

## Art in the City / Week 11

### ***Abraham Lincoln* by George Grey Barnard**

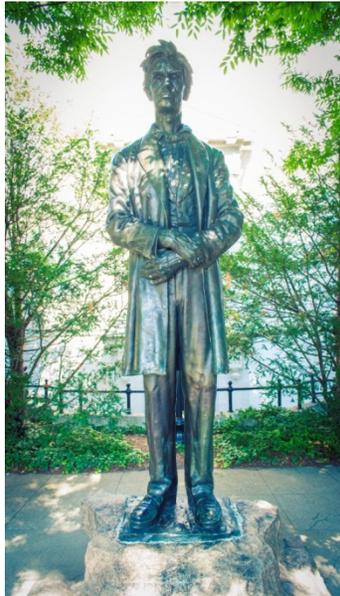


Photo credit: Luke Seward

Abraham Lincoln by the American sculptor George Grey Barnard (1863-1938) is one of four copies and was originally created for the city of Cincinnati, and dedicated in 1917 after nearly six years of preparation under the title *Lincoln in Thought*. Barnard received the commission from Cincinnati to create a memorial to President Lincoln in 1911 and spent the ensuing years attempting to form the most accurate likeness possible. Barnard's struggle to capture Lincoln's true character in bronze is well documented. The sculptor refused to work from photographs, claiming that they were "re-touched" and made sketches instead from a plaster model of Lincoln's face in the same way that Moses Ezekiel did roughly thirty years earlier for the bust of Abraham Lincoln (now on view at the Crescent Hill Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library).

After perfecting Lincoln's facial features, Barnard searched for an adequate model from which to study for the sculpture's figure. Barnard's search for the perfect lanky figure on which to base his sculpture led him to Louisville, Kentucky, where he placed a notice in the local paper that read, "Wanted: A man of Abraham Lincoln type, facial resemblance not desired, giant in stature, six feet three inches or more, big-boned, sinewy, age 40 or 50 years, to pose for Lincoln statue at \$10 per day." The newspaper advertisement was answered by Charles Thomas, an unemployed farmer who was encouraged to apply by his wife. Barnard found Thomas acceptable for the job, claiming that he had "seen the models of Europe--men of Greece and Italy--symmetrical and beautiful in a classical way, but nothing ever impressed me like the form of this Kentuckian." Barnard's trip to Lincoln's home state in search of the perfect model reveals both the sculptor's insistence on accuracy and a great deal of devotion to his subject. It is quite fitting that a copy of his original Lincoln statue, based upon the measurements of a "real Kentucky man," resides in Louisville today.

The version created for Louisville was commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Bernheim and was dedicated on October 26, 1922. It is located on the west lawn of the Main Library Branch at 301 York Street.

Abraham Lincoln, born in Hodgenville, Kentucky, was assassinated 151 years ago this week.

[Essay by Kelsey Frady, 2014 Public Art Intern]