



## E-Newsletter | September 2015

### Sculptors

Did you know that a woman was the youngest artist to ever get a commission for a statue from the U.S. Government? In this edition of our enewsletter, we profile two female sculptors whose artistry we celebrate!

The first woman and the youngest artist to get a commission for a sculpture from the U.S. Government, Vinnie Ream Hoxie not only sculpted the full-size status of Abraham Lincoln that stands in the U.S Capitol rotunda, she also built the first major monument to a U.S. Navy officer that was located in Washington, DC. Further, she designed the first free-standing statue featuring a Native American (Sequoyah) that was placed at the Capitol in Statuary Hall. Hoxie received the commission for the Lincoln sculpture after the Civil War, in 1866. The statue was unveiled in 1871, when she was 23 years old.



Vinnie Ream Hoxie

Previously the talented Hoxie, who wrote, sang and sculpted, had worked for the Federal Government as a clerk in the Dead Letter Office, where she was one of the first women to be so employed. She helped wounded soldiers write letters; she also gave concerts in hospitals and churches during the Civil War. Hoxie discovered her love of sculpting when she was in her teens. Buried in Arlington

stamp featuring her sculpture of Sequoyah.

African-American and Native American sculptor Edmonia Lewis, is believed to have been born in upstate New York and educated at Oberlin College. Lewis taught sculpture in Boston and received acclaim in 1864 with her bust of Colonel Robert Shaw. Colonel Shaw is remembered for his leadership when he died leading the all-black 54th Massachusetts Regiment during the Civil War. Lewis moved to Rome, Italy with the proceeds from the sale of this sculpture, where she set up a studio.



Edmonia Lewis

Lewis' works in Rome primarily followed religious and classical themes. Her 1867 work, "Forever Free" shows a black man and a black woman emerging from slavery. Other pieces reflect her Native American roots. Her classical pieces included busts of American leaders such as Ulysses S. Grant and Abraham Lincoln. Her sculpture "Death of Cleopatra" received critical acclaim at two showings in 1876 and 1888. For many years, both Lewis and her art were lost to history and forgotten. Happily, that is no longer the case. "Forever Free" is among the pieces of her work that are now permanently housed at the Howard University Gallery of Art. The Smithsonian American Art Museum permanently houses other pieces of her work including "Death of Cleopatra".

Women from all fields of endeavor have made and continue to make contributions to our culture. We benefit from their contributions and are proud to continue telling their stories.

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**Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America**  
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