

# Abraham Lincoln Statues in the Hoosier State

JAMES A. PERCOCO

On a blustery March 9, 1832, a young fledgling politician—New Salem, Illinois resident, Abraham Lincoln—tossed his hat into the political arena for the first time. Posting his circular around the frontier town, Lincoln let it be known, among other things, what he desired to make of his life. “Every man,” he wrote, “is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men.”<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later, this former Hoosier, now an Illinois Sucker and ascending member of the State Assembly, returned to the state in which he had lived from 1820 to 1831. Much had happened to the thirty-five-year-old Lincoln in the years between. As he drolly recalled, “In the fall of 1844, I went into the neighborhood in that state in which I was raised, where my mother and only sister are buried, and from which I had been absent about fifteen years. That part of the country is, within itself, as unpoetical as any spot of the earth; but still seeing it and its objects and inhabitants aroused feelings in me which were certainly poetry; though

---

James A. Percoco teaches United States and Applied History at West Springfield High School in Springfield, Virginia. He serves as History Educator-in-Residence at American University in Washington, D.C. where he teaches in the School of Education and in the History Department. Percoco is the author of *Summers with Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments* (2008) on which part of this article is based.

<sup>1</sup>“Communication to the People of Sangamon County,” March 9, 1832, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953), 1:8.

whether my expression of those feelings is poetry is quite another question.”<sup>2</sup> Penning a twelve-verse anthem to his days in southern Indiana, and calling it “My Childhood Home,” Lincoln’s doggerel opens:

My childhood’s home I see again,  
And sadden with the view;  
And still, as memory crowds my brain,  
There’s pleasure in it too.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly the Indiana landscape offered Lincoln mixed emotions. It had been a hard life there for the future president. In some ways, when Thomas Lincoln relocated his family across the Wabash River and into Illinois, his son never looked back. Two years later, he left his family and departed to New Salem.

Public memory is often very quirky and unpredictable, particularly when it comes to the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. It is strikingly so in Indiana, which boasts six of the more than two hundred public monuments erected to the memory of Lincoln across the American landscape. The number is considerably less than the fifty (and growing) standing in neighboring Illinois. Nevertheless Indiana has a right to claim its share of the Lincoln story. It was here he experienced loss early in his life with the deaths of his mother, Nancy Hanks, and his sister, Sarah. The National Park Service administers Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial in Lincoln City, interpreting the impoverished life of the young Lincoln who felled trees and cleared fields—the Lincoln of manual labor, who began his love of reading under the tutelage of his beloved stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnson Lincoln, and, in the end, rejected his father and his frontier roots.

It would be interesting to know what Lincoln would have said about all of this memorialization. His self-deprecating side would no doubt offer something in the way of, “What’s all the fuss?” But then again, the side of Lincoln that longed to be “esteemed by his fellow man” would clearly enjoy that fuss. In many ways, the historical Lincoln and the Lincoln of public memory are hard to nail down. Nowhere is that

---

<sup>2</sup>*Collected Works*, 1: 378.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

more difficult than on the stage of American civil religion, where we venerate our secular saints and national icons.

Fortuitously, each region of Indiana can connect to Lincoln through three of the six monuments erected to his memory. Residents of northern Indiana can take in Paul Manship's sleek art-deco *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth* (1932) in Fort Wayne; in the capital at Indianapolis, central Indiana citizens will find Henry Hering's 1935 Beaux-Arts-styled tribute to President Lincoln; and at Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial near Lincoln City, visitors to southern Indiana can study E.H. Daniels's five limestone memorial panels (1944) chronicling the Lincoln story. All of these monuments and public sculptures were created during the great age of Lincoln sculptures, beginning a few years after Lincoln was assassinated and ending by the middle of the twentieth century. Additionally, in Wabash, there is an enigmatic sculpture by Charles Keck—erected in 1932—of President Lincoln, burdened by the weight of the Civil War, sited beautifully against the striking Victorian era Wabash County Courthouse. The paper trail is very thin for this sculpture, but residents of Wabash are rightly proud of “their” Lincoln.<sup>4</sup>

The story of *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth* began long before its 1932 dedication and unveiling. In 1905, Robert Lincoln, the only Lincoln child to live into adulthood, granted the new Lincoln National Life Insurance Company of Fort Wayne permission to use Abraham Lincoln's image on stationary and in marketing strategy, a tradition that remains firmly in place today, under the auspices of the Lincoln Financial Group of Philadelphia (the descendant of the insurance company). Robert had carefully managed and cultivated his father's image and public memory. Never one to care about public sculpture, he presumed that statuary was intended for the home as a decorative art—no doubt having been influenced in this sentiment by the thousands of John Rogers's plaster-cast tabletop parlor pieces popular during the Victorian era. One of these anecdotal sculptures that found great favor among Americans after the Civil War was the ensemble called *The Council of War*, depicting Abraham Lincoln in conference with his Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and the commander of the Union Army, General Ulysses S. Grant. However, as a natural outgrowth of the Union victory, more and more

---

<sup>4</sup>A duplicate cast of Keck's brooding, sorrowful Lincoln is in Hingham, Massachusetts, the community to which Lincoln's English ancestors came in 1632.

