

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation

Edward F. O'Keefe, Chief Executive Officer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 19, 2021

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library and Roosevelt Descendants Facilitate Loan of Equestrian Statue from City of New York

MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA — The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library (“TR Library”), set to open in 2026, today announced that it has entered into an agreement with the City of New York for the long-term loan and reconsideration of the Equestrian Statue designed by James Earle Fraser, which was commissioned by the Board of Trustees of the New York State Roosevelt Memorial in 1929 and has stood on the steps of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City since 1940.

“We are grateful to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library for proposing a fitting new home for the Equestrian Statue,” said Vicki Been, New York City's Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development. “This long-term loan would allow an important part of the City’s art collection to be appropriately contextualized, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Library on next steps.”

The board of the TR Library believes the Equestrian Statue is problematic in its composition. Moreover, its current location denies passersby consent and context. The agreement with the City allows the TR Library to relocate the statue for storage while considering a display that would enable it to serve as an important tool to study the nation’s past. With the support of members of the Roosevelt family, the TR Library will establish an Advisory Council composed of representatives of the Indigenous Tribal and Black communities, historians, scholars, and artists to guide the recontextualization of the statue.

“Museums are supposed to do hard things,” said Edward F. O’Keefe, chief executive officer of Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. “It is said that ‘those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it,’ and our job is to forthrightly examine history to understand the present and make a better future.”

“The Equestrian Statue is problematic in its hierarchical depiction of its subjects and should be removed from New York State’s official memorial to Theodore Roosevelt,” said Theodore Roosevelt V. “Rather than burying a troubling work of art, we ought to learn from it. It is fitting that the statue is being relocated to a place where its composition can be recontextualized to facilitate difficult, complex, and inclusive discussions.”

The removal of the statue will be conducted by the American Museum of Natural History in coordination with the City of New York. The relocation via long-term loan, including any plans to display the Equestrian Statue, is subject to final approval by the City’s Public Design Commission.

“The American Museum of Natural History has a historic and continuing relationship with the Roosevelt family and is proud to be the site of the New York State memorial to Theodore Roosevelt,” said Ellen V. Futter, President of the American Museum of Natural History. “We anticipate that work to remove the Equestrian Statue, which will take several months, will begin later this fall. We thank the Roosevelt family and the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library for their roles in facilitating this important work.”

###

About the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation

The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation will open a library for the 26th President in Medora, North Dakota in 2026, the 250th anniversary of the United States. For more information, please visit www.trlibrary.com.

Contacts

Lisa Hernández Gioia / Maddie Sewani

C Street Advisory Group

(212) 433-0271 / (516) 343-1897

TRPL@thecstreet.com