

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN CURIOS AT EXPOSITIONS

The Sanitary Commission—the Red Cross of the Civil War—did much to popularize expositions by the successful Sanitary Fairs they conducted which became both attractive and lucrative. Even after the close of the war they were continued and paved the way for the great Philadelphia Centennial Exposition held at Philadelphia in 1876. There followed, periodically, expositions of international scope which have been held with some of our larger cities as sponsors. Abraham Lincoln himself had been a contributor to Sanitary Fairs and both his Emancipation Proclamation and two copies of his Gettysburg Address were presented to these groups with his compliments.

The President's remains had been at rest in the Springfield vault but a few weeks when enterprising men began to explore the possibilities of displaying for financial consideration some of Lincoln's personal belongings and also buildings associated with him. Of course they immediately recognized the value of fairs and expositions as offering the best opportunity of showing their wares. This issue of Lincoln Lore is an attempt to compile as accurately as possible with the source material at hand, a compilation of the most important Lincoln items which have been featured at expositions as there seems to be much confusion as to just when and where certain Lincoln curios were displayed.

### Chicago Sanitary Fair Chicago 1865

The *Boston Evening Transcript* for June 15, 1865 states, "President Lincoln's Log Cabin on exhibition at the Chicago Fair, which he helped to build with his own hands in the days of his youth and poverty is the most interesting of all the objects in the Fair." This was the Macon County, or first Illinois cabin of the Lincolns constructed in 1830 near Decatur. After being displayed at Chicago it was exhibited on Boston Common from July 5 to September 9 and from September 18 to the end of October at Barnum's Museum in New York City. It is said to have been lost at sea while being transported to England.

### World's Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893

Within the Exposition Building at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago there was on display a collection of 161 items associated with Abraham Lincoln known as "The Lincoln Memorial Collection." (See Lincoln Lore No. 932). There is a difference of opinion as to the disposition of the double cabin of Lincoln's parents which originally stood in Coles County, although it is associated in some way with the Columbian Exposition where it was supposed to be exhibited. A news dispatch from Chicago dated February 24, 1894 stated that the logs arrived in Chicago "two years ago" but no satisfactory site could be found to erect the structure and "they were stacked in a pile back of the John Brown fort building." A *Washington Post* dispatch of August 16, 1896 stated the cabin was to be moved to Washington but it was stored at the Libby Prison War Museum and later used for firewood. A facsimile of the cabin has been built in Coles County, Illinois on the site of the original structure.

### Tennessee Centennial Exposition Nashville 1897

A. W. Dennett purchased a part of the Lincoln birthplace farm in Kentucky in 1894. The following year he acquired a cabin which formerly stood on the farm and in which tradition claimed Abraham Lincoln was born. This cabin was rebuilt near its original site and in 1897 was dismantled and the logs were numbered and sent to Nashville for exhibition purposes. It was displayed on the midway along with the traditional birthplace cabin of Jefferson Davis.

### Pan American Exposition Buffalo 1901

The same Lincoln cabin which was exhibited at Nashville in 1897 was sent to Buffalo in 1901 to be displayed at the Pan American Exposition. It was shown in a group of supposedly historic log cabins arranged on the midway in a concession called "The Old Plantation" managed by Thompson and Dandy. The Davis cabin was also one of this group. Such of the logs of this cabin as could be preserved found their way into the structure now enshrined at the birthplace farm in Kentucky.

### Louisiana Purchase Exposition St. Louis 1904

The Lincoln Museum was one of the features of the fair at St. Louis and the structure costing \$15,000 stood just north of the Illinois building. Apparently the Lincoln curio here which was given most publicity was the "Lincoln car" in which the dead body of Lincoln had been conveyed from Washington to Springfield in 1865. The car was constructed at Alexandria, Virginia. There were three partitioned rooms, a state room, a drawing room and a reception room. The state room, Mr. Lincoln's private room, is reputed to have given George M. Pullman "an idea for improvement in the arrangement of the berths of his now famous sleeping cars." There was a Lincoln log cabin displayed at the exposition which was said to have been the cabin which the Lincolns occupied on Knob Creek, Kentucky from 1811 to 1816. The authenticity of this cabin has never been established and the final disposition of it is not known.

### Sesqui-Centennial Exposition Philadelphia 1926

The outstanding Lincoln exhibit at the Philadelphia Sesqui-Centennial Exposition was the replica of St. Gauden's statue of the standing Abraham Lincoln at Chicago. It occupied the center of the plaza at the Illinois Building.

### Century of Progress Exposition Chicago 1933

The limited space available in this issue of Lincoln Lore makes it impossible to mention all of the Lincoln features presented at the Century of Progress Exposition. The most impressive display was a number of replicas of buildings associated with Lincoln and called the Abraham Lincoln Group. It consisted of structures similar to the birthplace cabin, the Indiana cabin, the Lincoln-Berry store, the Rutledge tavern and the Wigwam where Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency in 1860.