

# Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller

(1908–1979)

Born in Bar Harbor, Maine, Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller was the grandson of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., the founder of Standard Oil, and of Nelson Aldrich, a U.S. senator from 1881 to 1911. Before entering government service, Rockefeller worked in his family's oil, real estate, and banking businesses. During World War II, Franklin Roosevelt appointed him coordinator of inter-American affairs for the State Department and then assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs. Later, Rockefeller was undersecretary of health, education, and welfare during the Eisenhower administration. In 1958 he won election as governor of New York, a post he held for 14 years.

Following several unsuccessful bids for the Republican presidential nomination, Rockefeller was nominated in 1974 by President Gerald R. Ford to fill the vacancy in the vice presidency that occurred when Richard Nixon resigned the presidency and Ford succeeded him. Congress confirmed Rockefeller as the 41st vice president of the United States under the provisions of the 25th Amendment. He held the office until January 1977 and then retired to philanthropic and artistic activities. With a lifelong interest in art, Rockefeller served variously as trustee, treasurer, president, and chairman of the board of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and he was founder and president of the Museum of Primitive Art, now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He died in New York City in 1979.

The U.S. Senate commissioned a bust of Nelson Rockefeller in 1983 as part of its ongoing Vice Presidential Bust Collection. Traditionally, the subject's family is permitted to select the sculptor, and the Senate funds the work. For this bust the Rockefeller family requested that artist John Calabró be given the commission, and the family donated funds beyond the amount earmarked by the Senate to defray the additional costs of executing the sculpture. Although Architect of the Capitol George White agreed to proceed with the recommendation, he was disappointed with the work as it progressed. Regarding the plaster model by Calabró, he noted: "Even though it was a reasonable likeness, there was in my judgment a definite lack of personality in the piece."<sup>1</sup> Before the sculptor could complete the work to his own or White's satisfaction, however, his health failed. Vincent Palumbo, master stone carver for the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., was asked to finish the Rockefeller bust, which he carved in marble from Calabró's plaster model. The piece was unveiled at the Capitol on June 1, 1987, with both Calabró and Palumbo in attendance.

John Calabró studied at Cooper Union in New York and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, Italy, under Gaetano Cerere. During the course of Calabró's long career, he exhibited plaques, busts, and statues throughout the United States. His notable works include busts of George Washington, Albert Einstein, Dwight Eisenhower, Samuel Clemens, and Abraham Lincoln.



**The marble bust of the 41st vice president is unveiled in 1987 by his widow, Margaretta "Happy" Rockefeller, and his nephew, Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia.**

(Architect of the Capitol)

*Nelson A. Rockefeller*

**John Calabró (1908–1994)**

Marble, modeled 1984, carved 1987

23 ¼ x 20 ½ x 12 inches (59.1 x 52.1 x 30.5 cm)

Signed (on right side of base): JOHN CALABRO, SC.

Carver's mark (on right side of base): V. PALUMBO, ST.C.

Commissioned by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1983

Accepted by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1987

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