Lincoln statues began to populate cities and towns in the North, coinciding with the American Art Renaissance and the City Beautiful Movement spurred on by the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. In response, Robert was forced to deal with varying sculptors' attempts to capture his father's persona and essence. "It seems to me impossible," he wrote a friend in 1881, "that a bronze heroic statue can ever be a faithful likeness of the subject."<sup>5</sup>

By the time the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company commissioned its own heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln to grace the entranceway plaza of its corporate headquarters, Robert Lincoln had been dead for two years. In 1928 the \$75,000 contract was awarded to one of America's eminent sculptors of the age, Paul Manship. Manship (1885-1966) was not, by trade or inclination, either a portrait sculptor or sculptor of historic moments. He was primarily a sculptor of animals and mythological allegorical figures from antiquity, and was best known for the golden *Prometheus* gazing down on the ice skating rink in New York's Rockefeller Center. However, the ultimate compliment for a sculptor to receive in the first three decades of the twentieth century was a Lincoln commission. Manship could not refuse. He brought tremendous energy and talent to the task, and gave the world its best image yet in the genre of "Lincoln the Youth." While perhaps not necessarily as faithful to Lincoln's physical features as works such as Bryant Baker's youthful interpretation in Buffalo, New York (1935), or Fred Torrey's contribution in Decatur, Illinois (1942), Manship's depiction of Lincoln as a youthful visionary is, in a way, true to the young lawyer's Whiggish roots, which interweaved an emphasis on personal economic uplift with a commensurate belief in America as "the last best hope of earth."<sup>6</sup>

To begin his particular journey into Lincoln lore, Manship toured the places in Kentucky and Indiana where Lincoln grew up. Joining Manship on his sojourn was Dr. Lewis A. Warren, an important second-generation Lincoln collector who, in 1931, opened the Lincoln Library and Museum, formerly called Lincoln Historical Research Foundation. Warren's vast collection became the basis of the Lincoln Museum of Fort Wayne, which closed its doors in 2008. Warren and the Lincoln

---

<sup>5</sup>Robert Lincoln to George Payson, June 25, 1881, Robert Todd Lincoln Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

<sup>6</sup>*Collected Works*, 5: 537.

National Life Insurance Company merged interests in the same year to promote greater public awareness of Lincoln and his Indiana years, as well as to showcase Warren's collection. *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth* became one of their early collaborations.

There is no photographic evidence of Lincoln before 1846, when he was thirty-seven. This proved to be particularly frustrating to Manship, who had to engage in a backwards intellectual forensic activity. He was forced to review dozens of photographs and dig deeply into Lincoln family genealogy. To better acquaint himself with his subject and to draw inspiration, Manship visited the grave of Lincoln's beloved mother, Nancy Hanks, in the far southeastern corner of the state. Manship would later claim that this was the defining moment of his quest and that standing before Hanks's grave he fully understood his charge. "The desire," he wrote, "to represent the young Lincoln as a dreamer and poet rather than as the rail-splitter was uppermost in my mind."<sup>7</sup>

Then, like all prodigious sculptors, Manship entered into the spirit of his subject. He pored over biography after biography of Lincoln. Conversations with Warren as they toured related historical sites helped Manship to fashion an appropriate image of the young Lincoln. He also conducted interviews with biographers Carl Sandburg and Ida Tarbell, who keenly identified with the "uplift factor" in Lincoln's life. Collectively, the sum of information he gathered helped Manship settle on his particular vision of the adolescent Lincoln.

Fortuitously for the sculptor who enjoyed creating statues of animals, Manship came across a story from Lincoln's junior law partner, William H. Herndon, claiming that in 1830, as the family crossed from Indiana to Illinois, Lincoln had rescued a dog struggling in the Wabash River. Manship was struck by Herndon's recollection of Lincoln saying, "I could not endure the idea of abandoning even a dog. Rolling off socks and shoes, I waded across the stream and triumphantly returned with the shivering animal under my arm. His frantic leap of joy and other evidence of a dog's gratitude amply repaid me for all the exposure I had undergone."<sup>8</sup> While some may suspect Herndon's recollection as more

---

<sup>7</sup>Manship, "Lincoln Statue to Be Dedicated," *The Junior Citizen*, August 1932, p.6, Paul Manship File, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

<sup>8</sup>Donald C. Durman, *He Belongs to the Ages: The Statues of Abraham Lincoln* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1951), 236. A self-published monograph, Durman's work contains pictures and text centered on many—but not all—Lincoln public sculptures erected around the United States.



Inspiring adoration in both man and beast, Lincoln rests one hand gently on his rescued hound in Fort Wayne's *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth*.

Courtesy of David Wiegers, Gurnee, Illinois

fable than history, for Manship the story worked. He found a dog “from across the Ohio River from the place of Lincoln’s youth and . . . just the type”<sup>9</sup> to use as a model for his statue.

