

Burchfield Center to Show 150 Years of Portraiture

By ANTHONY BANNON

News Critic

As we begin looking to history in the approach of Buffalo's Sesquicentennial year, history will look back at us, Wednesday through Jan. 31 in the Burchfield Center, and each gaze from the 143 painted, photographic and sculpted portraits on exhibit there will offer its own story.

The stories will be those of both common folk and dignitaries, such as government, church, legal, Indian or medical leaders, and, too, there will be the stories of the artists who created them, from the itinerant and anonymous to world-famous.

"Every city comes from somewhere and every city is going some-

where," mused Burchfield Center Director Edna M. Lindemann. "And it is people who do it. How better could the Burchfield Center mark the Sesquicentennial and its own 15th anniversary than by representing our heritage in living color, presenting real portraits of real people?"

And, she added, "we have the eyes of the eminent citizens and area personalities looking back at us — observing, critiquing and challenging us."

Conceived by Dr. J. Benjamin Townsend, professor of English at State University of Buffalo and Burchfield Center resident historian, the exhibition will display works collected from public and private sources to represent the vis-

ages of the past 150 years in the eight-county Western New York area.

"At first we had the grandiose idea of finding the most important ones from around the nation. But just to go to the portrait collection at the National Gallery in Washington would have exceeded our budget," Dr. Lindemann admitted. "So we played the role that has become the Center, looking for portraits in Western New York, and in many cases what we found, real treasures in private homes, have never been shared with the public."

The exhibit has been guest curated by Dana E. Tillou, a Buffa-

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lo fine arts and antiques dealer. "The more we moved into the show during the past year, the more we discovered the wealth of material we have locally ... The final selections were based on quality, aesthetics, variety, condition and the importance of the sitter or artist and the story told," said Mr. Tillou.

"They are all pretty good items in their own right, and it's an educational show, with all this history tied in with paintings."

IN A REAL WAY, said Mr. Tillou, the show is a "stroll through time," with stops at the likes of Sheldon Thompson, the first elected mayor of Buffalo; Joseph Ellicott, who surveyed and designed the village of Buffalo, and Corbet Sundown, a 20th century Seneca chief.

From the regal and huge to the miniature and adventurous, the show ranges through as many artistic styles as it does through personalities.

There will be work, for instance, in the American primitive style, and work in the early century style of Vorticism by one of its major exponents, Percy Wyndham Lewis, the English painter and critic.

Artists included range from Madame Elizabeth Shoumatoff, whose portrait of President Lyndon Johnson was used for the commemorative stamp issued in his honor; Thomas LeClear and Lars Sellstedt, early Buffalo artists of importance; Augustus Saint-Gaudens, America's leading sculptor in the late 19th century; Joseph Josephs, a colorful 19th century Buffalo signpainter, and a handsome representation of contemporary Buffalo artists, among them Harvey Breverman, Virginia Cuthbert, Walter Garver,

Barbara Insalaco, Catherine Konig, Joseph Manch, Grace McKendry, Anthony Patterson, Gerge Palmer, Walter Prochownik, Susan Read, Milton Rogovin, Anthony Sisti, Ellen Steinfeld, Virginia E. Tillou and former Buffalo artist Paul Wiesenfeld.

One of the major finds of the search was an enormous oil painted anonymously (but attributed to George P. A. Healy) of Col. Peter A. Porter, a civil war soldier killed in the battle of Cold Harbor, Va. "The picture is an important historical document of the Civil War," noted Mr. Tillou. It is "painted with great verve and sense of history," he added. The painting was discovered in the downtown business office of Jarvis Coffin, whose wife is related to the colonel.

The exhibit will open at 6:45 p.m. Wednesday with a dinner in the gallery, arranged by Mrs. Thomas R. Flickinger and Peter Gust Economou.

Co-chairpersons of the Art Forum Committee, which supervised the tracking of portraits, were Mrs. N. Holland Jewett and Mrs. John Wolf Jr. The tracking committee consisted of Mrs. Paul G. Bulger, Mrs. George L. Collins Jr., Mrs. Flickinger, Mrs. George H. Hyde, Mrs. John K. Kimball, Mrs. Samuel Mitchell, Mrs. Manley Tillou, Mrs. Peter Tower, Mrs. John C. Trefts, Mrs. Franciscus Visser't Hooft, Ms. Geraldine Safran and Samuel Mitchell.

The earliest work in the exhibition that they found is an oil on porcelain miniature of Andrew Ellicott by Raphael Peale, painted in 1802.

A catalogue, designed by Herta Kane, professor at Buffalo State, will accompany the show.