Lincoln and J.B. Grinnell
Remembering the 16th president on the 200th anniversary of his birth

It should be no surprise that J.B. Grinnell, a staunch abolitionist, knew President Abraham Lincoln. J.B. went to Washington in 1863 when he was elected to the first of his two terms in Congress. The following excerpts are taken from Charles E. Payne's book, "Josiah Bushnell Grinnell," published in 1936.

J. B. Grinnell probably first met Abraham Lincoln in 1860, Payne wrote, after which "a friendship rapidly developed." Payne quotes then from the Annals of Iowa: "When a delegation of Iowa editors and office seekers called upon the new President immediately after the inauguration, they were introduced to the President by Hon. Josiah B. Grinnell who seemed to know everybody from Iowa and was well acquainted with the President also."

In 1864, Grinnell introduced a resolution “encouraging the enlistment of negroes in the Northern armies.” After the resolution passed, Payne wrote that Lincoln invited Grinnell to his office and said, “..It is a great day for the black man when you tell him he shall carry a gun....it foretells that he is to have the full enjoyment of his liberty and manhood... Tell your people in Iowa...that the time has come for everybody to be fighting the rebels...and if you have any strong-legged jackasses in Iowa that can kick the rebels..., they have my hearty consent.”
From the president

We’ve had a very rewarding year at the Grinnell Historical Museum, with more visitors than in past years.

Extensive repair and painting of the 1895 structure was completed, with both the exterior and interior being painted as close to the original colors as possible. To celebrate the occasion, we had a lawn party in June with music and refreshments. More than 150 people attended. The museum’s Spaulding and Laros buggies were on display at the Grinnell Vintage Auto Club Show downtown on that day and also at the Happy Days car show in August.

The museum’s entry in the Grinnell Fourth of July parade won first place. The float featured the Randolph Header that was manufactured in Grinnell in 1879. (See photo at right.)

As part of a special community observance in November honoring World War II veterans, the museum was open daily for two weeks, with displays, speakers and special music. In early December we were open for Jingle Bell Holiday. We served roasted chestnuts and cider, had musical entertainment, and gave away homemade tree ornaments.

We are fortunate to have such dedicated board members and volunteers. Many of the tasks that other museums have to hire done are done here by volunteers. For this we thank you!

The upkeep of the museum is funded by investments, which have decreased like every one else’s. The operation of the museum (lights, heat, etc.) are funded by memberships and donations. With the downturn in the economy, we will now need both financial and volunteer help more than ever.

Howard McDonough

Museum shares its treasures

A Is for Apron

Aprons from Grinnell’s past were displayed by museum board member Barb Lease at a meeting of the Jewel Box Quilt Guild. While aprons have always been a practical way to protect clothing, they have in recent years become fashion statements. Aprons from the museum’s collection included a white cotton lattice weave with crocheted lace, a white-on-white sheer cotton with a ruffle, a linen embroidered fabric, a white cotton with turkey-red embroidery, and a blue gingham with cross stitch. For the audience, the collection brought back warm memories of aprons worn by mothers and grandmothers.

C Is for Christmas

Museum volunteers presented a Victorian Christmas to residents of the Mayflower Community on a snowy December afternoon. Dorrie Lalonde, Barb Lease, Dorothy Louden and Betty Moffett brought a variety of items from the Victorian era to show that many of our Christmas customs originated in Victorian times. The items included Christmas postcards, New Year’s calling cards, a basket of food and clothing that would be given to a less fortunate family, a feather tree with handmade ornaments; and excerpts from Grinnell newspapers describing local Christmas activities.
Many thanks to our donors in 2008

The Grinnell Historical Museum is grateful to the many individuals and groups who made monetary contributions in the past year.

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Donor support is vital

As might be expected, the Grinnell Historical Museum has seen diminished returns from its endowment in the past year. Annual operating costs at the museum total approximately $20,000. Generous contributions of about $6,000 from donors helped make up for some of that shortfall. Thanks to all of those who helped make that happen. We hope you will be able to continue to support your local history museum.

Counting and more

Museum volunteers continue to catalog our artifacts with the help of PastPerfect software. Since the project started in 2005, 1,042 records of objects, photos, archives and library items have been entered, 498 of those in 2008. A team of two people working together can add from 10 to 15 records in a morning – photographing, describing, measuring, barcoding and labeling each item and noting its location. With the thousands of items in the museum’s collection, you can see we have a long way to go!

Marian Dunham
1919-2008

Marian Dunham was a longtime museum volunteer. One of her last contributions to the museum’s programs occurred in 2007 when Davis School students made their annual visit. Marian sat in a rocker on the front porch and regaled the students with tales of her school days in Grinnell. Later, many of them commented that listening to “the lady on the porch” was their favorite part of the day.

CLASSIFIEDS

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To our many faithful volunteers

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