

THE PROCLAMATION

Vol. XXIII | Spring 2014



PRESIDENT
LINCOLN'S
COTTAGE



Memorial Day 2014

Enjoy a free guided tour of the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery on Monday, May 26. Tours depart President Lincoln's Cottage at 10:15 am and 12:00 pm. Learn more on page 2.

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From the Director

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to unveil our redesigned newsletter under its new masthead, "The Proclamation." Thank you for submitting hundreds of great ideas for names and participating in the online vote. "The Proclamation" is a fitting reference to one of Lincoln's most pivotal acts, developed and defended while in residence here. And we couldn't be happier with it.



You'll see we have some new features, too, including "From the Desk," a section where we share your feedback and testimonials. We've heard from many of you that the feature-length article is something you look forward to in each issue. Some of you even make it required reading for your students. Rest assured that the feature-length article will return in the summer 2014 issue. For this issue, however, we decided to feature multiple, shorter contributions from our frontline team, most of whom are current or recent graduate students, and one of whom is a retired teacher. I hope you enjoy reading their perspectives and experiences in history and education here at the Cottage. Their pieces range from a research project that made new connections between the US Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery and the Cottage, to an analysis of an historic print from our collection, to reflective pieces on the Cottage, readings, and filling a need for quality, history education.

This summer marks the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's last season in residence. From exhibits to teacher workshops, public programs to youth leaderships, we will be marking this momentous anniversary season. For more information on programs, and how the teenagers in your life can register for our second annual Students Opposing Slavery International Summit, keep reading.

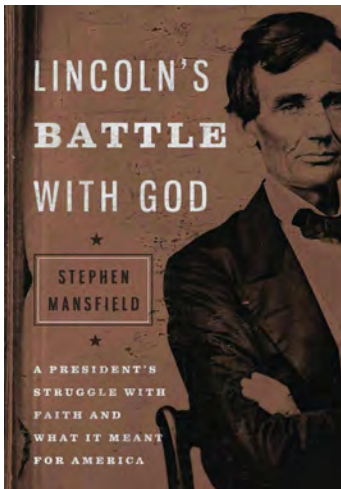
I hope you enjoy the redesigned newsletter and the short essays and articles herein. Let us know what you think by joining our conversation on Facebook and Twitter, or drop me a line by email. As always, I would be delighted learn your thoughts.

Erin Mast
EMast@savingplaces.org

A. Lincoln
PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S COTTAGE
AT THE SOLDIERS' HOME



Final Cottage Conversation of the Season on May 15 with Stephen Mansfield



Learn about the Lincoln's religious life from Stephen Mansfield, author of "Lincoln's Battle with God," while enjoying a glass of wine in Lincoln's home.

Thursday, May 15 at President Lincoln's Cottage.
Reception: 6:00pm. Lecture: 6:30 pm.
Reception \$10, lecture \$10. Free for \$250+ members. [JOIN NOW](#).

RSVP to Sahand Miraminy, 202-829-0436 x31232
or SMiraminy@savingplaces.org.



We are grateful for our sponsors for their generous support of the 2013-2014 Cottage Conversation Season: [Northern Trust Corporation](#), David Bruce Smith, and F. James Tennies.



Northern Trust

Join us for Memorial Day at the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery

Commemorate Memorial Day on **Monday May 26, 2014** with a brief ceremony and FREE guided tours of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) National Cemetery, the predecessor to Arlington National Cemetery. Pack a picnic lunch and enjoy the beautiful grounds and cool breezes on this historic hilltop after your tour! Register [online](#).

Wreath Laying Ceremony: 10:00 am. Meet at bandstand adjacent to Cottage at 9:30 am.

Cemetery Tours: 10:45 am and 12:30 pm. Meet at bandstand adjacent to Cottage at 10:15 am and 12:00 pm.

Learn more about the USSAH National Cemetery in [one of this month's feature articles](#).



President Lincoln's Cottage and the Armed Forces Retirement Home are proud to partner on the Memorial Day program.

