

# Statue of Liberty



The Statue of Liberty (Liberty Enlightening the World; French: La Liberté éclairant le monde) is a colossal neoclassical sculpture on Liberty Island in New York Harbor in New York City, United States. The copper statue, a gift from the people of France, was designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and its metal framework was built by Gustave Eiffel. The statue was dedicated on October 28, 1886.

The statue is a figure of Libertas, the Roman goddess of liberty. She holds a torch above her head with her right hand, and in her left hand carries a tabula ansata inscribed JULY IV MDCCLXXVI (July 4, 1776, in Roman numerals), the date of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. A broken chain and shackle lie at her feet as she walks forward, commemorating the national abolition of slavery following the American Civil War.[8] After its dedication the statue became an icon of freedom and of the United States, being subsequently seen as a symbol of welcome to immigrants arriving by sea.

## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

### Origin

According to the National Park Service, the idea of a monument presented by the French people to the United States was first proposed by Édouard René de Laboulaye, president of the French Anti-Slavery Society and a prominent and important political thinker of his time. The

project is traced to a mid-1865 conversation between Laboulaye, a staunch abolitionist, and Frédéric Bartholdi, a sculptor. In after-dinner conversation at his home near Versailles, Laboulaye, an ardent supporter of the Union in the American Civil War, is supposed to have said: "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 united effort—a common work of both our nations." [10] The National Park Service, in a 2000 report, however, deemed this a legend traced to an 1885 fundraising pamphlet, and that the statue was most likely conceived in 1870. [11] In another essay on their website, the Park Service suggested that Laboulaye was minded to honor the Union victory and its consequences, "With the abolition of slavery and the Union's victory in the Civil War in 1865, Laboulaye's wishes of freedom and democracy were turning into a reality in the United States. In order to honor these achievements, Laboulaye proposed that a gift be built for the United States on behalf of France. Laboulaye hoped that by calling attention to the recent achievements of the United States, the French people would be inspired to call for their own democracy in the face of a repressive monarchy." [12]

## Design

The foundation of Bartholdi's statue was to be laid inside Fort Wood, a disused army base on Bedloe's Island constructed between 1807 and 1811. Since 1823, it had rarely been used, though during the Civil War, it had served as a recruiting station. [78] The fortifications of the structure were in the shape of an eleven-point star. The statue's foundation and pedestal were aligned so that it would face southeast, greeting ships entering the harbor from the Atlantic Ocean. [79] In 1881, the New York committee commissioned Richard Morris Hunt to design the pedestal. Within months, Hunt submitted a detailed plan, indicating that he expected construction to take about nine months. [80] He proposed a pedestal 114 feet (35 m) in height; faced with money problems, the committee reduced that to 89 feet (27 m). [81]

Hunt's pedestal design contains elements of classical architecture, including Doric portals, as well as some elements influenced by Aztec architecture. [35] The large mass is fragmented with architectural detail, in order to focus attention on the statue. [81] In form, it is a truncated pyramid, 62 feet (19 m) square at the base and 39.4 feet (12.0 m) at the top. The four sides are identical in appearance. Above the door on each side, there are ten disks upon which Bartholdi proposed to place the coats of arms of the states (between 1876 and 1889, there were 38 of them), although this was not done. Above that, a balcony was placed on each side, framed by pillars. Bartholdi placed an observation platform near the top of the pedestal, above which the statue itself rises. [82] According to author Louis Auchincloss, the pedestal "craggily evokes the power of an ancient Europe over which rises the dominating figure of the Statue of Liberty". [81] The committee hired former army General Charles Pomeroy Stone to oversee the construction work. [83] Construction on the 15-foot-deep (4.6 m) foundation began in 1883, and the pedestal's cornerstone was laid in 1884. [80] In Hunt's original conception, the pedestal was to

have been made of solid granite. Financial concerns again forced him to revise his plans; the final design called for poured concrete walls, up to 20 feet (6.1 m) thick, faced with granite blocks.[84][85] This Stony Creek granite came from the Beattie Quarry in Branford, Connecticut.[86] The concrete mass was the largest poured to that time.[85]

## ANNOUNCEMENT AND EARLY WORK

### Announcement

By 1875, France was enjoying improved political stability and a recovering postwar economy. Growing interest in the upcoming Centennial Exposition to be held in Philadelphia led Laboulaye to decide it was time to seek public support.[42] In September 1875, he announced the project and the formation of the Franco-American Union as its fundraising arm. With the announcement, the statue was given a name, Liberty Enlightening the World.[43] The French would finance the statue; Americans would be expected to pay for the pedestal.[44] The announcement provoked a generally favorable reaction in France, though many Frenchmen resented the United States for not coming to their aid during the war with Prussia.[43] French monarchists opposed the statue, if for no other reason than it was proposed by the liberal Laboulaye, who had recently been elected a senator for life.[44] Laboulaye arranged events designed to appeal to the rich and powerful, including a special performance at the Paris Opera on April 25, 1876, that featured a new cantata by the composer Charles Gounod. The piece was titled *La Liberté éclairant le monde*, the French version of the statue's announced name.[43]

Initially focused on the elites, the Union was successful in raising funds from across French society. Schoolchildren and ordinary citizens gave, as did 181 French municipalities. Laboulaye's political allies supported the call, as did descendants of the French contingent in the American Revolutionary War. Less idealistically, contributions came from those who hoped for American support in the French attempt to build the Panama Canal. The copper may have come from multiple sources and some of it is said to have come from a mine in Visnes.

## CONSTRUCTION IN FRANCE

### Construction

On his return to Paris in 1877, Bartholdi concentrated on completing the head, which was exhibited at the 1878 Paris World's Fair. Fundraising continued, with models of the statue put on sale. Tickets to view the construction activity at the Gaget, Gauthier & Co. workshop were also offered.[57] The French government authorized a lottery; among the prizes were valuable silver plate and a terracotta model of the statue. By the end of 1879, about 250,000 francs had been raised.[58]

The head and arm had been built with assistance from Viollet-le-Duc, who fell ill in 1879. He soon died, leaving no indication of how he intended to transition from the copper skin to his proposed masonry pier.[59] The following year, Bartholdi was able to obtain the services of the innovative designer and builder Gustave Eiffel.[57] Eiffel and his structural engineer, Maurice Koechlin, decided to abandon the pier and instead build an iron truss tower.