

# LINCOLN LORE

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### THE HEROIC LINCOLNS OF THE CAPITOL

Location has much to do with the creating of a favorable atmosphere for a statue. Not only do the immediate surroundings contribute greatly to an appreciation of a work of art but the more general environment of the community itself enhances the value of the study. The Lincoln statues of the capitol are favored by both of these influences.

#### *Before the District Court House*

For many years Lot Flannery's statue of Lincoln, one of the oldest in the country, stood before the District Court House in Washington, D. C. Then, while certain boundary lines in the vicinity were being changed, and the buildings remodelled, the statue was taken down, much to the indignation of its many admirers, as well as the concern of the citizens of Washington, who were used to seeing the familiar work. After several years in storage, public opinion was sufficiently strong to influence the restoration of the work to its old place.

Lot Flannery, an Irish apprentice boy, was employed as a stone cutter under several Italian sculptors who worked on the wings of the Capitol building when it was under construction; through this work he became interested in sculpturing and began to study the art.

His initial interest in Lincoln was accentuated by the fact that he was present at the theatre the night Lincoln was shot. The assassination made such an impression upon him that he declared concerning his statue:

"I put him up so high that no assassin could reach him."

The statue was erected through popular subscription by personal friends and intimates of the President. Upon the event of its re-dedication, Justice Wendell Phillips Stratford of the Supreme Court, who could see the figure in its old place, from his window, wrote the following lines:

"Well, here I am once more in my old place;  
I'm rather glad; I always liked old things—  
Old clothes to wear, old neighbors and old books,  
And, truth and justice, oldest things of all—"

The memorial shows the President in a moment of impassioned speech. His hands are outstretched, one of them clutching a manuscript; his head is high.

This statue was first erected in 1868, at a cost of \$7,000, and was of marble. It was originally on a pedestal about forty feet high, but in 1923 the shaft was removed and the life size statue rests on a base ten feet in height.

Public concern has recently been attracted to it again, because the constant rumbling of heavy traffic near its location has shaken loose some of the fingers. It may be moved to a safer location.

#### *Rotunda of the Capitol*

"History is correct in writing Lincoln down as a man of sorrow. The all-dominating passion I have always carried in mind has been that of unfathomable sorrow, and that I tried to put into the statue. On two or three occasions he was so broken with grief that he sank into a chair and wept aloud. There never was grief like Lincoln's. Through all this time his personality was sinking deeper and deeper into my soul. I was modeling the man in clay; but he was being engraved still more deeply on my heart."

These are the words of Vinnie Ream, who, as a girl of sixteen, went daily to the White House to model the President at his desk. She is the creator of the famous Lincoln statue placed in the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, D. C.

An Ohio senator interceded for her when she confided to him her desire to model a bust of the president.

"What, perpetuate my ugly phiz in marble?" the president exclaimed. To which the diplomat replied:

"I will not urge the matter. I was merely speaking for a little girl who is very eager to model your head."

At this Lincoln smiled.

"I would do anything to please a child."

The Emancipator learned to look forward to the sittings as a welcome relief from the pressure of duty, and when one day in early spring Vinnie Ream announced that the bust was ready, he replied sadly:

"I am sorry. These have been hours of peace and rest."

After Lincoln's assassination, Congress appropriated the sum of \$15,000 to make a complete statue in marble, using the head which the girl sculptress had modelled. The finished work portrays the figure with a sort of cape flung over the accustomed long coat. The cape lends flowing and graceful lines to the work, and the paper which one hand holds gives a Romanesque dignity to the entire statue.

At the unveiling, which took place in 1871, Senator Carpenter said:

"This is an exact copy of the rough casket in which God lodged one of His brightest jewels. I am no judge of art—what Praxiteles might have thought of it I neither know nor care—but I am able to say in this vast and brilliant assembly that it is Abraham Lincoln all over."

#### *In Lincoln Park*

The entire cost of Thomas Ball's statue of Lincoln, located in Lincoln Park, Washington, D. C., was met by negroes. It is the well-known Emancipation group with which Boston and Florence, Italy, are familiar.

This statue represents Lincoln, life size, standing with the Emancipation proclamation in his right hand, and his left hand extended over the head of a kneeling slave. It was erected at a cost of \$17,000, and is ten feet high. It was unveiled in 1876.

#### *The Lincoln Memorial*

Seated in a huge armchair, the Lincoln of Daniel Chester French's skill seems to convey a sense of leashed power almost as of a tiger ready to spring. But in spite of this seeming lack of repose, the sober face is calm as usual. The head is slightly bowed and the hands rest on the arms of the massive chair in which he is seated. Someone has said:

"The stillness of the figure seems to suggest something of the aloneness and mystery which is in keeping with the character of the man."

Housed in the Lincoln Memorial, which is one of the beauty spots of the capitol and a constant tribute to the Emancipator, this heroic statue is perhaps one of the best-known in America. It looks out over Mirror Lake toward the Washington monument.

Congress appropriated \$3,000,000 for the entire memorial, \$88,400 of this being used for the figure and pedestal. The figure is 19 feet high, and would be 28 feet if it stood upright. The extreme width across the chair is 19 feet, and the oblong pedestal is 10 feet high, 16 feet wide and 17 feet deep. The statue, which is of white marble, was dedicated May 30, 1922.

The figure faces the east and in the light of the early rising sun is exceptionally majestic and compelling. Countless thousands of people visit the memorial every year, carrying away with them the memory of a great man fittingly placed in an edifice worthy of his esteem.

Above the head of the statue, on the wall of the building, are carved these words:

"In this temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever."