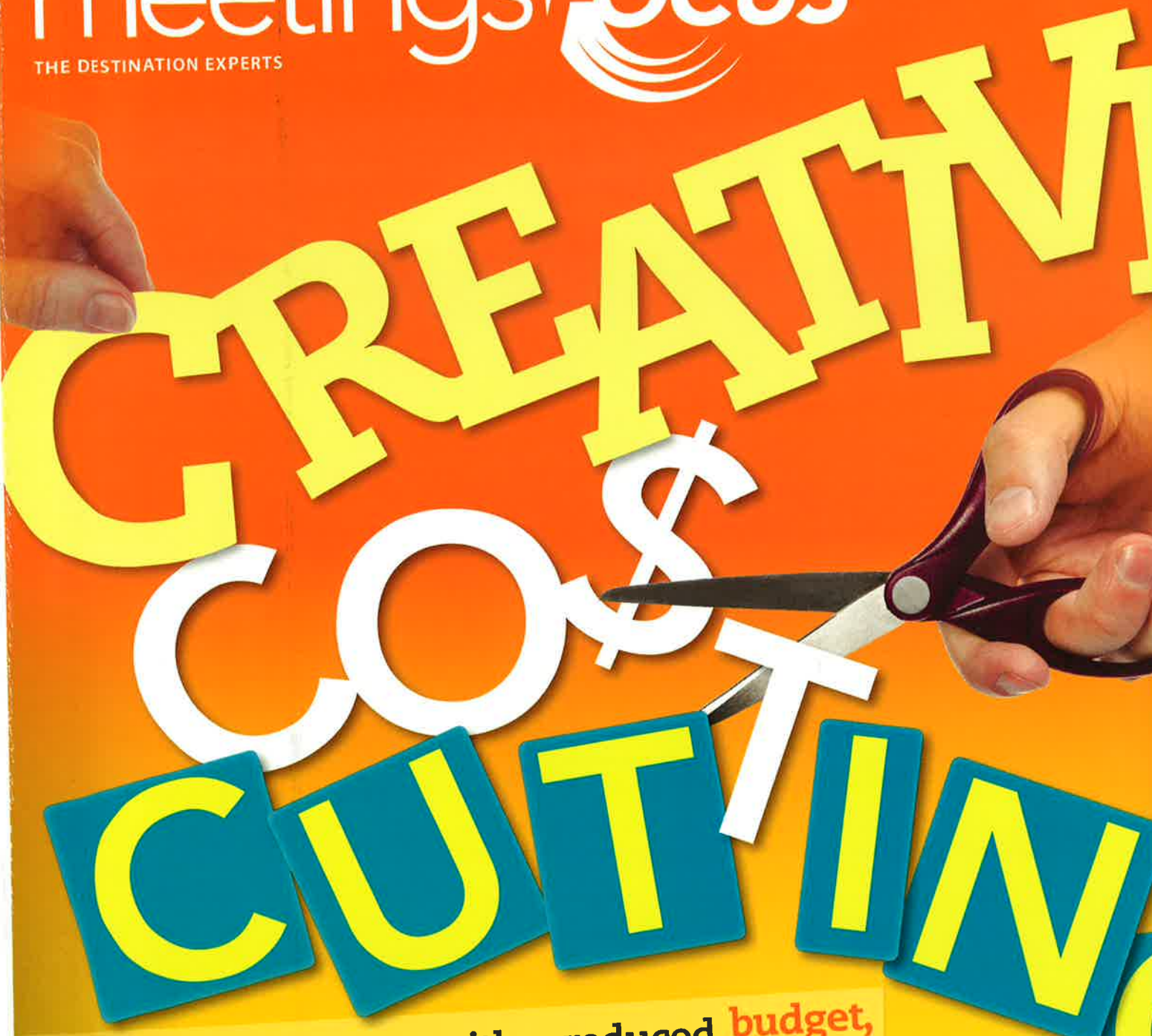


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A STAMATS print

# Step Back in Time

BY MARLENE GOLDMAN

New York is  
filled with unique  
experiences  
of yesteryear

Soon after the catcher's mask was invented in the mid-1870s, Deacon White became one of the first pro players to try out the new protective gear. White likely wore this early model (now missing its original padding and straps) when catching for his battery mate and brother, Will White, in the late 1870s.

