

AROUND TOWN | ARTS

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Left, Civil War-era artwork tying the 16th president's tumultuous time in office to California's early days; below, an image familiar to anyone who has examined a \$5 bill.

4 big Lincoln exhibits – honest

He never made it to California; photos, effects, memorabilia have

By Dixie Reid
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Sacramento is the new Land of Lincoln as four major museum exhibitions honoring the 16th U.S. president – and the 200th anniversary of his birth – roll out over the next few months.

The first, "Walking the Grade: Contemporary Views of the Pacific Railroad," just opened at Leland Stanford Mansion Historic Park. Large-format black-and-white photographs tie in to

Abraham Lincoln's belief in a transcontinental railroad.

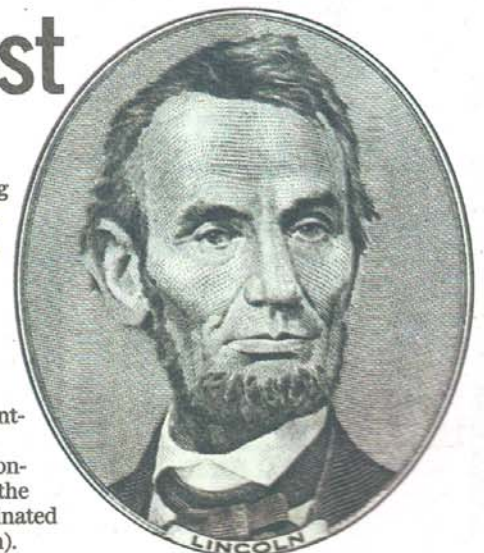
"The Rail Splitter and the Railroads: Lincoln, the Union and the Golden State" opens May 9 at the California State Railroad Museum, and "Our Union Forever: California's Role in the Civil War" opens May 22 at the California State Capitol Museum.

All these, under the umbrella title "Lincoln's California Legacy," are presented by California State Parks.

The final event is the Library of Congress' "With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lin-

coln Bicentennial Exhibition," opening June 24 at the [California Museum for History, Women & the Arts](http://CaliforniaMuseumforHistoryWomen&theArts).

Locals will have the rare chance to see some of Lincoln's personal effects, such as his hunting rifle (Railroad Museum) and the contents of his pockets the night he was assassinated (California Museum).



"Although Lincoln never visited California, California was vitally important to him on a number of fronts," says Phil Sexton, director of public programs for State Parks' Railroad and History Sector.

"Oddly enough, on the very day he died, he and (his wife) Mary Todd Lincoln talked about their common desire to visit California on the railroad as soon as his term was up. He heard the same things people back East had heard about the climate and the resources, and he was fascinated to see samples from California's gold mines. That played on his mind," says Sexton.

Lincoln, a lanky frontier lawyer, served as president from 1861 to 1865 and guided a divided country through the Civil War. He was shot by actor John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865, while attending a performance at Ford's Theater. He died the following morning.

"Lincoln was not only arguably our greatest president," says Sexton, "but he had a lot of influence on California's development. The choice of the (Transcontinental Railroad) route really influenced how Sacramento and San Francisco developed, and it defined commerce between the West and the rest of the United States, as well as opening up trade for the United States and Asia."

The four exhibitions will serve to flesh out Lincoln's legacy. Here is a little about what each will offer:

"Walking the Grade," Stanford Mansion

Lincoln set in motion the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, which in 1869 united California with the rest of the country. Taiwanese photographer Shen-Chih "Sam" Cheng sought out the original 1860s rail bed for the two dozen images that hang in the mansion's ballroom.

State Parks created a companion display of Chinese railroad artifacts borrowed from the U.S. Forest Service, including brownware vessels, an opium tin and Chinese coins found at old railroad construction sites.

"The Rail Splitter and the Railroads," Railroad Museum

"This is about Lincoln's railroad connections," says Sexton. "He signed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862. He was an advocate of national development, and building the railroad was a part of that."

The exhibition explores Lincoln's early life, his work as a lawyer, his political career, the Civil War years and his legacy. A document he signed and his hunting rifle, brought to California in 1849 by a friend, will be on display.

This year also marks the 140th anniversary of the

completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

"Our Union Forever," State Capitol Museum

Among the artifacts to be displayed in the historic attorney general's office are musket balls, buttons and a collection of flags that haven't been seen publicly for about 30 years.

"With Malice Toward None," California Museum

"The reason we've been so excited is that this is the national bicentennial exhibition from the United States Library of Congress," says California Museum executive director Claudia French. "It's only stopping at five cities in the U.S. and, of all the places on the West Coast, it's landing here."

Museum-goers will see 200 rare and historically important items from Lincoln's life, including his 1861 inaugural Bible (also used by President Barack Obama), his grammar book, his wife's jewelry, a lithograph of the Emancipation Proclamation, his debate scrapbook and a letter he wrote but didn't send to Gen. George Meade after the Battle of Gettysburg.

The Library of Congress' exhibition "will be important for this town," says Paul Hammond, museum director for California State Parks' Sacramento History and Railroad sector.

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In 1832, Lincoln told a group of citizens: "No other improvement that reason will justify us in hoping for can equal in utility the railroad."

"He was just 23, and already wise and forward-thinking," says Sexton.

Call *The Bee's Dixie Reid*, (916) 321-1134.



The contents of Abraham Lincoln's pockets on the night of his assassination will be on display in "With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition" at the California Museum this summer.

Library of Congress

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LINCOLN?

Here are some recent and critically acclaimed biographies, compiled from the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* and amazon.com.

"A. Lincoln: A Biography" by Ronald C. White Jr. (\$35, Random House, 816 pages)

"Abraham Lincoln" by James M. McPherson (\$12.95, Oxford University Press, 96 pages)

"Abraham Lincoln: A Life" by Michael Burlingame (\$125, Johns Hopkins University, two-volume box set: 2,024 pages)

"In Lincoln's Hand: His Original Manuscripts With Commentary by Distinguished Americans" edited by Harold Holzer and Joshua Wolf Shenk (\$35, Bantam, 208 pages)

"Looking for Lincoln: The Making of an American Icon" by Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt and Peter W. Kunhardt Jr. (\$50, Knopf, 512 pages)

"Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" by Doris Kearns Goodwin (\$21, Simon & Schuster, 944 pages)

"The Lincoln Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Legacy From 1860 to Now" edited by Harold Holzer (\$40, Library of America, 964 pages)

"Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief" by James M. McPherson (\$35, Penguin Press, 384 pages)

— Dixie Reid