

Lincoln-Tallman House and pottery exhibit showcased

By Jason Francis
Special to the Lakes Edition

Honest Abe Lincoln, the United States' 16th president and one of its most beloved, hung his hat here for a brief but momentous time.

Honestly, the Lincoln-Tallman House is the last surviving location in Wisconsin where Lincoln once slept.

The house and nearby Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center represent the crown jewels of the Rock County Historical Society's campus in Janesville, offering history buffs (and anyone looking for a uniquely fun time) a chance to experience intriguing, bygone eras.

There are changing exhibits at the museum and an awe-inspiring elegance on display in the structure, decor and all-around aura of the famous Lincoln-Tallman House.

The Rock County Historical Society (RCHS) manages the 1850s Italianate Lincoln-Tallman House, which was built by 19th century lawyer, land speculator and avid abolitionist William Morrison Tallman.

A pioneer in the Republican Party, Tallman hosted Lincoln at his home for two nights in 1859 after Lincoln, who lost a U.S. Senate bid the previous year, presented speeches in Milwaukee and Beloit. Lincoln became president in 1860

and served in the position until his assassination in April 1865.

The home and the vast array of elegant artifacts and furnishings displayed inside provide an educational avenue for RCHS to highlight the abolitionist movement and a way of life dating back 150 years. More than seventy percent of the furniture is original, making it one of the most complete historic houses in the Midwest.

Built between 1855 and 1857 at a cost of \$42,000, the six-floor mansion was constructed utilizing the state-of-the-art technologies of its time.

Lincoln-Tallman tours

Typically lasting between 50 minutes and an hour and encompassing the basement, first and second levels of the mansion, traditional Lincoln-Tallman House tours are offered Thursday through Sunday (and Wednesdays by appointment).

On Thursday, tours begin at 10 a.m. with the last one departing at 7 p.m. On Friday and Saturday, tours begin at 10 a.m. with the last one departing at 2 p.m. Sunday tours are offered on the hour at 12 p.m., 1 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Tours begin at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center (426 N. Jackson St.), which was once the home of Stanley Tallman (grandson of William Morrison Tallman).

A second type of tour – which is by appointment only – will likely interest you if you are a fan of the servant life that was so vividly portrayed in the television series "Downton Abbey." The Lincoln-Tallman House "Help Wanted" tour offers the chance to step into the shoes (and aprons) of those characters by joining the servant class in completing 19th century chores and activities.

Ornate pottery exhibit

The museum center, which is open daily from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the summer and fall months, showcases exhibits that highlight interesting facets of Rock County's storied past, most prominently the exquisite "Crafting Excellence: The History of Pauline Pottery & Pickard China" exhibit.

"Pauline Pottery and Pickard China have long been recognized nationally as some of the finest pottery and china, both for its functional use and as highly sought after artwork," states the exhibit description on the historical society's website. The exhibit "is more than a gallery of works from these two mediums. It tells a story of craftsmanship; its processes, makers and shops that created each masterpiece," adds the description.

This spring, when this reporter visited, the exhibit was being refreshed and reconfigured, with

some new pieces being added. At the time, RCHS volunteer Fred Brown of Cambridge, Wis., a member of the Pickard China Collectors Club, was doing electrical work inside a showcase cabinet.

"This is the largest display of Pickard China in the world," he said. "It is an amazing thing to see."

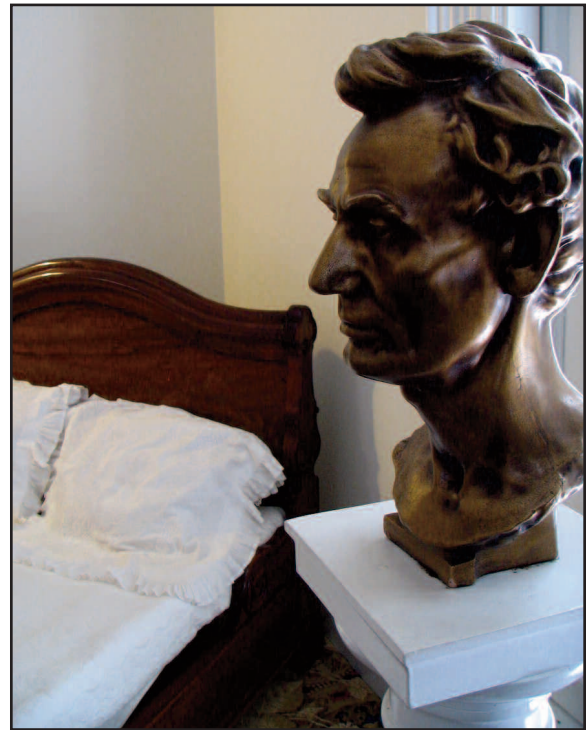
Selected artists and their distinct styles are showcased. The pieces date back as far as the late 19th century.

"Every piece is an individual 'painting' done by an artist. Each is unique," Brown said. "Most of the items are individually signed."

Founded by Wilder Pickard in Edgerton, Wis., in 1893, Pickard China is still a thriving company located in Antioch, Ill. It is the last true American company of its kind, said Brown, a former member of the board of directors of the Pickard Collectors Club.

Pickard China's pedigree is top-notch, as U.S. Presidents, the King of Saudi Arabia, the Queen of England and countless other dignitaries have dined on the company's fine wares.

Pickard China was an off-shoot, of sorts, of Pauline Pottery of Edgerton, which was run by Pauline Jacobus (1840-1930) in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Wilder Pickard (1857-1939) was a salesman for Pauline Pottery



Inside the Lincoln-Tallman House, a bust of Abraham Lincoln sits beside a bed where Honest Abe once slept. (Photo by Jason Francis)

and when the first incarnation of that business went under, he began Pickard China.

For more information on Pickard China, visit www.pickardchina.com. Info on the collectors club can be found at www.pickardcollectorsclub.org.

RCHS's 2018 theme

RCHS's theme for 2018 is a continuation of its 2017 theme: "History in Focus: Sharing Stories, Supporting Community."

Utilizing that theme, RCHS's goal is to capture hundreds of stories from all corners of Rock County, working in part-

nership with local businesses, local government, nonprofits and the general public as partners to capture the essence of Rock County, according to a 2017 press release.

RCHS has a "Story Squad" that helps unearth and compile these important stories.

A "Story Wall" inside the museum center showcases dozens of these stories. Interesting feature stories from among Rock County's citizens are also featured on the RCHS website.

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CAUTION: TALLMAN TOURS CONTAIN FUN!

IT ALL STARTS IN JANESVILLE Now with NEW Evening Hours

If you haven't toured the Lincoln-Tallman House lately, it's time to re-visit! Take the Traditional Tour and learn the secrets of the Tallman family and their most famous guest. Or, roll up your sleeves and see life from the help's perspective in the Help Wanted Tour. **Fun for all ages!**



2018 Events

- June 1Tallman Tour Season Begins
- June 20.....Summer Solstice Showcase
- August 5Tallman Arts Festival
- September 16Sunday Dinner: A Farm to Table Feast
- October.....Spirits in the Night
- November 19A Tallman Christmas Tour Season Begins



For More Information Visit:
www.rchs.us or Call 608-756-4509
426 N Jackson St, Janesville, WI 53548