His research completed, notes in hand, and dog in tow, Manship returned to his Paris studio in 1929 and began work. For three years he labored to produce a work of art that could capture Lincoln’s essence and connect with the people of Indiana. Thus the twelve-foot bronze Lincoln—seated on a large tree stump, with an earnest gaze on his face—who looks ready to take on the world. In his right hand he holds an open book, with his index finger marking what he has just read, and his axe resting at his side. This image may represent the apocryphal moment when Lincoln chose to trade manual labor for intellectual pur-

---

<sup>9</sup>F. Lauriston Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, (New Brunswick, N.J., 1952), 290. Bullard spoke with many living Lincoln sculptors for his book; much of the text is based on either interviews or other correspondence between the author and the artists. Bullard likewise surveyed many, but not all, public monuments erected to Lincoln’s memory. Quite surprisingly, E. H. Daniels’s work on the Lincoln Boyhood Home National Monument, for example, is excluded.

suits. The book itself could easily be Byron, Shakespeare, or Pope.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln's left hand, meanwhile, rests lovingly on the head of a hound dog who gently nuzzles Lincoln's thigh and gazes longingly at its master. Yet Manship also depicts Lincoln's formidable torso and his powerful arms under the rolled up linsey-woolsey shirt sleeves. "Everyone has heard or read stories of Lincoln's youthful physical prowess," he said, "and so we have depicted Lincoln as the brawny youth that he was. The axe tells the story of his rail-splitting days." At least two documented accounts from Civil War soldiers concur that as president, "Uncle Abe" entertained soldiers by picking up an axe he found in their encampment and holding it horizontal by one hand for several minutes. No small feat now or then.

Interestingly when the bronze was originally made, the axe was mistakenly cast backwards, and Manship had to have the axe recast to fix his error. Had Lincoln used the axe as it had originally been cast, he would have sliced his foot open with the first swing. That Manship's model reflects both the error and the subsequent repair speaks to his skills as well as to those of the foundry workers who engineered the work from full-scale clay model to bronze.

Cast at the Compagnie de Bronzes in Brussels, Belgium, the sculpture was unveiled and dedicated on September 16, 1932 in Fort Wayne. Art historian F. Lauriston Bullard argues that, "In it we have the earnestness and seriousness of a thoughtful youth, and we also see the melancholy aspect which was characteristic of the subject throughout his lifetime, and which has been depicted by the artist with rare subtlety."<sup>11</sup>

*Lincoln the Hoosier Youth* rests on a base of pinkish-grey Crotch Island granite from Maine, which protrudes out over the steps and sits flush with the elevated entrance plaza, also formed from the same stone. The 14.5-ton pedestal, quarried in Conway, New Hampshire, separate from the base on which the pedestal rests, is sited squarely in the center of the base and measures six-and-one-half feet high by five feet square. Both the base and pedestal reflect the strength of the figure they support. The sculpture itself harmonizes well with the surrounding architectural framework of its limestone office building home, designed by architect

---

<sup>10</sup>For Manship, "The book symbolizes his intellectual faculties; and the dog reminds us of his exceptional love for animals as well as the greater feeling of human sympathy and protectiveness." Durman, *He Belongs to the Ages*, 293.

<sup>11</sup>Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, 293.



Manship's *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth*, embodying the youth, power, wisdom, and seriousness of Lincoln in his pioneer years, evident even before the dark days and trials of his later life.

Courtesy of David Wieggers, Gurnee, Illinois



Benjamin Wister Morris, who collaborated with Manship in making the sculptural arrangements. The space is a great portal for a heroic sculpture.

Four bronze medallions of idealized figures, representing aspects of Lincoln's character that shaped the destiny of the nation, adorn the pedestal. Above the medallions are words etched in stone defining each image. On the south side of the pedestal sits the figure of Justice; on the north side is Fortitude, its strength demonstrated threefold by the lion upon which he sits, the Doric column grasped in his right hand, and the shield cradled under his left arm; Charity faces the building on the eastern façade of the pedestal, represented by a mother lovingly holding her children. A heroic, muscular American eagle, representing Patriotism, rounds out the series on the western side of the pedestal, the same side from which Lincoln faces the world.

1932 ranks as the worst year of the Great Depression. Fort Wayne, in the farm belt, was particularly struggling, but in spite of hard times four thousand men in fedoras and straw hats and women in calf-length dresses filled Harrison Street and the plaza in front of the insurance company building. The day was sunny and warm. Newsreel cameras were on hand to record the event and a national radio audience tuned in via the National Broadcasting Company's local affiliate, WOWO. Flag buntings and patriotic drapery hung from the surrounding buildings, all at the behest of Arthur J. Siebold, the manager of the credit rating bureau of the local Retail Merchants' Association.

