



# GUEST SPEAKERS PROGRAM

PRESENTATION TOPICS

2019  
2020



# Bring Buffalo to you!

Book our docents to bring the stories of Buffalo's fascinating history to your facility!

## BOOKING INFORMATION

All bookings include a one-hour presentation (45 minute presentation, 15 minute discussion or Q&A).

All talks include a PowerPoint presentation. Explore Buffalo can provide technology (laptop & projector) if your facility does not have it available.

Bookings cost \$75.

Please contact Paige Melin at  
**(716) 245-3032 ext.203**  
to book your Guest Speaker today!



***“Our docent’s knowledge & engaging personality made the talk very interesting!”***

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **Abolitionism in Buffalo 1843**

In August of 1843, Buffalo became the center of the national abolitionist movement. Individuals such as Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, Abby Kelly and Charles Lenox Remond spoke in churches, public buildings and the Park on their fight for the abolition of the slave.

## **Abraham Lincoln in Buffalo & WNY**

Buffalo's presidential history is arguably the country's most significant, with exception of Washington D.C. We are well aware that Millard Fillmore and Grover Cleveland were residents and political stalwarts of Buffalo when elected, and that William McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt was inaugurated here in September 1901. But what about Abraham Lincoln? Is there a chapter in Western New York's presidential book regarding his presence and legacy? This talk will reveal the answers to these questions as it describes Lincoln's four visits to Buffalo and Western New York.

## **Art's Up: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (BFAA) & Its Impact Near & Far**

The parent organization of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery is the BFAA which was established in 1862 and for over 150 years has been an ambassador for Buffalo — locally, nationally, and globally. In this talk, we will briefly review BFAA's history, including key events and "firsts" such as being the first major art museum to have a woman director. We'll focus on a selection of people throughout the years who've had significant influence, such as our own "Monuments Men" who helped recover Nazi-looted art during World War II. The fascinating facts you learn may help you in a trivia contest — and even more, offer a better understanding of the BFAA's role yesterday, today, and tomorrow as it sets its goals to continue to serve a diverse community and remain a leading promoter of the Buffalo area.

## **Banking in Buffalo**

Buffalo has a rich history in banking. Although there were numerous banks created over the last two hundred years, only one of them is still in Buffalo under its original name! This talk will include a discussion of the individuals who forged Buffalo's economy and created banking institutions that helped make Buffalo prosperous and inventive. There were also key players on the national scene of financing that hailed from Buffalo. As important as the history of banking are the buildings constructed to house them. Buffalo's beautiful bank buildings are part of our architectural assets and admired around the world.

## **Beerffalo: The Ales & Tales of Buffalo**

Buffalonians have been enjoying the taste of locally made beer since before the War of 1812. With a brewing resurgence in full force today and all the micro-breweries finding homes in the city, it's a perfect moment to reflect on Buffalo's brewing past. In this talk, we'll explore Buffalo's rich brewing history and culture, as well as the amazing renaissance that is ongoing today.

## **A Buffalo Culinary Journey**

Food is something that Buffalonians are proud to embrace and boast about. From chicken wings and beef on weck to food festivals that celebrate our immigrant roots, Buffalo has a wonderful culinary heritage. Join us for this talk where we'll take a look into the history of the various foods created and celebrated throughout Buffalo's delicious history.

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **Buffalo's Sporting Life**

Are you a diehard Buffalo Sabres fan? Do you keep rooting for the Bills year after year? Are you just getting into all that Buffalo sports has to offer? Whether an aficionado or an amateur, this talk is for you! Presented through the eyes of a 60-year-old lifelong Buffalo sports fan, this talk will focus on professional sports in Buffalo through the years, including the history of the Bills, the Bisons, the Braves, the Sabres, and more!

## **Buffalo Then & Now: What Building Was There in 2019?**

In this compare-and-contrast presentation, see what the sites of some of your favorite Buffalo buildings looked like one hundred years ago! This presentation will show what various locations around the Queen City looked like in 1918, juxtaposed with their 2018 appearance. You'll be surprised by how much the city has in some ways changed, and in some ways remained the same!

## **The Burchfield Penney Art Center: The First "Green" Art Museum in NYS**

The BPAC is celebrating 50 years as the Museum for Western New York Arts. In this talk we will briefly review the history of this art center, then discuss the present building design by Gwathmey Siegel and Associates. We'll illustrate how the architectural structure has distinctive features reflecting artist Charles E. Burchfield's love of nature. We'll also explore how the building design serves the BPAC's diverse programming to provide artists, students, scholars, collectors, and the general public with opportunities to learn and exchange ideas about the cultural legacy of the region.

## **Celebrating Buffalo & Beyond: The Artistic Legacy of Józef Sławiński**

Accomplished artist Józef Sławiński came from Poland to Buffalo in the 1960s and made the Niagara Frontier his home until his death in 1983. In those two decades Sławiński created artwork both reflecting and helping to inspire the civic, historical, architectural, religious, natural, and cultural heritage of the WNY community. In this talk we will consider both Sławiński's artistic vision as well as his versatility and skill in using varied materials and labor-intensive processes, such as hammered copper portraits or layered cement murals known as sgraffito which was his favorite medium. Although Sławiński's work is found elsewhere, "his richest body of work is in the Buffalo Niagara region." Join us for a virtual tour of his art, so that his work - as the artist hoped - would be "open for everyone's enjoyment" and "create a lasting tribute to the idea of peace."

