

CAPITOL GODDESS

**Texas' Own
Symbol of Liberty**





Set against the brilliant Austin skies, some 300 feet above ground, the majestic white statue atop the Texas Capitol dome is a familiar presence in the heart of the capital city. Since the late 19th century, this monumental statue of a woman in flowing robes—known as the Goddess of Liberty—has served as a classic symbol of liberty and wisdom and a crowning touch to a venerable work of architecture. By late 1985, after 97 years of exposure to searing heat and bitter cold, the statue was declared too frail for further service. But out of ingenuity, public support, and respect for tradition came the restoration of the original statue and the fabrication of a precise replica to take her place. Following is the story of the original Goddess, who so readily captured the public imagination, and her worthy successor atop the dome, who reigns today as a reminder of Texas' own special heritage of freedom.

A GODDESS IS BORN

In the 1880s, as the Texas State Capitol building evolved from architectural concept to reality, a statue personifying Liberty was considered an ideal ornament with which to crown such a grand public building. The custom of placing statuary on top of buildings goes back to the ancient Romans and later became an expression of U.S. neo-classical architecture. By the time Detroit architect Elijah E. Myers began designing the Texas Capitol in 1880, the U.S. Capitol dome had been endowed with a bronze statue of Armed Freedom, and several state capitol buildings bore statuary as well. It is not surprising,

Above: The Goddess of Liberty is a familiar sight to all who visit the Texas State Capitol.

Cover: The new Goddess of Liberty on display before her placement atop the Capitol. Meant to be viewed from a distance, the Goddess has exaggerated facial features.



Above: Workmen, dignitaries, and townspeople gather around the Goddess in 1888.

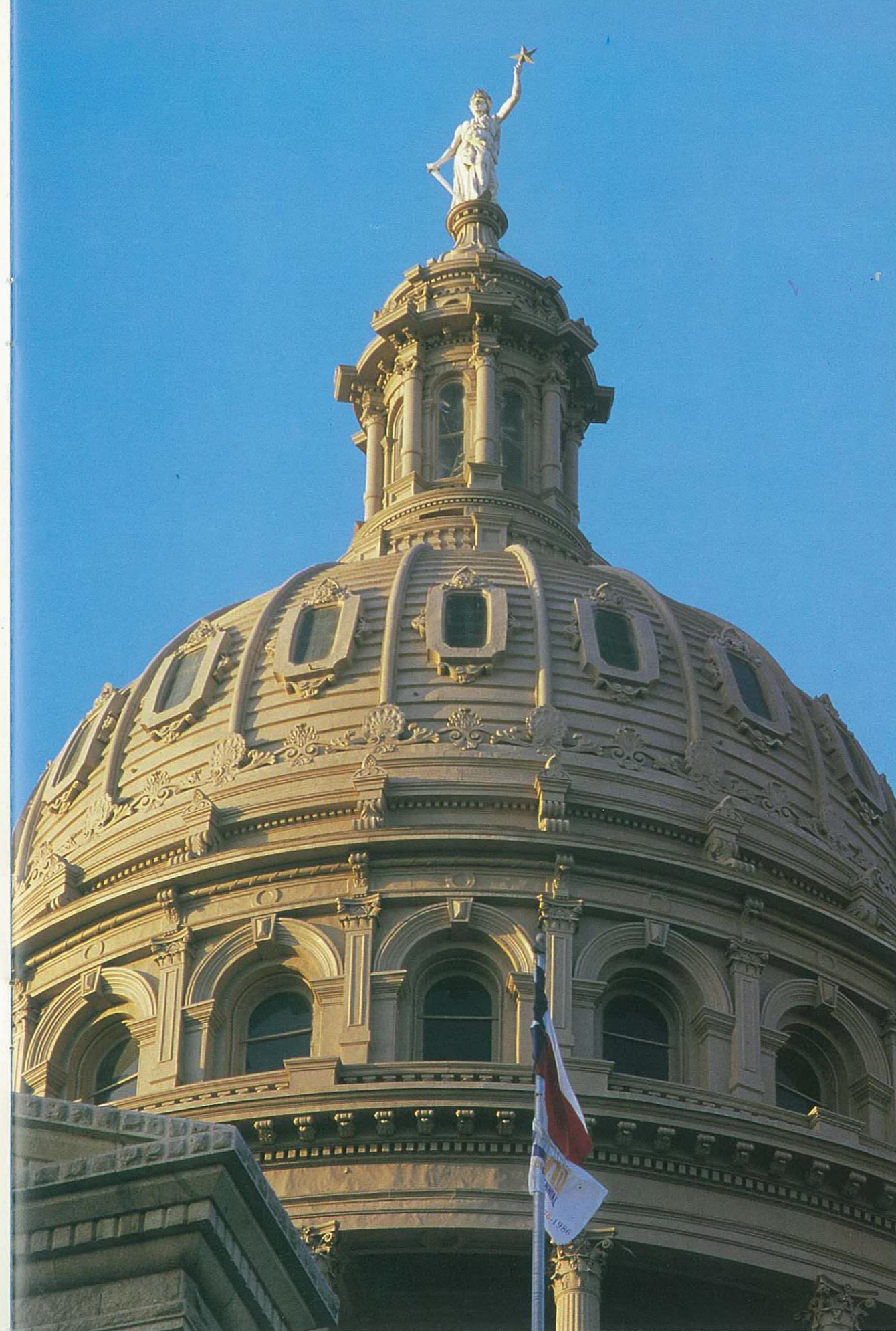
Right: The Goddess in 1986.

