

Emancipation Proclamation on display in Syracuse for one day only

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Syracuse (WSYR-TV) -- You'll have a very rare chance to see one of the most important points of American History Thursday at the OnCenter. The preliminary Emancipation Proclamation that set a date for freeing slaves in 11 southern confederacy states will be on display for one day only this week.

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued 150 years ago on September 22, 1862. It took effect several months later on January 1, 1863.

The document, along with a 1962 speech from Dr. Martin Luther King marking the Centennial will be on display, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the order.

Crews busily set up the ballroom of the OnCenter on Wednesday, in anticipation of the prized documents' arrival. When they arrived, the documents were carefully unloaded from their crates and gently set into a display case.

"It's both an honor and a privilege and just a daunting feeling when you have Abraham Lincoln's writing in your hands, you're responsible for it, but you get to see it, touch it and be near it, it's an awesome feeling," said Tom Ruller, with the NY State Museum.

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"The official document was in Chicago and that burned up in the Chicago Fire, so this is the only document that represents the Emancipation Proclamation, which is written in Lincoln's own hand," explained Tom Hunter, with the Onondaga Historical Association.

It's the first time in 50 years that the document has ever been taken on tour. That same year, Dr. King commemorated it. The original manuscript of King's speech will also be on display. Lincoln's document – a military document – with a presumed smudge from the president's finger, pieces of print defining articles of war pasted onto the paper will be there for all to see and appreciate.

"He wanted a document that was strong because he wanted a military victory to back it up," Hunter said.

Both of the documents are very delicate, which is why they have tightly controlled the temperature and humidity of the room they'll be displayed in. As far as the lights, it'll be dimmer near the display cases in another effort to protect the documents.

"I think people can expect to be awestruck. I hope they will be. To see a document written by Abraham Lincoln with his edits, his corrections, his modifications, the thought process," Ruller said.

It's a window into one of the most critical periods of our nation's history.

Auburn native William Seward was part of the cabinet who heard Lincoln read the Emancipation Proclamation. Homer native Francis Bicknell Carpenter is credited with a very famous painting depicting the first reading. The documents will be on display from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the ballroom of the OnCenter on Thursday only. The display is free and open to the public.

This exhibit will travel to several other New York venues, including:

- October 5-6: Burchfield Penny Art Center, Buffalo
- October 15-16: Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post and Greenvale
- October 19: Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Plattsburgh
- October 27-28: Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester
- November 1: Roberson Museum and Science Center, Binghamton
- November 9-10: New York State Museum, Albany

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