

# 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 722

FORT WAYNE INDIANA

February 8, 1943

## AUGUSTUS ST. GAUDENS, 1848-1907

Most certainly one would expect to find the name of Augustus St. Gaudens on the Lincoln Recognition Roster, or, in any Hall of Fame where sculptural art is eligible for recognition. Possibly no heroic bronze in America is better known by the combined name of sculptor and subject than "St. Gaudens' Lincoln." It is one of the few statues by an American sculptor which is of universal acclaim, and which has been reproduced in replica on foreign soil. The final acceptance of this magnificent study in preference to the Barnard interpretation, contributed tremendously to the general technique which sculptural works portraying Abraham Lincoln have followed.

St. Gaudens was but six months old when he arrived in America, having been born in Dublin, of a French father and an Irish mother. New York City furnished his childhood environment and in the very atmosphere of Cooper Institute, where Lincoln delivered his political masterpiece, the artistic genius of St. Gaudens received its preliminary training. Just at the close of the Civil War, when he was eighteen years of age, he went to Paris where he remained for three years. Here he studied under Jouffroy and following this tutorage he spent two years in Rome before returning to America.

The statue of Farragut, by St. Gaudens, has been called "the first important and creditable monument erected in this country," but all of his previous works pale in comparison with his standing Lincoln. Possibly St. Gaudens himself felt greater satisfaction in the completion of his seated Lincoln, which was his last piece of statuary.

There has sometimes been a feeling expressed that the Lincoln standing before a chair, made St. Gaudens famous, but before he created, what in truth may be considered his masterpiece, he was recognized by the critic, Kenyon Cox, as "an artist of intelligence, learning and imagination, with a great and distinguished talent."

Still another early observation by Mr. Cox refers directly to the character of St. Gaudens' work: "His figures are such as no other man than himself could have made them; his types of beauty are those that appeal most to his own nature and his own peculiar temperament. This temperament one cannot quite analyze, but one can readily discover one or two elements that enter largely into it. Two of these are virility and purity."

M. G. van Rensselaer, in a monograph, prepared for the *Century Magazine*, in November 1887 stated, "The Lincoln monument for Chicago is the most important commemorative work that Mr. St. Gaudens has yet produced and may well remain the most important of his life." He further commented that it is "our best likeness of Lincoln."

One of the most appreciative orations on Augustus St. Gaudens was delivered in Mendelssohn Hall, New York, February 29, 1908 by George B. McClellan.

"Whatever manner of man the real Lincoln may have been, the Lincoln who lives in the hearts of millions of us

who were born since he died is the Lincoln at Chicago, whom Saint-Gaudens conceived. . . . It is our ideal which Saint-Gaudens has expressed in the bronze. The nobility, the kindness, the patience, the long-suffering which we attribute to Lincoln, are all there. But it is the impression of strength which the statue gives that makes it so remarkable. There is a reserve force about it more than human, for it is the restrained might of a nation, speaking through its son and champion. To see it is to know that the people whose servant and whose leader he was could endure and dare and do all things."

Another statement by the same author gives special emphasis to St. Gaudens' genius.

"It was St. Gaudens' self-suppression, his absorption in his subject, the spirit of reverence with which he treated the past, that make him not only our greatest sculptor, but one of our great historians. His style is so pure, so free from heaviness or coarseness, so calm in its power, his art is so perfect, his spirit so refined and his soul so lofty, that his personality will live as that of a great American."

Many of St. Gaudens' statues have been made in replica, but the brief compilation which follows submits the more important pieces of sculptural art presenting Abraham Lincoln.

### *Heroic bronze statue—Lincoln Park, Chicago*

Unveiled on October 27, 1887, the gift of Eli Bates, a lumber merchant. The dedicatory address was by Leonard Swett. Abraham Lincoln, grandson of the President, withdrew the veil from this statue portraying the statesman standing before a chair.

### *Heroic bronze statue—London*

A replica of the Lincoln Park statue, unveiled on July 28, 1929. Presented by American citizens to England to mark a century of peace between Great Britain and the United States.

### *Bronze bust—Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C.*

An heroic bust from the Lincoln Park study. A facsimile of this bust is in the Hall of Fame in New York.

### *Bronze statuette—Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C.*

A reduced copy of the Lincoln Park statue loaned by Mrs. John Hay. A facsimile of this statuette is in Dublin, presented by John McCormick to the Irish Free State.

### *Heroic bronze statue—Grant Park, Chicago*

A seated figure made available through the bequest of John Crerar and dedicated May 31, 1926. The sculptor's last important work.

Note: This is the seventh of a series of biographical sketches on the ten persons selected by the Foundation Advisory Group for enrollment on the Lincoln Recognition Roster.