

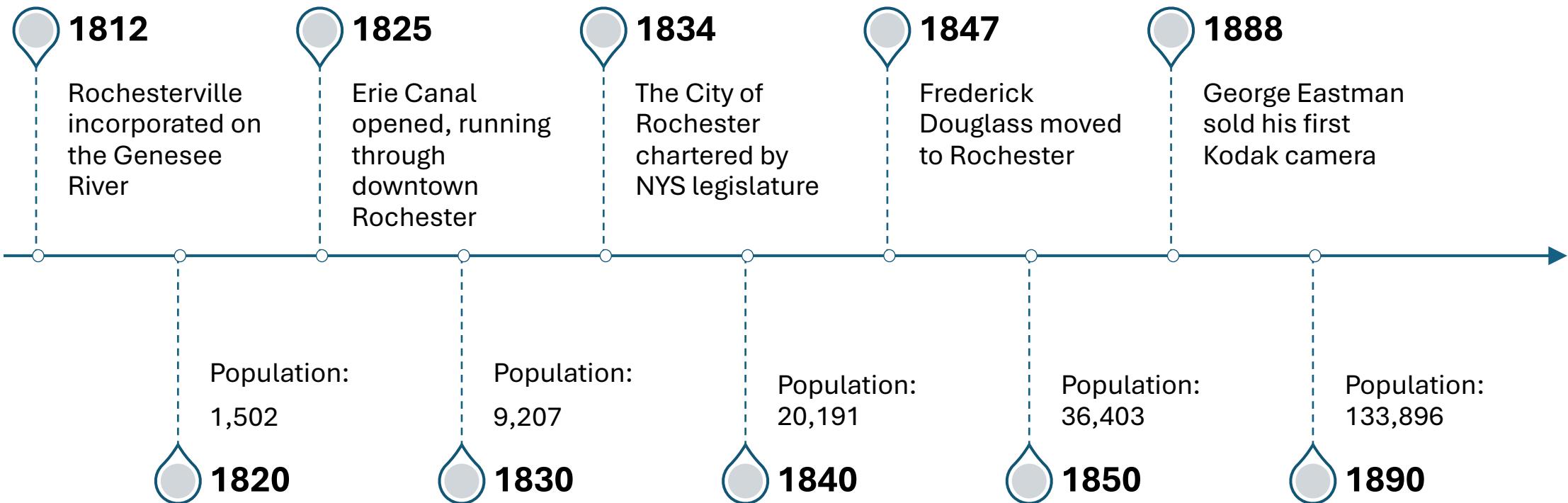


A History of Rundel Library

Katy Hasselwander

Brie Harrison

Historical Context



Before the Public Library

- University of Rochester opened in 1850
- First literary club founded in 1854
- Reynolds Library established in 1878

“Before the public library was organized...these association libraries and public libraries were the centers of literary discussion and study”
(McKelvey & Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1986, p. 3)

