

A low-angle, close-up photograph of the Statue of Liberty's head and crown against a clear blue sky. The statue's face is the central focus, looking slightly upwards and to the right. The crown's spikes radiate outwards. The texture of the copper patina is visible.

# THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

A GIFT FOR AMERICA

MARGOT MORRELL





In July 1865, as a dinner party wound down in a Paris suburb, an idea was tossed out.

The host was deeply touched by America's long-standing appreciation of French aid during the American Revolution.

On his trips to the U.S., he noticed tributes to the great French heroes, Lafayette, de Grasse and Rochambeau, who had made possible the decisive victory over the British at Yorktown in 1783.

As the Civil War came to an end, his guests agreed that America's ongoing battle for equality and liberty, should be recognized by France. The host declared France should send America a gift.

21-years later, the gift was unveiled in New York harbor – the Statue of Liberty.



The host was highly regarded lawyer and professor, Édouard René de Laboulaye, author of a three-volume history of the United States.

A passionate anti-slavery activist, Laboulaye was the president of a French organization that had been formed to aid former slaves.

Laboulaye hoped a celebration of American values would serve as an enduring inspiration for France and the rest of the world.





Among Laboulaye's dinner guests that evening was 31-year-old sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi – one of the few, perhaps the only artist, who could bring Laboulaye's idea to life.

Bartholdi specialized in colossal statues. At the time, he was working on other projects, but Laboulaye's concept remained in the back of his mind.

At the end of the Franco – Prussian war in 1871, Bartholdi and Laboulaye, over another dinner party, revisited the idea of a gift to America from France.

Laboulaye urged Bartholdi to go to America "to study the habits, art, feelings and ideas of the American people and decide upon a proper gift."

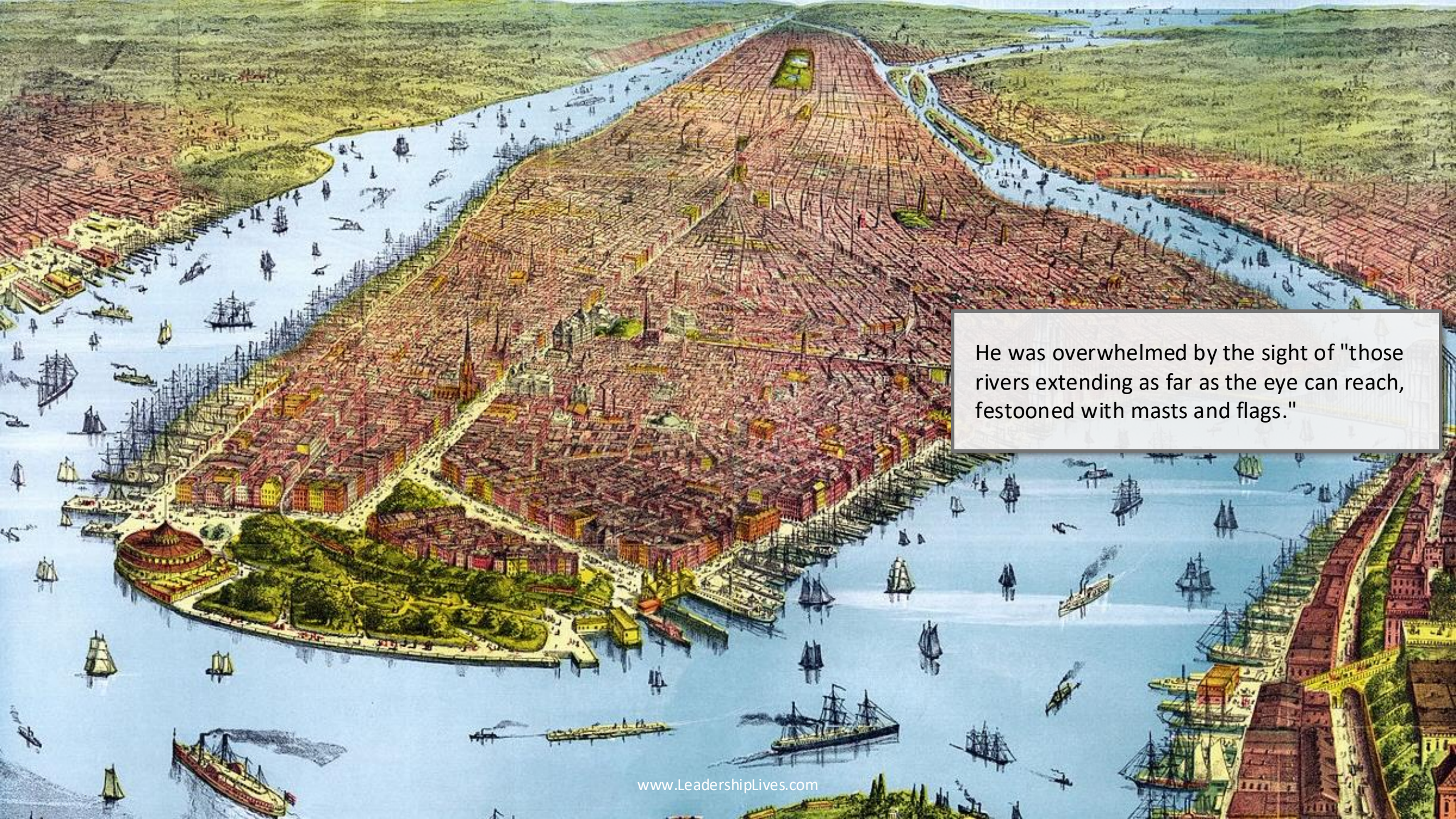




Bartholdi arrived in New York on a glorious June morning in 1871 and was awed by the beauty of the harbor.







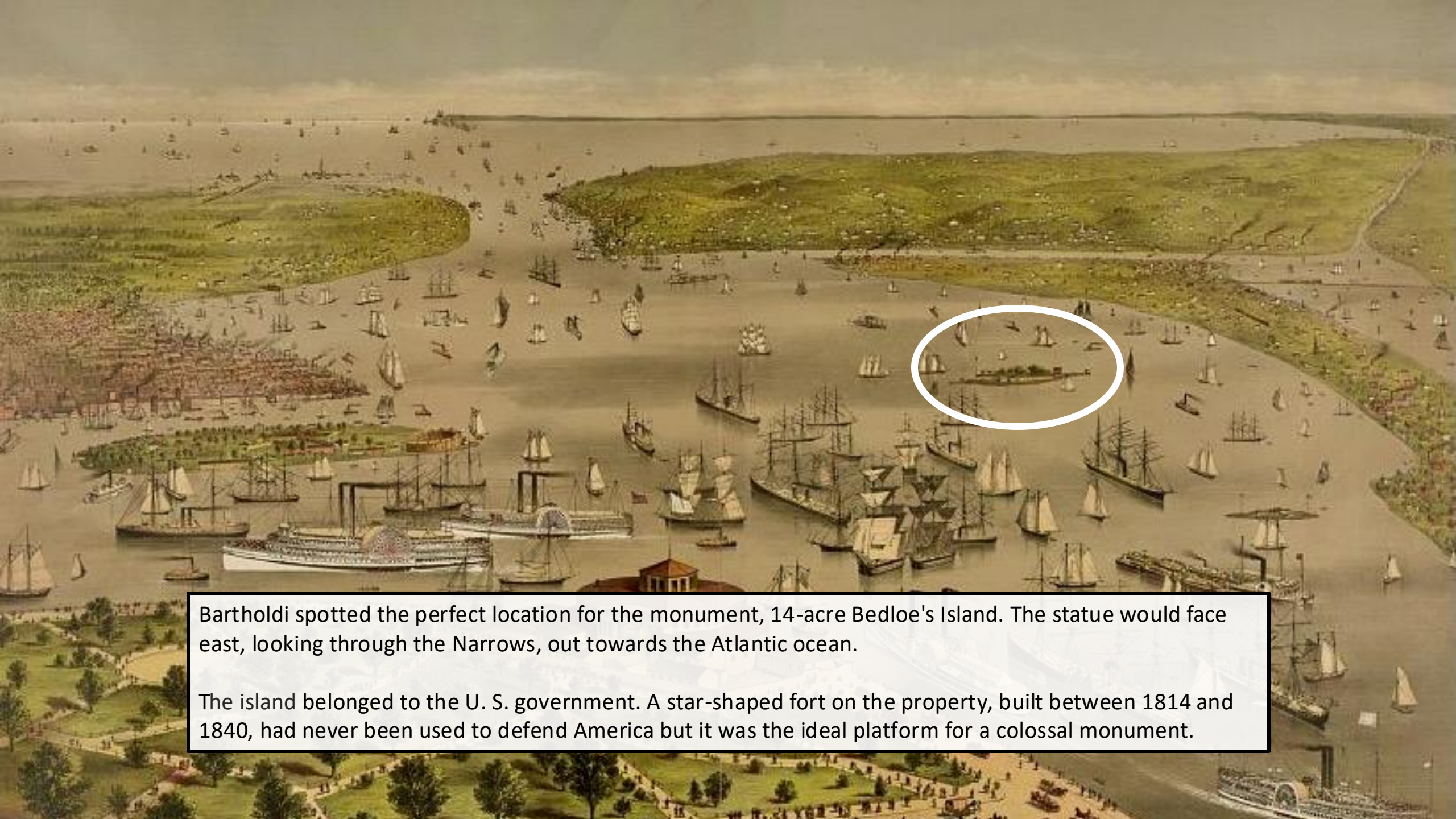
He was overwhelmed by the sight of "those rivers extending as far as the eye can reach, festooned with masts and flags."





Many years later he recalled, "at the view of the harbor of New York the definite plan was first clear to my eyes."





Bartholdi spotted the perfect location for the monument, 14-acre Bedloe's Island. The statue would face east, looking through the Narrows, out towards the Atlantic ocean.

The island belonged to the U. S. government. A star-shaped fort on the property, built between 1814 and 1840, had never been used to defend America but it was the ideal platform for a colossal monument.





As Bartholdi gazed at Bedloe's Island, he envisioned a statue modelled on the Colossus of Rhodes - the premier wonder of the ancient world. Rhodes' statue stood for 54 years at the entrance to the island's harbor.



Twelve years in the making, the statue was destroyed by an earthquake in 226 B.C.

The fragments that crashed on land remained an awe-inspiring sight and continued to attract gawkers to Rhodes for 800 years.

From ancient manuscripts, a few facts about the statue survived. The figure held a torch, wore a crown of rays, and stood about 108' high on a base.







For five months, Bartholdi traveled through America. Thanks to introductions provided by Laboulaye, in each city Bartholdi visited, he shared the idea for a monument to celebrate the "remembrance of the ancient friendship of France and the United States."

Judging from the list of subscribers who supported the project, the sculptor's presentations met with great success in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and, of course, New York.





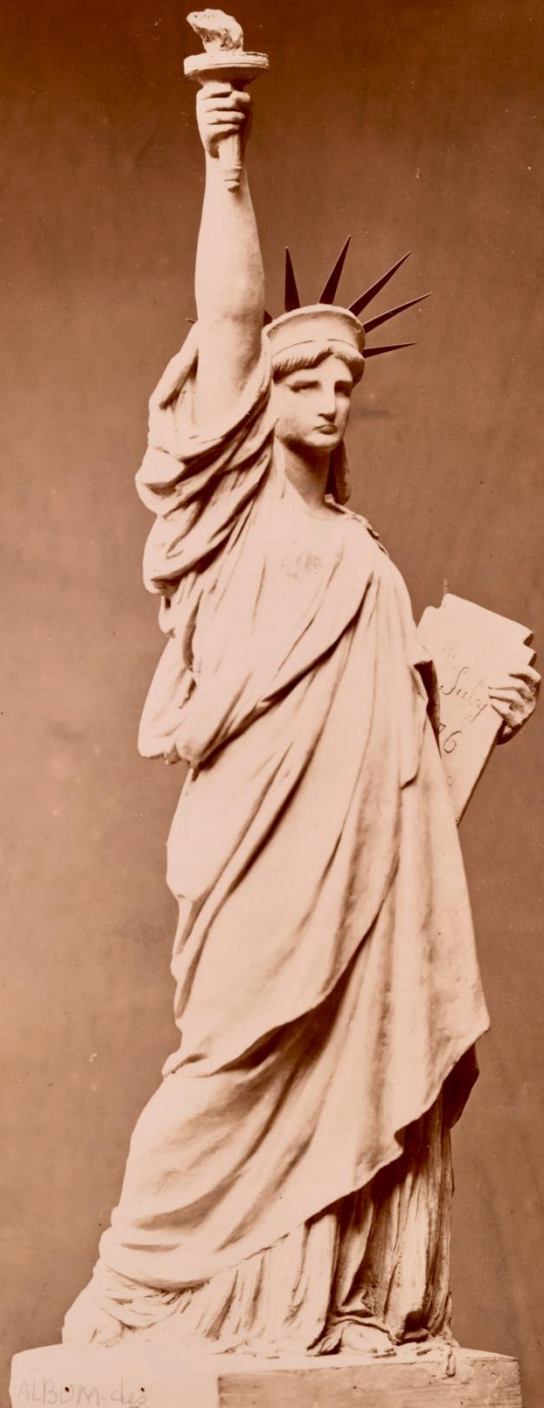
Marianne



Queen Boadicea

Back in Paris, Bartholdi got to work. For inspiration, he looked to Marianne and Queen Boadicea, the French and British symbols of the eternal struggle for independence and justice.





Bartholdi and Laboulaye planned to call their statue, "The Monument of Independence." After a number of attempts, in 1875 Bartholdi produced a model that Laboulaye approved. They called it "Liberty Enlightening the World."

Laboulaye felt the time was now right to announce the project to the public. With grandsons of Revolutionary War heroes, Lafayette and Rochambeau, Laboulaye organized a committee, the French – American Union, and began raising funds for the project. By the end of the year, half the necessary funds, over 200,000 francs, had been raised.

Ultimately, the Statue of Liberty was a gift to America from 180 French cities, 40 city councils, countless societies, and over 100,000 subscribers.



Craftsmen at the Paris foundry, Monduit and Béchét, (later Gaget and Gauthier) worked 10- hour days, seven days a week, to produce the arm holding the torch. Their goal was to send the first completed portion of the statue to the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition to give Americans a sense of the project.

At a fundraising event in Paris that spring, Laboulaye declared, "The proposed monument symbolizes American freedom, which extends peace and enlightenment everywhere."

The Philadelphia Exposition, held from May to November 1876, was America's first world's fair, a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The 37' torch arrived at the fair in July. Enthusiastic visitors paid .50¢ to climb the interior ladder to the torch's platform which could hold up to 12 people at a time.







When the Exposition closed, the torch was moved to Madison Square Park on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> St. in New York City.

It remained there the next six years when it was packed up and sent back to Paris to be assembled into the final statue with the other components.





From his original 4-foot-high model, Bartholdi built a 9' model. From there, he created a statue four times as large – 36' high - which was large enough to give him a sense of the final statue. The 36' model was then divided into pieces that were reproduced in sections four times larger to create the final statue which measured 151' high to the top of the torch.

Bartholdi worked with leading architects, Viollet-le-Duc, and after his death, Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel, to design the statue's internal support structure.

For the "skin" of the statue, Bartholdi chose hammered copper –  $\frac{3}{32}$ " thick - because it is light, durable and easily divided to transport.

In the fall of 1877, former United States president, Ulysses S. Grant (center), who had approved the project on his last day in office, visited Bartholdi's studio.