Parallel tributes to aging Union Civil War veterans often coincided with Lincoln statue dedications during the first three decades of the twentieth century. These moments provided civic celebrations for honoring the sacrifice of men quickly vanishing from the scene. Accorded special reserved seats on the grandstand, members of the local Grand Army of the Republic joined Manship and an array of civic leaders and speakers, including Tarbell and the venerable, eighty-two-year-old Daniel C. Beard, National Scout Commissioner for the Boy Scouts of America. Local Boy Scouts served as ushers and passed out programs. A special invitation had also been extended to eighty-four-year-old Mrs. M.O. Smith, formerly of Hanover, Pennsylvania. As a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl she had sung in the chorus that performed at the Gettysburg National Cemetery dedication ceremonies, and witnessed the delivery of the Gettysburg Address. She fondly recalled Lincoln grasping her hand during the ceremonies, saying: "[H]is great warm, all-enveloping hand took hold of my little one and almost crushed it." Later that evening at the reception, she claimed, Lincoln singled her out again and once more

took her hand in his. She reported that she “tingled all over” as the president held her hand in his, feeling his “kindliness and greatness of soul.”<sup>12</sup> Many of these octogenarians had more than just personal reasons to be in Fort Wayne: To the majority of younger folks in the crowd they represented not only the vestige of a bygone era, but also a living connection to Lincoln.

School had been dismissed early, but not before students had heard from Beard, who delivered an address on “Lincoln the Youth,” and from Tarbell, who spoke to the children at a special luncheon. The program kicked off at 12:30, headed by the founder and president of Lincoln Life, Arthur F. Hall, who had written a special request to the president’s son twenty-seven years before. “We want a name so proud that men and officers will give their lives to keep it stainless,” he wrote. “We want a name so simple and strong that the whole world would love it.”<sup>13</sup> Manship’s graceful statue now helped complete his corporate vision. An invocation was offered by Joseph R. Sizzo, the pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C., which housed the Lincoln pew. President Herbert Hoover sent his greetings through Senator James E. Watson of Indiana. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Arthur M. Hyde delivered the keynote address. Alongside them sat Warren, the director of the Lincoln Historical Foundation, which had played a crucial role in getting the sculpture erected. Manship spoke briefly, followed by the unveiling. On hand to pull the lanyard was Hall’s five-year-old grandson, who managed in two tugs to unveil the youthful Lincoln to the world, at which point the band struck up, “America,” followed by the National Rifle Corps of the American Legion Post 47’s twenty-one-gun presidential salute.

For the next hour the crowd heard a series of speeches presenting a Lincoln story much akin to the Horatio Alger myth. At their conclusion Beard, as a representative of the Boy Scouts of America, placed a wreath at the foot of the statue in tribute. Two years later, Beard and other Scout leaders drew inspiration from that moment when the Boy Scouts of America launched their annual long-term program, begun in Fort Wayne, called Lincoln Day Pilgrimages. Every February 12, Lincoln’s birthday, Scouts trooped to their local Lincoln statues and paid homage to the sixteenth president.

---

<sup>12</sup>Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Intimate Memories of Lincoln* (Elmira, NY, 1945), 480.

<sup>13</sup>Arthur F. Hall to Robert Lincoln cited in Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, 290.

Over the next several days nearly one hundred telegrams from across the nation poured into Warren's office at the foundation. Radio coverage produced a national interest as private citizens and all manner of government officials sent their congratulations to Fort Wayne. An article appearing in *The Detroit News* summed it up, reporting that "[a] new and different statue of Abraham Lincoln was unveiled here, today. . . . It is a likeness of Lincoln at 21; a stalwart Indiana frontiersman, unburdened by his country's problems."<sup>14</sup>

Manship's *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth* reflects the era in which it was dedicated. It marks Lincoln's time in Indiana, and demonstrates some of the universality of the story of the self-taught, self-made man. Making something of his life, which began with so few advantages, is one aspect of the many stories of the Lincoln image quite germane to his Indiana years; it is the story of an ordinary person growing up to live an extraordinary life.

Driving two hours southwest from Fort Wayne to Indianapolis, visitors can see a sculpture of Lincoln that powerfully demonstrates just how this ordinary man became extraordinary, and can witness how his exceptional nature, particularly as President of the United States during the Civil War, is depicted in heroic bronze.

Henry Hering's *President Lincoln* (1935) hearkens back to the days of Beaux-Arts, figurative, academic sculpture fast in decline by the mid-1930s. Hering (1874-1949), a one-time student and assistant to Augustus Saint-Gaudens—America's foremost sculptor of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—had received his formal instruction attending the Arts Students League in New York City and the famed *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, both associated with Saint-Gaudens. He received additional training in Paris from another Saint-Gaudens protégé, Philip Martiny. With Saint-Gaudens' encouragement, in 1900 Hering joined Saint-Gaudens and the Cornish, New Hampshire artists' colony that sprouted up around America's master sculptor at his estate, Aspet. During this period Saint-Gaudens was battling the intestinal cancer which would ultimately kill him. It was customary, given his deteriorating physical health, for Saint-Gaudens to direct assistants from a chair or chaise lounge. Historian David Tripp argues, in part, that what

---

<sup>14</sup>Fort Wayne Sentinel, September 16, 1932.



Henry Hering's *President Lincoln*, in Indianapolis. Hering's depiction presents the president "assuring the public that if they will only be calm and patient he will pull them through," a message as resonant today as it was in Lincoln's lifetime.

