July 1862 – the change of scenery was a positive development in her life. “We are truly delighted, with this retreat,” she wrote in that same letter, “the drives & walks around here are delightful, & each day, brings its visitors... We consider it a ‘pleasant time’ for us.”¹¹

Mary Lincoln had found her sanctuary.

POSTSCRIPT

Mary Lincoln wrote about the Soldiers’ Home far more times than Abraham Lincoln did. In fact, there is only one known direct reference to the Soldiers’ Home in all of his writing. That direct reference came late in the fall of 1862, and offers a glimpse into Lincoln’s own feelings about the Home. With Mary away at the Parker House in Boston visiting Robert at Harvard, the President telegraphed his wife on November 9, 1862, indicating that the household staff was ready to return to the White House for the winter. “Mrs. Cuthbert & Aunt Mary want to move to the White House, because it has grown so cold at Soldiers Home. Shall they?”¹² While Mary had signaled her eagerness to move out to the Soldiers’ Home in May, Abraham was in no rush to leave.

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The Mary Todd Lincoln letter to Julia Ann Spriggs, dated May 29, 1862, was recently acquired by the Library of Congress. The letter will be displayed as part of the Library’s upcoming “The Civil War in America” exhibit, opening November 12, 2012.
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1 Abraham Lincoln to Ephraim D. and Phoebe Ellsworth, 25 May 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 4:385-86.

2 Stephen Douglas actually broke this unwritten rule during the election of 1860. Grasping the potential threat of secession, Douglass went on a national speaking tour, trying to drum up support as a compromise candidate that would fight both abolition in the North and anti-Union sentiments in the South. The strategy did not pay off, as he ended up carrying just a single state in the election, despite finishing second to Lincoln in the popular vote.

3 Mary Lincoln to Julia Ann Sprigg, May 29, 1862, Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Fromm International, 1987), 127.

4 Mary Lincoln to Hannah Shearer, July 11, 1861, MTL 93.

5 Neither had Queen Victoria when her husband Prince Albert died the previous December.

6 Mary Lincoln to Julia Ann Sprigg, May 29, 1862, MTL 127.

7 See Matthew Pinsker *Lincoln’s Sanctuary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 207 n.6.

8 Soldiers’ Home Board of Commissioners report, Washington, DC, May 21, 1862.

9 July 2, 1862 “Correspondence from Washington,” *Iowa State Register* via Catherin Clinton Mrs. Lincoln: *A Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 178.

10 *Washington Chronicle*, October 15, 1869 via United States Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Home Preservation Plan, July 19, 1985, Volume Two, Prepared for the Department of the Army by Geier Brown Renfrow Architects.

11 Mary Lincoln to Mrs. Charles Eamges, July 26, 1862, MTL 130-131.

12 Abraham Lincoln to Mary Todd Lincoln November 9, 1862, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), V: 492.