

DAILY TIMES-CALL

IMPACT

Susan B. Anthony • Henry W. Beecher •
George A. Custer • Frederick Douglass •
David G. Farragut • James A. Garfield •
Horace Greeley • Ulysses S. Grant • Franz
Liszt • Abraham Lincoln • Albert Pike



SET IN STONE

Vinnie Ream sculpted important people so history would never forget them. One of her descendants has written a book to do the same favor for her.

By Amy Munger

The Daily Times-Call

What names and dates do Americans generally sear into their collective memories? Birthdays, anniversaries, their most influential teacher, major world events, famous presidents, infamous criminals, movie stars.

What about the name of the first woman ever to receive a federal commission for a statue? Does the Lincoln statue jog your memory? No? The fact that this hint tends to confuse more than enlighten is one reason [Glenn Sherwood] of Longmont has dedicated more than 10 years of his life to researching what has culminated into ["A Labor of Love: The Life and Art of Vinnie Ream."]

Sherwood, a descendant of Ream, began his research in an attempt to find the most basic information on Ream's life. As Sherwood's research progressed, he realized that not only was published information scarce, but much of what was readily available presented "wrong and misleading information."



Sherwood

["A Labor of Love,"] walks the reader through the public and personal life of Vinnie Ream (Hoxie), as well as the era she grew up in. Sherwood has detailed Ream's life from her developmental stages in the Wisconsin Territory, as she learned to draw from the local American Indians, to the height of her career in Washington, D.C., where, at the age of 24, she had the satisfaction of seeing her completed Lincoln statue placed in Statuary Hall. This life-size marble statue of Abraham Lincoln currently stands in the rotunda of the United States Capitol Building.

Vinnie was born in Madison, Wis., on Sept. 25, 1847. In 1863, in an improvised artist's studio located in a lower level of the United States Capitol, where Clark Mills was doing some sculpting work for the government, Vinnie created her first clay figure.

James S. Rollins had been commissioned by Christian College in Boone County, Missouri,



VINNIE REAM STANDS next to her bust of President Abraham Lincoln. Ream's sculptures decorate numerous locations in Washington, D.C. Her descendant, Glenn Sherwood, of Longmont, wrote a book about her accomplishments. Below are sculptures of (left to right): Admiral David Farragut, the Greek lyric poet Sappho, and President Lincoln.

where Vinnie had attended, to obtain a photograph of Ream for the school library. Rollins decided instead to have Mills create her likeness from clay.

As Mills worked on modeling Vinnie's features, Vinnie observed enthusiastically, "I can do that." In response to Rollins objection she said, "I would show you if I could get my hands on some of that clay." Mills tossed Vinnie a wad of clay that she caught and began to shape and form. A couple of hours later, Vinnie had formed the clay into the likeness of an Indian chief's head, complete with feathers.

It was from that point on that Ream's insatiable desire to sculpt only strengthened. Sherwood portrays Ream's life as a constant battle in overcoming obstacles to pursue her dream. The opposition of her friends and family merely reflected the prevailing societal pre-ten- sion that any type of professional career for a woman was outlandish and unladylike.

Despite the opposition, Vinnie's career as a sculptor burgeoned. She became well known in her time, and also gained distinction in art history. In "The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.: A Comprehensive Historical Guide" published by the Smithsonian Institute, Ream is recognized as "the most prominent American woman sculptor of the nineteenth century."

Historians have verified that Vinnie created nearly 100 works throughout her lifetime, however, it is strongly supported that the number is instead upward of 300 sculptures, medallions, and portraits.

Ream sculpted portraits of the likes of women's rights leader Susan B. Anthony; abolitionist Henry W. Beecher; U.S. Army General George A. Custer; orator Frederick Douglass; U.S. Navy Civil War Admiral David G. Farragut; General James A. Garfield, the 20th President of the United States; journalist and politician Horace Greeley; the 18th President of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant; Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt; the 16th president, Abraham Lincoln; and Masonic leader Albert Pike; as well as numerous U.S. senators and congressmen. Available from [SunShine Press].

