

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE SPIRIT OF LINCOLN IN NEBRASKA'S CAPITOL

One week ago last Saturday the editor of Lincoln Lore stood on the very spot at Council Bluffs, Iowa, from which Abraham Lincoln first viewed the Nebraska plains in 1859. The day before the editor visited the Nebraska state capitol building and observed how the spirit of Lincoln had found expression in both the exterior and interior construction of the beautiful capitol edifice.

Even from a distance one is impressed with the dignity of the massive tower which soars above the low base of the building. It seems to symbolize the awakened Lincoln who arose from his political lethargy with the passing of the Kansas and Nebraska Bill, and who finally achieved such an exalted position in the nation.

The architecture of the base itself with its open courts reminds one of pioneer days and the necessity for protection offered by the palisades and the block house. An inscription on a balustrade at the entrance seems to serve as a dedicatory sentence:

HONOR TO PIONEERS WHO BROKE THE  
SOD THAT MEN TO COME MIGHT LIVE

The simplicity of the interior decorations and the agricultural and pastoral scenes displayed allows one to conclude that "here is the spirit of the prairie pioneers faithfully interpreted and immortalized."

The fact that the state capitol building is located in a city named Lincoln has influenced to some extent at least the continual recurrence throughout the building of the name of Abraham Lincoln. Although provincial urge may have been responsible for featuring the name in some instances, it is largely a national or universal appreciation of the man which has caused him to be so often honored.

In the governor's reception room on the first floor, in its vaulted ceiling, one observes the names of six outstanding Americans set in ornate medallions. The place of honor is given to Lincoln and opposite is the name of Washington. The other four Americans thus honored are Jefferson, Hamilton, Marshall, and Franklin.

Through a window on the second floor a good view can be obtained of the heroic engaged statue of Lincoln on one of the tower buttresses. It is one of a series of eight figures symbolizing ideals of culture: History—Pentaur; Vision—Ezekiel; Reason—Socrates; Statecraft—Marcus Aurelius; Faith—St. John; Chivalry—Louis IX; Science—Newton; Liberties of the People—Lincoln.

Memorial Hall in the dome of the tower is the real shrine within the structure. Here the dark green and buff marble walls create an atmosphere of reverence which one feels to a greater extent than elsewhere in the building. The only inscription in the room, inscribed by gold tile on a black marble background, is the concluding statement of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

With malice towards none;  
with charity for all;

With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right,

let us strive on to finish the work we are in;  
to bind up the nation's wounds;  
To care for him who has borne the battle,  
and for his widow and his orphan—  
to do all which may achieve and cherish  
a just and lasting peace  
among ourselves and with all the nations.

In the senate chamber framed pictures of Lincoln and Washington appear on the wall in back of the lieutenant-governor's chair. A profile of Lincoln is the only decoration feature of an ornamental bronze lamp on the desk of each member of the senate. This same idea is used in the lamps on the desks of the members of the house.

As one leaves the building he is tempted to follow the spacious portico which completely surrounds the structure. Just below the parapet there appear in order the names of the ninety-three counties in Nebraska and, of course, among them is the name Lincoln.

In the terrace circuit there is a series of relief panels symbolizing the spirit of the law as shown in history. Eighteen studies are given:

"The Mosaic Law, Deborah Judging Israel, Solomon, these for the ancient Orient; The Constitution of Athens, The Law of the Twelve Tables, the establishment of The Tribune of the People, Plato depicting the Ideal State, Orestes before the Areopagites, Justinian's Code, symbolizing the gift of the Graeco-Roman world; the Anglo-Saxon Code, Milton defending free speech, Burke speaking for America, furnishing the British contribution; then, for the races of America, Las Casas pleading the cause of the Indian, the Mayflower Compact, The Proclamation of Emancipation; and finally three devoted to Nebraska's history, The Louisiana Purchase, The Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and the admission of the State."

The panel representing the Proclamation of Emancipation pictures Lincoln standing erect reading the proclamation. In back of him are but two figures, Stanton and Seward. Before him and on a lower elevation are three slaves holding their hands before them to show that the shackles with which they had been bound are now broken. Serving as a background to the whole scene is the capitol building at Washington.

The most impressive Lincoln exhibit outside the building is the famous heroic bronze statue of Lincoln at the west entrance to the capitol. This work by Daniel Chester French is one of the outstanding Lincoln studies in America and in many respects superior to the colossal statue in the Lincoln Memorial at Washington. The work by French at the Nebraska state capitol stands in front of a high tablet on which there has been inscribed the Gettysburg Address of the President. The statue depicts Lincoln at the moment of hush and quiet immediately following the delivery of the address and before the applause broke forth. If a half dozen of the most impressive Lincoln statues in America were to be selected, this one would most certainly find a place among them.

The state of Nebraska may feel justly proud of their beautiful and unique capitol building built without debt; and, while it symbolizes for the people of Nebraska the achievements of their own state, there are those who feel that its memorial features are of a more national character. It might well be called the Prairie Monument to Abraham Lincoln.