

LINCOLN LORE

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THE LINCOLN STATUE AT NEW SALEM

The dedication at New Salem, Illinois on June 21 of an heroic statue of Abraham Lincoln is of unusual interest to historians. It forever symbolizes in enduring bronze the most important episode in the Railsplitter's early life. The memorial diverts attention from his more commonplace experiences in the village and invites one's consideration of the paramount decision which he made while residing there. The statue serves as a reminder of his transition from the field of manual labor to the ranks of professional enterprise.

The spirit of Lincoln finds expression in the attitude of the donors, The Sons of Utah Pioneers. The key person in the project was Nicholas G. Morgan, Sr. of Salt Lake City, a great admirer of the Emancipator and a kinsman of James Morgan, author of "Abraham Lincoln, The Boy and the Man." Nicholas Morgan, Sr. represented the donors with an eloquent presentation address. Members of his family, and of the family of the sculptor, assisted in the unveiling of the statue. A large delegation from Utah was present and special music by Mrs. Dorothy Kimball Keddington of Salt Lake City and an address by Bryant S. Henckley also of Salt Lake City were numbers on the program greatly appreciated.

The sculptor, Avard Fairbanks is well known to Lincoln students as his statue of Abraham Lincoln created for the Ewa School near Honolulu, Hawaii is familiar to the Lincoln fraternity. Fairbanks, formerly at the University of Michigan, is now consultant in Fine Arts to the University of Utah.

On behalf of the state of Illinois, Governor William G. Stratton in receiving the statue made some appropriate remarks. A large number of distinguished guests including many of the state's leading public officials were present. A Lincoln Statue Commission to prepare for the reception of the statue was appointed by the governor with Wayne C. Townley of Bloomington, chairman who also presided at the dedication program. Many well known students of history in Illinois were named on the various committees preparing for the ceremonies.

Upon the written request of chairman Townley the brief interpretative address made by the editor of *Lincoln Lore* at the dedication is included in this issue of the bulletin.

THE RESOLUTE LINCOLN

By Dr. Louis A. Warren

The major decision of Abraham Lincoln's early life which changed his entire occupational viewpoint has been visualized by Avard Fairbanks in a heroic bronze statue which might well be designated "The Resolute Lincoln." There is no spot offering an environment more appropriately located for the dedication of the statue than New Salem, Illinois where the momentous question of his future employment confronted him.

The supreme importance of this crisis can best be recreated by the use of Lincoln's own words found in an



Lincoln By Avard Fairbanks

autobiographical sketch which he had prepared in the third person. After participating in the Black Hawk war and upon returning to New Salem in July 1832 "without means and out of business," apparently he gave himself an aptitude test. He observed: "Studied what he should do—thought of learning the blacksmith trade—thought of trying to study law—rather thought he could not succeed at that without a better education."

The perplexing problem which confronted him might be put in this

simple form, Blacksmith vs. Blackstone. Was he to continue manual labor to earn his livelihood or would he venture the more difficult task of preparing himself for a profession? We are happy indeed that in this exigency he chose the more exacting course.

Sculptor Fairbanks has utilized two symbols to illustrate the dilemma in which Lincoln at New Salem found himself when he was but twenty-three years of age—the ax, which Lincoln holds in his left hand and in such a position as if he were about to stand it against a fallen tree and a large book which he grasps in his right hand as if he were anxious to delve into its contents. The laying aside of an instrument of manual labor and the acquiring of an analytical volume presents almost a perfect visualization of the extremely important decision he was preparing to make.

Writing in later years about his early occupation he said, "I was raised to farm work which I continued until I was twenty-two." He then elaborated on this experience in his third person autobiography as follows:

"Abraham, though very young, was large for his age (eighth year) and had an ax put in his hands at once; and from that till his twenty-third year he was almost constantly handling that most useful instrument, less of course in plowing and harvesting seasons."

After making other corrections in a campaign biography of 1860, he left standing, without change, this statement about an important episode at the beginning of his legal apprenticeship:

"He bought an old copy of Blackstone, one day at auction, in Springfield, and on his return to New Salem attacked the work with characteristic energy."

The book which Fairbanks has placed in the hands of Lincoln in the interpretative bronze study is a large one, not a school text of small dimensions, but in form, typical of the Blackstone which, as far as is recorded, was the first book directly purchased by Lincoln.

Not only has the sculptor interpreted with appropriate symbols the transition period at New Salem but in the poise of Lincoln's body one observes the "characteristic energy" and in the expression of his face the determination to achieve, which invites one to think of him at New Salem as "The Resolute Lincoln."