Response by Frank J. Williams

Governor Bryant, President Smith, Congressman Harper, Archivist Ferriero, Librarian of Congress Hayden, President Keenum, Dean Coleman, Harold Holzer, fellow citizens – this is a great day.

Virginia and I are honored to place our Collection of Lincolniana next to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. Thank you for your kind thoughts.

It was the time and the place for our Collection, created over 60 years and containing over 30,000 books and ephemera, prints, paintings, sculpture – about half of the Collection are books and pamphlets. I have always loved the book - despite the electronic medium - there is nothing like the book.

We know the Collection will be in good hands here. But how do we know that? There is a history of our relationship with MSU, Mitchell Memorial Library, Dean Coleman, and President Keenum that pre-dates our gift.

About nine years ago, the Ulysses S. Grant Association needed to find another repository to house the Grant Collection as well as complete publication of the Papers of Ulysses S. Grant – funded in part by NHPRC. Our first Executive Director John Y. Simon had passed, so we also needed a new Director.

So, as President of the Ulysses A. Grant Association, on behalf of our Board, I urged John Marszalek, retired history teacher and author here at MSU to assume the duties – he agreed.

John also put me in touch telephonically with Library Dean Frances Coleman, and with one telephone call, the Dean and I agreed that Mitchell Memorial Library would house the Grant Papers and collection. It was in fact completed by a handshake over the phone. It has been, as you see today, a success – no business for lawyers – but we have shown that not all commitments need involve attorneys.

So our Lincoln and Civil War Collections are here for the study of two great leaders. Both espoused the same values – courage, resilience, peace, and empathy.
In 1862, as part of President Lincoln’s annual message to Congress, he admonished the American people with “...it is not that we can imagine better but can we all do better?”

With these galleries – and the Collections that support them – we have in a significant way “...done better.”

Thank you.