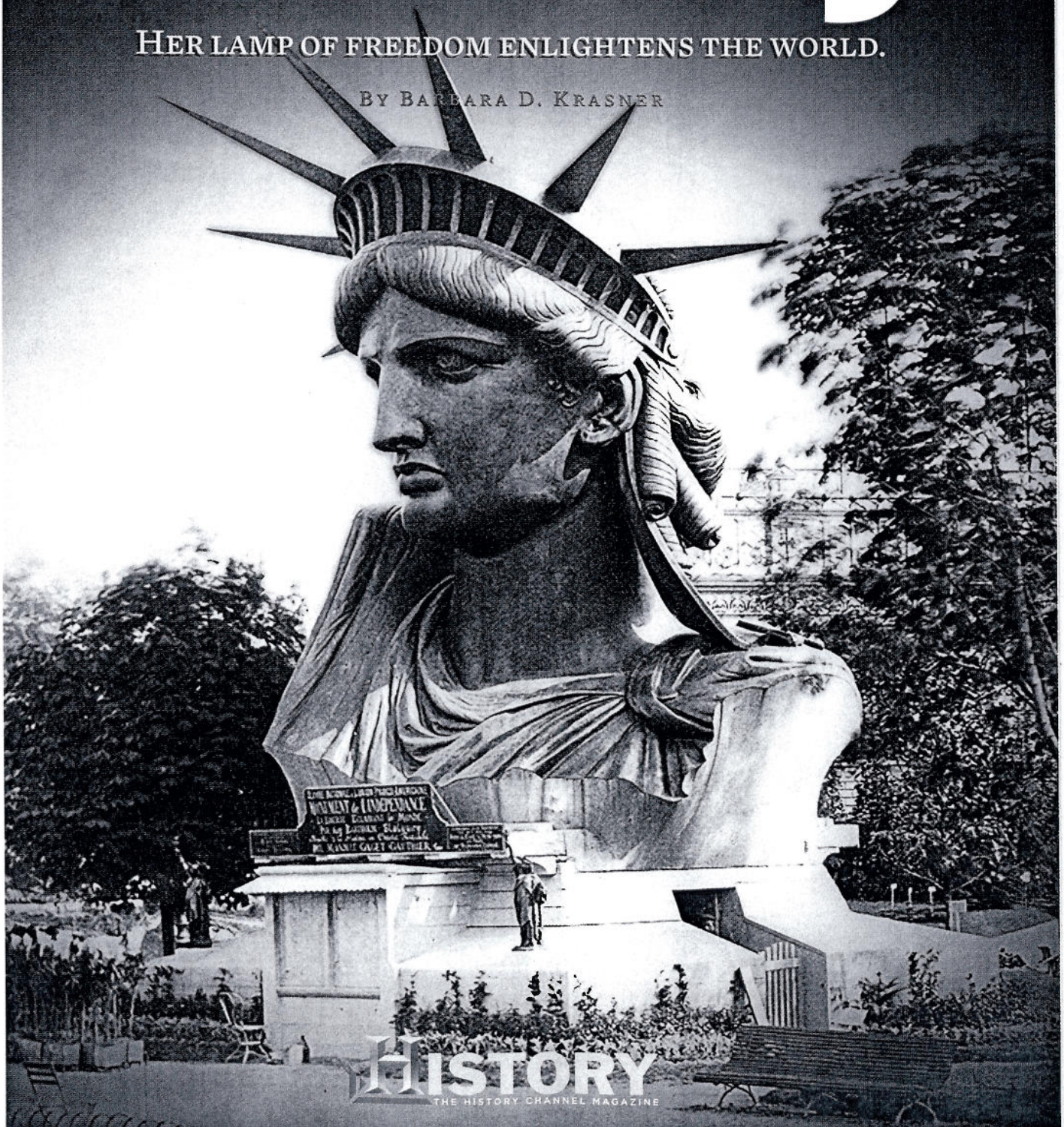


Lady Liberty

HER LAMP OF FREEDOM ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD.

