



THE COTTAGE COURIER

Vol. 18

www.lincolncottage.org

Winter 2013

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UPCOMING PROGRAM

At the Crossroads of Freedom & Equality: THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION & THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON

February 28, 2013 at 1:30 PM
Feat. Congressman James Clyburn.
Presented in partnership with the
Armed Forces Retirement Home.
RSVP: www.lincolncottage.org

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From the Director

Dear Friends,

This month marks our five-year anniversary of opening President Lincoln's Cottage to the public. The past year has been full of exciting accomplishments, from being the first public venue to display a rare edition of the Emancipation Proclamation, to our first-ever Youth Naturalization Ceremony in the Cottage, to our partnership with Polaris Project and seminal exhibition *Can You Walk Away?*. Perhaps this is a gross understatement, but it took a tremendous amount of hard work and your support for us to get here. Our first year was the year the economy collapsed. With no endowment and an uphill battle of restoring the Cottage's place in our collective conscience, we beat the odds. We are regarded as a leader in the field. And we continue to grow.

For our five-year anniversary, we drew inspiration from — who else? — Abraham Lincoln. Borrowing from the Gettysburg Address, we have turned our attention to our "unfinished work." Our unfinished work extends beyond our list of restoration projects, research, exhibits, online programming, and plenty of partner projects in the conceptual or early phases of development. We have redefined our purpose so that we're bringing people here not only to meet the true Lincoln but also to learn ways that they can continue the fight for freedom. We couldn't accomplish any of this without all of you.

Every day, I realize how fortunate I am to be surrounded by such passionate colleagues. Everyone here truly wants to be *here*. It's definitely not "just a job." And it's not just about working at an historic site or even a Lincoln site. We come to work each day because we believe in the distinctive importance of this place and the power of the great ideas Lincoln developed here. See more in our short video here.

Not only do we have a passionate staff, our advisors — volunteers who donate their time and expertise — elevate our work. This issue, we are featuring the first of a three-part series from Scholarly Advisor Prof. Douglas Wilson, who'll be writing about "Lincoln the Reader." So much of what Lincoln read here influenced or reflects the ideas he developed. I hope you enjoy it and the rest of the series to come. Let us know what you think!

Erin Mast
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A Lincoln

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S COTTAGE
AT THE SOLDIERS' HOME



A Site of the
National Trust for
Historic Preservation

The Unfinished Work

President Lincoln's Cottage celebrates its 5th anniversary of being open to the public on February 18, 2013. Education, Preservation, and Executive staff from the Cottage recently reflected on five years of enaging the public on Lincoln's bold ideas, and shared visions of the work to come.

Watch the video (click the image below). Share it with friends. And above all else, thank you for your support of President Lincoln's Cottage.



"It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

-President Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address



THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Extended Stay at President Lincoln's Cottage!

Follow the Emancipation Proclamation
on Twitter at @Emancipation150

*An Original, Signed Copy On Display Now
Through the End of April 2013*

**CAN
YOU
WALK
AWAY ?**

MODERN SLAVERY
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES

**MODERN SLAVERY:
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES**

Exhibit catalogs available now - purchase in the museum shop today

Save the Date!

*February 28th - "At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality,"
a Black History Month Program featuring Congressman James Clyburn,
produced in partnership with the Armed Forces Retirement Home*

March 21st - Cottage Conversation with Dr. James Oakes

April 25th - Cottage Conversation with Hon. Frank J. Williams

Visit www.LincolnCottage.org for more information on each of these events.

Special Tours

*The Emancipation Tour
is now available by
special request. Call
202.829.0436 x31232
and schedule yours
today.*

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.

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 of Development, by calling 202-829-0436 x31225 or emailing JDavison@savingplaces.org.



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Lincoln and Fanny

By Douglas L. Wilson

This is Part I in a three-part series of articles about Abraham Lincoln's affinity for reading and how it influenced him. In each part, historian Douglas L. Wilson will describe recorded moments of Lincoln's life that involved reading, especially moments that are significant in the Cottage's history.

One of the things that we think we all know about Abraham Lincoln is that he was an avid reader. Lincoln reading as a young boy by firelight, walking long distances to borrow books, and reading as a storekeeper and village postmaster, are all part of the familiar legend that Americans for generations have learned about in elementary school. The remarkable thing about this pervasive Lincoln "legend" is that most of the stories about Lincoln reading are true, more or less. Lincoln was, in fact, an assiduous reader from his early childhood, and it was by virtue of his persistent reading as a young man that he managed to educate himself.

As a lawyer, he consulted books as a regular part of his work. In fact, he was a familiar figure at the state library in Springfield, and he is known to have conducted more than one ambitious research project there. His partner William H. Herndon had a large and wide-ranging personal library that Lincoln had access to, but Herndon's impression was that he almost never read the books he loaned him all the way through. This was partly because he and Herndon had very different tastes, and partly, because as Lincoln grew older, he preferred to re-read his old favorites, especially where literature was concerned.