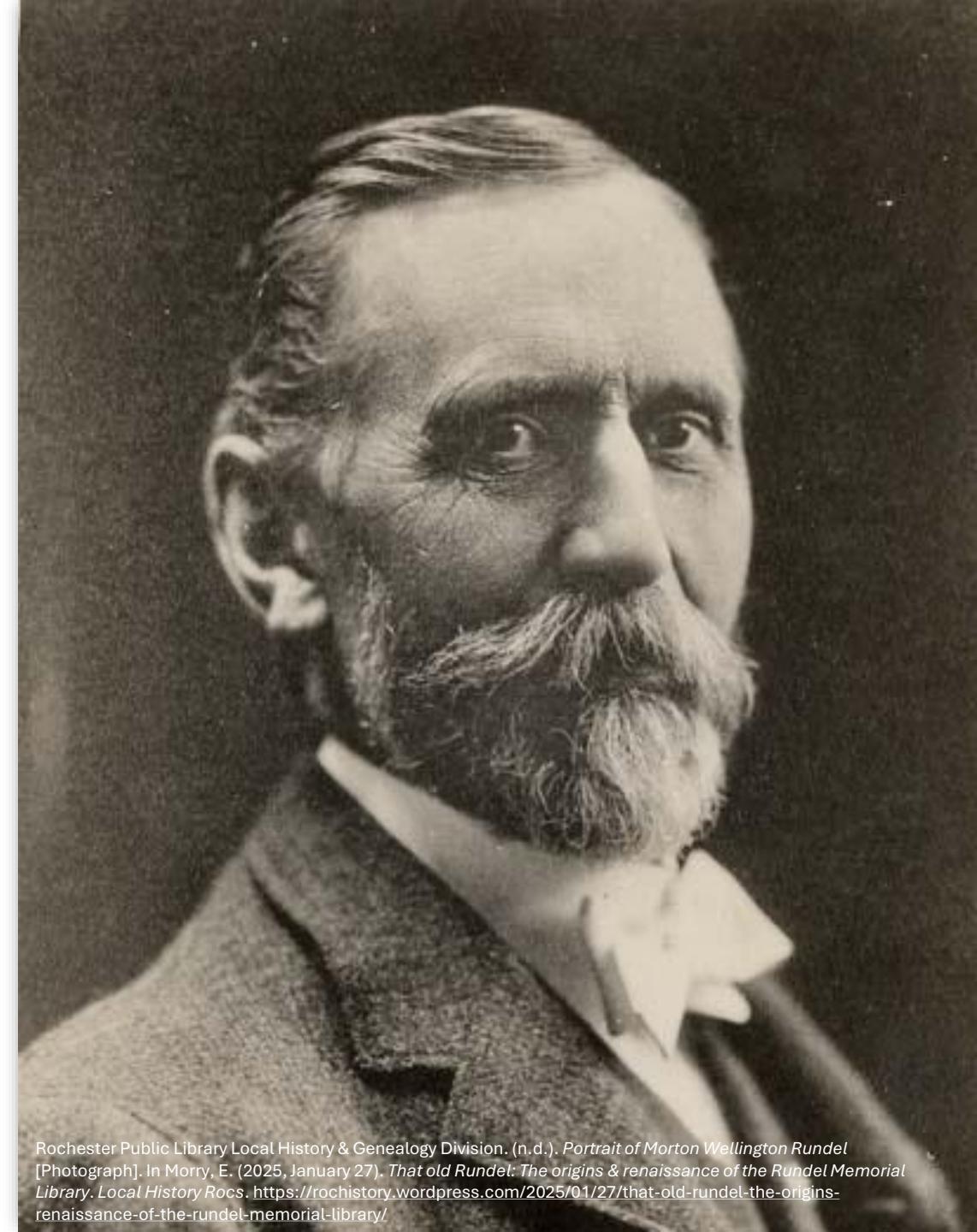


RPL First Established as Branch System

- Mayor Hiram Edgerton authorized a public library system in 1911
- Focus on local access
- Plan to open one branch a year
- Branches located directly in neighborhoods

Bequest for a Central Library

- In 1911, Morton W. Rundel left a \$400,000 bequest to “erect, equip and maintain a structure to be known as the ‘Rundel Memorial Building’
- Years of legal disputes delayed receipt



Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division. (n.d.). *Portrait of Morton Wellington Rundel* [Photograph]. In Morry, E. (2025, January 27). *That old Rundel: The origins & renaissance of the Rundel Memorial Library*. Local History Rocs. <https://rochistory.wordpress.com/2025/01/27/that-old-rundel-the-origins-renaissance-of-the-rundel-memorial-library/>

SENSATIONAL ALLEGATIONS IN ACTION AGAINST WOMAN TO RECOVER RUNDEL STOCKS

Mrs. Elizabeth A. Holmes Accused of Having
Represented Herself to Helpless Old Man
as Possessing Supernatural Powers.

ALMOST HALF A MILLION INVOLVED

The Road to a Central Library

- In 1926, George Eastman purchased the former Kimball Tobacco Factory for municipal purposes and a temporary Central Library opened at the City Hall Annex
- At the 1931 Exposition, the Library gathered 2,000+ signatures on a petition that said *“Build your Central Library now”*
- In 1934, Depression-era PWA funds of \$263,000 allowed construction to begin

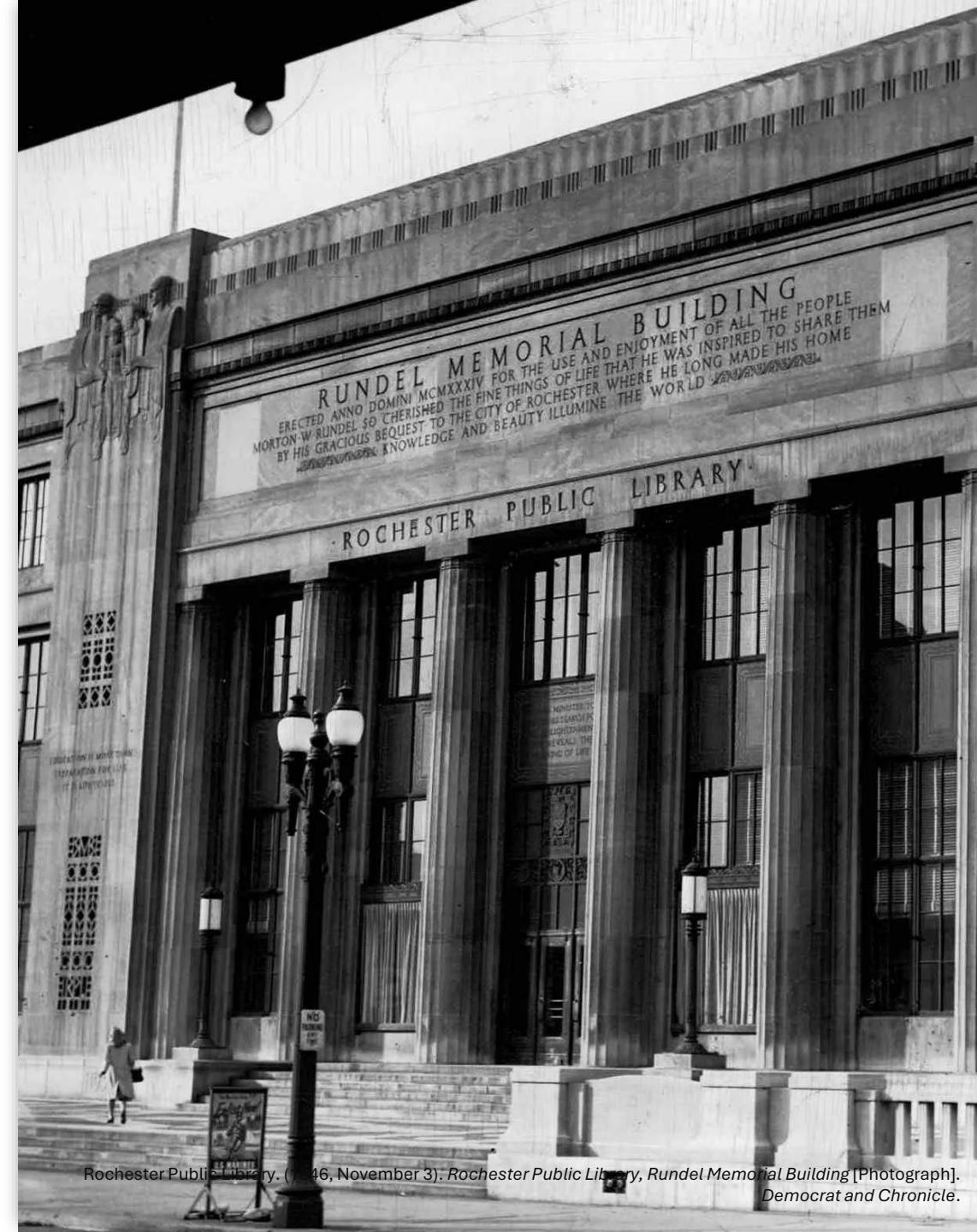


rpf00530.jpg RPL Local History Division

Grand Opening

- An estimated 10,000 people attended the building dedication in 1936.
- 5,600 patrons visited & 3,200 books loaned during the first open day.