Viollet-le-Duc, famous for restoring Notre Dame Cathedral, devised the plan to build a wood frame that was covered with plaster in the form of the final statue.

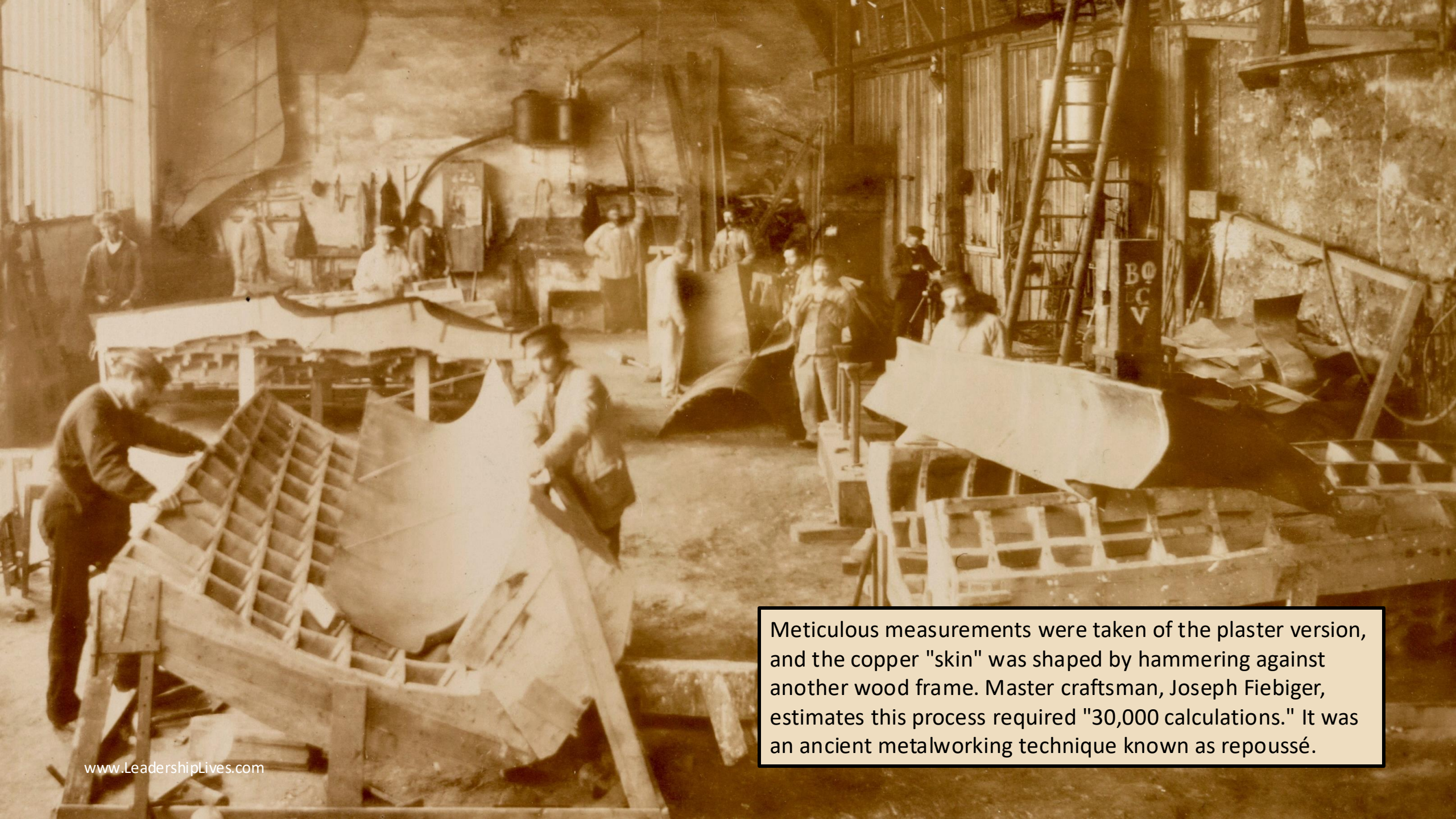
Note the man covered with plaster dust, sitting on the arm.





In the circled area, the head  
of the 36' version can be seen.





Meticulous measurements were taken of the plaster version, and the copper "skin" was shaped by hammering against another wood frame. Master craftsman, Joseph Fiebiger, estimates this process required "30,000 calculations." It was an ancient metalworking technique known as repoussé.

