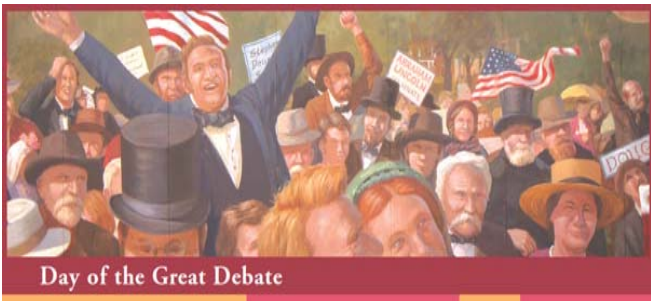




In September of 1873, a marble Soldier's Monument was dedicated here in memory of the 800 men from LaSalle County who perished in the Civil and

Spanish American Wars . The monument was restored in 2006. A new crowning Goddess of Liberty was set atop the column and the names it bore before, weathered nearly invisible, were re-engraved on plaques surrounding the Monument. A memorial to the veterans of Ottawa whose lives were lost in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam war is located on the north side of the park long Lafayette street.

In 2007 an outdoor mural was unveiled on Jackson street directly south of Washington Square park depicting Ottawa's Debate, pictured below, created by artist Don Gray.



For more information on Washington Square park or for MORE Ottawa Experiences contact the **Ottawa Visitors Center.**

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## Washington Square Park

*Where Lincoln's voice  
was FIRST heard!*



Located between LaSalle & Columbus  
and  
Lafayette & Jackson Streets  
in Downtown Ottawa



On August 21, 1858, two years before he would become President, lawyer-politician Lincoln had his sights set on a U.S. Senate seat. His chief obstacle to that goal was not a short one, short and stocky maybe, but formidable. Incumbent Sen. Stephen A. Douglas, nicknamed "The Little Giant," was running for his third term.

Douglas has been, and would be again, presidential material. His intention that summer in 1858 was to shake loose a lesser-known opponent who had been dogging in his footsteps on the stump-speaking circuit.

Eventually, the two men agreed to appear formally together at seven sites around the state: Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy and Alton. That summer and fall, each man maintained an exhausting schedule, traveling some 5,000 miles and making dozens of speeches outside the formal debate.

When they arrived in Ottawa, both men were greeted by parades, bands and cheering crowds and were escorted to Washington Square, the site of the debate.



Some 14,000 people witnessed the debate. The dust stirred up by all the foot and wagon traffic hung over the valley and bluffs of town like a smoke haze. Hotel and boarding houses filled up quickly, and many people simply set up camp around town. Picture Washington Square Park as the crowd gathered. Smell the mouth-watering aroma of roast pig prepared for the crowd. Hear the boom of the cannons, the music of brass bands, and the shouts of street vendors as they hawked pain killers and watermelons.

The debates were remarkable for many reasons. In the last decade, Douglas had faded from prominence, but in 1858 he far outshone Lincoln. The debates got Lincoln noticed, won him invitations to speak on the east coast and made him a presidential contender for 1860.

One other factor that made the debates significant, Douglas and Lincoln were busy appealing directly to people who **DID NOT** control the election of U.S. Senator. In those days, Illinois' Senators were elected by the state legislators. But the debates drew crowds everywhere they went. All seven debates followed the same pattern: Douglas would open for one hour,



Followed by 90 minutes of rebuttal by his opponent, and the original speaker would take over the stump again for the last half hour. Douglas opened in Ottawa.

Both Lincoln and Douglas could claim victory. Douglas won the election of 1858, but his stances during the debates sealed the fate of his Presidential aspirations. Two years later, the Democratic Party split, and Lincoln and the Republicans rose through the gap.

Though no bloody battle was fought on Illinois soil during the civil war, Ottawa was the center of a battle of words that would determine the future of the country. The debate preceded any of the bloodshed, but was engagement where values of a splitting nation were personified in men known as "The Rail Splitter" and "The Little Giant"

In 2002, the community commissioned a fountain dominated by Heroic-Sized bronze statues of Lincoln and Douglas surrounded by a beautiful plaza. Sculptress Rebecca Childers Caleel designed the statues.