

## Greeneville Postmaster Jeffery Smalling Teams Up with Local “Lincoln” to Honor Bicentennial

It was an ordinary day for Greeneville, Tennessee, Postmaster Jeffery Smalling. Ordinary, that is, until Abraham Lincoln walked in to his office.

“Call me Abe,” said the bearded visitor. “I also answer to Chris.”

Chris Small, who founded and leads *The Lincoln Project*, now based in Greeneville, has portrayed the 16th President for over a dozen years. After commenting on the coincidence of their last names, Small explained to Smalling that he was working with local entities to develop and coordinate events honoring Lincoln’s 200th birthday. Small told the Postmaster he’d read that the USPS was issuing a set of Lincoln Bicentennial stamps. Since Greeneville is the hometown of Lincoln’s second Vice-President, Andrew Johnson, Small wondered aloud, was the local post office planning any special events, such as those for the recent Johnson Bicentennial?

Postmaster Smalling was immediately excited by the idea and explained the special cancellation system to the Lincoln reenactor. The two began planning a unique postal cachet and Smalling made official application for the cancellation.

Ultimately, Smalling--with the help of Small--finalized a design. The cachets are envelopes featuring a color print of an 1864 National Union Party campaign poster with the images of both Lincoln and Johnson, with the following text beside:

“February 2009 marks the 200th birthday and Presidents’ Day celebration of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States. His wisdom, honesty, common roots, and efforts to preserve the Union and free the slaves make him America’s most admired President. Although Lincoln never visited Tennessee, he is forever tied to Greeneville as the site of the Union Convention of 1861 and the hometown of his second Vice President, Andrew Johnson, whose marriage was officiated by relative Mordecai Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson are the only Executives to run and serve as President under the National Union Party, composed of both Republicans and pro-Union war Democrats.”

The special cancellation features an image of Lincoln, encircled by the words: "Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial & National Union Party Station -- Greeneville, TN 37743-9998." Underneath are the phrases "Abraham Lincoln 200th Birthday February 12, 2009" and "Of the People, By the People, For the People" from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

Unfortunately, getting the cachets was not easy. The original printer made errors three different times. Running out of time, an anxious Smalling turned to Dan Greene of the local Staples office supply and printing store. Greene hand-fed 300 envelopes through a special color printer to finally produce the finished cachets.

Lincoln's Birthday, February 12, was the first-day-of-issue for the set of four new Bicentennial Stamps in Springfield, Illinois. In addition, Small, who travels around the country, would be out-of-state giving first-person Lincoln presentations on that date. For these reasons, Postmaster Smalling set the date of February 18, following Presidents' Day, for a special event at the Greeneville Post Office.

On the 18th, Smalling set up a table in the lobby, manned by himself and BMEU Clerk Hope Drummonds. Abraham Lincoln, portrayed by Small, arrived about 10 AM and stayed on hand for four hours. Smalling made cancellations and sold the cachets, the Lincoln Bicentennial stamps, and other USPS merchandise featuring the stamp designs. Meanwhile "Old Abe" greeted delighted Post Office customers, pointed them to the Bicentennial display, and posed for photographs. Small, "the Greeneville Lincoln," signed the backs of cachets with Lincoln's name and his own.

"There was a tremendous response," said Small later. "As soon as I arrived as Lincoln, a line formed and did not let up at all until after the lunch hour."

Postmaster Smalling was impressed with Small's portrayal: "He stayed in character, telling stories as Lincoln and looking very presidential, bowing, shaking hands, and doffing his tall beaverskin hat to everyone who walked in the door. When he finally had a moment to sit down, he even asked to switch for my wooden chair, as he said it looked more authentic than vinyl."

During the short time "Lincoln" was at the Post Office, Smalling sold around 200 of the postal cachets, along with hundreds of the Bicentennial stamps. Smalling also said he has received requests to purchase the cachets by mail from around the U.S., and even gotten orders from collectors in England, France, Germany and Canada.

The special cancellation may still be obtained from the Greeneville Postmaster for 31 days after February 12, Lincoln's Birthday. A limited number of cachets are still available at \$5; a full set of cachets with all four Lincoln Bicentennial stamps is \$20.

For more information on this event and other Lincoln Bicentennial events in Greeneville, Tennessee, please visit [www.thelincolnproject.com](http://www.thelincolnproject.com) and choose "Bicentennial" link.

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