The Statue of Liberty Exhibit
The Statue of Liberty is a tapestry of old symbols woven into new meanings. The broken shackles at her feet stand for freedom newly achieved. The tablet she holds, inscribed “July 4, 1776,” identifies her as an apostle of American freedom, law, and justice. Her classical face and drapery suggest a Roman goddess of liberty, and the seven rays of her crown correspond to the seven seas and seven continents. The light from her torch bespeaks her original name—“Liberty Enlightening the World”—and announces her lofty mission.

Cover: A full-sized copper replica of Liberty's face.
The Statue of Liberty is more than a monument. She is a beloved friend, an enduring symbol of freedom to millions around the world. For many, visiting her is like a pilgrimage to a shrine.

In 1986, on the occasion of Liberty's centennial, a permanent exhibit was opened in the base of the Statue. This exhibit is a visual biography with two major themes: the Statue's origin and construction, and her evolution into a national and international symbol. The Statue of Liberty Exhibit pays tribute to the people who created, built, and paid for her. It honors the ideals she represents and the hopes she inspires.

This book highlights some of the chapters in Liberty's history as they are presented in the exhibit.
The original torch—a revered symbol itself—is now on display in the main lobby. It was removed from the Statue in 1984 after serious structural defects were found.

The flame has been altered several times since 1886 in attempts to illuminate the torch from within, an idea never intended by the French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi. The last major alteration took place in 1916 when 250 sections were cut out of the flame and replaced with amber panes of glass. Water leaking through the seams over the years damaged the torch and arm. Liberty now holds a gilded flame lighted from the outside, as the sculptor originally planned.
Visitors entering the exhibit see a full-sized copper replica of Liberty's face fashioned by the same hammering technique as the original. For the first time, they can meet Liberty face-to-face and sense her colossal scale.

The first part of the exhibit recounts the 21 years between the birth of the idea and the dedication of the Statue. The story begins with the two Frenchmen who were the principal figures in the creation of the monument: Edouard de Laboulaye, a historian who conceived the idea of a gift from France to the United States, and Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor who created the Statue and guided the project to completion.
From 1870 to 1875 Bartholdi carefully refined the figure of Liberty. He made many study models, from small preliminary figures to 4-foot high models, before he arrived at a final form. This display shows most of the changes that took place during this process. The large terra cotta statue at the far right is the best surviving example of the 4-foot models from which the Statue’s final measurements were taken.
"Liberty" was a controversial idea in the 19th century. To many people, it suggested violence and revolution. Lafayette and Barbé-Marbois agreed that their monument should not be seen as lending support to the violent inciting the three emblems of liberty: peace, liberty, and equality. When asked if they would call the monument Liberty Enlightening the World, the sculptor himself would not answer, but it may have been the name the public gave it.
A photograph of the original workshop in France shows how the Statue was enlarged through successive stages to its final size. In the exhibit, a simulated workshop illustrates how the same techniques were used in the 1980s to duplicate the Statue’s torch, face, and left foot. Scale models, molds, and tools explain the fabrication process step by step.
Though Liberty's feet are enormous, they are difficult for visitors to see. A full-sized copper replica of the left foot, measuring 6 feet, 8 inches wide, was made for museum-goers to touch. It was fashioned—like the original—from thin copper sheets hammered from the reverse side into negative molds. This technique, known as repoussé, is explained in a video program taped in the artisans' workshop.
An 8-foot cut-away model reveals the internal structure of the Statue. Displayed so it can be seen from all sides, it clearly shows the armature system devised by the ingenious French engineer Gustave Eiffel to support the copper shell.

Eiffel's system consists of a central iron tower—or pylon—anchored deeply within the pedestal. From the pylon hang the second and third stages of framing. This framing supports the copper shell and transfers its weight and other stresses inward to the pylon.