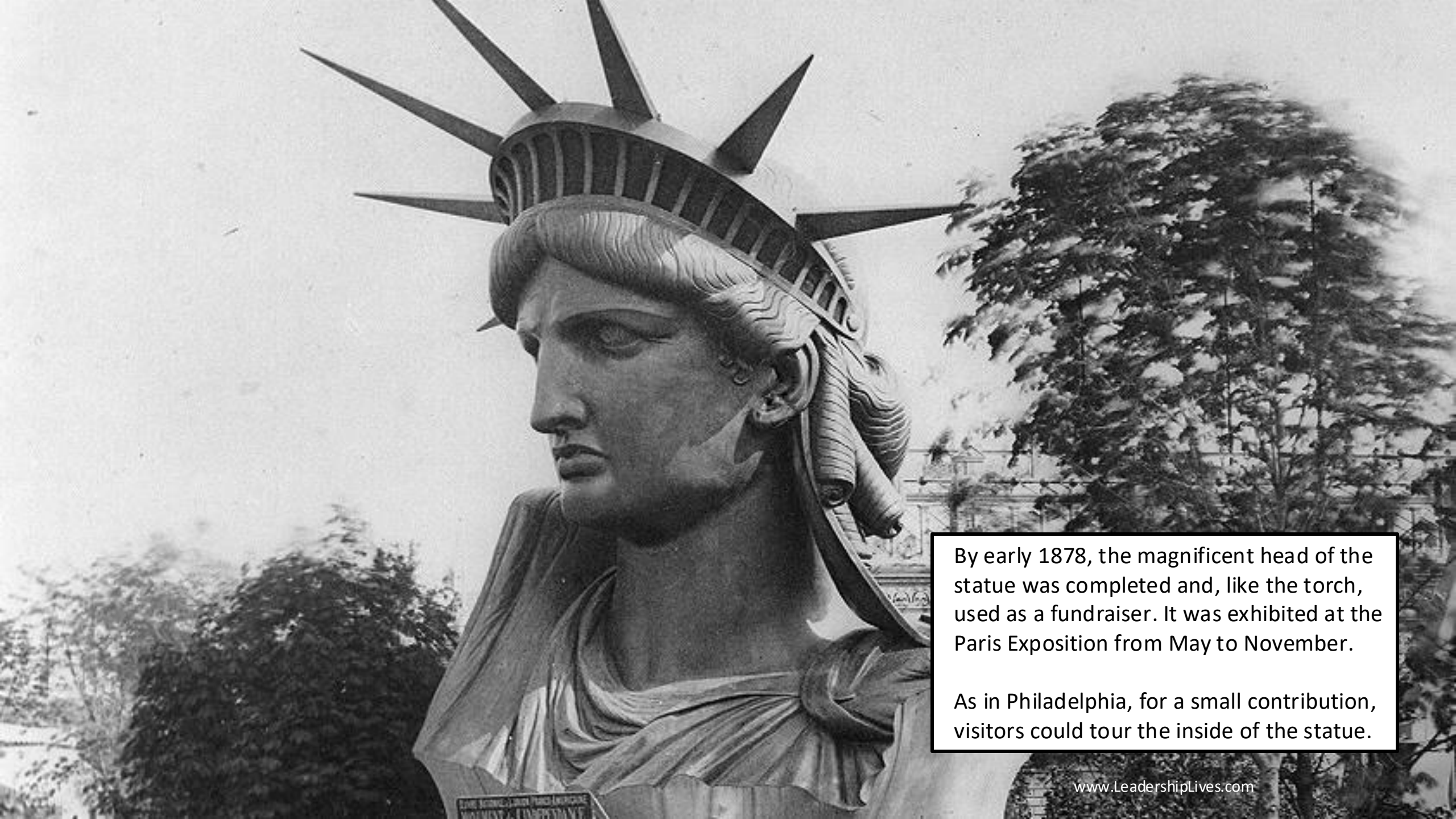


In February 1877, a joint resolution of Congress was passed to accept the gift from France on behalf of the American people. President Hayes then appointed General William T. Sherman to oversee the project.

Aware that Bedloe's Island was Bartholdi's first choice as a venue, General Sherman had the island designated as the official site for the statue. An 1886 pamphlet describes the island as "Lying just off the channel, in full view of the vessels passing through the Narrows, it presents a picture no other spot could suggest."



