In 1873 his bas-relief, Israel won the Prix de Rome.
Moses Jacob Ezekiel: Prix de Rome Sculptor

Judith S. Lucas

The American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion recently received a treasure trove of ninety albumen photographs featuring Moses Jacob Ezekiel's bas-reliefs, portrait busts, statues, monuments, and his studio. These newly found photographs, along with his known sculptures have shed new light on the high level of Ezekiel's artistry, on the uniqueness of his Rome studio, and on his strong ties to Cincinnati.

At the age of twenty-nine, this nineteenth century sculptor received the prestigious Prix de Rome, the first of many distinctions, from the Berlin Royal Academy of Fine Arts for his remarkable bas-relief Israel. The first American to receive this award, Ezekiel joined the ranks of such previous recipients as Ingres and Delacroix. Ezekiel's stature rapidly progressed with his then fashionable neo-classical style. But because the neo-classical style later fell out-of-favor with the public, his work has been ignored and neglected.

In 1985 an exhibition catalogue stated, “An assessment of Ezekiel's place in American art has long been overdue. Though much admired in his lifetime, the artist is barely known today.” The donation of the albumen photographs to the American Jewish Archives has provided the impetus for a reevaluation of Moses Ezekiel, a citizen of the world who brought honor to Cincinnati.

Prior to 1868-1869 the Ezekiel family resided in Richmond, Virginia. Catherine and Jacob Ezekiel were married June 10, 1835, in Richmond. Moses Jacob Ezekiel, born October 28, 1844, was the sixth of fourteen children; he felt privileged to be able to live with his grandparents, Ezekiel Jacob Ezekiel and Hannah Rebecca Ezekiel. At the age of twelve, young Moses left school to work as a bookkeeper in his grandfather's store. Even as a youth Ezekiel showed an interest in art and when he received $2.00 for a panorama, he bought watercolors with part of his money.

Ezekiel took his first art lessons in Richmond where he learned “to transfer artistic conceptions to glass.” With money from sales of some of this work, he bought oil paints. At age thirteen, Ezekiel attempted his first sculpture, a clay bust of his father. In order to cast it in plaster, he read books on the subject. The praise received for this first creative effort persuaded Ezekiel to pursue a career as an artist.

Although only in his teens when the Civil War began in 1861, Ezekiel enrolled in the Virginia Military Institute (V.M.I.) and while there participated in one of the Civil War's most dramatic chapters—the battle of New Market. Along with 247 teenaged fellow cadets, Ezekiel marched from the classrooms of V.M.I. to help Confederate forces defeat 6,000 Union troops in one of the South’s last victories. He graduated with honors from V.M.I. on July 4, 1866.

While attending V.M.I., Ezekiel met General Robert E. Lee. In a conversation with Ezekiel the General told him: “I hope you will be an artist, as it seems to me you are cut out for one.” Ezekiel had long hoped to study art in Europe but due to limited finances instead he entered the Medical College of Virginia in 1867 to study anatomy. A year later the Ezekiel family left Richmond for Cincinnati.

By 1865 Cincinnati had developed into a major regional art center. Art galleries had existed here since 1851. "Few cities in America even today can claim the climate for the arts that Cincinnati generated before 1900." What was it

Judith S. Lucas, Curator, Gallery of Arts and Artifacts, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Cincinnati, received a masters degree in art education from the University of Cincinnati.
in the atmosphere of Cincinnati in those days that was so nurturing to sculpture and painting?

Many credit the support given to artists by patrons and the promotion of educational institutions with the early development of Cincinnati as an arts center. The establishment of art galleries and the Industrial Expositions provided a showcase for the arts. To Ezekiel, the cultural opportunities in Cincinnati proved beneficial.

In Cincinnati, Ezekiel entered the studio of Thomas Dow Jones and began a more disciplined study of sculpture. "Jones, trained as a stonemason, was undeniably a skilled technician, and in this respect, a good teacher."7 In 1869 under Jones' instruction, Ezekiel with his youngest sister Sally as a model, sculpted a statuette called Industry, which attracted a good deal of attention. A Cincinnati newspaper reported on this work being displayed in a Cincinnati gallery. "When I finished this statuette in all of its most minute details, it was exhibited in a prominent window of an art shop, Pape Bros. on 4th Street and the papers spoke about the work in a very encouraging manner."8

The first of a series of Industrial Expositions was held in Cincinnati after 1869. Although Ezekiel was not in Cincinnati when the first Industrial Exposition opened, it is possible that Ezekiel's concept for Industry was connected with the local newspaper's excitement of 1869 and was meant to anticipate the Industrial Exposition. If so, the statuette seems part of the legacy that expositions left behind.

Encouraged by the accolades for Industry, Ezekiel was determined to go to Europe. He sold a diamond pin, which he had received as a gift, to his eldest sister Hannah's husband, Levi Jacob Workum, the scion of an early Cincinnati Jewish family. With the money, Ezekiel booked passage in May 1869 on the steamer Westphalia sailing for Germany.

In Berlin, Ezekiel was introduced to the sculptor Rudolf Siemering, and together they drove to the former studio of the great sculptor Christian Rauch. "I saw for the first time in my life what a real sculptor's studio was like."9 Siemering offered Ezekiel a place in his studio and encouraged him to attend the Royal Academy.

Of the fifty young men who took the entrance exam, Ezekiel was one of the sixteen who passed. Classmate Fedor Encke, whom Ezekiel considered the best draftsman and painter at the academy, became Ezekiel's life long friend. Ezekiel also began visiting the studio of Albert Wolff, a former professor at the Berlin Academy, a former assistant to Rauch and sculptor of the royal family. "The pupils in his studio were learning to do very large work, which I felt much more inclined to do than the smaller pieces."10 After moving into sculptor Wolff's studio, Ezekiel finished in plaster his first statue—Virginia Mourning Her Dead. It was not until 1900 that he cast this statue in bronze. Ezekiel presented his first statue to V.M.I. as a memorial to the ten cadets who died in the Battle of New Market.11 Every May on the battle's anniversary, commemorative ceremonies take place at this monument on the V.M.I. parade grounds.

Inspired by Wolff, Ezekiel began to model his colossal bust of George Washington. In 1872, after the favorable reception of Washington and his talent now recognized, Ezekiel was admitted into the Society of Artists in Berlin. 12 Among the early commissioned works he created in Berlin were Confession and Consolation. Exhibited at the Berlin Art Club both works were seen by Moritz Becker who consequently invited Ezekiel to make two marble busts. Becker also invited Ezekiel's artist friend Encke to paint portraits of him and his wife. During vacations Ezekiel and Encke went to Becker's home on the Baltic seacoast where Becker built them a studio. During these visits Ezekiel fell in love with Becker's daughter Emma and became engaged to her.13 Although they never married, years later Ezekiel modeled a marble portrait relief of Emma which he sent to her mother.

In 1873 he entered into competition for the Prix de Rome a bas-relief entitled Israel, his first treatment of...
a Jewish theme. “The four figures in the relief express his thought of the significance of Israel’s place and position in the world.”

Israel was publicly crowned with a laurel wreath by the Senate of the Royal Academy, and Ezekiel became a celebrated sculptor. The prize included a stipend for two years of study in Rome.

At the end of 1873, while still in Berlin, Ezekiel unexpectedly received his first major commission from America. The Independent Order of B’nai B’rith commissioned him to execute the monument to commemorate the establishment of religious liberty in the United States for the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia. (“Organizations not large enough or rich enough to erect a building wanted a place where their members from different parts of the country might meet each other and wanted, too, some way of demonstrating to the nation their purpose and their accomplishments. A good means, they thought, was a statue.”)

“I modeled my sketch of Religious Liberty according to the drawing I had made on the back of my letter a moment after receiving it.” Ezekiel was asked to present a sketch model to the committee before a contract for $20,000 was signed. On the trip to America to present his sketch model, he met Benjamin B. Hotchkiss, inventor of the revolving cannon, and received a commission to come to Paris and model his bust.

Although Ezekiel received his fellowship for study in Rome in 1873, he delayed settling there until September 1874. Once in Rome he selected models for Religious Liberty and found a studio where he could sculpt this piece. When nearly finished in clay, Ezekiel received a letter advising him to discontinue the work because contributions were not forthcoming. “But I made up my mind that having gone so far, I would carry on the work and make it anyway, even upon borrowed money, but I would not abandon the work. It was the first monument that any Jewish body of men had ever wanted to place in the world; the matter had been published to the world, I had received the commission without ever seeking it.”

