

LINCOLN LORE

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EARLIEST SCULPTORS OF THE PRESIDENT

The fact that Leonard Volk's life mask of Lincoln and his subsequent studies ranging from an idealized head to a heroic size bronze statue, have been given so much attention that some of the other early attempts to portray the President in sculpture have been practically ignored. There are three early efforts which seem to be worthy of some attention.

JONES

Thomas S. Jones was born in Oneida County, New York on December 12, 1811. In 1841 he moved to Cincinnati and became a marble cutter. Without further training he began to make pieces of sculpture, making busts of such famous men as Taylor, Scott, Clay Webster, Brackenridge, and Lincoln. He is credited with 6 statues, 30 groups, 34 busts and 10 medallions. He died in Columbus on February 28, 1881. The best story of his Lincoln bust is found in the New York Tribune for April 9, 1865:

"At this time when the name of Lincoln is on every tongue, and his memory in every heart, anything that recalls vividly to the eye the features of the honored martyr is peculiarly welcome, and will be gazed upon by thousands with mournful interest. The bust executed by T. D. Jones of Cincinnati was commenced about six weeks before Mr. Lincoln left Springfield, enroute to occupy the presidential chair. The last sitting was given only two days before his departure. As a work of art it has high merit—as a portrait it is truly a fac-simile. It is bold and grand in outline; it is modelled with exquisite skill; its expression is faithful to the life, and it is characteristic in its whole contour and in every line of its elaborate manipulation. It is but very rarely that so successful a portraiture is achieved in plaster, but in this we recognize positive individuality of, as well as the closest resemblance to the subject. The simple dignity of the unpretentious man, the native nobility which never failed in any emergency, have in this bust, been caught and perpetuated for the admiration and respect of posterity. It will undoubtedly be received as the historic bust of Abraham Lincoln not only because it is so perfect in all points of intellectual and physical resemblance, but because it is the only one for which President Lincoln ever sat. For some reason or other, this fine and very important work of art seemed destined to remain in obscurity, and but for the intervention of Mr. Henri L. Stuart, of this city, it would probably have remained unknown until now. He recognized its merit, ordered some casts to be made, out of which but three or four have as yet crossed the Allegheny mountains. One was sent to Mrs. Lincoln, and has since formed a prominent object of attraction in the red reception room at the White House, Washington. Another has been in our editorial rooms for some time, and will be exhibited to-day in front of The Tribune publication office. A third will be shown to-day at the store of A. D. Porter & Co. No. 542 Broadway. These busts will assuredly attract much attention from the striking points of excellence which we have enumerated. Mr. T. D. Jones is at present engaged, we understand, upon a full length life-size statue of President Lincoln, for which he made careful and elaborate studies while engaged on the bust."

ELLICOTT

When photographs were made of Abraham Lincoln's funeral decorations in the Capitol at Washington, there stood at the head of the casket what appeared to be a marble statue of him. Pictures available give a very good likeness of the statue but no one seemed to be able to identify it or tell what became of it. This study would appear to be the earliest full-length statue of Lincoln, but whether it was in plaster or marble we have been unable to ascertain.

Some time ago the Lincoln National Life Foundation came in possession of a carte-de-visite photograph of the statue taken by "Rice, Union Photograph Gallery, 520 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D. C.," and written in ink on the back of the card is the notation, "Statue of President Lincoln by Ellicott." On the front of the card and under the picture in the same handwriting is the line "Statue now in Capitol (June '67) by Ellicott."

Henry Jackson Ellicott was born in Ann Arundel County, Maryland on June 27, 1846. After studying drawing at the National Academy of Design his education in sculpture was supervised by Brumede, Powell and Lintze. He passed away in Washington on February 11, 1901. For the Capitol at Washington he did the busts of Vice Presidents, George M. Dallers and Millard Fillmore. He also modeled two statues at Philadelphia and an equestrian statue of General McClellan and also a statue of General Meade in Fairmont Park.

MEZZARA

For many years Lott Flannery's statue of Abraham Lincoln was thought to be the earliest full length study of the President. It stood on a pedestal twenty-three feet high in front of the District of Columbia Court House at Washington. Later it was removed but public sentiment cultivated somewhat by the claim that it was the earliest statue of Lincoln had it replaced on a stone base more in keeping with the surroundings.

But the Flannery statue was not even the first statue in Washington as it is evident that the Ellicott statue preceded it by three years. The honor of the erecting of the first Heroic Bronze Statue goes to San Francisco and this is quite appropriately so. The last word spoken by Lincoln to any of his associates as he left the White House for Ford's Theatre was "San Francisco." He addressed Colfax from his carriage and said, "I'll telegraph you at San Francisco."

The stationery of the Lincoln Monument League carries this information about the statue, "Designed by a California artist. Erected in San Francisco by San Franciscan Loyalty. Unveiled on the First Anniversary of President Lincoln's death. Destroyed by the Great Fire in 1906. To be replaced by this League."

It is fortunate that a portrait of the statue has been discovered not only for the preservation of the figure of Lincoln in the first bronze study but also for the inscription which appeared on the base. While the inauguration date is apparently confused with the election date the wording of the sketch is of interest: Abraham Lincoln/ Born Feb. 12, 1809/Elected President of the/United States/ March 1861/Re-elected March 1865/Died April 1865/

The Boston Transcript for August 29, 1865 contains the following news item relating to the sculptor and statue:

"STATUE OF MR. LINCOLN. A California sculptor named Mezzara has nearly completed a colossal statue of President Lincoln. It is nine feet high, and stands on a pedestal ten feet in height, making a total of nineteen feet. The posture is described in a San Francisco paper as majestic and commanding; the left arm extended in front, and the hand grasping a scroll, supposed to be the Emancipation Proclamation. The right arm hangs at the side, thrown slightly back, as if the subject was speaking. Under the right foot writhes a serpent, and close by it is a broken shackle. An allegorical stump of a tree from which grow two clasped hands, stands just behind and to the right of the figure."

A news dispatch in a much later paper makes this comment: "A French bronze statue of Lincoln weighing 12,000 pounds has been erected in front of the Lincoln school house in San Francisco. It was executed by the late P. Mezzara, a native Californian sculptor."