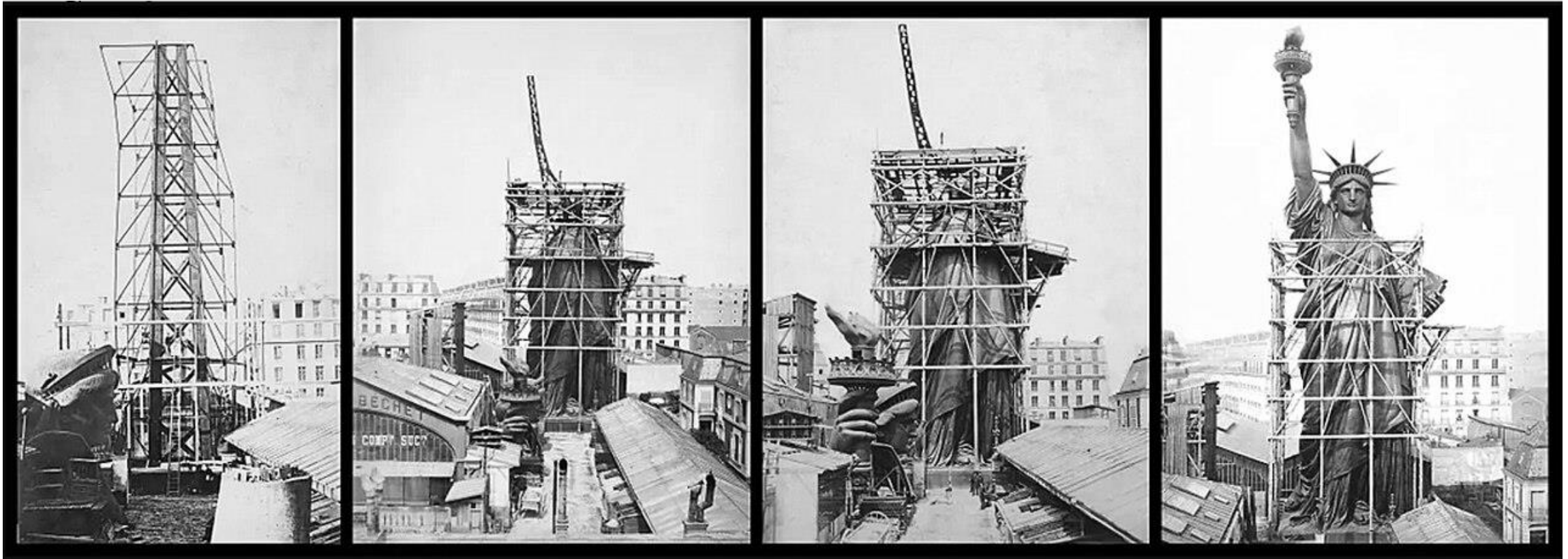




By early 1878, the magnificent head of the statue was completed and, like the torch, used as a fundraiser. It was exhibited at the Paris Exposition from May to November.

As in Philadelphia, for a small contribution, visitors could tour the inside of the statue.

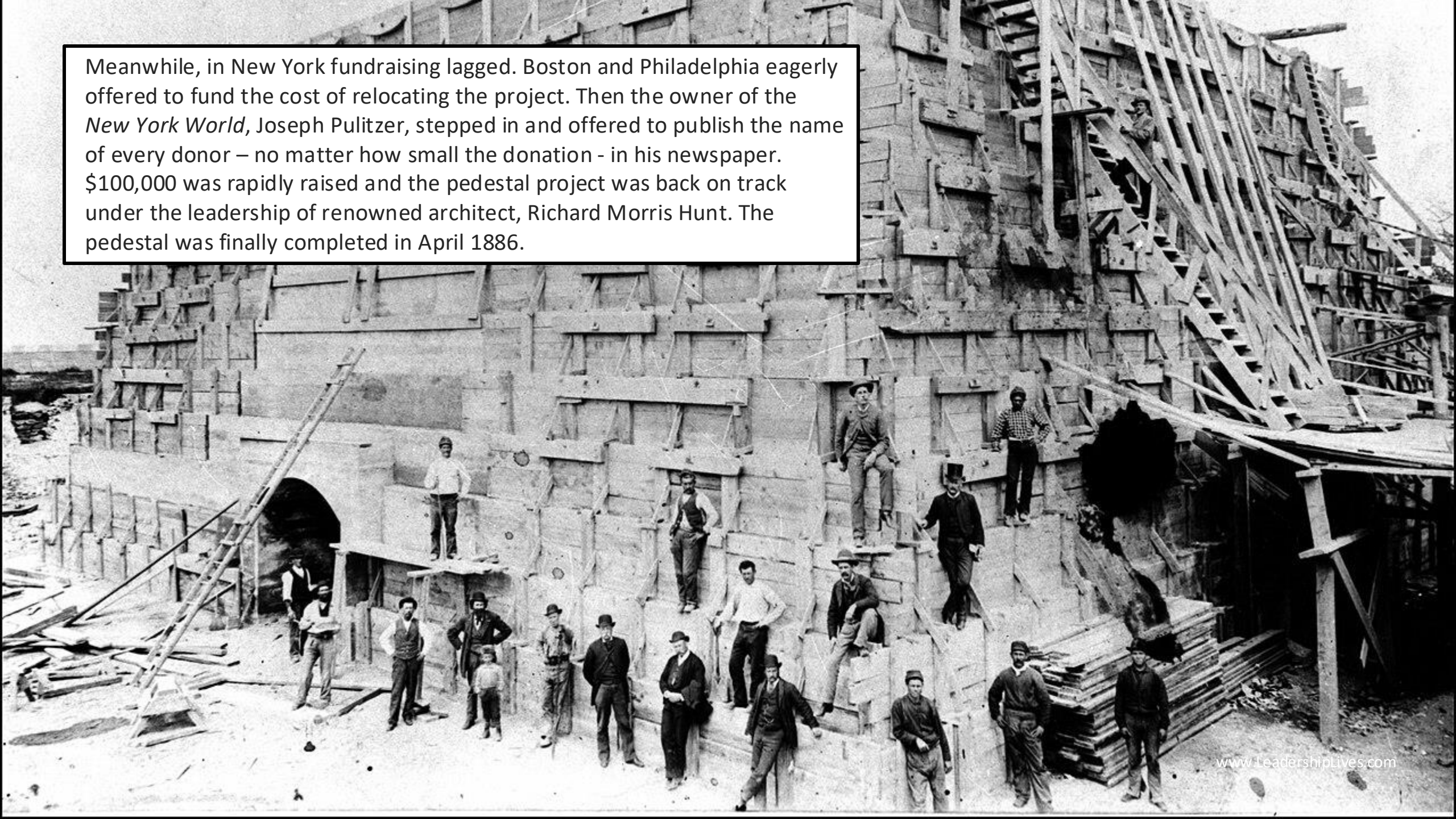




In January 1884, the statue was fully assembled outside the foundry - 350 pieces of copper held together by thousands of rivets. The statue turned the Paris foundry into a tourist attraction.