Ezekiel believed in his work and in the original idealization of a theme. “The central figure in Religious Liberty and the giant woman with the torch in the harbor of New York are sisters.” Ezekiel’s work was neo-classical in

Ezekiel was engaged to Emma Becker and years later he did a bas-relief in marble which he later sent to her mother.

Unveiled in 1876 Religious Liberty represented a young, beautiful America clad in a long flowing Greek robe of war and peace and crowned by a Phrygian cap with a border of thirteen stars.
form and detail but often represented abstract historical and literary concepts. "He aimed to chisel abstract ideas in stone."23

Before shipping his twenty-five foot marble allegorical sculpture to Philadelphia for the 1876 Centennial, Ezekiel exhibited his work in Rome. Critics praised him—Publica Opinione in Naples wrote: "Usually abstract ideas incarnated in marble or on canvas are mute. Ezekiel gives them speech."24 Religious Liberty remained in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park until 1985 when it was moved to the grounds of the National Museum of American Jewish History, just steps from the Liberty Bell. To commemorate the relocation of the statue, the Museum held the first solo exhibition of Ezekiel's work last year.

When first seen in 1876, Religious Liberty marked the American public's introduction both to the German and the new Italian methods. While previously little attention had been given to Ezekiel, the sculptor's studio soon became a busy place with many commissions coming at once and several assistants employed.

Ezekiel formed his concepts into a clay sketch and then enlarged the clay to full scale which his workmen would cast in plaster. "These men, with the aid of a pointing machine which acted as a three-diminensional guide in transferring proportions from plaster to marble, would do the actual carving."25 Although workmen did much of the actual labor, Ezekiel always personally completed his work to insure proper surface treatment and details.

There were many advantages to living in Italy: one was inexpensive workmen; another was fine examples of antique sculpture; still another was quarries of white Carrara marble. But the greatest advantage was a magnificent studio in Rome in a portion of the ancient Baths of Diocletian, dated 302 A.D. where for over thirty years, Ezekiel lived and worked. One scholar wrote that "his studio alone has insured a lasting place in art history to this artist."26 In the upper studio Ezekiel received his friends and kept his finished work, in his workroom on the unaltered lower level he executed his statues.

Ezekiel's studio was the center of artistic and social activities in Rome and part of the grand tour of European cities. On Fridays, he received guests who heard piano or string music by the finest musicians in Rome. "In the art of life as well as the art of sculpture he was master, and only such a one could have created this studio, filled it with these loving works and gathered within its ever hospitable walk such a circle of friends as always surrounded him."27 In 1910 Ezekiel was forced to move his studio from the Baths of Diocletian, where he wrote his memoirs, to a new studio given him by the Municipality of Rome in the Tower of Belisarius.

The studio housed casts of important commissions among which was one from William Wilson Corcoran who established the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., to house his existing art collection and as a public gallery. The Corcoran Gallery (now the Renwick Gallery of Art) was considered an American Louvre. Corcoran commissioned Ezekiel to make decorative marble statues of renowned artists to be placed in the exterior niches. Ezekiel accepted this challenge more for the art than for the money. The original works begun in 1879 and placed in 1884 included: Phidias, Raphael, Michaelangelo and Durer, Titian, da Vinci, Rubens, Rembrandt, Murillo, Canova, and Crawford. These statues remained there until 1897 when they were sold.28

A student of Franz Liszt commissioned Ezekiel to make a portrait bust of Liszt for the Academy of Music at Pesth and in 1881 Ezekiel went to ask Liszt to sit for him. Busts of Liszt had previously been made without his sitting, but he had heard of Ezekiel and was willing to cooperate. Liszt was staying at the palatial Villa d'Este in Tivoli, residence of Cardinal Gustav von Hohenlohe, the Papal representative of Austria. An intimate friendship grew among three which lasted throughout their lives. "They formed in themselves a lovely Trinity of Art, Music and Religion."29 This bust was among his best work and gained for Ezekiel honorary knighthood conferred in 1887 by the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, the "Cavalier Crosses for Merit in Art and Science."