Notes from the Desk

We reached out to a few supporters and asked them to tell us about the impact President Lincoln's Cottage has had in their lives for "Notes from the Desk," a new feature where we share your letters about this historic place. Their responses left us all the more committed to our own 'unfinished work,' and we hope that their reflections resonate with you, too. Drop us a line with your own thoughts: LincolnsCottage@savingplaces.org. Your words may be included in the next issue!

A Living Tribute to the Journey Toward Freedom and Equality

"Change begins in single places, within individual minds and hearts. When that change strikes a chord of reason and right with others, it grows and builds. President Lincoln's Cottage is the single place where freedom from slavery in the United States was born. Here at this cottage, individuals are gifted with the opportunity to personally connect with the place where President Lincoln contemplated, resolved, and lent his entire soul into embracing Freedom and Equality for all.

Our family is a transracial family; my wife and I adopted an African-American son. We are so full of love for our son and thrilled to be advocates for racial reconciliation. We also contemplated and resolved to further the progress of Freedom and Equality through our actions and love for our son. President Lincoln's Cottage is a living tribute and personal reminder of the intellectual journey toward Freedom and Equality that began in this single place, and has continued to strike its chord. May it continue to inspire change for many

individuals, as the work we have begun is not yet finished."

-The Strum family, Columbia, SC

"Here at this cottage, individuals are gifted with the opportunity to personally connect with the place where President Lincoln contemplated, resolved, and lent his entire soul into embracing Freedom and Equality for all."

Helping Students Discover Lincoln's Humanity

Over two dozen children stepped back in time to 1860's America, torn in two by the Civil War, when they set foot in President Lincoln's Cottage. More than dates, battles, and proclamations, they saw the life of a man, a father, a husband, and the embodiment of the American dream in this haven for Lincoln and his family. The children were able to imagine Lincoln climbing a tree in the back, rescuing one of Tad's pet peacocks. They could see the tragic consequences of war that Lincoln saw when he looked out on

the cemetery, where every day were buried casualties of a war he felt compelled to undertake. But they also saw the great potential from the other side of the Cottage: a capitol dome, unfinished, but rising high above its surroundings, a beacon of Lincoln's ideals of what the country could be. Through several visits to this historic site, our group of homeschool children experienced on a most intimate level the ideas, conflicts, and heart-wrenching decisions facing President Lincoln."

-Anna Bernanke, Mt. Ranier Home School Group, Mt. Ranier, MD



The Mt. Ranier Home School Group joined a chorus of hundreds in reciting the Gettysburg Address on its 150th anniversary from the Cottage veranda.

Notes from the Desk

Finding A Way to Experience the Cottage

"My relationship with the Cottage began four years ago when I toured this quaint summer home that Abraham, Mary, and Tad enjoyed so much. I became a member that day and, through the newsletter, kept in touch with special activities like the 150th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address celebration. Since I was unable to attend but wanted to participate [Associate Director for Programs] Callie Hawkins found a way. She called me on her cell phone at the start of the last recitation, introduced me to the crowd as her special friend from Indiana who would be participating remotely by speaker phone, and allowed me to join the group in reciting this remarkable speech by this great man... This experience demonstrates that the people at the Cottage will find a way to make it possible for everyone who wants to do so to experience President Lincoln's Cottage in their own way and come away with special memories of their own."

-Shari Petersime, Fountain City, IN

Inspiring A Personal Lincoln Labyrinth

"I now own exactly 77 Lincoln books, 3 Lincoln prints, 4

bicentennial commemorative Lincoln pennies, and one Lincoln bobblehead. And that's all dated from when I came to his cottage at the Soldiers' Home for your wonderful tour and walked out with a copy of Pinsker's Lincoln Sanctuary in my hands. Maybe I ought to send you guys the credit

"That trip was kind of a culmination of what got stirred up within me while at your cottage nearly three years ago. So thanks. At least in my case, you guys did an outstanding job- almost too outstanding- of sending me down my own Lincoln labyrinth."

card bill? During a recent visit here, my brother said he decided to lull himself to sleep by counting all of my Lincoln books. But I have yet to reach the point where I find Old Abe boring...

