

## Preservation Buffalo Niagara

### *Year in Review*

Excerpts of Remarks of Catherine Schweitzer

Annual Meeting October 24, 2009

Delaware Avenue Baptist Church

Our first year has been one of great tests and triumphs. One year ago we stood before you and asked you to believe in a vision, and an untested future, as two organizations with important history came together. Now we are here to report and hope you will approve and applaud our efforts.

#### **A moment of silence for Michael Miller**

After a long search, we were so very excited to appoint Michael Miller as our first executive director. Michael brought many talents to our organization and we were so eager to work with him. So, it was a devastating blow to our organization, the Central Terminal, his colleagues at M&T Bank, his friends - and most of all his family - that Michael died so unexpectedly in late August.

The twinkle in his eye and steady hand are missed by all who knew him. At this time I ask that you join in a moment of silence to remember our friend, volunteer, colleague and leader, Michael Miller.

#### ***“And with a little help from our Friends”***

These words sum up our year, starting with stunning news at the October 2008 meeting. The John R. Oishei Foundation, the DB Trust and the Baird Foundation all announced significant grants to provide vital support over several years. These monies will allow us to accelerate our effort to become a professional preservation organization.

Subsequently, M&T Bank provided exemplary support for our Buffalo Tours program, while another eleven local businesses generously sponsored our Awards Luncheon.

Also gratifying has been an extraordinary membership growth. We started with a combined membership of 415 individuals and families; today we are over 800 and hope to reach 1,000 charter members by year-end. Despite the economy's turmoil, we had a high percentage of existing members renew, and a significant re-joining by formerly lapsed members. And we have been very excited to welcome several hundred new members.

#### **Many Firsts—with some outstanding accomplishments!**

- Our first official act was to become a Local Partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, joining a national network of 112 preservation organizations; subsequently a National Trust grant matched by the Greater Buffalo Community Foundation allowed us to hire a Preservation Specialist.
- The most significant achievement benefiting Buffalo was escorting New York Times architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff around our city. His wonderful article appeared in the New York Times November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 with more than a dozen stunning photos of Buffalo.
- Our most involved preservation effort was a letter we signed in concert with the National Trust and the Preservation League of New York State on the proposed Peace Bridge Plaza Expansion, stating that the mandated analysis of preservation impacts was flawed by an inadequate summary of alternatives.

- Our first regional effort was co-sponsoring a conference on historic preservation in Medina.
- Our first new project was a cultural resource survey—a grant from the Preservation League enabled us to perform an architectural survey of the North Prospect Hill neighborhood.
- Our 2009 Awards program identified exemplary projects in both Erie and Niagara Counties, presented at our successful 2009 Awards Luncheon with over 300 people in attendance.
- Our first public forum in Buffalo was on the reuse and revitalization of historic religious buildings.
- Our first documentary is on Buffalo's Historic Preservation, to be screened on December 6th.
- Our greatest legislative success was supporting the expansion of state historic preservation tax credits and joining Gov. Patterson as he signed this important legislation.
- Our most significant on-going effort is Buffalo Tours. Our outstanding docent corps, volunteers all, served more people than ever before, including local residents and persons from throughout the country and the world.

### **And Now – Our Staff Is Here!**

Our plan for **Preservation Buffalo Niagara** challenged us to assemble the most significant staff ever developed to foster preservation in the Buffalo region. We have done so! ...though our staff was not settled until this September.

We now have one of the country's most experienced preservation executives as our director. Henry McCartney was our advisor as we created **Preservation Buffalo Niagara** and helped us get started; after Michael's death, we convinced him to join our staff and we are grateful to have with him with us. Among his first acts was to hire Andrea Rebeck as our preservation specialist, adding to our staff another 30+ years of great experience.

Buffalo Tour's 2009 success also showed us how one energetic staff person (Fred Schrock) can greatly reinforce the work of our volunteers. And our office staff of Heather Solberg and Kim Mc Henry helps us all so much—staff, board, volunteers, members, tourists and those seeking preservation advice.

So, hats off to this experienced, dedicated staff.

### **See you next year!**

With this strong start and now with our terrific staff, I am eager to see what we will accomplish in 2010. We are so grateful for your interest, financial support, and volunteer effort on behalf of preservation. Thank you for believing in the possibilities a year ago and for coming to hear this year's report—and I look forward to reporting to you on next year's successes.

Catherine Schweitzer, Chair  
 Preservation Buffalo Niagara  
 October 24, 2009