then, that a statue atop the Texas Capitol dome was part of Myers' architectural concept from the beginning, appearing even on the competition drawings by which he won the commission. Perhaps inspired by the Statue of Liberty, then under construction in New York harbor, Myers showed in his drawings a statue of a robust lady with a sword in her right hand and a star in her upraised left hand, much as the Goddess looks today.

The Goddess was cast from molds believed to have been furnished by the Chicago firm of Friedley and Voshardt. Catalogs for the firm from the 1890s show a line drawing of a goddess ornament very much like the Goddess of Liberty, but with softer features; the illustration is captioned "Furnished for the Texas State Capitol Building."

The evidence further suggests that Albert Friedley and Hermann Voshardt brought their firm's plaster molds from Chicago to Austin in January of 1888. Reports from the era indicate that a foundry was set up to cast the Goddess in the basement of the Capitol, then still unfinished. The 15' 7.5" statue was slush cast in sections from zinc alloy, and the sections were then attached to an iron armature for support. Once assembled, the statue was coated with white paint, with a little sand mixed in to make her glisten like stone, and the upraised star was gilded with gold.

To place the Goddess atop the dome, 311 feet above ground level, workmen most likely hoisted the statue in four large sections (the head, two arms, and



torso) using ropes, pulleys, scaffolding, and wooden derricks. Final assembly of the statue was completed atop the dome during the last week of February, 1888. And the Goddess reigned supreme for 97 years.

TIME TAKES ITS TOLL

In 1983, workmen painting the lantern that serves as the statue's base noticed large cracks along the back of the Goddess' arms, hands and sword. After preliminary studies in 1984, newly appointed Architect of the Capitol Roy Eugene Graham, AIA, began an extensive investigation into her condition in January of 1985. Experts from the Sculpture Conservation Laboratory at Washington University Technology Associates, Inc. (WUTA), of St. Louis, Missouri, were asked to make a thorough evaluation of the Goddess and recommend a course of action for her future. Drawing on their specialized knowledge of antique monumental sculpture and zinc restoration, WUTA experts reported that the Goddess suffered from partial recrystallization, brittleness, severe corrosion, and extensive cracking.

