



Lincoln Memorial

WASHINGTON, D. C.



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

Had Lincoln been an ordinary ruler—even an ordinary hero—an ordinary monument would have sufficed and doubtless would have been built quickly. More than half a century elapsed before a fitting memorial was dedicated to this simple, heroic man whose name has penetrated to the ends of the earth and universally called to mind with reverence and hope wherever aspiration kindles the heart of youth, or tyranny oppresses mankind. The Memorial, neither palace nor temple nor tomb, but partaking of the nature of all, seems to gather within its marble walls the very essence of his upright character, steeped in tolerance and the belief that all people should be free—free to think, free to express themselves, and free to apply themselves to various enterprises.

Inception and History

The first concerted effort looking to the erection in Washington of a monument in honor of Abraham Lincoln appears to have been made about 2 years after his death by an act of Congress, approved March 29, 1867, which incorporated the Lincoln Monument Association. An appeal for subscriptions was sent out. Plans were submitted but no practical results appear to have been accomplished from this legislation.

The next effort to secure authority from

Congress for such a monument, or memorial, was made in December 1901. Numerous additional efforts were made in the following years, but it was not until February 1911, with the passage of a bill "To provide a Commission to secure plans and designs for a Monument or Memorial to the memory of Abraham Lincoln," that these efforts were crowned with success.

The Commission created by the act held its first meeting on March 4, 1911. At its tenth meeting on February 3, 1912, the Commission decided to locate the Memorial in Potomac Park on the axis of the Capitol and Washington Monument, as recommended by the Commission of Fine Arts. After viewing designs prepared at its invitation by Henry Bacon and John Russell Pope, architects of New York, the Commission at its fourteenth meeting selected Henry Bacon to prepare a final design, which Congress approved January 29, 1913. Ground was broken for the foundations of the Memorial on February 12, 1914, and the cornerstone was laid February 12, 1915. At subsequent meetings, Daniel Chester French was selected as sculptor for the Lincoln statue, and Jules Guerin as architect to design and execute the murals for the end walls and the ornamentation on the bronze ceiling beams. The Memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30, 1922.

The Architecture

The exterior of the Memorial symbolizes the Union of the United States of America. Surrounding the walls of the Memorial Hall is a colonnade of the States of the Union, the frieze above it bearing the names of the 36 States existing at the time of Lincoln's death. On the attic walls above the colonnade are inscribed the names of the 48 States existing today. These walls and columns enclose the sanctuary containing three memorials to Abraham Lincoln. The place of honor is occupied by a colossal marble statue of the man himself, facing the Washington Monument and Capitol. On the north wall to the right of the central space where the statue is placed, and separated from it by a row of columns, is inscribed Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Similarly, on the south wall the Gettysburg Speech is memorialized.

There are some architectural refinements in the work not common in modern buildings. The columns are not vertical, but are slightly tilted inward toward the building, and the tilt of the four corner columns is even more exaggerated. The outside face above the columns is also inclined inward, but less than the columns. The wall of the Memorial Hall inclines inward least of all. This was done to avoid the optical illusion of bulging at the top.

The Building

The foundations of the Memorial rest upon bedrock from 44 to 65 feet below the original grade. The superstructure of white Colorado-Yule marble is approximately 80 feet high and rests on a base composed of three immense marble steps. Masonry approaches from the direction of the Washington Monument and the Capitol ascend a terrace retained by a

