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An evening of U.S. presidential history



PHOTO BY NICK FIALA

Actor Danny Russel, as President Abraham Lincoln, was at the Jasper County Library on Thursday. Behind him is a replica of Lincoln's coffin, which will be on display at the library until Monday.

Jasper library displays Lincoln's replica coffin

BY NICK FIALA
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RENSSELAER — People who attended Thursday night's presentation at the Jasper County Library were treated to an unusual

sight — Abraham Lincoln standing next to his replica coffin.

To commemorate Lincoln's death and burial, the library will have the replica coffin on display until

Monday. The display was made possible by Jackson Funeral Home and by members of the local Daughters of the American Revolution organization.

A one-man show,

starring Lincoln impersonator Danny Russel, served as a kickoff for the display. Russel's show touched on various Lincoln anecdotes,

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as a large crowd of locals laughed along at his raucous retelling of the life of the nation's 16th President.

The casket is on loan from Batesville Casket Company. According to www.jacksonfuneral.com, it was constructed

"for use at funeral home open houses and historical events such as Civil War reenactments. Batesville did not construct the original coffin but used original plans to build it.

"This living history display is a great tool for schools, historical groups or interested individu-

als," said Julie Hesson, funeral director at Jackson Funeral Chapels and a DAR member.

Library staff also passed out information on Lincoln's assassination and the long, eventful journey to his final resting place in Springfield, Ill. Lincoln's body did not reach its cur-

rent location until Sept. 26, 1901. In those 36 years, it was moved nearly 20 times.

While Lincoln's final burial chamber was being constructed, his coffin was opened for the final time to assure the precious few permitted to see it that the President's body had not

been previously stolen. His appearance had reportedly "not changed much" since that of his original burial in 1865.

Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865, while attending a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., as the Civil War was

drawing to a close. The assassination occurred five days after the surrender of Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

After remaining in a coma for nine hours, Lincoln died at 7:22 a.m. April 15.