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LETTERS

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AMERICAN HISTORY

WHO SCULPTED LINCOLN BUST?

I was rather surprised at the article in your July/August 1997 issue about the nineteenth-century American woman sculptor, Vinnie Ream, sometimes called Vinnie Ream Hoxie. The photograph of the Lincoln bust on page 22 of your article is one that I had not seen before. The article appeared when we were going to press with my 460-page illustrated biography about the artist. At first, I wondered if I had missed something. But after some research, it appears that the bust shown in your magazine closely resembles a bust of Lincoln by Augustus St. Gaudens titled "Lincoln The Man," which was unveiled in 1887, 20 years after the Ream commission. Unlike Vinnie Ream, St. Gaudens never modeled Lincoln from life sittings.

The bust shown on page 22 does not look much like the known sculptures of Lincoln by Vinnie Ream. There is a distinct difference in the way the hair is modeled. The smiling mouth on the work doesn't fit Miss Ream's impressions of Lincoln as a "man of sorrow," which are so prevalent in her better-known works. The bust also appears to be made of bronze. Vinnie Ream made several different Lincoln busts and medallions in her early career, but they were made of plaster or Carrara marble. The pure white material symbolized Lincoln's purity of character in a neoclassic sense. Vinnie Ream did not work in bronze until later in her career, and to my knowledge, Miss Ream never made a bronze bust of Lincoln.

Unfortunately, much of the work of Vinnie Ream is lost, undiscovered, or has not survived. Many of the sculptures she made were apparently rendered only in a form of plaster casts. The Smithsonian Index of American Sculpture lists relatively few works by this sculptor. This has made it difficult to compile a comprehensive book and inventory of her work. Perhaps your readers know more? If there are newly discovered works by Vinnie Ream being found, I would like to know about them for the second edition of my book.

I took a personal interest in the project. My grandmother's name was Ream, and I am related to the family through both parents. I researched Vinnie Ream for 10 years. Part of my research was funded by a fellowship from the United States Capitol Historical Society in 1989. I decided to write a comprehensive illustrated book on her because it appeared that nothing like it had ever been done before. Vinnie Ream's work certainly never became as celebrated as the work of St. Gaudens. I created the kind of book I wanted to see but could not find.

Glenn V. Sherwood
Longmont, Colorado

ANOTHER EARHART MYTH

The short article [History Today] in the March/April 1997 issue announcing Linda Finch's world flight propagates one of many Earhart myths that have sprung up recently. The U.S. Navy's search for Earhart and Noonan was not "the most extensive sea search in this nation's history." It was, in fact, a small effort compared with previous searches and has been far surpassed by hundreds of searches since. Only six ships and about 65 planes ever searched for Amelia. The aircraft of the battleship USS *Colorado* and the carrier USS *Lexington* (with two escorting destroyers) were involved in the Earhart search for only six days each. The much smaller U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* and the seaplane tender USS *Swan* were each assigned Earhart search duties for only 14 days. During the operation, USN Rear Admiral Orin G. Murfin told a press conference about the unsuccessful 27-day hunt for flyer Charles T. P. Ulm and two companions off Hawaii two years earlier. He related how in one dawn-to-dusk operation alone, 23 U.S. combat vessels and assigned aircraft scoured 100,000 square miles. The admiral wanted it emphasized that this was not the first time the Navy had devoted itself to looking for lost aviators.

You will find these facts documented in the contemporary newspaper accounts written by shore-based reporters and the six correspondents actually aboard the search ships. They are verified in the more than four linear feet of official U.S. Coast Guard and Navy Earhart files available to any researcher.

Richard G. Strippel
Chatham, New Jersey

BABY ON BOARD

After reading Dorothy Black's very interesting and informative article, "At Home on the High Seas," in the March/April 1997 issue, one should be reminded that not infrequently these voyages ended in tragedy. Charles Fannin recalled in his history, *Richmond (Maine) on the Kennebec*, a ship named *G.W. Morton* had been built by T. J. Southard in 1853. Its master, Captain Horatio Tallman, married Southard's daughter, Delia. In 1854, Delia and her baby accompanied Tallman on a voyage from New York to Havre. The ship never arrived at her destination, and no trace of her was found.

Fannin went on to recall that sometimes a ship would come back with a brand new baby aboard, born to the captain's wife at sea or in some foreign port. It sometimes happened, though, that a baby or child was brought back dead, in a cask of rum. Its folks couldn't bear to have it buried far away. But very few of the sea children seem to have died young. Healthier at sea than ashore in those days!

Richard E. Witham
Bell, California

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