

# Primary Source: The Statue of Liberty

from Huntsville (Alabama) Gazette, November 6, 1886

*Designed by Frenchman Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, the construction of The Statue of Liberty began in the 1870s. Originally named "Liberty Enlightening the World," the statue was erected in New York Harbor and officially dedicated on October 28, 1886. However, bad weather postponed the fireworks display that had been planned for the dedication. On November 1, 1886, the rescheduled fireworks show took place, and the statue was lit completely for the first time.*

*Below is a report of this celebration from the Huntsville, Alabama newspaper. Candle power/candlepower refers to the old measurement of light. A car's headlight, for example, would be roughly equal to 96 candlepower.*

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## LIBERTY'S LIGHT.

### **The Light Turned On In the Great Bartholdi Statue—An Imposing Sights, Signalized by a Brilliant Pyrotechnic Display—The Harbor of New York a Blaze of Many-Colored Fires and Screaming Rockets—A Salute From the Navy.**

NEW YORK, Nov, 1.—Electricity, the light of the nineteenth century, crowned the colossal statue of Liberty, the wonder of the world, last night, and the coronation of the goddess was celebrated by a carnival of fire-works on land and water. As darkness settled down upon the city and the bay, steam tugs came down the North and East rivers, and as they gathered about the little island in the harbor, they formed a flotilla gay to see. Then brass throats and breath of steam sent up three shrill hurrahs as they waited for the coronation. The Yantic and the Kearsarge, war ships, lay at anchor a furlong off Liberty Island, and the lights from their port holes showed a busy scene between decks as preparations for the illumination went on within.

Communipaw, on the Jersey coast, lit the first beacon by kindling a great, red flame of Greek fire. It crimsoned the sky, bewildered the stars, and was the signal for a deafening huzzah from the hundred steam whistles. The boom of cannon from Governor's Island rolled over the water to the flotilla and told that preparations were ready. The light from Communipaw's beacon showed the yardarms of the warships alive with sailors in white trousers, and also showed against the black sky Bartholdi's colossal figure. The wind and the waves were still, and no sound came from the great metropolis sparkling in the distance.

Suddenly, at half-past seven o'clock, from the torch in Liberty's uplifted hand streamed forth a dazzling white light. Amid shouts from thousands upon the steamer's decks; amid music and loud tug whistles Liberty looked out for the first time over the harbor by night. At the moment her torch was kindled with the lamp of 30,000 candle power, the Yantic and the Kearsage became cauldrons

of fire. Their black hulls boiled over with an effervescence of many colored rockets. Fiery serpents came up, wriggled for a moment in the air, and fell into the sea. Rockets burst above the statue, and baptized in showers of fire. From every spar tip and masthead censers were waved, and their incense was red, blue green and yellow smoke.

A dense cloud soon gathered about the feet of Liberty, formed of the fireworks, smoke and steam from the whistles, hiding the base entirely. It gave the statue a new and beautiful appearance. It seemed to stand illumed above the clouds. When a row of lights were lit about the feet at eight o'clock, still another effect was given to the pedestal. At each of the five points of the star redoubt, at the pedestal's base, a lamp of 6,000 candle power, placed in a radiator, threw it's rays up over the statue, and in the pedestal, a dynamo capable of generating 120,000 candle power revolved. The whole plant of electrical machinery was donated yesterday to the American people by Edward Goff, president of the American Electric Manufacturing Company.

Fire-works were displayed to a crowd of 20,000 people at the Battery where the statue was illuminated, and also from Castle William, Governor's Island. All the fantasies of Japanese invention in the form of rockets and Roman candles were set off. The Field building, the Produce Exchange, and all the tall buildings in the lower part of the city were illuminated, and accommodated on their lofty and spacious roofs and in their windows thousands of delighted spectators.

**Questions**

1. The author says a beacon from New Jersey "bewildered the stars." What type of figurative language is this?
2. Based on the explanation of candlepower/candle power in the introduction, would you say the Statue of Liberty was brightly lit by today's standard or not?
3. What does *illumed* mean here: "It seemed to stand illumed above the clouds"?
4. Compare Liberty's fireworks display in 1886 with today's modern public fireworks shows. Do you think Liberty's would have been better, or would today's? Why?