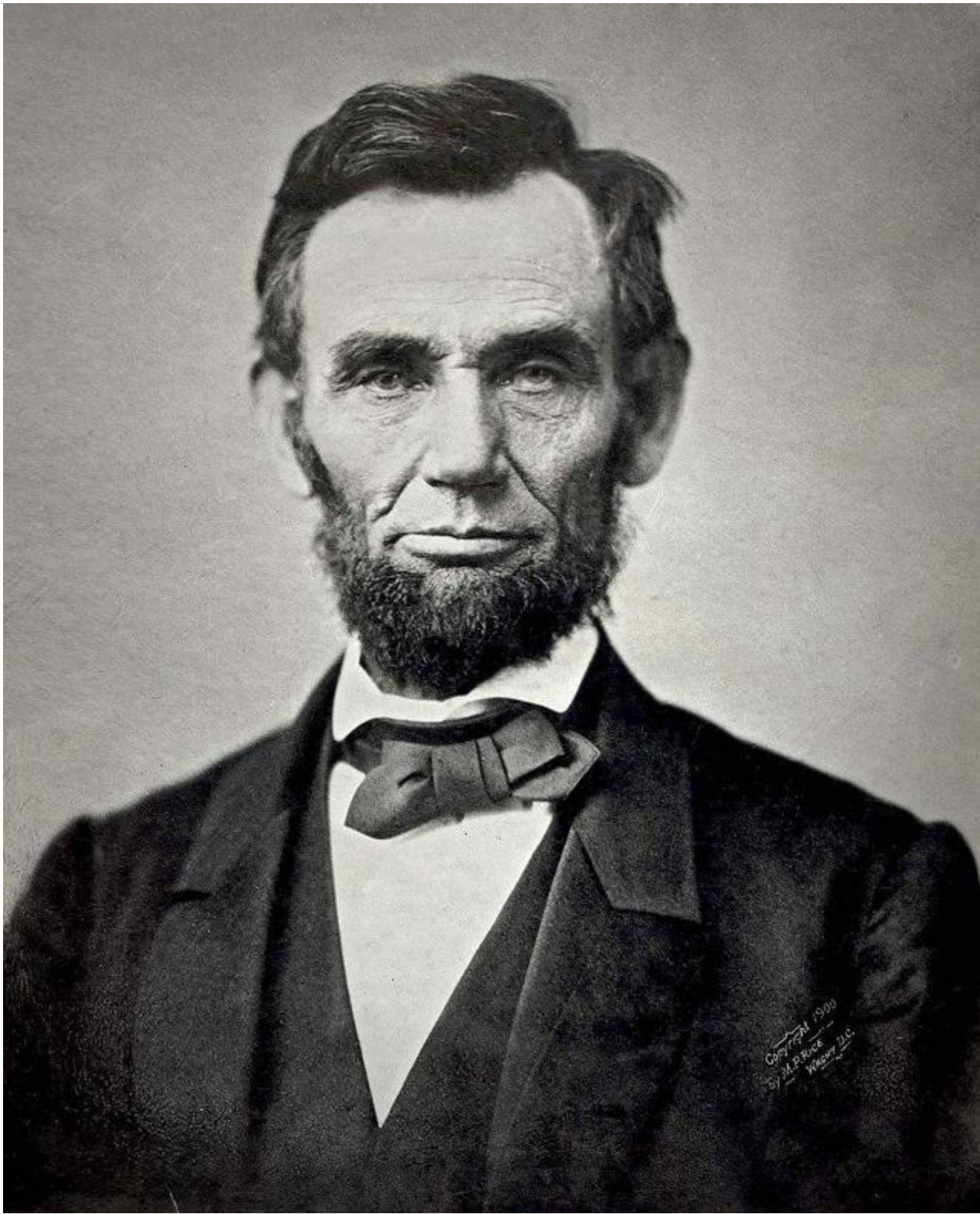




# **Hayner Library to Display Authentic Letter Written by Abraham Lincoln to Alton Resident**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - On Saturday, Feb. 17, 2023, the Hayner Public Library District will display a real letter written by Abraham Lincoln to an Alton resident.

Director Mary Cordes explained that the library has owned this letter for many decades, but it's usually stored in their safe deposit box. From 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Feb. 17 at the Genealogy & Local History Library in Downtown Alton, visitors can see the letter

on display for the first time and listen to a lecture by historian Tom Emery about Lincoln's connection to the Alton area.

"It's probably the coolest thing I've ever held in my life," Cordes said about the letter. "One of the first things when I became the director, after seeing it, I thought, 'This is neat and I really want to share this with everyone.' I mean, it does belong to the district, and so people should get a chance to see it."

The letter was written by Lincoln to Simeon Ryder, an Alton resident who built the building at 31 E. Broadway that now houses My Just Desserts. Lincoln was a practicing attorney at the time, and he advised Ryder on a legal matter. Cordes noted that the handwriting and the content of the letter are equally fascinating.

"It's what you would expect," she said. "First of all, the script is so neat to see. And he's very matter-of-fact. He talks about a legal matter at hand. It's just exactly what you would expect it to be...I think when people come to see it, it's my hope that there will just be this overwhelming feeling of, 'I'm looking at a real — a real — piece of history by someone who really, really left an indelible mark on the country.'"

In addition to the letter, a few pieces of china owned by Mary Todd Lincoln will also be on display. People can view the letter and china throughout the day on Feb. 17, but you must pre-register for Emery's lecture at 10 a.m., titled "Reimagining Places of the Past: Historic Preservation Lecture Series, Part II: Abraham Lincoln in Alton with Tom Emery." Call the library at 618-462-0677 to save your spot.

Cordes hopes the Feb. 17 event will also encourage people to check out the Genealogy & Local History Library, located at 401 State Street in Alton. There are several displays at the library so visitors can learn about the history of Alton and surrounding areas.

But the Lincoln Letter will be the main attraction that day, and Cordes is excited to share it with the community. She pointed out that it's a unique historical artifact owned by the people of the district, and she hopes visitors find it as interesting as she does.

"People can come take a look at it, see a piece of history, see a piece of Alton's history and see a piece of the library's history," she added. "It belongs to the people of the district and we want everybody to be able to see it."

For [more information about the event](#), visit the [Hayner Public Library District official website at HaynerLibrary.org](#).