
I. Manhattan Can Turn the Nation

Beautiful City

Όμορφη πόλη

by Dean Andromidas

PART III of Three Parts

The City and the Building of a Temple to the Republic

February 2017—A city is no city unless it honors its heroes, martyrs, and citizens who have made noble contributions to the city and country. A true memorial should commemorate the deeds of the past to instruct and inspire future generations. It must also express beauty. The ancient Hellenes always commemorated those who fell in battle to save their nation, especially those who died defending all of Greece from the two invasions of the Babylonian-Persian Empire. The building of the Parthenon was motivated not only by the need to rebuild the temples destroyed by the Persians, but also to celebrate the Greek victory with a living memorial.

As New York City entered the “postbellum” era, it experienced an explosion of economic development and expansion in all directions. Manhattan and eastern Brooklyn expanded beyond recognition as the Manhattan “grid” was filled up, and a new grid was laid out in Brooklyn. By the end of the second half of the 19th Century, the so-called “City Beautiful” movement came into being. It was promoted by a group of architects and sculptors, many of whom studied in Paris where

they had attended the Beaux Arts school, in Rome where they founded an American School, or in Florence, where many opened their own studios. They inaugurated an era of the monumental and the monument.

Their creations can be seen all over the city. These works include the New York Public Library, City Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Low Library at Columbia University, and many other structures, that while by no means ugly, in many cases may be seen as more monumental than beautiful.

They were concerned not only with buildings, but also city planning. In this regard, they picked up from the work of the previous generation such as Olmstead’s creation of Central Park, Riverside Park on the west side of Manhattan, and Prospect and Fort Greene Parks in Brooklyn.



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

The 42nd Street Library in New York City.

Within this movement, there was a debate between the classical Greek style and the Roman style.

While the “monumental” concerned itself with public buildings, including city halls, courthouses, museums, schools, and universities, the “monument” concerned itself with commemoration of a great leader—military, political, civic, or literary. New York City is filled with such monuments, especially equestrian statues of Civil War generals erected at the expense of old comrades who became men of great wealth following the Civil War.

Many of these statues were set in elaborated squares and plazas, such Grand Army Plaza at the southeast corner of Central Park at the intersection of 59th Street and Fifth Avenue, home to Augustus Saint-Gaudens’ magnificent equestrian statue of General William Tecumseh Sherman, and Washington Square Park with its beautiful Triumphal Arch. Another Grand Army Plaza graces the entrance to Prospect Park, Brooklyn, with a complete ensemble of monuments including a Triumphal Arch.

While many of these statues and monuments were executed by some of the best sculptors and architects of the time, and many can be seen on the busy thoroughfares of Manhattan, one monument that is of seminal importance for New York is almost forgotten and never seen by most New Yorkers. It is the Prison Ship Martyrs Monument in Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn overlooking Wallabout Bay, the site of the old Brooklyn Navy Yard. This is the same Fort Greene of the Revolutionary War Battle of New York. Modeled on the commemorative monuments of the Ancient Greeks, it is a single huge Doric column topped by an ancient tripod holding an eternal flame. It stands atop a tomb, the final resting place of many of the 11,500 Americans who died as prisoners of war during the American Revolution. Imprisoned in the rotting hulks of old British warships, their deaths mark the most infamous war crime of His Majesty’s Army and Navy, unequaled in that war.

This wanton murder, for murder it was, of more than 11,500 men and women, is more than twice the number of 4,500 revolutionary soldiers who died in battle during the entire Revolutionary War. It is almost four times the number of Americans killed in the World Trade Center. That such a crime is all but forgotten is a



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The north face of the Washington Square Arch.

crime in itself, and therefore warrants a telling in this narrative in summary form.

Most of these prisoners were not sailors of the Revolutionary Navy, which hardly existed, but were sailors of privateers and merchantmen captured by the British Navy. By the laws of war, the revolutionary government was not responsible for them. They were not to be released in return for the release of British prisoners. Indeed, British prisoners were highly trained professional soldiers, while many of these seaman were unable even to use firearms.

The British captured and kept them for two reasons:

A warship of His Majesty’s navy shared many of the attributes of a prison ship. Much of its crew had been kidnapped by press gangs deployed in English and Scottish harbors. A contingent of Marines was always on board, not so much to fight the enemy as to prevent mutinies by the crew. In times of war, the British Navy was always short of able-bodied seamen. So the idea of imprisoning Americans sailors under horrible condi-

tions was seen as an inducement for them to “join” the navy of the “Motherland.” The vast majority, being patriots, refused, for they would rather have died than betray the revolution.

