

The Collection

The Museum's collection of over 22 million artifacts and documents is a rich source of both Chicago and United States history including one of the foremost collections on Abraham Lincoln in the United States. The collection is organized into seven main holdings: Archives and Manuscripts; Architecture; Costumes; Decorative and Industrial Arts; Prints and Photographs; Painting and Sculpture; and Library materials. This vast array of materials allows the Museum to interpret the dynamic interplay of national, regional, and local trends and events.

Collection materials relating to the Revolutionary War, westward expansion, and industrialization help to explain Chicago's early development and rise as a city; while regional historic resources related to the city's steel skeleton frame architecture, its grain and lumber markets, its mail order business, and innovative music help to illuminate America's transformation from a rural nation to an urban society and culture.

Among the most important American history documents and artifacts in the collection are:

- The first patent issued in the United States signed by President George Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson on July 31, 1790.
- Clothing worn by important figures in U.S. history including George Washington's vest and second inaugural suit, two suits worn by John Adams, and items belonging to Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln.
- Civil War materials including an enlisted man's jacket, slave tags, Elijah Lovejoy printing press, weapons, and battle flags.
- Materials associated with Abraham Lincoln including an 1860 campaign banner, presidential carriage, and his death bed.
- First printing of the Declaration of Independence - one of only 25 known copies of the Dunlap broadside printed on the night of July 4, 1776.