

# Great Rivers Lincoln Coffin replica unveiled in Elsah

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
April 10 2015 1:10 PM



A replica of the grand coffin in which President Abraham Lincoln was put to final rest was unveiled Thursday morning to an enthusiastic historical group in Elsah.

The replica, called the Great Rivers Lincoln Coffin, was previewed Thursday at Farley's Music Hall in Elsah. The project took nearly two years to finish. The Historic Elsah

Foundation, Chautauqua Historical Society and Grafton Historical Society collaborated to make the coffin and event possible. Richard Mosby of Mosby Woodworking crafted the coffin.

“This is an absolute museum quality piece,” Tim Tomlinson, one of the coordinators of the project, said. “It was something the Historic Elsie Foundation, the Chautauqua Historical Society and Grafton Historical Society all agreed to work on. It is a fascinating piece of work.”



Tomlinson praised Grafton's Richard Mosby on his work with fabricating the coffin.

“He fabricated the coffin to the specifications we came up with and did an excellent job,” Tomlinson said. “Richard is an excellent craftsman.”

The coffin was draped with an 1865 American flag and removed by an honor guard of veterans. The coffin resembles the one that brought Abraham Lincoln's body to Springfield, IL., for entombment in Oak Ridge Cemetery. The coffin will be part of an overnight vigil display in downtown Springfield on May 2 before being transported to Oak Ridge Cemetery.

The reenactment will be part of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's body being transported from Washington, D.C., back to Springfield.

Batesville Casket Co. in Indiana and Brooks Brothers of New York City supported the creation of the coffin replica. Brooks Brothers loaned the committee a coat like the one worn by Lincoln when he was assassinated on April 15, 1865, to get proper measurements for the coffin.

George Provenzano portrayed Lincoln's undertaker, Frank Sands, during the event. He greeted those who came at the front door in character and stayed there for a brief presentation in front of the coffin.

Rose Tomlinson, president of the Chautauqua Historical Association, said last year she heard about the Lincoln coalition project and its plan to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's body being transported back to Springfield. She said they needed someone to craft a coffin replica.

"Mary Lillesve of Grafton Historical Society and I both said we could do that," Rose Tomlinson said. "We had no idea what it would involve. We did extensive research as very little was known about the width of coffin. It has been an exciting process."

It was determined the casket should be 6-feet-6 inches long and 18 inches wide. "Everybody knew how long the coffin was, but nobody knew how wide it was," Rose Tomlinson adds.

The historical groups talked to different artists, but Rose Tomlinson came up with talking to a historic tailor to get the exact width of the coffin

"We went to Brooks Brothers, a historic tailor, and discovered through one of his coat replicas the coffin should be 18 inches wide."

After the build up for the unveiling of the coffin on Thursday, the Tomlinson family will likely go through some Lincoln withdrawal.

“I feel like Mr. Lincoln is living in our house,” Rose Tomlinson said.





