

Copyright Lore

Statues May Be Protected by Copyright

■ *Judith Nierman*

The second general revision of the U.S. copyright law in 1870 is important not only because it placed the copyright function in the Library of Congress but it also, for the first time, statues, statuary, and models became eligible for copyright protection. There is no way of knowing how

many claims to copyright in a sculpture have been registered. But registration applications for many well known sculptures, as well as the sculptors themselves, have passed through the Copyright Office.

Among these works are the Marine Corps War Memorial statue by Felix de Weldon, who visited the Office in 1977. De Weldon's bronze masterpiece, a monumental work with figures four stories tall, depicts Marines raising the American flag on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima in the final days of World War II. Initial design work on the statue was begun just hours following the battle after de Weldon, an enlisted man in the Navy stationed at Patuxent Naval Air Station, saw Joe Rosenthal's gripping photo of the event.



PHOTOS BY CHARLES GIBBONS

Another statue well known to Copyright Office employees and located in the James Madison Memorial Building is the nearly 8-ton depiction in Cararra marble of

President Madison, which was commissioned by the Architect of the Capitol. Sculptor Walker Hancock's statue was sculpted in Pietrasanta, Italy, from a 30-ton block of solid marble. In a 1977 interview with the Smithsonian Institution, Hancock said, "I was determined that though this figure might sit rigid and attentive, rather than relaxed as the usual seated figure is, that it should have a certain flow of life through it." He continued, "I wanted to have him sitting there with his book in hand listening intently, and ready to leap up at any moment"

Completed in 1975, the sculpture was delivered to the Library in 1976, but remained in storage for 2 years before it was installed on a pedestal of white Vermont marble in the newly completed Madison Hall. Lore about the Office says that ice was placed on the pedestal and the figure lowered onto the slippery substance, permitting precise positioning before the ice melted.