Courtesy of David Wiegers, Gurnee, Illinois

really made Saint-Gaudens great was his almost Svengali-like power over his assistants to have them craft clay figures while Saint-Gaudens envisioned them. He was a perfectionist, and believed himself to be a mentor to the next generation of sculptors. Hering, and the others working in Cornish, endured criticism when necessary, and praise when “the Saint” was pleased. While in Cornish, Hering worked on a number of major Saint-Gaudens commissions, most notably *The Charles S. Parnell* statue for Dublin, Ireland, and *The Seated Lincoln* for Chicago’s Grant Park, for which Hering did most of the modeling.<sup>15</sup>

When Saint-Gaudens died in 1907, Hering lovingly created a memorial portrait bust to his mentor that can be seen today at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish. In correspondence with Bullard, before his death in 1949, “Hering gladly concede[d] Saint-Gaudens’ great influence on him, writing of him as a great man and a fine friend.”<sup>16</sup> In 1910 Hering married another Saint-Gaudens assistant, Elise Ward. Ward abandoned her own career to work as her husband’s chief assistant.

Saint-Gaudens’s influence on Hering cannot be overestimated, and Hering’s major commissions, including the classical figures he did for Chicago’s Field Museum, the Chicago memorial to the defenders of Fort Dearborn, and his Civil War memorial at Yale depicting the allegorical figures of *Devotion*, *Memory*, *Courage*, and *Peace*, all carry Saint-Gaudens’s artistic DNA.

He likewise collaborated with many architects of the period, and some of his work can be seen adorning bridges and buildings, most notably in Cleveland, Ohio, on the Severance Concert Hall, and the Lorain-Carnegie (now Hope Memorial) Bridge.

Hering was no stranger to the community when his *Lincoln* was unveiled in Indianapolis’s University Park. The city had a solid complement of public sculpture, most notably the towering State Soldiers and Sailors Monument (1902), a tribute to the sons of the city who served in the Civil War; Charles Niehaus’s sculpture of Indiana’s only native-born president, Benjamin Harrison (1908); and the assortment of memorials

---

<sup>15</sup>Gleaned from conversations held with the NPS staff at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire and interpretative plaques in the Lincoln Room located at the site, July 18, 2008.

<sup>16</sup>Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, 305.

and tributes occupying the five-block-square World War Memorial Plaza that commemorate the Indiana residents who served in World War I.

Hering's contributions to Indiana's Memorial Plaza were numerous. "In Obelisk Square," standing like a sentinel in the center of the terraced pavilion, "one finds an obelisk one hundred feet in height, representing the aspirations of the nation. The bronze panels at the base of this obelisk represent Religion, Science, Law, and Knowledge—the foundations of the nation's hopes—and are the work of Hering."<sup>17</sup> At the southern end of the park is the Memorial Building, a multipurpose structure serving as a reminder of the sacrifices made by Hoosiers during World War I. To ascend the ziggurat-like structure one must climb a grand stairway and pass a second Hering piece, the enormous freestanding figure *Pro Patria* (1929). At the time it was the largest sculptural bronze casting in the United States. For Hering, *Pro Patria* "sought to express all there is in humanity of aspiration, valor, renunciation, and the perpetuation of the memory of the patriot fighting for the right."<sup>18</sup> Standing before the twenty-four-foot *Pro Patria* one sees a robust youth, representing the Spirit of the American Soldier, clad only with sandaled feet and a scabbarded sword around his waist. Striding forward he holds a flagstaff in his right hand; the unfurled flag billows behind him, providing the necessary volume to artistically balance the sculpture. His left arm upraised, the boy gazes skyward almost as if in an appeal to heaven.

Like most major cities at the turn of the twentieth century, Indianapolis wanted to honor Lincoln with a suitable civic sculpture. For many of those cities—including Chicago and Indianapolis—a wealthy benefactor made the difference. Indianapolis benefited from the largesse of Henry Clay Long, a Civil War veteran, local lumber merchant, and philanthropist who bequeathed \$10,000 to the city "for the erection of a bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, to be located near the southeast corner of University Square or Park."<sup>19</sup> After Long died in 1901, different city administrations raised objection after objection—regarding not the subject matter, but rather the designated site and its potential impact on the harmonious balance of University Square. Finally, though, in 1933 newspaper publicity brought the issue to a head.

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>18</sup>Hering to Bullard in Ibid., 304.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 303.

“The Board of Park Commissioners, through the probate court, obtained possession of the legacy, which accrued interest had by that time increased to \$25,000, and forthwith contracted with Mr. Hering for the creation of the Lincoln statue.”<sup>20</sup> With Hering’s local reputation secure, the board deemed no competition for other artists or designs necessary. Hering completed first his maquettes, then the successive full-scale clay and plaster model, in well under the usual three-year standard contract between sculptor and client.<sup>21</sup> Once finished, the full-scale models were shipped off to the Roman Bronze Works of New York for casting. On April 6, 1935, Long’s dream became a reality as the statue, placed on a Vermont rose granite pedestal provided by the park commissioners, was unveiled. The keynote speaker at the dedication was Lewis A. Warren. Three years removed from his work on *Lincoln the Hoosier Youth*, he recalled Lincoln’s childhood in Spencer County, stating, “and when he left he was not an ignorant boy, but a well-read young man, able to cope with the best of the Illinois politicians.” Clearly Warren saw Lincoln’s years in Indiana as his formative years, a belief offering a particular “challenge to the state to aid in producing other famous citizens.”<sup>22</sup>