“Depressions...are inside as well as outside and books have a therapeutic value in enabling men to gain the courage and knowledge to fight their way through.”



Rochester Public Library. (1946, November 3). Rochester Public Library, Rundel Memorial Building [Photograph]. Democrat and Chronicle.



Building Exterior

Exterior Details

- Pylons
- Carvings
- Inscriptions
- Bronze elements



Building Interior

- Bronze elevator
- Zodiac details and inscriptions
- Chandeliers, large windows, and skylight
- Intentional design

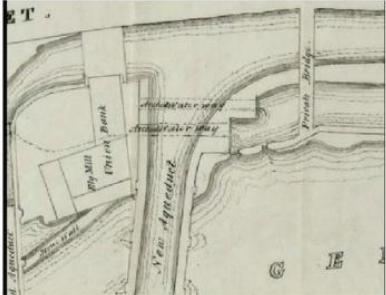


Building Site

- Overlooks the Genesee River
- Sits directly above the original bed of the Erie Canal, later occupied by the Subway
- Johnson and Seymour mill race still operates beneath the Library and provides cooling to the building



Seward, Z. (2011, June 23). *The Erie Canal-era Johnson Seymour Mill Race flows underneath Rochester's central library* [Photograph]. *Innovation Trail*. <https://www.innovationtrail.org/energy/2011-06-23/rochester-one-step-closer-to-lighting-library-with-old-millrace>

1817

Rochesterville Incorporated as a Village
Johnson Seymour Mill Race Constructed

1865

Great Flood

1924-25

Broad Street Bridge Constructed over the
Aqueduct

1934-36

Rundel Library Constructed

1937

North Terrace Constructed
(Comprised of Broad Street and Viaduct Terraces)

1825

Erie Canal Opens

1834

City of Rochester formed

ERIE CANAL 1825-1919 (94 yrs)

AQUEDUCT 1821 - 1837

JOHNSON SEYMOUR

MILL RACE

GENESEE RIVER

1821-23

1st Aqueduct Constructed

1837-42

2nd Aqueduct Constructed



Erie Canal rerouted out of downtown Rochester

1918

Depth of Genesee River lowered

1919**1921**

The City of Rochester purchases the rights to the
Erie Canal from the State of New York

1927

Rochester Subway Opens

1948-1952

Mount Morris Dam

1956

Rochester Subway Closes

2018

Present Day

NORTH TERRACE
RUNDEL LIBRARY
BROAD STREET BRIDGE

ROCHESTER SUBWAY 1927 - 1956

1973-74

Broad Street Bridge Reconstruction

81 years

82 years

93 years

176 years

201 years

1936-1937 North Terrace

Newspaper articles note that the bids for the terrace construction were excessive and the project was rebid and constructed between 1936-37.



1936 Rundel Library

Designed and built during the Great Depression, the Rundel Memorial Building is constructed over the Johnson Seymour Mill Race, the old Erie Canal, and Rochester Subway bed. The mill race, which was incorporated into the design of the building, still flows under the building and a portion spills through a series of archways built into the West facade of the building.



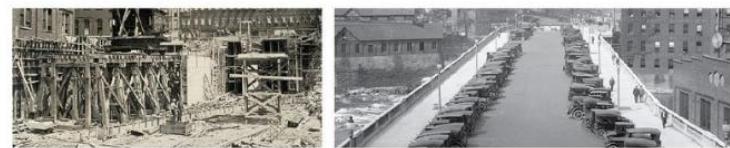
1927-1956 Rochester Subway

Built in the bed of the Erie Canal Aqueduct, construction began in 1921, and in 1927 the Subway was completed, carrying the first passengers under the City.



1925 Broad Street Bridge

Built on the foundation of the Erie Canal Aqueduct, the Broad Street Bridge provided an important link between the east and west during the rise of the automobile.



1842-1919 Erie Canal Aqueduct

Replacing the original aqueduct (circa 1823), a second, wider aqueduct was constructed across the Genesee River to accommodate the increase in Canal traffic. Built entirely of Onondaga Limestone, the second aqueduct provides the foundation for the current Broad Street Bridge.



