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University Archives' Lincoln Collection highlighted in national project

When then-Chairman of Oakland University's History Department Charles W. Akers examined the William Springer Lincoln Collection before Oakland purchased it in 1970, he had some idea the historical documents within would be useful for research purposes.

"... The research potential of the books, pamphlets, periodicals, and a few miscellaneous papers is far greater than we had anticipated," wrote Akers to then Chancellor D.B. "Woody" Varner.

Now, 46 years later, pieces of that same collection are part of a digital collection detailing the 1865 assassination of Abraham Lincoln that is being curated by Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. – the exact site of the tragic historical event.

Ford's Theatre began the "Remembering Lincoln" project to recount the reactions of the public during the time of Lincoln's assassination. "People across the world left behind evidence — letters, diaries, newspapers, sermons, mourning ribbons — that reveals their responses. These traces of the past show how the country, coming back together after four years of a bloody Civil War, mourned — or didn't mourn — our 16th president," wrote the curators of the exhibit.

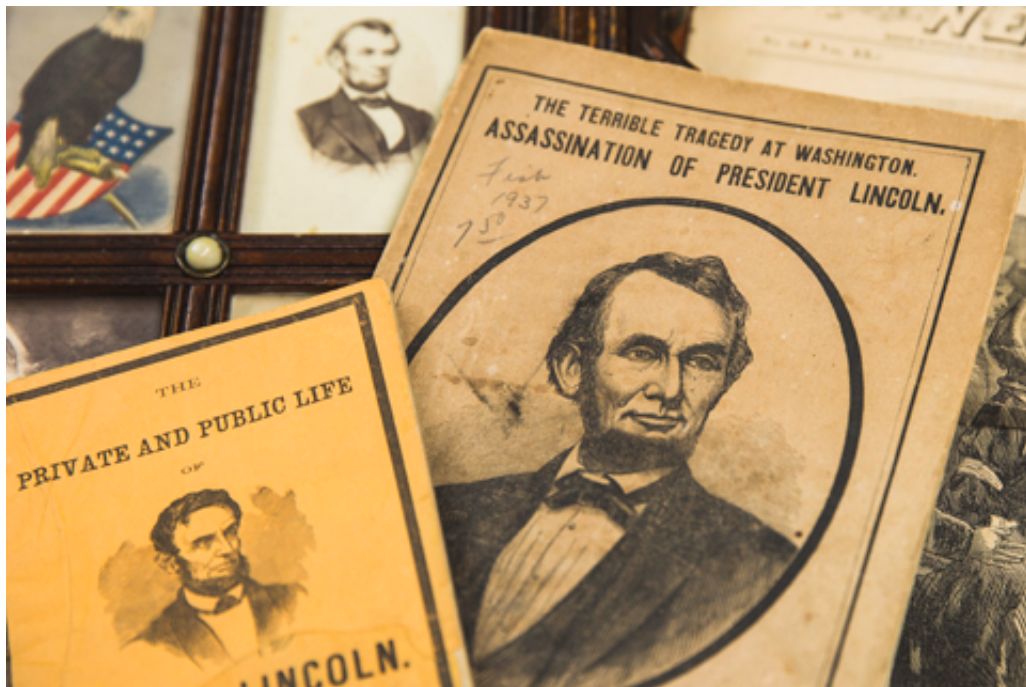
It combines items and documents from nearly 30 historical and academic establishments across the country, including a wonderful collection from Oakland and others from prestigious institutions such as the Massachusetts Historical Society and the University of Pennsylvania libraries.

Among the Oakland University Archives and Special Collections contributions are newspaper clippings, funeral pamphlets and memorials for America's 16th president, historical drawings, books about Lincoln and more.

Dominique Daniel, Ph.D., associate professor and coordinator of Archives and Special Collections, led the effort to digitize Oakland's large historical collection.

"I found out about the Remembering Lincoln project through a contact at the Detroit Historical Society," said Daniel, who organized the contributions with Archives Assistant Shirley Paquette.

"It is quite an honor to have our collection associated with the prestigious Ford's Theatre. When I first contacted them, I was not sure our items would be of interest to them."



Most of the pieces are in good condition, as they are stored in a climate controlled environment, said Daniel. However, that also has

something to do with the material newspapers were produced on – cotton and linen rags, not wooden pulp. Daniel added Oakland's participation in the project will “give our collections national and even international exposure.”

Daniel said the preservation of the historical record is essential to understanding the present and deciding the future. “For a university like OU, preserving our documents, photos, publications, websites, objects and even today our social media accounts helps us understand our values, where we came from, how we were shaped. ... It also helps strengthen our collective memory and helps create a culture of accountability and transparency.”

Added Paquette: “Even though the library has owned this collection since 1970, to me it felt like working with newly acquired material. It was really nice to bring these items of historical value out of storage and share them with an appreciative ‘audience.’”

Take a tour of the Remembering Lincoln project at <http://rememberinglincoln.fords.org>. To view Oakland University's contributions to the Ford's Theatre exhibit, visit <http://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/contributor?uid=76>.