Hering’s Lincoln evokes the work he completed for Saint-Gaudens, *Seated Lincoln*. Working intimately on that piece, while his mentor fought cancer, he knew his subject matter well. Hering posed Lincoln seated in a finely detailed Victorian parlor chair, complete with fringes. Draped across the back of the chair, behind the subject, and flowing over the chair’s arms is a shawl. Many accounts from the White House and Lincoln Cottage relate how the president would often drape himself in a shawl. In the sculpture, Lincoln’s left foot is forward while his left arm and hand rests on that thigh.<sup>23</sup> This is a Lincoln of wisdom, as his right hand is extended, fingers spread as if to make a point to those encountering him. Standing before the sculpture, one feels as if he stands in the president’s office. Lincoln’s famous stovepipe hat rests behind the chair on the ground, with a pair of gloves placed gracefully atop the hat.

---

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 305.

<sup>21</sup>Maquettes are the small clay models or sketches where sculptor’s ideas come to gestation quickly.

<sup>22</sup>Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, 305

<sup>23</sup>Found on what was at the time the grounds of the Old Soldiers Home, the Lincoln Cottage was a summer residence three miles from downtown Washington where Lincoln stayed in 1862, 1863, and 1864.



Viewed from up close, the skill, detail, and emotional impact of Hering's sculpture becomes truly evident.

Courtesy of David Wieggers, Gurnee, Illinois

Hering explained that, “after reading the life of Lincoln over again and the story of the troublesome times he went through, it occurred to me that he was getting little support, and it is at this period that I decided to depict him in an attitude of assuring the public that if they will only be calm and patient he will pull them through. This caused me to use the gesture to aid in conveying my idea. I also made the features grave, with the head bowed and serious. The shawl and the tall hat in the rear of the figure helped to make a good composition.”<sup>24</sup>

Near the end of his life Hering unwillingly found himself thrust into the national news and part of a tragic irony. At 9:50 a.m. on July 28, 1945, a B-25 Mitchell bomber crashed into the northern side of the seventy-eighth and seventy-ninth floors of New York City's fog-enshrouded

---

<sup>24</sup>Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze*, 305.



Empire State Building. Fourteen people died in the freak accident. Nearby structures also sustained damage, including a building at 10 West 33rd Street, where one of the engines crashed through the penthouse and started a fire. The penthouse was Hering's, and included his studio; both were consumed by the fire. Hering, playing golf in Scarsdale, returned to find most of his work destroyed and damage to his property totaling well over \$100,000.<sup>25</sup> In 1904 a huge conflagration likewise consumed the large barn studio on the grounds of the Saint-Gaudens estate in Cornish. Much of the Saint-Gaudens enterprise was obliterated by the blaze, including important documents, a huge loss of primary material relative to Saint-Gaudens's work, and models of varying sizes.<sup>26</sup>

Hering, an elected Fellow of the National Sculpture Society, is remembered today mostly through a prestigious award. The Henry Hering Art and Architecture Award and Medal is given by the NSC for outstanding collaboration between sculptor, architect, and owner.

Tourists and visitors to the rural southeastern corner of Indiana, deep in Spencer County, will encounter one of the largest memorials in the nation erected to Lincoln, in a place whose atmosphere and physical appearance have changed little over time. Elmer Harland Daniels's (1905-1986) five massive Indiana limestone panels, located at Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial, chronicle in stony narrative the story of Lincoln's life and legacy. What separates this memorial from others in the state and around the nation is that it was originally conceived as a tribute not just to the sixteenth president, but also to his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln.

Unlike other large public civic projects underway in the early 1940s, such as John Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum's presidential tribute on Mount Rushmore, this particular project was not halted at the outbreak of World War II but was instead erected and completed during wartime. As an in-house project of the state, only local resources—particularly limestone quarried in nearby Bedford—were used, thus alleviating the project delays typically faced by others at the time.

---

<sup>25</sup>Clifford Orr, The Talk of the Town, "Aftermath," *New Yorker*, August 11, 1945, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>A second fire coincidentally took place in Cornish in 1940. John Tauranac, *The Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark* (New York, 1995).

The driving force behind the creation of the panels and the memorial building to which they are attached was the Indiana Lincoln Union (ILU), organized in 1926. The ILU sought to secure a fitting testimony to Lincoln's Indiana years in the locale where Nancy Hanks was buried. Fund raising by the ILU permitted the purchase of "seventeen hundred acres near Gentryville, Indiana and encompassing the site of the Lincoln cabin there and the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln."<sup>27</sup> Hanks Lincoln died on October 5, 1818 after contracting "milk sickness," a disease passed on to humans through the consumption of tainted milk from cows who had ingested milkweed, a plant poisonous to humans. At the time of her death, Abraham Lincoln was nine. The ILU worked for fourteen years and lobbied five different gubernatorial administrations to finally get the project moving, and on January 12, 1940, it contracted with architect Richard E. Bishop to design the memorial. The executive committee simply requested that whatever was erected "should be a forthright expression of honesty, simplicity, and dignity, qualities we associate with Lincoln and his mother," and that the design should be suggested by the best practice of the days when Nancy Hanks was a young woman, not suggestive of log cabins, "but of a type of structure that might have been built by one of the best builders of the period to commemorate an illustrious pioneer."<sup>28</sup>

