

PETITION TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Petition for the Permanent Removal of the 1903 Emma Lazarus Plaque from the Statue of Liberty

Restoring the French-American, French-Acadian, Acadian, Revolutionary, and Original Historical Context of *Liberty Enlightening the World*

PETITION

We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the National Park Service to **permanently remove the 1903 Emma Lazarus plaque from the interior of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty** and to restore the monument's original historical context through public interpretation, education, historical documentation, and preservation.

This petition arises from a historical distinction that deserves direct recognition.

The Statue of Liberty was created as a French monument presented to the United States.

Its original French name was **La Liberté éclairant le monde — Liberty Enlightening the World**.

Its conception developed from the historical relationship between France and the United States, including the American Revolution, the French-American alliance, American independence, French political thought, republican government, liberty, emancipation, and nineteenth-century French-American relations.

The monument also belongs to a much longer French North American history reaching through Acadia, Acadian settlement, the Grand Dérangement, Acadian displacement, the Acadian diaspora, and French-speaking communities throughout northern New England.

Emma Lazarus entered the history of the Statue at a later stage.

She wrote *The New Colossus* in 1883, three years before the Statue's dedication.

Her poem introduced themes of exile, refuge, immigration, displacement, and welcome through her own literary and personal experience, including her work with Jewish refugees arriving from the Russian Empire.

Lazarus died in 1887.

Georgina Schuyler revived the poem around 1901.

In 1903, selected lines from the poem were permanently installed on a bronze plaque inside the Statue's pedestal.

The plaque therefore represents a later addition to the monument.

This petition asks the National Park Service to recognize that historical sequence and to **remove the plaque permanently from the Statue itself**.

The poem can remain preserved as an important work of American literature.

The historical record of Emma Lazarus can remain fully preserved.

The plaque can be preserved within the National Park Service's museum and archival collections.

The physical monument can return to an interpretation centered upon its original French-American history.

I. FRENCH NORTH AMERICA AND ACADIA

The history of the Statue of Liberty reaches into the earlier history of French North America.

French settlement developed throughout northeastern North America during the early seventeenth century.

Acadia encompassed areas corresponding broadly to present-day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, portions of Maine, and surrounding regions.

Saint Croix Island became one of the earliest French settlement sites.

Port Royal developed as another important center of French settlement.

Acadian communities developed agricultural, fishing, trading, linguistic, religious, and family traditions.

Acadian society also developed relationships with the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous peoples.

This French presence forms part of the historical landscape preceding the later French-American relationship.

The history of French liberty in North America therefore extends through generations of French settlement, cultural development, conflict, displacement, migration, and survival.

II. BRITISH CONTROL OF ACADIA

Britain gained control of mainland Acadia in 1710.

Acadians sought to preserve their communities and maintain neutrality during conflicts between the British and French empires.

British authorities demanded allegiance.

The political pressure placed upon Acadian communities contributed to the events that followed.

III. LE GRAND DÉRANGEMENT

Beginning in 1755, British authorities forcibly removed thousands of Acadians from their homes.

The Acadian people experienced family separation, displacement, confiscation of homes and farms, transportation, and dispersal.

The period became known as **Le Grand Dérangement**.

The National Park Service documents approximately 10,000 Acadians displaced between 1755 and 1763.

Acadians were transported throughout British North America, England, and France.

Acadian communities later developed or re-established themselves in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Louisiana, Maine, and other locations.

The Grand Dérangement created an enduring Acadian diaspora.

It also created a lasting historical record of French-speaking North American communities experiencing political displacement and forced migration.

That history belongs within the broader French-American historical context.

IV. ACADIANS, MAINE, AND NEW ENGLAND

Acadian refugees entered New England.

Northern Maine became an important location for Acadian and French-Canadian settlement.

French-speaking communities continued across the northern New England region.

Acadian and French-Canadian communities developed relationships through migration, family, language, settlement, and culture.

The National Park Service preserves extensive historical material concerning Acadian settlement and cultural survival in Maine.

This history establishes a direct connection between French North America and the geographic region surrounding the later development of the United States.

V. THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

The struggle between France and Britain continued through the Seven Years' War.

British forces captured Quebec in 1759.

The war ended in 1763.

France lost major North American territories.

The political landscape of French North America changed dramatically.

The history of Acadia, Quebec, British North America, and the French presence in North America formed part of the environment in which the American Revolution later developed.

VI. THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The American Revolution began in 1775.

The United States declared independence on July 4, 1776.

The American struggle for independence developed within the larger geopolitical conflict between Britain and France.

France recognized the American cause as an opportunity to challenge British power.

