

The New York Times

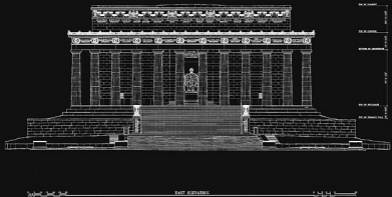
May 26, 1923

A TRIBUTE TO AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.



The pageant held last week at Washington, when President HARDING presented the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects to HENRY BACON, who designed the Lincoln Memorial, was something more than a tribute to a great artist. It was public recognition by a body of men especially qualified by their training to judge the merits of a piece of architecture that the Lincoln Memorial is one of the great achievements of American art. Inspired as was the conception of Mr. BACON, he yet was only completing the general plan devised by the late CHARLES F. MCKIM, DANIEL H. BURNHAM and the other members of the commission appointed in 1901 to study the park system of the City of Washington. They, in turn, reverted to and elaborated the original plans of Major L'ENFANT, who in 1791 began to put on paper his project for the national capital. L'ENFANT'S vision has only partly been carried out. His idea of the Mall which was to lead from the Capitol building to the "Tiber," as the Potomac was then sometimes called, has been impaired by the erection of various buildings which did not belong in the original scheme. How to restore this damage and how best to conform to his ideas was part of the work which the commission in 1901 undertook. The reclamation of land along the Potomac enabled MCKIM, OLMSZED and the members of the commission to extend the Mall and to plan to place at the end of it the Lincoln Memorial.

When HENRY BACON designed this building he had, as ROYAL COCHRAN put it, "to express the spirit of calm, settled fidelity in which the millions of the United States stand by the name and fame of ABRAHAM LINCOLN." To his success in this



task President HARRING paid a delicate tribute when he said that LINCOLN, if he could but see this monument, would find his greatest satisfaction not in the recognition which it typifies of his own services, but in the thought that the nation he loved and saved has brought forth such a proof of lofty aim and capacity for achievement as this monument shows.

In these days, when it is fashionable to pretend that no art can flourish in the United States, it is a comfort to reflect that not only in such buildings as this is American architecture pre-eminent. As a matter of fact, in utilitarian buildings—such as the Woolworth Tower, the Equitable Building, the Pennsylvania Station and the Grand Central and in modern country houses—American architecture holds first place. We have been content with simplicity and dignity, and with molding to our special needs the best of other times and other lands. If our cities have been, on the whole, less satisfactory, it is because of the speed with which the nation has grown and because, except in the case of Washington, there has been no occasion to build, from the very beginning, with a view to beauty. Even in Washington there are still many sections which are utterly hideous. But the older streets, with their placid shade and comfortable houses, make a fit setting for monuments such as those to WASHINGTON and LINCOLN. They also show that the American people have developed good taste in architecture, taste that is swift to recognize in the White House and Mount Vernon and in the Lincoln Memorial genuine masterpieces.

