

# LINCOLN LORE

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## A LINCOLN MEMORIAL TO THANKSGIVING

There are several heroic bronze statues in America which memorialize important events or episodes in the life of Abraham Lincoln. The Hoosier Youth, The Rail-splitter, Captain Lincoln, The Circuit Rider, The Debater, The Emancipator, The Orator at Gettysburg, and The Lincoln of the Second Inaugural Address are some of the themes visualized by these bronze figures.

Sometimes the environment of a statue contributes much to the message which the figure conveys. It was appropriate indeed to place the statue of Lincoln the Debater in one of the towns where Lincoln engaged Douglas in debate; to locate Lincoln the Circuit Rider in a county seat of the old Eight Judicial Districts; to erect at Washington, D. C., the famous Ball statue of Lincoln the Emancipator.

There has recently been dedicated at Hingham, Massachusetts, an heroic bronze statue by Charles Keck, which might well serve as a bronze memorial to the first annual national proclamation of Thanksgiving issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Certainly no other community in New England could offer such a favorable environment for a Lincoln memorial to Thanksgiving. In this festival are blended the atmosphere of the family circle, the deep religious sentiment of the Puritans, the spirit of patriotism which dominated the fathers, and the harvest environment.

Thanksgiving is our outstanding family festival. Hingham has been a Lincoln family settlement for more than three hundred years; there is no town in America so predominantly Lincoln. As early as 1637 there were eight men living in Hingham by the name of Lincoln; no other family group was represented by so many adult males. Their sons played a prominent part in the colonial history of New England, one author naming 350 prominent men with Lincoln blood in their veins. As late as 1884 there were twenty-three men by the name of Lincoln on the list of legal voters residing in Hingham, and the name is by no means uncommon there today. It is appropriate indeed that the bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln should face the building site where Samuel Lincoln, the first American progenitor of President Lincoln, established his home. In the very shadow of the statue seven generations of Samuel Lincoln's descendants were reared.

A festival of Thanksgiving which is primarily religious would find a congenial atmosphere in a town such as Hingham where there is a pronounced spiritual sentiment. Here there is located the Old Ship Church, used continuously for religious worship longer than any other church structure standing in America today. Samuel Lincoln was a member of this congregation and one of the builders of the original edifice. When Abraham Lincoln issued his memorable Thanksgiving Proclamation, Calvin Lincoln, a kinsman, was the minister of the Hingham church.

Patriotism was a cardinal virtue with the colonial Lincolns and, with the exception of General Washington himself, no Revolutionary soldier stood higher in the esteem

of the people than General Benjamin Lincoln of Hingham. There was an Abraham Lincoln, descendant of Samuel of Hingham, who took part in the siege of Boston on March 4, 1776. The Lincolns intermarried with the family of Paul Revere.

It was a happy thought to have the bronze statue of Lincoln at Hingham dedicated in the fall of the year with suggestions of the harvest season everywhere about, thus contributing to the surroundings of the occasion the final element to make them appropriate indeed. Family history, religious appeal, and patriotic shrines were blended into an ideal Thanksgiving atmosphere.

Shortly after Mr. Keck completed the original bronze study of Lincoln, the editor of *Lincoln Lore* inquired of the sculptor if there was a specific incident in Lincoln's life which he was attempting to portray. He replied it was but a sympathetic study of Lincoln as President.

Any student of Lincoln who has paid attention to Lincoln's changing features during his administration, will immediately identify this bronze study by Sculptor Keck as a portrait of the late 1863 period. In the preliminary model made by Mr. Keck, he shows Lincoln seated holding a manuscript in hand. In the final stage the manuscript was omitted for artistic symmetry.

There were two important events in Lincoln's life during the latter part of 1863 which were worthy of commemoration; the delivering of the Gettysburg Address and the issuing of the first annual national proclamation of Thanksgiving. The Gettysburg Address has been memorialized over and over again by heroic statues of Lincoln, and very naturally in every instance it has been a standing Lincoln who has been portrayed in the process of delivering the address.

We should expect to find a seated Lincoln as the author of the Thanksgiving Proclamation, and this heroic statue by Mr. Keck has that reverent repose and meditative mien that makes one feel as if the President is in communion with "the beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." A magnificent painting of Abraham Lincoln proclaiming Thanksgiving was recently completed by the famous American painter Dean Cornwell. Sculptor Keck and Artist Cornwell apparently have both been inspired by the same Lincoln—the President signing the Thanksgiving Proclamation.

When the late E. E. Whitney bequeathed to the town of Hingham, Massachusetts, an heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, something more than just another likeness of the President was created. It was a Lincoln who had come back to live among his kinsmen and to remind us all of that sacred institution which grew up with the nation.

It seems timely indeed that there should be dedicated, at the conclusion of seventy-five years of national Thanksgiving festivals, in the town of Lincoln's kinsmen, near The Old Ship Church, in the land of the Pilgrims, and in the fall of the year a Lincoln memorial to Thanksgiving.