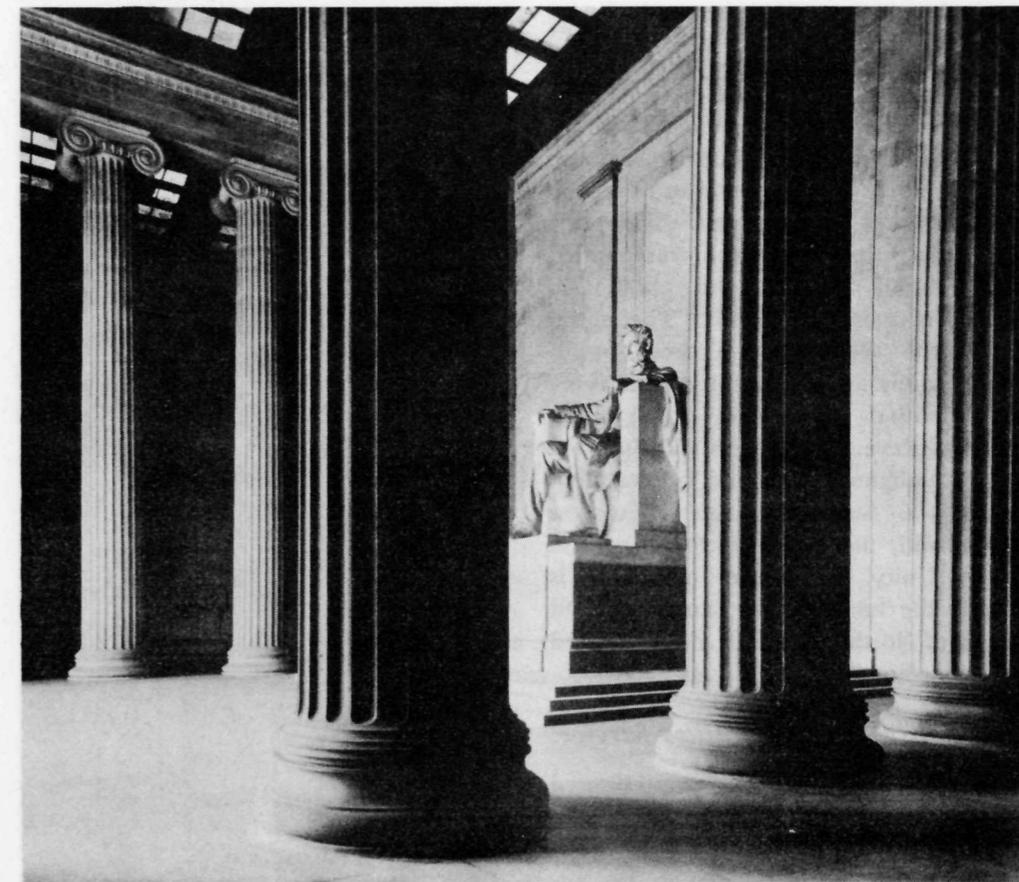
14-foot granite wall. This wall on the east and west sides is 256 feet 10 inches long and 187 feet long on the north and south sides. The walls of the Memorial are enclosed by a continuous colonnade 188 feet 4 inches long and 118 feet 6 inches wide. The 38 columns in the colonnade, including the two standing in the entrance, are 44 feet high, 7 feet 5 inches in diameter at the base, and the shafts are composed of 11 drums each.

Greek Ionic columns 50 feet high and 5 feet 6 inches in diameter at the base divide the interior of the Memorial into three chambers. The walls of the interior are Indiana limestone, and the ceiling, which is 60 feet above the finished floor, is designed with bronze girders ornamented with laurel and pine leaves. The panels between the girders are of Alabama marble saturated with melted beeswax to produce translucency. The interior floor and the wall base are of pink Tennessee marble. The central chamber, containing the Lincoln Statue, is 60 feet wide and 74 feet deep. The side chambers are each 63 feet wide and 38 feet deep.

The two tripods on the two buttresses flanking the steps leading up to the entrance to the Memorial are each 11 feet high. Each is cut from a single block of pink Tennessee marble. The carving upon them was done by Piccirilli Brothers of New York. The decorative carving on the stonework of the building was executed by Ernest C. Bairstow of Washington.

The Statue

The outstanding feature of the Memorial is the statue of Abraham Lincoln, designed and modeled by Daniel Chester French. It is placed in the central hall of the Memorial where, by virtue of its imposing



View of the interior looking toward the south wall through the Ionic columns

position in the place of honor, it predominates. The statue represents Lincoln as the war President seated in a great armchair 12½ feet high, over the back of which a flag has been draped. The gentleness, power, and determination of the man have been wonderfully expressed by the sculptor, not only in the face but also in the hands which grip the arms of the massive seat. Twenty-eight large blocks of Georgia white marble compose the statue, which is 19 feet high from head to foot. The extreme width, including the drapery over the chair, is 19 feet.

The carving of the statue was done by Piccirilli Brothers in their shops at New York, where it was also worked on by Mr. French personally. Some 4 years were devoted to the work. The statue rests upon an oblong pedestal of Tennessee marble 10 feet high, 16 feet wide, and 17 feet deep (which in turn rests upon a platform of Tennessee marble). On the wall above the statue is the inscription: "In this temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever."

The Murals

The two murals by Jules Guerin typify allegorically the principles which were evident in the life of Lincoln. They are affixed to the north and south walls above the Memorial addresses and are each 60 feet long and 12 feet high. The piece of canvas upon which each was painted weighed 600 pounds, and about 300 pounds of paint were used. The mural above the Gettysburg Address (south wall) centers around a group portraying Emancipation. An Angel of Truth is freeing a slave. To the left and right are groups typifying Justice and Immortality. Above the Second Inaugural Address (north wall) the mural has for its central theme Unity. An Angel of Truth is joining the hands of the laurel-crowned figures of North and South and is flanked by Fraternity (left group) and Charity.