Sir Moses Jacob Ezekiel first exhibited the bronze half figure of Liszt in his studio and then in the Roman Salon, Palace of Fine Arts. In 1886 art critic of Popolo Romano wrote, "the likeness is truly speaking and it is modeled in a very masterly manner, full of strength and bold to the extreme." The Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen ordered a replica—an artist frequently received orders for replicas of an admired "ideal" piece. A replica of the Liszt bust was sent to America in 1892 to be exhibited at the Chicago Columbian Exposition but was lost in transit and when finally recovered sent to Cincinnati.

Earlier in Cincinnati the local Commercial Gazette of September 14, 1884, had reported on Ezekiel's visit to the city and his talk at the twelfth Industrial Exposition in which Ezekiel expressed his thoughts and impressions of an art gallery and of the purpose of exhibitions to further cultivate an encouragement of art. "The works are hungering for just one glance of sympathy, for one heart
beat of recognition, begging for a little moment's repose in some human breast. ... But how different the feeling is when I can enter the sacred precincts of those homes of art in Italy.

That same year he received a commission for the Statue of Neptune for a fountain in Nettuno, Italy, known as the favorite resort of emperors and kings of Rome. This was one of only two public monument commissions Ezekiel ever received from Italy. The Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, on September 7, 1884, carried a front page story—"this is the first public work that has been assigned, as far as we know, to a foreign artist in Italy, and the work, as executed by Ezekiel was received with enthusiastic applause by the authorities and the community."

In 1893, Cardinal Hohenlohe selected Ezekiel to greet royal guests at his villa in his absence and on that occasion Ezekiel again received knighthood—the "Cavalier's Golden Cross of the House of Hohenzollern"—from Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany. King Victor Emanuel of Italy also knighted Ezekiel for busts of Liszt and Cardinal Hohenlohe. Ezekiel received the Cross of an "Officer of the Crown of Italy," in 1906.

Ezekiel was most prolific, executing nearly 200 works, on several main themes, among which religious subjects were the earliest themes and probably among his most enduring works. In them he enshrined his own intense loyalty to his faith. "Jewish ideals appealed to him because he was an idealist. He pierced to the very root of the truth for which Judaism stood." Ezekiel's conception of Christ is daringly original with an heroic face of calm endurance yet forceful.

Ecce Homo 1886, represents Christ. "Although the head is drooped in physical exhaustion, one's sense of this is completely overmastered by the spiritual power of the expression—by the living face, with its forgetfulness of pain,
its calm, unshaken faith, its entire resignation and its profound and overflowing pity.\footnote{28}

Lorado Taft thought the treatment and pose of The Martyr "striking." The face of Christ is upturned in prayer, conceived by Ezekiel as the highest expression of self-forgetfulness and martyrdom. Thomas S. Noble, Director of the Cincinnati Art Academy, viewed the bound torso of The Martyr and said, "This is the most perfect and real head of Christ I have ever seen."\footnote{29}

Ezekiel executed a recumbent statue of Christ in the Tomb, in 1889 which impressed studio visitors. It was after seeing this Christ in his studio that Queen Margherita knighted Ezekiel. A patron in Paris purchased this statue as a monument to the memory of friends and family who perished in the Charity Bazaar fire in 1900 and it was placed in the Rue de Goujon Chapel of Consolation. "In evolving the type of head and features for Christ in the Tomb, Ezekiel was free to choose from the idealization of centuries but he created his own ideal, selecting the highest characteristics of the Hebrew race; and with the pitifulness, the suffering and horrors of death eliminated, it is one of majesty and utmost triumph."\footnote{30} It is fascinating that a Jew gave the world one of its greatest interpretations of Christ.\footnote{31}

For years Ezekiel used Jewish themes. First came the torso of Judith 1880, exhibited in Ezekiel's studio where it remained for five years before being sold to Maria and Bellamy Storer of Cincinnati. Judith inspired leading poets and when exhibited in the Paris Salon, 1881, was hailed for its classic beauty.