Upon WUTA's recommendation, workmen erected scaffolding around the Goddess to permit an exhaustive close-up study of her condition in the fall of 1985. On October 23, Architect of the Capitol Roy Graham issued the final verdict: "The Goddess must come down." WUTA's report showed that the statue's deterioration was even worse than had been expected. After 97 years of exposure to the harsh elements, the



Above: Intricate scaffolding permitted extensive close-up evaluation of the statue's condition.

Right: Architect of the Capitol Roy Eugene Graham, AIA, checks the Goddess in final preparation for hoisting her from the top of the dome via helicopter.





Goddess had simply become too frail to leave safely in place, even after restoration. WUTA recommended instead that the Goddess be replaced. Acting on this recommendation, the State Preservation Board—created by the legislature in 1983 and charged with the responsibility of preserving and restoring the Capitol—decided to remove the Goddess for permanent conservation and to replace her with a precise replica made from master molds of the original. Then came the obvious question, “How do we get a 3000-pound statue down from the dome?” The answer proved to be a Vietnam-era twin-engine helicopter.

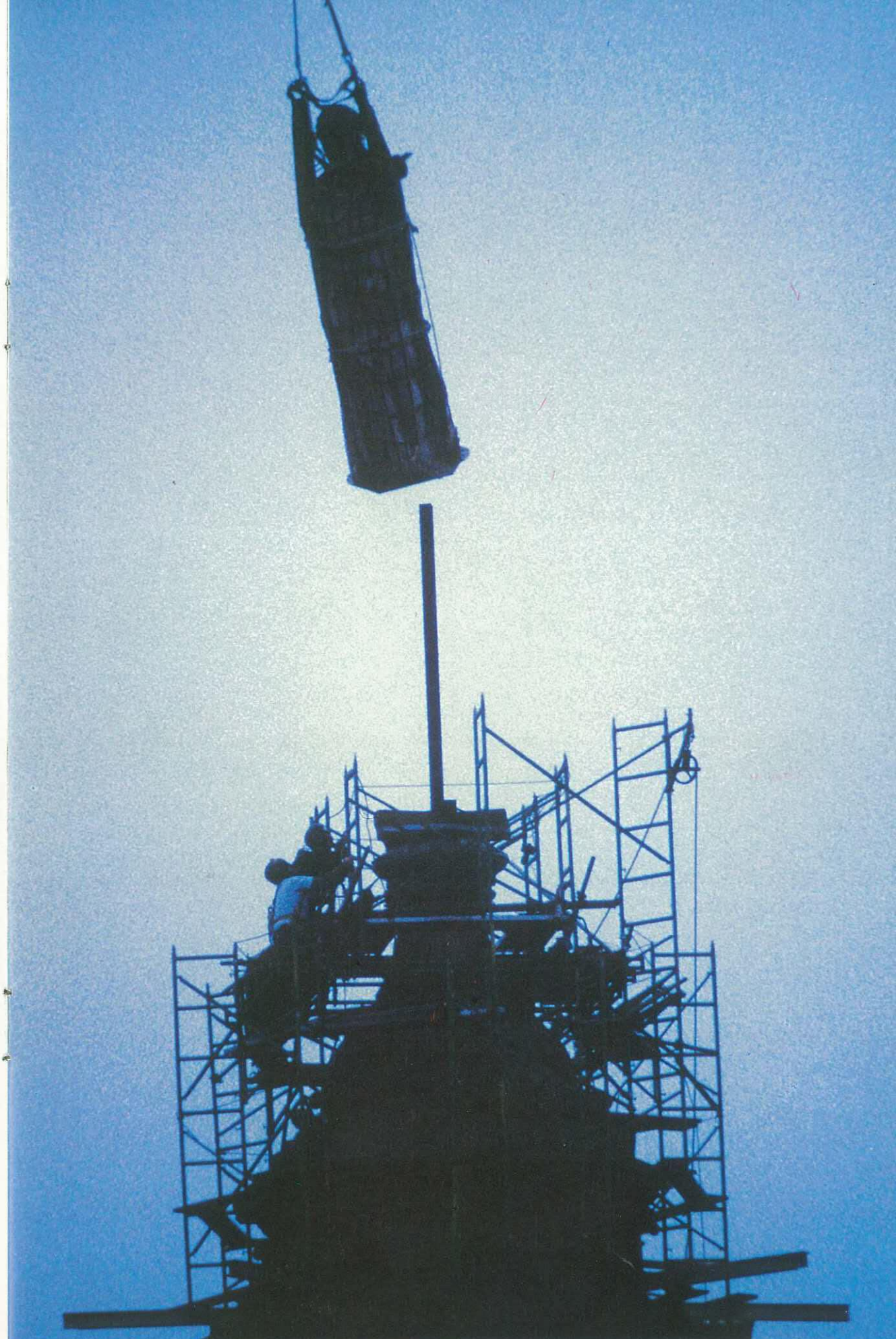
AIRLIFT ONE: DOWN FROM THE DOME

It was dark and raining on Sunday morning in Austin, November 24, 1985, as hundreds of well-wishing onlookers assembled at various vantage points near the Capitol grounds to observe an historical event. At about 8 a.m., a massive CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the Texas Army National Guard at Camp Mabry began hovering some 35 feet above the statue, its rotor wash whipping the trees on the grounds below. In a matter of minutes, the chopper had plucked the Goddess from her perch. Implementing a well-rehearsed procedure, a crew commanded by Colonel Herbert Purtle linked up with the heavy nylon rigging enshrouding the Goddess, lifted her clear of her internal support system, and lowered her upright into a box of sand on the south lawn for public viewing. Her arms had been removed to facilitate her descent. Over the next three days, a constant



Above right: Texas Army National Guard Colonel Herbert Purtle and his helicopter crew pose before airlift one.

Above and right: The Goddess was lifted from the Capitol on November 24, 1985, in the midst of a turbulent rainstorm.

