



After ceremonies, the cornerstone of the Freedom Tower, which is to be the tallest building at the rebuilt World Trade Center site, was put in place.

Rebirth Marked By Cornerstone At Ground Zero

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

In the dusty bowl of ground zero, a garnet-speckled granite cornerstone was laid yesterday for the Freedom Tower, the tallest skyscraper planned at the World Trade Center site.

New York took the first tangible step to recover its place at the pinnacle of the global skyline in a ceremony that was held within the trade center's foundation, in bright sunshine but far below street level, where bedrock begins. Once again, said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, "the world's tallest building will rise in Lower Manhattan."

Exactly how tall is not yet known. Though officials in their Independence Day speeches could not resist referring to the Freedom Tower as a 1,776-foot building, the main structure will reach only 1,500 feet — still quite a bit higher than the twin towers were — while the television antenna might approach 2,000 feet.

The cornerstone is about 65 feet below nearby Vesey Street, on a concrete pedestal set atop Manhattan schist bedrock. Next to it is a column footing from which structural steel will begin to rise in the next year; that is, if all the financing falls into place for a project that will cost at least \$1.3 billion and has no large prospective office tenants yet.

With many questions unanswered, symbolism was the order of the day at the hour-long ceremony. The mistletoe of 2,749 lost lives, including that of Officer Clinton Davis of the Port Authority Police Department, whose 13-year-old son, Julian, read a brief portion of the Declaration of Independence from the dais.

"Today is renewal," said the Rev. John D. Roman, pastor of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church on Cedar Street, which was crushed beneath the south trade center tower. But he added, "I still have hurt in my heart."

In a speech accompanied by the screech of a passing PATH train, Gov. George E. Pataki of New York said the future 73-story office building would "serve as a reminder that not only did thousands of our friends and family die on this sacred ground, but that they lived, worked, loved and dreamed here, too."

He was joined by Mayor Bloomberg, Gov. James E. McGreevey of New Jersey and the developer Larry

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Cornerstone Marks Rebirth at Ground Zero

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A. Silverstein is unveiling a block of granite 3 feet 6 inches high that was quarried a little over a month ago at Ruby Mountain in the Adirondacks.

Engraved on its buffed and polished face are two- and four-inch-high letters, in a simple sans-serif typeface called Gotham, highlighted in silver leaf.

"To honor and remember those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001 and as a tribute to the enduring spirit of freedom," the cornerstone says, "July Fourth 2004."

At 10:45 a.m., as the canyonlike trade center foundation reverberated with the bass of Morris Robinson of the Metropolitan Opera singing "God Bless America," the 20-ton block was hoisted into a temporary position as a photo backdrop, sitting on heavy timber supports atop a concrete pedestal within a shallow 300-square-foot pit.

An hour and 20 minutes later, after the high-ranking officials and some 520 invited guests had dispersed, the stone was raised again by Dan McClain, at the controls of a 130-ton crane from Bay Crane Service. The timber supports were removed and the stone was laid back down directly on the pedestal.

Because it is so far below street level, the cornerstone is almost impossible to see from any public vantage, although a view can be had from the top of the east staircase of the Vesey Street pedestrian bridge. It is in front of the nearest exterior emergency staircase at the temporary PATH station.

Even this view will be lost as the steel structure begins to rise for about 500,000 square feet of underground space. That will occur after the foundation walls have been reinforced with new anchors tied to bedrock, which will permit the dismantling of the underground parking garage, the floors of which now provide needed reinforcement.

By this time next year, if all goes according to plan, the Freedom Tower will have begun its ascent to a point somewhere far up high in the sky, certainly higher than the original north tower (1,368 feet) or the south (1,362).

"The glory of this latter house shall exceed the former," Governor McGreevey said, borrowing from the Old Testament book of Haggai.