Last summer my wife let me go on a solo vacation to - you guessed it - Springfield. During that four-day pilgrimage, I took in his presidential library and museum, his office, the old State Capital, the train station where he said his goodbyes, his gravesite and his home (which, not knowing when I would be back and thankful it was free, I visited each day that I

was in town). I even managed to get a picture with a professional Lincoln lookalike, which now sits on my writing desk at home. That trip was kind of a culmination of what got stirred up within me while at your cottage nearly three years ago. So thanks. At least in my case, you guys did an outstanding job- almost too outstanding- of sending me down my own Lincoln labyrinth."

-Lee Pitts, Washington, D.C.

Making History Come Alive

"Your support of Title I and ESOL students makes the Cottage experience totally accessible to students of all learning styles and levels. Your creative, professional and highly organized staff make your programs memorable and fun for students, chaperones, interpreters, parents as well as

teachers. Your hands-on, Lincoln's Hat Program is always a big hit with my kiddies. You make history come alive for them.

This year's class loved their hats so much that they created a dance with them and entered the talent show. It was awesome to have my, heretofore, shiest girls singing and dancing and smiling and having fun...all as a result of one winter's afternoon when they had the opportunity to visit the Cottage and make a stovepipe hat. We just love you guys!"

-Melanie Carney, Braddock Elementary, Annandale, VA

Open Through June 2014: Lincoln's Briefcase and Tad's Photo Album

President Lincoln's Cottage is currently displaying Abraham Lincoln's briefcase and a photo album given to Tad Lincoln as part of its "originALS" exhibit series. The briefcase and album are on display until June 30, 2014.

The briefcase that held Abraham Lincoln's handwritten notes during the Civil War is currently on display at President Lincoln's Cottage. The exhibit marks the first time the briefcase has returned to the Cottage since Lincoln himself had it here. While living at the Cottage with his family during the summers of 1862, 1863, and 1864, President Lincoln carried his papers in the briefcase on his daily commute to the White House. A photo album made for Tad Lincoln by the 150th Pennsylvania Volunteers, a company stationed at the Cottage during the Civil War to guard the Lincoln family, is also on view in the exhibit.



Wear Your Love for Lincoln on Your Sleeve...



*...or on
your tie,
sock or
hat!*

Your purchase helps support the Cottage!

Buy these items and more in the store or shop online today: <http://shop.lincolncottage.org>.

Store hours: Monday-Saturday 9:30 am - 4:30 pm, Sunday 10:30 am - 4:30 pm.

Exploring the Cemetery: A New Digital Resource

By Zach Klitzman and Evan Phifer

In the aftermath of the First Battle of Bull Run, the Federal army created the first national cemetery adjacent to the Soldier's Home in Washington, D.C. Yet the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery — today officially called the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery — has not received as much as attention as Arlington National Cemetery, its direct successor. To rectify this, we have created "[How Sleep the Brave: Soldiers' Home National Cemetery, Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War](#)," a website that specifically details the important legacy of the USSAH National Cemetery.

In addition to predating Arlington, the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery is significant because it influenced President Lincoln when he lived at the Cottage. As he witnessed numerous burials taking place in the cemetery, the cost of war became increasingly

apparent. In fact, by [graphing the burials](#), we discovered that a huge spike in the number of burials occurred between August 1862 and January 1863. Battles that summer and fall, including Seven Days, Second Bull Run, Chantilly, South Mountain, and Antietam, produced massive casualties. Yet during this time Lincoln deliberated, drafted and defended the Emancipation Proclamation, while living at the Soldiers' Home.

