

Thomas Andrews Hendricks

(1819-1885)

Thomas Andrews Hendricks, a U.S. representative and senator from Indiana and the 21st vice president of the United States, was born near Zanesville, Ohio. Raised in Shelby County, Indiana, Hendricks served in the Indiana house of representatives and senate before winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1851. He held office for two terms, and in 1855 President Franklin Pierce named him commissioner of the Department of Interior General Land Office. As a U.S. senator from 1863 to 1869, Hendricks was part of a small Democratic minority and strongly opposed Republican plans for Reconstruction. Hendricks served as governor of Indiana from 1873 to 1877, and although he was often named as a potential presidential candidate, he never secured the nomination. After an unsuccessful bid for the vice presidency in the disputed Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, Hendricks won the position as Grover Cleveland's running mate in 1884. He died after serving only eight months as vice president.



A daguerreotype of Thomas A. Hendricks by the Mathew Brady studio, after 1863.

(Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

In 1886 Ulric S.J. Dunbar requested permission to submit a portrait model of Thomas A. Hendricks to the Joint Committee on the Library, suggesting that those who knew Hendricks could recommend improvements to this model before it was carved in marble. In a letter to the committee, Dunbar advised that because no work from life could be created of the late vice president, “the sooner a bust is secured after the decease the better his lineaments can be recognized and criticised [sic] by his friends.” Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark reviewed the model and submitted his positive recommendations, for what he deemed a credible likeness, to the Joint Committee on the Library. Although the Senate had approved that busts of former vice president’s be placed in the Senate Chamber gallery in 1886—the same year Dunbar submitted his model—it was not until four years later that a bust of Hendricks was authorized. Dunbar was ultimately awarded the commission, and the finished bust was placed in the Senate Chamber in August 1890.

Dunbar’s bust of Hendricks seems to reflect the last few years of the vice president’s life, when he was plagued by poor health and conflicts within the Democratic Party. The sculpture is a straightforward, sober likeness with a degree of honest naturalism evident in the furrowed brow and the careful depiction of three moles near the mouth. Together with the elaborately drilled pupils, this simple realism generates the feeling of a disillusioned and unwell man.

Dunbar was born in London, Ontario, in 1862. After working in Philadelphia, he settled in Washington, D.C., where he became a prolific maker of portrait busts as well as full-length figures, executing more than 150 pieces during his lifetime. In addition to the Hendricks bust, the artist sculpted the Senate’s marble portrait of Martin Van Buren (p. 378) for the Vice Presidential Bust Collection. Dunbar also created an imposing bronze of Alexander Robey “Boss” Shepherd and the *Ross Memorial* for the District of Columbia building. Other works by the artist are held by the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Dunbar’s sculptures were exhibited at the Atlanta, St. Louis, Buffalo, San Diego, and San Francisco Expositions, as well as the Sesquicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia.

Thomas A. Hendricks

Ulric Stonewall Jackson Dunbar (1862-1927)

Marble, modeled 1886, carved 1890

29¼ x 27 x 17 inches (74.3 x 68.6 x 43.2 cm)

Unsigned

Commissioned by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1890

Accepted by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1890

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