



George Bernard Grey's Lincoln Statue in Louisville

"While still a boy I came to America seeking the opportunity of freedom. During all the years I have enjoyed this blessing, there has ever stood out before me the luminous and inspiring career of the lowly rail-splitter who became President and a prophet."
--Isaac W. Bernheim

This dramatic *Louisville Courier-Journal* photograph, taken during the great Ohio Valley Flood of 1937, shows

George Grey Barnard's statue of Lincoln apparently defying the laws of physics on the grounds of the Louisville Free Public Library at Fourth and York streets. This is clearly a high-water mark in the somewhat problematic history of Barnard's Lincoln bronze.

It is the third cast of a statue commissioned by Charles Taft, half brother of William Howard Taft, for the city of Cincinnati in 1910 and displayed in 1917. A second cast was sent to Manchester, England, in 1919.

In 1920, Isaac W. Bernheim, a Louisville businessman and philanthropist, approached George Grey Barnard about producing a Lincoln statue for Louisville. Barnard decided to produce a duplicate of the Cincinnati statue. Later, in response to criticism, he began to speak vaguely of "entirely new forms and surfaces." Close study, however, has not revealed any significant differences.

This third Louisville cast, like the first two, was criticized on both aesthetic and political grounds. Even sympathetic observers found it "gloriously ugly and at the same time touchingly pathetic." The statue, moreover, added to the complexity of the conflicted Civil War sentiments of Louisville.

The statue was dedicated at high noon on October 26, 1922. Bernheim was accompanied by "an assembly comprised of gentile and Jew, of Southerners and Northerners, and of every shade of secular society." George Grey Barnard's Lincoln statue took its place less than two miles from a Confederate monument, designed by noted Louisville sculptor Enid Yandell, which was dedicated in 1895.

Abraham Lincoln statue on the grounds of the Louisville Free Public Library during the 1927 flood.
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