A nearby model demonstrates how the spring-like support bars attached to the skin lend sufficient flexibility to the 151-foot figure for it to withstand gale-force winds and the temperature extremes of New York Harbor.
It took five years of imaginative work and special events in France to raise the money needed to pay for the Statue. Several ideas employed there are still very much alive in the United States. Souvenir statuettes and product labels with Liberty’s image were popular then as well as now. Examples of these and other objects used for fund raising, some dating from the 1870s, are displayed in this section of the exhibit.
Paying for the Pedestal

The price tag for building the pedestal and erecting the Statue topped $300,000. The American Committee raised half this sum between 1877 and 1884. Then a crisis occurred: the Statue was due to arrive, funds had run out, and work on the pedestal stopped. In March 1885, publisher Joseph Pulitzer and his newspaper, The World, came to the rescue with a highly successful six-month fund raising campaign.
The French paid for the Statue; the Americans agreed to build the pedestal. But raising the $300,000 needed for that work went slowly until Joseph Pulitzer and the New York "World" entered the campaign. Colorful mementos, cartoons, and souvenirs recall the 8-year-long drive for funds that sparked little enthusiasm at first but eventually enjoyed wide public support.

The Statue’s pedestal is an architectural monument in its own right. It was designed by Richard Morris Hunt, a prominent American architect. Scale models of several of Hunt’s alternative designs were specially constructed for this exhibit to help illustrate the long search for the right pedestal for Liberty to stand upon.
The long-awaited dedication took place on October 28, 1886, twenty-one years after the idea for the Statue was first proposed. Because of rain, the fireworks display seen in this woodcut took place four days later. A video tape of historic scenes recreates the excitement of those events.

Many gifts of gratitude were exchanged between French and American dignitaries. The mayor bestowed "the freedom of the City of New York (honorary citizenship) on Bartholdi with a richly illuminated document (left). From the French government came vases made by the celebrated Sévres porcelain firm for those Americans who contributed to the project.
During its first century, the Statue of Liberty underwent many renovations but none so extensive as the restoration of the 1980s. The diagram on the opposite page lists the problems that existed throughout the structure and the measures taken to correct them.

One serious problem was the iron bars, some 1,825 in number, that connected the copper skin to the inner frame. Because of galvanic action, many of them had corroded at their point of contact with the skin. To resolve this problem permanently, all the armature bars were replaced with bars of stainless steel, carefully insulated from the copper by Teflon tape.

Some of the original iron bars are displayed so that visitors can see how each one was individually shaped to fit its section of the Statue.
The Torch
- Problem: The lantern leaked, the iron structure was severely corroded, and the copper envelope was deteriorated
- Solution: Removed and rebuilt torch

The Crown Platform
- Problem: Advanced corrosion of iron framework
- Solution: New platform designed and installed

The Head Arches
- Problem: Some structural cracks
- Solution: Cracks repaired and strengthened

The Shoulder
- Problem: Weak connection of right arm to central pylon
- Solution: Reworked connection

Emergency Elevator
- Problem: Difficulty to respond rapidly to emergencies
- Solution: Provided new emergency elevator up through Statue

The Helical Staircase
- Problem: Unsafe condition of handrail and rest seats
- Solution: Replaced handrail, removed seats

The Skin Support System
- Problem: Advanced corrosion of iron armature ribs, failure of copper saddles
- Solution: Replaced all ribs and saddles

The Copper Envelope – Exterior
- Problem: Rust staining
- Solution: Armature replaced and stains removed

The Guy Rods
- Problem: Sagged from lack of tension
- Solution: Restored tension

The Lattice Girders
- Problem: Advanced corrosion of girder components
- Solution: Replaced corroded components

Visitor Circulation
- Problem: Circulation patterns confused, limited elevator capacity
- Solution: Provided separate up and down stairs, new double deck elevator, and access for disabled persons

The Tie Rods
- Problem: Lack of tension
- Solution: Restored tension
The last section of the exhibit is devoted to Liberty’s evolution into an international symbol. Over the past century two modestly priced items, postcards and souvenir statuettes, have carried the Statue’s image around the world.

