



## **Rip McIntosh**

### **PROUD SYMBOL OF FREEDOM BY E.P.UNUM March 13, 2021**

She has been called by many names...*Liberty Enlightening the World, The Mother of Exiles, The Lady in the Harbor, and, of course, The Statue of Liberty.* But for over 135 years one thing has remained constant: The Statue of Liberty's abiding legacy as a symbol of American ideals. Draped in a majestic robe, and raising an illuminated torch 305 feet in the air, this striking figure proudly welcomes all who enter America legally seeking new and better opportunities for themselves and their families.

From the original idea proposed in France in 1865 to the monument's spectacular unveiling in 1886, the story of the Statue of Liberty's creation is the story of how two nations with a shared commitment to freedom set about honoring the United States of America as it approached its centennial anniversary.

The idea was conceived by Edouard de Laboulaye, a professor of comparative law at the College de France. An expert on the U.S. Constitution and an ardent abolitionist, Laboulaye had been closely following the American Civil War. He invited other like-minded French intellectuals and abolitionists to a meeting at his estate to discuss relations between America and France. At this meeting, he floated the idea that a colossal monument should be built in time for America's centennial celebration on July 4, 1876. Laboulaye wanted the statue to be paid for by the people of France and given as a gift to the American people. Laboulaye believed, however, that the foundation or pedestal should be paid for by the American people, thus making the project a joint effort that would underscore the solidarity between the French and American people.

The project began with great enthusiasm. Auguste Bartholdi, a 31-year-old respected artist, and sculptor expressed interest in designing it. Plans were made, artists were recruited, engineering designs were created and a major fundraising effort mounted. Then, the fundraising effort was terminated early in 1871 by Napoleon III, emperor of France, who viewed such a monument to liberty as a criticism of his regime. After Napoleon was defeated in the Franco- Prussian War, Laboulaye resurrected the project and, despite several major hurdles and delays, saw it through to completion, with the help of President Ulysses S. Grant, Jacob Pulitzer who raised the last \$100,000 to finalize the completion of the pedestal and the Union League Club of New York. *Liberty Enlightening the World* was completed in France in 1884 and was formally presented to the United States in Paris at a ceremony held on July 4. The statue was then disassembled into 350 pieces, packed into 214 crates, and shipped to America aboard the French Navy Frigate *L'Isere*. Upon arrival, it was then re-assembled by American and French workers on Bledsoe Island, where it stands today, her *torch shining in New York's harbor, lighting the entrance to the land of the free and home of the brave.*

Emma Lazarus, a Jewish author, wrote the words inscribed on Lady Liberty's pedestal/foundation, the full text of her poem entitled *The Great Colossus* is presented below:

- 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 Glows 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-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*"

I remember my grandfather and my father taking me to visit the Lady in the Harbor several times. I remember listening with a thirsty ear to family discussions of how important that symbol meant to them. My grandfather spoke of the emotions he felt seeing it from the deck of a ship bringing him home from World War I. My father also spoke of how magnificent the monument looked to him coming home from World War II. Later in my life, I too felt great pride as our nation celebrated its bi-centennial in 1976 and, seeing the fireworks in New York harbor, my eyes like lasers focused on that lighted torch reminding all that freedom rings true. I thought of the stories of my family arriving on ships from Italy, some before the turn of the century, seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time, and giving thanks to God they would finally be able to pursue the American Dream.

Since that day of celebration in 1886, the Statue of Liberty has remained a revered national symbol. For all immigrants, passing through Ellis Island, the Statue has represented a mother welcoming them to a life of freedom in America. During times of war or conflict, its image has been used to depict a guardian who will protect America from outside threats. Today, the Statue of Liberty, having undergone a massive restoration project in the mid-1980s, stands strong and tall, "*her lamp lit beside the golden door*" at the entrance to New York harbor, a personification of freedom for all who look upon it.

But, today I find myself wondering if American children in our elementary and high schools know about *Liberty Enlightening the World* (the official name of the Statue of Liberty) and what a powerful symbol of freedom she represents? I wonder if they realize how important this gift called freedom really is and how much America has paid in blood and treasure for it? I wonder if they know...and more importantly, why... the history of how this beautiful gift from France was created and came to our shores? I wonder if they have ever heard or read the words of Emma Lazarus inscribed on the base of this monument to liberty and, equally if they understand their significance?

I wonder if it is important at all to them or to those who teach them.

I wonder if they care.

I wish I didn't wonder about such things. They have always mattered to me.

*Kindest regards,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rip' with a stylized flourish at the end.

*Henry P. McIntosh IV*

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*"The evil, that one endures patiently because it see inevitable, becomes unbearable the moment its elimination becomes conceivable."*

*Alexis De Tocqueville*