

# STATUE OF LIBERTY

Richard V. Bergen

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” These words are readily recognizable as being associated with that “Grand Lady” who stands majestically in New York Harbor, her torch of Liberty held aloft. Millions of hearts have been stirred in the breasts of newcomers to this land of opportunity. Tears have formed in the eyes of millions of our servicemen returning from battlefields on far-distant shores, and millions of tourists at the end of their travels have strained to catch their first glimpse of this awesome symbol of freedom from the deck of the vessel bringing them back to their homeland (or from the window of the airplane winging swiftly over the harbor) and most have invariably remarked, “There’s no place like home.”

Symbolism is the very keynote of Masonic education. No idealism uses symbolism more effectively in inculcating its teachings than does Freemasonry. No adherent has a greater appreciation for its effectivity than does the Masonic scholar.

It is not presumptuous, then, to cite the high regard held by practically all Masons for this extraordinary symbol of our national freedom, for freedom is one of our most valued legacies and is espoused by Masons as one of our most vital causes. We point with justifiable pride to the contributions made to this great cause by our colonial brethren – Washington, Franklin, Revere, Warren – to name but a few of the countless thousands who have deemed this cause worthy of their dedicated service, yes, even their lifeblood.

It is entirely appropriate that Masons recognize the significance of the year 1984 in this connection, for it is the centennial year of the laying of the cornerstone for this national monument by the Grand Lodge of New York, this ceremony having been performed on August 5, 1884. The Grand Lodge of New York will observe this anniversary on August 5, 1984 with appropriate ceremonies.

The Statue of Liberty, a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States, commemorates the allegiance of the two nations during the American Revolution and attests to their abiding friendship.

Further gratification is derived from the knowledge that the Statue of Liberty was designed by a brother Mason. Frederic A. Bartholdi (1834 – 1904) was one of the early members of Lodge Alsace-Lorraine, Paris (October 14, 1875), which was composed of prominent intellectuals, writers and government representatives.

When his famous statue, “Liberty Enlightening the World,” was complete, Bartholdi convened his Lodge to review it, even before the statue was shown to the U. S. committee. On June 19,

1884, the Lodge, as if it were a pilgrimage, went in a body to review the masterpiece that was to be the gift of the French people to the United States. On November 13, 1884, Bartholdi delivered a lecture and gave the Lodge a report on the history and various methods used in the completion of the statue. Again, the Lodge witnessed his emotion when he came back from his visit to the U. S. in 1887, and told them of the ardent welcome he had received and of the wide enthusiasm created by his work.

Since President George Washington in a brilliant Masonic ceremony on September 18, 1793 personally laid the cornerstone of the United States Capitol under the supervision of the Grand Lodge of Maryland, it had been the traditional custom in America to have the cornerstones of public and private buildings consecrated with full Masonic rites.

A brief description of the ceremony of “laying the cornerstone” for the pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty stands is taken verbatim from an article by Brother William C. Kissell, Jr., a member of Tenakill Lodge No. 266 of Tenafly, New Jersey.

“Brother Richard M. Hunt, principal architect of the pedestal, presented the working tools to M. W. William A. Brodie, Grand Master, who in turn distributed them to the Grand Officers: R. W. Frank E. Lawrence, Deputy Grand Master, R. W. John W. Vrooman, Senior Grand Warden, and R. W. James Ten Eyck, Junior Grand Warden.

“R. W. Edward M. L. Ehlers, Grand Secretary and a member of Continental Lodge No. 287, then read the list of items to be included in the copper box within the cornerstone:

- A copy of the Unites States Constitution;
- George Washington’s Farewell Address;
- 20 bronze medals of Presidents up through Chester A. Arthur (including Washington, Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Johnson and Garfield, who were proven Freemasons);
- Copies of New York City newspapers;
- A portrait of Frederic A. Bertholdi;
- A copy of a poem on Liberty by E. R. Johnes; and
- A list on parchment of the Grand Lodge of Masons in the State of New York.

“The cornerstone was then tested and being found Square, Level and Plumb, the Deputy Grand Master completed the work by applying the mortar and having the stone lowered firmly into place. The Grand Master then struck three blows with the gavel and declared the stone duly laid.

“The elements of consecration were next presented by R. W. Frank R. Lawrence, R. W. John W. Vrooman and R. W. James Ten Eyck.

“The Most Worshipful Grand Master then gave a brief but pointed talk. He asked the rhetorical question, ‘Why call upon the Masonic Fraternity to lay the cornerstone of such a structure as is

here to be erected?’ His answer, which is as true today as it was then, was, ‘No institution has done more to promote liberty and to free men from the trammels and chains of ignorance and tyranny than has Freemasonry.’”

Many major events and celebrations are being developed to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Statue of Liberty, starting early in 1984 and continuing through 1986. These include:

1. A superstar entertainment gala to announce the Liberty Centennial Campaign early in 1984;
2. A nationally televised ceremony and events on July 4, 1984 when officials will commemorate the centennial of the gift of the Statue of Liberty by the people of France, and launch a grassroots campaign;
3. On August 5, 1984, the Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York will observe the centennial of the cornerstone;
4. In the spring of 1985, with a gala event, international stars will officially launch a summer-long international festival of cultural and entertainment events;
5. From May through September of 1985, countries of the world are invited to join us in an international salute to Liberty, with each participating nation having its own day at the Statue of Liberty;
6. At the beginning of 1986, top entertainers will join in a gala themed to all fifty states, which will launch the finale of the campaign;
7. Throughout the summer of 1986 there will be 100 days of celebration and events for all fifty states;
8. On July 4, 1986, the Statue of Liberty restoration will be celebrated as the focal point of Liberty Centennial Week, involving a huge assembly of tall ships in New York Harbor, special July 4<sup>th</sup> parades throughout America, entertainments and the world’s largest fireworks display;
9. October 28, 1986, the Centennial of the unveiling and dedication of the Statue of Liberty, will be celebrated by a rededication ceremony on Liberty Island followed by special entertainments and tributes.

Additionally, throughout the entire period of 1984 – 1986, television events planned include a series of Liberty Centennial Moments, made for TV movies, dramas, documentaries, feature programs and athletic events, all themed to various aspects of America’s heritage as a nation of immigrants.

Yes, the words recited earlier, with which this paper began, are very familiar to all of us, by have you ever heard the entire sonnet from which these words were taken? The sonnet, written by Miss Emma Lazarus (1849 – 1887) played an effective part and gained wide circulation during the campaign launched by Joseph Pulitzer in the New York World in the spring of 1885 to raise the funds needed to complete the construction of the foundation and pedestal upon which the Statue of Liberty Stands. Miss Lazarus’s sonnet is as follows:

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 might woman with a torch whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon hand  
Glow 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,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me;  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

**Presented by Richard V. Bergen**  
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**William O. Ware Lodge of Research**