



U.S. CAPITOL *visitor center*

The Model for the Statue of Freedom

The plaster model for the Statue of Freedom, which was used to cast the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol Dome, is the centerpiece of Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center.

A monumental statue for the top of the Capitol appeared in Architect Thomas U. Walter's original drawing for the new cast-iron dome, which was authorized in 1855. Walter's drawing showed the outline of a statue representing Liberty; sculptor Thomas Crawford proposed an allegorical figure of "Freedom triumphant in War and Peace."



The original plaster model for the Statue of Freedom, originally sculpted in 1857 by Thomas Crawford, is the centerpiece of Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center.

The model for the statue was originally cast in five main sections from clay sculpted by Crawford in Rome. The model was completed in November 1856 and shipped to the United States in April 1858. Upon its arrival nearly a year later, the model was assembled in the Old Hall of the House (now National Statuary Hall).

In 1860, Clark Mills was selected to cast the bronze statue at his foundry near Washington, D.C. The Statue of Freedom was cast with the assistance of an enslaved artisan, Philip Reid. The casting was completed by 1862, and the bronze statue was displayed on the Capitol Grounds until the Capitol Dome was completed. The five sections were then hoisted up and bolted together atop the tholos, with the head of the statue set in place on December 2, 1863 to a salute of 35 guns, answered by the guns of the 12 forts around Washington.

The Visitor Center's opening date of December 2, 2008 was the 145th anniversary of the placement of the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol Dome. By placing the model for the Statue of Freedom in Emancipation Hall, visitors can see details of the statue that would be impossible for them to see from the ground looking up at the statue atop the Capitol. The compelling story of Freedom will be something that visitors of all ages will take with them when they leave the Capitol.