

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 608

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 2, 1940

THE EMANCIPATION GROUP BY THOMAS BALL

The heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln by Thomas Ball has recently been given some prominence by its use on a postage stamp which made its appearance on October 20, 1940, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the passing of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution.

This was a much more important anniversary than might be implied from the little attention that was paid to it, but unfortunately it came in the midst of a political campaign. Not only were four million men liberated from slavery by the amendment but the passage of the Emancipation Act was a significant and epochal event in the annals of constitutional government.

An amendment, the twelfth, to the Constitution of the United States, was made in 1804, five years before Abraham Lincoln was born. He lived his whole lifetime of fifty-six years without ever seeing the Constitution amended, although the thirteenth amendment was well on the way to ratification at the time of his death. When modern statesmen talk flip-pantly about amending the Constitution to meet some temporary emergency, they would do well to recall that for more than fifty years it stood as it was at the turning of the nineteenth century. How true has Lincoln's prophecy been with respect to some of its recent amendments: "New provisions would introduce new difficulties, and thus create and increase appetite for further change."

The statue by Thomas Ball, situated in Lincoln Park at Washington, has become a symbol of the thirteenth amendment. It represents Lincoln breaking the shackles from the slaves. Unfortunately it has been obscured by the magnificent Lincoln memorial which shelters the statue by French, and the emancipation group now attracts but little attention.

Thomas Ball, the sculptor, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1819. As a young man he sang bass in oratorios, but later his artistic temperament led him into the field of portrait painting and still later into modelling and sculpture. After several years study in Europe he returned to Boston and created within the next few years several statuettes of important American characters, among them a statuette of Lincoln.

One of Ball's best known works is the emancipation group portraying Abraham Lincoln and, kneeling be-

fore him, a slave from whom the shackles of oppression have been broken. The original statue made in 1865 is in Italian marble. A photograph of it taken in Florence, Italy, is in the Foundation collection. There is a marble study of this group exhibited in the second floor corridor of the New York Public Library.

The bronze group at Washington, a later study by Ball, differs slightly

Thirteenth Amendment Preliminaries

The following chronological table records the events which preface the passing of the thirteenth amendment.

1863

December 8. President Lincoln mentions "The Great Consummation" (13th Amendment) in Message to Congress.

December 14. Amendment bill introduced in the House by Ashley, and a joint resolution on amendment submitted by Wilson.

1864

January 11. Henderson proposed in Senate joint resolution on amendment.

February 8. Sumner introduced bill in Senate on amendment.

February 10. Trumbull reports substitute bill on amendment.

April 8. Amendment passed in the Senate.

June 7. Senator Morgan on suggestion of Lincoln proposed endorsing the amendment at Baltimore Convention.

June 15. Resolution in House favoring amendment fails to receive two-thirds vote.

December 6. Lincoln in annual message recommends passage of amendment.

1865

January 6. Motion in House to reconsider vote of June 15, 1864, on the amendment. House votes in favor of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

January 31. House of Representatives passes the amendments.

February 1. Lincoln signs the bill of amendment.

February 1. Illinois first state to ratify the amendment.

October 20. Amendment to the Constitution ratified by required number of states.

December 18. Secretary Seward made official proclamation that the Thirteenth Amendment had become part of the Constitution of the United States.

from the original in that the slave indicates more action, as if he has himself participated in his own deliverance. In the former study the slave was entirely passive, a much more pathetic figure. The slave in the bronze work is not an idealistic conception, but the portrait of an actual slave named Archer Alexander. He was the last slave ever taken up in Missouri under the fugitive slave law and was released under the or-

ders of the Provost Marshall of St. Louis.

Some of the symbols incorporated in the study are interesting. The President stands beside a monolith on which there is a closed book, and in his hand resting on the monolith is a scroll representing the Emancipation Proclamation. A whipping post entwined by a rose vine, with the bondservant's garment partly obscuring it, symbolizes its passing and the disuse of the ball and chain and whips which lie at its base. On the side of the monolith in relief is a profile of George Washington.

The cost of the monument was \$18,000 and Congress authorized the expenditure of \$3,000 additional for the base and pedestal. It was dedicated on April 14, 1876, the eleventh anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. The principal speaker on the occasion was Frederick Douglass, son of a slave and a famous colored orator. The statue was unveiled by President Grant. A replica of the statue was dedicated at Boston in 1879.

Ball first anticipated doing an emancipation group the day following Lincoln's assassination, and that same day a negro woman by the name of Charlotte Scott of Marietta, Ohio, a former slave in Virginia, contributed the first five dollars which she had earned as a free woman towards the erection of a monument to Lincoln.

The inscription on the pedestal which follows gives a brief history of the movement which brought about the consummation of the project: FREEDOM'S MEMORIAL/in grateful memory of/ABRAHAM LINCOLN/This monument was erected/By the Western Sanitary Commission/of Saint Louis, Mo./With funds contributed by/Emancipated Citizens of the United States/Declared free by his proclamation/January 1 A.D. 1863/The first contribution was made/By Charlotte Scott, a freed woman of Virginia/and consecrated/By her suggestion and request/On the day she heard of President Lincoln's death/To build a monument to his memory.

A bronze tablet on the back of the pedestal contains these words from the closing paragraph of the Emancipation Proclamation: "And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God. Emancipation Proclamation January 1, 1863."