Next he modeled Eve-Hearing the Voice (Gen. 3:8) 1881, a statue of which Ezekiel was very fond and consequently he made several replicas from his original model. The life-size bronze Eve was exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition, 1904 where it received a Silver Medal and Certificate of Honor as one of the best works by an American sculptor. While Eve was still in the studio the statue inspired a poem titled "Mother Eve." Ezekiel sculpted a reduced-sized Eve in marble for John J. Harjes, a Parisian, who presented it to the Emperor of Germany. The emperor ordered Eve to be placed in the San Royal Palace at Potsdam. After 1904 the statue of Eve was exhibited in Hanna Hall of the Cincinnati Art Museum and in 1915 it was exhibited in the San Francisco Art Exposition.\footnote{32}

He also created David Singing His Song of Glory 1903, considered an important work. David's face expresses Corcoran commissioned Ezekiel to make decorative statues of renowned artists for the Corcoran Gallery. Thomas Crawford was the only American included in the "Great Artists of the World" group.

The portrait marble bust of Liszt was the only work Ezekiel executed directly in marble from life.
gratitude to God for having been with him in an unequal victory.  

In Cincinnati in 1889, Ezekiel sculpted a portrait bust of Isaac M. Wise, founder of the Hebrew Union College Cincinnati, who had seen the necessity for an institution where young Americans could be educated for the rabbinate. To celebrate Dr. Wise’s eightieth birthday, his congregation decided to present his family with a bronze bust by Sir Moses Ezekiel. Ezekiel modeled this bust in Cincinnati at the Wise home in College Hill. A picture of this bust is included in the book Cincinnati in Bronze. Wise did not live to see the completed work in bronze, which is now on permanent display at Hebrew Union College, but was photographed with the clay model. Dedicated to the memory of Isaac M. Wise, Ezekiel also designed a window for Temple Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia, however, it was destroyed by fire in 1972.

Returning to a favorite theme, religious intolerance, Ezekiel executed a monument for Jesse Seligman, 1896, which was commissioned by the Director of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, New York. The base symbolized the cruel dynasties of Assyria, Egypt, and Rome, with modern civilizations rising from these ruins. A serpent winds itself about the column to be destroyed by an American eagle. The column, along side which stands an orphan girl holding a scroll, is crowned with a laurel wrath upon which is a bronze bust of Jesse Seligman. The theme represented is that true liberty destroys intolerance.

A second segment of Ezekiel’s sculpture represents portraits either for commissions received or as a tribute by the sculptor to a friend. “Ezekiel’s best works are his portrait heads, which evidence great skill in handling and execution.” Many of these were Cincinnatians modeled by Ezekiel and include, besides his parents and Dr. Isaac M. Wise—Mrs. Charles Mills, Bellamy Storer, Rufus King, Belthazar Roth, James E. Murdock, Tilie Moch Mayer, Hannah Workum, and Jeptha Workum. Mrs. Mills, a niece of Reuben Springer, founder of Cincinnati Music Hall, is a relief in marble. The marble bust of Storer was commissioned by his wife Maria Longworth Nichols Storer, founder of Cincinnati Rookwood Pottery. Of this work Ezekiel wrote, “My bust of Mr. Storer proved a great success. He was one of the finest specimens of a manly figure that I have ever seen and his face was classically beautiful.”

Ezekiel’s prodigious artistic works can be found in both Europe and the United States. Some works which are mentioned in the memoirs, although the locations are unknown, are: Virginia Virgo (Miss Bullock), Jesica, Cassandra (Miss Richardson), Hans Peter Fedderson, Miss Edith Lack, Alexander McDonald, and Miss Ann Thomson. These works are represented in the collection of rare albumen photographs recently donated to the American Jewish Archives. Of Cassandra Ezekiel wrote, “I colored it so that it was one of the most impressive reliefs I had ever made.”

In St. Margaret’s Chapel of Westminster Abbey in London, England, is Ezekiel’s marble bust of Robert Lowe, Lord Viscount of Sherbrook, 1895.

Authorities of the Hague, Holland, called upon Sir Moses to execute a statue for them of Baruch Spinoza, 1890. He made several models in clay which culminated in a small bronze statuette (original replica in the collection of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum). The sculptor always considered this one of his best works.

On the campus of Cornell University, New York, are Ezekiel’s recumbent statues of Mrs. Andrew D. White, 1889 and Jennie McGraw Fiske, 1908.

Located in Philadelphia is a seated bronze figure of Anthony Joseph Drexel, 1904, founder of Drexel University; and a bronze bust of Governor Andrew G. Curtin, 1903, for the Smith Memorial Gateway to West Fairmount Park.

