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Photographs / Images: composite photo of 1912 dedication of Lincoln statue (Hindmarsh photo), the Lincoln statue today (David Murphy photo)



Composite photo of 1912 dedication of Lincoln statue.

IGNORING INTERMITTENT SHOWERS, a crowd estimated at ten thousand gathered at the Nebraska capitol building on September 2, 1912, to witness the unveiling of Daniel Chester French's heroic bronze sculpture of Abraham Lincoln. The sculpture's dedication realized a long-held goal to create a memorial to the nation's sixteenth president in his namesake city. Completed well before French executed his most famous commission, the seated Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., his Nebraska Lincoln remains an acclaimed interpretation of the president's humanity, humility, and strength of character.

In 1908 Nebraska citizens and government officials, aware that the centennial of Lincoln's

birth was barely a year away, organized the Abraham Lincoln Centennial Memorial Association to raise funds to provide an enduring tribute to the martyred president. The pending anniversary gave new life to an idea first proposed by Nebraska Civil War veterans in the 1880s.

A \$20,000 appropriation by the state legislature, \$10,000 in donations from Nebraska citizens, and \$5,000 from the city of Lincoln covered French's \$30,000 fee and most of the additional cost to give the sculpture a proper setting. Kimball Brothers Company of Lincoln provided a granite block to be inscribed with the Gettysburg Address. The statue was erected on June 29, 1912, and the entire monument was completed on August 24.

Dedicating Nebraska's Lincoln Memorial, 1912



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The September 2 ceremonies began on the north side of the capitol building with remarks by several dignitaries, including Governor Chester H. Aldrich. William Jennings Bryan gave the principal address. At one point during his speech, Bryan asked whether any in the crowd had ever seen Lincoln. "Instantly, a hundred hands were waving wildly, scores of eager voices shouted, 'Yes, Yes, I did,' and some rose from their seats in excitement." The throng included many veterans of the Civil War.

At the conclusion of the two-hour program, the crowd surged to the west side of the capitol, where stood the flag-draped memorial. When Civil War veterans John Lett of Benedict and Jonathan

Edwards of Omaha "pulled the strings which loosed the flags swathing the figure . . . the huge assemblage looked on the figure in silent admiration of the greatest American." Then, while "scores of old men, gathered at its foot, and with all the spirit of fifty years ago, rendered 'Marching through Georgia'," Lincoln photographer Roy Hindmarsh made this view. 📷

JAMES E. POTTER



The Lincoln statue today. Though the capitol behind it has been replaced, the statue remains at its original location. Photo by David Murphy.