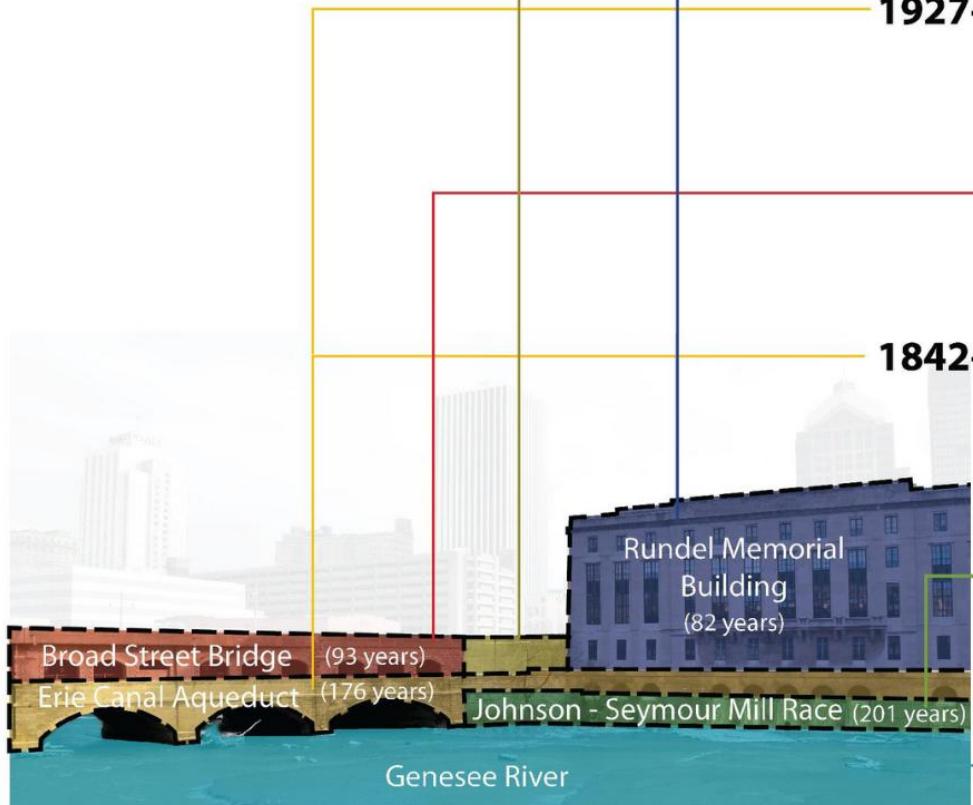
1817 Johnson - Seymour Mill Race

The race was cut along the East bank of the Genesee River by Elisha Johnson and Orson Seymour to operate mills on the site of the Rundel Library.



Genesee River

Flowing through the heart of the City, the River provided the power necessary for its growth.

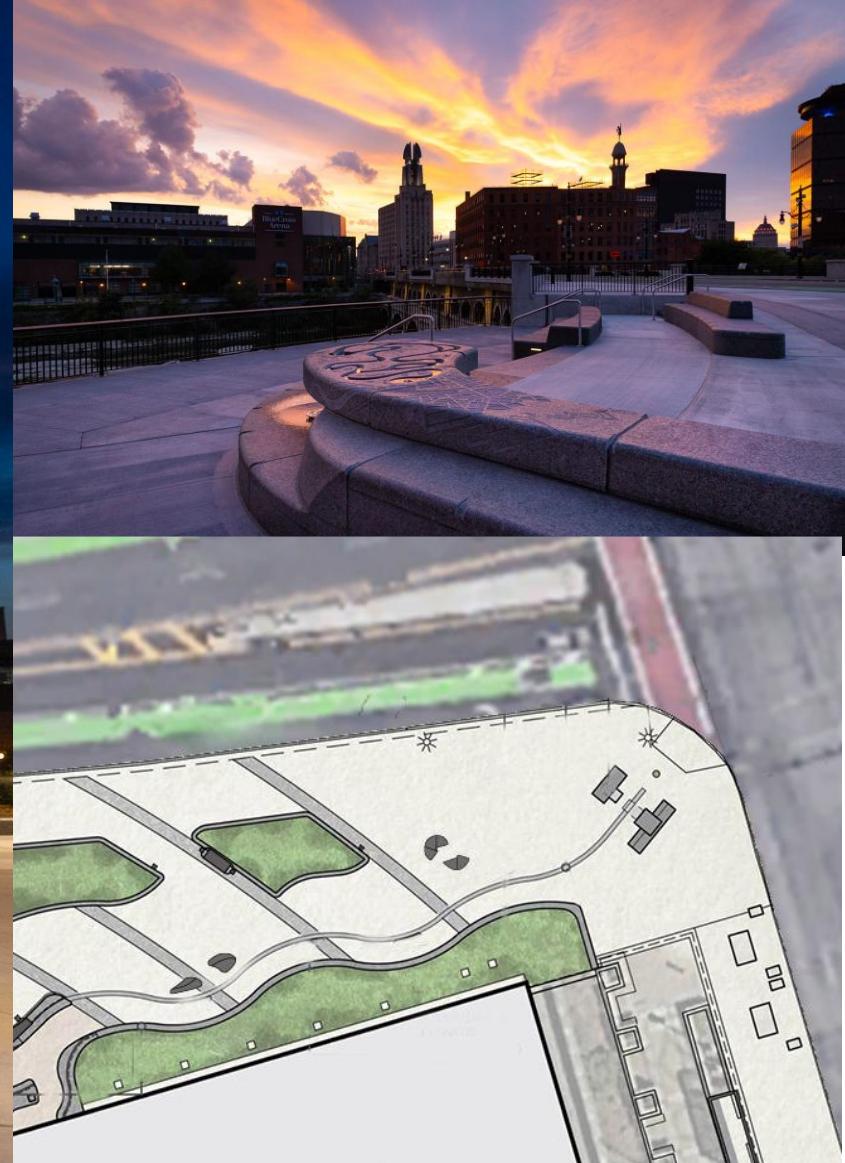


Rundel North Terrace

- 2018-2022 project; starting initiative of *ROC the Riverway*
- Structural repairs and shoring
- River platform extension and viewing terrace
- Terrace park, landscaping, seating
- Public Art installations
- Sidewalk bands follow path of former Subway lines





