



THE COTTAGE COURIER

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www.lincolncottage.org

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From the Director...



Dear Friends,

Here at President Lincoln's Cottage education is at the heart of all of our activities. We strive to make the pursuit of knowledge joyful by providing unique and creative experiences for young and old to learn about President Lincoln and his world, here where he lived it. Our latest endeavor is a special exhibition for 2010-2011, entitled *Being Lincoln*. This exhibition invites visitors to explore the world of Lincoln impersonation before moving beyond appearances and delving into the qualities that defined Lincoln as a leader and statesman.

Beyond exhibitions, we also provide quality experiences for growing numbers of school groups. Last year, we welcomed a record number of students, giving them a memorable experience to compliment their classroom education. In addition, over 400 teachers from across the country participated in our "Living Lincoln" workshop. For every teacher we reach, hundreds of students benefit from their knowledge.

Once we have a successful program, we look for ways to expand our reach. I am pleased to announce that we recently received funding to produce school program brochures to make more teachers aware of our programs and provide a limited number of transportation scholarships for the 2010-2011 school year. Help us spread the word by encouraging your local teachers to see what we have to offer online and on site.

Lincoln saw the value of both formal education and life experience. As Professor Matthew Pinsker notes in this quarter's feature article, "Lincoln believed that life was like a 'school of events.'" We commissioned this article while developing our permanent exhibitions, and are publishing it here for the first time. I hope you enjoy it!

Sincerely,

Erin Carlson Mast
Director



Upcoming Programs

Cottage Conversations

September 30, 2010

with Daniel Weinberg

November 4, 2010

with Ivan Schwartz

January 2011

with Harold Holzer
and Craig Symonds

All Programs:

6:00pm Reception

6:30pm Lecture

General Admission: \$10
Cottage Members \$100+: Free
Subscription for entire series: \$40

To purchase tickets, contact:
alison_mitchell@nthp.org
or (202)829-0436 x31228

Visit our website for the full schedule

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Being Lincoln



On August 21st, President Lincoln's Cottage opened its newest special exhibit, Being Lincoln. Located in the special exhibit gallery of the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center. Being Lincoln explores what it means to be like Lincoln.

Being Lincoln looks at what motivates modern men to portray President Lincoln and explores what it means to be Lincoln. Additionally, visitors are invited to "Lincoln Yourself" using an interactive, touch-screen program. The program allows visitors to visually become President Lincoln while learning about Lincoln's beliefs and character. A "Lincoln Yourself" gallery is featured on lincolncottage.org, showcasing the images visitors produced during their visit.

The new special exhibit is on view until August 2011. Guests of all ages are encouraged to visit and discover what Being Lincoln means to them.

by Katie Needham

Images from the Installation:



Preservation Manager, Jeff Larry



Graphic Designer, Jay Christian

Get your
Being
Lincoln
T-shirt
here!





Girl Scouts and their troops can now earn a badge at the Cottage! Scouts will receive a special admission price which provides a tour, an activity sheet, and a Cottage patch! [Click here for more information.](#)

T-SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE AT OUR ONLINE STORE!



Coming Soon to the Cottage...



This interactive component to the exhibit "Being Lincoln" will be available for all to participate in online in September!

SOURCE will be a special section on our website especially for teens where they can learn about Lincoln and the Cottage. Launches this fall!



EVENING FOR EDUCATORS

This free event for teachers will be held at Tudor Place in DC on September 16 from 6-8pm. Co-sponsored by members of the Civil War Washington Museum Consortium.



Unique
MEMORABLE
Historic

President Lincoln's Cottage is an unparalleled setting for private and corporate events. With two beautifully restored historic buildings and a pastoral setting, this venue provides respite from the hectic pace of downtown DC. Whether you are holding an executive retreat in the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center, hosting a reception in the same rooms where Lincoln himself entertained, or having a tented seated dinner on the landscaped grounds, events staff will ensure that everything runs perfectly.

The historical importance of President Lincoln's Cottage makes it one of the most exceptional rental sites in all of Washington DC. Start planning your holiday events now!

Start planning your holiday events now!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LINCOLNCOTTAGE.ORG/EVENTS OR CONTACT SHIRA GLADSTONE, EVENTS COORDINATOR, AT (202) 829-0436 EXT. 31232.



