

1898

**Bust of Lincoln Modeled from Life, Leonard W. Volk, sculptor,  
Chicago, 1860.**

S. Klaber & Company.

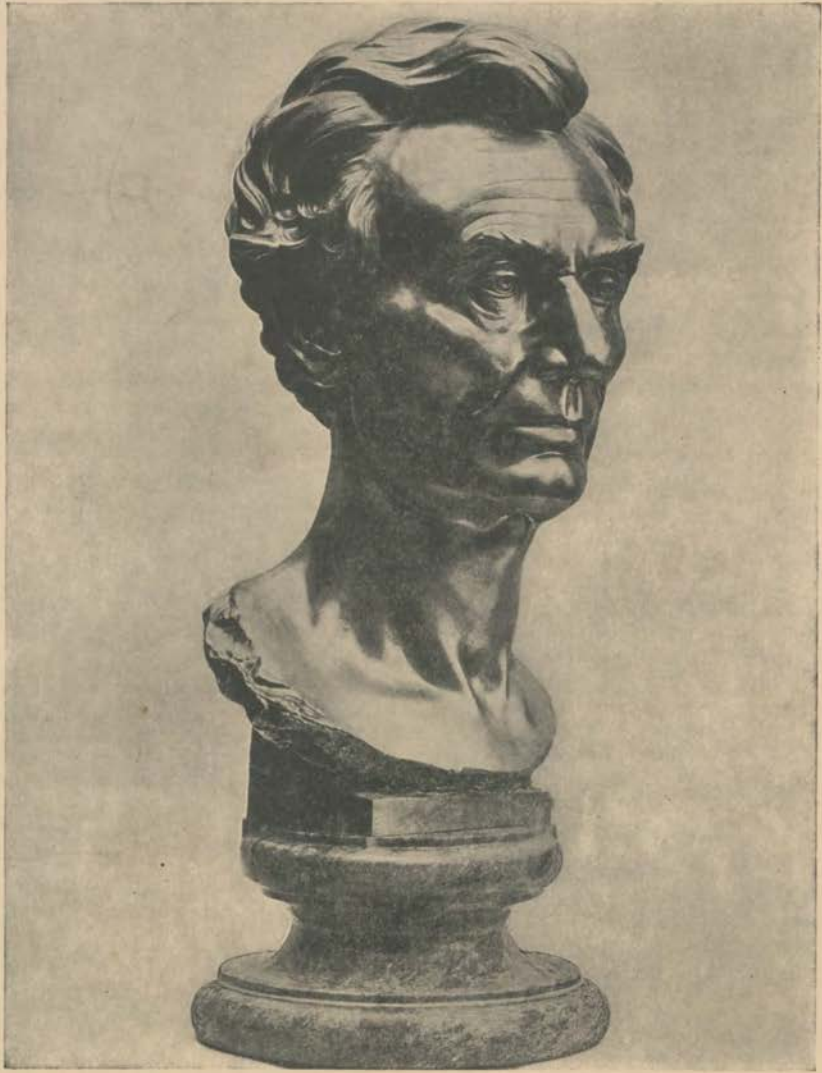
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Bust of Lincoln Modeled from Life

Leonard W. Volk, Sculptor

CHICAGO, 1860

Bronze, 21 inches High

Over

# Bust of Lincoln Modeled From Life

Leonard W. Volk

*(McClure's Magazine, February, 1898)*

“THE Volk life mask is the only portrait we have of Lincoln which compares in the loftiness and resolution of its expression with the Macomb picture. This mask Mr. Volk made in Chicago in 1860, only a short time before Mr. Lincoln's nomination to the Presidency, and it must be considered the most perfectly characteristic portrait we have of Lincoln when first elected President of the United States. Although it gives with perfect truthfulness the rugged features which, when considered separately, led people to pronounce his face ‘ugly’, these features are not what strike one in the mask. We see rather the kindness of its lines, the splendid thoughtfulness of the brow, the firm yet sweet curve of the lips, and, particularly, the fine expression of dignity and power. It is, in fact, a face of the truest distinction and the profoundest interest.”

## The Making of the Mask

*(Condensed from an article in The Century  
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“HE sat naturally in the chair when I made the cast, and saw every move I made in a mirror opposite, as I put the plaster on without interference with his eyesight or his free breathing through the nostrils. It was about an hour before the mold was ready to be removed, and being all in one piece, with both ears perfectly taken, it clung pretty hard, as the cheek-bones were higher than the jaws at the lobe of the ear. He bent his head low and took hold of the mold, and gradually worked it off without breaking or injury; it hurt a little, as a few hairs of the tender temples pulled out with the plaster and made his eyes water.

He gave me on this day a long sitting of more than four hours.

The last sitting was given Thursday morning, and I noticed that Mr. Lincoln was in something of a hurry. I had finished the head, but desired to represent his breast and brawny shoulders as nature presented them; so he stripped of his coat, waistcoat, shirt, cravat and collar; threw them on a chair, pulled his undershirt down a short distance, tying the sleeves behind him, and stood up without a murmur for an hour or so.

I then said that I was done, and was a thousand times obliged to him for his promptness and patience and offered to assist him to re-dress, but he said:

‘No, I can do it better alone.’ I kept at my work without looking towards him, wishing to catch the form as accurately as possible while it was fresh in my memory.

Mr. Lincoln left hurriedly, saying he had an engagement, and with a cordial, 'Good-by! I will see you again soon,' passed out. A few moments after, I recognized his steps rapidly returning. The door opened, and in he came exclaiming:

'Hello, Mr. Volk! I got down on the sidewalk and found I had forgotten to put on my undershirt, and thought it wouldn't do to go through the streets this way.' Sure enough, there were the sleeves of that garment dangling below the skirts of his broadcloth frockcoat!

I went at once to his assistance, and helped to undress and re-dress him all right, and out he went, with a hearty laugh at the absurdity of the thing."

In commenting on the making of the bust, Mr. Lincoln said: "In two or three days after Mr. Volk commenced my bust, there was the animal himself."

*From*

## "Lincoln"

By Schurz and Bartlett

*By permission of the Houghton Mifflin Company*

"MR. L. W. Volk, a Chicago sculptor, was the first artist to whom Lincoln sat for his portrait,—a bust,—finished a month or two before the Chicago convention. An event occurred in the progress of making this bust that may be justly called the second most important one in the history of American portraiture,—the taking of a most perfect mask of the future President's face—the other being a like process with the face of Washington in 1785, by the French sculptor Houdon.

This Lincoln mask is the first reliable contribution to the material upon which a safe examination of the forms of his face can be made. The photographs, ambrotypes, and tintypes made before and after he became President are also valuable contributions. Those, with casts of both his hands, taken a few days after his nomination, complete what there is of unquestionable material by which to judge of the character of Lincoln's face, figure and physical movement."

Cast by

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