

Norway's Copper Lady Liberty

One of America's most famous symbols may have a Norwegian beginning.

The copper skin of the Statue of Liberty is widely believed to have come from the Visnes Copper Mine in Karmøy, Norway. The mine opened in 1865 and became one of Norway's most important copper sources. During the years when the statue was being built in France, Visnes was active, productive, and connected to European copper markets.

For many years, the story was a local tradition. Then, in the 1980s, Bell Laboratories compared trace elements from the Statue of Liberty's copper with copper from Visnes. The chemical match was close enough that researchers concluded Visnes was highly likely to be the source.

Today, Visnes proudly celebrates this connection. The Visnes Mining Museum tells the story, and a small replica of the Statue of Liberty stands there as a reminder that a piece of Norway may be standing tall in New York Harbor.

It is a wonderful Norwegian-American story: copper from a rocky island in western Norway becoming part of a global symbol of freedom. Not bad for a little mine on Karmøy. Skål to that.