By Albert Stumm | Special to the Globe

The Statue of Liberty, reuphol- der in her flowing robes and pointed crown, proudly holds her torch above the grumpy lump of a humid summer traffic circle, seaweed not the least of its worries, and boulder- filled marshes but rather tourists yearning for the canals and cafes of a medieval French village.

The 30-foot replica on display just outside Culture, in the Alcase region,

is a reminder of that most patriotic of American sym- bols was a French idea. Other copies are spread around France, including three in Paris and one in Bordeaux, but this one com-

memorates a hometown hero, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, who designed the original. On the day of my visit in May, the sun peeked out from behind the clouds just as the bus from

nearby Strasbourg stopped at the entrance to Culture, a former convent with artwork spanning from medieval and architec- tural artifacts from Gallic and Roman times. Signs of aging applied from window bone tend-

ings, peeling and cracked billboards. Finches twittered away the town square.

Ladies leaned on their canes during a late summer afternoon.

Along the short walk over the Lanceau to the historic core, lined with a collection of four regions with feet planted in two worlds, the path through traditional facades hosted by crumblingTALES OF A TRAVEL TRUNK

and timbered buildings. Their hand- painted facades of the 16th century could have been found in the Black For- est today.