Outside the ceremony and up on Church Street, members of the World Trade Center Restoration Movement and Team Twin Towers took an opposite tack, saying that a failure to rebuild the twin towers

amounted to a capitulation to terrorism. "What's taken down should get built right back up," said Joe Wright, from the restoration movement.

Critics of the redevelopment process also took issue with official priorities. "The governor and the mayor should feel obliged to put as high a priority on creating good jobs and affordable housing for ordinary New Yorkers as they do on replacing high-end office space," said David Dysegaard Kallick of the Fiscal Policy Institute.

On West Street, members of the Coalition of 9/11 Families urged the preservation of the structural remnants of the original towers, including the cut-off bases of the box-shaped perimeter columns. "We feel they will provide a powerful, tangible connection for current and future generations," said Anthony Gardner of the coalition.

Most guests arriving at the ceremony were probably unaware that they were crossing the line of the north facade of the north tower, since the column bases had been covered in gravel. Officials of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the site, said the gravel was spread to create a smoother grade and to protect the remnants.

During the impending dismantling of the parking garage that was under 4 World Trade Center, some architectural elements will be preserved, including a smoke-scarred column, a column on which the paint was blistered by heat into a marbled pattern and a section of smoke-stained wall with the words, "Yellow Parking B2."

Almost the entire floor slab from Level B4 will be saved because it doubles as the ceiling over the PATH tracks, which will run directly under the Freedom Tower.

Tapered and torqued, the tower is to have 2.6 million square feet of office space, an observation deck, restaurants and the antennas of the Metropolitan Television Alliance, which includes Channels 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13. It is being designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, which worked with Daniel Libeskind, the master planner of the site. The Tishman Construction Corporation is the builder.

To the question of exact height, a spokesman for Silverstein Properties

Jason George and Colin Maynihan contributed reporting for this article.



Arriving behind a color guard are, from left, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Governors George E. Pataki and James E. McGreevey.



After speeches proclaiming the significance of the project, the cornerstone dedicated to the memory of those who died is unveiled.

A Piece of a Mountain to Begin a Tower

Had it not been chosen as the cornerstone of the Freedom Tower, the 20-ton block of granite from the Ruby Mountain quarry in the Adirondacks was destined for slightly humbler duty.

"It would have ended up as someone's countertop," said Tim Conboy, the vice president for strategic planning of the Barton Group in Lake George, N.Y., which owns the quarry about 30 miles northwest, near North River. "The one that's being used was slated to be cut up into slabs." Or, it might have been crushed and turned into industrial garnet abrasive — say, for sandblasting or glass finishing — which is Barton's main business.

The 11th-hour reprieve came last month in a call from Karen Pearse, the founder and chief executive of Innovative Stone in Hauppauge, N.Y., which had been

asked by Silverstein Properties to furnish the Freedom Tower cornerstone. At first, in the interest of confidentiality, she referred to the assignment cryptically as a "high-profile" job.

When Mr. Conboy learned the real purpose, he said he told his colleagues, "We better make sure we get them the best darned block we've got." That was a 119-by-67-by-47-inch piece quarried in late May. In this block, sparkling spots of rust-brown garnet, the official state gem, run through layers of jade-green hornblende and charcoal-colored feldspar.

Charles H. Bracken Jr., chairman of the Barton Group and great-great-grandson of the founder, Henry Hodson Barton, attended yesterday's ceremony. "To have this happen," he allowed, "is pretty amazing."

ties said that "1,776 feet will be marked in a significant way but is not necessarily from base to point."

The building is to be occupied in late 2008. Silverstein Properties, the commercial leaseholder of the trade center site, maintains that insurance proceeds will cover the cost of the Freedom Tower. The leaseholder has lost several legal battles with its insurers, however, and it is unclear how much more of the planned five-

tower development can be financed through insurance.

Meyer Feig, whose computer consulting firm, the Intera Corporation, once had its office in the south tower, seemed content for the moment with the ceremony itself.

"It's really a service of moving forward the rebuilding process," he said. "You now get the sense that there really is some positive energy in the air down here."