The cemetery expanded after the war as well, with several highly decorated Buffalo Soldiers as well as General John Logan, founder Memorial Day, buried on the grounds. Buffalo Soldiers, such as Medal of Honor recipient [Sergeant John Denny](#), were the military descendents of the Colored Troops that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation authorized. Reflecting upon the military service of the Buffalo Soldiers, visitors can understand the legacy of

Lincoln's ideas about freedom. Similarly, [Logan, buried after the war](#), helped define how we view the Civil War and its veterans' war experiences, as he became a staunch advocate for Union veterans during his post Civil War political career.

In addition to the USSAH National

Cemetery's burials, we also discuss how [the cemetery has been visualized throughout history](#), how Lincoln dealt with [deep personal loss](#) in addition to the impersonal burials in the cemetery, and how [National Cemeteries evolved](#) throughout the country, starting with the Soldiers' Home and continuing through Reconstruction, Civil War anniversaries, and the present.

This project sparked our interest because we saw the cemetery as an overlooked aspect of Lincoln's overall Soldiers' Home experience. From our experience working at the Cottage, we believe this resource will be extremely useful to the site's visitors and supporters. We often receive questions about the cemetery, especially since it is not part of our standard tour (though open to the public). So it's our hope that this resource will give visitors a better understanding of the context that surrounded Lincoln at the Soldiers' Home. To that end, we envision the site as a collaborative effort. So please comment on the site to let us know if you have any questions or additions.

www.ussahcemetery.wordpress.com

Mr. Klitzman is the Executive Assistant at President Lincoln's Cottage and Mr. Phifer is a Historical Interpreter at President Lincoln's Cottage. Both Mr. Klitzman and Mr. Phifer are graduate students in the American University Public History program.



The Soldiers' Home National Cemetery, circa 1864.

What Will Be Your Legacy?



As a private non-profit, President Lincoln's Cottage depends on donations and bequests. You can help ensure this powerful place is here for generations to come by leaving a bequest in your will. In this [video](#), Site Council member Candice Shy Hooper shares why she chose to support this historic site with a bequest.

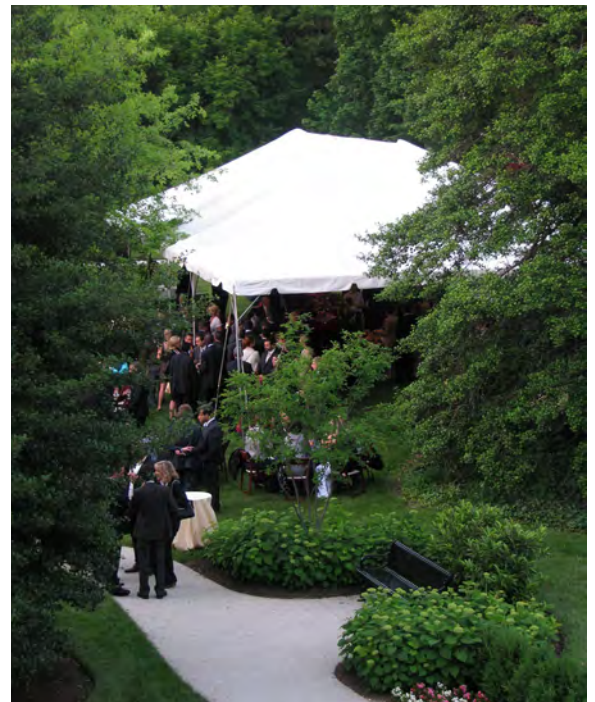


For more information about using your will to protect President Lincoln's Cottage and the big ideas of freedom and equality that live here, please contact John Davison, Associate Director for Development, by calling 202-829-0436 x31225 or emailing JDavison@savingplaces.org.

Host Your Next Event at the Cottage

President Lincoln's Cottage is a picturesque and historic setting for private events. This National Monument provides an intimate setting for dinners and receptions in the same rooms the Lincoln family used for entertaining. Two historical structures - the 1842 Gothic Revival Cottage, and the 1905 Beaux Arts style Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center - and the beautiful surrounding landscape offers a wide variety of options for indoor and outdoor entertaining. Ample parking is available on the grounds and both buildings are fully accessible.

