

# The Branch Line

Newsletter of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

Winter/Spring 2010



## Abraham Lincoln: *Self-Made in America*

April 9 – May 7, 2010

Americans revere Abraham Lincoln for two significant reasons: his vision redefined who we are as a country and enslaved people gained their freedom. The “United States” is a singular noun today not plural. We are one nation not just a collection of states as people often thought prior to the Civil War. Lincoln taught us that reality. Because of his actions the 13th Amendment to the Constitution finally abolished slavery, a long tolerated abomination and stain on our national fabric.

The Lincoln Exhibit examines his life from its beginning in the crudest of circumstances to his ascension to the presidency and his eventual assassination. It includes reproduction of artifacts and documents drawn from the 50,000 items in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, IL. They animate the story of a man who embraced the 19th Century notion of self-improvement. The ideal of being “self-made” worked in Lincoln’s life in ways that still serve as exemplars to 21st Century Americans and characterized America during the 19th Century.

**EXHIBIT HOURS: TUESDAY - FRIDAY 11 - 5 SATURDAY 10 - 2, SUNDAY NOON - 3**

### **Civil War Era Twilight Cemetery Tour Saturday, April 24, at 7 pm**

Early settlers created the Alamo Cemetery and many important citizens rest there. You have a golden opportunity to visit it on Saturday April 24th at 7:00 p.m. This will not be your typical tour. Look for costumed interpreters representing historic families and listen as they voice their strongly held opinions about the Civil War era. Keep your eyes peeled for a spectral visit by a famous President. Finish the tour by listening to Danville Poet Laureate Nancy Frazee, who will keep you spellbound with her recitation of Vachal Lindsay’s famous poem *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*. To defray costs of special effects a \$3.00 per person contribution is requested.

### **Now He Belongs to the Ages Celebrate Lincoln's Life on April 15 with Chocolate, Champagne, Poetry and Music**

The 145th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s death falls on April 15th. To celebrate him you are invited to a special event starting at 7:30 pm. Enjoy a great dinner at a Danville restaurant and then come over to the Museum to see the exhibit and hear Danville and San Ramon’s Poet Laureates read from the immortal Walt Whitman’s treasury of Lincoln poems. Interspersed with the poetry will be Civil War songs performed by singers from the group Extended Roots. Actor Eric Hayes will read Whitman’s prose about the real Abraham Lincoln going about life in chaotic Washington, DC.

To top off the evening, feast on chocolate and champagne! A \$10.00 contribution will help the Museum. To register go to [www.Museumsvr.org](http://www.Museumsvr.org) or call 925.837.3750. Bring someone important to you and enjoy this very meaningful evening.



Pictorial photographs skillfully snapped by those with an artistic eye are currently exhibited at the Museum. *Exposing Danville Inside Out, Today and Yesterday*, compiled by **Sharon Richey** and **Florence McAuley**, presents a maze of scenes from the San Ramon Valley. Expanding the exhibit is the fantastic collection of old cameras and camera equipment, showing its impact on art. **Bob and Linda Sada** have created a visual feast of these items with loans from **Tom Zamaria, Carol Anderson, Bruce Garner, Dr. Michael McDermott, Mac McAuley, Don Stevens, Charlie Fralick** and those from the Museum's own collection. A special thanks to the **J.M. Long Foundation** for underwriting this show.

The exhibit will close March 13th and four of the area high schools will display their photography from March 16th-31st. We invite all of you to come see what our talented Valley youth have "scene"!

A special opening event was held on January 19th, and Museum Volunteers will be honored at the Volunteer Recognition Dinner starting at 5:30 PM on Tuesday March 9th. **Tom Zamaria** will speak at the event and will expand our knowledge of cameras and camera collecting. Volunteers are requested to RSVP to the Museum 837-3750 on or before March 1st for the March 9th event.