Meanwhile, in New York fundraising lagged. Boston and Philadelphia eagerly offered to fund the cost of relocating the project. Then the owner of the *New York World*, Joseph Pulitzer, stepped in and offered to publish the name of every donor – no matter how small the donation - in his newspaper. \$100,000 was rapidly raised and the pedestal project was back on track under the leadership of renowned architect, Richard Morris Hunt. The pedestal was finally completed in April 1886.





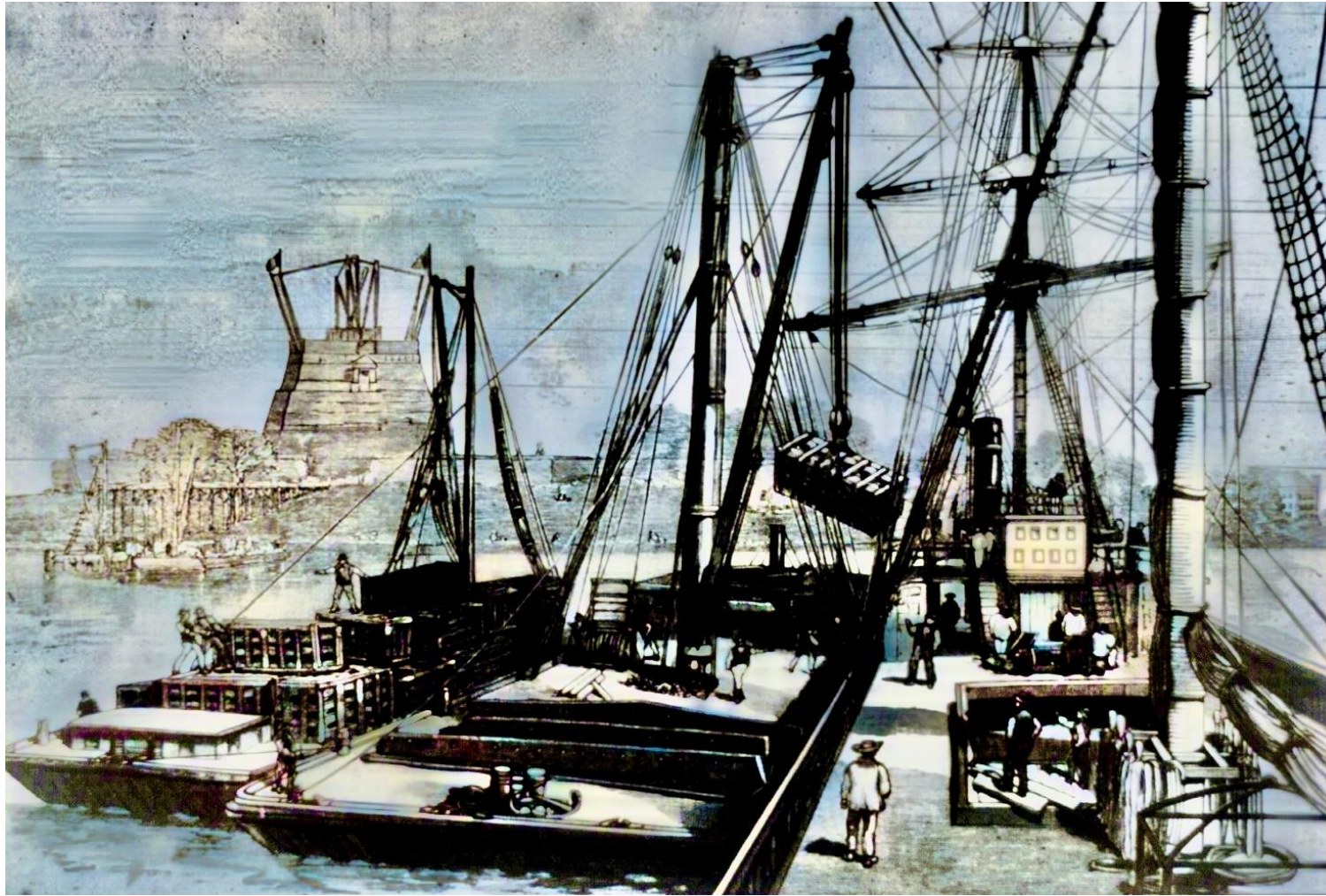


As part of New York's fundraising effort, poet Emma Lazarus wrote a sonnet and donated it to an 1883 auction to benefit the "Pedestal Fund."

### THE NEW COLOSSUS

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  
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,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"**