In one display, Liberty’s unmistakable form emerges from a mosaic wall pieced together from hundreds of picture postcards, some dating from the 1880s. Together they testify to Liberty’s wide-ranging popularity.
Between 1886 and 1924, fourteen million immigrants entered America through New York Harbor. To the newcomers, the Statue's uplifted torch said “welcome.” Many have tried to describe what they felt when they first saw Liberty in the harbor. The immigrants' own words—written and recorded on tape—are the heart of this tribute to the “Mother of Exiles.”

In 1883, Emma Lazarus contributed a copy of her poem “The New Colossus” to an auction to raise funds for the pedestal. A bronze plaque with the words of that poem was affixed to an interior wall of the base in 1903. This plaque is now part of the exhibit.
Tears of joy streamed in my face as we passed the Statue of Liberty.

A boy was screaming with joy, "Wake up, wake up, you can see the Statue of Liberty, you can see the Statue of Liberty."
During World War I, the Statue came to represent America itself. Original Liberty Bond posters, sheet music, and other publications with patriotic themes depict her role as a unifying symbol in a time of national trial. Early movie footage shows how soldiers and sailors greeted Liberty as their ships sailed past on their way to and from the war in Europe.
The "Statue of America"

During World War I, the Statue of Liberty came to symbolize America. Ships with immigrants now sailed past her carrying soldiers. America's enemies had become "The Red Menace," and Liberty Bonds were a means of supporting her. The Statue was regularly on display and in bond promotions. The bonds were with "That Liberty Not Perish," for example, and Liberty's possible section. Two million copies of these were ordered in two weeks.
From the time Liberty was conceived in France, her image has been exploited for commercial purposes. Manufacturers around the world have not hesitated to use the Statue to sell cigars, soap, and countless other products. A video program shows how the world of international advertising views the Statue.
The times have cast Liberty in many roles. She is Bartholdi's “Goddess of Liberty,” Emma Lazarus's “Mother of Exiles,” New York's “Lady in the Harbor.” To free men and women everywhere, she is the personification of America. This protean identity is the source of her vitality. Taking advantage of these many meanings, artists, cartoonists, and filmmakers all over the world have used Liberty as a stand-in, an easily recognizable image that quickly conveys their point.
The Statue in Popular Culture

From the beginning, Liberty has stirred the emotions of ordinary people, and has inspired folk artists and commercial manufacturers alike—not to debase her, but, in their own ways, to honor her. Through the years, the Statue's admirers have sewn, hammered, cut, molded, fused, painted, and printed her image on an extraordinary array of materials.
From Laboulaye's time on, Liberty has stirred deep emotions. She has inspired children, artists, craftsmen, manufacturers, and persons from every walk of life to honor her in their own ways. Through the years, the Statue's admirers have sewn, hammered, cut, molded, fired, printed, and painted her image on almost every material imaginable.
The exhibit closes with a wall of quotations reminding us that liberty is an aspiration shared the world over.

I am content! America is assured of her independence. Mankind has won its cause; liberty is no longer homeless on earth.
—Lafayette

Where liberty dwells there is my country.
—Unknown Latin author

Liberty costs a great price, and one must either resign himself to live without it or decide to pay its price.
—José Martí

I had reasoned this out in my mind, there were two things I had a right to, liberty and death. If I could not have one, I would have the other. . . .
—Harriet Tubman

Love of all the world is the most important thing, and liberty. Without liberty, there is no love.
—Marc Chagall

Liberty . . . is one of the greatest blessings that Heaven has bestowed upon mankind.
—Miguel de Cervantes

I would not care to be a king to lose my liberty.
—Phaedrus

Liberty is not the power to do what one wants, but it is the desire to do what one can.
—Jean-Paul Sartre

Liberty is never out of bounds or off limits: it spreads wherever it can capture the imagination of men.
—E. B. White

I am a lover of my own liberty and so I would do nothing to restrict yours.
—Mahatma Gandhi
National Park Service

The Statue of Liberty Exhibit was designed and produced by MetaForm/Roth/DEP (The Liberty/Ellis Island Collaborative) for the National Park Service.

This book was designed by MetaForm Inc. Photographs by Alan Shortall; inside covers and page 3, Dan Cornish/ESTO.


GPO: 1988-506-174

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