## **Christmas Shopping in Buffalo**

Do you remember being in downtown Buffalo at Christmastime? This talk will bring back memories of getting dressed up, spending the day shopping in the wonderful stores, looking at the department store window decorations, eating at the AM&A's top floor restaurant and so much more! We'll also talk about all of the great retailers that made Buffalo their home.

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **The Erie Canal: The Creation of the Empire State**

The Erie Canal had a significant impact not only on the growth of Buffalo but the growth of the nation. The talk includes: the initial concept of the Canal, the political fight to make it a reality, the construction of this amazing civil engineering feat, and its effect on the economy of Buffalo as it became one of the largest inland ports in the world.

## **From Soaps to Riches: Larkin, Hubbard, & Wright**

This lecture will tell the story of the Larkin Soap Company founders, John Larkin and Elbert Hubbard, and their relationship with architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright designed not only famous Larkin Company administration building, but also houses for company executives Darwin Martin, Walter Davidson, George Barton, and William Heath.

## **German Immigrants in Buffalo & WNY**

Buffalo's history is a story of immigrants. Among the first immigrants were people from the German "states". In fact, individuals of German heritage comprise the largest immigrant group to settle in the United States as a whole. The nation of Germany as we know it was not established until the completion of the Franco-Prussian war around 1870. The talk covers early immigration prior to this period through the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will also include information about the speaker's family that came from what is now the Alsace region of France.

## **A Grave Discussion**

Death is as inevitable as taxes! For generations, humans have grappled with what to do with our dead. In addition to burying dead on church-owned lands, burial grounds were also formed on state land or land lent by farmers or local merchants. In Buffalo, both public and pauper (potter) burial lands were formed at what appear to be random locations as the city grew. As towns expanded outward, bodies located in (no longer) rural areas were exhumed and reinterred further away from the city proper in beautified cemeteries – a move which characterized the Rural Cemetery Movement that swept the country beginning in the 1830s. This casual presentation focuses on this area's very first burial grounds - former, abandoned, and the oldest cemeteries that exist today - & is sure to be quite a crowd-pleaser!

## **The Guaranty Building**

The Guaranty Building, completed in 1895, is considered one of Louis Sullivan's masterpieces. In the 1890s, the skyscraper was a new and uniquely American building type. Sullivan is one of the most important American architects of the 19th century and is considered the "Father of the Skyscraper." Learn about the history and architect of this landmark building in detail.

## **History of Buffalo Aviation: People, Place, & Planes**

Did you know that Buffalo was once the center of United States Aviation? In a Casey Kasem countdown-style format, this talk will introduce the top five people that influenced Buffalo's aviation history. Come hear about the manufacturing centers existing and long gone that created the industry. Listen to stories and facts about Buffalo built planes that affected the world. Let your knowledge soar to new heights!

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **Kleinhans Music Hall**

Anyone who has spent time in Buffalo has no doubt heard that the acoustics of Kleinhans Music Hall are amongst the finest in the world. Dating from 1940, Kleinhans was designed by an architect of international reputation, Eliel Saarinen, who worked closely with an acoustical consultant throughout the design process. Based on original research in the Kleinhans Music Hall archives, this talk will explore the history of acoustical design of the main auditorium – including the intriguing story of dual consultants – and the ultimate acoustic results which perhaps surprisingly, fell short of what they had desired to achieve. Elements of acoustical planning and recent changes to the design of Kleinhans Music Hall will be discussed.

## **Larkland: The Larkin Family Estate**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of Buffalo's leading families purchased an entire city block on Lincoln Parkway, bordering Delaware Park, to create an estate for themselves. John D. Larkin, owner of the immensely successful Larkin Soap Company, built homes for himself and four of his children. Enclosed by a low stone wall that is still seen today, the place was called "Larkland." Learn about the family and their soap business, their connections to Frank Lloyd Wright, and their legacy to the City of Buffalo.

## **Learning, Caring, & Curing: Medical History in Buffalo**

Since the mid-1800s, Buffalo has seen the development of quality clinical care, education, and medical research facilities. The opening of the new *John R. Oishei Children's Hospital* and the *UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences* in 2017 only continue this tradition. With the expansion of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus driving the city's resurgence, this presentation takes a look back at the evolution and development of the medical school, hospitals, and research facilities within the city. This talk will showcase some of the highlights of Buffalo's history of medical excellence, innovations, and inventions, as well as many photographs of buildings and sites that were once home to hospitals and schools.

## **The Library in Erie County: A Short History & Overview of the Current Library System**

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System as we now know it is an institution with an equal focus on education, preservation, and community engagement. However, the library system has gone through many changes, and in Buffalo there are a number of libraries that no longer exist or that have become adapted to new purposes, like the Brighton Place Library. In this talk we will learn about the evolution of Buffalo's library system as well as some of the jewels of Buffalo libraries today, including those found at local colleges and institutions.