Neptune, done in 1884 was one of only two public monument commissions Ezekiel received from Italy. It was destroyed in World War II.
Literary giants are represented by Ezekiel's heroic marble bust of Longfellow 1889 (CAM, purchased by the Schmidlapp family), a colossal bronze group *Homer and Guide*, 1907 (University of Virginia), and a bronze seated *Edgar Allan Poe*, 1917 (Wyman Park in Baltimore, Maryland). The concept of two-figured sculptures such as, *Homer and Guide*, was quite rare in neo-classic sculpture. The Homer group was donated to the University of Virginia to inspire a love for Greek culture and for classical art in countless generations of students. The Poe statue, made for the Poe Memorial Association, is Ezekiel's last work and perhaps his finest portrait statue. It is pleasing to think that the sculptor's work should commemorate another artist, and one too, of his own native land.40

Knighted by three European countries, Ezekiel is nevertheless best remembered for his overtly "American" works—the third group of artistic subjects. The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was meant to commemorate the fourth century of America's discovery. No American fair has ever rivaled the sculpture that profusely adorned the grounds and buildings. Art critic William Howe Downes credited the half-year long spectacle as beginning "our American rebirth in sculpture." Conspicuously displayed was a nine foot high, ten-ton bronze statue, *Columbus* by Moses Ezekiel. The figure was made of bronze melted down from crucifixes, statuettes of Christ, vases, and water pots; some perhaps new when Columbus discovered America. It was cast in Rome, where it was blessed by Pope Leo XIII.41 From 1894-1958 the statue, *Columbus*, remained above the entrance to the Columbus Memorial Building on North State Street and it became a landmark for sightseers. The statue became "available" when the building was razed in 1958. Disneyland, Columbus, Indiana, and Columbus, Ohio, all vied for the statue, but it went to the Municipal Art League of Chicago. In 1966 *Columbus* found a home in Chicago's Italian community as the focal point of the fountain in Victor Arrigo Park.

His most important work with an American patriotic theme was his monument to Thomas Jefferson, in Louisville, Kentucky.42 Jefferson, one of Ezekiel's heroes, was thirty-three when he authored the Declaration of Independence so he is represented as a youthful figure standing on a huge Liberty Bell with four symbolic figures around the bell. The figures symbolize the spirits of Liberty, Brotherhood, Justice, and Equality. Lorado Taft referred to the bell-shaped pedestal idea as novel and interesting. It was commissioned in 1899 by Bernhard and Isaac Bernheim for the courthouse in Louisville at a cost of $50,000. A replica was unveiled in 1910 at the University of Virginia. This monument represented for Ezekiel a new idealism of expressive truth.

His statue of Eve modeled in 1881 is now in a private collection in Cincinnati.
Ezekiel modeled the bust of Bellamy Storer in his studio on Fourth Street.
Done in 1886 a marble bust of Jefferson as an older man is part of the collection of art in the United States capitol. Thomas Jefferson had been a presiding officer of the Senate, today his marble bust is over the speaker's chair in the senate chamber gallery.

In Cincinnati is Ezekiel's 1880 bronze of Abraham Lincoln, which is particularly rare and accurate since it is a composite portrait of the Civil War president. When planning this work the sculptor secured several copies of all the well-known portraits in existence of Lincoln from the time of his nomination to the presidency until his death. In observance of Lincoln's birthday, the sculpture was on exhibition in the window of Loring Andrews Company. Another large bronze bust of Lincoln, by Ezekiel, is now in the Public Library of Louisville, Kentucky.

Yet another work with an American theme is Senator Daniels, a Southern hero and great orator modeled in 1913 for a public park in Lynchburg, Virginia.

As a Virginian, a soldier, and a friend of the Lee family, Ezekiel's lifetime disappointment was not receiving a commission to create a monument to General Robert E. Lee. "In my home [state] I am considered a weak artist not equal to the task of making a Lee monument. They expect to see a finished work in a small model, and they do not take into consideration what I have done in my art in all these years without them." Throughout his life Ezekiel complained about the unfairness of competitions.