His Majesty’s army was even more hard-pressed for manpower. In several battles, including the Battle of Saratoga and especially Yorktown, where the British surrendered, thousands of well-trained, battle-hardened soldiers, irreplaceable at the time, became Washington’s prisoners.

By contrast, the British held few revolutionary soldiers as prisoners, because Washington’s tactic of fighting, then retreating to fight another day, gave little opportunity to take captives. Manipulating the rules of war, the British therefore simply went out and captured merchant seamen as hostages to trade for British and Hessian soldiers. Washington had to refuse, since such a trade was like giving up battle tanks for jeeps—moreover it would just encourage the British to continue to capture more seamen.

So these poor men, under terrible conditions, faced death. In the prison ship *Jersey*, known as “Hell” by its inmates, the men died at the rate of ten a day, three hundred per month and 1,200 a year, and were buried in shallow graves on the shore of Wallabout Bay, or simply cast into the deeper waters of the lower Bay of New York.

A poem by J.M. Scott tells the horrid tales of those on the *Jersey* and the *Scorpion*:

Let the dark *Scorpion*’s bulk narrate
The dismal tale of English hate
Her horrid scenes let *Jersey* tell
And mock the shadows where demons dwell
Their shrieks of pain, and the dying groan,
Unheeded fall on ears of stone.

All Washington could do was to appeal to the humanity, or lack thereof, of the British Commander, General William Howe, to whom he wrote:

You may call us rebels, and say that we deserve no better treatment. But remember, my Lord, that supposing us rebels, we still have feelings as keen and sensible as Loyalists, and will, if forced to it, most assuredly retaliate upon those upon whom we look as the unjust invaders of our rights, liberties and properties.

At the war’s end, those who survived left their prisons freer men than when they were captured.

It would be many decades before a fitting grave, let alone a monument would be given to the thousands who perished. Yet even the dead can make their presence felt. As the shallow graves along Wallabout Bay began to expose the bones of the fallen victims, and when the building of the Navy Yard began, the bones were collected—only to be put into barrels and boxes and reburied in the nearby property of John Jackson. Later, with the help of Tammany Hall and concerned citizens, Jackson erected a tomb on his property topped by a memorial, but not of immortal stone, but of easily-perishable wood. And soon it indeed perished, becoming a local eyesore.

It wasn’t until 1864 that action was taken, when Fort Greene was transformed into a park and become the site of a real tomb and memorial. Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, fresh from their creation of Central Park, were commissioned to carry out the work. They erected a fitting tomb into a hillside of the park, where the bones were soon transferred. Olmstead and Vaux had planned to top the tomb with a memorial in the popular Gothic style, but this was never done.

It wasn’t until 1905 that the firm of McKim, Mead and White, one of the most famous of the “Beaux Arts” firms, was given the commission to create a monument. The task was entrusted to Stanford White, senior partner of the firm. His works included the triumphal arch in Washington Square Park and the nearby Italianate Judson Memorial Church. He was also the architect of Gould Memorial Library at today’s Bronx Community College, around which the American Hall of Fame colonnade referenced in Part II of this narrative is located.

As in the Greek classical tradition, White chose a single graceful Doric column topped by a tripod and an eternal flame. At the base of the column were two sculptured eagles executed by Adolph Weinman.

The commemoration of these martyrs was an annual event as part of the Evacuation Day celebrations. The latter commemorated the day—Nov. 25, 1783—when the British finally evacuated New York City. It had been a major yearly celebration in the city up until 1916, after which it was seen as politically incorrect when the United States allied with the British Empire in World War I. Following a refurbishing, in November 2008, a major celebration was held to commemorate the monument’s centennial.

Following a campaign led by the Lower Manhattan Historical Society, Bowling Green in Lower Manhattan was co-named “Evacuation Day Plaza, November 25, 1783.” The sign was erected on Feb. 22, 2016, George Washington’s birthday.

We must return to Athens for an answer to the question of what is a fitting memorial.

By way of introduction: In Prospect Park, Brooklyn, there stands a monument dedicated to the great patriot of freedom, the Marquis de Lafayette. Instead of an equestrian statue atop a pedestal that towers over the viewer, we see a bronze bas-relief executed by the sculptor Daniel Chester French. Rather than mounted on his horse, as if marching into battle, Lafayette stands in a noble pose in front of his horse, overseeing the battlefield. A sense of motion is given to the image by Lafayette’s African-American orderly, who struggles with the reigns, as the horse appears to pull his head up in protest. The

scene is crested with a blossoming magnolia tree. This orderly is not just a stand-in, but is the slave James Armistead, who also served as Lafayette’s spy, especially during the battle of Yorktown. After successfully petitioning the Virginia State Assembly for his freedom, in an effort aided by Lafayette, James took the Frenchman’s name for his own.

