



1809-2009

*The Idaho Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission
P.O. Box 122 • Boise, Idaho 83701*

IDAHO'S BORGLUM - SEATED LINCOLN STATUE

IN JULIA DAVIS PARK, BOISE

DEDICATED JUNE 19, 2010.

Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor of Mt. Rushmore, was born in St. Charles, Idaho on March 25, 1867. During the 1890's he studied art in Paris, befriending Auguste Rodin. Always fascinated with the facial and physical features of Abraham Lincoln, Borglum eagerly accepted a commission of \$25,000 in 1910 to execute a statute for a Grand Army of the Republic post in Newark, New Jersey. The sculptor studied Lincoln's life mask, read nearly all of his written words and pondered the sixteenth President as a weary man "bearing the heavy burdens of the war", "letting himself fall on one of the benches in the park, and then sitting deep in thought". Borglum drew a conceptual sketch for his work on an envelope and labeled it "Lincoln in Gethsemane".

The sculpture was installed in front of the Essex County Courthouse on Market Street in Newark. The dedication on May 30, 1911 drew a crowd of twenty thousand citizens to hear an address by former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt.

Over the years, because so many young people clamored upon the figure and the bench, the work also earned the nickname "The Children's Lincoln". It quickly became and remains today one of the most memorable and iconic Lincoln images in the world.

In late 2008, Boise author and historian Carol MacGregor determined to form an all women's donor group to bring a replica of Borglum's Lincoln to Boise. A Julia Davis Park site was chosen to complement the planned second century upgrades and history walk for that facility. The location is particularly appropriate as the original donor of the park land, Tom Davis, reputedly played marbles with Lincoln as a youth in Illinois in the 1850's before moving West.

When negotiations to obtain an authority to copy the statute stalled, MacGregor contacted Dave Leroy, Chairman of the Idaho Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, to facilitate the effort. Mayor Dave Beiter wrote letters of support and former Boise Mayor Brent Coles made personal contacts to win the required access.

Boise sculptor Irene Deely and Leroy visited Newark to observe a three day long computer scanning process that recorded six million data points to allow a precise imaging of the statute. Transferred to a disc, a second computer in California used the scan to direct a cutting tool in making an enlarged, twice-life-size, plastic foam model of the original. In turn, that image was shipped to Parks Bronze in Enterprise, Oregon where a now 9 foot tall image of Lincoln was cast using the lost wax method. Because the laser cut was not able to precisely reproduce the smallest surface textures of Borglum's original, Deely applied a clay exterior to the foam model by hand using some 350 photographs to assure the accuracy of her final work. The bronze image of Lincoln and his hat weigh over 1500 pounds.

To emphasize the Western site of this particular copy, the organizers elected to make the bench from Idaho native sandstone rather than bronze. Local landscape artist Gerhard Borbonus executed a stone bench to replicate Borglum's original. Borbonus also supervised the placement of the statute and the 3000 pound bench by crane ten days before the dedication.

Boise's Seated Lincoln, as conceived by Carol MacGregor, PhD, was funded by her, Mary Abercrombie, Leslie Garrett, Anita Kay Hardy, Elizabeth Pursley, Melinda Sander, Adelia Simplot and Linda Yanke. The Idaho Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission managed group finances and paid for the dedicatory plaque. That sign, mounted on a stone shaft adjacent to the statute, contains a 1912 quotation from Borglum assessing his own work:

"I have tried to give posterity, in a true, unstudied picture, a glimpse of possibility the best-loved man in our national history as he might sit alone, unposed . . ."

The June 19th, noon dedication ceremonies are set to coincide with the historic Juneteenth celebration of freedom from slavery as recognized by the Idaho Black History Museum.

Officials from the Museum will make remarks, as will Diane Davis Myklegard, Chairman of the Park renovation project. The main address will be given by David Weigers of Gurnee, Illinois, the nation's leading expert on the importance of Lincoln public monuments. Dr. MacGregor will present the statute and Mayor Beiter will accept it on behalf of the City. Mark Thornton will sing Lincoln's favorite song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." At the conclusion of the music and remarks, the donors and Mrs. Deeley will pull aside a large red, white and blue bunting to reveal Borglum's Lincoln in Idaho for the first time.

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