Click [here](#) to learn more about our site rental offerings. To schedule your site visit, contact Events Coordinator Sahand Miraminy at 202-829-0436 x31232 or at SMiraminy@savingplaces.org.



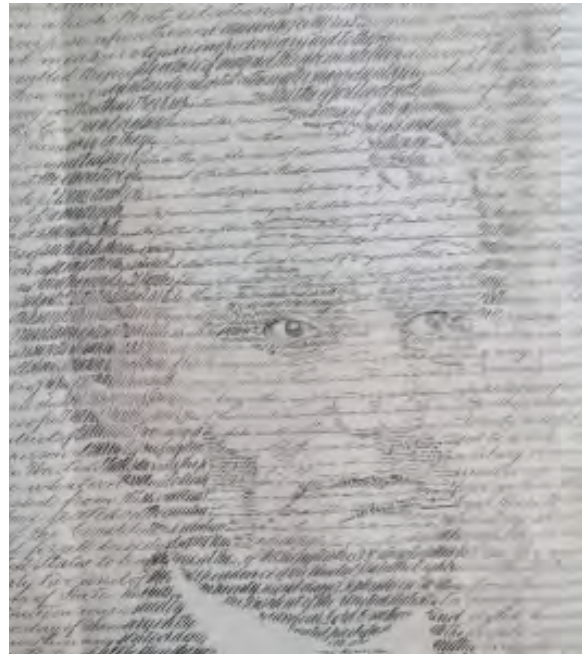
From the Collection: “Allegorical Portrait of Abraham Lincoln”

By Kelsie Torrenti

Within President Lincoln’s Cottage’s collection, there is a steel pen engraving by R. Morris Swander, of the Philadelphia-based publishing company, Swander, Bishop and Co. Like many of the other prints in the Cottage’s collection, Swander’s print is a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. This print stands apart, however, as Lincoln’s image is entirely made of the words of the Emancipation Proclamation. Swander entitled his 1865 work, “Allegorical Portrait of Abraham Lincoln.”

As the title suggests, Swander’s work is overflowing with meaning. The meaning of the Proclamation to the thousands of people it

freed is readily apparent. In one corner, dated 1860, Swander included the image of an enslaved man being whipped by his white master. Another corner of the print, dated 1865, represents how far the country had come in four years of war. Lady Freedom releases a former slave from his shackles as an African-American soldier marches off to fight for his country. In the corner, sits a young African-American boy reading a book—a representation of the future that freedom promised, but perhaps also a reminder of how far the country still had to go.



Detail: “Allegorical Portrait of Abraham Lincoln,”
R. Morris Swander, 1865.



“Allegorical Portrait of Abraham Lincoln.”
R. Morris Swander, 1865.

Swander’s print is also very much an allegory for Lincoln’s legacy. The portrait is reminiscent of the words that President Lincoln spoke on January 1, 1863. Referring to his momentous proclamation, Lincoln said, “If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it.” Lincoln was fully committed to the Proclamation and the promise of freedom it represented. And in the end, Lincoln was right—his place in history is secured, and the Emancipation Proclamation has been a foundation for his legacy.

At President Lincoln’s Cottage, the ideas make the man. In an “Allegorical Portrait of Abraham Lincoln” the ideas, quite literally, make the man. Swander’s work is not just an image of Abraham Lincoln, but a representation of who he was, what he did, and why he is remembered. Perhaps then, the print’s inclusion in the Cottage’s collection has given it a new meaning—not only as an allegory for Lincoln’s life and legacy, but also for the ongoing mission of President Lincoln’s Cottage.

Ms. Torrenti is a Historical Interpreter at President Lincoln’s Cottage and a graduate student in the George Washington University Museum Studies program.

Roof Restoration: Complete!

There was a lot of activity at the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center over the past few months as the crew at Wagner Roofing worked through a tough winter and completed the roof restoration project ahead of schedule and on budget. Asphalt shingles, installed in the mid-20th century, were removed and green clay tiles, manufactured by Ludowici Roof Tile, were installed to replicate the roof as it appeared when the building was first constructed in 1905.