Baseball card from 1888 of Detroit Wolverines third baseman Deacon White, whom Hall of Fame player-turned-manager

**F**rom Niagara Reservation, the country's first state park, to New York City, its first national capital in 1789, the state of New York is filled with a history as diverse as its landscape.

Throughout the state, history buffs will find an array of sites encompassing everything from its sports history to its political past. Following are eight great ways groups can step back in time in New York.

## New-York Historical Society, New York

[www.nyhistory.org](http://www.nyhistory.org)

Founded in 1804, the New-York Historical Society's museum brims with more than 1.6 million works. Highlights include vast collections of Hudson River School paintings and American portraits.

In addition, its Patricia D. Klingenstein

Library is one of the oldest in the country. Groups can host events amid its 50-foot ceilings and stained-glass windows.

"We underwent a major renovation in 2011, so we're still new and look fantastic," says Laura Washington, vice president of communications for the New York Historical Society.

New spaces include the Dimenna Children's History Museum and a 420-seat auditorium.

"We can use multiple spaces for cocktail receptions or seated dinners," says Alex Maresca, director of special events. "We can also close off some galleries during the daytime."

Some of the museum's myriad group venues include Dexter Hall, featuring American art through the centuries, and the Henry Luce III Center, with more than 60,000 objects, including George Washington's camp bed from Valley Forge.

## New York State Museum, Albany

[www.nysm.nysed.gov](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov)

Albany's New York State Museum, founded in 1836, is the country's oldest and largest state museum, occupying the first four floors of the 10-story Cultural Education Center.

The museum includes everything from Native American history in the region to the original set from Sesame Street. It also houses the largest 9/11 permanent exhibition.

The biggest event space is the Fourth Floor Terrace, which overlooks Empire State Plaza, showcasing Albany's architecture. Also on the fourth floor is a full-size carousel made between 1912 and 1916.

Groups can use the wilderness-themed Adirondack Hall for functions, according to Albert Gnidica, facility use coordinator for the museum.

There are also two theaters on property.

## Gold Coast Mansions, Long Island

[www.goldcoastmansionsoflongisland.com](http://www.goldcoastmansionsoflongisland.com)

With a little help from *The Great Gatsby*, Long Island is seeing a renewed interest in its famed Gold Coast Mansions. A handful of the remaining early 20th century estates are open to the public, some as hotels, others as museums, and some as historic grounds.

"We've had a lot of press with *The Great Gatsby* movie," says Nancy Melius, founder of the Gold Coast Mansions Historic Long Island New York alliance.

The alliance helps market six of the mansions, including Oheka Castle Hotel & Estate, Old Westbury Gardens, Mill Neck Manor, Eagle's Nest, as well as Vanderbilt Museum, Planting Fields-Coe Hall and the NYIT de Seversky Mansion, each of which has its own

options for groups.

Oheka Castle, built in 1919 and currently a 32-room hotel, event space and restaurant, welcomes groups and can offer docent-led tours.

"When we took over the estate in 1984, it was in a state of disrepair," says Melius, who is also director of marketing and design for Oheka. "We've retained the 1920s style."

Options at other mansions include use of the planetarium, rose garden and courtyards at The Vanderbilt Museum and tours of the Coe Hall mansion, located at the Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park, which can be used for functions.

### National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown

[www.baseballhall.org](http://www.baseballhall.org)

Gearing up for its 75th anniversary in 2014, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown spotlights more than 38,000 artifacts.

Exhibits include the Cooperstown Room, which examines the history of the Hall of Fame and the Hall of Fame Plaque Gallery, showcasing 300 Hall of Famers. The gallery is the main area for group functions.

