Inside the Vault: Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection

November 12, 2020

The session will start shortly. Please note:

• Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
• You can participate through the Q&A function.
• If you have technical difficulties, please email firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.
Gilder Lehrman Staff

Panelists

• Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
• Christopher Henry Young - Swing in the And Peggy Company of *Hamilton*
• Keisha Rembert - Assistant Professor of Teacher Preparation at National Louis University
• Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator
During the Session

- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature, which is at the bottom of your screen.
- Viewing in full screen is recommended to see the presenters and the presentation at the same time.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.
Today’s Documents

• A personal letter from Abraham Lincoln to Mary Owens
• Two speech fragments from Lincoln’s 1857 US Senate campaign
• The Gettysburg Address
• 13th Amendment
Abraham Lincoln to
Mary Owens, May 7, 1837

Springfield, May 7, 1837

Dear Mary,

I have commenced this letter to show you before this birth of a black skinned wretched fellow I got my arms upon and I love them. As I thought it wasn’t warm enough and a second one in the other section. I shall send this post out on it now.

This story of being in Springfield is rather nice business after all and at least it is as to me. I am going as long as we can anywhere in the state. I have been spoken to by but one man since I’ve been here and shouldn’t have been by any of the others who considered it. You have been to Chicago yet no feeling shall not be good. The way was because I am curious I shouldn’t know how to behave myself.

I am often thinking about what we can do for you coming to live at Springfield. I am again you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of farming about in Carversville where it would be your farm to stand me without knowing in it. You won’t have to be part in the money of finding your fortune, do you believe you can bear that patience? Whatever comes my way I can set a lot with mine hands. My very nature to be able to do all the things to make her happy and contented and there is nothing I can imagine that is not love and am not unhappy when one is to live in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am.

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The Early Life of Abraham Lincoln

- 1809: Born in Kentucky
- Fall 1816: Moved to Indiana
- 1830: Moved to Illinois
- April 1837: Moved to Springfield, Illinois
- During the 1830s, he worked as a
  - Shopkeeper
  - Surveyor
  - Postmaster
  - Lawyer
  - Politician
Abraham Lincoln to Mary Owens, May 7, 1837

- Written shortly after Lincoln moves to Springfield
- He is 28 years old.
- Mary lives in New Salem, Illinois.
- Tries to convince Mary of all the reasons why she wouldn’t want to be married to him
Lincoln befriends Elizabeth “Betsy” Owens while living in New Salem, IL.

Fall of 1836: Betsy persuades Lincoln that her sister Mary would be a good match.
  ○ Lincoln agrees to become engaged to her.

April 1837: Lincoln moves to Springfield, IL to practice law.
First Impressions
"I've never been to church yet, nor probably shall not be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself—"
“I am often thinking about what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here; which it would be your doom to see without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty.”
“Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented; and there is nothing I can imagine, that would make me more unhappy than to fail in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you.”
Lincoln thinks she shouldn’t go through with it

“I much wish you would think seriously before you decide. For my part I have already decided. What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is, that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now immagine.”
"Yours & c. - Lincoln"

"Friend Mary."

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What happened to Mary?

- Lincoln formally proposed marriage to Mary in Fall 1837.
  - She declined.
- She moved back to Kentucky, got married, and had children.
- In 1866 Lincoln’s law partner William Herndon interviewed Mary for a book about Lincoln.
Lincoln speech fragments, 1857-1858

don't truth—truly so plain by our own statute
in however, that all free men understand it even
are to know, and creeping treachery. The act, who has
to裁定 a claim to his seat, will firmly
confine the fruit of his labor against whatever rule
sounds. And so plain, that the more evil are
stupid, plain that our terrible for a martyr, even
certainly know that it is wrong. So plain that
no one, right or low, can ever dispute it except in
a plain, palpable way: for although some of her
volume is written to prove plainly a very gross
thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take
the grow of it, by being a place himself.

Most government, have been based, practically, on
the denial of the equal rights of men, and have, in
part, proven it; this began by affirming them
rightfully, powerfully, and by your people you would always keep
them ignorant, our acquired. No provision to give
all a chance, and we expect the weak to your
strengths, the ignorant, even; and all better, and
happy together.

