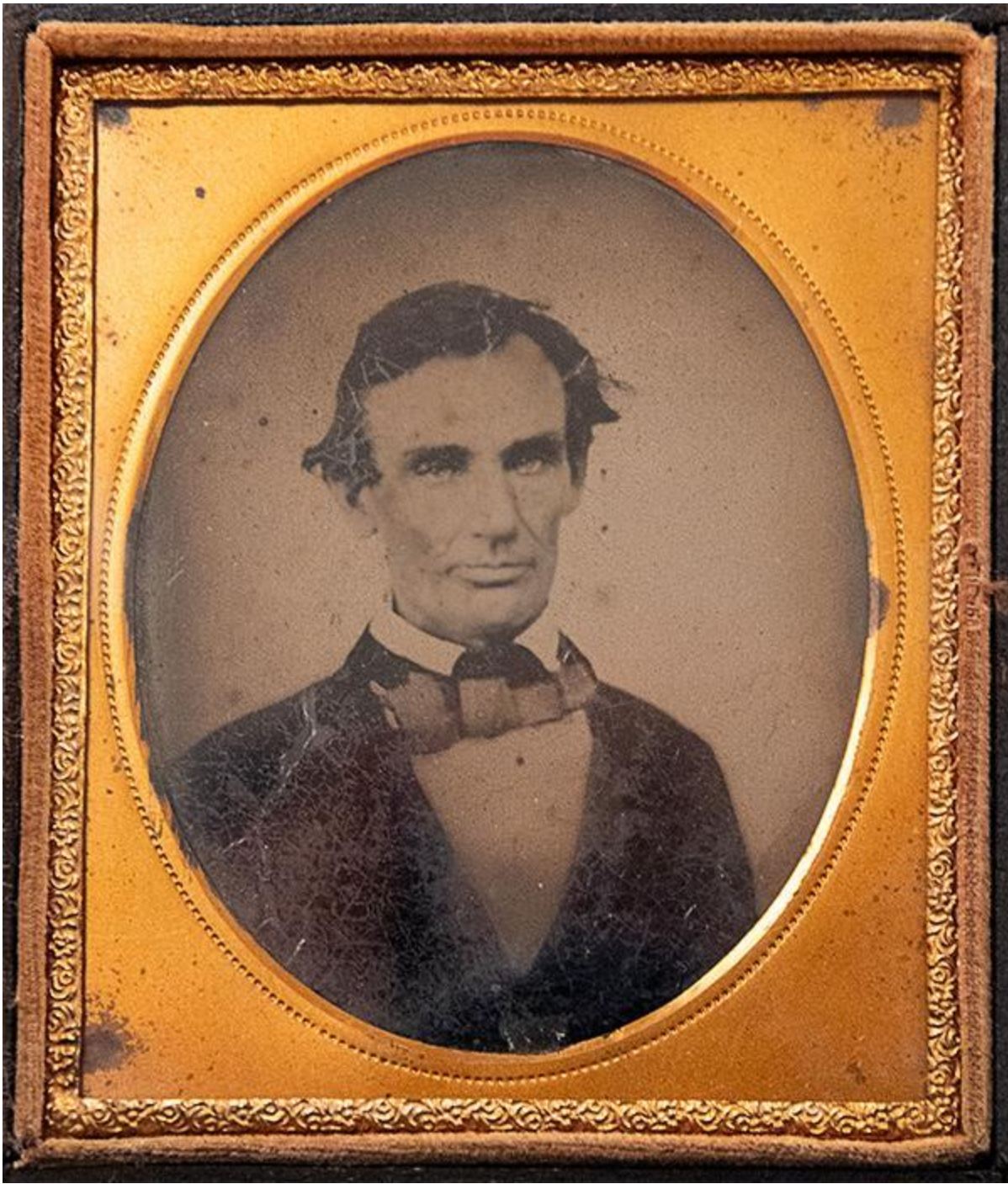




Lincoln Museum Acquires Original Photo Lincoln Gifted to Injured Supporter

September 27 2023 1:14 PM



SPRINGFIELD – The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum has acquired an original photograph that Lincoln gave to a man who had been gravely injured while preparing for a rally during the historic 1858 U.S. Senate race.

Charles Lane was nearly killed when a cannon went off prematurely the day before a Lincoln political rally in Pittsfield, Ill. The next day, Lincoln arrived, held his rally and then tried to visit Lane. The doctor would not allow visitors, but Lincoln arranged for Lane to receive a photo that had been taken that day.

Lame recovered, and his family held onto the photo for generations. Now his descendants have donated it to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum so that it will be protected and shared with the public.

It will be displayed in the museum's Treasures Gallery starting Monday, Oct. 2.

"Original images of Abraham Lincoln are extraordinarily rare, and images with a fascinating back story like this are even more rare. Lincoln fans everywhere should thank Charles Lame's descendants for this generous donation," said Christina Shutt, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

The photo is an ambrotype, a negative image on glass. The images were displayed on black backgrounds. That background showed through the clear portions of the negative image, creating the illusion of a black-and-white photo. The oval image is 2 ¾ inches high by 2 ¼ inches wide.

Historian Leroy H. Fischer wrote about Lincoln's Oct. 1, 1858, visit to Pittsfield in a 1968 article for the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society.

Fischer reports that it was common for political events to include the boom of unloaded cannons firing. The day before Lincoln spoke, Lame and another man had been test-firing a cannon. It went off as Lame was ramming gunpowder into the barrel. The blast burned his face, and the ramrod went through his arm, ending up embedded in a tree a block away.

Lame was rushed to his home, where a doctor administered what treatment he could. The doctor decided not to amputate Lame's arm, a dangerous gamble in an era before antibiotics. Infection set in, but Lame eventually overcame it and recovered. He lived almost 40 years more, dying in 1897.

The day after the accident, Lincoln delivered a two-hour speech in the town square, devoting most of his time to condemning his opponent's position on slavery. He said Stephen Douglas's goal was "to deny the equality of men, and to assert the natural, moral, and religious right of one class to enslave another."

Afterward, Lincoln visited the studio of photographer Calvin Jackson, who made two identical ambrotypes of the 49-year-old candidate.

Before leaving town, Lincoln stopped by the Lame house to express his sympathies and tell the family that one of the ambrotypes would be delivered to them the next day.

“Lincoln’s gift was a small gesture, but it reaffirms his reputation as a man of compassion. The photo that has so generously been donated to the ALPLM is a physical reminder of his kind spirit and concern for others,” said Dr. Ian Hunt, head of acquisitions for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

The photo was passed down by Lane’s descendants until it was inherited by Mrs. Mary Davidson of Hendersonville, Tenn. She passed away in August 2022, and her children decided the image should come to Springfield, where it could be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

The other ambrotype made that day is owned by the Library of Congress.

About the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum:

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 – roughly 13 million items from all eras of Illinois history.

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