

# \$2 million historic restoration project completed at Buffalo History Museum



The Buffalo History Museum has completed the second major phase of restoration to the lower level of its National Historic Landmark Building.

A press release stated, "Reactivating the Portico Gallery is foundational to and advances a bold reimagining of the guest experience set forward in the museum's new master plan. This expansive new gallery now aligns to the original vision of architect George Cary, restoring a previously inaccessible area to showcase an expansive, 4,400-square-foot gallery with broad columns. The gallery leads down to a rotunda and park side door, which once served as a grand entryway to the 1901 Pan-American Exposition."

Carmina Wood Morris, DPC served as architectural partners on the project, offering in-kind services to help realize the vision of the restored space. Construction partners for the project were RP Oak Hill Building Co., with plaster work by Swiatek Studios. The project included selective demolition, installation of a new HVAC system, electrical upgrades, restroom reconfiguration and modernization, and floor, wall and ceiling restoration.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held with local officials, project funders, and representatives of the museum to mark the official opening of the newly restored space, now named the Penfold Portico, which is now accessible to the community. Future programming, exhibits, special events and school field trips will all be welcome in the gallery.

"This project is the culmination of our 'Restore, Reactivate, and Reconnect' campaign," said Greg Tranter, president of The Buffalo History Museum's board of managers. "Five years of planning and execution has resulted in

transforming 6,000 square-feet within our building – both what is now our Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Gallery and the space under our portico that was closed to the public for 30 years. This directly opens the museum back to Delaware Park and provides us a new space for the community to gather, appreciate and connect with history."

The Buffalo History Museum Executive Director Melissa Brown said, "Debuting a revitalized historic gallery and reconnecting to the community's cherished Olmsted Park System – I can think of no more perfect means of honoring the 120th anniversary of our iconic building and this tremendous community resource entrusted to our care. Through working diligently with key funders, supporters and organizations in the community, we ensured this project was completed timely despite the challenges of the pandemic. With the opening of the Penfold Portico, we continue to grow as a vital cultural asset for our community. By utilizing this space to welcome school children, programs with community partners, exhibits featuring our vast collection, and more, we are playing our crucial role in showcasing the diverse stories of the people who call Buffalo and Erie County home."

Paul Lang, managing principal of Carmina Wood Morris, DPC, said, "Carmina Wood Morris is humbled and honored by the opportunity and trust the museum has placed in our team to guide the restoration of this gallery. It has truly been a privilege and we look forward to more years of partnership restoring this historic gem. Thank you to The Buffalo History Museum, the RP Oak Hill team, and the contractors and tradesmen who bordered on artisans to bring this wonderful space back online. The gallery is breath taking and

we can't wait for the community to enjoy it once again."

Empire State Development Vice President and Executive Director of Tourism Ross D. Levi said, "New York's museums are a jewel in the state's tourism crown; they showcase themes as unique as the communities they call home, supporting jobs and welcoming visitors from around the world. The Buffalo History Museum's renovation, made possible by a grant through the state's Regional Economic Development Council initiative, ensures that this popular family attraction remains one of the area's premier cultural assets, inviting more people to explore Buffalo and all there is to see and do in the surrounding region."

Financial supporters of project include generous individual donors and friends, the Dormitory Authority of New York State, New York's State Historic Preservation Office, Empire State Development, the City of Buffalo, County of Erie, Charles D. and Mary A. Bauer Foundation, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Richard and Karen Penfold, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The Buffalo History Museum has been a premier historical organization since 1862. Its collections, exhibits and programs tell the stories of the people, events and movements that demonstrate Western New York's essential place in shaping American history. The venue is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

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