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### **First Monument to Lincoln**

After the unveiling of the statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Mechanic's Pavilion in Union Square in San Francisco, on August 10, 1865, the sculptor, Pietro-Mezzara was rewarded with a gold medal, a somewhat routine honor. No one was yet aware that the statue was the first ever made of the martyred President.

Now that the Mechanics' fair was over and Mezzara had received his medal, he offered the statue to the Lincoln school. The banker Ralston came forward to head the list of subscribers who would assume the expenses necessary in setting it up properly. The sculptor asked only that its second unveiling be postponed until the anniversary of Lincoln's death. This was done and, according to Idwall Jones, Mezzara, in his burnished silk hat, rode behind bands in the parade and beheld the ceremony as young George King, son of James King of William, pulled the flag from the statue. An inspired writer affirmed that the sculptor's masterpiece would stand to the end of time.

Mezzara was embarrassed by all the praise. He knew that his statue was not what he wished it was. As a portrait it would do, but he had intended nothing more than a statue done honestly as portrait. He had had but his spare time in two or three months, and this mostly at night, to give to the task, and he had lacked what the sculptor of today would have had—generations of Lincolnian statuary as guide. He had been obliged to work from a tintype and a cartoon or two which he had cut from the newspapers.

The President was dressed in tailored clothes, a shade too fashionable, and the conception was perhaps a shade too pictorial, was the opinion of the author of "Ark of Empire." A foot was pressed on the neck of a reptile, assumed to be a serpent of secession, and the hero beside a hacked-off tree of liberty, waved the document of Emancipation in what seemed to be a gesture of leave-taking.

For the rest of the year Mezzara was subjected to the light of notoriety and the high approval of the fashionable world. He shrank from it, knowing instinctively that the fashionable were menials to the false. One or two teas and he was done with that life, and refused to attend any more.

The life of the original statue was not to be long. It had been cast in plaster coated over with a bronze lacquer, which was no thick shield against the elements. In 1889, after a winter of some of the heaviest rains San Francisco had experienced, when the water slid in sheets off the roof upon the shoulder of the statue, which was directly under the eaves, the arm fell off, to the dismay of the janitor and the indignation of the editorial writers of the day.

It seemed as though all the citizens of San Francisco came down to see the Lincoln with one arm, ten times as many, so the papers reported, as had seen the late President with two arms. A benevolent citizen made a gift of funds, to have the statue recast in a more durable material. It was reproduced in an alloy known as French bronze, and then there was a third unveiling.

The figure stood, foot on serpent, 17 years more, until it was struck by the fire of 1906. It melted like pewter, and the school itself was reduced to a heap of bricks. Its graduates gather together once a year for a meeting and dinner. There is always much talk about a hope that someday there will be another statue. And always the ceremonial tap of the gavel as the meeting is called to order: a tap most delicate, for the gavel head is a metal finger, all that now remains of that first monument of Lincoln.