



For Immediate Release

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**Rare Abraham Lincoln letter donated to
the Historical Society of Pennsylvania**

PHILADELPHIA (January 14, 2009) — The Historical Society of Pennsylvania recently obtained a handwritten letter, which provides a rare detailed account of President Abraham Lincoln's 1861 visit to Philadelphia and his speech at Independence Hall.

The four-page letter was written by a young Samuel W. Pennypacker, who later became governor of Pennsylvania. Abraham Lincoln gave a speech in Philadelphia in 1861 just weeks before his inauguration. Pennypacker, who was 17 years old at the time, attended the event with his grandfather. The two reportedly stood just 20 feet from the stage.

Afterward, Pennypacker wrote a letter to his uncle, describing the event. Pennypacker writes: "We saw him {Lincoln} make a speech and afterward at our request (I mean the crowd's) the lesser celebrities quit the stand and almost left him alone in his glory. He took off his coat and hat, seized the rope, and the flag ran up to the top of the State House very easily and prettily without any hesitation or accident to make the omen a bad one."

Another colorful excerpt from the letter:

"Rumor said that Lincoln was a horribly ugly man and rumor never told a greater falsehood – he is quite a good looking man with some resemblance to his photographs but very little. He has dark hair & whiskers. I believe every one who saw him was favorably impressed with him, and we made our way out of the crowd with high hopes and expectations and doubtless feeling very patriotic."

The letter was donated to the historical society by Rudy J. Evans, a distant cousin of Pennypacker. Evans, who lives in Omaha, Nebraska, purchased the letter through the online auction site, eBay, several years ago. Evans said he decided to give the letter to the historical society so it could be properly preserved and shared. "With the coming anniversary of Mr. Lincoln's birth, a new president being sworn in less than a month, and an African American at that, I thought it was time for this letter to have a better home than being tucked away on a shelf at my office," Evans said.

To arrange an interview with Matthew Lyons, the society's Director of Archives and Collections Management, or with the donor, Rudy J. Evans, call the society's Coordinator of Communications, Lauri Cielo, at 215-732-6200 ext. 233. Media will be allowed to take photographs of the letter. Images of the letter, Lincoln and Pennypacker can also be provided for publication.

About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824 in Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (www.hsp.org) collects and tells the stories of Pennsylvania. It is home to some 600,000 printed items and more than 21 million manuscript and graphic items. Its unparalleled collections encompass more than 300 years of America's history – from its 17th-century origins to the contributions of its most recent immigrants. The society's remarkable holdings together with its educational programming make it one of the nation's most important special collections libraries: a center of historical documentation and study, education and engagement.

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