The work is mounted in a frame of pink granite bas-relief designed by the architect Henry Bacon. The relief columns are inspired by the Tower of Winds in Athens. Unlike the equestrian and other monuments executed in “heroic” style, this memorial exudes a sense of thoughtful understatement, that impels the viewer to reflection rather than over-dramatic awe. It was these two artists, from their studios in New York City, who created the Lincoln Memorial, America’s most celebrated monument.



cc/Beyond My Ken

The Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument, at the center of Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn, New York, commemorates the 11,500 American prisoners who died aboard 11 British prison ships during the American Revolutionary War.

New York and the Creation of the Lincoln Memorial

It might be hard to believe that fifty years after the end of the Civil War, there was no monument in the nation’s capital to the man who saved the Union, save only for a statue erected in 1868 in front of the District of Columbia City Hall. At the turn of the century, the members of the City Beautiful Movement made the first real efforts to create a memorial. By 1910 Congress had passed the necessary legislation, and in 1911 a Lincoln Memorial Commission was established.

There was already a commission of architects and sculptors, veterans of the City Beautiful Movement, who were busy planning the renovation of Washington D.C., especially the Mall lying between the Capitol building and the White House, where most of the government buildings are concentrated. They strove to revive L’Enfant’s original plan. They were called the Fine

Arts Commission, and they dominated the proceedings. They included such famous architects as John Russell Pope, who had designed of the National Archives, the Jefferson Memorial and the West Building of the National Gallery of Art. Another member was Charles McKim, senior partner in the famous New York City architecture firm of McKim, Mead, and White. Most were from New York, and were well-known for designing famous museums, and public and university buildings across the country. Yet none of them were chosen to design what would become the most important monument in the United States, which was to be unprecedented in its size and conception. The choice was Henry Bacon.

Known as the “Architect’s Architect,” Bacon was cut from a different cloth than many of his colleagues in the City Beautiful Movement. Born in Illinois in 1866,

the son of a government engineer of old Massachusetts stock, he was raised in North Carolina, where his father was carrying out engineering works for the Army Corps of Engineers. After one year at the university, he left to work as a draftsman and architect in Boston, and then in New York at McKim, Mead, and White. Having won a Rotch Scholarship allowing him to conduct a study tour of Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, he soon developed a keen interest in classical Greek architecture.

While on his study tour in what is now Turkey, with his brother, Francis Henry Bacon, also an architect and artist, the two brothers married into the Calvert family, consuls for British and American interests in the Dardanelles. The Calverts owned a farm on which the famous site of Troy was discovered by the German entrepreneur and archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann.

During his study tour of Europe, Bacon met another American student, Albert Kahn, who would later found one of the most successful industrial architecture firms in the United States, Albert Kahn Associates. This large firm, which at one time exceeded 600 employees and still exists today, designed Detroit as the nation's "motor city," including many of the automobile factories there. But Kahn also designed graceful institutional buildings in the Neo-Classical and Renaissance styles which brought America's industrial expansion and the City Beautiful Movement together.

Kahn said of Bacon, "to me he proved not only a splendid teacher, but a real friend, whose kindness and stimulating influence I have treasured ever since." This was a sentiment held by all who knew Bacon.

In a time of "Big Industry," and "Big Science," Kahn and the firm McKim, Mead, and White represented "Big Architecture," where one major project could be the work of tens of draftsmen and junior architects, laboring to bring into completion the senior architect's initial idea.

But this was not for Bacon, for one could call him the poet of this generation of architects. For him, architecture was first an art and only second a "career."

After returning to McKim, Mead and White, he soon left to establish his own firm with another archi-



Exeter Historical Society
Henry Bacon

tect, James Brite, in 1897. In 1901, Bacon was approached by the Fine Arts Commission to draft plans for a memorial in Washington dedicated to Lincoln. It was in that year that he began to develop his ideas for the memorial, and spent many hours of his own time, so much so that his partnership broke up because Brite could not agree to Bacon's spending so much time on an unpaid project. No matter—Bacon's practice continued to flourish, and he achieved an artist's immortality which Brite never hoped nor sought to achieve.

