

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS "FACT, FICTION & SPECTACLE: THE TRIAL OF RED JACKET"**

*September 28, 2010* -- The Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society is proud to announce the opening and presentation of "Fact, Fiction & Spectacle: The Trial of Red Jacket." This major exhibit centers on the colossal painting, "The Trial of Red Jacket," by John Mix Stanley, from the museum's collection. The show opens to the public on October 8, 2010, and runs through August 7, 2011. The exhibit is generously sponsored by M&T Bank, with generous media support by WGRZ/Channel 2.

The exhibit will tell the stories behind the canvas through the exploration of four major themes. These themes will include the artist, John Mix Stanley (1814-1872); the social dynamic of life on the Buffalo Creek Reservation; Native American clothing, jewelry and accessories; and the question of why Red Jacket so captured the public's imagination.

The museum's 1,800-square-foot Erie County Gallery will be utilized for the exhibit. Upon entering, visitors are greeted a brief introductory video, featuring WGRZ Channel 2 anchor Scott Levin; he will welcome visitors and give an overview of the exhibit.

The first section showcases the dramatic nine-foot wide painting, *The Trial of Red Jacket* (1862-1868). It will be gloriously draped in red velvet and lit up with period-inspired footlights; the elaborate canvas will be shown as it would have been in its heyday. Like other paintings of this period, it was more than just a painting; it was an "event" and a social document. When the painting toured around the country, people lined up to pay to see it, sometimes multiple times.

Stanley's attention to technical detail is undeniable. Upon examination however, his manipulation of the historical record is revealed. The exhibit story pushes beyond the visual experience, exploring aspects of the painting, its creation, its content and the times during which it was made. Inaccuracies revealed by historic "detective work" pose new questions; encourage and engage visitors.

In a second video installation, the artist John Mix Stanley will be portrayed by actor Todd Benzin (with costumes by theater professional Kari Drozd). This will be shown in an interactive wall portrait. It discusses his life and times, how he marketed the painting and chromolithographs of it, creating an oral history of how the painting was perceived by the public, its importance and the drama that surrounded it.

Authentic examples of the Native American clothing and accessories depicted in the painting will be an exhibit focal point. Juxtaposing Stanley's rendering, locally made, period reproductions of Seneca clothing will also be showcased. Interpretive text written by scholar Dr. Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, examines aspects of life on the Buffalo Creek Reservation and reveals the central figures captured on canvas. Themes of why the Reservation existed and what life was like there around 1800 will also be explored.

The last section looks into why Red Jacket himself so captured the public's imagination and attention. Many additional portraits of him from the Historical Society and others' collections will be included. The section also includes vintage documents, and one of the country's most celebrated artifacts, the Peace Medal given to Red Jacket by President George Washington, a rarely displayed item.

The event is underwritten with generous support from M&T Bank, as well as supported by our media sponsor, WGRZ Channel 2.

**Note to editors:** curator interviews, hi res images and on site tours available.

**WHAT:** Fact, Fiction & Spectacle: The Trial of Red Jacket

**WHERE:** The Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society, 25 Nottingham Court, at the corner of Elmwood Ave.

**WHEN:** Members opening, Thursday, October 7, 2010. Opens to the public October 8, 2010, runs through August 7, 2011.

**INFO:** [buffalohistory.org](http://buffalohistory.org), (716) 873-9644