



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



MiniPresentation#49

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

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The 1986 celebration of the **100th anniversary** of the Statue of Liberty was a remarkable demonstration of how a meaningful symbol can cut through the clutter of commercialism and other not-so-noble interests. The Lady of Liberty held her torch high above T-shirt vendors and bustling crowds, unaffected by the circus around her. The ideals that she stands for—freedom and liberty—give as much hope and faith to everyone who sees her today as they did a hundred years ago. She was then a gift from the people of France to the New World—but the Norwegians can also claim a very substantial connection to the Statue of Liberty. She is made of Norwegian copper, mined in the island of Karmøy ('KARM'ey) on Norway's western coast.

Until the winter of 1986, no one knew the origin of the copper sheets which were shaped into the personification of liberty. Only an old legend among the people of **Karmøy** gave a clue to where the copper came from: tradition claimed that it was mined in one of the island's many abandoned mines. The old tale had persistently survived several generations, and the Karmøyings were curious to see if there was any substance to the rumor. So when Norwegian-American Baard Lande ('Baward 'LAHN 'deh) visited the old country and Karmøy in 1984, he was asked to help verify the legend. Lande's grandfather had been the owner of the land where the mine in question was located, so it was hoped that the Lande family tradition could shed some light on the story.

Lande himself did not know, but when he returned to the United States he contacted the New York Park and Recreation Board for more information, only to learn that the origin of the Statue of Liberty's copper was one of the few unknown facts about the Lady. The aspect of solving the puzzle caused great excitement, but hard facts were needed. Lande and his daughter, **Kay Lande Selmer**, set out to find undeniable proof. For this they needed samples of copper from the old mine, something which turned out to be difficult to find. After many setbacks and disappointments, a candle-snuffer made of copper from that particular mine was located in the Karmøy museum.

A small piece of metal from the candle-snuffer was brought to the laboratories of AT&T where metallurgists compared it to copper from the statue. Every copper mine has its very own characteristics, as recognizable as a person's fingerprints. And **AT&T's tests** confirmed the old legend: the copper used in the Statue of Liberty came from Karmøy, Norway. The 80 metric tons of copper that were required to create the statue came to France through a dynamic French businessman, Charles DeFrance, who purchased mining rights in Karmøy in 1865. Under his leadership, the copper mines became very profitable. They grew to be among the largest in Europe at the end of the last century and the copper mined here was famous for its purity and excellent quality.

The restoration of the statue showed that the Karmøy copper had held up relatively well. However, her left cheek—the one that faces Manhattan—was badly damaged by pollutants from the city. Also, the tip of her nose was beyond repair—due to the accumulation of water that eventually led to complete corrosion of the metal. So today, when the experts claim that the **Lady of Liberty** is good for another hundred years, Norwegians still can enjoy the fact that she is literally of Norwegian stock. But the tip of her nose — well, that's another story.