

## This Day in History... October 28, 1886

# Grover Cleveland Dedicates Statue of Liberty



*The Statue of Liberty has welcomed over 12 million immigrants passing through New York harbor.*



*Stamp from the Liberty Series, which was named for the statue*



*The first US bi-colored definitive with a denomination under \$1.*



*The statue served as a functional lighthouse for its first five years.*



*Part of a series issued to raise consciousness of the need for a strong national defense in 1940.*

On October 28, 1886, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in New York harbor.

In 1865, French politician and writer Édouard René de Laboulaye was one of the first to suggest giving America a gift to mark the centennial of the American Declaration of Independence. Five years later, sculptor Auguste Bartholdi joined Laboulaye and became the official sculptor of the Statue of Liberty. Bartholdi visited the United States in 1871 to promote the statue and find an appropriate place to display it. Bedloe's Island seemed like a perfect location, and Bartholdi returned to France a year later to report his findings to Laboulaye and the French government.

The Statue of Liberty's construction began in France in 1876. Bartholdi originally hired Eugene Viollet-le-Duc to be the statue's engineer, but he died partway through the project. Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel stepped in to complete the project and became famous for the techniques he used to overcome the various challenges of the statue's construction. In 1880, Eiffel created a 98-foot inner support system for the statue. The iron framework would hold most of the statue's weight and remove unnecessary strain from the external structure.



*The statue was meant to commemorate France and the United States' alliance during the war.*

To fund the statue, the people of France made public donations. Performances were also used to raise money, including *La liberté éclairant le monde* (Liberty enlightening the world) by future famous composer Charles Gounod. In all, \$250,000 was raised. Similarly, the US – which had agreed to build the statue's base – held several benefit events, art exhibitions, auctions and prizefights to raise money.

Although Laboulaye initially planned to present the statue to America in 1876, a late start and several delays made this impossible. The right arm and torch were completed in time, and were put on display at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Completed in 1885, the Statue of Liberty was deconstructed in Paris before being shipped to America in 350 separate parts aboard the French steamer *Isère*. On June 17th, the ship arrived in New York Harbor and was met with much celebration.

Unfortunately, the statue's pedestal was not finished at the time, so the Statue of Liberty sat in storage for a year. The pedestal was finally ready in 1886, and Lady Liberty's reassembly began. This process was extremely difficult and dangerous, but the statue was completely reassembled by October 20, 1886. Once done, a large French flag was draped over the statue's face until the grand unveiling eight days later. Over one million people turned out to see the completed Statue of Liberty on October 28, 1886. President Grover Cleveland presided over the ceremony and delivered a stirring speech:

*"We are not here today to bow before the representation of a fierce warlike god, filled with wrath and*



*Issued for the statue's 100th anniversary.*



*One of the first non-denominated rate change stamps issued without a letter.*

# This Day in History... October 28, 1886 continued



Issued to prepay the international air rate for one-half ounce to South America and adjacent lands.



This Airmail stamp was used primarily for mail sent to Europe and parts of Northern Africa.



Issued as part of the increase of the international rate for airmail to 18¢ for postal cards and aerogrammes.



Stamp produced for use in vending machines.



President Grover Cleveland accepted the statue on behalf of the American people.

vengeance, but we joyously contemplate instead our own deity keeping watch and ward before the open gates of America and greater than all that have been celebrated in ancient song. Instead of grasping in her hand thunderbolts of terror and of death, she holds aloft the light which illumines the way to man's enfranchisement. We will not forget that Liberty has here made her home, nor shall her chosen altar be neglected. Willing votaries will constantly keep alive its fires and these shall gleam upon the shores of our sister Republic thence, and joined with answering rays a stream of light shall pierce the darkness of ignorance and man's oppression, until Liberty enlightens the world."

The dedication ceremony was followed by a fireworks display and New York City's first ticker tape parade. The 151-foot copper statue was modeled in a classic Roman style based on Libertas, the ancient Roman goddess of freedom from slavery, oppression, and tyranny. The crown of seven spikes represents the Seven Seas and the seven continents,

while the torch symbolizes enlightenment. Lady Liberty holds a tablet that is representative of knowledge, and reads "July 4, 1776," the date of the Declaration of Independence.

Historians debate who Liberty's face is modeled after, but it's likely one of two women. Some believe it was Isabella Eugene Boyer, the recently widowed wife of Isaac Singer, creator of the Singer sewing machine. Others believe the statue was modeled after sculptor Frédéric Bartholdi's mother, Charlotte Bartholdi.

In 1883, the statue inspired Emma Lazarus to write *The New Colossus*, which was engraved on a plaque on the statue's pedestal in 1903. It reads:

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  
Glowed world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridge 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!"

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge declared the Statue of Liberty a National Monument. Several decades later, in 1956, Bedloe's Island was officially re-named Liberty Island. Since then, the statue has undergone several major renovations due to normal wear and tear, natural disasters, and even terrorist attacks. Through it all, Liberty has remained a symbol of hope to all who enter New York Harbor. She is a standing reminder of the spirit and strength of the United States.



One of 17 Lady Liberty and Flag rate change stamps issued in 2005 and 2006.



This stamp pictures a Las Vegas replica of the statue. It's use on this stamp cost the USPS \$3.55 million!

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