"The gallery is an off-season facility," says June Dolhun, sales manager for the museum,



Old Fort Niagara

noting that Labor Day to Memorial Day weekends are ideal for groups as it closes at 5 p.m.

During summer the gallery closes at 9 p.m., but groups can still use the hall for after-hours events, such as dessert receptions.

Groups can rent the entire museum after hours for a private viewing. They can also organize special programs with the help of the Otesaga Resort Hotel in Cooperstown, such as Hall of Fame speakers for functions.

### Old Fort Niagara, Youngstown

[www.oldfortniagara.org](http://www.oldfortniagara.org)

Located where the mouth of the Niagara River meets Lake Ontario, the 22-acre Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown is home to the oldest original buildings on the Great Lakes.

Groups can use the oldest building at the fort, French Castle, built in 1726, for small receptions and dinners, or the 1920s-era Fort Niagara Officer's Club just outside the walls of the fort.

Space for groups is relatively unlimited, considering the size of the grounds and the ability to set up tents outside.

"Groups can come for dinner and then can do lantern tours of the fort at night with ghost stories," says Bob Emerson, executive director of Old Fort Niagara.

Another option is to host a dinner followed by a half-dozen soldiers in uniform firing cannons or muskets.

### Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site, Buffalo

[www.trsite.org](http://www.trsite.org)

Originally built in 1840, the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site was used for the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt in 1901.

In 2009, the site received an upgrade, making it even more attractive for history fans.

"We have a guided tour unlike any other museum experience," says Janice Kuzan, assistant director of the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site. "Now there is a lot of interactive multimedia installations that immerse you in the time Roosevelt lived in the house."

Part of the upgrade was the recreation of the Wilcox Carriage House on its original foundation. The second floor of the Carriage House is open to groups.

"Our staff can also set up a number of historical programs, and can bring in a historian," Kuzan says.



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## Lake Placid Olympic Center [www.whiteface.com/facilities/olympic-center](http://www.whiteface.com/facilities/olympic-center)

Nothing will compare in sports history to the 1980 Miracle on Ice, when the U.S. men's hockey team defeated the Soviet Union on its way to winning the gold medal.

Held at the Lake Placid Olympic Center, built in 1932, the historic win can be integrated into group functions in a number of ways.

Groups can set up dinners for up to 400 on the ice at the Herb Brooks Arena, replete with an ice show, according to Jackie Kelly, conference center coordinator for the New York State Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA).

"We can reach out to members of the 1980

team, some of whom have become motivational speakers, and present at an evening function," Kelly says.

Groups can organize team-building activities on the ice such as curling competitions and slapshot competitions.

The James B. Sheffield Olympic Skating Rink is available for opening ceremonies, including an Olympic torch, and the Lake Placid Olympic Museum offers space for small receptions.

## Bethel Center for the Arts, Bethel [www.bethelwoodscenter.org](http://www.bethelwoodscenter.org)

Woodstock aficionados will likely be making a pilgrimage next year to the Bethel Center for the Arts, as it prepares a full lineup of programs in honor of the 45th anniversary of the 1969 Woodstock Festival.

The cultural center comprises a 15,000-

seat outdoor amphitheater, a 440-seat indoor performance space and a museum situated on approximately 800 acres of grounds located on the original festival site.

For a historic perspective, The Museum at Bethel Woods offers an interactive multimedia experience to tell the story of the '60s and Woodstock.

Groups can use the Events Gallery at the museum for sit-down dinners or receptions. More casual outdoor sheds are also available for smaller functions. [mfi](#)

**MARLENE GOLDMAN** is a former Meetings Focus editor and a native New Yorker.

## New in New York

### Developments and renovations are giving the Empire State renewed appeal.

In May, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced a \$60 million campaign to increase state tourism, calling for special attention to Upstate New York.

