

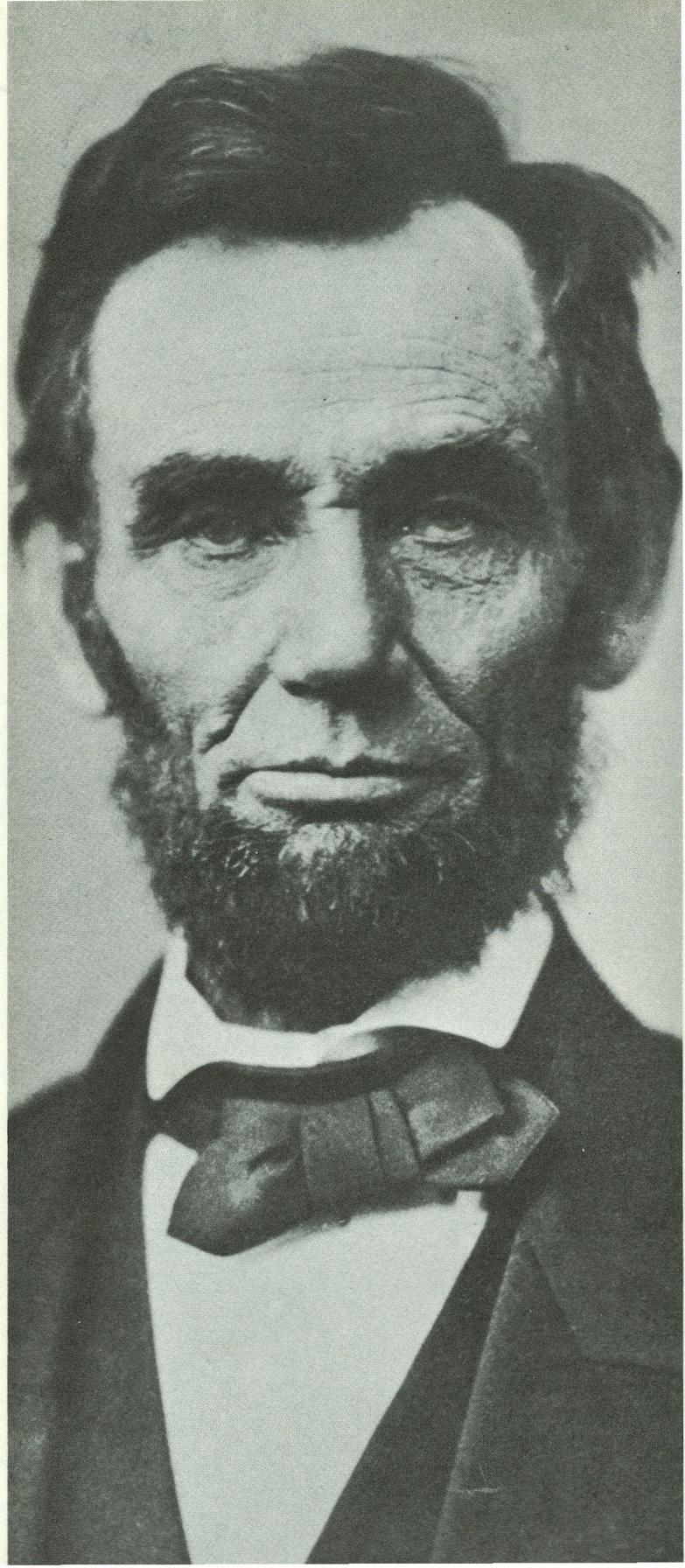
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# The Lincoln Memorial

Washington DC

“it is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us... that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom-and that government of the people by the people for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

Gettysburg Address, Nov. 19, 1863.



## **The Lincoln Memorial**

Dedicated to the 16th President of the United States (1861-65), a statesman who practiced the virtues of tolerance and honesty, and whose life, mind, and character have become an enduring inspiration to the world.

Abraham Lincoln, the son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was born on February 12, 1809, near Hodgenville, Ky. He grew up in a primitive environment and knew none of the advantages of good schooling, wealth, or social position. Yet he became proficient in the law and rose from political obscurity to become President of the United States during one of the bloodiest civil wars ever fought. War, which has a way of testing a man's worth, put Lincoln to the supreme test; and when he died from an assassin's bullet in 1865, he was mourned and elevated to greatness by people the world over.

Few Americans recognized Lincoln's greatness while he lived; it was the impact of his death that made them realize he was something more than an ordinary President, something more than an ordinary hero. To honor him, they sought to erect a memorial in the Nation's Capital, but more than half a century passed before an appropriate memorial arose. And the memorial they built is neither temple, palace, nor tomb, but embodies something of each. Its marble walls seem to hold the spirit of Lincoln's character and his belief that all men should be free—free to think and express themselves, and free to apply their natural talents and ambitions to lawful enterprise.

