



Illinois Artist Donates New Lincoln Painting To Presidential Library

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SPRINGFIELD – More than 150 years after his death, Abraham Lincoln continues to inspire artists, from writers to filmmakers to painters. A fascinating new example was unveiled Thursday at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

“400 Split Rails for One Yard of Cloth” by Donn Ziebell illustrates a story from Lincoln’s youth. He needed a new pair of pants but lacked money, so he worked out an arrangement with a neighbor. He would split 400 fence rails for each yard of cloth needed for the pants.

The painting will hang in the presidential library’s atrium, where many pieces of Lincoln art are now on display.

The painting uses a seemingly crude “outsider art” style that captures the feel of life in a frontier village and Lincoln’s status as a raw young man still searching for his place in the world.

“I describe it as an ‘enhanced storybook painting’ because I want young children to have a wonderful visual understanding about part of Abraham Lincoln’s life and work ethic,” said Ziebell, of Lake Barrington, Ill. “As a young grammar school kid, my family visited New Salem with its log houses and split rail fences and stories about Lincoln that fascinated me.”

Ziebell, 85, began painting in 1955 when he was a metallurgical engineering student at the Missouri School of Mines & Metallurgy. He had no particular interest in doing a Lincoln painting until the last few years, when he heard the anecdote about Lincoln trading fence rails for cloth. He says it “shouted to me” as a great subject for a painting.

The oil painting, which is five feet wide and seven feet tall, required more than 500 hours of work over nine months.

“We thank Mr. Ziebell for this generous donation,” said Ian Hunt, the presidential library’s chief of acquisitions. “President Lincoln’s impact on American society can be seen in how much art is devoted to him, whether it’s formal statues, lighthearted movies or this stylized image of young Lincoln hard at work.”

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum uses a combination of rigorous scholarship and high-tech showmanship to immerse visitors in Lincoln’s life and times. The library holds an unparalleled collection of Lincoln books, documents, photographs, artifacts and art, as well as some 12 million items pertaining to all aspects of Illinois history.

For more information, visit www.PresidentLincoln.illinois.gov. You can follow the ALPLM on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).