

Historical Society Receives Prestigious National Recognition

Awarded Re-Accreditation from the American Association of Museums

Buffalo, NY -- Dec. 16, 2010 - The Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society announced today that it achieved re-accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM), the highest national recognition afforded the nation's museums.

Accreditation signifies excellence to the museum community, governments, funders, outside agencies, and the museum-going public. The Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society was initially accredited in 1974, and re-accredited in '86 and '99. All accredited museums undergo re-accreditation reviews approximately every 10 years to maintain that status.

Of the nation's estimated 17,500 museums, 775 are currently accredited. The Historical Society is one of only 63 museums accredited in the state of New York, out of an estimated 900.

AAM Accreditation brings national recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards and continued institutional improvement. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for 35 years, AAM's museum accreditation program is the field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability.

AAM and its accreditation process strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and remain financially and ethically accountable – all in order to provide the best possible service to the public.

"We are deeply gratified that the AAM has seen fit to fully re-accredit the Historical Society," said Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D, Executive Director during the three-year process. "Having this accreditation elevates all of our efforts to a higher level. The rigorous application process helps us to refocus those efforts on what is most important for the museum, the community and all of our constituents. I commend the staff for their dedication and commitment, enabling all this to happen."

Accreditation is a very rigorous and highly rewarding process that examines all aspects of a museum's operations. To earn accreditation, a museum first conducts a year of self-study, then undergoes a site visit by a team of peer reviewers.

Incoming Executive Director, Melissa N. Brown, who was the Director of Research and Interpretation throughout the process, said, "I am delighted to begin my tenure as Executive Director with these results. The re-accreditation truly highlights our ability to both move with the times, and to rise to AAM's standards of excellence-which we have done for the past four decades. The self-study process, while arduous, gave us a healthy dose of introspection and encouraged new goals."

AAM's Accreditation Commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, then considers the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation. While the time to complete the process varies, it generally takes up to three years.

"Accreditation is emblematic of an institution's commitment to public service and to overall excellence," said Ford W. Bell, AAM president. "Attaining accreditation involves taking a hard look at yourself, allowing your peers in the field to do the same, and being judged to be superior in all areas. The people of Buffalo and the Western New York region can take great pride in the fact that their local institution is one of America's premier museums."

Since its founding in 1862, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society has served as Western New York's premier historical organization, collecting, researching, interpreting, and sharing the Niagara Frontier's rich history. Its collections include more than 100,000 artifacts, 200,000 photographs, and 20,000 books. The Historical Society annually presents a wide array of programs, exhibits, tours, outdoor events, and activities for all ages that utilize many of these resources to tell the stories of both ordinary and extraordinary people of Western New York.

The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society (BECHS) is a private not-for-profit organization tax exempt under Sec. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It receives operating support from the County of Erie, the City of Buffalo, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA, a state agency), and from members and friends. BECHS is accredited by the American Association of Museums. For more information, visit www.buffalohistory.org.

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 15,000 individual, 3,000 institutional, and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.