On February 6, 1778, France formally recognized the United States and entered into alliance with the new nation.

The alliance established a direct political and military relationship between France and the United States.

VII. FRENCH ASSISTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES

France provided extensive assistance during the American Revolution.

French assistance included:

- weapons;
- ammunition;
- uniforms;
- financial support;

- military forces;
- naval forces;
- supplies;
- diplomatic support.

Approximately 5,500 French troops under Rochambeau arrived at Newport in 1780.

French troops participated directly in the Yorktown campaign.

French naval forces contributed to the campaign.

French assistance became a major element in the military and diplomatic history of American independence.

The Treaty of Paris in 1783 recognized American independence.

The French-American alliance became one of the oldest and most significant diplomatic relationships in American history.

VIII. FRENCH-AMERICAN RELATIONS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The relationship between France and the United States continued after independence.

The two nations experienced periods of cooperation, disagreement, diplomatic tension, and renewed cooperation.

The United States Department of State identifies France as one of America's oldest allies, with the relationship dating to French recognition of American independence in 1778.

During the nineteenth century, French-American relations developed through political thought, art, republicanism, constitutional government, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.

This nineteenth-century relationship forms the immediate historical environment in which the Statue of Liberty was conceived.

IX. LABOULAYE AND THE FRENCH- AMERICAN MONUMENT

Édouard René de Laboulaye was a French political thinker and constitutional scholar with a strong interest in American republican government.

In 1865, Laboulaye proposed a monument that France could present to the United States.

His proposal followed the American Civil War and emancipation.

The National Park Service describes Laboulaye's interest in American liberty and the American political system.

The proposed monument carried a French-American purpose.

Laboulaye died in 1883.

His death occurred during the same year Emma Lazarus wrote *The New Colossus*.

Laboulaye died before the Statue's dedication in 1886.

His historical role therefore belongs to the conception and development of the monument itself.

X. BARTHOLDI AND *LIBERTY ENLIGHTENING THE WORLD*

Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi became the sculptor of the monument.

Bartholdi worked with Laboulaye during the development of the project.

The Franco-American Union was established in 1875 to organize fundraising.

The Statue was constructed in France.

Its components were transported to the United States.

The Statue was assembled on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor.

The monument was dedicated on October 28, 1886.

Its original title was:

La Liberté éclairant le monde — Liberty Enlightening the World.

That title establishes the original conceptual identity of the monument.

XI. THE FRENCH GIFT TO THE UNITED STATES

The French gift was formally documented in 1884.

The deed transferred the Statue from the people of the Republic of France to the people of the United States.

The gift represented friendship between the two nations.

The monument therefore carried a documented diplomatic, political, artistic, and historical relationship between France and America.

The Statue's French origin remains physically embodied in the monument itself.

XII. THE ORIGINAL SYMBOLS OF THE MONUMENT

The Statue contains a deliberate symbolic vocabulary.

The torch represents enlightenment and liberty.

The crown contains seven rays.

The tablet bears:

JULY IV MDCCLXXVI

The inscription identifies the date of American independence.

Broken chains appear at the feet of the figure.

The National Park Service associates the broken chains with the abolition of slavery.

The monument's imagery draws from classical and Mediterranean artistic traditions.

The Greek, Egyptian, Roman, and broader classical influences surrounding nineteenth-century monumental liberty imagery deserve continued historical consideration.

These elements existed as part of the monument before the Lazarus plaque was installed.

XIII. EMMA LAZARUS

Emma Lazarus was born in New York City in 1849.

She came from a Portuguese Sephardic Jewish family.

She became a poet, writer, and advocate for Jewish immigrants and refugees.

Her writing addressed Jewish history, persecution, exile, immigration, identity, and displacement.

She published *Songs of a Semite* in 1882.

During the 1880s, Jewish refugees arrived in the United States from the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe.

Lazarus became involved in relief and advocacy work through the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society.

She encountered refugees at Ward's Island.

Her personal and literary history therefore became connected with the experiences of Jewish refugees arriving in New York.

XIV. THE NEW COLOSSUS

Emma Lazarus wrote *The New Colossus* on November 2, 1883.

The poem was written for an art exhibition supporting the fundraising campaign for the Statue's pedestal.

Lazarus invoked the ancient Greek Colossus and presented a new female figure as the **Mother of Exiles**.

The poem introduced themes of:

- exile;
- refuge;
- immigration;
- displacement;
- poverty;
- welcome;
- European arrival;
- and opportunity.

These themes reflected Lazarus's literary perspective and her experience with Jewish refugees.

The poem consequently created a distinct literary interpretation of the Statue.

