

Little Miss Liberty



By Peggy Spranzani

With the 100th birthday of the Statue of Liberty approaching in 1986, Borough Historian, R. Kennedy Carpenter was searching for a way to remind borough residents about the important part the town's namesake played in bringing the statue to America.

After meeting with the statue's sculptor, Auguste Bartholdi in Colmar, France, Richard Butler returned home to become the secretary of the committee that raised the money to build the statue's pedestal. About 120,000 Americans donated \$100,000 to build the pedestal on which the statue now stands.

As the statue's centennial celebration was being planned, the old Municipal Building/Firehouse in the park was empty and the Wooden Fireman, which had stood on the balcony for years, had been moved to the new firehouse on Carey Avenue. Mr. Carpenter came up with a plan to replace the Fireman with a replica of the Statue of Liberty.

It was learned that an 8-foot fiberglass replica of the statue could be acquired from the Statue of Liberty Foundation for \$1,000. Carpenter approached the Town Council and received a proclamation of support. The Butler Museum led the drive to collect donations and, with the support of the community, the fund reached its goal.

On October 28, 1985, the 99th anniversary of the dedication of the original "Liberty Enlightening the World," Little Miss Liberty was unveiled on the balcony of the old Borough Hall. Ken Carpenter hosted a brief program at which Peter Shepard, chairman of the Butler Museum Commission, presented the statue to Mayor Claude Post, who accepted it in the name of the community.

In 1988, the old Borough Hall remained vacant and the future of the building was undecided. Because it was unprotected, vandals were able to access the balcony and damage the statue. Little Miss Liberty was moved to the museum for restoration and safe-keeping. Local history buffs rejoiced in 1998 when Butler Borough decided to renovate the building and turn it into police headquarters and a community center. Little Miss Liberty was returned to the balcony where it continues to grace the building overlooking Butler Park.

Source: *Butler In Story and Pictures 2001*, *Statue of Liberty Website*