From the beginning, the Lincoln memorial was intended to be the most important monument in Washington after the Capitol Building and the Washington Monument. It could

not be a statue on a pedestal in some overly ornamental setting.

For Bacon, the model was the Parthenon. Not only in its form, but in its very conception. The Parthenon was not conceived like any other temple in the Hellenic world. The temples to Zeus and the other gods were cult centers whose purpose was to propitiate a powerful, and most often a cruel deity, while the Parthenon celebrated Athena, the goddess who gave man the capacity for creating beauty, justice, and wisdom.

Lincoln was no mere "hero" on the battlefield; his qualities and his gifts to the nation went beyond the struggle on the battlefield. The memorial would take the form of a temple celebrating the man who saved the Republic. But it would be more; it would be a temple celebrating that Republic of which Lincoln himself was the personification, like the famous temple to Athena, who was not merely a powerful goddess, but the deity of Hellenic civilization itself. The idea of a memorial to Lincoln being a "Greek Temple" kicked up no little controversy. But what else could it be but a work cast in light of the classical principles of Greece?

Speaking of Greek classical art, John La Farge, a great American artist and decorator, and a friend and collaborator of Bacon, wrote:

That is to say, that they too often do not look to the end, but to the means, while to the artist the means are a mere path—as with the Greeks,

whose work will live, even if its very physical existence is obliterated, because it is built in the mind, in the eternity of thought. So Greek art existed, and has lived, and lives, the most flourishing and richest that we know of—with less to represent it than we turn out daily. So it lived, when it had no longer anything of its own body to represent it, in everything that was done in every country which kept its lessons; and lives still, without examples to refer to, even into the very painting of today.



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., modeled on the Parthenon.

What other form of art could commemorate Lincoln, who is above all remembered for saving a republic whose principles will live even beyond the life of that republic?

In an interview appearing in the *New York Tribune* on Jan. 7, 1912, Bacon developed his idea:

The power of impression by an object of reverence and honor is greatest when it is secluded and isolated, for then, in quiet, and without distraction of the senses or mind, the beholder is alone with the lesson which the object is designed to teach and inspire, and will be most subject to its meaning.

This principle of seclusion is an old one. At the height of the achievement in Greece is found the Athena. . . .

The design of the Lincoln Memorial, by withdrawing into the seclusion of a monumental hall the statue of Lincoln and memorials of his two great speeches, and by placing this hall, expressing in its interior the union, in the seclusion of an area surrounded by groves of trees bordered by the Potomac and related to the monument to Washington, will have a significance that is not possible on any other site in the United States.

Terminating the axis which unites it with the Washington monument, it has a significance which no other site can equal, and any emulation

or aspiration engendered by a memorial there to Lincoln and his great qualities will be immeasurable, stimulated by being associated with the like feelings already identified with the capital and the monument to George Washington.

On the other end of the axis we have the man who saved that government, and in between the two is the monument to its founder.

All three of the structures, stretching in one grand sweep from Capitol Hill to the Potomac, will lend, one to the others, the association and memories connected with each, and each will have its value increased by being on one axis and having visual relations with the others.

In a vista over two miles long, these three large structures, so placed that they will for ever be free from proximity to the turmoil of ordinary affairs and the discordant irregularity of adjacent secular buildings, will testify to the reverence and honor which attended their erection; and the impression of their dignity and stateliness on the mind of the beholder will be augmented by the surroundings, for which we have free field for symmetrical and proper arrangement.

They are, however, sufficiently far apart for each to be distinguished, isolated and serene, not conflicting in design or appearance the one with the other, and each will impress the observer with the reason for its existence. . . .



CC/Hu Totya

The Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial, on a line from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument (in the background), and the U.S. Capitol.

[The reflecting lagoon adds to tranquility and retirement:]

The Potomac Bridge connects the site with Arlington Cemetery, where the dust of those who gave “the last full increase of devotion” to their country is also a symbol of Reunion. “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.”—First Inaugural Address. . . .

The Memorial itself should be free from the near approach of vehicles and traffic. Reverence and honor should suffer no distraction through lack of stillness or repose in the presence of a structure reared to noble aims and great deeds.

I propose that the memorial to Lincoln take the form of a monument symbolizing the union of the United States of America, enclosing in the walls of its sanctuary three memorials to the man himself, on a statue of heroic size expressing the human personality, the other memorials of his

great speeches, one of the Gettysburg speech, the other of the second inaugural address, each with attendant sculpture and paintings, telling in allegory of his splendid qualities evident in those speeches.

