

# AMERICA'S Civil War:

## Sharing History with your Family

By Mira Temkin

This year, America will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the "Great Civil War;" a war that divided this country for four years and often, pitted brother against brother in battle. The war began on April 12, 1861 when secessionists fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston, S.C. When it ended in April 1865, more than three million men had fought in the "war between the states" and over 600,000 soldiers lost their lives, the deadliest war in American history. Slavery was forever abolished and the U.S. had lost a beloved president.

States across the country are marking this milestone with an array of lectures, exhibits and activities to capture the spirit and memory of the war -- and teach future generations of the historic impact that shaped America's destiny.

Whether you want to travel east through Civil War battlefields or watch historic reenactments a little closer to home, there are hundreds of commemorations going on this summer that will allow you to share a little bit of history with your kids. In our own "Land of Lincoln," many communities have spearheaded their own sesquicentennial events.

### Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation

Start your Civil War exploration right in the neighborhood at the Frankfort Public Library on Sat. June 4, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. See the national traveling exhibition on Lincoln's quest to restore a Union divided by Civil War and other historic moments. Call 815-469-2423 or visit [www.frankfortlibrary.org](http://www.frankfortlibrary.org) to confirm dates and times.



### "Lincoln's Chicago" -- Chicago History Museum

Chicago became Abraham Lincoln's second home and political headquarters during his rise to power. This gallery features portraits of Lincoln's contemporaries with lithograph views of Chicago created in the 1860s. The pairings provide a glimpse of the city that Lincoln knew and loved — a dynamic young metropolis on the verge of greatness. 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago. [www.chicagohistory.org](http://www.chicagohistory.org).

### The Civil War and DuPage County: A Local Perspective

Older students will gain a deeper appreciation for the war's human drama as shown at the DuPage County Historical Museum, 102 E. Wesley, Wheaton. Through letters, photos and documents from the museum's archives, the exhibit reflects the relationship between soldiers and their families and

friends during this time of dramatic change as well as hardship. On view until September 2012, 630-665-4710, [www.dupagemuseum.org](http://www.dupagemuseum.org).

### Reenactments bring the war to life

At Civil War camps, reenactors turn back the clock to July, 1863 as they portray both Union and Confederate soldiers. You and your children can experience the sights, sounds and smells of a Civil War camp, discovering this era of American history first-hand. See how a Civil War soldier is dressed, where he sleeps, what he eats and how he relaxes when off duty. Interactive drill demonstrations are designed to educate both children and adults.

### Civil War Days, Wauconda

The Civil War booms to life with the sound of cannons, the crack of rifle shots, and the galloping of horses. The 20th annual Civil War Days encampment will take place July 9 - 10 at Lakewood Forest

Preserve, the corner of Rte 76 and Fairfield Road, near Wauconda. See large scale battles, meet President & Mrs. Lincoln, and wander through civilian camps with artisans and tradesmen at work. Kids will enjoy period kids' crafts and participate in a scavenger hunt. Sponsored by the Lake County Discovery Museum. \$8 adults, \$4 kids (4-17 and seniors) [www.lcfdp.org](http://www.lcfdp.org).

### Civil War Reenactment, Channahon, IL, Dollinger Family Farm

Ideal for families, this 16th Anniversary Civil War Days Reenactment takes place at Dollinger Family Farm, October 15 -16, one of the best in the state. Relive history with President Lincoln, experience a real battle and let the kids participate in a kids' drill and games. \$5 for adults, \$3 for kids. 815-467-6766 or visit [www.dollingerfarms.com](http://www.dollingerfarms.com)

### Alton -- Lincoln & Civil War Legacy Trail

Located about five hours from Chicago, there are 10 Lincoln and Civil War sites along this historic trail. Take your children and walk in the footsteps of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln. Experience the life of young Lincoln as a lawyer, duelist and orator and see where the final Lincoln-Douglas Debate took place, highlighting the issue of slavery. Visit the ruins of the prison where Confederate soldiers were held captive and cemeteries for both Union and Confederate soldiers. In another historic event, Alton resident and U.S. Senator Lyman Trumbull helped author the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery in the United States. His house is a National Landmark. Get your trail guides at the Alton Visitors Center, 200 Piasa Street in downtown Alton. [www.VisitAlton.com](http://www.VisitAlton.com).