We made the experiment, and the fruit is before
us. Look at it: think of it. Look at it, in its
aggregate growth, of extent of country, over number,
of population—of ship, and steamboat, ourselves,

Why, Kerry, is not the whale, nor a

"I house?"

I believe the government can not forever,

I experienced the belief that age, nor

I do not expect the Union to decline,

I do not expect the house to fall; but

I expect it will come to an end. It
can become as in thought, or as the other. Either
the affairs of slavery will amount the future
of its own, nor that in case of absolute extinction of
its advocates, will not find the place. It

Do you want it? To see the Union strong,

Do you want it? To see the Union strong,

Do you want it? To see the Union strong,

Do you want it? To see the Union strong,

Do you want it? To see the Union strong,

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Lincoln and slavery

• Lincoln believed the founding fathers set slavery on a course to extinction.
  • Ended the international slave trade
  • The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in the territory north of the Ohio River.

• Changes in the 1850s prompted him to reenter politics.
  • Compromise of 1850
  • Kansas-Nebraska Act
  • *Dred Scott* Decision
Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech

- Early draft of the speech
  - Historian Don Fehrenbacher dated it as December 1857.
- The “House Divided” Speech was delivered on June 16, 1858.
  - NOT part of the Lincoln-Douglas debates
- Lincoln identifies slavery as a moral and political issue that threatens the survival of the United States.
"Why, Kansas is neither the whole, nor a tithe of the real question.
‘A house divided against itself can not stand.’
I believe this government can not endure permanently, half slave, and half free...
I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other, either.

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“Do you doubt it? Study the Dred Scott decision, and then see, how little, even now, remains to be done....

“[T]hat a negro can not be a citizen – That point is made in order to deprive the negro in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the U. S Constitution which declares that: ‘The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States’”
“The Grimsley Trunk”
- Lincoln left his non-essential writings with Elizabeth Todd Grimsley in Springfield.

After Lincoln’s death, Elizabeth gave pages to friends or autograph collectors.

Years later, a servant burned many of the papers in the trunk, thinking they were trash.

The trunk itself was sold in 1967 and is currently in private ownership.

John G. Nicolay and John Hay date the speech to 1858.
The rest of the speech is lost.
Provides valuable insight into Lincoln’s thought process.
“So plain that no one, high or low, ever does mistake it, except in a plainly selfish way; for although volume upon volume is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of it, by being a slave himself.”
“Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men, as I have, in part, stated them; ours began, by affirming those rights. They said, some men are too ignorant, and vicious, to share in government. Possibly so, said we; and, by your system, you would always keep them ignorant and vicious. We proposed to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier together.”
The Gettysburg Address, 1863

- Battle of Gettysburg: July 1-3, 1863
- Approximately 23,000 Union casualties and 23,000 Confederate
  - 8,000 killed
  - 27,000 wounded
- November 19, 1863: Ceremony to dedicate a cemetery for the Union dead
- The main speaker was Edward Everett.
- Lincoln is not mentioned on the cover of this pamphlet.
Edward Everett spoke for two hours.

President Lincoln had been invited to make a “few appropriate remarks.”

- He spoke 275 words in approximately 3 minutes.

About 15,000 people heard his speech.

It wasn’t very well-received at first.
The Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract.

The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom; and that governments of the people, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.
The Gettysburg Address

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Published by Miller & Mathews, 107 Broadway.
Article
13th

• April 1864: Passed by the Senate
• January 1865: Passed by the House of Representatives
• December 1865: Officially ratified as the 13th Amendment
The 13th Amendment

- Written on vellum
- One of six existing “Congressional” copies of the 13th Amendment
  - President Abraham Lincoln
  - Hannibal Hamlin
  - Schuyler Colfax
  - 37 Senators
  - 111 Congressmen

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The 13th Amendment

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”
Q&A
Upcoming Programs

● *Inside the Vault*, Thursday, December 3 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)
  ○ Featuring letters, and photographs from the attack on Pearl Harbor during WWII

● *Book Breaks*, November 15 at 12 pm ET (9 am PT).
  ○ David S. Reynolds discusses his book *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times*.

● Visit [gilderlehrman.org](http://gilderlehrman.org) for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.