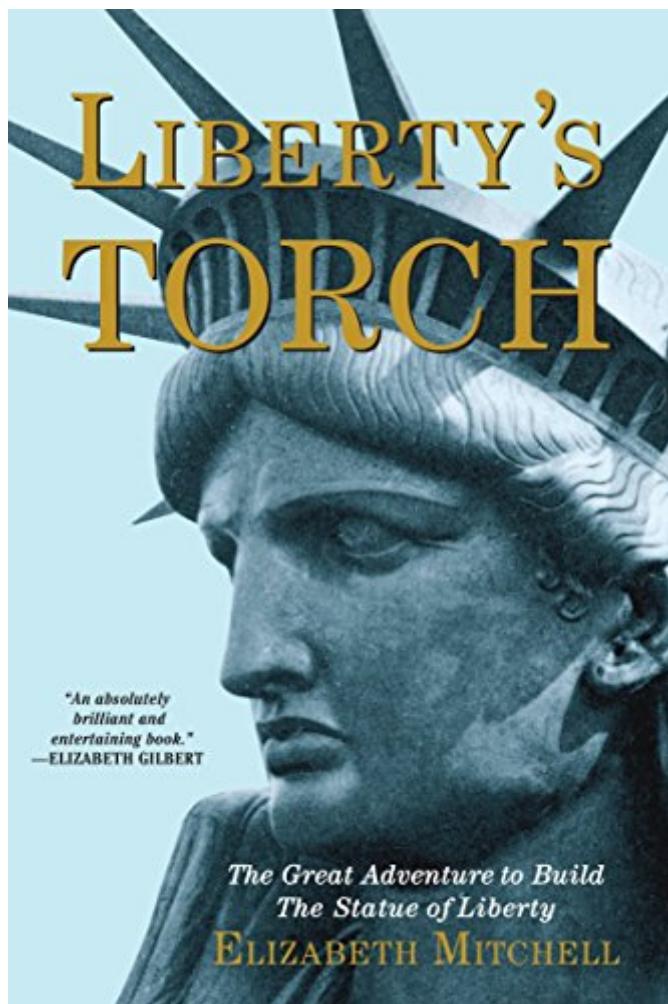


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Liberty's Torch: The Great Adventure To Build The Statue Of Liberty



Synopsis

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most recognizable monuments in the world, a powerful symbol of freedom and the American dream. For decades, the myth has persisted that the statue was a grand gift from France, but now Liberty's Torch reveals how she was in fact the pet project of one quixotic and visionary French sculptor, FrÃ©dÃ©ric Auguste Bartholdi. Bartholdi not only forged this 151-foot-tall colossus in a workshop in Paris and transported her across the ocean, but battled to raise money for the statue and make her a reality. A young sculptor inspired by a trip to Egypt where he saw the pyramids and Sphinx, he traveled to America, carrying with him the idea of a colossal statue of a woman. There he enlisted the help of notable people of the age - including Ulysses S. Grant, Joseph Pulitzer, Victor Hugo, Gustave Eiffel, and Thomas Edison - to help his scheme. He also came up with inventive ideas to raise money, including exhibiting the torch at the Philadelphia world's fair and charging people to climb up inside. While the French and American governments dithered, Bartholdi made the statue a reality by his own entrepreneurship, vision, and determination.

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Customer Reviews

Most Americans know vaguely that the Statue of Liberty was a present from France to the United States, done to commemorate Franco-American friendship and the two nations' shared commitment to democracy. Elizabeth Mitchell's appealing new history of the conception and construction of Liberty Enlightening the World fills in quite a few of the blanks in our knowledge and tells a fascinating tale of egotism, perseverance, and eventual success. Her clear descriptions and entertaining stories remind me of David McCullough's The Great Bridge and The Path Between the Seas, which also deal with monumental engineering and construction feats of the same time period. The story of the Statue of Liberty must begin with its creator, Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, a gifted and extremely self-confident French artist who specialized in monumental statuary, for which there was quite a vogue during the nineteenth century. Bartholdi first conceived of a monumental statue as a way of commemorating the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869. Although the ruler of Egypt was cool to the idea Bartholdi never gave up, and eventually succeeded in interesting a group of creative Frenchmen in what was now to be a giant statue in New York harbor. The statue took shape slowly over a period of many years, making use of the new technologies and materials made possible by the Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, in the United States a similar long term effort was underway to find a site for the statue and then build a suitable pedestal for it. Fortunately men as gifted and as egotistical as Bartholdi took an interest, and eventually in 1886 the giant statue became a part of the New York City harbor.

She is Lady Liberty, an American icon recognized by all as part of our nation's history, yet she is shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Despite having been destroyed in countless movies by aliens and assorted villains, she remains at her post in New York Harbor rising majestically above the entrance to the port of New York and standing as a symbol to millions of immigrants. In the second half of the 19th century, more than nine million immigrants came to the United States; for many, the Statue of Liberty was their first glimpse of their new homeland. As America celebrates her 238th birthday, LIBERTY'S TORCH by Elizabeth Mitchell is an entertaining and informative history of the building of Miss Liberty. American school children grow up believing that the Statue of Liberty was a gift from a grateful French nation to celebrate America's 100th birthday in 1876. In reality, it was not the French nation that decided upon a gift, it was one man --- Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, a French sculptor who envisaged, designed, financed and constructed the Statue. Initially it had nothing to do with the Centennial, but had everything to do with Bartholdi being spurned by a different suitor. Bartholdi was involved in the building of the Suez Canal. He proposed to the leader of the Egyptian government that he construct a statue of a woman wearing a crown and holding a

torch at the mouth of the canal. When the Egyptians said no, Bartholdi took his idea across the Atlantic. Arriving in America in 1871, Bartholdi had a new idea. He proposed that France and America jointly erect a monument to American independence and suggested sites all over New York. Somehow he landed upon Liberty Island as the appropriate location.

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