



# LADY OF LIBERTY

by ALBERTA WILLIAMS

The fame of the Statue of Liberty is virtually limitless, its influence impossible to estimate. Certainly this colossal sculpture is the most symbolic structure in the United States.

For 68 years, this goddess of liberty with the broken shackle of tyranny at her feet has stood on the eleven-acre Bedloe's Island at the entrance to New York Bay, the world's largest harbor, holding aloft the torch of freedom in her right arm and clasping in her left a book inscribed, "July 4, 1776" to represent the document upon which our freedom is based.

And through those years, little by little, this gift of the people of France to commemorate their unbroken friendship with the people of the United States has come to symbolize for the whole world the ideal of liberty on which our nation was founded.

Viewed simply as a piece of sculpture liberty is dramatically unique. She is, as far as is known, the largest statue ever to have been created by man.

Liberty towers 46 feet higher than the famed Colossus of Rhodes. Her arm, which could easily reach across most city streets, measures just three feet less than the total height of Rockefeller Center's

## Lady Liberty

bronze figure of Atlas, one of this country's largest single-figure sculptures.

Her 151 feet from base to torch dwarfs such masterpieces as Michelangelo's 18-foot *David* in Florence, Ulric Ellerhusen's *Pioneer* standing atop the beautiful Capitol in Salem, Oregon, or the 22-foot bronze figure symbolizing the soul of the American soldier that Donald De Lue, noted American sculptor, has been commissioned to do for the St. Laurent Cemetery, Normandy Beachhead in France.

The granite-over-concrete pedestal upon which Liberty stands, one of the heaviest pieces of masonry ever built, is 154 feet high. Thus, the total structure of the Statue of Liberty rises 305 feet.

When you stand at the base of Liberty's pedestal and let your gaze travel upward to her torch, you are looking about as far, and feeling about as Lilliputian, as you do in St. Louis when you stand on the sidewalk and stare straight up the 30 stories to the roof of the Park Plaza Hotel. Only 41 cities in America have skyscrapers as tall as Liberty.

But one gets the keenest feeling for Liberty's magnificent proportions from contemplating one of her *smallest* measurements—that of her index fingernail, which is 13 by 10 inches. Her index finger itself is eight feet long, almost two feet longer than the bed in which you sleep.

Liberty is the work of Frédéric Bartholdi, the Alsatian sculptor to whom the statue brought lasting fame. Ten of the best years of his life—his entire forties—were devoted to work on Liberty.

In choosing the material from which to fashion the figure, Bartholdi had to select one that could withstand the strong salt sea winds that day and night sweep over Bedloe's Island. Moreover, the material had to be light in weight, because of Liberty's tremendous proportions.

Bartholdi's Liberty is a copper

## *Lady Liberty*

shell over an intricate and incredibly strong steel framework, designed by Gustave Eiffel, the French engineer who designed and built the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Bartholdi's original study model of the statue was four feet high.

Five times, this was cast and recast and successively enlarged until the sculptor obtained a figure 36 feet high. This was divided into 214 sections and each section enlarged to the measurements of the finished colossal statue. Then carpenters made wooden molds of each section of the figure and French workmen hand-hammered over these frames the 300 copper sheets from which Liberty is fashioned.

The copper, now covered with a lovely green patina, the result of oxidation, was painstakingly hammered out to a thickness of only  $\frac{3}{32}$  of an inch, just  $\frac{1}{32}$  of an inch thicker than an American cent. Even so, 200,000 pounds of copper were used in the statue, enough copper for more than 100 stacks of pennies, each as tall as the Empire State Building.

But when you consider the weight of Liberty's copper you are thinking of less than half her total weight, for 250,000 pounds of steel are in her framework. This brings the sculpture's total weight up to 450,000 pounds.

Trans-Atlantic voyagers do not see Liberty herself until their ship enters New York Harbor. But the light of her torch, equivalent to 2,500 times the effect of full moonlight, can be seen 15 miles out at sea. It is lighted by thirteen 1,000-watt incandescent lamps, three 250-watt incandescent lamps and six 400-watt mercury vapor lamps.

Last year, 797,412 people took the boat from Battery Park, at Manhattan's lower tip, and made the 15-minute trip to Bedloe's Island to visit Liberty. On a beautiful summer Sunday, the great lady often has as many as 7,000 callers.

Visitors are admitted to every part of the statue except the torch. Inside Liberty's head 40 people can

## *Lady Liberty*

stand, twice as many as are allowed to crowd into the spacious modern passenger elevators of most large department stores and skyscrapers.

In 1937, the whole of Bedloe's Island became the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Maintenance cost is \$90,000 annually, but very little of the money is used on the statue itself. Liberty was so well designed and constructed, and the engineering problems of its erection so expertly solved, that few major repairs have ever been necessary. No important ones have been required since 1937.

The Statue of Liberty cost its French givers \$250,000. Americans raised the \$350,000 for the pedestal. Sculptors say it is fantastic even to attempt to calculate what such a figure and pedestal would come to today—certainly their estimates would have to be made in terms of millions.

But, then, in every way the Statue of Liberty constantly increases in value. For she has become a symbol now, beyond price.