"Some pieces are geared for individual destinations, while others will be used nationally to promote meetings in the state," according to Gina Mintzer, director of sales for the Albany CVB.

Among the planned efforts is the creation of a New York State Sports and Special Events Commission charged with recruiting sporting and other events to New York State venues.

Though New York City is not a primary target for the campaign, Christopher Heywood, senior vice president of communications for NYC & Company, believes the city could see some benefit with an influx of groups throughout the state.

The city itself is unveiling several new hotels and other major projects. One of the biggest is the upcoming fall completion of a renovation of the Javits Center, including the debut of the second-largest green roof in the U.S.

"The renovation has been many years in the making," Heywood says. "The Javits Center is coming back to be more competitive."

Other news includes the July 4 reopening of the Statue of Liberty following closure after damage from last year's Hurricane Sandy. Ellis Island

still awaits a reopening date. NYC & Company recently launched Neighborhood x Neighborhood, a campaign to encourage exploration in all five boroughs.

"There is also a trend toward borough hotel development," Heywood says, with about 30 percent of development happening in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx. "There is a lot of opportunity in those boroughs, especially for smaller meetings."

The 60-room Bronx Opera House Hotel opened this summer, while in Queens, the Crowne Plaza JFK is slated to open this fall with 330 rooms. Meanwhile, Brooklyn's InterContinental New York Barclay is adding meeting space.

As of summer 2013, there were 73 properties under construction across all five boroughs, representing 16,000 new rooms by 2016.

Openings in Manhattan this year include the Courtyard by Marriott Manhattan/Times Square West and Courtyard by Marriott Manhattan/Herald Square. The 487-room Hyatt Times Square New York will open in October with 8,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Paramount Hotel recently upgraded its 1920s property, offering new event spaces. The New York Palace renovated its Tower Rooms and

86 suites. Outside the city, Long Island boasts a number of new spaces, including the 22-room Topping Rose House in Bridgehampton, featuring a one-acre farm and a studio for events.

In early July, the Palms Presidential Penthouse Suite debuted on Fire Island's Ocean Beach, with space for up to 10 in four bedrooms.

Hilton Garden Inn Stony Brook recently debuted with 135 guest rooms and meeting space. Also new is the Homewood Suites Carle Place, with 4,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Hilton Long Island/Huntington recently underwent a \$16 million renovation, including upgrades to its 26,000 square feet of meeting space.

New group spaces include The Space at Westbury, a theater with flexible space for meetings.

In the Catskills region, the Villa Roma Resort and Conference Center recently completed a \$40 million overhaul. Last year, The Sullivan debuted in Rock Hill and offers 70 guest rooms plus meeting space.

Albany is seeing growth, including the Carey Conference Center, located on a 100-acre country estate, which will be marketed for corporate retreats. It offers 10,000 square feet of meeting space and 54 guest rooms.

The new Hilton Albany was unveiled in May after a \$14 million renovation.

The 385-room hotel now offers more than 30,000 square feet of meeting space.

News from Buffalo includes a continuing \$295 million development of its historic Canalside district, including an upcoming Courtyard by Marriott and a \$170 million amateur hockey complex.

The city's former Hotel Lafayette has been redeveloped into a mixed-use project, including the new 57-room Hotel @ The Lafayette. Also, the former Statler Hotel was redeveloped into an event venue, Statler City.

In the Niagara Falls region, the Sheraton At The Falls is finishing a renovation of its 391 guest rooms and suites. Also completing a renovation to its guest rooms is the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel.

In Saratoga, the Courtyard Saratoga Springs completed an expansion of its meeting space in May. The ballroom now spans 4,300 square feet.

Syracuse announced a new seven-story combined Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn, which opened this summer. The Marriott features 180 hotel guest rooms.

Near downtown Rochester, the 107-room Hilton Garden Inn Rochester/Pittsford recently debuted with four meeting rooms.



For more New York content, click [MeetingsFocus.com/NewYork](http://MeetingsFocus.com/NewYork).