This classic image depicts a young Abraham Lincoln reading by the fire. Eastman Johnson, 1868. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Although the legend doesn't have much to say about it, the most casual student of Lincoln soon learns that accounts of his presidency are rife with stories about his reading. Most of these stories do not concern matters of state but rather capture Lincoln at leisure or in company, usually reading aloud. These stories are attractive because they seem to radiate a sense of the man, his appealing personality and temperament. Some stories concern a president consulting books in search of help with his problems, such as the works on military tactics and strategies he seems to have read to his advantage. Other stories about his

reading aloud to his associates convey a sense of his need to find temporary release from the unrelenting pressures of the presidency by indulging his sense of fun and appetite for humor.

There are many indications that President Lincoln's Cottage, the summer residence that Lincoln knew as the Soldiers' Home, was a favorite place for reading. Located three miles north of the Executive Mansion, the house was well out of the urban center of Washington, and situated on the spacious grounds of a rural military installation for retired service men. Perched on high ground overlooking downtown Washington, the Soldiers' Home afforded both a breathtaking view of the city and escape from the heat and stifling humidity of the swampy conditions in the city, especially near the Potomac River. Besides being more comfortable, the Soldiers' Home was also less accessible to those who intruded on his privacy after hours. Visitors still found their way to the President's summer residence, but there were fewer of them than at the White House.

On June 30, 1862, Illinois Senator Orville Browning, his wife, and another couple, called at the Soldiers' Home in the evening, just before the arrival of the President himself, who



Senator Orville Browning. Circa 1855-1865.
Courtesy Brady-Handy Collection, Library of Congress.

had been working late at his office. It was an exceedingly hectic time for him. General McClellan's grand plan to capture Richmond by way of the Virginia Peninsula situated between the James and York Rivers was not going well, and the General himself was behaving badly, blaming the President for his lack of success and demanding more troops. Another General, David Hunter, had recently taken it upon himself to issue a sweeping proclamation abolishing slavery in three states and had to be publically reined in for doing what the President insisted only he himself had the power to do. Lincoln was also in the midst of an effort to persuade the four very reluctant Border States to agree to a plan of gradual emancipation. And he was desperately trying to put together a plan to deal with slavery, the lack of which was a subject of constant criticism and complaint. On this particular evening, a telegram sent at 9:00 PM by his Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, relates that the

President had "gone to the country very tired."

When the President arrived, he excused himself from his other guests and took his old friend Senator Browning out to the porch. "He asked me to sit down with him on the stone steps of the portico," Browning wrote in his diary, "then took from his pocket a map of Virginia and pointed out to me the situation of army before Richmond, and gave me all the news he had from there. He then took from his pocket a copy of Hallack's [sic] poems and read to me about a dozen stanzas concluding the poem of *Fanny*. The song at the end of the poem he read with great pathos, pausing to comment upon them, and then laughed immoderately at the ludicrous conclusion."

Fitz-Greene Halleck is a name scarcely known today, but in the 1840s, Edgar Allan Poe wrote, "No name in the American poetical world is more firmly established than that of Fitz-Greene Halleck." He was, for his time, considered a master of light verse. A key to what Lincoln particularly liked in his poetry is perhaps spotlighted in this observation by fellow poet William Cullen Bryant: "He delights in ludicrous contrasts, produced by bringing the nobleness of the ideal world into comparison with the homeliness of the actual." This is perfectly exemplified in the passage from Halleck's satirical poem *Fanny* that Lincoln read to Browning, which contains this stanza:

There's music in the dash of waves
When the swift bark cleaves their
foam;

There's music heard upon her deck,
The mariner's song of home,

When moon and star beams
smiling meet
At midnight on the sea —
And there is music — once a week
—
In Scudder's balcony.

(Scudder's was a New York museum that apparently featured weekly balcony concerts to attract visitors.) This stanza is thus the setup for the ending that Lincoln found so ludicrous:

The moonlight music of the waves
In storms is heard no more,
When the living lightning mocks
the wreck
At midnight on the shore;

And the mariner's song of home
has ceased,
His corse [sic] is on the sea —
And music ceases when it rains
In Scudder's balcony.

The details of this anecdote about Lincoln's reading suggest that Lincoln, stressed by intractable problems as president and very tired from a long day's efforts, needed something to elevate his spirits and to make himself presentable to visitors. As he did on many other occasions, he chose reading aloud from an old favorite, something he knew would make him laugh.

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Dr. Wilson is Co-Director of the Lincoln
Studies Center at Knox College and a members
of the President Lincoln's Cottage Scholarly
Advisory Group.
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Stay Connected!

Want to learn more about efforts to combat human trafficking around the globe? Can't get enough of Spielberg's *Lincoln*? Discover our series of blogs at www.LincolnCottage.org! Follow along as our historic interpreters connect Spielberg's film to the Cottage, and our marketing and education teams report on the Cottage's work to raise awareness on modern slavery worldwide.

Continuing Lincoln's Fight For Freedom Across the Globe — Part I

By Callie Hawkins, Associate Director for Programs



Bradley Myles of Polaris Project (left) and Callie Hawkins of President Lincoln's Cottage will depart for a modern slavery awareness trip.



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