[On Lincoln’s statue:]

It will occupy the space of honor, a position facing the entrance which opens toward the Capitol. This position is in a central hold, separated by screens of columns from spaces at each side, in each of which will be one of the other memorials. Each of these three memorial will thus be secluded and isolated, and will exert its greatest influence.

I cannot imagine a memorial to Lincoln so powerful in its meaning and so appropriate to his life as an imposing emblem of the Union, en-



wikipedia/ Attilio Piccirilli

The statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

kernel the memorials of Lincoln's great qualities which must be so portrayed to mankind that Devotion, Integrity, Charity, Patience, Intelligence and Humanness will find incentives to growth by contemplation of a monument to his memory and to the Union the just pride that citizens of the United States have in their country will be supplemented by increasing gratitude to Abraham Lincoln for saving it to them and their children.

The Washington Monument provides enough of the vertical. In the capitol you have the dome effect, and the Lincoln memorial would therefore furnish the horizontal element in a scene of great beauty and historical significance, not conflicting in design and making an imposing whole.

closing memorials of his qualities and achievements.

Each memorial, placed on a site of such significance and possibility of broad treatment as the site in the Potomac Park, will convey its lesson with the greatest of force.

[It is set on a hill:]

On this will rise the memorial to Lincoln, a monument representing the Union he saved by his extraordinary gifts and powers and to which his devotion was supreme.

[The 13 plinths of steps represent the first 13 states; the 36 columns represent the states of the Union in 1865. On the wall of the hall rising above the columns, are the 48 states:]

These three features of the exterior design represent the Union as originally formed, as it was at the triumph of Lincoln's life, and as it is when we plan to erect a monument to his memory.

These cumulative symbols house as their

While Bacon made innumerable journeys to Washington to study the site, the memorial itself was created in New York, not just in its conception and design, but even some of the most important components.

While Bacon designed the "Temple," the statue of Lincoln was created by Daniel Chester French and the often overlooked murals were the work of Jules Guerin, while the dedication behind Lincoln was composed by art critic Royal Cortissoz. All lived and worked in New York City. In fact their offices, studios, and even their homes and social clubs were within walking distances of each other. This area was the Gramarcy Park neighborhood and Greenwich Village. Bacon's office was on 160 Fifth Avenue (the building still stands) at 21st Street, and he apparently maintained his home in the area. French maintained a studio in the area and lived at an address on Gramarcy Park. It is said he created the Lincoln models at the studio of his summer residence, Chesterwood, in Massachusetts, in a home designed by Bacon. Guerin maintained a studio first in the West Village, but later a penthouse studio atop an office building on East 23rd Street and Park Avenue South, and a home on Gramarcy Park a few short blocks from his studio.

Bacon, Guerin, and Cortisoz were members of the Players Club, also on Gramarcy Park, while French was a member of the National Arts Club, which was just next door.

All had worked closely together for many years and enjoyed intimate professional and social relations.

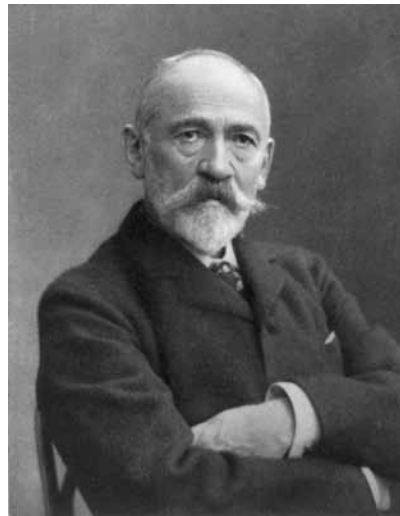
According to one anecdote, Bacon, in the company of his friend and fellow architect Charles Platt, sketched out his ideas for the Lincoln Memorial on the public table at the Players Club. It was Platt who in 1907 designed the town house of Sara Delano Roosevelt, which she shared with her son Franklin; Eleanor Roosevelt described Platt as an “architect of great taste.” That house still stands as the Roosevelt Public Policy Institute of Hunter College.

The proximity of their places of work, home, and recreation offered more than mere convenience. At the time, this particular part of Manhattan was the Florence of the United States for the plastic arts. The nation’s leading painters and sculptors had their homes and studios in these few square blocks. Even the parks and squares of the neighborhood were the sites of monuments and statues created by the artists in residence. Indeed their works can be seen throughout the squares, parks and museums of New York City, as well as in other cities around the nation.

