

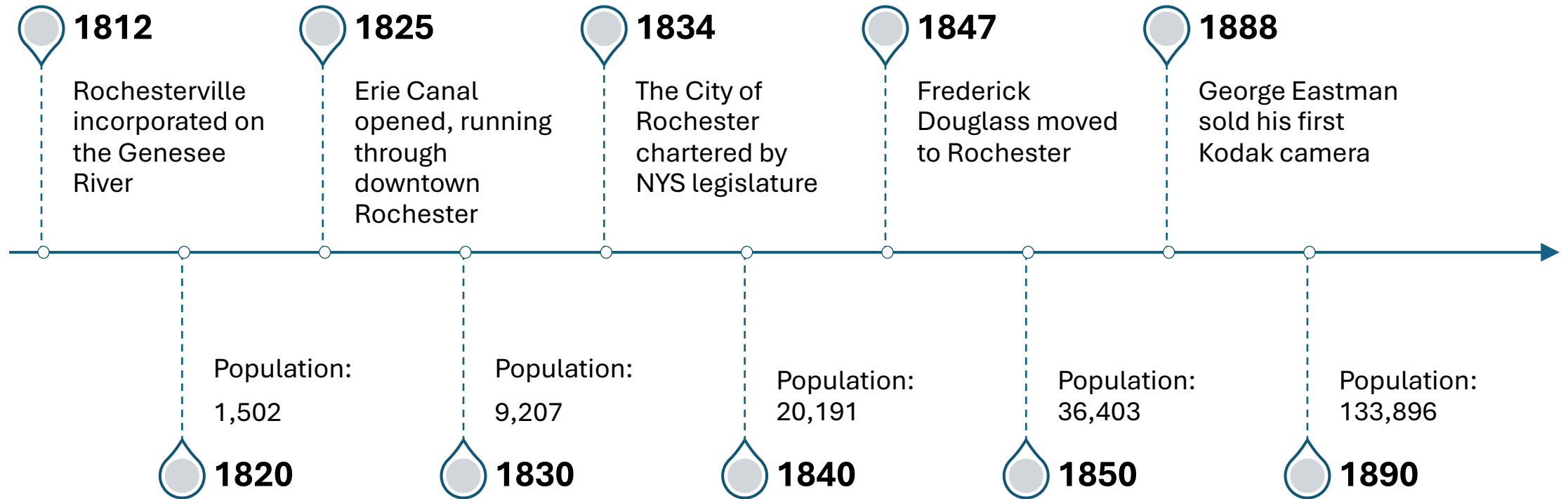


A History of Rundel Library

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)

