

A Time Capsule – Literally

And while I'm on the subject of time capsules, the following article about hidden history really caught my eye:

(CNN) by Kelly Marshall – A long-hidden message has been discovered inside Abraham Lincoln's pocket watch, the Smithsonian's Museum of American History announced Tuesday.

Watchmaker Jonathan Dillon was repairing Lincoln's watch in April 1861 when he heard about the attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and wrote a short message on the metal inside the watch, the Smithsonian said.

There it remained, unseen for almost 150 years, it said.

In a 1906 interview with The New York Times, Dillon reported that as soon as he heard the news about the first shots of the Civil War, he unscrewed the dial of the watch and wrote on the metal, "The first gun is fired. Slavery is dead. Thank God we have a President who at least will try."

The actual message that the museum found differs from the watchmaker's recollection. It says, "Jonathan Dillon, April 13-1861, Fort Sumpter [sic] was attacked by the rebels on the above date J Dillon, April 13-1861, Washington, thank God we have a government, Jonth Dillon."

According to the Smithsonian, it was not unusual for professional watchmakers to record their work inside a watch.

"Lincoln never knew of the message he carried in his pocket," said Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum of American History.

The museum decided to open the watch after being contacted by the watchmaker's great-great-grandson, Doug Stiles, who had heard about the message Dillon said he had inscribed and wanted to see if it was really there.

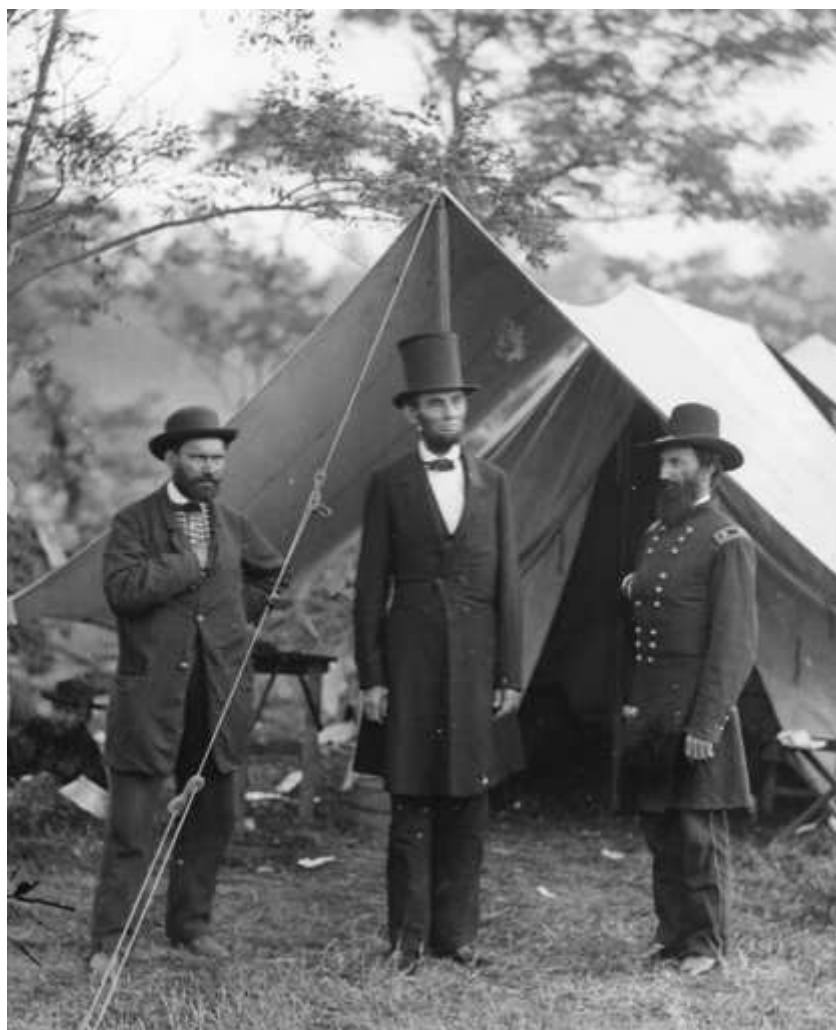
I think it's really cool that this window into history was only recently discovered. If we had known about it all along, I don't think the message would carry as much significance. The fact that the message's existence was the subject of a family legend only adds to the mystique, and it's a good thing the museum decided to follow up on the great-great-grandson's tip!

Happy Birthday Abe!

Today is Abraham Lincoln's birthday. The 16th president of the United States would be 200 years old today if he was still alive. Unfortunately, an assassin's bullet cut his remarkable life short at the age of 56 – not that he would still be alive today, but his assassination was still very tragic of course. Because this is such a milestone “birthday”, Lincoln has been in the news a lot lately. I learned something really interesting about his widow, Mary Todd. Ten years after Lincoln's death, Mary was hospitalized in a mental institution for being delusional and for spending too much money. I guess her delusions were caused by a sleep medication she was taking, but intriguing to me is the fact that the institution where she was hospitalized was in Batavia Illinois – a stone's throw from where I spent most of my childhood. Next time I'm in the area, I'm going to have to take a look at the place – it's now apartment buildings, but I think it would still be cool to see the land that used to be the mental institution which housed Mary Todd Lincoln.