We often walk the streets of New York, rarely taking a second look at the statues and monuments that adorn the city, and perhaps do not consider them art worth studying. A look at these artists reveals this to be a mistake, because behind each of them is the immortal story of how man struggles, as our Greek author said,



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis



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John Quincy Adams Ward, circa 1900. At top, statue of George Washington in front of Federal Hall in New York City.

“to turn matter into spirit.” To infuse a soul into raw stone or bronze.

Many of these artists had undergone training in Paris, Rome, and Florence, tutored by some of the most celebrated artists of the time. Many of the Americans stayed in Europe and expressed themselves in the styles of the impressionism and mannerism popular in Europe at the time. Those who stayed in Europe were often held, perhaps rightly, to have succumbed to the “decadence” of Europe.

But others who assimilated the artistic craftsmanship offered in Europe, returned to the United States with the conviction that the American artist should express himself through American themes. Daniel Chester French was among the latter. They set before themselves the same mission as Poe did for establishing an American literary excellence, but for sculpture and the plastic arts. New York soon became the center of this great mission.

It could be said that French was of the second generation of American sculpture. One of his mentors was John Quincy Adams Ward. (Even Ward’s name says something about him.) He is the creator of the statue of Washington that stands before the Federal Building in lower Manhattan. Few could deny that it is a magnificent work of art. It is one of the “American themes” these artists wished to express. Ward depicts Washington stepping forward to take the oath of the office of the Presidency. Washington is not seen in an

artificial show of patriotic heroism, ascending to the nation’s highest office with all its honor and power. No. Ward reveals the man of great integrity and dignity, who reaches to take the oath, not from ambition, but

from a profound sense of responsibility. Ward strives to reveal a certain hesitancy of a man who realizes he is not taking on a new glorious honor, but rather the deep and heavy responsibility of having to preserve the nation he helped to create. Ward strives to bring alive the man, and the hard bronze is transformed into a living memorial.

Ward has not “frozen” Washington, but imparted a sense of motion in solid bronze, as one would “play between the notes” in the performance of a classical musical composition. Sculpture is no different from musical composition or poetry—it is based on the same aesthetic principles that have been practiced since the ancient Greeks more than two thousand year ago. This can be dramatically demonstrated by comparing Ward’s “The Freedman,” executed in 1862 to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation, with the Hellenistic “The Boxer at Rest,” executed by an unknown master over twenty centuries ago, but only discovered in 1885. Obviously neither artist knew the other nor saw the other’s work, but nonetheless they shared the same “poetic principle,” as Poe wrote, and managed to create the “in-betweenness” so essential for truthful art.

Ward wrote of this work that it was a figure “we call the ‘freedman’ for want of a better name, but I intended it to express not one set free by any proclamation so much as by his own love of freedom and a conscious power to Brake [sic] things—the struggle is not over with him (as it never is in this life) yet I have tried to express a degree of hope in his undertaking.”

Born in 1830, Ward was the protégé of Henry Kirke Brown, born in 1814. The latter’s equestrian statue of George Washington can be seen in



Bronze statue of “The Freedman” (1862-63) by John Quincy Adams Ward.

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The so-called “Thermae boxer,” resting after a match. This Greek bronze statue is of the Hellenistic era (3rd-2nd centuries BC).

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Union Square, Manhattan, and his statue of a standing Lincoln in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, and Union Square in Manhattan. Brown spent four years in Italy, and when he returned, he set up his studio in Brooklyn where he was committed to creating an American idiom for this art.

“The Bison Hunt,” by Brown’s student, nephew, and adopted son Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, a dramatic depiction of a Native American on horseback slaying a bison, is an obvious Americanization of the classic theme of a man slaying a lion, as in Carl Conrad Albert Wolff’s “Löwenkämpfer” [Lion Fighter], which stands on the steps of the Altes Museum in Berlin.

New York was fast becoming the Florence or Paris of the United States in its arts and culture. Ward wrote, “The masses of the people, if they don’t get the whole of what an artist has expressed, certainly get a part of it. I have never yet seen a really good art work go a-begging in New York. We artists sometimes whine about the lack of appreciation. But in nine out of ten cases the cause of our sorrow lies in ourselves. If a true work of art meets the wants and therefore stirs the feelings of the ordinary human heart, it is sure to win recognition.”

Ward’s other works can be seen all over New York City, including his “Indian Hunter,” “The Pilgrim,” “The Sentinel” and “Shakespeare” in Central Park, as well as “Integrity Protecting the Works of Man” on the pediment of the New York Stock exchange of all places.