BY BARBARA D. KRASNER



HISTORY
THE HISTORY CHANNEL MAGAZINE

Lady Liberty

AS GRAND AS THE IDEALS SHE REPRESENTS, BARTHOLDI'S MASTERWORK WELCOMES ALL SEEKING FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE.

The Statue of Liberty owes its colossal beginnings to a humble dinner party in a village near the palace of Versailles outside Paris. While French politician Edouard René Lefebvre de Laboulaye entertained a small number of literary men, artists, and fellow politicians at his home, the conversation turned to the bonds between France and the United States, proven during America's War of Independence. Laboulaye said, "When two hearts have beaten together, something always remains, among nations as among individuals." Why not, he suggested, build a monument for France to give to America in the name of friendship and the mutual commitment to liberty? The idea excited one guest in particular, sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.

Six years later, Bartholdi sailed to America without even a sketch in hand but inspired by something Laboulaye had written: "Liberty is the mother of a family that watches over the cradle of her children, that protects consciences ... Liberty is the sister of Justice and of Mercy, mother of Equality, Abundance, and Peace."

Voila! Patterned after his mother, Bartholdi's Statue would be a proud, tall woman, with one raised arm holding a torch. She would stand on a pedestal, larger than any known statue, ancient or modern. As his ship sailed into New York Harbor, he spotted a small island, perfect for the Statue. He wrote home, "Yes, in this very place shall be raised the Statue of Liberty, as grand as the idea which it embodies, casting radiance upon the two worlds." After his six-month visit to soak up American culture, he returned to France to begin work.

Initial funds were raised during a special dinner in Paris attended by both Americans and French. Headed by Laboulaye, the Union Franco-Américaine formed and brought in financial contributions from citizens, officeholders, and the City of Paris. But the funds were not suf-

ficient to complete the Statue in time for the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition. Only a portion of the Statue, the 42-foot arm holding the torch, was shown. Better late than never, the Union Franco-Américaine announced the fund was complete in 1880.

America had a part to play in the project as well. The American Committee for the Statue of Liberty, headed by Secretary of State William M. Evarts, and its subcommittees took action. The Legislation Committee spurred Congress to pass an act in 1877 for the construction and erection of the Statue's pedestal. The Finance Committee and the Pedestal Fund Committee had a tougher job. Even an art-loan exhibition and fund-raising auction featuring the talents of the most popular writers, artists, and actors of the day netted only \$15,000 of the necessary \$350,000.

The time had come for serious fund-raising. Hungarian immigrant Joseph Pulitzer, owner of the *New York World*, pitched in. He printed daily pleas for money and contributed \$1,000 from the newspaper. "New York ought to blush at this humiliating spectacle," he said.

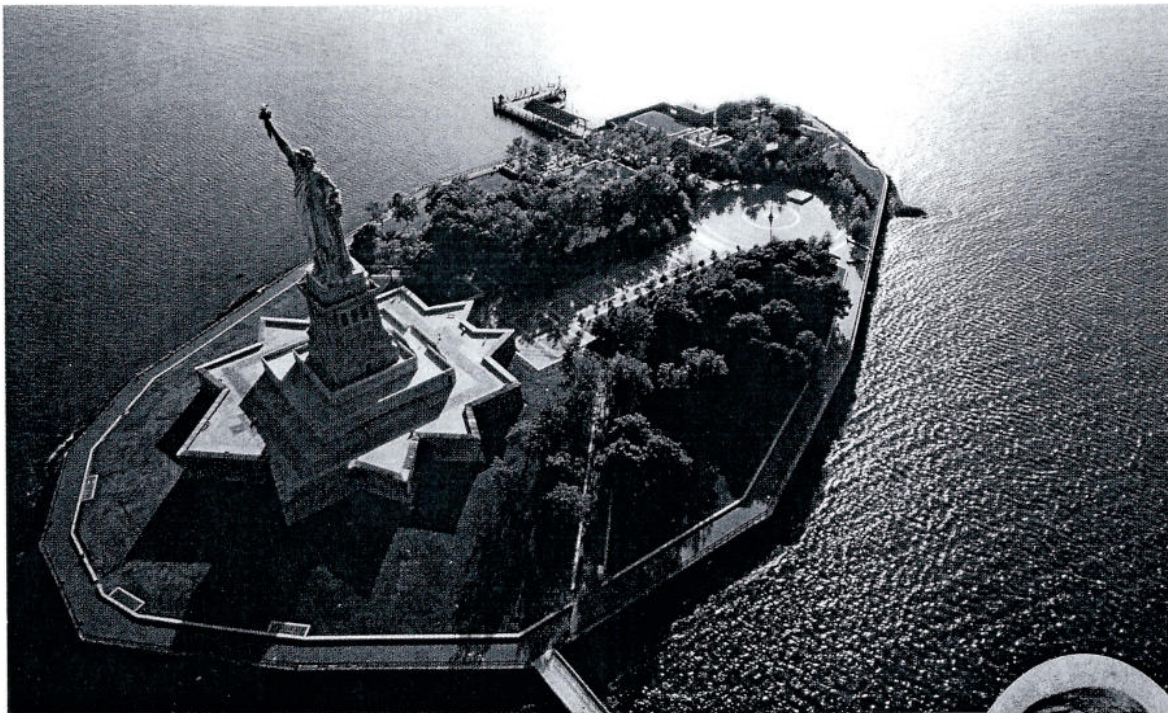
"The statue, the noble gift of our young sister republic is ready for us ... and we stand haggling and begging and scheming in order to raise enough money." Money poured in from all over America and the newspaper printed the name of every contributor.