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **Life in the Original Larkinville**

Today, Larkinville is a revitalized neighborhood that boasts of successful businesses, a vibrant arts scene and, of course, food truck Tuesdays. The area has arisen from the neglect of the late 20th Century and in many ways represents the re-birth of 21st Century Buffalo. Many people, however, know very little about the namesake Larkin Soap Company, which was one of Buffalo's major employers 100 years ago. When one thinks of large corporations in the early 20th Century, images of over-worked and under-paid women and children working in dangerous sweat-shops comes to mind. While this period became known as the Progressive Era in American history, most large businesses were very slow to improve the working conditions for the average worker. The Larkin Soap Company was a leader in changing the work place environment by placing an emphasis on the overall well-being of their employees. They created an environment where all of the "Larkinites," which included not only the employees but also management and their customers, were treated with respect creating a very dedicated and loyal organization. This talk will look at the policies and benefits that were instituted by the Larkin Soap Company that not only improved the lives of their employees but also the lives of the citizens of Buffalo.

## **Merry Christmas from Buffalo, NY**

Despite modern-day commercialism, Christmas here in Buffalo and throughout this nation was first a religious celebration whose roots date back to the Romans and to ancient pagan rites. While it eventually evolved into a general celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas was deeply rooted in the specific ethnic origins and traditions of the families celebrating it. Buffalo, with its diverse ethnic population, had an abundance of Christmas traditions that influenced the various ways this holiday was celebrated. Join us to learn how these early Buffalonians brought their unique ethnic and religious traditions to help define a Buffalo Christmas!

## **A Night Out on the Town**

This talk revives the exciting history of the entertainment community in Buffalo. Are you a movie buff? We will talk about the variety of theatres that would have shown everyone from Charlie Chaplin to Cary Grant to the original Star Wars. Is music more your speed? We will help you imagine where you would have sat to listen to the likes of Sinatra, Elvis, the Stones, and the Goo Goo Dolls. From vaudeville to live stage productions, Buffalo has been home to wondrous theatres and other venues which are no longer physically with us but, through this talk, can once again be part of our collective memory.

## **Presidents in Buffalo: Which Ones & When?**

Every time a United States President visits Buffalo, the question arises: How many Presidents have come to Buffalo (or the region), either before, during or after their presidency? The answer may not be definitive yet, as researchers continue to discover new information. However, with assistance from the Buffalo History Museum and several other individuals, Bren T. Price, Sr. has compiled a (nearly) comprehensive list to answer this question. Aside from our two resident presidents, you may be surprised to learn who came first, the most, or not at all.

# Presentation Topics

Please note: Talk availability is subject to the availability of our docents.

## **Spiritualism in WNY**

Many Buffalonians are familiar with Lily Dale, but fewer of us know that spiritualism actually has a long and rich history in Western New York. Join us for this interesting talk which will introduce the concept of spiritualism and its development in the United States before delving into its history here in WNY. You'll learn about famous locals such as the Fox sisters and the Davenport brothers, along with others who influenced the practice of spiritualism in this area. The talk will include information about Lily Dale and its place as the center of spiritualism in the United States, as well as various other local places where spiritualist events have occurred. Finally, we'll discuss where spiritualism fits in with today's social fabric.

## **They Worked Hard for their Money! Working Women at the Turn of the Century**

The influx of Irish immigrants and the Industrial Revolution changed the lives of women, especially single women, between 1870 and 1920. Although it was the Gilded Age in Buffalo, not everyone was a millionaire living on Delaware Avenue. What kind of work were women doing and where were they doing it? From domestic servants to ground-breaking professionals, hear the stories of Buffalo's working women - their struggles and their successes.

## **Top 10 Architectural Features**

One reason that Buffalo's architecture is so appealing is that it is loaded with ornamentation – especially Classical ornamentation derived from Greece and Rome. Join us for this talk where you'll learn the top ten most frequently used decorations. Once you know these, no matter where you travel in the Western world you'll be an architecture "expert." This talk features many examples derived from the Illustrated Dictionary on the website *Buffalo Architecture and History* (BuffaloAH.com).

## **Trains Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow**

Although Buffalo was always known to be an important Great Lakes shipping port, it is less well known that Buffalo became the 2nd largest railroad hub in America. The story of the importance of railroads to Buffalo and the great railroad stations built here to serve them is a fascinating one. The story may yet have another interesting chapter as we will also examine the very topical issue of the future of rail travel in Buffalo. All aboard!

## **The Village of Depew: Chauncy Depew, Railroads, & Olmsted**

The Village of Depew, one of the largest villages in WNY, has a rich and varied history. It served as a major supplier of Buffalo's lumber in the early 1800s and eventually developed into an important industrial and transportation hub through the forethought of Chauncey Depew, the businessman and investor for whom the Village was named. Join us for this talk to learn about Depew's development and its special connection to famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.