Needless to say both Brown and Ward deeply opposed slavery.

Ward was French’s first mentor. After French studied in Ward’s studio for a month, the latter became his life-long friend and collaborator.

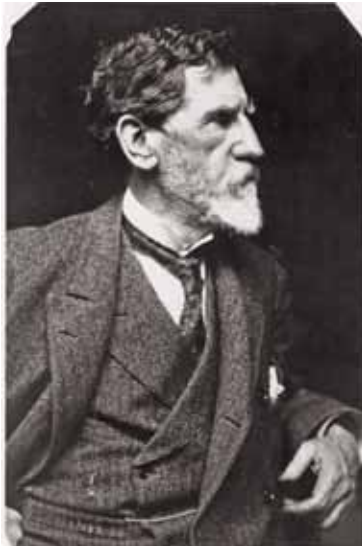


The original plaster model by Augustus Saint-Gaudens of the bronze memorial to Robert Gould Shaw leading the first African-American regiment, the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Regiment, during the U.S. Civil War. The Bronze memorial is across Beacon Street from the State House in Boston. The model is at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

It Is Through Public Monuments that ‘We Can Make Our Lives Divine’

Before a discussion of French, I must discuss Augustus Saint-Gaudens, slightly his senior and something of another mentor of French.

Born in Ireland of a French father and an Irish mother, Saint-Gaudens had the passionate personality of his father, who hailed from southern France, and the sensitivity of his Irish mother. His father was a shoemaker by trade, a poor man, and the son grew up on the streets of New York City, engaging in fist fights with the gangs in the neighborhood. Artistically inclined from youth, he took up the trade of a cameo maker, which offered an opportunity to exercise his artistic inclinations, and gave him a modest income to pursue his artistic education, including study at Cooper



public domain

Augustus Saint-Gaudens

Union and then in Paris and Rome.

As a young boy, he experienced the political atmosphere of the Civil War, and from the low vantage point of a sidewalk, saw Lincoln’s arrival in the city after his election, an image that forever remained with him.

His masterpiece, and one of the most important masterpieces of his time, not only in the United States but internationally, was the Shaw Memorial, dedicated to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, who led the first African-American regiment to fight in the Civil War. Shaw and many of his comrades fell in battle.

It is a high relief, and while it stands in Boston, it was created in Saint-Gaudens’ studio on West 36th Street in Manhattan. While Saint-Gaudens first conceived the project as an equestrian statue, Shaw’s parents considered that inappropriate. Although Shaw was brave and fell with honor in battle, he was no Grant or Sherman—therefore it is not for his military exploits he was being commemorated, but for his leadership in leading the first African American regiment in the Civil War.

Saint-Gaudens took this artistic challenge to heart. Shaw is seen mounted on his horse, every bit the leader he was, and behind him in high relief is his regiment of African-Americans. Saint-Gaudens himself said the regiment soon took on more importance than Shaw, or better, the two worked together for a strikingly powerful image.

A project that was originally conceived as a low relief to be completed

within a year became a labor of love, which took fourteen years to complete. All of the dozen or so African-American soldiers were modeled from real individuals, some of whom Saint-Gaudens himself recruited from the streets of Manhattan.

The Shaw Memorial was the first public memorial commemorating the heroism of African-Americans in the Civil War.

Saint-Gaudens also created a bust of Sherman from life, which now stands in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and following Sherman's death, this bust became a model for the artist's great equestrian statue of the General which now stands on the southeast corner of Central Park and Grand Army Plaza on 59th Street and Fifth Avenue.

Born of New England Puritan stock despite his name, French might not have had the passionate personality of Saint-Gaudens, but he shared his unbounded passion for his art. His first commission, the Revolutionary War monument, "The Minuteman," stands in Concord, Massachusetts. After that commission French, like his mentors, left to study in Paris, Rome, and especially Florence. While many of his fellow American art students remained in Europe for their entire careers, French, like Ward and Saint-Gaudens, returned to America to take up the challenge of developing American art through exercising their own creativity. Indeed, the America of the Revolution, the Civil War, and the great economic development and growth of the country demanded an artistic expression.

French soon left Massachusetts and settled among the growing artistic community in New York City, where he began a lifelong collaboration with Bacon, who designed many of the pedestals and settings for his monumental projects, including the Nebraska "Lincoln" and the already-mentioned "Lafayette" in Prospect Park, among many others throughout New York City and the United States. Bacon had done the same for Saint-Gaudens and many others.