We thank the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation for providing funding for this impactful project.

For more information about how you can support preservation at President Lincoln's Cottage, contact John Davison, Associate Director for Development, at JDavison@savingplaces.org.



Before: Asphalt shingles on the Visitor Education Center.



After: The newly-restored Visitor Education Center roof.

Double Your Impact - Extended!



Image credit: Bruce Guthrie

When you donate to President Lincoln's Cottage, the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation generously matches your contribution. For example, a gift of \$250 becomes \$500. A new matching period runs until June 30.

Your support is critical because President Lincoln's Cottage:

- *is the only National Monument in the country that receives no government operating support;*
- *has no endowment (but budgets responsibly and has no debt either); and*
- *is making a substantial difference through original, transformative programs such as our international Students Opposing Slavery initiative, Emancipation Anthology, and effort to bring every DC public school student to Lincoln's beloved home free of charge.*

**Click here to
DONATE**

Help us build a sustainable future for this historic treasure by making a gift today!

Growing at the Cottage: Education Programs for Students

By Michelle Martz and Beth Roberts

One of the most rewarding parts of our jobs at President Lincoln's Cottage is working with student and teacher groups. At the Cottage, we provide innovative programs for kindergarteners to college students, teachers and adult learners.

Local students and students from around the world visit the Cottage to learn about Lincoln, his experiences during the Civil War, and emancipation. However, the students come away with much more than a history lesson. Our three age-appropriate programs give students a look into the personal story of Abraham Lincoln. Very often in school, time is limited in the study of any subject, but here

at President Lincoln's Cottage we can look at our subject more deeply. We explore and delve into how Lincoln developed his ideas. We look at the world in which he lived and how that world influenced him. We look at how he made decisions. In each of these explorations we connect students personally to his process: students make hats and write big ideas to put into those hats; students write and perform fables to illustrate a universal moral; students literally debate topics that Lincoln had to consider when writing the Emancipation Proclamation. They learn that because of his hard and persistent work and because of

his big ideas, each of them has the opportunity to work as hard as they can to be whatever they want to be.

While sitting in the Drawing Room of the Cottage one day, We asked a group of third grade students, "If you had the chance to speak with Lincoln, what would you ask him?" One student replied that he would ask Lincoln for book recommendations. Another



Education programs inspire students of all ages to learn about Lincoln and reflect on his work in their own lives.

student said she would ask Lincoln what his favorite song was. Then a student raised his hand and said, "I would ask Lincoln how he was doing? Because it wouldn't be easy during the Civil War – or figuring out slavery. I would want to know that he was okay." This student understood the pressure Lincoln was under. This led the group in a great discussion about how Lincoln likely felt stressed, tired, and frustrated at times, just like we do.

As we moved into the next room, a student stopped and whispered, "You know what I would ask Lincoln? I would ask him to be my friend."

These personal moments, which happen every day for students at President Lincoln's Cottage, also move us to better understand Lincoln.

One afternoon, a group of high school students were frustrated that Lincoln did not end slavery sooner. We engaged in a discussion on other options and decisions Lincoln could have made. Then one of the students admitted, "Lincoln wasn't perfect." The comment brought to mind the words that abolitionist Lydia Maria Child wrote about Lincoln: "I think we have reason to thank God for Abraham Lincoln. With all his deficiencies, it must be admitted that he has grown continuously;

and considering how slavery had weakened and perverted the moral sense of the whole country, it was great good luck to have the people elect a man who was willing to grow." Lincoln is not exceptional because he was perfect; rather, Lincoln was exceptional because he continued to grow. Isn't that a great message for our students—and us?

Ms. Martz and Mrs. Roberts are Historical Interpreters at President Lincoln's Cottage. Ms. Martz is a graduate student in the George Washington University Museum Studies program. Mrs. Roberts is a former teacher.

