

LINCOLN LORE

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A LINCOLN PORTRAIT ON A COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

Twenty-five years yesterday President Calvin Coolidge rode on horseback to the foot of Mount Rushmore from his nearby summer camp and formally presented Gutzon Borglum with a kit of tools at which time the artist began work on the most famous of America's sculptural creations. In memory of this event the Post Office Department prepared for issue on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the occasion a commemorative stamp bearing the likeness of Borglum's colossal sculpture which contains stone portrayals of the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

Inasmuch as Aug. 10, the actual anniversary day fell on Sunday, the first day ceremonies for the release of the stamp were scheduled for August 11. Keystone, a small hamlet of South Dakota's Black Hills country, has the honor of placing its postmark on the first day covers prepared for the occasion.

The memorial stamp was first suggested by M. B. Chilcott, a North Dakota newspaper editor. The stamp is of the standard commemorative size, arranged vertically and of three cent denomination. It is printed in green and features the Borglum figures in their Mount Rushmore setting. In the lower right hand corner are the figures of a woman and child gazing at the sculpture. Also in the lower right of the stamp is a legend: "Mount Rushmore National Memorial 1927-1952." At the top is the line "U. S. Postage 3¢" and at the bottom, "Black Hills, South Dakota."

Gutzon Borglum, already known to students of Lincoln sculptural art when he began the Mt. Rushmore project, had created the Lincoln heroic bronze at Newark, New Jersey which is still accepted as the finest of the informal studies of Lincoln. Here the President seems to have moved over on the bench where he is seated to make room for the children, irrespective of color, who literally crowd around him. The colossal head of Lincoln by Borglum in the rotunda of the nation's capitol is known to all visitors to Washington and replicas appear in other cities.

The feature after all of the Mt. Rushmore creation is its gigantic size. The head of Lincoln for instance is three times larger than the head of the famous Sphinx of Egypt. The head of Lincoln is 66 feet from chin to crown and the nose is 18 feet long. The mountain of stone which provides the background for the engaged portraits contributes tremendously to the enormous piece of pagentry carved in rock. This seems to be man's most ambitious effort to perpetuate the heroes of his own generation into the vast future.

Possibly, Stone Mountain in DeKalb County, Georgia, sixteen miles east of Atlanta may have suggested the Mt. Rushmore project. Here Mr. Borglum as early as August 17, 1915 made a trip to the mountain and found the stone of satisfactory quality for sculptural designs. The year before, Atlanta Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy had drawn some resolutions with respect to utilizing the mountain for a massive memorial to the

Confederate cause with special prominence given to the memory of Robert E. Lee. Borglum visualized the military forces of the Confederacy carved on the mountainside embracing as many as 1,200 characters. After he had chiseled out the 20 ft. head of Lee however, some misunderstanding between the sculptor and the sponsors caused him to be replaced by another artist.

It was not until 1924 that Doane Robinson proposed "converting a group of Black Hills Needles into massive and spectacular figures of sculpture." In his talk he referred to the Stone Mountain project in Georgia. Mr. Borglum was invited to visit the Black Hills and Mt. Rushmore was selected for the contemplated undertaking. A congressional act which became effective July 1, 1925 authorized the South Dakota interests to proceed if their project would not interfere with the administration of the Harney National Forest and also that "the United States shall be put to no expense."

In the meantime Mr. Borglum began working on his models and from the first subscription of \$2,500 to the enterprise \$1,000 of it was turned over to the sculptor. The first sizeable subscription, \$5,000, came from Mr. Charles E. Rushmore of New York for whom the mountain had been named forty years before. Other large gifts were received and the work was started, as already mentioned, on August 10, 1927.

Borglum was born in Idaho in 1871 and as a western man his whole energy was put into this masterpiece. For fourteen years Borglum labored on the Mt. Rushmore mountainside and by February 1, 1941 the actual work on the faces had been completed, but there was still much to be done on some other parts of the memorial. On February 17 Borglum became a patient in Henrotin Hospital in Chicago and died there on March 16 of a heart ailment.

Always a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln, Borglum named his only son for the Emancipator and it was Lincoln Borglum who brought the Mt. Rushmore work to its conclusion. The Lincoln head was separately dedicated on September 17, 1937 and Borglum was undecided for a while whether to show Lincoln with a beard such as he wore during the Presidency or to reveal the smooth face Lincoln of the Illinois years. He finally decided on Lincoln as the chief executive.

The entire panorama in stone is called America's Shrine of Democracy with the portraits of the four men who contributed most to the fundamentals of the American way of Life. Someone has identified the quartet of statesmen in their relation to the nation as follows: "George Washington who founded it; Thomas Jefferson who documented it; Abraham Lincoln who preserved it and Theodore Roosevelt who revitalized it."

Possibly at no time in the past has there been a greater need for the nation to turn to Mt. Rushmore than now. The work of Gutzon Borglum may help to tide us over another crisis in which the storms of socialistic ideology seem to be beating against our weakened national structure.