Bust of General Sherman by Saint-Gaudens.
<http://www.takinbetz.com>

This long collaboration made Bacon and French a natural "team" for the Lincoln monument.

While French created his Lincoln, in clay and then plaster, he did not carve it himself. In fact, few sculptors actually carved their works themselves. Mostly professional stone-cutters did the job.

French, like many other sculptors of the time, gave this task to the Piccirilli Brothers and their establishment located in the Bronx. This remarkable establishment had been founded by Giuseppe Piccirilli, a staunch republican and a veteran of Garibaldi's wars of Italian unification, and his six sons. The entire family were not only stone-cutters, but accomplished sculptors in their own right. Theirs was a very New York-style studio.

Lunchtime guests often included New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, with Enrico Caruso singing Neapolitan songs. Their own works and those they carved for others can be seen all over New York City.

These brothers took French's six-foot plaster model of the seated Lincoln, and with the aid of a copying ma-



public domain



U.S. Library of Congress.
American sculptor Daniel Chester French. At left: the Minute Man, by Daniel Chester French, erected in 1875 in Concord, Massachusetts.

chine, they transformed the Georgia marble into the monument we see now.

The monument was completed in 1922, after ten years in the making. In 1923, Bacon was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects, which was presented to him by President Harding in a great ceremony on the steps of the Memorial. Within a year he was dead. While earlier virtually unknown outside of his profession, after the completing of the memorial he achieved such fame that thousands attended his funeral at St. Georges Episcopal Church near Gramercy park. In 1927, a small memorial was erected at the same church.

A tinge of tragedy can be seen in his widow, who lost what ever wealth they held in the 1929 stock market crash. Without children to support her, she was supported by a modest stipend given by the American Institute of Architects.

After Bacon's death, which affected him greatly, French continued the unfinished task of adjusting the artificial lighting of the statue, which took another four years to complete.

The story of Lincoln's Memorial really begins after its completion.

Behind Lincoln's statue is inscribed this epitaph:

IN THIS TEMPLE
AS IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE
FOR WHOM HE SAVED THE UNION
THE MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN
IS ENSHRINED FOREVER

A "memorial" commemorates, while a "temple," as with a house of religious worship, offers the worshipper not only the chance to pay homage to his God, but to draw strength for carrying out his God-given destiny into the future.

In 1939, fourteen years after its completion, the Lincoln Memorial demonstrated its ability to give strength to the those who believed in the great principles upon which our Republic stands, as so effectively declared by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address, now enshrined in the Memorial.

In that year, forgetting the Revolution they claimed as their parent, the Daughters of the American Revolution denied the right of the African-American contralto Marian Anderson to perform before an integrated audience at their Constitution Hall, the largest auditorium then available in Washington, D.C. At the time Ander-

son had just completed a highly successful national tour, giving benefit concerts before integrated audiences in order to raise funds for Howard University.

Eleanor Roosevelt, who had first met the famous singer when she was invited to sing at the White House in 1935, intervened, suggesting that she perform the concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. President Franklin Roosevelt strongly supported it as did Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, whose department was responsible for all National Monuments. Ickes himself had been a director of the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

To demonstrate that she deplored the DAR's segregationist policy, Eleanor resigned her membership, a move she made public. Fearing she would upstage Anderson, Eleanor chose not attend the concert, but she did persuade the major radio broadcasters to cover it.

On Easter Sunday, 1939 more than 75,000 Americans, representing the entire cross-section of the American population, white and black, young and old, high dignitaries and average working people, gathered to hear Marian Anderson's beautiful yet powerful voice. Anderson opened her concert with *America*, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty," which was followed by operatic classical pieces and a selection of spirituals. She closed it with an encore, the great spiritual "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."

From that moment on, the Memorial was sanctified. It became and continues to be a temple and shrine for social and political movements seeking to evoke its power in their fight for justice, and the principles upon which the Republic rests, which Lincoln saved. So in the decades since Marian Anderson's concert, the Civil Rights Movement held many demonstrations there, the most memorable led by Martin Luther King, who gave his "I have a dream" speech in 1963 to a gathering of 250,000. But other social movements rallied there as well, especially the anti-war movement against the Vietnam War and other unjust wars.

Daniel Chester French saw the work that assured his immortality for the last time in 1928. Speaking to his daughter on the steps of the Memorial, he asked, "I wonder what they will think of this work a thousand years from now?"

It was a question we may ask ourselves now, at this most historical of junctures. What will they think of our republic, whose temple these artists created, a thousand years from now?