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For Immediate Release: January 10, 2014

Abraham Lincoln's Briefcase Returns to Washington, DC

16th President's original briefcase on view at President Lincoln's Cottage, now through June 2014.

Washington, D.C. – The briefcase that held Abraham Lincoln's handwritten notes during the Civil War returns to Washington, DC, for a six month exhibit at President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home. While living at the Cottage with his family during the summers of 1862, 1863, and 1864, President Lincoln carried 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, will also be on view in the exhibit. The briefcase and photo album are on loan from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, IL, and will be on display at President Lincoln's Cottage through the end of June 2014.

"While Lincoln was living here, he developed the Emancipation Proclamation and produced significant wartime policy and correspondence. It's documented that he used this briefcase to bring his work back and forth on his daily commute from the Cottage to the White House," remarks Erin Carlson Mast, Executive Director of President Lincoln's Cottage. "This is the first time the briefcase has returned to the Cottage since Lincoln himself brought it here during the Civil War."

The briefcase served as a repository for some of President Lincoln's greatest work. Members of President Lincoln's military guard regularly observed him carrying around a portfolio "containing papers relating to the business of the day" when returning home to the Cottage, where he drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. Robert Lincoln later gave the briefcase to Estella Heyser, his housekeeper, as a gift in appreciation for her service. The Heyser family privately held the briefcase until 2004, when Tom Heyser generously donated the artifact to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Tad Lincoln's photo album was a gift from the young men serving in Lincoln's Presidential guard, who bestowed upon the boy the unofficial title of "Third Lieutenant." Tad, who lived with his mother and father at the Soldiers' Home, frequently took his meals with the soldiers, observed their drills, and passed much of his time in their camp. Private Albert Nelson See, a soldier in the company, reflected in his diary that Tad "seemed as much at home with us as though he was one of us, and we could not have thought more of him if he had been a brother." Many years later when A. N. See wrote to Robert Lincoln requesting the album, Robert declined, noting that the album was his favorite of Tad's possessions because it "showed the esteem the men who knew him best placed on him." The album, which contains photographs taken at Mathew Brady's studio of each of the one hundred members of the company, is adorned with an engraved escutcheon bearing the following: "Presented to Tad Lincoln by Co. K, 150th PA. V."

The briefcase and photo album are the second display in "originALS," a series of exhibitions at President Lincoln's Cottage highlighting original objects connected to President Abraham Lincoln that speak to the importance and complexity of the Lincoln story and relate directly to Lincoln's time here at the Soldiers' Home.

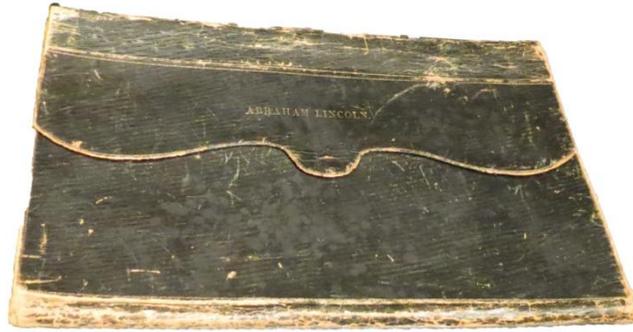


Photo: Courtesy President Lincoln's Cottage, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation © 2014.

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 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.