After forty years of professional work, Ezekiel finally received his first commission from the South, to create a statue of Stonewall Jackson. The request came from the Charleston, West Virginia chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Ezekiel, as a V.M.I cadet, was Corporal of the Guard who sat with Stonewall Jackson's body before burial. Ezekiel returned to America in 1909 for the unveiling of this bronze statue on the capitol grounds in Virginia. He made a replica for the V.M.I parade grounds which is one-quarter of life-size.

The Cincinnati chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy then commissioned a monument to those who died in the Union prison on Johnson's Island. Southern or Confederate Soldier was described as "The gallant 'Knight of the Lost Cause' Ezekiel's noble bit of bronze, an artistic treasure challenging comparison with any statue or monument on the shores or islands of the Great Lakes, a solitary figure stands with his hand shading his eyes that peer through the surrounding trees to see the excursion boats and steamers." The bronze figure was unveiled in 1910 on Johnson's Island cemetery.

Patriotically devoted to the South all his life, Ezekiel was proud of his participation in the Southern cause and one of his chief works is The Confederate Monument, also titled New South, in Arlington National Cemetery. It is fitting that the noted sculptor is buried at the foot of this monument commemorating the Confederacy, as Ezekiel was the only well-known American sculptor to see combat in the Civil War.

By Act of Congress approved June 6, 1900, a section of Arlington National Cemetery was set aside for the burial of the Confederate dead. William Howard Taft of Cincinnati, the then Secretary of War, was officially in charge of national cemeteries and he gave permission to the United Daughters of the Confederacy to erect a Confederate monument in Arlington.

The committee, aware that Ezekiel would not submit plans beforehand, asked for an idea of what he proposed to do. "I took out a lead pencil and a piece of paper and made a hurried little sketch which contained the whole idea as it flashed upon my mind. As usual in such cases, I have never been able to get away from the first intuitive concept."
Taft was president when the contract for the Confederate monument was given to Ezekiel. He told Ezekiel he was pleased the commission had been granted to him—“You have contributed a great deal towards the peaceful solution of our affairs.” When the Confederate monument cornerstone was laid, November 12, 1912, William Howard Taft addressed the members of the Daughters of the Confederacy. On June 4, 1914, the birthday anniversary of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, the monument was unveiled and President Wilson accepted it on behalf of the United States. The closing words of his speech brought out the sculptor’s idea of making this monument a peace offering indicating a reunited people.

“The development of patriotic themes was Ezekiel’s specialty.” The crowning work of his life was The Confederate Monument in Arlington which cost $75,000 and overlooks monuments to Washington and Lee. Ezekiel asked to be buried in the Soldier’s Cemetery at Arlington at the foot of the work he loved the most and on which he labored with greatest satisfaction. The inscription on his own grave stone in Arlington is the simple epitaph the distinguished sculptor selected before his death on March 27, 1917.

By the time of his death Ezekiel’s style of art was no longer in fashion. As early as 1889 neo-classicism began a slow decline and Impressionism became the favored form of expression. The Armory Exhibition of 1913 marked the beginning of modernism in American art. “The neo-classic sculptor was as alien to post Civil War American society, which had cast off the Jeffersonian idealism out of which neo-classicism grew, as he was to the foreign land where he had chosen to live and work.” Much support for such sculpture came from America, and the sculptural forms did express an American ideal derived from non-American iconography. These sculptors reiterated the classical concept of the human body as the ultimate artistic ideal—an ideal of beauty rather than expressiveness.

Two generations of American sculptors were pioneers in Italy. Among the exceptionally talented artists who migrated to Rome were: Hiram Powers, Horatio Greenough, Thomas Crawford, Moses Ezekiel, Richard Greenough, William Wetmore Story, Paul Akers, Harriet Hosmer, Randolph Rogers, Edward Bartholomew, and

A lifetime of disappointment for Ezekiel was his failure to receive a commission to create a monument to Robert E. Lee.

As a student Ezekiel met Robert E. Lee who urged him to become an artist.

His most important work with an American patriotic theme was his monument to Thomas Jefferson in Louisville, Kentucky.
William Henry Rinehart. They wished to establish America as the equal of Europe in Art, “yet the products of this school have often been condemned as cold and lifeless.”

