The New Colossus – history/information – from Wikipedia (excerpts)

For full article - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Colossus

"**The New Colossus**" is a sonnet by American poet Emma Lazarus (1849–1887). She wrote the poem in 1883 to raise money for the construction of a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty (*Liberty Enlightening the World*). In 1903, the poem was cast onto a bronze plaque and mounted inside the pedestal's lower level.

History

This poem was written as a donation to an auction of art and literary works conducted by the "Art Loan Fund Exhibition in Aid of the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund for the Statue of Liberty" to raise money for the pedestal's construction. Lazarus's contribution was solicited by fundraiser William Maxwell Evarts. Initially, she refused, but writer Constance Cary Harrison convinced her that the statue would be of great significance to immigrants sailing into the harbor. Lazarus was involved in aiding Jewish refugees to New York who had fled antisemitic pogroms in eastern Europe, and she saw a way to express her empathy for these refugees in terms of the statue.

"The New Colossus" was the first entry read at the exhibit's opening on November 2, 1883. It remained associated with the exhibit through a published catalog until the exhibit closed after the pedestal was fully funded in August 1885, but was forgotten and played no role at the opening of the statue in 1886. It was, however, published in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* as well as *The New York Times* during this time period. In 1901, Lazarus's friend Georgina Schuyler began an effort to memorialize Lazarus and her poem, which succeeded in 1903 when a plaque bearing the text of the poem was put on the inner wall of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

On the plaque hanging inside the Statue of Liberty, the line "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" is missing the comma after the word "keep." The plaque also describes itself as an engraving; it is actually a casting.

The original manuscript is held by the American Jewish Historical Society.

Interpretation

The poem is a Petrarchan sonnet.

The title of the poem and the first two lines reference the Greek Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, a famously gigantic sculpture that stood beside or straddled the entrance to the harbor of the island of Rhodes in the 3rd century BC. In the

poem, Lazarus contrasts that ancient symbol of grandeur and empire ("the brazen giant of Greek fame") with a "New" Colossus – the Statue of Liberty, a female embodiment of commanding "maternal strength" ("Mother of Exiles").

The "sea-washed, sunset gates" are the mouths of the Hudson and East Rivers, to the west of Brooklyn. The "imprisoned lightning" refers to the electric light in the torch, then a novelty.

The "air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame" refers to New York Harbor between New York City and Brooklyn, which were separate cities at the time the poem was written, before being consolidated as boroughs of the City of Greater New York in 1898.

The "huddled masses" refers to the large numbers of immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1880s, particularly through the port of New York. Lazarus was an activist and advocate for Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Imperial Russia.