On January 20, 1941, little more than a year later, Bishop's plan for the initial building structure was presented to the committee, with a caveat regarding its location on the property. In his report, Bishop urged the ILU to maintain the existing integrity of the Lincoln Hanks burial site, claiming that "the grave on the little hill sheltered by a beautiful grove of native trees, with a few other moss covered graves nearby, provides a picture in harmony with the character of Nancy Hanks Lincoln as history and legend record it. Nancy Hanks was a simple pioneer woman though the revered mother of our great President. It would probably be out of character and might spoil the natural dignity of her resting place if any modern or formal buildings were located too near to her grave, even as a well meant tribute to her memory."<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Durman, *He Belongs to the Ages*, 272.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>To craft his design Bishop first read reports submitted to the executive committee by noted landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. and then, after consulting with committee chairman Colonel Richard Leiber, agreed with Olmsted and Leiber's general site plan for

Bishop's idea was to make the memorial both functional and aesthetically pleasing. In 1943, when work was complete, that is what the ILU received. The memorial consists of three parts: the central feature is a set of limestone panels. These are fronted by a cloister connecting the small Abe Lincoln Hall (which includes a memorial chapel) to the larger Nancy Hanks Hall, which serves as a combination public lounge and visitors' center. To make his ideas three-dimensional, Bishop turned to sculptor E.H. Daniels who produced, at the architect's direction, a model of the memorial. Daniels, a native of Michigan, had studied at the John Herron Art Institute at Indianapolis and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in New York City, in addition to time spent studying sculpture in Italy, France, and Great Britain.<sup>30</sup> All was considered satisfactory with the conception, with the only remaining questions concerning the size and the materials for the panels (bronze vs. stone).<sup>31</sup> In the end it was agreed that the panels should be large, to depict the grandeur of the subject matter as well as to provide physical strength to the building. Limestone was selected, as there was a quarry nearby and because the stone came from Indiana soil. Governor Henry F. Schricker committed \$30,000 to the project, and Daniels signed a contract for \$12,000 per year for two years. As was customary with sculptors until the last half of the twentieth century, the artist's contract covered other costs as well and, in the case of Daniels, the \$65 per week paid to the stone cutters was subtracted from his salary.

During his work on the model for the memorial, Daniels, who had a strong interest in Lincoln statuary, and had earlier completed a portrait bust of Lincoln for the ILU, became personally invested in the design of the panels, and he absorbed the cost of drafting the designs out of his own pocket to create sketches designed to impress the executive committee. And impressed they were, as was noted sculptor Lee Lawrie, retained by the ILU as a consultant and to whom the committee had submitted Daniels's sketches. In August 1941, the ILU contracted with

---

locating the memorial. "Their basic idea seemed to me sound because it would naturally result in a broad and relatively low structure." Richard E. Bishop to the Indiana Lincoln Union, Executive Committee, January 20, 1941, Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial Archives, Lincoln City, Indiana.

<sup>30</sup>Simon Stemle, "Sculpture was most important in nation at time," *The Herald*, November 14, 1986, p.6.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

Daniels to complete the panels. One month later he established a studio in nearby Jasper and worked steadily on the project until June 1943.<sup>32</sup> Commission in hand, a pleased Daniels wrote Charles DeTurk, director of the state parks in Indiana: “I may get a bigger job some day, but I doubt if I will ever have a more significant one.”<sup>33</sup>

Daniels, sketching first in pencil and then transferring his ideas to clay, created small models measuring twenty-seven inches long by sixteen inches high. His work was under constant review by the Sculpture Committee to insure that the finished product be historically accurate in all manner of details, ranging from the people down to the foliage. As with all large works of art, though, Daniels’s ideas changed and evolved over time with the oversight committee’s input, sometimes to his consternation.<sup>34</sup> Working clay models were created, one-half the size of the full panels, then cast in plaster for the stonecutters to begin their nearly year-long labor on the five separate, ten-ton, thirteen-and-one-half-foot long by eight-foot high limestone panels quarried in nearby Bloomington and provided by the Sare Hoadley Company. Daniels personally selected each slab. The stone carving team, overseen by Daniels, included Harry Liva, Joseph Slinkard, and Jesse Corbin—all residents of Bedford, Indiana.

On May 21, 1940, the cornerstone of the memorial was laid by Governor Schricker, who delivered the principal address. Although the memorial was completed by July 1, 1943, with all the panels installed and the property landscaped, the dedication was subsequently put off until after World War II by the Indiana Department of Conservation; ultimately, no ceremony was ever held.

The memorial panels, a curved chronology in stone documenting important moments in Abraham Lincoln’s life, are today the centerpiece of Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial, which acquired the

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>E.H. Daniels to Charles DeTurk, undated file, Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial Archives.

