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Diane Ronayne: MacGregor pursued Lincoln statue for Boise

- Idaho Statesman
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She calls them her "team of friends." They are eight women and one man who banded together to present Boise with its newest artwork, the "Seated Lincoln" bronze sculpture dedicated Saturday, June 19, in Julia Davis Park. A ninth woman created it, and the story of its journey to Boise is as complex and inspiring as its subject.

Three years ago, planner/preservationist **John Bertram** showed historian **Carol MacGregor** a rather poor photograph of a statue of Abraham Lincoln created by Gutzon Borglum, born in St. Charles, Idaho, in 1867. Borglum had trained as a sculptor in Paris, where he knew and was influenced by Auguste Rodin. He eventually carved the four presidents on Mount Rushmore from 1927 to 1941.

Borglum's fascination with themes of heroic nationalism is apparent in his "Seated Lincoln," which at twice life-size is 9 feet tall. The original graces the courthouse square in Newark, N.J.

"When I saw that picture of the statue, I fell in love with the humanity, the pathos - it moved me greatly," Carol said. "I really wanted it for Boise."

Initial inquiries into the owner of the statue's casting rights were disheartening, however: "They wanted hundreds of thousands of dollars to cast a new one."

Enter **David LeRoy**, chairman of the Idaho Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. "David made it possible," Carol said, smiling. An avid Lincoln scholar and an attorney, David researched the law to ascertain

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that the Newark sculpture was in the public domain and therefore could be copied with the permission of its owner. He learned that former Boise Mayor **Brent Coles** knew the mayor of Newark, asked Brent to give him a call, and the rest is history.

David also found sculptor **Irene Deely**, owner of Woman of Steel Gallery in Garden City. "She knew about Scansite, a California company that could use a laser scanning technique to replicate the New Jersey statue in Styrofoam," Carol said.

From that, Irene made the clay maquette, which the Parks-Bronze Foundry in Enterprise, Ore., used to cast. The whole process took a year.

In the meantime, Carol was responsible for raising money to pay for the artwork. Idaho Commission on the Arts commissioner **Anita Kay Hardy** supported Carol's dream from start to finish.

"Originally, Kay and I were going to do it all," Carol said, "but that wasn't possible. I approached several groups for help and these women stepped forward: **Mary Abercrombie, Adelia Simplot, Leslie Garrett, Melinda Saunder, Linda Yanke and Betsy Pursley**. After Saturday's dedication ceremony, every one of them told me, 'I'm so glad you asked me to do this!'"

When the time came on Saturday, June 19, for the city to accept their generous gift, Mayor **Dave Bieter** stood with the women and David as the red, white and blue bunting dropped to reveal the imposing bronze.

Sited near the Black History Museum, its somber presence reminds us of both the injustice of slavery and the courage of a president who understood that a "house divided against itself cannot stand."

As **Mark Thornton**, minister of music at Livn4Him Ministries in Meridian, sang Lincoln's favorite song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," many in the crowd wept.

RIVER SPIRIT ART SHOW

The Boise River Arts Celebration will be from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 29, at City Hall, 6015 Glenwood St., Garden City.

Artists include **Carl Rowe, Judy Holcombe, Steve Bly, Rose Elkovich, Dee Miller and Venture Coy**. **John Heimer** leads nature walks. Art sales support the Garden City Arts Commission and Idaho Rivers United.

For more information: www.idahorivers.org or **Liz Paul**, 343-7481.

Freelance writer Diane Ronayne: dianeronayne@gmail.com

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