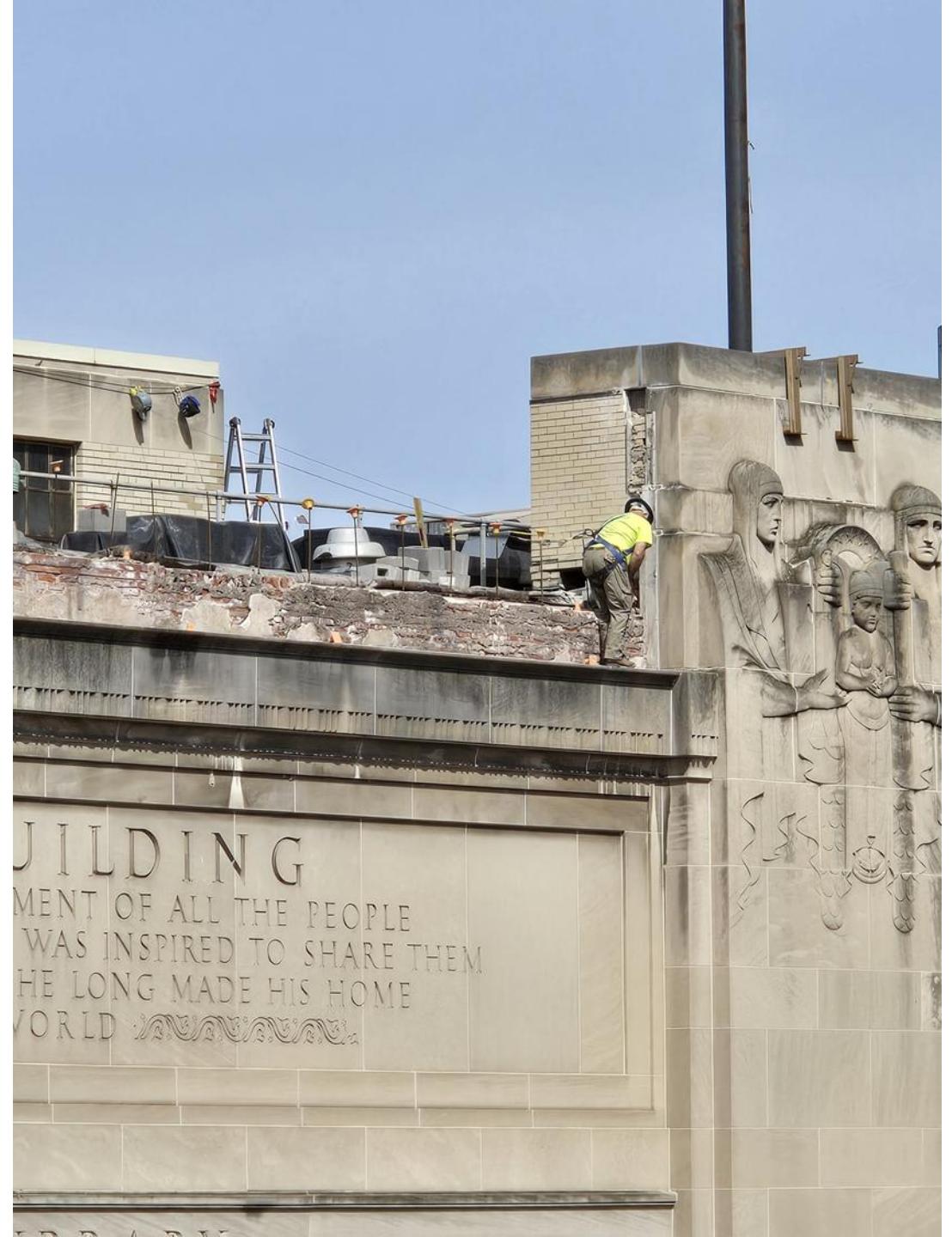


<https://roccitylibrary.org/rundel-public-art/>