### **Building the Memorial**

The first organized effort to erect a monument to Lincoln in Washington came 2 years after his death, when an act of Congress, approved March 29, 1867, incorporated the Lincoln Monument Association. The association appealed for subscriptions and prepared plans for a monument, but nothing was accomplished. The years passed and, although many subsequent efforts were made to secure a memorial, it was not until February 1911 that Congress passed the legislation that procured it. A commission, appointed "to secure plans and designs for a Monument or Memorial to the memory of Abraham Lincoln," decided on the location in West Potomac Park on the axis of the Capitol and the Washington Monument. Henry Bacon and John Russell Pope, architects from New York City, were invited to prepare designs for a structure. Bacon was selected to submit the final design that Congress approved on January 29, 1913.

Workmen broke ground at the memorial site on February 12, 1914, and the cornerstone was laid a year later. As work progressed, the commission chose Daniel Chester French to sculpture the Lincoln statue and Jules Guerin to design and execute murals for the end walls. The completed memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30, 1922. Chief Justice William Howard Taft, chairman of the commission, presented the memorial to President Warren Harding, who accepted it for the United States.

## **Architecture of the Memorial**

The memorial is of white Colorado-Yule marble. Its architectural lines are similar in plan to those of the Greek Parthenon, the temple to the goddess Athena on the Acropolis in Athens. The outer columns are Doric; the columns inside the great hall are Ionic. Together these features represent classical architecture at its perfection. The memorial building would not seem out of place if set down among the great antiquities of Greece and Rome. Its beauty and purity of design equal the best of the ancient world.

Within the broad framework of classical design, the structure has a motif that symbolizes the Union of the States. The 36 columns surrounding the walls of the memorial building represent the 36 States in the Union at the time of Lincoln's death. The names of these States are cut into the frieze above the colonnade. On the attic walls above the frieze are the names of the 48 States comprising the Union at the time the memorial was built. Ernest C. Bairstow of Washington carved the frieze and the decorations on the attic wall.

The memorial chamber contains three commemorative features—a colossal seated statue of Lincoln and two huge inscribed stone tablets. The marble statue of Lincoln occupies the place of honor, centrally located near the back of the chamber and facing the Washington Monument and the Capitol. On the north wall, inscribed in stone, is Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address; on the south wall, similarly inscribed, is the Gettysburg Address. The decorations of the Gettysburg and Second Inaugural Addresses were done by Evelyn Beatrice Longman under the direction of Daniel Chester French.

### **The Statue of Lincoln**

Daniel Chester French designed and made the model for the statue of the seated Lincoln. It represents Lincoln as the War President. The statue from head to foot is 19 feet high, the scale being such that if Lincoln were standing he would be 28 feet tall. The extreme width of the statue, including the drapery over the chair, is the same as its height—19 feet. There are 28 blocks of Georgia white marble in the sculptured statue, which rests on an oblong pedestal and platform of Tennessee marble.

The Piccirilli brothers carved the statue in their New York studio, spending more than 4 years on the project. French personally assisted in this work. Experiments with models showed that the statue, originally intended to be 10 feet tall, would be dwarfed and out of scale in the large hall where it would stand. This led to a change in the contract whereby the size of the statue was doubled.

### **The Murals**

The two murals on the north and south walls represent, allegorically, principles of conduct and thought evident in the life of Abraham Lincoln. These murals, painted by Jules Guerin, are each 60 feet long and 12 feet high. The mural above the Gettysburg Address on the south wall shows an Angel of Truth freeing a slave; on the left and right, groups



of figures represent Justice and Immortality. The mural above the Second Inaugural Address on the north wall depicts the unity of North and South; on the left and right, groups of figures symbolize Fraternity and Charity.

### **The Memorial in Statistics**

Retaining wall:

Height, 14 feet. Length, 257 feet, east and west sides; width, 187 feet 4 inches, north and south sides.

Foundation of Building:

44 to 65 feet to bedrock below original grade.

Height of Building:

80 feet above top of foundation. 99 feet above grade at foot of terrace walls.

Doric colonnade:

Length, 189 feet. Width, 118 feet 8 inches. Number of columns, 36 plus 2 in entrance. Height of columns to cap, 44 feet. Diameter of column at base, 7 feet 4 inches. Number of stone drums in column, 11.

Ionic Columns Inside Memorial:

Height, 50 feet. Diameter at base, 5 feet 6 inches. Number of columns, 8.

Central chamber:

Width, 58 feet. Depth, 74 feet.

End chambers:

Width, 63 feet. Depth, 36 feet 8 inches.

Cost of building, \$2,957,000.

Cost of statue, \$88,400.

The interior walls are of Indiana limestone. The ceiling, 60 feet above the floor, includes bronze girders ornamented with laurel and oak leaves. The panels between the girders are Alabama marble saturated with paraffin to produce translucency. The floor and the wall base are of pink Tennessee marble.

The two tripods, one on either side of the steps to the entrance of the memorial, are 9 feet high. Each is cut from a single block of pink Tennessee marble. The Piccirilli brothers of New York carved the tripods.

### **Administration**

The memorial is open daily from 8 a.m. to midnight, closing only on Christmas Day. It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Address all inquiries to the Superintendent, National Capital Parks-Central, 1100 Ohio Drive, SW., Washington, D.C. 20242.

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