

Walt Disney's Patriotic Legacy

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Feb. 15, 2016 – As Americans observe Presidents Day, uncover the patriotic presence in Disneyland Park, Magic Kingdom Park and Epcot. A look at three iconic attractions shows how each day Disney Parks embody the spirit of America and honor those who have led this nation.

Walt Disney's patriotism was born long before he decided to create an Audio-Animatronic historic figure. As a child he dressed up as Abraham Lincoln to perform the Gettysburg Address for his classmates, and referred to the 16th president as one of his heroes. Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln was conceived as part of the project development work for the 1964 New York World's Fair. Using the latest technology, Walt and his Imagineers took Audio-Animatronics to the next level and created the most lifelike characters to date. The World's Fair audiences were awestruck, and patriotic characters influenced the development of future attractions.

At Disneyland Park, the original idea behind Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln was a show titled One Nation Under God, which would feature all the nation's presidents on one stage. This was part of Walt's vision of a colonial-themed area at Disneyland Park, but the idea fell to the wayside as bigger plans unfolded. The show was shelved but the vision never disappeared. In 1971, the opening of Magic Kingdom Park brought a brand-new land full of patriotic wonder – Liberty Square.

As the idea for Magic Kingdom Park came to life, the birth of America became represented in a land of its own, complete with Walt's original presidential project. The Hall of Presidents features some of the most expressive and highly innovative Audio-Animatronics to date. Combining film and Audio-Animatronics figures, the show culminates in Walt's original vision. The finale features a stage with 43 figures representing those who have served in the nation's highest office. Carefully placed artifacts bring authenticity to the scene, such as John F. Kennedy sitting in his rocking chair and a stack of books near Thomas Jefferson.

The American Adventure at Epcot allows guests to experience one of the most prominent displays of American history. The show highlights the men and women who have shaped the path of this nation from independence to the modern era. High-level technology, special effects and powerful music contribute to the moving performance. Several presidents appear on stage or in film in the attraction, which debuted in 1982.

Walt's patriotic legacy lives on as these attractions have evolved over the decades to honor America and its presidents at Disney Parks. Music composed for The American Adventure has found a second home at the reimagined Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln. A figure of each new President of the United States is added to The Hall of Presidents attraction, along with recorded phrases that are incorporated into the show.