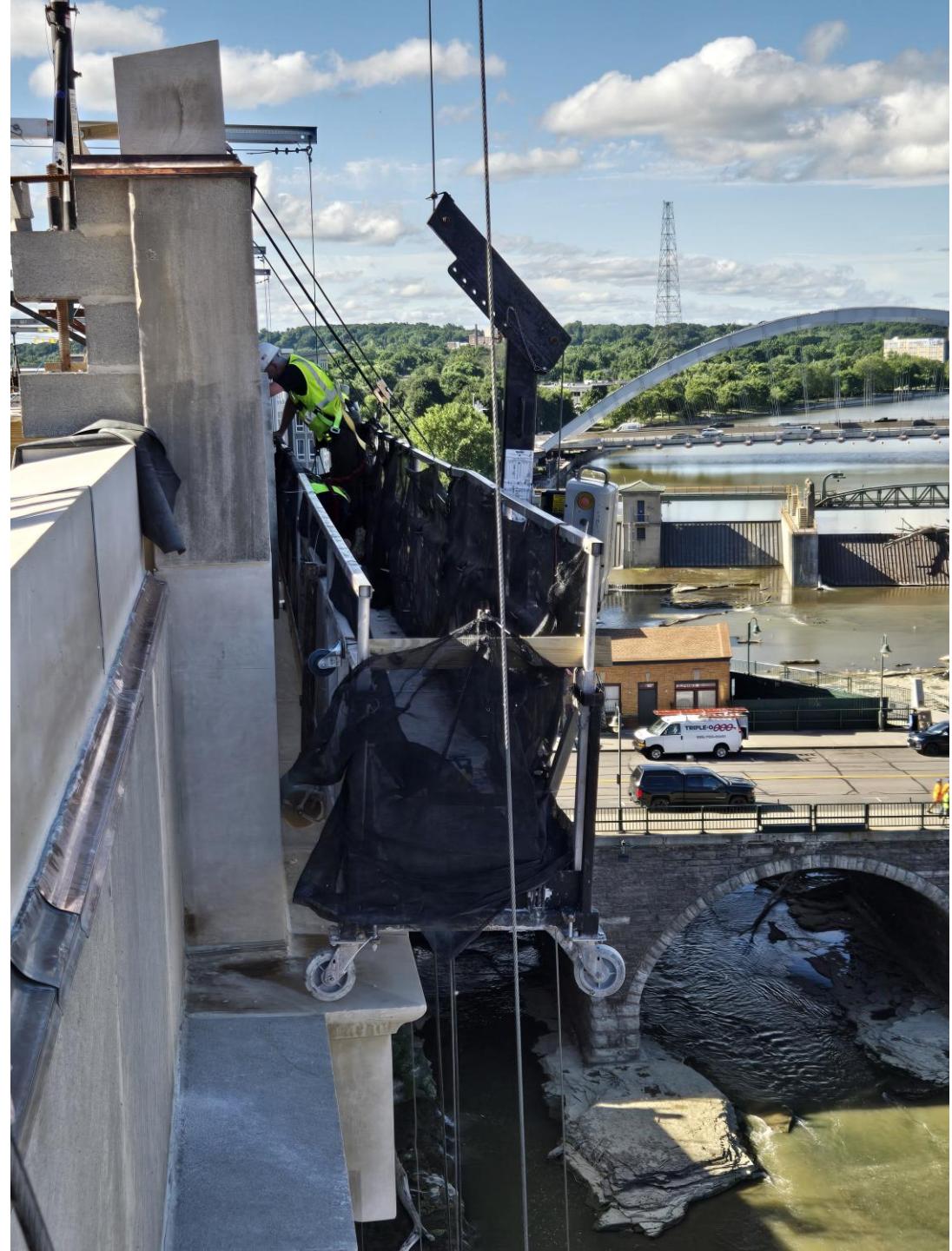
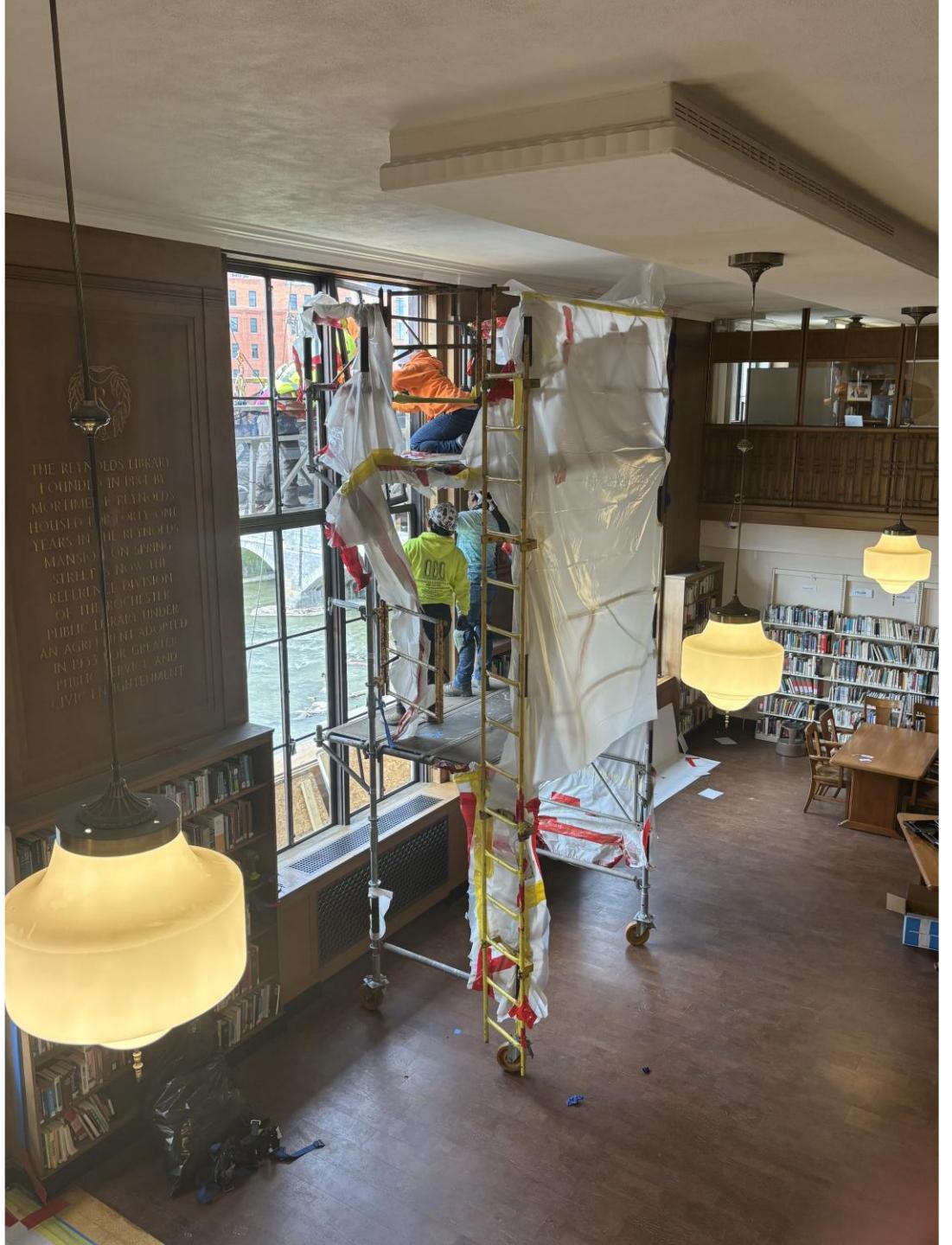
Rundel Masonry & Window Restoration