*Stream behind Diablo Lodge.  
Photographed by Holly Blair.*

Carmen Curtis

## Lincoln at the Museum



Hosting "Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made in America" is a great honor for the Museum. We applied for this exhibit way back in June, 2008 and were chosen as one of only forty sites in America. We are grateful for the confidence of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in us. We

deeply thank the Leshar Foundation for underwriting the exhibit. We are partnering with the Libraries, the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, the YMCA, Forest Home Farms, the San Ramon Historic Foundation, and the San Ramon Valley Historical Society. Wow! Great things have happened here. As you read this issue look at all the neat events that you should attend to help Lincoln's contribution to American life come alive for you. A variety of people will also do their very best to translate the reality and values of Lincoln. We have invited visits by Bay Area Museums, schools, senior centers, retirement communities, and local churches. Special invitations went out to scouts and YMCA participants. Other groups are equally welcome. Please greet all our guest visitors warmly.

Now we need **you** to visit the exhibit and to bring family and friends. You have every reason in the world to be glad you are a member of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley!

Jerry Warren  
Steering Committee Chair

## MUSEUM PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS FOR LINCOLN EXHIBIT

The Museum values its partnership with the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. Third graders have been provided with an outline of Lincoln's stove pipe hat. They are encouraged to decorate it with designs that depict his life and presidency. Many of these stove pipe hats will be displayed at the Museum, but most of them will be hung in local businesses in Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon.

Fifth Graders will participate in an essay contest on Lincoln. The topic is *Why Lincoln was such a great President for our Country*. The essays will be displayed at the Museum during the exhibit. High School sophomores are being encouraged to complete a project relating to Lincoln after they visit the exhibit. The Debate Clubs from Monte Vista and San Ramon Valley High Schools will debate each other on March 30 upon the same theme that convulsed Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln but in a contemporary vein.

Gail Kamerer





## First Lady of Controversy

Mary Todd Lincoln's story is one of loss and controversy. Born into a wealthy political family in Lexington, Kentucky she was exceptionally well educated and loved to discuss politics with her father. As a young lady in Springfield she was courted by both Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln.

After marrying Lincoln she eagerly supported his political ambitions by hosting teas and receptions, and by helping in his campaigns. Mary Lincoln was ahead of her time. She was the first woman to be called the "First Lady" and initiated many things in the White House which we take for granted.

But we are left with questions. Was she a traitor who supported the South? Was Mary manic depressive and a compulsive shopper? Was Mary a shrew who was a burden to Lincoln in the midst of the Civil War? Was son Robert justified in putting her into an insane asylum? In today's world we are more sympathetic to the tragedies and the cultural limitations on a woman in her time, but Mary remains a "First Lady of Controversy."

Jean Blaser

*Learn more from Jean Blaser on April 23, at the "read.booksellers" in Blackhawk Plaza event, 7 pm, or at the May 16 Strawberry Party at the Museum (\$5 Fee). Register for events at: [www.MuseumSRV.org](http://www.MuseumSRV.org)*

## FOREST HOME FARMS LINCOLN EVENTS

In tandem with our Museum exhibit Forest Home Farms in San Ramon will host two events. On Saturday, April 24th from 10 am to 4 pm visit the Civil War Living History Day. Civil War re-enactors will introduce you to 1860's army life.

Starting on May 15th the gallery space at the Glass House at Forest Home Farms will host an exhibit entitled *Ladies of Lincoln's Era*. See on display stories of mischief making, trend setting, and pistol wielding gals who made a difference in American history.



## The Civil War Era in the San Ramon Valley

The Civil War era was a turbulent time for Americans, Californians included. California was still an unformed frontier region, with the vast majority of the population having lived in California less than 15 years. Their opinions on the Constitution, states' rights, democracy and slavery reflected life in the communities in which they had once lived.

The San Ramon Valley was entirely agricultural. The villages of San Ramon, Danville and Alamo were small with resident hotels, black smithies and general stores. Only Alamo and Danville had post offices and home schools predominated.