XV. THE POEM AND THE MONUMENT HAVE DIFFERENT HISTORICAL ORIGINS

The Statue existed as a French-American monument before the Lazarus poem became physically attached to it.

The poem was written in 1883.

The Statue was dedicated in 1886.

Emma Lazarus died in 1887.

The poem therefore originated during the development of the monument and remained separate from the physical monument for many years after the dedication.

This distinction is central to this petition.

The original monument carried the French-American history of liberty, independence, republican government, French friendship, and the American Revolution.

The Lazarus poem carried a later literary interpretation shaped by exile, immigration, Jewish history, and Russian-Jewish refugee experience.

Both histories can be preserved.

The physical monument should retain its original historical identity.

XVI. GEORGINA SCHUYLER AND THE REVIVAL OF THE POEM

Georgina Schuyler was a friend of Emma Lazarus.

Around 1901, Schuyler rediscovered *The New Colossus* in a bookshop.

She organized an effort to restore the poem to public attention.

The National Park Service credits Schuyler with this revival.

Her work created the historical bridge between Lazarus's 1883 poem and the later plaque.

XVII. THE 1903 PLAQUE

In 1903, selected lines from *The New Colossus* were permanently installed on a bronze plaque inside the Statue's pedestal.

The installation occurred seventeen years after the Statue's dedication.

The plaque therefore became a physical addition to an already completed monument.

The poem became physically incorporated into the Statue through this later installation.

The plaque established a permanent visual and physical connection between the Statue and Lazarus's interpretation of immigration, exile, refuge, and welcome.

The installation also changed the way generations of visitors encountered the monument.

XVIII. THE HISTORICAL DISPLACEMENT OF MEANING

This petition identifies the 1903 plaque as a **displacement of historical meaning**.

The original Statue arose from the French-American relationship.

The plaque introduced a later literary interpretation into the physical structure of that monument.

The original history reaches through:

French North America

- **Acadia**
- **Acadian cultural development**
- **Le Grand Dérangement**
- **Acadian diaspora**
- **British North America**
- **American Revolution**
- **French military and diplomatic assistance**
- **American independence**
- **nineteenth-century French-American relations**
- **Laboulaye**
- **Bartholdi**
- **Liberty Enlightening the World**
- **1886 dedication**

The later literary history follows:

Emma Lazarus

- **Russian-Jewish refugee experience**
- *The New Colossus*
- **Lazarus's death**
- **Georgina Schuyler**
- **1903 plaque**
- **development of the Statue's immigration interpretation**

This chronology provides the foundation for the petition.

The later interpretation has become so prominent in American public culture that the earlier French-American historical meaning has received less public attention.

This petition describes that process as **historical displacement** and, within the broader Acadian framework, as a form of **modernizing derangement**.

XIX. THE FRENCH-AMERICAN MEANING AND THE 1903 PLAQUE

The French-American relationship forms the historical foundation of the Statue.

The 1903 plaque carries a literary interpretation created through Emma Lazarus's personal experience and advocacy.

The poem's central imagery concerns the Mother of Exiles.

The original monument's title identifies Liberty Enlightening the World.

These two frameworks carry different historical subjects.

The French-American monument concerns the relationship between France and the United States, American independence, liberty, republican government, emancipation, and the history of the French gift.

The Lazarus poem concerns exile, immigration, refuge, and the arrival of displaced peoples.

The petition asks the National Park Service to preserve the distinction between these historical layers.

XX. THE RUSSIAN TIMELINE

The chronology surrounding Russia requires particular care.

Lazarus wrote *The New Colossus* in 1883.

She worked with Jewish refugees during the 1880s.

She died in 1887.

Georgina Schuyler revived the poem around 1901.

The plaque was installed in 1903.

The Bolshevik faction emerged from the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party's 1903 division.

The Bolsheviks later seized power during the Russian Revolution of 1917.

These events occurred across distinct historical periods.

The Russian-Jewish refugee history connected with Lazarus belongs to the 1880s.

The 1903 Bolshevik development belongs to a later political history.

The 1917 revolution belongs to a later period still.

The chronology should remain precise in public interpretation.

XXI. BARTHOLDI AND THE PLAQUE

Bartholdi remained alive when the Lazarus plaque was installed in 1903.

He was living in France.

He died in Paris in 1904.

This creates an important historical question concerning the plaque.

The National Park Service should investigate surviving French and American records to determine:

1. Whether Bartholdi received information concerning the plaque.
2. Whether Bartholdi knew that Lazarus's words were being permanently installed inside the monument.
3. Whether Bartholdi expressed an opinion concerning the poem or plaque.
4. Whether correspondence survives concerning the installation.
5. Whether French newspapers reported the installation.
6. Whether American newspapers reported contemporary discussion of the change.

