



# DAUGHTER OF INDEPENDENCE

by C. L. Rothwell

"A brilliant scene on the waters of the harbor" wrote the New York Times June 20, 1885, when the long delayed Statue of Liberty arrived aboard the Isere. The Statue had arrived Tuesday evening, June 16, in 214 packing crates. Official ceremonies on June 19 welcomed the lady to Bedloe Island.

From the start, the project had been plagued with delays and setbacks. The year was 1865, and the scene was a party at the home of French professor, Edward de Laboulaye, near Paris. An ardent admirer of the United States, he was telling his guests, including sculptor, Brother Auguste Bartholdi, about the coming birthday of America. He took great pride in the fact France had helped America gain independence.

"If a monument should rise in the United States, as a memorial to their independence, I should think it only natural if it were built by a united effort, a common work of both our nations," said Laboulaye "Liberty is the daughter of Independence, the sister of Justice, the mother of Equality," he said.

A French country newspaper had just raised money to send a medal to the widow of President Lincoln. It bore the inscription: "Dedicated by French democrates to Lincoln, twice-elected President of the United States - honest Lincoln, who abolished Slavery, reestablished the Union, and saved the Republic without veiling the statue of Liberty."

The words stuck in Bartholdi's mind, and he decided a fitting memorial would be a "statue of Liberty." Bartholdi sailed for America to rouse American interest in the project. Entering New York harbor, he was spellbound by the scene. That "marvelous sight" gave him his first vision of the statue, and he determined it should be erected in this "gateway to America."

The monument was to be completed in 1876, the Centennial Year. The Philadelphia World's Fair prepared to display the statue but received only the right arm with the torch. The head was shown in Paris two years later.

On February 22, 1877, Congress had approved the site of Bedloe's Island for the erection of the statue, but no money was forthcoming to build the pedestal. The statue was finished on May 21, 1884, and presented to U.S. Minister Morton on July 4. Work on the pedestal had finally started, but soon funds ran out.

Joseph Pulitzer, new owner of the World, personally took up the cause with a headline "The Pedestal Disgrace." Money immediately began pouring in.

In the midst of this crisis, the Statue of Liberty arrived in New York Harbor. She had sailed from France on May 21, one year after her completion. Government officials and 20,000 citizens escorted the Isere to her pier at Bedloe's Island. Bands played the "Marseillaise" as representatives of various French societies joined the Americans for a parade from the Battery to City Hall. The New York Times described the crowds lining Broadway as "like a solid wall." The first rivet of the statue was driven July 12, 1886, almost a year after Pulitzer succeeded in raising \$100,000 for the pedestal. On October 28, 1886, the last rivet was driven, and President Grover Cleveland was on hand to dedicate the statue.

Of the original men present at the birth of the idea for the statue, only the sculptor, Brother Bartholdi, lived to see the dedication. He stood in the head of the statue and pulled the rope unveiling the Statue of Liberty.

The original tablet in the pedestal gave credit to the "patriotic citizens" who contributed to the pedestal fund. Graven on a bronze plate within the pedestal today is Emma Lazarus' poem, "The New Colossus." It was not there originally. The story goes that Miss Lazarus wrote the poem in a moment of inspiration after watching immigrants come into Ward's Island. She sat down and wrote:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land  
to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch,  
whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles.  
From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome;  
her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that  
twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips.

"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

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