

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War
Created by the National Constitution Center
With Lead Support from the Lincoln Financial Group

Exhibition Overview

Introduction

Even as the convention that framed the U.S. Constitution ended in September 1787, Americans began debating critical issues that their founding charter left unresolved. Were the “united states” truly one nation? How could a country founded in the belief that “all men are created equal” tolerate slavery? Would our Constitution be robust enough to safeguard the liberties we held so dear? Like ticking time-bombs, these troublesome issues threatened to explode. Finally, in the winter of 1860-1861, they did. As the winds of war began swirling, Americans worried whether their new president-elect—an inexperienced former congressman and trial lawyer from Illinois—could resolve the crisis. Would Abraham Lincoln survive the test? Would *we*?

Beginning in June 2005, this perilous moment in our country’s history will be presented as never before. The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia—the world’s first interactive museum dedicated to honoring and explaining the U.S. Constitution—proudly offers *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*. Produced in association with The Lincoln Museum of Fort Wayne, Indiana, *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*, a 2,500-square-foot traveling exhibition, will show how Lincoln’s leadership and constitutional vision steered the nation through its most turbulent years and into a future that forever changed America.

Core Themes

Neither a traditional biography of Lincoln nor a conventional exhibit on the Civil War, *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War* explores how one individual, deeply committed to the belief that citizens can make a real difference, exercised leadership at a pivotal time of crisis for the nation, the Constitution, and the course of freedom worldwide. Though the Civil War was a military conflict waged between North and South, at base it was a constitutional crisis—the severest test of the American experiment in popular self-government since the founding of the Republic. Lincoln understood this, and his constant focus on the Constitution enabled him to chart a course that, ultimately, saved both Constitution and country.

From families with young children to Civil War buffs and history scholars, everyone will find something engaging in *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*.

(more)

Walking through the Exhibition

The exhibition is organized into seven areas: **Secession Winter, Meet Mr. Lincoln, Oath of Office, Crisis of Secession, Crisis of Slavery, Crisis of Civil Liberties,** and **Lincoln's Legacy: The Gettysburg Address In His Time and Ours.**

Secession Winter, a fast-paced dual-screen video presentation, introduces the exhibition. Intermixing imagery, narration and period music, it dramatically traces the chain of events that began with Lincoln's election and culminated in Jefferson Davis' inauguration as president of the Confederate States of America—even as President-elect Lincoln traveled to Washington for his own inauguration.

While waiting to be sworn-in, Lincoln turned 52 years old. He marked the occasion by doing something he'd never done before—he grew a beard. But many people didn't recognize his new face! Just who was this now-bewhiskered man? In **Meet Mr. Lincoln**, visitors can use an electronic touch-screen to learn about the life of someone whom we know so well, but about whom there's still much to discover.

In the next area, **Oath of Office**, visitors can stand at Lincoln's side as he is sworn in as President on March 4, 1861. Also in this area, visitors also can look through a replicated circa-1860 box camera to view battlefield images of the Civil War, interspersed with portraits of Lincoln, to see how the war exacted its own physical toll on him.

The core of the exhibition consists of three sections, each focusing on the key constitutional challenges—**Secession, Slavery** and **Civil Liberties**—that tested Lincoln's leadership. Within each section, priceless original documents, such as signed copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery, will bring Lincoln's presidency to life. Audio segments will reveal Lincoln's inner thoughts. Manipulative and electronic interactives will offer novel and engaging learning experiences. In the **Crisis of Secession**, for example, visitors can play "The Secession Game"—a genuine board game from 1862—and watch Lincoln and Jefferson Davis square off over secession in an animated "Championship Prize Fight." In the **Crisis of Slavery**, they can try to use the right "constitutional keys" to "unlock" the slavery problem. In the **Crisis of Civil Liberties**, visitors encounter first-hand accounts from people who were arrested for being "disloyal," and judge whether or not their arrests were legitimate.

Entering the last section of the exhibition, **Lincoln's Legacy: The Gettysburg Address in His Time and Ours**, visitors will hear Lincoln deliver his moving address at Gettysburg on November 18, 1863, and listen to comments from people in our time about what Lincoln's words mean. Visitors will be able to offer their own reflections.

Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War is made possible through the generous support of Lincoln Financial Group.

Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War
June 10 through November 4, 2005
National Constitution Center in Philadelphia

Museum admission is \$7 for adults, and \$5 for seniors ages 62 and up, children ages 4-12, and active military personnel. Children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. (Prices are subject to change.) For more information, call 215-409-6600 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.