A documented formal protest by Bartholdi has not been established in the historical material presently identified for this petition.

The question deserves archival research.

XXII. THE QUESTION OF WHO AUTHORIZED THE 1903 PLAQUE

The National Park Service should also investigate the administrative history of the plaque.

This research should establish:

- who commissioned it;
- who manufactured it;

- who paid for it;
- who authorized its placement;
- what correspondence existed concerning its installation;
- what role Georgina Schuyler played;
- what government officials approved;
- what newspapers reported;
- what French organizations reported;
- and how the installation was understood in 1903.

The answers would provide a clearer historical record of how a later literary interpretation became physically attached to the monument.

XXIII. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMMIGRATION INTERPRETATION

The immigration interpretation became increasingly prominent during the twentieth century.

The 1903 plaque became a permanent physical source for that interpretation.

Schools, government publications, immigration organizations, museums, popular culture, and public commemorations contributed to the development of the Statue's immigration symbolism.

This development forms part of American cultural history.

The petition asks the National Park Service to place that development within its chronological position.

The immigration interpretation belongs to the later history of the monument.

The French-American interpretation belongs to the original history of the monument.

XXIV. ACADIAN HISTORY AND THE MEANING OF DISPLACEMENT

The history of Acadia gives the question of displacement a deeper North American context.

Acadians experienced forced removal from their homes.

Families were separated.

Communities were dispersed.

French-speaking communities survived throughout North America.

The Grand Dérangement became a defining historical experience of Acadian identity.

The later American Revolution transformed the political relationship between Britain, France, and the emerging United States.

France subsequently became the principal foreign ally of the American revolutionary cause.

The Statue emerged generations later from that French-American relationship.

The history of displacement therefore reaches through several different periods and communities.

The petition asks the National Park Service to preserve these distinctions while presenting their chronological relationship.

XXV. HISTORICAL ERASURE AND PUBLIC MEMORY

Historical memory develops through monuments, inscriptions, education, museums, public ceremonies, and cultural repetition.

A permanent inscription inside a monument carries exceptional influence over public memory.

The 1903 plaque became one of the most recognizable textual associations with the Statue.

Its placement helped establish the immigration interpretation as an enduring component of the monument's public identity.

The petition argues that this process contributed to the diminishing visibility of the Statue's French-American historical foundation.

The French-American history remains documented.

The Acadian history remains documented.

The Revolutionary alliance remains documented.

Laboulaye and Bartholdi remain documented.

The 1884 French gift remains documented.

The 1886 dedication remains documented.

The 1903 plaque represents a later historical intervention.

This petition seeks to correct the imbalance in public presentation through removal of the plaque from the monument itself.

XXVI. THE PLAQUE SHOULD BE PRESERVED AS HISTORY

Permanent removal of the plaque does not require destruction of the plaque.

The plaque itself has historical value as an artifact documenting the development of the Statue's twentieth-century public interpretation.

The National Park Service can preserve the plaque within its museum or archival collections.

The plaque can be exhibited with its complete chronology:

1883 — Lazarus writes the poem.

1886 — Statue dedicated.

1887 — Lazarus dies.

1901 — Schuyler revives the poem.

1903 — Plaque installed.

This treatment preserves the historical artifact while returning the physical monument to an interpretation centered upon its original French-American foundation.

XXVII. REQUEST FOR PERMANENT REMOVAL

We therefore respectfully request that the National Park Service:

- 1. Permanently remove the 1903 Emma Lazarus plaque from the interior of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal.**
- 2. Preserve the plaque as a historical artifact within the National Park Service's museum and archival collections.**
- 3. Provide visitors with a complete historical explanation of the plaque's 1903 installation.**
- 4. Clearly distinguish the 1886 Statue from the 1903 addition.**
- 5. Restore primary public interpretation of the monument's original French-American identity.**
- 6. Restore recognition of *La Liberté éclairant le monde* — *Liberty Enlightening the World* as the original title and conception of the monument.**
- 7. Expand interpretation concerning French North America and Acadia.**
- 8. Include the history of the Grand Dérangement and Acadian displacement.**
- 9. Include the Acadian and French-speaking history of Maine and northern New England.**
- 10. Explain the French-American alliance during the American Revolution.**
- 11. Explain French military, naval, financial, diplomatic, and material assistance to the United States.**
- 12. Preserve the historical roles of Laboulaye and Bartholdi.**
- 13. Explain the 1884 transfer of the French gift to the United States.**
- 14. Explain the original symbolism of the torch, crown, tablet, July 4, 1776 inscription, broken chains, and classical imagery.**
- 15. Present Emma Lazarus's history separately and accurately.**
- 16. Explain Lazarus's Sephardic Jewish background and her work with Jewish refugees from the Russian Empire.**
- 17. Explain the chronology connecting Lazarus, *The New Colossus*, Georgina Schuyler, and the 1903 plaque.**