Hiram Powers who like Ezekiel benefited from the Cincinnati milieu so encouraging to artists preceded Ezekiel to Europe. Powers was the first American sculptor to win international acclaim; but Ezekiel was the first American to win the Prize of Rome. Powers’ famous work *The Greek Slave* is in the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art; and it was a coup for Ezekiel to receive the commission for the Corcoran Gallery of Art niches—“The Great Artists of the World.”

While Ezekiel remained conservative, his contemporary Rodin created tormented and dramatic works which fiercely opposed classicism and its static ideals. “Ezekiel’s prime concern was the literary and historical idea behind the work.” His sculptural works successfully interpret his abstract ideas. Sculpture was his vehicle to give tangible form to living ideas. “The literary sculptors had taken the first steps toward a genuinely American sculpture by successfully creating sculptures with American themes.”

In lasting materials, Ezekiel has transmitted his feelings to future generations. The widely acclaimed sculptor is an important part of Cincinnati’s heritage, both by his works and through his family. The first mention of the name of Ezekiel is in the Old Testament. “The name became obscure from the 1st century until the latter part of the 18th century; until it was revived by the earliest known ancestors of the present family who flourished in Amsterdam, Holland. The genealogy of the Ezekiel family is something that certainly should interest members of that family whose name has outlived the lapse of ages.” Noted sculptural works have outlived the century and can regenerate a family name. A special kind of history can be told about these scattered statues, busts, bas-reliefs, and monuments brought together in the recently discovered collection of ninety albumen photographs.

When Ezekiel was in Cincinnati in 1884 for the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition he said: “You cannot put art in prison nor ignore it, nor fete it, nor make it die. Once born, there it stands and lives, working its own quiet way through ages. No temporary encouragement, no neglect can alter its worth. Its real worth will make itself known in time, and not even the artist’s modesty can keep his work from finding its level some day.”

Much of the work of this prolific and talented sculptor is unknown today because study of Ezekiel’s art has been temporarily neglected. Yet his sculptures along with the newly found vintage photographs and drawings have particular significance to our Cincinnati history. With the exhibition, “Moses Ezekiel: Prix de Rome Sculptor,” his art can now be re-evaluated and the name of Ezekiel recognized once more.
from the Baths of Diocletian, Jeptha Workum.

by Ezekiel was of his nephew

One of the many portraits done

"Moses Jacob Ezekiel: Prix de Rome Sculptor" exhibition at Hebrew

Union College has located more than thirty original drawings by Ezekiel.

that no known drawings exist. However, the curator of the 1986-1987

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Jewish Historical Society, No. 28, 1922, p. 7.

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Chyet and Gutmann, p. 165. The Benjamin Hotchkiss bust is on

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For history of exhibitions see Encyclopedia of World Art, "Exhibitions,


Philipson, p. 12.

Clara Enskine Clement and Lawrence Hutton, American Artists of the

Nineteenth Century, (Boston, 1885), p. 243.

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Regina Soria, Journal of the Archives of American Art, American Jewish


Philipson, p. 25.

Crawford is renowned for his sculpture decorations of the capitol—

colossal statue Liberty for capitol dome; bronze doors of Senate wing; and

Indian Chief Mourning His Race, pediment of North Wing. Jay Cantor,

"Temple of the Arts: Museum Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America,


Henry K. Bush-Brown, "The Arts Through the Ages," Art and Archaeology,

Vol. XI, No. 6, June 1921, p. 234.

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Henry Clay Ezekiel, Private Collection of Pictures and Sculptures, Traxel

Art Galleries, May 24, 1930, p. 18.

Ibid., p. 17.

Katherine H. Wrenshall, "An American Sculptor in Rome," Art International,


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Millard F. Rogers, Jr., The Golden Age: Cincinnati Painters of the Nineteenth

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Archives, Arlington National Cemetery, Sir Moses Ezekiel (1844-1917),

p. 2.

Stanley F. Chyet and Joseph Gutmann, eds., Moses Jacob Ezekiel: Memoirs

from the Baths of Diocletian, (Detroit, 1975), p. 130. Ezekiel described many

of the pictured sculptures in his memoirs. Lincoln monument by Thomas

Dow Jones is at the State Capitol, Columbus, Ohio.

Chyet and Gutmann, p. 136.

Ibid., p. 139.
Works by Ezekiel in public collections in Cincinnati

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Ezekiel works in private collections in Cincinnati


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