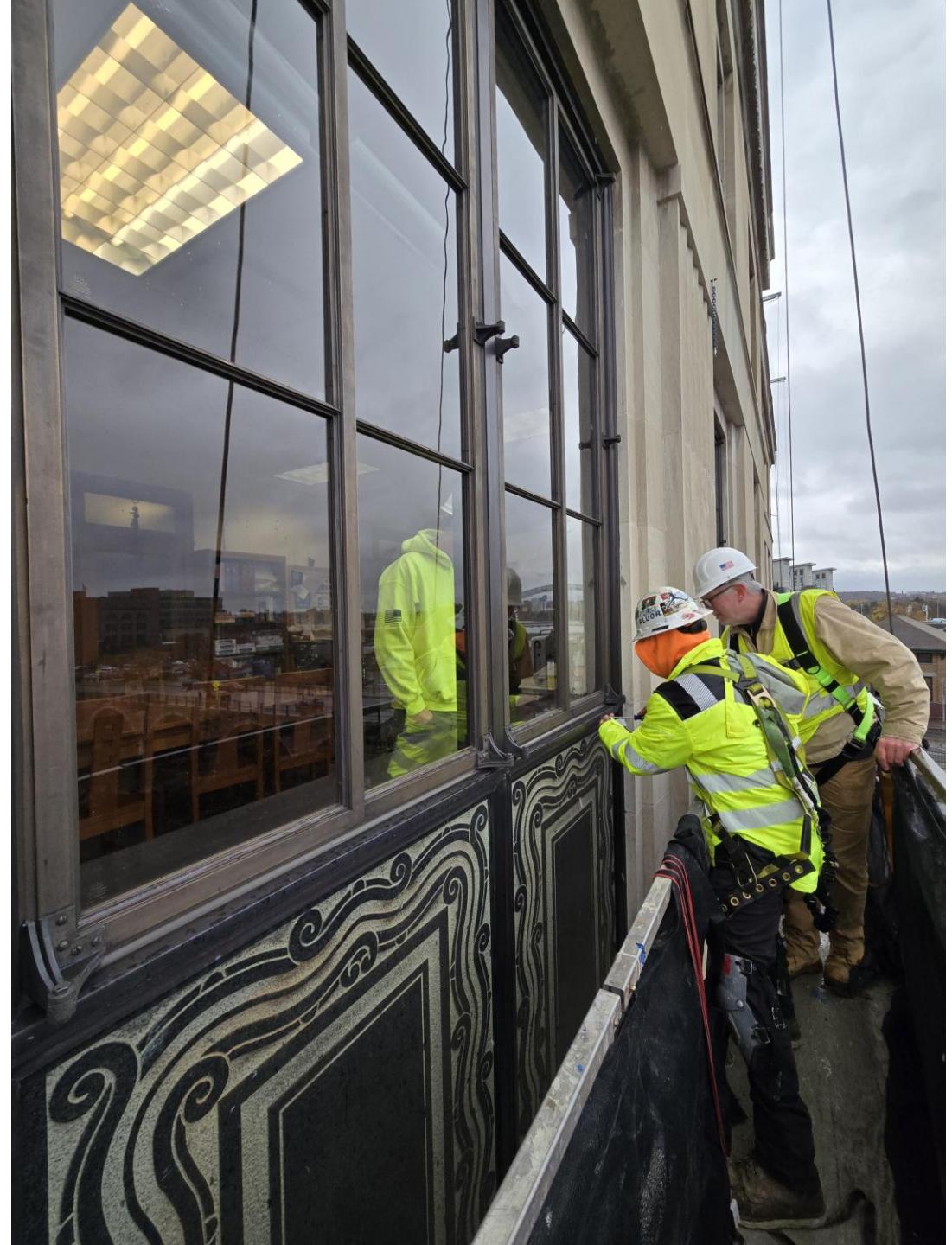
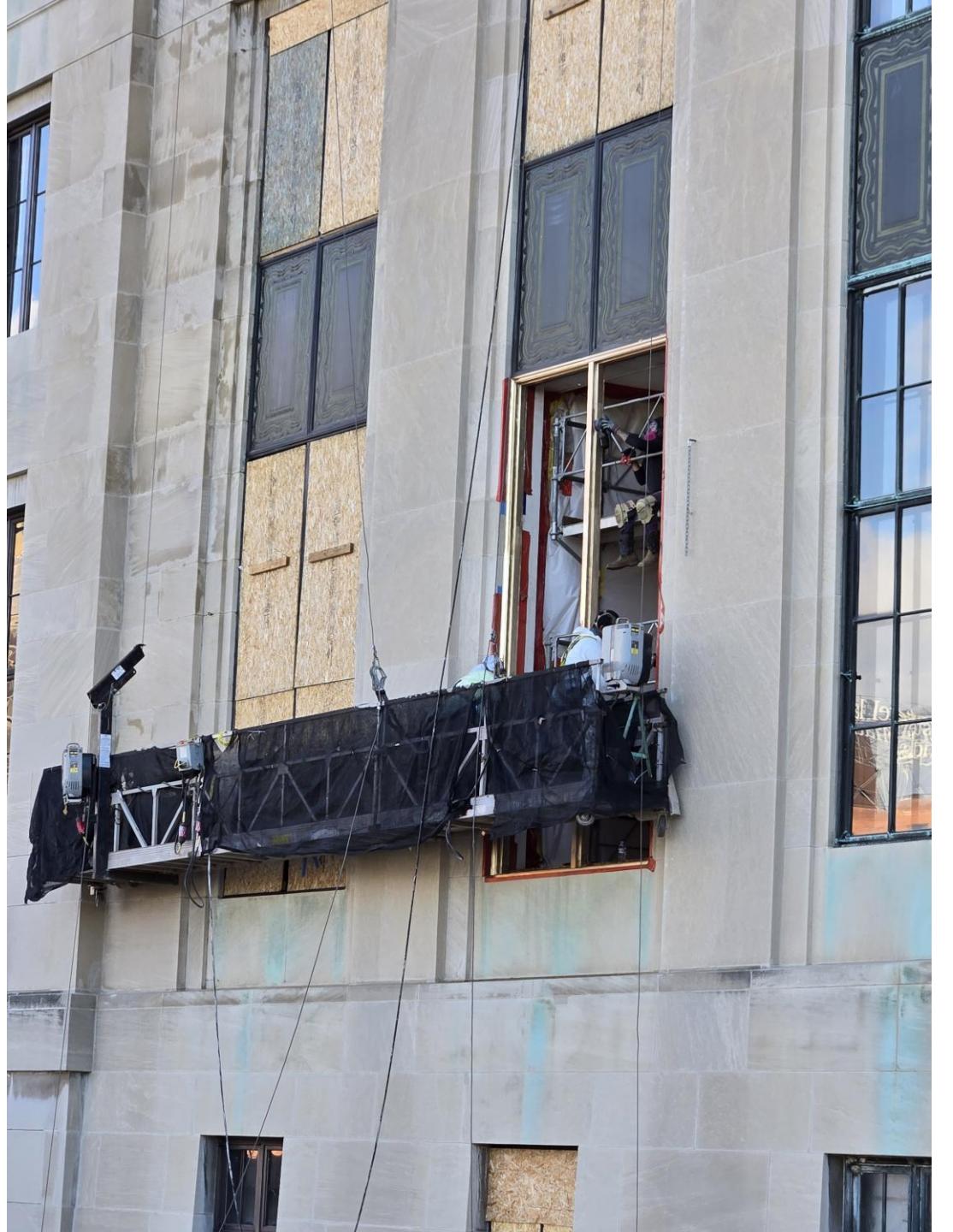
- \$9.9m restoration project, “once in a lifetime”
- Parapet (seen in photo) rebuilt to modern waterproofing standards
- Limestone, granite repairs and replacements
- West side (river) window restoration
- Complex access – custom rooftop cantilevered scaffolding







