

Lincoln Presidential Library And Museum Opens Exhibit Highlighting Lincoln Letters

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SPRINGFIELD – With the nation racing toward civil war, President-elect Abraham Lincoln sat down and wrote an inaugural speech that he hoped would pull America back from the brink. It urged patience. It insisted the North and South must remain friends. It asked everyone to heed their “better angels.”

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is proud to announce that the desk where Lincoln wrote most of that famous First Inaugural Address is now on display, along with an exhibit that explores critical moments in his life through documents in the library’s collection.

The desk and exhibit, called “Lincoln’s Life in Letters,” are in the ALPLM’s library building, where there is no charge for admission. The desk will be displayed for six months, while the exhibit is there indefinitely.

The desk has been restored to ensure it will be in top condition for decades to come and that it's as historically accurate as possible. For instance, nails from previous restorations have been removed and replaced with the type of nails used in the 1850s. Inauthentic hardware and knobs have been replaced, too.

“Lincoln’s Life in Letters” highlights some of his most interesting and important writing, from silly poems in a boyhood notebook to the Gettysburg Address. Panels with images of the documents and related photos, transcripts, and analysis will hang on the walls of the library atrium.

Abraham isn’t the only Lincoln in the exhibit. There’s also a letter by his son Willie about the death of a family friend in the Civil War and one from Mary Lincoln advocating for her husband’s tomb to be located in Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery.

“Few people in history have used words as eloquently and effectively as Abraham Lincoln. This exhibit will give visitors new insight into his writing and its impact on American history,” said Christina Shutt, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. “Being able to include the restored First Inaugural desk is an amazing bonus.”



When it was time for Lincoln to write his inaugural speech, he needed a quiet place away from the crush of his other duties. He found it in an unused room in a Springfield store run by his brother-in-law, Clark M. Smith. The desk Lincoln used remained in Smith’s family for nearly a century until Smith’s daughter sold it to the Illinois State Historical Library in 1953 for \$500.

The State Historical Library and its collection are now part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Until recently, the desk sat in the Old State Capitol State Historic Site. It was removed for conservation by Chicago’s Third Coast

Conservation and now will be housed in the climate-controlled presidential library building.

“Abraham Lincoln was one of our greatest presidents, and he was elected at a time of great dissent and misunderstanding in the Union. The process of thinking through his wording at this desk must have been agonizing,” said conservator Robin DeGroot. “The responsibility to properly present his desk was very important to me and I hope inspirational to the people who see it. I am honored to have been a part.”

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 or follow the ALPLM on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).