Students Opposing Slavery: Benefit and 2014 Summit Registration



Support Students Opposing Slavery! You are invited to "Spring Free," a reception at President Lincoln's Cottage to benefit SOS. Enjoy live music, drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and an opportunity to learn more about SOS from student participants.

Wednesday May 21, 2014 4:30pm-6:30pm

\$100 per guest, advanced payment required

RSVP to Hilary Malson: 202-829-0436 x31228

"During the Summer I had the wonderful opportunity of participating in the youth-led Students Opposing Slavery International Summit. It was a great way for me to learn about the horrible issue of human trafficking and network with a lot of my peers. We were open to all forms of information that we learned through out that week and later shared our ideas. Coming together to share ideas was definitely a great way to stay connected as a group and prepared us for taking action and speaking out."

-Courtney McCrimmon, 2013 SOS Summit participant

How to Register for the 2014 SOS Summit

Students Opposing Slavery (SOS) is a program that encourages high school students to join the fight to end modern slavery. This network of abolitionists raises awareness on modern slavery and helps students develop the tools they need to continue Lincoln's fight for freedom in their own communities.

President Lincoln's Cottage is now accepting applications for the 2014 SOS Summit on June 23-27, 2014. Registration is open to students ages 15-18 who are rising sophomores, juniors, seniors, or college-bound. Participation in the Summit is free and lunch is provided each day. Visit www.studentsopposingslavery.org/summit for the registration form. **Registration is open until May 16, 2014.**



Questions? Contact Callie Hawkins, Associate Director for Programs, at 202-829-0436 x31223 or at CHawkins@savingplaces.org.

Top Five: Book Selections from the Store

By Jordan Johnson



Lincoln's Sanctuary, Matthew Pinsker

Pinsker tells the story of President Lincoln's time at the Soldiers' Home in vivid detail. An added bonus: proceeds from sales of this book directly support President Lincoln's Cottage.

A. Lincoln, Ron White

This biography gives an in depth look at Lincoln the politician. White, who visited the Cottage during its restoration while writing this book, uses Lincoln's private papers to give the reader a vivid display of Lincoln's thoughts throughout the Civil War.

Giants, John Stauffer

From humble beginnings to influencing a nation of people, this book compares two of the biggest figures of the time. Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln were the preeminent self-made men of their time. This dual biography is well researched and insightful. Though invited, Douglass never made it to the Cottage in Lincoln's lifetime, but the historical record makes it clear their interests had a profound influence on one another.

Lincoln and His Boys, Rosemary Wells. Age Range: 8 - 12 years

It is easy to only think of Lincoln as a masterful politician but this book takes a look at the more personal side of President Lincoln, through the eyes of his sons.

Abe Lincoln's Dream, Lane Smith. Age Range: 5 - 9 years.

In this whimsical book, Quincy, a young tourist lost in the White House, ends up on a journey through the United States with Abraham Lincoln's ghost. As they explore the country in modern times, Quincy discovers Lincoln's vision for the nation. It is a great tool for introducing children to the ideas and issues Lincoln struggled with at the Cottage.

Ms. Johnson is a Museum Store Associate at President Lincoln's Cottage and holds an MA in Public History from American University.

Visited Recently? Write a TripAdvisor Review!



Did you enjoy a recent visit to President Lincoln's Cottage? Consider reviewing us on [TripAdvisor](#). It's the world's largest travel site, helping millions of visitors every month plan the perfect trip. Our visitors often tell us how helpful it is to read past guests' reviews before booking their own visits. We're eager to hear what you thought of your experience.

The Grateful American Series Visits the Cottage

The Grateful American Series is a radio show, TV series, and guidebook dedicated to restoring enthusiasm in American history for children, and grown-ups, too! David Bruce Smith and Hope Katz Gibbs, hosts of *The Grateful American Series*, visited President Lincoln's Cottage this spring to sit down with Executive Director Erin Carlson Mast and learn about Lincoln's beloved home in Washington, D.C.