Another interesting Lincoln tidbit; I found this picture on the internet, and I thought it was so cool I had to share it. It captures Lincoln in real life, not just posing for a portrait as many people are used to seeing him. The man on

his left was his bodyguard, Allan Pinkerton, and the man on the right was Major Gen. John A. McClernand.



A-Z's of Me

I received another 'getting to know you' email forward, and this one promises to be 'different' so here goes...

Here's a new one & it's much better than previous versions. Cut and paste and fill in the answers. Then, send to all your friends!

*A – Age: 30

*B – Bed size: Queen

*C – Chore you hate: drying dishes

*D – Dessert you love: depends upon my mood

*E – Essential start of your day item: yogurt

*F – Favorite actor(s): Steve Carell, Tom Hanks

*G – Gold or Silver: Gold

*H – Height: 5 ft. 8 in.

*I – Instruments you play: little bit of piano, various percussion instruments

*J – Job title: Homemaker

*K – Kid(s): 3 girls and a boy

*L – Living arrangements: Husband, 4 kids, 2 dogs, and a parrot

*M – Mom's name: Phyllis

*N – Nicknames: Mom, Lis

*O – Overnight hospital stay other than birth: other than MY birth or any birth? Cuz I've had 4 kids... Also some ear infections when I was a baby.

*P – Phobia or fear: frogs

*Q – Favorite quote: Until I can think of a better one – "Abraham Lincoln said, if you are a racist, I will attack you with the North." – Michael Scott

*R – Right or left handed: Right

*S – Siblings: 1 older sister

*T- Talent: multi-tasking

*U – Unique skill: I can hang a spoon off the end of my nose

*V – Vegetable you hate: peas

*W – Worst habit: procrastination

*X – X ray: dental

*Y – Yummy food you make: I just made a California blend soup yesterday out of leftovers that everyone loved

*Z – Zodiac Sign: Cancer, the crab!

Down And Out In The Magic Kingdom

I was doing a search in the library's database, and I came across the title *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* by Cory Doctorow. Further investigation showed it to be a science fiction book about Walt Disney World in the future. Not usually my type of novel (and I strongly prefer to read non-fiction anyway), but since we're Disney affectionados, I couldn't resist the read. It took me over a month to read it, and that's not even solely because I'm so busy. The book is difficult to read – author Doctorow does a nice job at placing the reader in the characters' futuristic universe, but it's almost too much – he neglects to provide an explanation of certain things. For instance, the characters all have "Whuffie" and "HUDs", and these concepts are constantly revisited throughout the story, but it's never explained exactly what these things are! My interpretation is that Whuffie refers to a meter in one's body that measures a person's positive characteristics, experiences, and emotions – and others can see your Whuffie level. A person with low Whuffie is shunned in society, and sometimes even denied entrance to Disney World. HUDs seem to be a person's computer – it almost seems to be a part of their brain. They can look up stuff and send things to each other instantly with their HUDs like directions to places. It seems to be kind of like today's internet, yet it's built right into people's brains. So, yeah, you can see why it was slow reading as the reader had to get around all of these unfamiliar concepts. But onto the story itself...

In the future when *Down and Out...* is set – and I don't know what year that is, he never specifically says – Disney World is now a retro-park; something that is preserved only because it's an example of the great works of our current time. The

main character, Julius and his girlfriend Lil (who was raised in the Magic Kingdom) are on a mission to save the Magic Kingdom and keep the attractions as they are: old-fashioned rides through vintage dioramas. There is a group of people trying to “rehab” all the rides and give them a futuristic makeover, and they do get ahold of the Hall of Presidents – they make it so that the guests can actually see what it *feels* like to be Abraham Lincoln and the rest of the former Presidents. It is the goal of Julius, Lil, and their friend Dan to keep the rest of Liberty Square (a section of the Magic Kingdom), especially the Haunted Mansion, away from the “ad-hocs” as the rehabbing group is called. Throw in Julius’ murder (don’t worry, he’s been “backed up” and can reclaim his life in a clone) and the fact that he now has to find out who killed him and keep it from happening again, and that’s how the plot thickens.

Overall, it was a very interesting read, but probably not something I’d re-read. It was worth stepping out of my usual non-fiction genre for the experience to read a science-fiction tale, but it wasn’t anything stupendous. The story was interesting, and the author did a great job of detailing life in the future, even if it was at times confusing to the reader. I kept feeling like I was coming in on a sequel having missed the first part. I thought there’d be more details about the Magic Kingdom, and in that respect, I was disappointed. But if you like sci-fi books and you’ve been to Disney World, I recommend this book only if you read a lot and have lots of spare time. On a grading scale, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* gets a C- from me. Up next for me is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully- a non-fiction book about a guy who was involuntarily given an “ice-pick” lobotomy as a 12-year old.