



# The Dispatch

Special Edition Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

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Auxiliary Issue

October 2003

## Fall One Day Bus Trip!! Lincoln Remembered – Chesterwood and Hildene's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour



Daniel Chester French  
Lincoln Memorial (installed 1920)  
Washington, D.C.

Join us on October 12 as we explore the beauty of the Berkshires and nearby Green Mountains that inspired both Lincoln's son, and the sculptor who is best known for his work on the Lincoln Memorial, in a one day bus tour of Lincoln sites in our own area. Sign up today! Details inside!

**No other public monument** is as revered as the Lincoln Memorial located in the nation's capital city of Washington DC. Our first stop on our fall bus trip will take us to the mountain workshop of Daniel Chester French, where his working models of the seated Lincoln were sculpted. A full tour of the studio and the home will be led by the curator of Chesterwood, where you will see the models evolve in the story that becomes the Lincoln Memorial.

After lunch enroute and enjoying the height of Fall foliage season, we will visit the Lincoln historic site of Hildene in Manchester VT, where Robert Todd Lincoln built his summer home. In a curator-led tour of Lincoln and Hildene memorabilia, we will get a sneak preview of the first Civil War interpretation and exhibit ever to be done at Hildene (planned for opening in 2004) in a behind the scenes interpretation of local Vermont troops.

**\$49 includes tour, bus, snacks, and admissions. A very special opportunity! Brown bag your own lunch, and drinks will be provided. We will stop for light dinner on your own at the historic Bennington Station on the way home. You know our trips – this one is no exception! Details below. Trip departs from Filene's at Crossgates at 8 am sharp!! Return home is anticipated at 8 pm. Limited capacity, so early reservations are strongly suggested to avoid disappointment.**

## **Chesterwood – Stockbridge MA**

**Chesterwood** is the 1920's summer home, studio and garden of sculptor Daniel Chester French (1850-1931). Guests take a step back in time when visiting this 122 acre estate that inspired an artist who inspired a nation. At Chesterwood, visitors view working models of the seated Lincoln for the Memorial in Washington D.C. and other noted public monuments, including *The Minute Man*. Our in-depth tour will be led by the curator of Chesterwood, part of the Preservation Trust.

American sculptor **Daniel Chester French** was born in Exeter, New Hampshire on April 20, 1850. His colossal seated figure of Abraham Lincoln presides over the Lincoln Memorial.

Reared in Cambridge and Concord, Massachusetts, he was embraced by members of the Transcendentalist community including Ralph Waldo Emerson. Author and fellow Concord resident Louisa May Alcott (who is today little known for her work as a Civil War nurse) encouraged young French to pursue a career as an artist. Louisa's sister, artist May Alcott, was his early teacher.

French studied in Boston and New York prior to receiving his first commission for the 1875 statue *The Minute Man*. Standing on the Green in Concord, Massachusetts, this work commemorates the battle of Lexington and Concord. An American icon, images derivative of *The Minute Man* statue appeared on defense bonds, stamps, and posters during World War II.

With the success of *The Minute Man* came opportunities to study abroad. After a year in Italy, French opened a studio in Washington, D.C. Additional trips to Europe and a friendship with fellow sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens resulted in more ambitious work beginning with the impressive *General Lewis Cass* executed for the U.S. Capitol in 1888.

By the turn of the century, French was America's preeminent monumental sculptor. *The Angel of Death* *Staying the Hand of the Sculptor*, created for Boston's Forest Hills Cemetery; *John Harvard*, located at Harvard University; and a standing *Abraham Lincoln* at the west entrance to the Nebraska State Capitol are a few of the important monuments French produced during a long and productive career. Daniel Chester French died on October 7, 1931.

**Our curator led tour will take us through the house and grounds of the French studio. We will see how light was the biggest influence on the sculptor and the effect he desired in the seated Lincoln, and how the unique natural setting of Chesterwood allowed French the exact mix of light he needed to create the American icon statue of Abraham Lincoln for the memorial.**

## Hildene – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Home of Robert Todd Lincoln

Robert Todd Lincoln first visited Manchester as a young man when he came to the Equinox Hotel with his mother in the summer of 1863. Some forty years later, he returned to buy a tract of land on which to build his family summer home. As President of Pullman Company, the large house reflected his position.

In 1902, Robert Todd Lincoln, the eldest son of President Abraham & Mary Todd Lincoln, hired a Boston architectural firm to build a stately home on a promontory overlooking the Battenkill Valley in Manchester, Vermont. The site he chose commanded sweeping views of the valley bordered by the Taconic Mountains to the west and the Green Mountains to the east. His magnificent Georgian Revival style home was completed three years later. Robert Todd Lincoln named his new home *Hildene* meaning "hill" and "valley."

The main house was built at the turn of the century as the summer home for Robert Todd Lincoln and his family. Robert was the only son of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln to survive to maturity. Many family possessions are on display and most of the furnishings are those used by the Lincoln family for nearly 75 years.

Hildene would be Mr. Lincoln's summer home for the next 21 years, and would be the only house in America where all of Abraham Lincoln's descendants would eventually reside. Mary "Peggy" Lincoln Beckwith, a great-granddaughter of Abraham Lincoln, would be the last of the President's descendants to live at Hildene. She occupied the home until 1975.

Shortly thereafter, Friends of Hildene, a non-profit organization, was formed to oversee the preservation of Hildene's open land and the restoration of those buildings that best serve the public as an educational and cultural resource and as a memorial to the Lincoln family. Today, Hildene welcomes thousands of visitors from around the world who arrive to enjoy this meticulously restored home with its elegant formal gardens and to participate in the many special events held annually on the beautiful grounds of the estate.

Our curator will take us behind the scenes in a sneak preview of the first ever Civil War interpretation to be done at Hildene. *Vermont and the Northshire in the Civil War* will be a changing exhibit that follows the men of the North Shire (the towns surrounding Manchester) as they form the Equinox Guards in 1861. The Guards went on to suffer one of the highest casualty rates of any Vermont Regiment, which were already disproportionately high, for the Union cause.

**Our day will conclude with dinner on your own at the famous Bennington Station Historic Restaurant, with cuisine ranging from wings to full dinners. The Bennington & Rutland Railroad made its home here from 1897, serving as many as 18 trains per day at the height of its service.**

**\*\* Trip includes tours, bus, snacks, admissions, and drinks. Only \$49!**

**NOTE: Because of the short time span, all reservations are binding.**

Call Joe Stracuzzi at (518) 371-0449 and leave your name and number of reservations by Friday October 10.

Or email to Sue Knost at [sue.a.knost@usps.gov](mailto:sue.a.knost@usps.gov) with your name and number of reservations needed.

**Sign up now by reserving your space either by email, or phone.**

**Payment will be collected on the bus. Remember, a reservation made is a reservation paid!**