Read the [article](#), listen to the [podcast](#), or watch the [video](#) of the interview.



Follow @LincolnsCottage and Stay Connected!



Get the latest updates from the Cottage by following our social media accounts:



President Lincoln's Cottage is the "Best of Groupon!"

We're excited to announce that President Lincoln's Cottage is featured as a "Best Of Groupon" merchant! Over 95% of visitors who found out about President Lincoln's Cottage through Groupon would recommend a visit to a friend. Don't miss out - discounted tour tickets to President Lincoln's Cottage are available now through [Groupon](#), for a limited time only.



Expanding the Depth of Tour Experiences

By Curtis Harris

No tour at President Lincoln's Cottage is ever exactly the same as another. Even if a return visitor has the same guide, their tour can be a whole new experience. Every person on tour, the Historical Interpreter (guide) included, brings to the table a different set of interests, a different way of thinking. These experiences combine during the tour to create unique and enriching moments for everyone. Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services, President Lincoln's Cottage enhanced this fundamental aspect of our tours by creating greater flexibility for our guides with a new technology platform.

Flexibility has always been a part of President Lincoln's Cottage, but with the new technology we were able to take a huge leap forward last year. Each tour was already a unique experience. Now, however, guides and visitors can reach greater levels of understanding and meaning for Lincoln, the Civil War, and emancipation with this new platform.

Each guide is now equipped with a tablet that controls our multimedia resources inside the Cottage. Many of these resources have always been available on our tours and continue to provide a rewarding experience. However, the new platform has expanded the depth of each tour experience by creating an expansive toolbox. Each guide can customize their toolbox by adding historic, primary resources they find relevant and

helpful for their tours and visitors.

During discussions of the Emancipation Proclamation, for example, the conversation can go down dozens of different avenues depending on visitor inquiries. Personally, I've had the pleasure of using some of these resources to create a richer experience for visitors. On several occasions prior to our upgraded system, visitors were curious about the extent of slavery in the United States. I was able to tell them through words and we had thoughtful discussion, but it lacked the authority of a primary source to anchor the conversation.



Curtis demonstrates the new tablets used during tours of the Cottage.

On one occasion, a high school group, tired from a week-long trip to D.C., visited the Cottage as their last stop before going home. Adding to their fatigue was a vicious rain storm that soaked everyone as they entered the Cottage. Needless to say, this wasn't the optimal circumstance to grab the attention of teenagers. So, I went into my toolbox and pulled out a Harper's Weekly article that included the image of Gordon, an ex-slave whose back was filled with welts and scars from several beatings. The image

stunned the students by starkly showing them the brutality of slavery. However, that same article showed Gordon in his uniform as a Union soldier. From that point forward we had an engaging conversation about slavery, emancipation, and the struggle for equal rights in America.

One of the most amazing moments with our new platform came when I finished a tour for a group of college students. They refused to leave the Cottage until I showed them how I was able to pull up various maps and zoom in and out of photographs. After a five-minute demonstration, they all agreed more museums should adopt the system. This recommendation wasn't solely because the platform is hi-tech. They believed it brought the history of the Cottage and Lincoln's work alive. It stirred them to reconsider their thoughts of the Civil War and emancipation.

Dedicated to the ideas and work of Abraham Lincoln, and its continuing relevance to our country, our tours have always been and continue to be grounded in conversation with visitors. This new platform simply helps ease that process further for guides and visitors. So the next time you're at President Lincoln's Cottage, ask a really tough question that forces your guide to go digging through their toolbox. As we have seen, some amazing conversations will happen as a result.

Mr. Harris is a Historical Interpreter at President Lincoln's Cottage and a graduate student in the American University Public History program.

10-Word Story Challenge

By Brittany Carney



*“Away from the
iron cage, his ideas
could be free.”*

We gave Ms. Carney this “10-Word Story Challenge,” asking her to capture the significance of the Cottage to President Lincoln. Ms. Carney is a Historical Interpreter at President Lincoln’s Cottage and holds an MA in Public History from American University.