

# **Letter Written by Lincoln to be Displayed at Hayner 180 Years and One Day After He Wrote It**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
February 6 2024 2:51 PM



ALTON - The Hayner Public Library District will display a letter written by Abraham Lincoln 180 years and one day after he signed it.

On Feb. 17, 2024, Hayner's Genealogy & Local History Library will welcome community members from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to look at the letter and other artifacts and learn about Lincoln's connection to Alton. The day will also include a lecture by

historian Tom Emery from 10–11 a.m. Hayner Library Director Mary Cordes explained that the event will welcome people to the library while sharing a piece of Lincoln history with community members.

“That’s the whole goal of that Saturday, is to let people see something that truly belongs to all of us because it belongs to the library and the library belongs to everyone,” she explained. “We wanted to make sure people could come and see that and then at the same time, it’s kind of like, ‘Well, we already have people here looking at this letter, so maybe there might be people coming in who have never been in the library and this is the thing that gets them in.’ So while they’re there, it’s like, ‘Hey, let us show you what else we have because we do this really neat stuff.’”

During the open house, community members can view the letter and pieces of china that belonged to Mary Todd Lincoln. The letter was written in 1844 and addressed to Simeon Ryder, an Alton resident who built the building at 31 E. Broadway that now houses My Just Desserts in Alton. Lincoln, who was a practicing attorney at the time, advised Ryder on a legal matter.

Cordes said the Genealogy & Local History Library staff are “the best in town” and will be present on Feb. 17 to answer questions about the letter and other items. She encourages community members to check out all of the displays at the library, including the yoke of Elijah Lovejoy’s printing press and various artifacts, and to ask the staff members any questions you might have about Hayner or Alton.

“Basically, that’s the day to come and just take a look at the library,” Cordes said. “We have lots of different displays up, different displays of Alton history that you can take a look at. We can sign you up for a library card while you’re there. We can talk with you about all of the different genealogy and local history resources that we have, talk with you about ebooks.”

Tom Emery’s lecture, titled “Reimagining Places of the Past: Historic Preservation Lecture Series, Part II: Abraham Lincoln in Alton with Tom Emery,” is part of Hayner’s “Historic Preservation Lecture Series” that invites historians to share information about Alton history. This lecture, scheduled for 10–11 a.m. on Feb. 17, will talk about Lincoln’s relationship to Alton. Attendees are asked to register for the lecture; you can do so by calling Hayner at 618-462-0677.

Cordes hopes to see a lot of people at the library that day. You can stop by the Genealogy & Local History Library, located at 401 State Street in Alton, to see the letter and artifacts at any time from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024.

“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...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.’”

For more information about Hayner Public Library District, including upcoming events, visit their [official website at HaynerLibrary.org](http://HaynerLibrary.org).