<sup>34</sup>Undated file, Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial Archives. In January 1942, Daniels took his frustrations, which included delayed installment payments due to him, directly to the press. Embarrassed by his actions, the Indiana Department of Conservation—which managed the construction—reprimanded Daniels and ordered him not to speak to the press again without prior permission. No documentation exists as to whether his payment schedule was resolved. “The Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial, Phase II, Lincoln Boyhood Administrative History,” chap. 3, Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial Archives.

entire site from the state of Indiana in 1962. On the one hand, these high and bas-relief panels evoke a suggestion of ancient Egyptian inspiration, while on the other hand, they figuratively reflect a myriad of WPA art projects completed during the 1930s, with their slightly exaggerated figures and forms. Nine quotes, from a variety of Lincoln sources including state papers, speeches, and letters, are incised into the stone above each panel and above the four cloister entrances. These quotes are connected to different Lincoln themes: A Supreme Being; Peace; Labor; Liberty; Democracy; Friendship; Law and Order; and Right and Duty. Each of the quotes, set above the five panels, is relevant to the scene beneath.

Standing in the Memorial Court, and facing the memorial, visitors first encounter, on their left, the easternmost panel, "*Kentucky, 1809-1816.*" Here they see Lincoln as a seven-year-old boy, transfixed by the words of Christopher Columbus Graham, a traveler and outsider whose stories cast their spell on the impressionable child. Others in the panel include Jesse LaFollette (grandfather of the future Senator Robert LaFollette from Wisconsin), Thomas Lincoln, Nancy Lincoln, and Sarah Lincoln (who stands working a butter churn), and local schoolteacher Caleb Hazel. A log cabin serves as a reminder of that element of the Lincoln lore, particularly his homes at Sinking Spring and Knob Creek farms.

The second panel, "*Indiana 1816-1830,*" depicts Lincoln as a muscular and thick-limbed young man, doing what he was sometimes best known for—splitting rails. He stands in the center of the panel with an axe held in his left hand, its head resting on the ground. The players in this drama consist of Justice David Turner (who first brought the law to Lincoln's attention) and his friend Allen Gentry (who accompanied Lincoln on a trip to New Orleans via the Mississippi River). This trip may have been apocryphal, as some say it was on this trip that Lincoln first witnessed slavery.<sup>35</sup> In the image, Thomas Lincoln holds one end of a log, while Nathaniel Grigsby, Lincoln's brother-in-law, holds the other. Dennis Hanks, cousin of Nancy Hanks (and someone who would play a role in giving Lincoln his nickname of "rail-splitter"), also appears in the panel, as does Lincoln's stepmother, Sarah Bush Lincoln.

"*And Now He Belongs to the Ages,*" is the third and central panel. "This panel depends entirely on symbolism for its meaning, representing

---

<sup>35</sup>David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York, 1995), 34-35.

Lincoln's enduring influence on all succeeding generations."<sup>36</sup> Allegorical figures within it reflect a blacksmith (representing labor and industry), and a sower (representing both agriculture "and suggesting the analogy of sowing and reaping as applied to human acts and their consequences").<sup>37</sup> A mother and child represent family, home, and posterity. On his knees before an almost deific figure of Lincoln kneels a freedman, seemingly offering supplication. As a gesture of freedom and hope the former slave's shackles are broken. Interestingly, this is one of only nine African American figures represented within the plethora of Lincoln statues across the United States. Tapping into the ethereal, two allegorical figures complete the scene: Clio, the Muse of History, who records Lincoln's deeds on a scroll; and Columbia, who presents Lincoln with a laurel wreath in homage from the nation. The White House and a cabin stand in low relief, symbolizing Lincoln's rise from humble and obscure origins to the greatest office in the United States. The alleged words that Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, uttered after Lincoln took his final breath, "And now he belongs to the ages," imply Lincoln's place within American and human history.

The fourth panel, "*Illinois 1830-1861*," depicts Lincoln's life in Springfield, Illinois, and the congratulations offered to him by friends upon his 1846 election to the House of Representatives. Personalities germane to Lincoln's law practice populate the panel, including John Stewart, Stephen Logan, and William Herndon. Lincoln shakes the hand of his best friend Joshua Speed while Mary Todd Lincoln, Simon Francis (a local editor and Lincoln supporter), and Orville H. Browning (another friend and future political ally) round out the reliefs.

"*Washington, D.C., 1861-1865*," stands as the fifth and final panel. Here visitors witness Lincoln conferring with Union General Ulysses S. Grant near the end of the war at an encampment near Petersburg, Virginia. Four high-relief idealized and thirteen low-relief figures of Union soldiers symbolize the great conflict of the Civil War and the sacrifices citizens made for Union victory. A cannon barrel rests on the ground.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Richard E. Bishop, *The Nancy Hanks Lincoln Memorial: An Account of the Planning and Development of the Memorial Buildings, Sculpture and Grounds by the Indiana Lincoln Union and the Indiana Department of Conservation, 1940-1944* (n.p., 1944), centerfold.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>This panel later graced the cover of the February 1943 issue of *Outdoor Indiana*.

The Hoosier State, which can rightfully claim a genuine piece of the Lincoln story and myth, has a right to be proud of these monuments. As they have doubtless shaped previous generations and their impressions of Lincoln, so too will they remain a testimony of his life in the future, despite being tales told in metal and stone.