### Springfield -- Lincoln's Living History

Springfield has the greatest number of Lincoln historic sites in the country with their crown jewel being the Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library, which opened in 2005.

Dedicated to Lincoln's life and legacy, the Presidential Library combines scholarship with showmanship to immerse visitors in the world of gas lamps and hoop skirts. You'll learn while being mesmerized by this world-class facility which transports you back to Lincoln's 19th century world. Having been here, I can "honestly" tell you this museum is amazing and something every proud Illinoisan should see!

There's enough to do in Springfield for an entire weekend. New Salem, with its timber houses and shops, features costumed interpreters who mimic the people who lived and worked here during Lincoln's six-year stay. Lincoln's home, the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office and Lincoln's Tomb are just some of the other highlights. Of course, visiting the beautiful state capital is always an educational experience, whether the legislature is in session or not.

### Gettysburg Civil War Reenactment

While plans are underway for the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 2013, the community will be once again offering commemorative events this July 1- 3,

2011. Held on the actual movie set of "Gettysburg," the event features an expansive living history village with authentic tents, exciting battles and mortar fire demonstrations. Hear General Lee give his thoughts on Gettysburg and Civil War Generals discuss their battle strategy. [www.gettysburgreenactment.com](http://www.gettysburgreenactment.com).

### Richmond, Virginia -- Battleground of the Republic

Historically significant, Richmond was much like "ground zero" during the Civil War. It not only served as the capital of the Confederacy, but the setting for many major battles. Union soldiers heeded the battle cry, "On To Richmond!" to conquer this capital. Today these words invite visitors to learn more about the places, stories and experiences that reshaped America. To highlight the Richmond area's critical role during the Civil War, Virginia is observing the Civil War and Emancipation 150th Anniversary through 2015.

Richmond is filled with President Lincoln memorabilia as well. Just ten days before he was assassinated, Abraham Lincoln walked through Richmond. He came to visit the capital to symbolize his commitment to "bind up the nation's wounds" and begin rebuilding the country. Here you can walk in Lincoln's footsteps, tour the same streets and visit the same sites as he did in 1865. For information, visit [www.virginiacivilwar.org](http://www.virginiacivilwar.org), [www.civilwartrails.org](http://www.civilwartrails.org).

### Washington, DC - The focal point of civil rights

Visiting our nation's capital provides parents with many teaching moments of our government at work. During the 150th anniversary and to celebrate DC's unique role in civil rights, cultural attractions, organizations and historic landmarks have joined together for "Civil War to Civil Rights" events. New museums such as The African American Civil War Memorial, The Washington, DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial and Ford's Theatre Center for Education and Leadership will be opening soon. [www.washington.org/civil-war/home](http://www.washington.org/civil-war/home), [www.culturaltourismdc.org](http://www.culturaltourismdc.org).

Through October 30, 2011 - Explore historic locations and listen to dramatic Civil War stories at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate.

April 29, 2011-March 18, 2012 - National Portrait Gallery, 8th and F Streets NW. Exhibition will explore the life of Elmer Ellsworth, the first Union soldier killed in the line of duty.

July 21-24, 2011 - Manassas National Battlefield Park - Living history presenters will commemorate the first major battle with special ranger tours of the battlefield, historic weapons demonstrations, exhibits, lectures, and music.

### Watch Civil War movies together

A good way to introduce your children to the history of the Civil

War is to view some of the movies made about the subject. "The Littlest Rebel" with Shirley Temple, "The Birth of a Nation," "Southern Yankee," "Glory," "The Red Badge of Courage" and "Gettysburg" are suggested. And of course, the epic "Gone with the Wind" is still the best known, well-loved classic. Be sure to check the age-appropriateness of the movies, mostly for violence.

While the Civil War is not America's proudest moment, it is an important part of our history and must continue to be studied. Giving your children a chance to commemorate this event personally will inspire future generations and ensure it will never happen again.

"We cannot escape history."  
Abraham Lincoln

### Additional Resources

For a statewide calendar of events during the Sesquicentennial and to learn more about the role Illinois played during the Civil War, visit [www.illinoiscivilwar150.org](http://www.illinoiscivilwar150.org).

Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kentucky and Arkansas all have battle reenactments planned. For more information, visit [hughescamp.org/PHP/MOCW150Schedule.php](http://hughescamp.org/PHP/MOCW150Schedule.php)



Photo courtesy of Lake County Discovery Museum



Photo courtesy of Dollinger Family Farm