

February 2011

“Forever Free” in Ravenna

By Cass Owens, Director
Reed Memorial Public Library

The “Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation” exhibit is on display at the Reed Memorial Library in Ravenna, OH from December 26, 2010 through February 13, 2011. Staff members assembled the exhibit before the library opened on the Sunday after Christmas.

Since Abraham Lincoln stopped briefly in Ravenna in 1861, we had a visit from “Abraham Lincoln” at our opening reception on January 8, speaking on his election and reading the Gettysburg Address. After his “scout” verified that our building was secure for his visit, President Lincoln proceeded to charm a large audience. Members of the Portage County Historical Society joined Mr. Lincoln, dressed in Civil War attire and helping direct patrons to the program and answering questions.

On January 9th, Chris Vallillo brought many instruments of the Civil War era and performed “Lincoln in Song.” Chris's program is endorsed by the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and was enjoyed by another sizable audience.

Other programs included:

- Cathy D. Nelson from the Ohio Humanities Council Speaker's Bureau came and did a wonderful slide presentation on the Underground Railroad in Ohio.
- Our Children's Librarians Esther Cross and Louise Starling had a successful program called “Addy's Time” with food, fun and American Girl books.
- Our adult book discussion group had an interesting book discussion about *Manhunt: the 12 Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* by James L. Swanson and our middle school book discussion group did *Mr. Lincoln's High Tech War* by Thomas B. Allen and Roger MacBride Allen.

On our closing weekend, we will have a local author and historian, Richard Staats, make a presentation on the Underground Railroad, specifically in the Portage County area. He will also talk about Abraham Lincoln's visit to Ravenna.

The entire process of writing the grant, getting it approved, going to the workshop in California, planning for the exhibit and actually getting the exhibit took almost five years, so it was a long but enjoyable process. The community turnout has been very encouraging – patrons are visiting the exhibit and telling others among the community about the programs and the exhibit. We have had visits by scout troops and local schools. Many staff members of Reed Memorial Library have helped tremendously with their time, energy and ideas to help make this a successful program for our community.



<http://library.ohio.gov/marketing/Newsletters/TheNews/2011/February/ForeverFreeinRavenna>