

# 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 786

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

May 1, 1944

## THREE IMPERISHABLE NAMES IN LINCOLN SCULPTURAL ART

For nearly a half of a century the name of Augustus St. Gaudens has stood almost unchallenged as the premier artist in the field of sculptural creations depicting Abraham Lincoln. Within the past decade, however, two more sculptors of Lincoln subjects have come to the front so rapidly in the esteem of the average American that either one may some day surpass in popularity the prestige enjoyed so long by St. Gaudens. These two men are Daniel Chester French and Gutzon Borglum.

The names of French and Borglum were often associated with St. Gaudens before either of the former two had created his Lincoln masterpiece. Time and again in the selection of the three outstanding pieces of Lincoln sculpture, Borglum's informal Lincoln, at Newark, New Jersey, and the meditative Lincoln, by French, before the Nebraska State Capitol, have been mentioned along with the St. Gaudens', Lincoln the Statesman, and they continue to be the choice of many critical students.

St. Gaudens' fame in the Lincoln field rests almost entirely on his standing statue of Lincoln located in Lincoln Park, Chicago. His seated figure of Lincoln occupies a prominent site in Grant Park, in the same city, but it has contributed little to his fame, although the sculptor himself felt it was a more satisfactory likeness of the President than the earlier study. Replicas of the standing Lincoln, in both Europe and America, as well as a bust in the Hall of Fame, may have contributed somewhat to St. Gaudens' supremacy in sculptural Lincolniana.

Although the heroic bronze statue by French, standing before the Nebraska State Capitol, at Lincoln, is an unusual and superior work of art, it is the heroic stone statue of the seated Lincoln, in the Memorial at Washington, that has augmented most the ever increasing fame of the artist. The impressive environment of the Washington statue, with the text of the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural inscribed on the adjacent walls, has contributed much to a finer appreciation of the portrait. It is doubtful if any statue in America has been able to create such an atmosphere of profound reverence as this Lincoln with its almost human qualities. The fact that this work, by French, will be viewed by a thousand guests while a single individual may be seeking out the comparative obscure St. Gaudens, at Chicago, will greatly favor the popularity of the statue in the Nation's Capitol. London with her St. Gaudens' replica may still favor the Westminster Abbey Lincoln.

When the Lincoln Memorial was completed it was the architectural beauty of the structure, by Bacon, which received the most attention of the critics, but in later years interest in the statue within the edifice is more often the subject of discussion. Possibly the lighting effect has contributed as much as any of the more foreign elements to the popularity of the statue, and this is especially true with respect to the pictures made of the statue.

The third sculptor who may be named along with the other two, without fear of being overshadowed, is Gutzon Borglum. His earliest Lincoln study in bronze, the informal, seated figure at Newark, has most always been given a place next to St. Gaudens in the listing of heroic statues in bronze of the Emancipator.

While both St. Gaudens and French must rely almost exclusively, each on a single production, to bid for supremacy

in the Lincoln field, Borglum has three outstanding works which will continue to call attention to his skill and indefatigable industry. Aside from some minor Lincoln studies, three major projects, the bronze at Newark, the magnificent head in the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, and the colossal figure in the group at Mount Rushmore are exhibits which will have an appeal to admirers of Lincoln for many generations.

Little comment need be made about the bronze at Newark where Lincoln is so sociable that he appears to move over to make room for you on his bench which allows no racial preferences. It will be a long time before we have a more friendly bronze than this one which Borglum has created. In the same city is another outstanding work by Borglum associated somewhat with Lincoln, a colossal monument comprising forty-two figures in bronze, called "Wars of America."

Borglum's great passion for mammoth figures first found expression in the Lincoln field in the production of the colossal head in the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington. Year by year this head finds more favor, and a bronze replica of it has been placed in the approach to the Lincoln Tomb at Springfield. Another study, slightly different, cut from a block of Grecian marble, weighing six tons, has been greatly admired.

When the beautiful Lincoln Shrine at Redlands, California was completed, it was a head of Borglum's that was given the premier place among the interior exhibits. Several other replicas of the famous colossal head have been created, one at the University of California, and another, with a different treatment, at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

It is not the Newark bronze nor the colossal head which will bring to Borglum his greatest fame as years go on, but the gigantic figure of Lincoln in the Mount Rushmore Group in the Black Hills of South Dakota. This head of Lincoln alone makes a pigmy of the famous sphinx head in Egypt which is but one seventh the size of the Borglum's granite masterpiece.

It is not strange that Borglum, with his interest in colossal figures, would eventually conceive of a project in sculptural art which would not be limited to any block of marble, but would utilize a whole mountain of stone. The group including the figures of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt is possibly the most stupendous undertaking in the field of ancient or modern sculpture ever completed.

On the towering seven-hundred foot mountain side there has been carved a seventy foot head of Lincoln. One authority claims it is visible for eighteen miles.

Some of Borglum's studies of Lincoln to which we may have referred as minor works may one day attract more attention than at present. The editor of *Lincoln Lore* was seated in the lobby of Hotel Rumley, at LaPorte, Indiana a few weeks ago, and was almost overwhelmed by the artistic beauty of a bronze bust of Lincoln which he could not identify. Upon inquiring, he learned it was a Borglum production and according to the informant "Mr. Borglum considered it his best head of Lincoln." It was an entirely different pose from his other familiar heads of the Emancipator.

Certainly in St. Gaudens, French, and Borglum we have *Three Imperishable Names in Lincoln Sculptural Art.*