

Schuyler Colfax

(1823–1885)

Schuyler Colfax served as a U.S. representative from Indiana, and as the 17th vice president of the United States during the first term of President Ulysses S. Grant's administration. Born in New York City, Colfax grew up in Indiana where he became owner-editor of a prominent newspaper, the *St. Joseph Valley Register*. He was an active Whig until that party dissolved in the 1850s; he then redirected his energy toward the new Republican Party in his adopted state.

First elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1854, Colfax became an influential member and a strong anti-slavery advocate. He was elected Speaker in 1863 and served until 1869, when he assumed the vice presidency under Grant. After serving one term, he lost his bid for renomination in 1872. Implicated in the *Crédit Mobilier* scandal, a fraudulent financial scheme associated with the building of the Union Pacific Railroad, Colfax faced a loss of public support. Although he denied charges against him, and a motion to impeach him failed, the scandal's aftermath eclipsed his rising political career. The vice president finished his term as a discredited man; he was never to hold political office again. Colfax retired to his home in South Bend, Indiana, frequently traveling to give public lectures. He died in Minnesota in 1885.

Intending to commission a marble bust of Schuyler Colfax for the Senate's Vice Presidential Bust Collection, the Joint Committee on the Library requested a preliminary clay model from Indiana sculptor Frances M. Goodwin in 1896. Born in New-castle, Indiana, Goodwin had studied with famed sculptor Daniel Chester French at New York's Art Students League and at the Art Institute of Chicago. The former vice president's widow, Ellen Colfax, liked the preliminary model Goodwin submitted. On her recommendation, the committee approved the piece, and Goodwin began work on the bust that same year.

Ellen Colfax visited the sculptor's Chicago studio regularly, making suggestions that, as she put it, "will aid her in modeling a faithful likeness." The Piccirilli Brothers of New York translated Goodwin's clay model into marble, and the Joint Committee on the Library authorized acquisition in February of 1897. The work was placed on view immediately in a gallery-level niche of the Senate Chamber.



Indiana artist Frances M. Goodwin.
(Architect of the Capitol)

Schuyler Colfax

Frances Murphy Goodwin (1855-1929)

Marble, 1896/1897

30³/₈ x 29³/₄ x 18³/₄ inches (77.2 x 75.6 x 47.6 cm)

Signed (on subject's left front jacket): Frances. M. Goodwin.

Commissioned by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1896

Accepted by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1897

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