

SEAN KIRST | POST-STANDARD COLUMNIST

JUBILEE MARKS 2 KEY ANNIVERSARIES

Gregg Tripoli, executive director of the Onondaga Historical Association, recalls his sense of awe upon his first visit to Rome. "You'd be walking down a street," he said, "and suddenly it would just hit you that you're walking in the same place where Mark Antony once walked."

A love of history, to Tripoli, hinges on such moments. It is a response organizers hope to kindle Friday, when the OHA holds a celebratory jubilee in the old Carnegie Library at Columbus Circle in Syracuse.

"It's going to be a great event," said Kitty Rice, who — as a member of the Black History Preservation Project in Syracuse — helped in the planning. "You think of the Emancipation Proclamation, and you always think of somewhere else. But Upstate New York played a very important role."

The jubilee will honor two distinct sesquicentennials: Both the OHA and President Abraham Lincoln's nation-changing proclamation were created 150 years ago. Lincoln issued the document on Jan. 1, 1863, thus freeing millions of men, women and children held as slaves in the Confederate states during the Civil War.

The logic of merging the celebrations was fueled by an outpouring last September, when 3,500 Central New Yorkers showed up for a traveling state exhibit that featured an original copy of the proclamation. Throughout the day, people waited for hours to see the document at the Nicholas J. Piro Convention Center; the last visitors didn't get their chance until midnight.

"Syracuse really had the most passionate response. There's no doubt about it," said Thomas Dunn, a spokesman for the state education department. The proclamation was displayed in six other metropolitan areas, Dunn said.

To Tripoli, everything came together when retired City Court Judge

Langston McKinney told him about a January 1863 "emancipation jubilee" in Syracuse, in which the black community and abolitionists gathered to celebrate Lincoln's proclamation. The event was held in the Syracuse Wesleyan Methodist church, now known as the Mission Restaurant; those who assemble Friday at the Carnegie will be able to see the old church through a window.

OHA officials, aware of how a new Stephen Spielberg film has heightened na-



Mike Greenlar / The Post-Standard, 2012

THE LINE at the Oncenter Sept. 27, 2012, to see Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was very long.



John Berry / The Post-Standard, 2009

THIS HAIR PICTURE was made from the hair of former President Abraham Lincoln, his wife, vice president and his Cabinet.

tional interest in Lincoln, intend to display a particularly compelling artifact: A "hair picture" that includes a woven piece of the 16th president's hair. Many years after the Civil War, Ida Champney — the widow of a barber in Washington D.C. — moved to Syracuse to live with her daughter. Thomas Hunter, curator of collections at the OHA, said Champney's husband helped create two pictures of human hair during the war, both in the shape of an American eagle.

Champney used locks of hair from Lincoln and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Secretary of State William Seward, future president Andrew Johnson and many leading officials. One picture was sold at auction to benefit ill or wounded soldiers. The Champney family kept the other one, Hunter said, until it was donated to the OHA.

Dennis Connors, the association's curator of history, said Friday's gathering also recalls some difficult truths. Syracuse was hardly free of racial anger during the Civil War, and 1863 was especially tumultuous. Accounts from The Syracuse Daily Standard, a forerunner to The Post-Standard, describe how the local celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation was originally supposed to be held at City Hall. Threats of violence if any black received the chance to speak caused organizers to move the gathering to the church.

Lincoln's proclamation enflamed local divisions about the wisdom of the war. On St. Patrick's Day of 1863, Connors said, a gang of angry Irish youths — furious at the prospect of being drafted and sent to fight for abolition — began attacking blacks on the streets of Syracuse.

Yet the region's nobler aspects would go on full display that summer, when companies of Union soldiers from Central New York played a key and selfless role in the battle of Gettysburg.

Almost 150 years later, the OHA jubilee will underline how those events shaped the nation as we know it today. Organizers hope the community will offer its support, not as a dusty reminder of years past but as a tribute to the importance of the OHA's downtown museum and research center.

"I don't care who you are," said Kitty Rice. "You can find a little bit of who you are in there."

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BRANFORD MARSALIS HEADLINES JAZZ FESTIVAL



Saxophone legend Branford Marsalis is headlining a jazz festival in Haiti.

Marsalis arrived in the Caribbean nation Friday to perform several shows at the Port-au-Prince International Jazz Festival.

The first show for the Branford Marsalis Quartet was performed in the coastal town of Jacmel. The second show was performed at Port-au-Prince at a concert venue that was once a sugarcane plantation.

Marsalis also will perform a private show today at the residence of U.S. Ambassador Pamela White.

"It's really cool to be here," Marsalis, 52, said by telephone from an oceanfront hotel in Jacmel. "The people are beautiful to me."