

April 25, 2012 Wednesday

The mystery of Lincoln's hat

Editorial:

About that Lincoln hat.

If anybody can prove Honest Abe ever wore it, we'll eat our hat.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield has long proclaimed that an 1850s-era stovepipe hat in the museum's possession belonged to Lincoln.

But this month, after Dave McKinney of the Chicago Sun-Times began looking into the matter, museum officials admitted they can't prove it.

So it's not necessarily Lincoln's hat, strictly speaking, which is the only way serious historians should speak.

Listen, we're not happy about this. We were big fans of the hat. We were charmed by the worn thumb spot on the brim, which suggested that the wearer - we were told Abe - constantly tipped the hat.

The hat is Lincoln's size and was made by his Springfield hatter. But the only evidence that he actually owned it consists of an 1858 affidavit from a woman who says her Illinois father-in-law, William Waller, obtained the hat from Lincoln "during the Civil War in Washington."

Unfortunately, there is no evidence Waller was even in Washington then.

So it could be an Honest Abe hat.

But it might be a dishonest Abe hat.