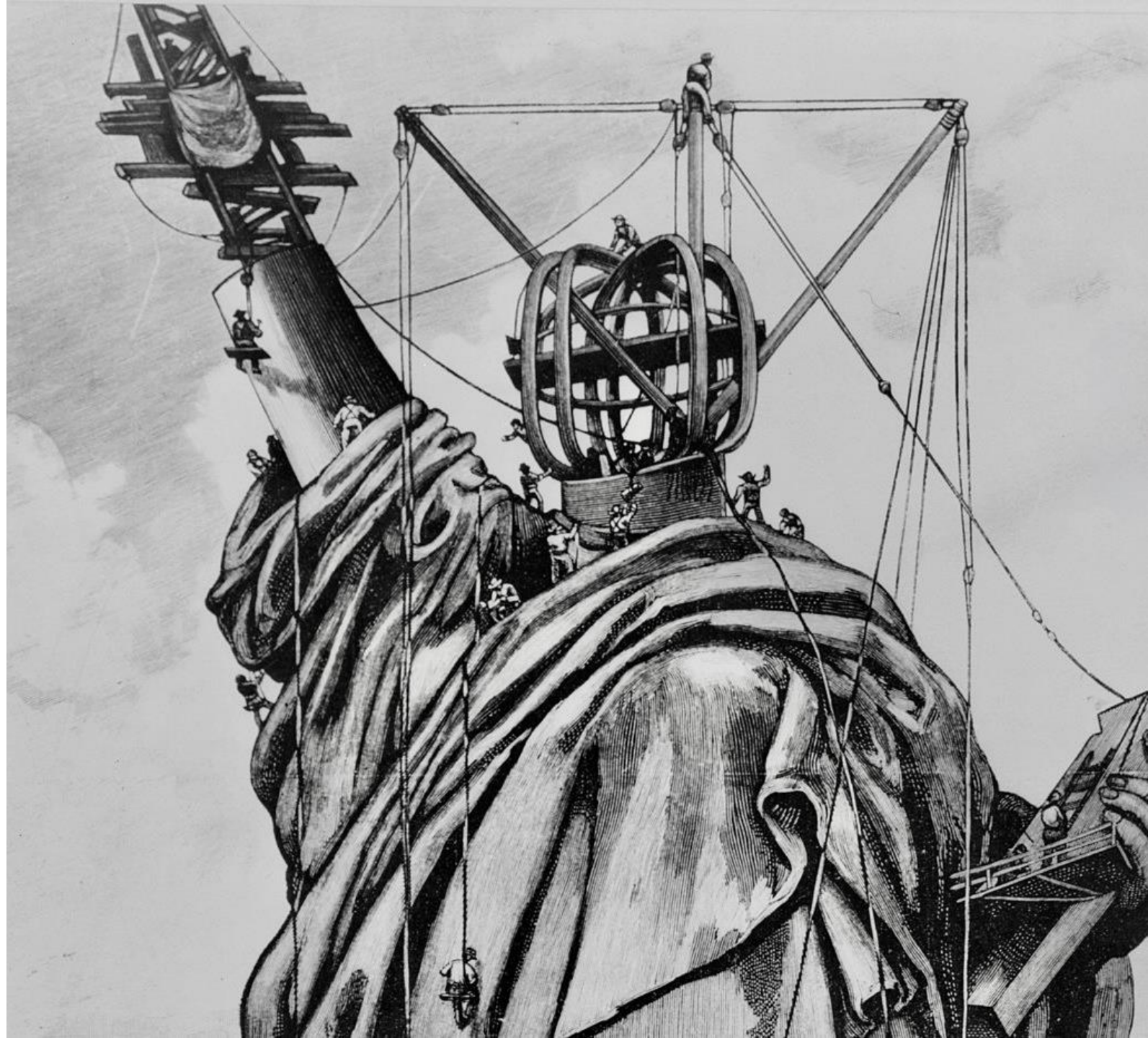
"On July 4, 1884, the statue was formally accepted by Mr. Morton, the United States ambassador to France, and in June 1885, the whole statue was taken apart and brought in 210 cases on board the French vessel *Isère* to New York harbor."

*Weekly Herald*, Helena, Montana  
November 11, 1886



21 years after Laboulaye's dinner party triggered the project, the assembly of the statue began on Bedloe's Island in April 1886. Sadly, the visionary had passed away in May 1883.

This time workmen did not use scaffolding to assemble the statue. They borrowed a method used on ships, "bosun's chairs."







From the Statue of Liberty's crown, seven rays radiate outward through the seven oceans, to the seven continents, to spread peace, liberty, and enlightenment throughout the world.





The statue's torch guides travelers to safety.

At the 1886 dedication of the statue, President Grover Cleveland said, the beacon leads people "toward the path of freedom."




The statue holds a tablet based on a design that dates from the Roman Empire.

The tablet is inscribed "July IV MDCCLXXVI" to commemorate America's momentous declaration of independence on July 4, 1776.





A close-up photograph of the lower portion of the Statue of Liberty, specifically her feet and the base of her skirt. The statue is made of green patinated bronze. Her feet are positioned on a stone platform. Broken chains and shackles are visible at her feet, symbolizing the end of slavery. The background is dark and out of focus.

The broken chains at the statue's feet symbolize the end of slavery.

Liberty has crushed the shackles of bondage.





The official unveiling of the statue was held on Thursday, October 28, 1886. The celebration was the occasion of New York's first ever ticker tape parade. A lengthy parade of ships passed through the harbor.

*The Brooklyn Eagle* reported in the morning paper, "Today the greatest statue that ever came from a sculptor's hands takes its place among the wonders of the modern world, a mighty monument to Liberty..."

Keynote speaker, Chauncey M. Depew, declared "We dedicate this statue to the friendship of nations and the peace of the world. The spirit of liberty embraces all races in common brotherhood; it voices in all languages the same needs and aspirations."



Sculptor Auguste Bartholdi declared,

“The statue was born for the place which inspired its conception. May God be pleased to bless my work, and long may it remain as an emblem of freedom and a monument of the good will and friendship existing between France and the United States of America.”





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