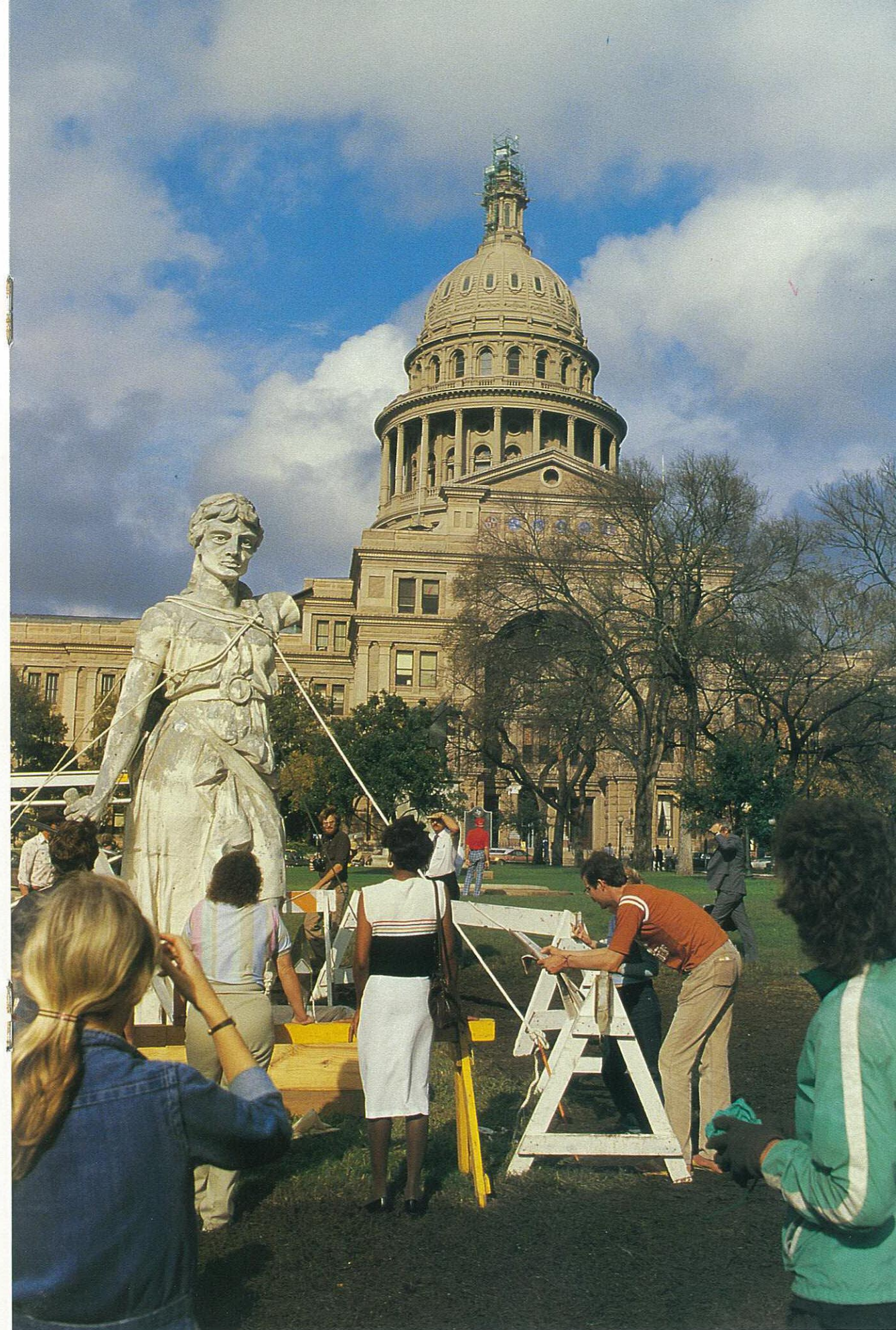


stream of visitors paid their respects to the weather-worn Goddess.

A NEW GODDESS IN THE MAKING
After display on the Capitol grounds, the Goddess was transported to the American Art Foundry in Rhome, Texas. There WUTA technicians studied, tested, and disassembled the statue, then prepared it for use in making master molds of rubber.

Restoration of the Goddess and the casting of her successor was a matter of intense public interest. After all, the Goddess, like the Capitol itself, belongs to the people of Texas. And the people wanted to show they cared by giving to the cause. The necessary funding came largely from the private sector through the Capitol Committee, Inc., a non-profit support group for the State Preservation Board. Corporate support for the overall project came from the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA); Burlington-Northern; Coca-Cola Foods, makers of Maryland Club Coffee; and Safeway Corporation. Two University of Texas organizations—Kappa Alpha Fraternity and Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority—provided many hours of service. And, demonstrating the extent to which the Goddess had endeared herself to the grass roots of Texas, the school children of the state donated generously through the P.T.A.—one quarter at a time.

After careful examination of all the options, ALCOA selected Dellray Bronze in Houston to make the replica because of its fine-arts orientation and



Above and right: After the Goddess was lowered onto the front lawn, curious admirers came to get a closer look. The display on the Capitol lawn was one of the last opportunities to view the Goddess in her deteriorating state.



Above top: Workers at the American Art Foundry in Rhome, Texas, create molds to be use in casting the new Goddess of Liberty.

Above bottom: Rubber molds made from the original Goddess were used to fabricate 48 segments that formed the completed Goddess.

Right: Welders at the Dellray Foundry in Houston fashion the head of the new Goddess.

its capacity to handle a large-scale casting in aluminum. Using the rubber master molds, foundry workers cast 48 aluminum segments that were painstakingly welded together to form a new statue that replicated the original Goddess down to the smallest detail. Houston sculptor Ben Woitena served as artistic supervisor during the casting process to help ensure that the artistic integrity of the original statue was retained, although final authority regarding authenticity remained with the Architect of the Capitol.