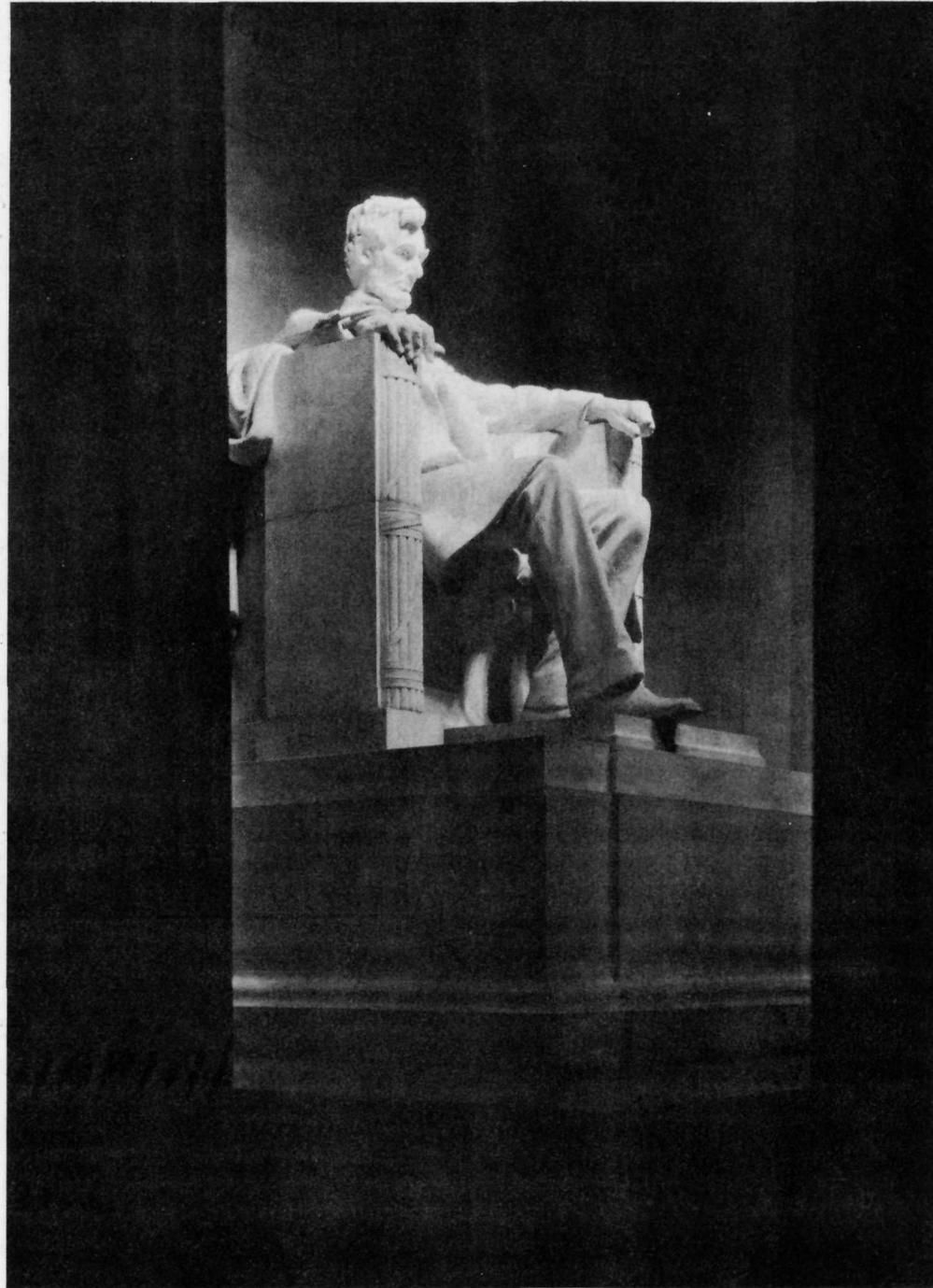
Administration and Visitor Service

The Lincoln Memorial is administered by the National Capital Parks for the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. All inquiries should be addressed to the Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Washington, D. C. This national memorial is open daily from 9 a. m. to 9:30 p. m., closing only on Christmas Day.



Washington Monument and Capitol from south colonnade of Lincoln Memorial

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The Lincoln Statue by Daniel Chester French



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