

Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr.

(born 1913)

Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr., the 40th vice president and 38th president of the United States, was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As a young man, he practiced law in Grand Rapids and then served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Discharged in 1946 as a lieutenant commander, Ford was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1948; he served continuously for 13 terms, eventually becoming House Republican leader.

In 1973, following Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation, President Richard Nixon nominated Ford to replace Agnew under the terms of the recently ratified 25th Amendment to the Constitution. (Until 1967 the Constitution did not provide for a midterm vacancy in the vice presidency.) Ford was subsequently confirmed by Congress but served as vice president for less than a year. When Nixon resigned in August 1974 amid allegations stemming from the Watergate scandal, Ford was sworn in as president. In 1976 he was nominated as the Republican candidate for president against former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia; Ford lost the election by a narrow margin. He retired to Rancho Mirage, California. Gerald Ford is the only person to hold the offices of vice president and president without being elected to either position.

Gerald Ford selected sculptor Walker Hancock to execute his likeness for the Senate's Vice Presidential Bust Collection. The artist had earlier completed a bust of Hubert Humphrey (p. 194) for the collection. Ford sat for Hancock in mid-1983 at the Ford home in California; the sittings took place over several days, with the artist also taking photographs and measurements of Ford's head. Hancock later noted: "I had meals with him and was constantly in his company, so that I felt that I was well acquainted with him by the time I left." The artist wrote to Architect of the Capitol George White following the sittings: "He has a splendid head for sculpture, and I am fortunate in being assigned to model this bust." The sculpture was carved in Washington, D.C., by Vincent Palumbo, master stone carver at the Washington National Cathedral, and was dedicated in 1985 at ceremonies held at the Capitol and attended by Ford.

One of the most distinguished classical portrait sculptors of the 20th century, Walker Hancock is represented by many important sculptures in Washington, D.C., including busts of Chief Justices Earl Warren and Warren E. Burger at the Supreme Court of the United States, and the monumental seated figure of James Madison at the Library of Congress. Two of Hancock's works are displayed at the National Cathedral: a larger-than-life-size bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln and the figure of Christ above the altar. Hancock also completed a third bust, that of George H.W. Bush (p. 52), for the Senate's Vice Presidential Bust Collection. In 1981 Hancock was awarded the National Sculpture Society's Medal of Honor, and in 1989 President Bush presented

him with a National Medal of Arts "for his extraordinary contribution to the art of sculpture, and for demonstrating the enduring beauty of the classical tradition."¹



Attending the unveiling ceremony at the Capitol with President Ford are sculptor Walker Hancock, right, and carver Vincent Palumbo, left, 1985.

(Courtesy Gerald R. Ford Library)

Gerald R. Ford

Walker Kirtland Hancock (1901-1998)

Marble, modeled 1984, carved 1985

26 x 22 x 12¼ inches (66 x 55.9 x 31.1 cm)

Signed and dated (on subject's truncated left arm): WALKER HANCOCK 1984

Carver's mark (under subject's truncated left arm): C V. V. PALUMBO / 1985

Commissioned by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1983

Accepted by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1985

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