

CONNECTICUT POST

REPRINT FROM THE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2004 ISSUE • FRONT PAGE - FAIRFIELD COUNTY EDITION

STRATFORD FIRM TRANSPORTS LINCOLN ITEMS

By MARIAN GAIL BROWN

STRATFORD — Abraham Lincoln's personal letters, books and mementos - including his handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address - are on the move to their own state-of-the-art presidential library in Illinois, courtesy of a Stratford company that specializes in moving rare collections.

The Lincoln collection, which filled several basement rooms below Illinois' Old State Capitol in Springfield, stretches for 27,000 linear feet.

"That's enough books and manuscripts, stacked end to end, [to extend] for five miles," said Bill Overton, vice president of the library relocation division of William B. Meyer Inc., a fourth-generation family-owned moving company.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is paying Meyer \$109,000 to organize, sort, transport and then unpack the collection. It's moving down the street to its new home, where the 16th president's personal documents, books and belongings will have the spotlight all to themselves.

The items include the only known photograph of Lincoln lying in state after he was assassinated on April 14, 1865.

"A library is a different kind of customer than a residential [client]. You'll have stuff you want to move and then you'll have stuff you haven't seen before — or at least not in years — that you are unsure whether you should take," Overton said.

"Libraries, when they come across stuff they haven't seen before or in a while, have to be very careful. They need to make sure they've captured everything and that nothing is thrown out by mistake."

Inside the dungeon-like Old State Capitol basement, 30 teams of Meyer's employees are painstakingly removing the artifacts and placing them on numbered orange Rentacrats and heavy industrial library carts.

The items are arranged in the exact order — or as close to it as reasonably practical — as they stood on the shelves and cabinets in the Old State Capitol basement. Once loaded on the carts, they will take a trip through a series of freight elevators to an underground parking garage; a series of moving vans will truck them



AP
William Malone, an employee of Stratford's William B. Meyer Inc., moves Abraham Lincoln documents out of the Illinois State historic Library stacks at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Ill. recently. Lincoln documents are being moved from the library in preparation for the opening of the new long-delayed, state-of-the-art Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, which may open at the end of the month.

all of 500 yards to their new abode.

"It's an honor to be entrusted with the move of a president's books and belongings," Overton said. "We are grateful for the confidence that is being placed in us."

As one might imagine with the kind of work the Meyer moving company does, "it's a niche business," Overton said.

"We get a lot of our business from referrals. Librarians are a close-knit bunch, and they talk. One good word speaks volumes."

The company performs 40 to 50 library moves a year. Representatives of the business log more than 100,000 air miles a year, flying to trade shows to solicit business.

Besides the Lincoln library project — a job in the planning for two years — Meyer has moved the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.; the Redwood Athenaeum Library, the country's oldest private library, dating back to the mid-1700s; and most recently the University of Kentucky library in Lexington.

"They are fantastic. We had a complicated move with four library collections and 500,000 books coming together and needing to be reclassified. And they helped us do this without ever closing," Mary Molinaro, director of the William T. Young Library at the University of Kentucky, said. "We had rooms that were a sea of books. Yet if somebody requested something, the movers always were able to lay their hands on it."

With some of the work, Overton said, Meyer movers have scanned each book in a collection, bar-coded the packing boxes and the skids on which the boxes were grouped. It's diligent, detailed (some might say anal-retentive) work.

"We've also had the task of converting books [catalogued] on the Dewey decimal system over to the Library of Congress' alphanumeric system," Overton said.

"The last thing we would ever want is to have a misplaced book, because a misplaced book is like a lost book. If you can't locate it, it's as though you don't have it. We work very hard at being very precise at what we do. And luckily for us, we have never lost a book or a document."

It's a claim every mover would love to make. MariAn Gail Brown, who covers regional issues, can be reached at 330-6288.



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New Haven Register

REPRINT FROM THE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2004 ISSUE • BUSINESS SECTION

STRATFORD COMPANY MOVES LINCOLN ARTIFACTS

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — It's a bit more involved than renting a trailer and begging a few friends for help, but that can be expected when moving the world's largest collection of Abraham Lincoln documents to a new home.

Sure, it's all only going a block down the street. Just don't tell that to Gary Stockton, who is coordinating the move that includes, among reams of documents that would make for several truckloads, a handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address and the only photograph of Lincoln lying in state after his assassination.

William B. Meyer, a Stratford, Conn.-based company that specializes in moving libraries, is being paid \$109,000 to pack the material, truck it a block down the street and unload it at the new library.

Mark Dalene, a supervisor for William B. Meyer, said this is the biggest moving job he's ever tackled. He called it an honor, and also a great responsibility, to move such historic items.

"If you misplace one book, the chances of them ever finding it are slim," Dalene said.

The project has required years of planning, a platoon of movers, three weeks and \$109,000. It is the last major step before opening the long-delayed, state-of-the-art Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, on track to open late this month.

The old library is a dungeon-like maze of rooms beneath the Old State Capitol in downtown Springfield. With the move under way, shelves are half-empty. The floors are crowded with orange "RentaCrates" being loaded with books and papers. Empty cabinets, broken chairs and boxes of odds and ends are scattered everywhere.

The library's collection ranges from rare books and original Lincoln documents to microfilms of Illinois newspapers and copies of routine county records. Then there are the truly irreplaceable items, like the Gettysburg Address, one of only five surviving copies.

Kim Bauer, curator of the library's Lincoln collection, said the address had not been moved to the new building yet. He said it will probably be transferred without notice or fanfare, protected in a special container, to the



William Malone of William B. Meyer Inc. moves Lincoln documents out of the Illinois State Historic Library earlier this month. AP

new library's vault on some quiet day.

The collection also includes a signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, letters between Lincoln and his wife, political correspondence, rare photos and a signed copy of the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery (Lincoln pushed the measure through Congress, but it wasn't ratified by the states until some eight months after his death).

While William B. Meyer will haul most of the books and boxes to the new library, it won't be handling some of the most precious documents, said Stockton, the archivist for the State Historic Library's acquisitions.

Instead, those items will be wrapped in their protective folders and boxes, then moved to the new building by library employees.

One delicate item that will be handled by the movers is the original tombstone of Lincoln's son Edward, who died in 1850 at age 3, Stockton said.

A library devoted to the 16th president has been discussed for decades, but the project really got off the ground six years ago.

Construction began in 2001 with a price tag of \$115 million for the library and an accompanying museum that is to open next year.

Stockton recalled an early meeting to discuss all the details. He asked how much money was being set aside to move the library's contents.

"I could tell from their reaction that not a

lot of thought had been given to it," he said.

Perhaps as a reward for speaking up, Stockton was put in charge of moving the large collection.

The sheer volume is daunting: Imagine a semitrailer filled with paper from top to bottom. Now add four more just as full; that's roughly the library's 12,000 cubic feet of manuscripts, letters and prints.

Then there are the books. Line them all up on one shelf and it would be about 2.6 miles long.

There are 135,000 reels of microfilm and negatives, with more being added every day, and a little of everything else: statues, movies, paintings of obscure officials.



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