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L.A. THEN AND NOW

An invitation to USC's own land of Lincoln

Rare books, family portraits and other treasures housed in the law library may be viewed by appointment.

BY JEAN MERL

Tucked away in the second-floor library at USC's Gould School of Law, the Lincoln Reading Room houses a trove of rare books, family portraits, campaign memorabilia and other artifacts honoring one of the nation's most revered presidents.

Law students using the room can't help but feel the presence of Abraham Lincoln as he gazes from an engraving of himself and his family in the White House.

Rare books, part of a collection of 192 volumes about the 16th president, are visible behind the glass enclosures of richly dark wood bookcases, which, along with a faux fireplace and two Victorian chairs, are replicas of furnishings that graced the Lincoln family home in Springfield, Ill.

The books and furnishings form a marked contrast to the rest of the room, lined with shelves of contemporary newspapers and magazines — *Time*, *Newsweek*,



Photographs by BOB CHAMBERLIN Los Angeles Times

FAMILY: Brian Raphael of the USC law school library reads a Lincoln biography next to reproduction bookcases and a fireplace that are reflected in a portion of a lithograph showing Lincoln with his son Tad.

Fortune, the *New Republic* — and fitted with casual, modern seating.

"It's nice that our law students get to come in here and be in touch with history a little bit," said Brian Raphael, assistant director of the law library. "Our future attorneys can connect with Lincoln as a lawyer as well as a president."

As the nation celebrates the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth this month, the law school is offering the public a chance to examine its impressive collection of artifacts, which also includes cam-

paign songs ("Give Us Noble Leaders"), editorial cartoons, a poster offering a reward for the capture of Lincoln's assassin, a micrograph of the Emancipation Proclamation and a historic reproduction of his handwritten Gettysburg Address (known in earlier days as the Gettysburg Cemetery Speech).

Two display cases in the lobby of the Musick Law Building contain some examples of the collection, including its oldest volume, published in 1860.

Appointments to tour the reading



POIGNANT: Above Leonette Williams is a copy of a letter Lincoln wrote to a mother who lost five sons in the Civil War.

room, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays through March, can be made by calling (213) 740-6482. Among the items on display is *The Anecdotal Lincoln: Speeches, Stories and Yarns of the Immortal Abe*, published in 1900 by Paul Selby, a newspaper editor who had been a friend of Lincoln, according to law library officials.

Another book, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Allen Thorndike Rice and published in 1888, contains remembrances by a number of the president's prominent contemporaries, including Ulysses S. Grant, Frederick Douglass, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and Walt Whitman.

Other volumes explore the famous political debates between Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas and chronicle events that culminated in the assassination of Lincoln on April 14, 1865.

One of the most poignant artifacts is a



COLLECTION: A reproduction of a Lincoln-Douglas debate poster in the Lincoln Reading Room, which the public can visit through March.

copy of a letter that Lincoln had penned to a Boston mother who had lost five sons in the Civil War.

"I feel how weak and fruitless might be any word of mine" in offering comfort and gratitude, Lincoln wrote.

For the region, law library officials believe their Lincoln artifacts to be second only to those of the Huntington Library in San Marino, which holds the West's most extensive collection dedicated to the president known as the Great Emancipator.

The Huntington is holding a special exhibition from its collection, *The Last Full Measure of Devotion: Collecting Abraham Lincoln*, through April 27. More information is available at (626) 405-2100 or www.huntington.org.

How did USC come by its collection?

It was a gift, in 1998, from the International Academy of Trial Lawyers Foundation and was donated at the suggestion of USC law school alumnus James Ackerman.

The artifacts had been collected by a

Saratoga, Calif., physician and Lincoln admirer, H. McLeod Patterson, and his wife, who wanted to donate the items as a memorial to their daughter, Samantha Shields Patterson, who died in an automobile accident at the age of 18.

Patterson chose the trial lawyers group because of a long-standing good working relationship with one of its members.

"All my life I have been a student of Lincoln and started to collect material on Lincoln while in high school," Patterson wrote in a letter to the group, which has continued to add to the collection.

Leonette Williams, the law library's associate director for collections and technical services, said the collection, while not particularly large, offers some valuable and fascinating glimpses into the life and times of Lincoln.

"It's been wonderful to have it here," Williams said, "and the 200th birthday is such a great time to be highlighting the collection."