Later that spring, the Statue—which already had been erected in Paris and presented to America's minister to France, Levi P. Morton—was disassembled. Packed into 214 wooden crates, with each part marked and numbered and loaded onto 70 railway cars, it trekked to the port of Rouen. On June 17, 1885, Liberty arrived in New York. Her 149-foot pedestal was nearly complete.

Despite fierce winds, rain, and a thick mist, *Liberty Enlightening the World* was unveiled on Oct. 28, 1886.

The Statue of Liberty, poised at the gateway to America, came to symbolize freedom for millions of immigrants. ♦





Above: *Lady Liberty stands tall upon her pedestal on Liberty Island in New York Harbor.*

Right: *American poet Emma Lazarus, author of "The New Colossus."*



'Give me your tired, your poor'

One person was conspicuously missing from the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in 1886. Although her poem, "The New Colossus," was read aloud during the ceremony, 37-year-old Emma Lazarus was in Europe and in rapidly declining health.

Three years earlier, former U.S. Secretary of State William M. Evarts called on the young, well-known poet, a former protégée of Ralph Waldo Emerson, to contribute a literary work to the Pedestal Fund's auction. She did not want to "write verses on order" and refused at first. Program chairwoman Constance Cary Harrison asked her to reconsider. Harrison pleaded, "Think of the Goddess standing on her pedestal down yonder in that bay, and holding her torch out to those Russian refugees of yours you are so fond of visiting at Ward's Island." Since the spring of 1882, Emma had been intrigued by the newly arrived Russian Jewish immigrants. Although her own family had been in America for four generations and her father had been listed in New York City's social registers, she took up the cause of these refugees through her articles and essays. She called for a Jewish homeland. She pushed for the founding of the Hebrew Technical Institute to teach the refugees farming and building trades.

She acquiesced to Harrison's request and penned, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," the now famous lines of "The New Colossus." Press coverage of the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition helped permanently link the poem with the Statue of Liberty, forever naming the Statue as the "Mother of Exiles."

Both Emma and her sonnet fell into obscurity until the turn of the 20th century when New York socialite and Lazarus family friend Georgina Schuyler stumbled upon the souvenir booklet in a bookstore. Together with Emma's friend and editor, Richard Watson Gilder, they cut through bureaucratic red tape to have the poem cast in bronze and bolted inside the Statue of Liberty's pedestal in 1903. In 1945, the plaque was moved to the Statue's main entrance.

More than 1 million visitors read Emma's words each year. —BK

The bronze plaque of Lazarus' famous sonnet contains a typo: the comma in "Keep, ancient lands" is missing, altering the meaning of the line, which reads "Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!"