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2



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Posted at 05:00 AM ET, 02/08/2012

Removal of statue atop Smithsonian has begun

By [Michael E. Ruane](#)

The Smithsonian Arts & Industries Building was built in 1881 but "shuttered in 2004 after years of neglect and underuse." The building is one of the 11 most endangered historically significant sites in the United States, the National Trust for Historic Preservation said in 2006. (The Associated Press)

This post has been updated.

Workers using a giant construction crane Wednesday began dismantling and removing an elegant, 10-foot-tall metal statue from the roof of the [Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building](#), which is currently undergoing external renovations on the Mall.

Starting about 10 a.m. crews removed the first element of the three part, 130-year-old sculpture titled "[Columbia Protecting Science & Industry](#)."

The first segment, a statue depicting science, was hoisted into a chilly gray sky and lowered to a flatbed tractor trailer parked beside the building.

The white statue is made of sand cast zinc and shows a seated woman reading a huge book as an owl perches on a globe beside her.

The statue had small cracks in the metal and was soiled in places, but appeared to be in generally good condition.

The operation was observed by a small group of Smithsonian employees, including the institution's secretary, G. Wayne Clough.

He said he was delighted to be able to see the statue up close, and that the deteriorated but elegant old brick building on which it sat was getting a much needed facelift

The three-part cast zinc statue has been atop the ornate north entrance to the 19th-century brick building since it was constructed in the late 1870s and early 1880s, said T. Scott Kreilick, head of an Oreland, Pa., conservation firm.

The building, which had been endangered by deterioration, has been closed since 2006 and is now encased in construction scaffolding.

Once the statue is removed, the piece is to be trucked to a Swedesboro, N.J. facility used by Kreiland's firm. There, the old paint will be removed, damaged metal will be repaired and the statue will be repainted, Kreilick said.

The statue was created for the building by influential Czech sculptor Caspar Buberl, who also crafted the dramatic 1,200-foot frieze of hundreds of Civil War figures around what is now the [National Building Museum](#).

Buberl also made the somber statue of the Confederate soldier in Alexandria and numerous other monuments on the battlefields in Gettysburg, Richmond and elsewhere. He died in New York in 1899.

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