

Francis Bicknell Carpenter

(1830 - 1900)

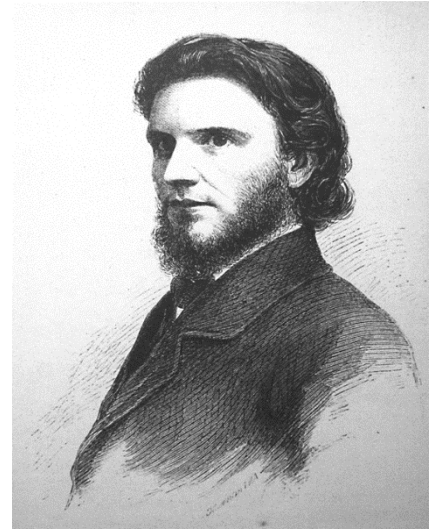


Homer's native-son, Frank Carpenter, as a youth, honed his portraiture skills at a studio located at Mechanics Hall (now site of the Homer Center for the Arts) and then at a studio at William Sherman's Homer Exchange on North Main Street (south of the Town Hall). The fledgling painter had Homer's Paris Barber as an early benefactor to help launch his career. Later, Carpenter returned summers from his studio in New York City. He did the portraits of five U. S. Presidents and many "movers and shakers" of nineteenth century America.

But he is best known for the iconic image of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator in "The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the Cabinet" (1864) and for his book *Six Months at the White House* (1866). The

painting was exhibited in Homer in 1866 and now hangs in the U. S. Capitol Building, thanks to behind-the-scenes lobbying by Carpenter's friend and fellow Homerite, William O. Stoddard, who had been President Lincoln's assistant private secretary. Black and white prints of the painting by the engraver

Alexander Hay Ritchie have made their way into homes, businesses, and history books.* The portrait study Carpenter rendered of Lincoln in 1864 was made into an amazingly life-like print by Frederick W. Halpin. Of this particular image Lincoln remarked to Carpenter, "I feel there is more of me in this portrait than in any representation which has been made." On February 9, 1864, Carpenter walked with Lincoln to Mathew Brady's Photographic Parlor. There he arranged how the President should sit for photographs taken by Anthony Berger. No one knew then that the two images would one day grace the



Viewing Carpenter at Work on the Picture.

Lincoln penny and the American five dollar bill.

Carpenter died in New York City but is buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Homer, the community that now boasts of having twenty-three portraits in oil rendered by Carpenter, including a collection of the eleven Homer Academy "Trustee Paintings" owned by the Homer Central School District.

* A copy of the painting is on display on the SW corner of Homeville Museum's Civil War section.

Biography provided by Martin A. Sweeney. More details are available in his book: *Lincoln's Gift from Homer, New York: A Painter, an Editor and a Detective* (McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011).

First photograph - courtesy of Harvard University Archives

Woodcut of young Francis Carpenter - source unknown (photographed by David P. Quinlan)

Carpenter at an easel with Lincoln, Mary, and unidentified man looking on - woodcut illustration by Felter in the book Forest Boy (1867)