

Lincoln-Douglas Traveling Exhibit Returns to Library

The traveling exhibit, "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries: The Lincoln-Douglas Debates," was on display at the library for two weeks in August, 2008, coinciding with Freeport's celebration of the sesquicentennial of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate that took place in Freeport on August 27, 1858. The August 30, 2008 reenactment of the debate drew thousands of people to Freeport. The recently-refurbished Debate Square, right next door to the library, drew a standing-room-only crowd to the event.

It was a hot day, and several people elected to watch the debate from the air-conditioned comfort of the library. The east wall windows on the second floor overlook Debate Square and offered a good view of the reenactors George Buss and Tim Connors portraying Lincoln and Douglas. George and Tim were broadcast live on Big Radio's WFRL-AM 1570 Radio, as was the Debate Square Dedication Ceremony that followed, making it possible to both see and hear the celebration from the library.

A lot of people visited the library that day, and the traveling exhibit was a real attraction. Ours was one of eight identical exhibits that visited libraries throughout Illinois for the next year to raise awareness of the Debates and why Lincoln and Douglas's words and topics are still significant to Americans today.

The "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" exhibit is 20 feet wide by seven feet tall. It contains a wealth of information about the Debates, the political climate of the time, and the 1858 election results. (Douglas, the incumbent U.S. Senator, you will recall, defeated Lincoln in 1858, but the notoriety that Lincoln gained during the Debates help propel him to the White House when he faced Douglas in the 1860 presidential election.)

"Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" traveling exhibits were sponsored by the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition on behalf of all the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Communities. Historians from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum helped to develop the exhibits' content, text and graphics. They were funded in part by the Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

At the end of 2009, when their traveling days were done, one exhibit went back to Springfield, and the remaining seven returned to each of the Debate sites to find a permanent home somewhere in those communities. Our very own "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" is on permanent display at the Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

It's back!

The "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" exhibit is back at the library through the winter holidays to allow a little extra display space at the Visitors Center for the upcoming Freeport Art Museum exhibit and the Visitors Center's hugely popular holiday expo. Thanks to Ed and Cathy Finch for assembling "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" here on the second floor.

Added Value

Accompanying the "Confronting Democracy's Boundaries" exhibit, you'll find a brochure, made possible through the generosity of FHN, which includes a brief history of Stephenson County and a special Lincoln-Douglas pop quiz.

Library Director Carole Dickerson may be reached by phone at 815-233-3000, ext. 216 or by email at cdickerson@freeportpubliclibrary.org.