Abraham Lincoln's "School of Events"

By Matthew Pinsker

Just about a month after Abraham Lincoln's death, the San Francisco Bulletin published a recollection by an anonymous California woman ("a lady") who had visited the president at his "country house" the previous autumn with a group of other women. Her piece was lengthy but remarkable, offering a series of vivid portraits of life at the Soldiers' Home and with President Lincoln. She recalled that the president had been too busy to meet with her delegation at first and that after spending much of the afternoon touring the retirement facility guided only by a "jolly-faced, wooden-legged conductor," the visitors eventually decided it was best to leave. Yet when they paused to view the nearby cemetery before departing, Lincoln finally appeared. He joined them, silent for a time, before offering a few appropriate lines from the well-known English poet William Collins (1721-1759):

*How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest—*

According to the recollection's author, the busy president then offered to ride back into the city with the group, presumably to finish his day's work at the White House or War Department telegraph office. While in the carriage,

enjoying the "charming coolness of the evening," Lincoln interrupted a debate among his visitors over the identity of a certain tree along the pathway, commenting, "Let me discourse on a theme I understand." He added, "I know all about trees in [light] of being a backwoodsman." Then he promised to show the women the difference between spruce, pine, cedar and the particular tree in question, which he labeled, "a kind of illegitimate cypress." He proceeded to delay

the president grew reflective and suggested that what the world really needed was "a school of events" to help classify the character of men as one might do with objects in nature

the journey into the city while he collected specimens of each.¹

This small but memorable scene appeared in a handful of popular nineteenth-century collections about the great president but otherwise largely disappeared from view. It's a shame that it fell from favor because the juxtaposition of images—a busy executive, a thoughtful, almost melancholy admirer of poetry, and an experienced outdoorsman—so perfectly captures the essence of Lincoln's complex and inspiring story. And if the California

woman's memory can be trusted, the encounter proved even more revealing. She recalled that after a brief but instructive lecture on the identity of trees and foliage, the president grew reflective and suggested that what the world really needed was "a school of events" to help classify the character of men as one might do with objects in nature. He explained that what he envisioned was a place where students might "mimic vicissitudes and situations that are necessary to bring out their powers." In essence, he was offering a philosophy for the proverbial school of hard knocks. "There is no more dangerous or expressive analysis," he claimed, "than that which consists of trying a man."²

Nobody knows for certain if Lincoln said those exact words in that manner, but few phrases better capture the meaning of his life story than this idea of "a school of events." Lincoln was not a product of the Ivy League or the nation's great military academies. His family was not wealthy. He had no exceptional artistic or creative talent. Yet he repeatedly endured the "vicissitudes" of his life and career to emerge as the greatest political figure in American history. It seemed that the more he was

tried, the more he thrived. That is the key, however. During his rise to power, Lincoln undoubtedly thrived. Despite popular legends that dwell extensively on Lincoln's supposedly long experience with adversity, the truth is that he was a remarkably successful man who built on his achievements to become

crisis that eventually culminated in the winter of 1814-15 with a secessionist convention in Hartford, Connecticut that nearly resulted in the attempted withdrawal from the Union of several New England states. President Thomas Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican allies in Congress had originally

degenerated into a dangerous military conflict, the War of 1812, which was wildly unpopular in some sections of the country and resulted in the burning of Washington, D.C. by British forces. Only British impatience that fueled a negotiated settlement and a stunning victory by General Andrew Jackson and his forces at the Battle of New Orleans succeeding in lifting American morale. The infamous Hartford Convention and the extended crisis with the British marked a low-point in early national history that coincided with young Abe Lincoln's first six years of existence.³

Just how much the Lincoln family was aware of these grave national events is unclear. Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's father, was an illiterate Kentucky farmer, but he certainly heard the news of the day during his many visits to the local grocery store or at informal social gatherings held

after church. He might have been especially interested because there was a vague family connection to Massachusetts. The Lincolns were descendants of an English Puritan clan from East Anglia that had first settled in the Massachusetts Bay colony during the early seventeenth century.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL TEXT OF THE ARTICLE](#)

Matthew Pinsker is Associate Professor of History and Pohanka Chair in American Civil War History at Dickenson College



Drawing by William Woodward, 2007

the nation's greatest president.

Early Nationalism and the "Right to Rise"

Abraham Lincoln was born at the beginning of a secession crisis. During the same month of his birth, in February 1809, an arch Federalist senator from Massachusetts named Timothy Pickering issued a stinging call for state nullification of the controversial U.S. embargo against foreign trade. Pickering's attack heightened a political

put the risky embargo policy in place in 1807 mainly as a response to various insults that had been inflicted on the young American nation by Great Britain. The British were not only recent colonial rulers, but also had remained the top U.S. trading partner and were the global superpower of that age. Pickering was part of an increasingly agitated band of New England Federalists who bitterly opposed what they considered the self-destructive and excessively anti-British policies of outgoing President Jefferson. Eventually, the embargo crisis