After fabrication was complete, the statue was coated with white paint mixed with particles of sand to replicate the original finish, and a gilding of 23K gold leaf was applied to the upraised lone star. The finished statue toured through six Texas cities in the last week of May, 1986, offering the citizens of Texas a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the new Goddess at close range.

Meanwhile, the original Goddess was lovingly restored in Rhome and made her debut in Fort Worth for that city's Fourth of July celebration of the Texas Sesquicentennial. Subsequently, she visited the State Fair of Texas before her arrival in Austin for permanent display in the north lobby of the Capitol.

HIDDEN MEMORIES: THE GODDESS OF LIBERTY TIME CAPSULE
While disassembling the original Goddess, WUTA experts were delighted to uncover historic remnants from another era—the decaying remains of a "time capsule" that had been hidden





Above top: The newly created Goddess on her six-city tour prior to her ascent.

Above bottom: Thousands came to view the new Goddess on display at Camp Mabry as she waited to take her place atop the dome.

Right: Modern-day scene, showing the new Goddess with various well-wishers from the Capitol Complex, recalls the widely published photograph of 1888 in which a similar gathering took place before the original ascent to the dome.

inside the Goddess' star at the time she was made. The cache of materials included several business cards and newspapers wrapped in a paper covering. Its discovery confirmed a report made in 1946 by the late Edward Schutze of Austin that, in 1888, he and his future wife, Emma Wolf, placed in the star a calling card and a copy of *Texas Vorwaerts*, a prominent German-language newspaper established by Schutze's father in 1883. The invitation to place something inside the star was a friendly gesture extended to Schutze by the fabricator of the statue, Albert Friedley, of Friedley and Voshardt.

AIRLIFT TWO: THE ASCENT OF A NEW GODDESS

Placing the newly created Goddess atop the dome proved to be much more difficult than the removal of her predecessor. Texas Army National Guard Colonel Purtle once again assembled his team for a helicopter airlift May 31, only to find—to the dismay of spectators—that the obstacles were insurmountable. The pilots were hampered by high winds, the lack of a winch, and an absence of high-altitude reference points necessary for precise maneuverability. (Lacking direct visual contact, the pilot was "flying blind," responding to voice commands from a crewman in the belly of the aircraft.) The task of slipping the 20" base of the statue over its 12' vertical support was akin to threading the eye of a needle blindfolded. And although many hours of strategizing had taken place—refining the intricate rigging, rehearsing the voice commands, installing a TV



monitor in the cockpit—the mission proved to be impossible, even after further attempts the next day.

Suggestions on how to place the Goddess came pouring in, some serious, some in jest. (Add a funnel to the base, enlarging the opening. Erect a building crane. Fly helium balloons as reference points for the pilots. Or, put the Goddess in the right mood; ply her with champagne.) Undaunted, Colonel Purtle arranged for the loan of a more specialized flying machine—a CH-54A “skycrane”— from the Mississippi Guard. Equipped with its own hoist, and providing the pilot direct visual contact with the statue, the skycrane seemed tailor-made for the job. As the crowds cheered on the morning of June 14, the insect-like chopper appeared on the horizon, dangling from its belly the new Goddess, draped in a Texas flag. Hovering above the dome with utmost precision, the crew made quick work of lowering the statue into place. The event was witnessed by thousands of observers around the Capitol grounds and on local television. But in a very real sense, the whole world was watching. Indeed, it was a proud day for Texas.

After six months without its crowning symbol, the Capitol now was graced by the familiar presence of the Goddess of Liberty. Atop the classic dome she is poised today, ever watchful. And there she will remain in behalf of all Texans, for generations to come.



Above: CH-54A “skycrane” makes easy work of lowering the Goddess into place.

Right: Poised atop the classic dome, the Goddess serves gracefully as Texas’ symbol of liberty.



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