



‘Tinnners’ bring C.R.’s Lady Liberty statue back from flood

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Retired sheet metal worker Mike Kane looked at what was left of the Lady Liberty statue on May’s Island after the mighty flood of June 2008, and shrugged.

“It’s just a matter of patience and perseverance,” he said. “We’ve had worse.”

The eight-foot, four-inch-tall Lady Liberty statute has been part of the downtown landscape for more than 60 years. It was donated by the Boy Scouts of America as part of the youth organization’s nationwide “Strengthen the Arm of Liberty” campaign from 1949 through 1951.

The statues were designed to remind the general public of the citizenship values instilled in Boy Scouts and their own heritage of freedom.

The statue hasn’t had an easy life.

Retired sheet metal worker Gary Myers recalled how she took a beating from “hippies” who used a baseball bat on her in the early 1980s, possibly to make a political statement. The baseball bat attack dented in her face and chest, and broke off pieces of her crown.



Retired sheet metal workers Gary Myers, Andy Goodrich and Jerry Hintz solder pieces of Cedar Rapids' Lady Liberty statue back together as part of a restoration project by Sheet Metal Workers Local 263 of Cedar Rapids on Tuesday, April 26, 2011 at the union's apprenticeship training facility. The statue was seriously damaged in the June 2008 Cedar River flood. (photo by Dave DeWitte/SourceMedia Group News)

The statue’s mounting system was changed when it was moved from Green Square Park in Cedar Rapids to Ellis Island, resulting in more damage. Myers said the statue was originally fixed to the base by a single pole that went up through her hollow center. When it was moved, it was fixed into cement, closing off some of the holes in the metal at the bottom that previously drained out moisture that condensed inside the statue.



A Boy Scout leader for over 40 years, Myers helped piece Lady Liberty back together during the previous vandalism attack, filling in the dented areas with solder and shaping it to look like the original. He was glad to help her one more time.

It's a big job. The flood ripped Lady Liberty from the cement base she'd been installed on after she was moved to May's Island from Green Square Park. It had also washed away one of her feet, which a citizen returned.

City parks officials put in a call to Myers after the statue was found leaning on its side on a sidewalk after the flood. It was eventually taken to the union's apprenticeship training facility in southwest Cedar Rapids, and then to a **sandblasting company** that removed the paint and corrosion coating the exterior. It was back at the apprenticeship facility for the final stage of restoration this week.

Getting rid of the paint and oxidized metal was key to working the metal sculpture back together, according to Myers. He said any oxidation prevent solder used to rejoin the metal pieces from adhering.

on Tuesday, April 26, Goodrich, Myers, Kane and fellow retiree Jerry Hintz worked together like an experienced team to reassemble the statue. Goodrich would heat up the large metal soldering irons, while Hintz, Kane and Myers worked together shaping the metal plates, holding them in place, and soldering them together.

"That grand old lady just needs some tender loving care from some old tinnners," said Andy Goodrich, one of the retired sheet metal workers on the restoration team. Tinnners is a term sometimes applied to sheet metal workers from the days when they made many objects from tin.

Hintz said the group has asked the city's permission to change the sculpture's color from a bronze paint scheme to green, the color of oxidized copper, in order to better match the real Statue of Liberty. The final decision, he said, would be up to the city's arts commission.

Myers said the Boy Scouts raised monies to buy the statues by collecting pennies, and many believed the pennies were actually melted to produce the statues. He believes the pennies were simply used to buy the sculptures

The idea of building the sculptures has been credited to the late Jack Whitaker, who was a Scout commissione for the Kansas City Area Council of the Boy Scouts. He had attended a dedication ceremony for a State of Liberty made of chicken wire and concrete in Spirit Lake in 1959, and thought up the idea of ordering similar statues to celebrate Scouting's 40th anniversary.

The statues were made by Friedley-Voshardt Co. of Chicago at a cost of \$300 each, plus \$200 to \$500 for the base and \$10 to \$15 shipping. By 1951, they had been installed in 195 communities in 39 states.

Iowa communities that received the statues included West Liberty, Muscatine, Dubuque, Waterloo, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and Fairfield.