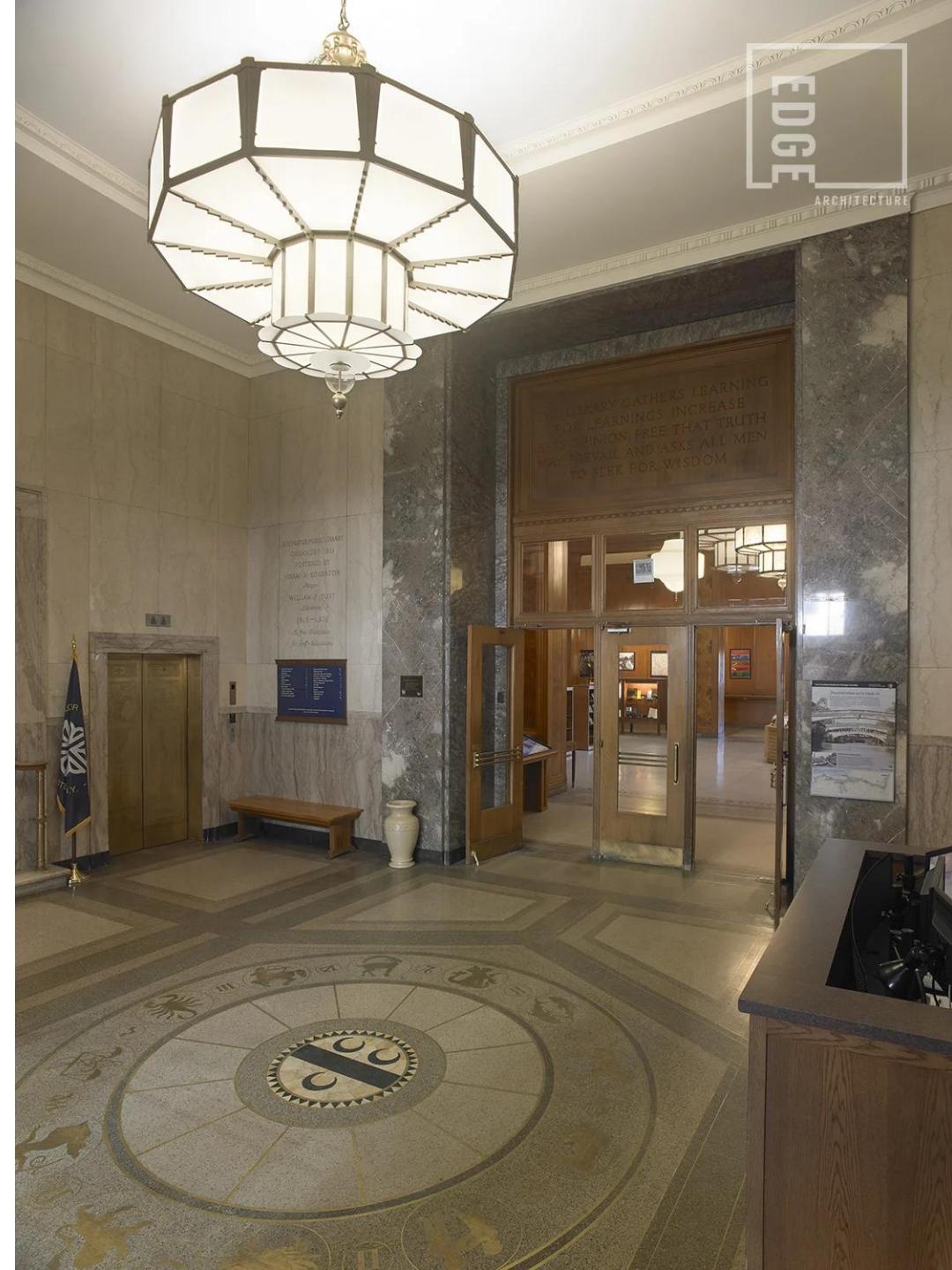






Rundel Future Needs

- East terrace (entrance) structural repairs
- Ventilation upgrades for staff floors (second and third)
- Elevator modernization
- Electrical service upgrades
- Roof replacement
- Cooling system upgrades and rooftop unit replacements - one is original!





Questions?