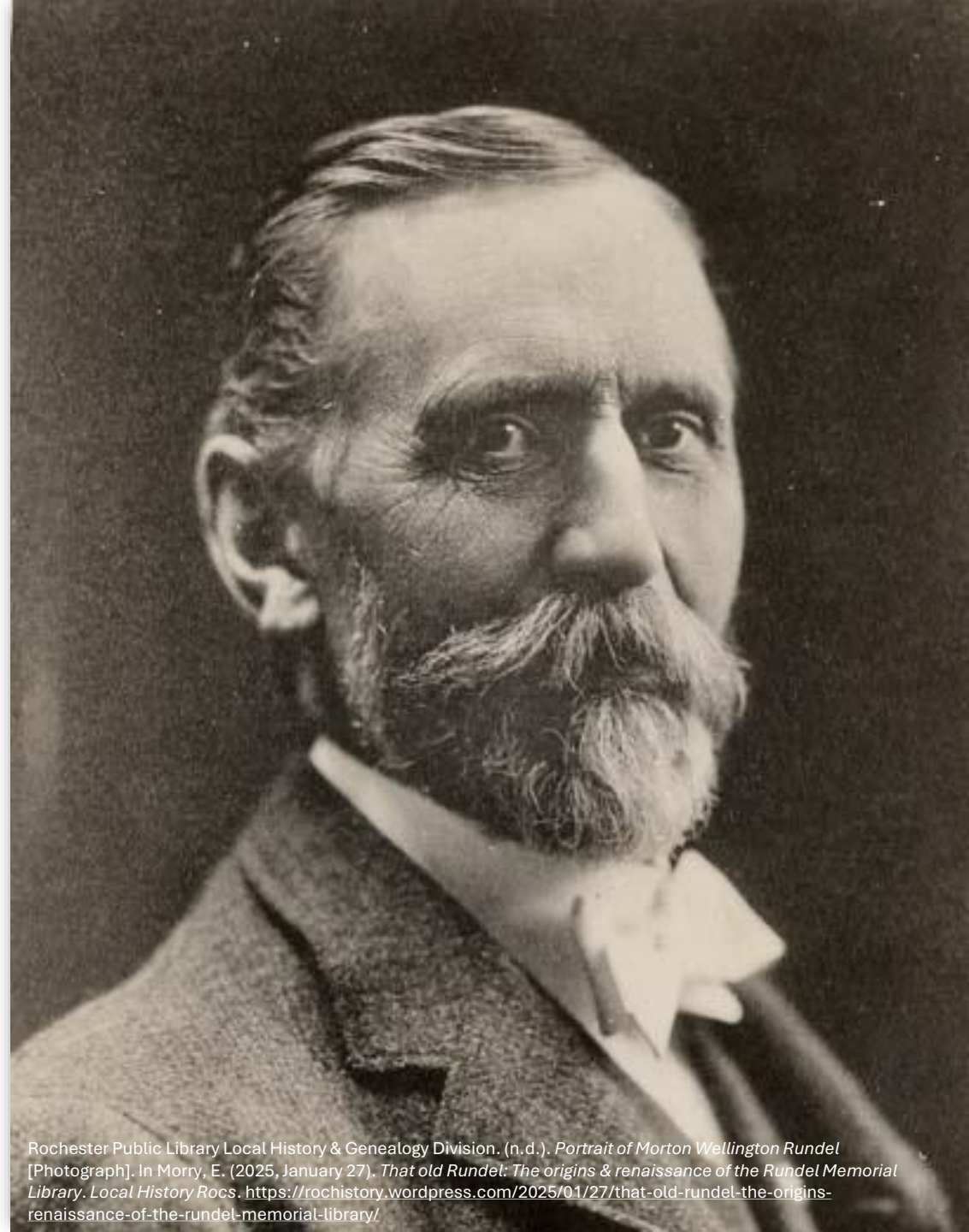


RPL First Established as Branch System

- 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



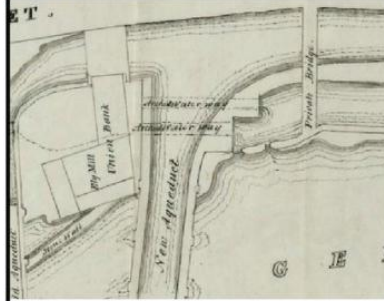
Building Site

- 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



Rochester 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

NORTH TERRACE

RUNDEL LIBRARY

BROAD STREET BRIDGE

ROCHESTER SUBWAY 1927 - 1956