18. Conduct archival research into the authorization and installation of the 1903 plaque.
 19. Research surviving records concerning Bartholdi's knowledge of the plaque.
 20. Research French and American newspaper coverage surrounding the plaque's installation.
 21. Preserve the Russian-Jewish refugee chronology separately from the later 1903 Bolshevik political history and the 1917 Russian Revolution.
 22. Document the development of the Statue's immigration interpretation during the twentieth century.
 23. Present the historical development of the Statue's public meaning without allowing the 1903 plaque to stand as the primary physical representation of the monument's original purpose.
-

XXVIII. WHY REMOVAL IS ESSENTIAL TO TRUE MEANING OF AMERICAN-FRENCH LIBERATION

The request for removal arises from the historical identity of the monument.

The Statue was created by France.

The Statue was presented by France.

The Statue commemorated a relationship between France and the United States.

The monument emerged from the historical relationship created during the American Revolution.

The monument carried the French conception of **Liberty Enlightening the World**.

The 1903 plaque was added seventeen years after the Statue's dedication.

The plaque carries a later literary interpretation centered upon exile and immigration.

The physical presence of the plaque has allowed the later interpretation to become inseparable from the monument in public memory.

Removing the plaque would create an opportunity to present the complete history with greater chronological clarity.

The poem remains part of American literary history.

Emma Lazarus remains part of American history.

Jewish immigration remains part of American history.

Russian-Jewish refugee history remains part of American history.

The 1903 plaque remains part of the history of the Statue.

The physical monument itself can carry its original French-American historical meaning.

XXIX. THE HISTORICAL RECORD SHOULD REMAIN WHOLE

This petition does not seek the disappearance of Emma Lazarus from American history.

It seeks the proper historical placement of her contribution.

It does not seek the disappearance of Jewish-American immigration history.

It seeks its accurate placement within the chronology of the Statue.

It does not seek the destruction of the 1903 plaque.

It seeks its preservation as a historical artifact.

It seeks the removal of a later inscription from the physical monument so that the original historical context can receive its proper place.

The history of the Statue can contain every layer.

The physical monument carries its own chronology.

The French-American origin came first.

The Lazarus poem came later.

The plaque came later still.

That chronology should remain visible in the National Park Service's interpretation.

XXX. CONCLUSION

The Statue of Liberty stands as one of the most important monuments of the relationship between France and the United States.

Its history reaches from French North America and Acadia through the Grand Dérangement, the Acadian diaspora, the American Revolution, the French-American alliance, American independence,

nineteenth-century French-American relations, Laboulaye, Bartholdi, and the creation of *Liberty Enlightening the World*.

The monument was dedicated in 1886.

Emma Lazarus wrote *The New Colossus* in 1883.

Lazarus died in 1887.

Georgina Schuyler revived the poem around 1901.

The plaque was installed in 1903.

That sequence matters.

The French-American meaning of the monument belongs to its conception, construction, presentation, and dedication.

The Lazarus poem belongs to a later literary history.

The 1903 plaque physically placed that later interpretation inside the monument.

The petition therefore requests the **permanent removal of the 1903 Emma Lazarus plaque from the Statue of Liberty**.

The plaque should be preserved as a historical artifact.

The poem should remain preserved and studied.

Emma Lazarus's history should remain fully documented.

Jewish-American immigration history should remain fully documented.

Russian-Jewish refugee history should remain fully documented.

The history of Acadia and the Grand Dérangement should receive greater recognition.

The French-American alliance should receive greater recognition.

Laboulaye and Bartholdi should receive full recognition.

The original title, **Liberty Enlightening the World**, should return to the center of public interpretation.

The Statue's history deserves its complete chronology.

The monument deserves an interpretation grounded in the history from which it was created.

We therefore respectfully petition the National Park Service to permanently remove the 1903 Emma Lazarus plaque from the Statue of Liberty, preserve the plaque as a historical artifact, and restore comprehensive public interpretation of the Statue's original French-American, French-Acadian, Acadian, Revolutionary, and historical context.

SIGNATURES

Name: Union of Saints, 501c3

City / State / Country: Acadian Region, Canada, United States

Date: 9/19/2026

Signature: *Dannielle Elizabeth Courchene-Cowdrey, US*

Additional Comments:
