



the

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Illinois Celebrates Lincoln and Civil War Anniversaries

One hundred fifty years ago, our country experienced “the best of times and the worst of times,” to quote Charles Dickens. Between April and May, 1865, citizens rejoiced over the end of the long, bloody Civil War, but despaired over the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the president who kept the country united through the turmoil. This year, Illinois is marking these sesquicentennial anniversaries with a wide variety of events. Here is a small sampling of them.

Springfield

Many events were held in Springfield, especially at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM), and other Lincoln sites in the capital; some are ongoing. The activities brought thousands to the capital and its historic sites. In April of this year, nearly 43,000 attended the ALPLM. “That’s the best attendance since Lincoln’s birthday bicentennial in 2009,” said ALPLM spokesman Chris Wills. During Springfield’s recreation of Lincoln’s



Lincoln’s Funeral Train was recreated for the Springfield funeral procession. It also traveled to Lincoln’s Log Cabin State Historic Site in Lerna this year. In 1865, the original took Lincoln’s body from Washington, D.C. through seven states to Springfield, generally following, in reverse, the route Lincoln took from Springfield to Washington when he assumed the presidency in 1861. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and Lincoln’s Log Cabin State Historic Site.

funeral and funeral procession on May 2 and 3, nearly 8,000 people visited the Old State Capitol and about 4,200 toured Lincoln’s Tomb, he adds.

But the commemoration events aren’t over. The ALPLM is still holding a couple related exhibitions with many items never before seen by the public. One exhibit, called “Undying Words,” focuses on Lincoln’s most important speeches and how they showed the changes in his views about slavery. It features six original - some handwritten - speeches, the bed on which he died, and a carriage the Lincolns used, among about 120 other items. This exhibition runs through February, 2016.

Another exhibition at the ALPLM, called “A Fiendish Assassination,” showcases items related to Lincoln’s death, including a towel with the president’s blood, a swan feather sent to Lincoln’s Tomb by Queen Victoria, and the only photograph of Lincoln in a coffin, among other original artifacts. This exhibition runs through the middle of July.

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At the Old State Capitol in Springfield, where Lincoln served as a lawyer and lawmaker, and worked as president-elect, furniture from Lincoln's funeral train will be on display through September 15.

The Lincoln Home National Historic Site is draped in black mourning material like it was by the Lucian Tilton family when Lincoln died. The Tiltons rented the house from the Lincolns when the latter left Springfield for Washington, D.C. Exhibits across the street from the Lincoln Home show photos of the house's exterior and interior from April to May, 1865, as well as photos from Lincoln's funeral procession in Springfield that year. These will remain until mid-June.

Lerna

The Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site in Lerna, the nineteenth cen-



Among the fifty-plus original artifacts in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum's "A Fiendish Assassination" exhibition about Lincoln's murder is this silver medallion engraved with Abraham Lincoln's initials. This and another medallion in the exhibition adorned Lincoln's hearse and were removed shortly after Lincoln's 1865 funeral in Springfield. Photo courtesy of the ALPLM.

tury home of Lincoln's father and step-mother, Thomas and Sarah, was draped in mourning in April and its historic interpreters gave presentations to visitors on nineteenth century mourning customs. "Our American Cousin," the play Lincoln was watching when he was shot at Ford's Theatre, was held at the Site's Visitor's Center, and the Lincoln funeral train visited the Site.

Mount Pulaski

Local grade school children recited the Gettysburg Address and poems honoring Lincoln on April 16 at the Mount Pulaski Courthouse State Historic Site, where Lincoln argued cases.

For more information about past or upcoming events at Illinois' historic sites, visit the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency web site at: www.illinois.gov/ihpa.



Lincoln's Funeral Procession

As the soldiers approached in the midday heat, and the sound of their boots and the drum's beat grew louder, an onlooker said, "They're coming!" The crowds lining one of Springfield's main thoroughfares stood and watched. Some had been waiting for the procession for hours. Among them were people dressed in heavy, dark, nineteenth century mourning clothes. Several onlookers wore sprigs of evergreen, the Victorian symbol of bereavement and everlasting life. When the procession neared, everyone grew quiet, just like their predecessors had done 150 years ago.

Of all the events held to commemorate the anniversary of Lincoln's death, probably the most spectacular was the recreation of his funeral procession in Springfield. After Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, his body traveled from Washington, D.C. through seven states until it reached his final resting place in Springfield. Numerous cities along the way held funerals for him. The last was in his former hometown.

In 1865, throngs of his friends, peers, dignitaries, and countrymen met his special funeral train at Springfield's downtown depot and escorted

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The hearse and coffin used in the re-enactment of Lincoln's Springfield funeral procession were recreations of the originals. The hearse is topped with black ostrich plumes. The 36-star flag laid over the coffin was a reproduction created by Annin Flagmakers, who made the original. Six black horses draped in black capes drew the hearse. All photos from the Lincoln Funeral Procession by Tara McClellan McAndrew.

Lincoln's coffin to the capitol (today's Old State Capitol), where his body laid in state. The next day, an even larger procession escorted the coffin to Oak Ridge Cemetery, a few miles away from the city.

On May 3 and 4 this year, Springfield recreated those processions of 150 years ago. The event had been in the planning for six years. About 1,250 Civil War re-enactors came from around the country to participate. The Springfield Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau currently estimates that about

ten thousand people from across the U.S. and other countries attended the funeral procession recreation.

Re-enactors camped out for the weekend at historic sites, parks, and other locales throughout the city, creating small 1860s communities with A-frame tents, cots, camp fires, and talk of Lincoln and the Civil War. Six descendants of the original pallbearers who accompanied Lincoln's coffin and hearse during his original funeral procession came to take their ancestors' places.

On May 3, they walked about three miles from the city's center to the cemetery beside a black, ornate horse-drawn hearse recreated to look like the original. Like the procession in 1865, the re-enactors passed by places in the city related to Lincoln, including his home, the Old State Capitol, and Edwards Place, the recently refurbished antebellum mansion of his in-laws, Benjamin and Helen Edwards, where many visitors stayed in 1865 to participate in the funeral activities.

After the procession reached Oak Ridge Cemetery (now the location of Lincoln's Tomb), Lincoln's Springfield funeral was re-enacted with a choir and re-enactors portraying clergy and soldiers. Like 150 years ago, it ended with cannon fire.



During Lincoln's 1865 funeral procession, 14 of his Springfield friends and colleagues served as honorary pallbearers, escorting the hearse holding his coffin from the city's center to Oak Ridge Cemetery. For the 2015 reenactment, six descendants of the original pallbearers took their ancestors' places, wearing heavy, black mourning suits, white sashes, and gray gloves.

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During the procession, the only sounds were the soldiers' boots, the horses' hooves, and the drum's rolls.




Hundreds of military and civilian Civil War re-enactors traveled to Springfield to participate in the funeral procession re-enactment.

Transitions

On May 8, **Governor Bruce Rauner** named **James Dimas** as the head of the Illinois Department of Human Services. Dimas was the department's acting director of community operations.

On the same day, the governor tapped **Anna Hui** to be the assistant director of the Illinois Department of Labor. She will be leaving her post at the Heritage Foundation as a senior adviser and policy analyst.

Joseph P. Galvan was named to lead the Illinois Housing Development Authority by Governor Rauner, also on May 8. Currently, Galvan leads his own housing development and consulting firm. 



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