



## **The Statue of Liberty-A Gift of Friendship**

**By Karly Kay**

**Training Technician, Division of Administration**

July is our nation's birth month, and this year brings with it a special semiquincentennial celebration to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In honor of this milestone, it is time to look back at the history of one of the most widely recognized American symbols: the Statue of Liberty.

The statue was a gift from France; a country the United States has had diplomatic ties with since the Revolutionary War. The European power provided instrumental assistance in defeating Great Britain, sparking what would become a long and prosperous friendship between the two nations.

This close relationship was an inspiration for Édouard de Laboulaye, a French jurist, writer, and anti-slavery activist. To honor of the centennial anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, de Laboulaye desired to present a monument to the people of the United States. Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, a renowned French sculptor, created the design for what was initially deemed *Liberty Enlightening the World*, a statue that would soon come to be colloquially known as the Statue of Liberty.

Bartholdi was purposeful in his design, putting meaning, intent and symbolism into each piece. The crown with seven spikes represented the light of freedom shining across the seven seas and continents, the tablet contains a Roman inscription that reads July 4, 1776, and the broken shackle and chains represent the abolishment of slavery.

While de Laboulaye and Bartholdi provided inspiration and designs for the grand monument, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel was the artisan who crafted it. Eiffel came up with an iron pylon and secondary skeletal framework, an ingenious design that prevents structural issues and allows the copper skin of the statue to move independently while remaining upright. Eiffel would also go on to create the iconic Eiffel Tower.

The statue was completed in France in July 1884, the same time that architect Richard Morris Hunt was designing a granite pedestal for the monument. While Americans worked on the pedestal, the French broke the statue into 350 individual pieces and packed them into 214 crates to cross the Atlantic Ocean. On June 17, 1885, the statue arrived in New York Harbor. Nearly a year later, the pedestal was finished. The statue was raised at Bedloe's Island, today's Liberty Island, and on October 28, 1886, the monument was dedicated to the people of the United States.

While the Statue of Liberty has seen numerous changes since her dedication date—including the color, which went from a reddish bronze to the iconic green hue we see today—the friendship it represents between the French and American people has and forever will remain constant.