81 years

82 years

93 years

176 years

201 years

1973-74

Broad Street Bridge Reconstruction

1821-23

1st Aqueduct Constructed

1837-42



2nd Aqueduct Constructed

1918

Depth of Genesee River lowered

1919



Erie Canal rerouted out of downtown Rochester

1921

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

1948-1952

Mount Morris Dam

1927



Rochester Subway Opens

1956

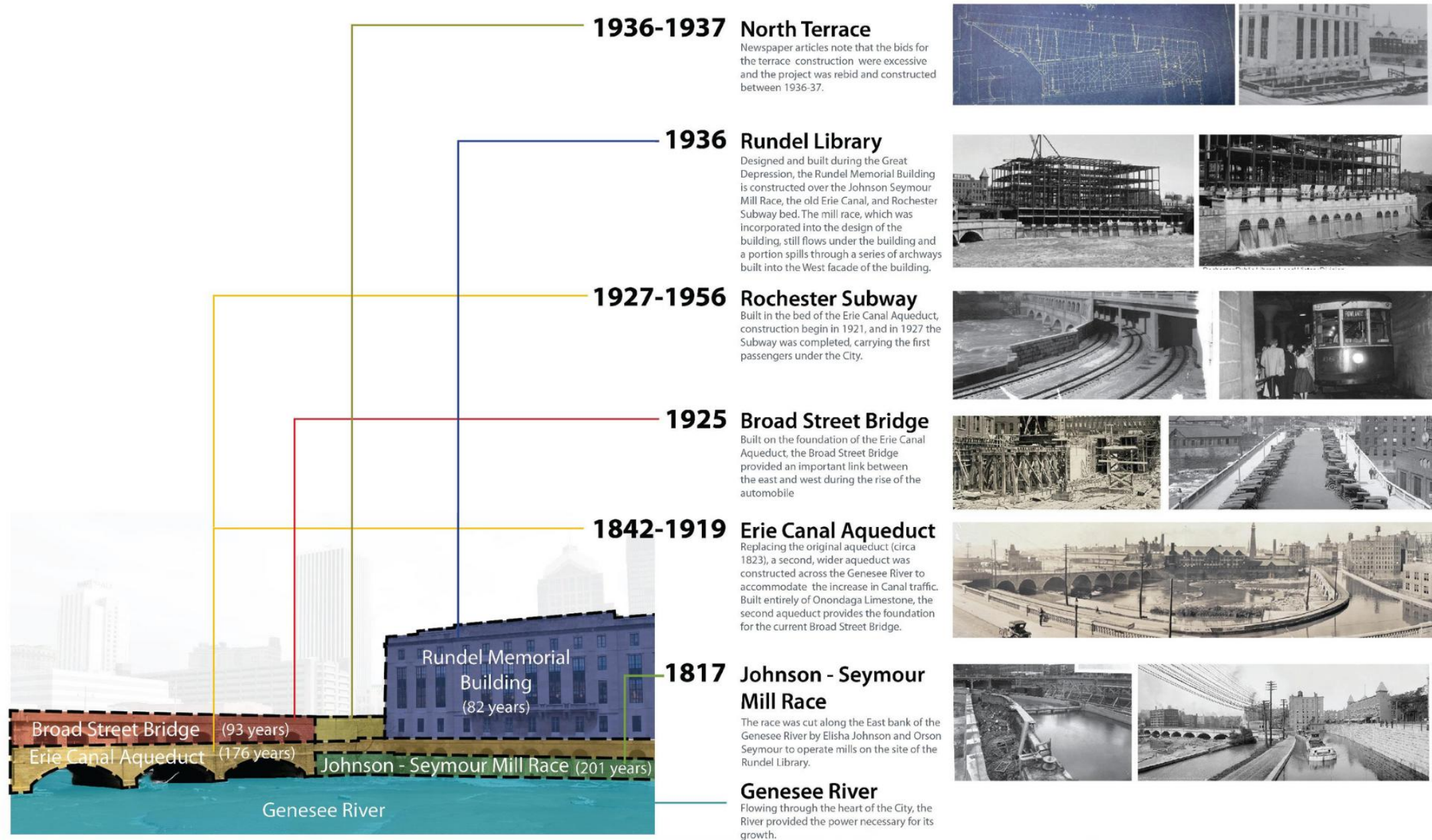


Rochester Subway Closes

2018



Present Day



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





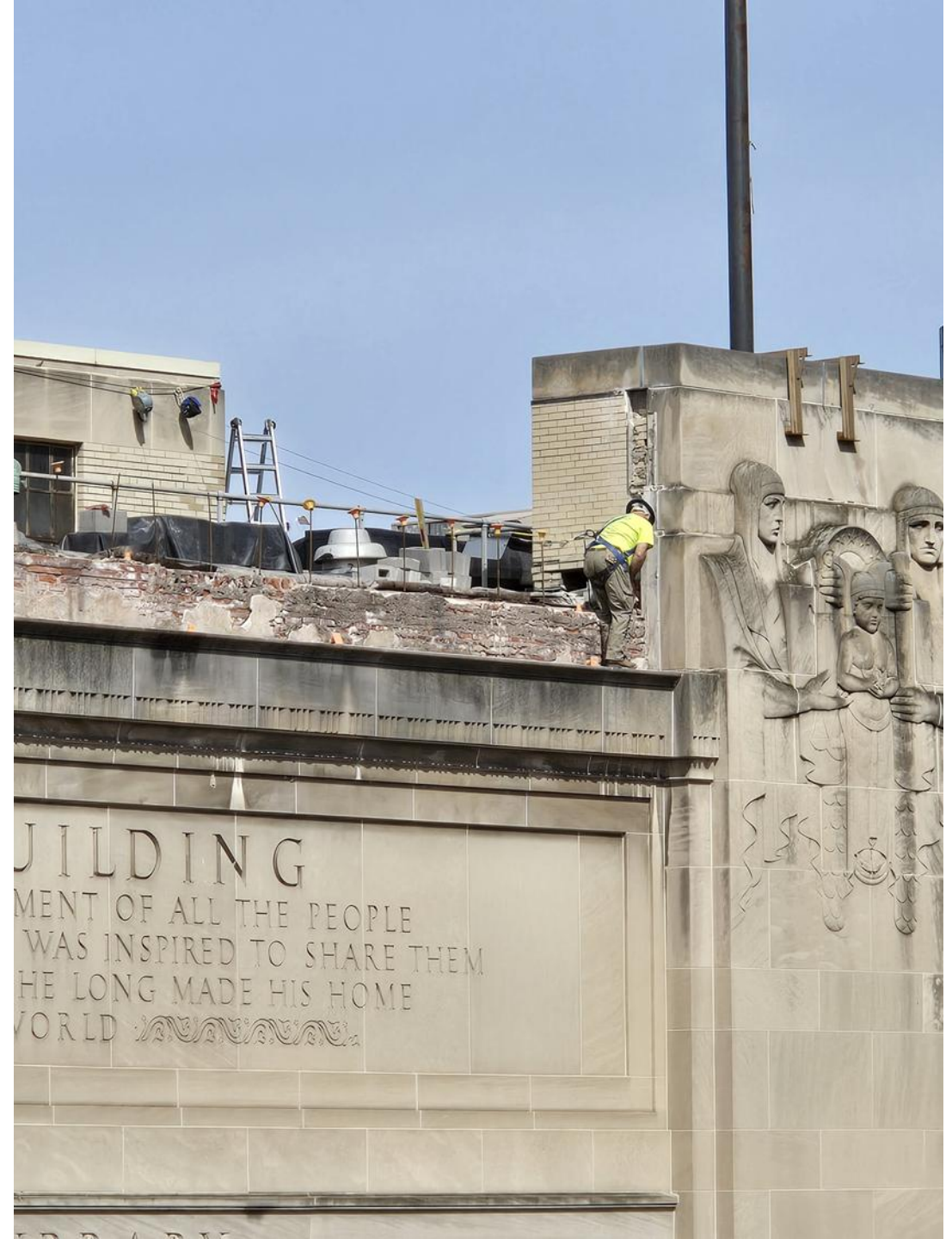


<https://roccitylibrary.org/rundel-public-art/>



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







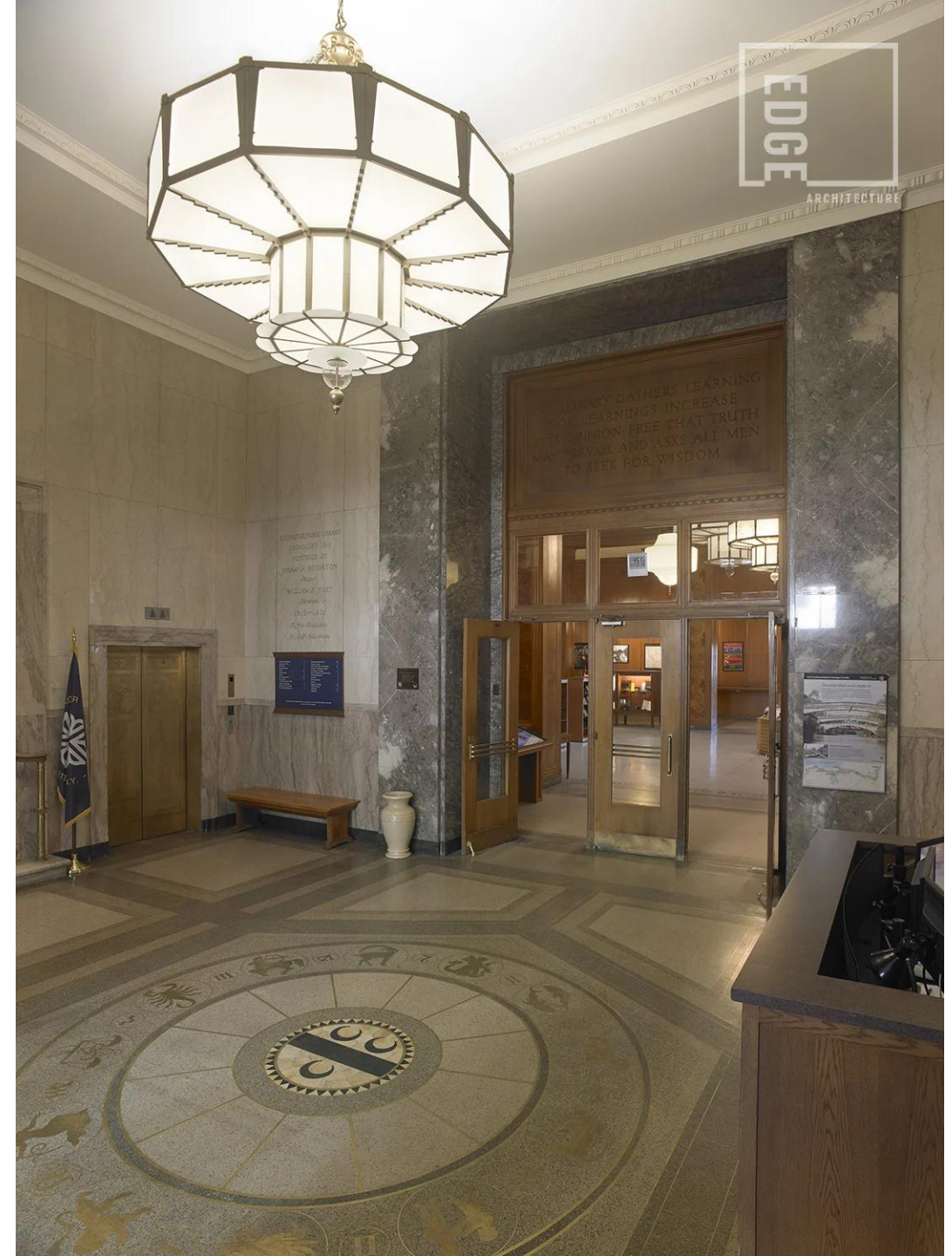






Rundel Future Needs

- 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?