When the Civil War began in April of 1861, even though California was thousands of miles away, it definitely played a part. Not only did it stay loyal to the Union, California sent regular gold shipments to the government, gave substantial donations to the Sanitary Commission (19th century Red Cross), and replaced Union soldiers in the West with thousands of California volunteers.

In the San Ramon Valley, arguments between Union Republicans and the Democrats were vigorous. During the Museum's Lincoln exhibit, stories about these disputes will be recounted – and some of them are priceless. There were July Fourth dust-ups, a large Union rally near the Danville Oak, neighborhood arguments over posting the American flag, and political convention diatribes reported in the Contra Costa Gazette. E. H. Cox, Charles Wood, David Glass, and Levi and Sarah Maxcy were staunch Union loyalists. Democratic brothers John and Nathaniel Jones and Daniel and Andrew Inman argued for secession and "the Constitution."

Throughout the County, the Valley was known as a firmly Democratic area. During the 1864 Presidential election, Danville (probably with San Ramon) voted for McClellan over Lincoln, 91 to 76. Alamo supported Lincoln, 50 to 17. Lincoln won overwhelmingly in Contra Costa County and California.





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Visit [www.museumsvr.org](http://www.museumsvr.org)  
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### MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday-Friday 1-4,  
Saturday 10-1

### Lincoln Exhibit Hours

(April 9-May 7)  
Tuesday-Friday 11-5,  
Saturday 10-2, Sunday Noon-3

**Editor: Candace Andersen**  
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## 2010 LINCOLN AT THE MUSEUM SCHEDULE

April 9 7 pm Opening Event - **Abraham Lincoln Self-Made in America** Exhibit

Interpretive Programs included with your admission:

- April 10 Visit of Mary Todd Lincoln (Mary Hess)
- April 11 Meet Mr. Lincoln (Roger Vincent)
- April 17 *Lincoln's Fighting Generals: How Politics and Strategy Collided*
- April 18 *Lincoln's Fighting Generals: How Politics and Strategy Collided*
- April 24 Meet Mr. Lincoln (Roger Vincent)
- April 25 Meet Mr. Lincoln (Roger Vincent)
- May 1 Meet Mr. Lincoln (Roger Vincent)
- May 2 *Charlie Jenkins and the California 100*
- May 7 Lincoln Traveling Exhibit closes but The San Ramon Valley During the Civil War Exhibit continues through May 29.

Special Programs:

- March 10 7 pm *Lincoln at 200: In Fact Rather Than Fiction* Gerald Henig - San Ramon Library
- March 18 7 pm *Lincoln's California Legacy* Historian Robert Chandler - San Ramon Golf Club San Ramon (Reservations and Dinner Charge)
- March 30 7 pm Lincoln-Douglas Style Debate - Monte Vista vs. San Ramon Valley High School Debate Clubs - Village Theatre in Danville, Sponsored by the Danville Library
- April 15 7:30 *Now He Belongs to the Ages* at the Museum (Reservations and Fee)
- April 23 7 pm *Mary Todd Lincoln: First Lady of Controversy* at the new "read.booksellers" in Blackhawk Plaza
- April 24 10-4 Civil War Living History Day at Forest Home Farms (Fee)
- April 24 7 pm Twilight Cemetery Tour of Alamo Cemetery with special guests (Fee)
- May 16 2 pm Strawberry Party with the First Lady at the Museum (Reservations and Fee)
- May 15-Oct. 10 *Ladies of Lincoln's Era* Exhibit at Forest Home Farms Glass House in San Ramon

## Tad's Toys

Small folks who come with visitors can keep busy playing with Tad's Toys while the older folks check out the exhibit. Lincoln's sons played with marbles, cannons, and other toys. There will be a selection of these available for children to keep them involved.

**A special thanks to our  
Sponsors of both  
the Lincoln and  
Photography Exhibits**



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