

# **Abe Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum Celebrates Black History Month And Lincoln's Birthday**

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*Abraham Lincoln*  
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

SPRINGFIELD – The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will celebrate Lincoln's birthday and Black History Month with activities that include a read-a-thon, two days of free admission and a play about a daring escape from slavery.

“February was first chosen for Black History Month in part because it included Lincoln's birthday,” said Christina Shutt, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. “You can't fully honor Lincoln without acknowledging his impact on African Americans and, in turn, their essential role in building this nation.”

Black History Month opens Feb. 1 with the first of 10 performances of “Small Beginnings,” a short play about the amazing Robert Smalls. Enslaved from birth, Smalls commandeered a Confederate ship in Charleston Harbor and used it to take family and friends to freedom in 1862. He then piloted that ship for the U.S. Navy and was elected to Congress after the war.

Other performances are scheduled for Feb. 2, 3, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 23 and 24. All performances begin at 1 p.m. and are included in the regular admission price. They are followed by a Q&A session with the actors.

The ALPLM will also run a series of mini-documentaries about important Black figures in American history, including Frederick Douglass, Muhammad Ali and Nina Simone. The films, each just 90 seconds, will be shown in the Mr. Lincoln Theater throughout the month.

Museum admission will be free Saturday, Feb. 11, and Sunday, Feb. 12, to celebrate Lincoln’s birthday on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Actors portraying Abraham and Mary Lincoln will mingle with visitors Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the birthday boy will return the next day for the same times.

That Saturday, the ALPLM will team up with Compass for Kids and Springfield’s public library, the Lincoln Library, to host a read-a-thon. Community leaders will read their favorite children’s books during the live, day-long event, which can be enjoyed in person or online. The event’s purpose is to collect books and donations for Compass for Kids.

Donors can drop off new books at the presidential library or the Springfield public library. They can also buy books or gift cards at the Springfield Barnes & Noble and donate them there. Another option is buying an online gift card and emailing it to [enrichment@compassforkids.org](mailto:enrichment@compassforkids.org).

Two other reading events later in the month have a connection to Lincoln’s birthday. The Little Lincoln’s Fireside Tales program will offer stories and activities on the theme of “birthdays,” including Lincoln’s. An online version will be offered Feb. 23 at 10 a.m. on Zoom. An in-person program will take place at the presidential library Feb. 28, also at 10 a.m.

Registration details can be found at [www.PresidentLincoln.Illinois.gov/events](http://www.PresidentLincoln.Illinois.gov/events).

On Feb. 15, adults are invited to a “history happy hour” where the presidential library’s research director, Brian Mitchell, will tell the often-overlooked story of Oscar Dunn, the first Black man to serve as a state’s executive officer. Dunn was elected lieutenant

governor of Louisiana after the Civil War and twice served as acting governor for brief periods.

Mitchell is the author of an award-winning graphic novel called “Monumental: Oscar Dunn and His Radical Fight in Reconstruction Louisiana.” His presentation at Anvil & Forge in downtown Springfield begins at 5:30 p.m.

The ALPLM also offers online education resources for teachers during Black History Month.

On Feb. 7, the Book Club for Educators will discuss “Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019” from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Participants earn nine continuing professional development units for reading the book and participating in the discussion. And on Feb. 27, our PD in Your PJs program examines historic letters from African Americans to President Lincoln. Participants get one CPDU.

The ALPLM also has a special exhibit on the history of Black sororities. It features a fascinating array of photos and artifacts on loan from central Illinois chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Sigma Gamma Rho.

The mission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is to inspire civic engagement through the diverse lens of Illinois history and sharing with the world the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln. We pursue this mission through a combination of rigorous scholarship and high-tech showmanship built on the bedrock of the ALPLM’s unparalleled collection of historical materials – some 12 million items from all eras of Illinois history.

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