

Alfred University breaks ground for new museum

9/10/02

Alfred University has broken ground for a new \$9 million home for the Schein-Joseph Museum of Ceramic Art at Alfred. The new museum will be located on the corner of Park and Terrace streets in the Village of Alfred, on the south edge of AU's campus. Designed by architect Bruce Wood of Kallmann, McKinnell and Wood Architects, Boston, MA, the new structure "combines aesthetics and practicality, and will become an architectural jewel for this campus," said President Charles M. Edmondson in highlighting the models and sketches on display for the ground breaking ceremony. The firm designed the award-winning Miller Performing Arts Center on the northern end of the "academic alley." Wielding shovels for the ceremonial ground breaking were Edmondson; State Senator John R. Kuhl, who was instrumental in securing \$7.95 million in state appropriations to build the new museum; Dr. Edward G. Coll, Jr., president emeritus of Alfred University, under whose leadership the project began more than a decade ago; Dr. Marlin Miller Jr., chairman emeritus of the AU Board of Trustees and among the major donors for the museum; Dr. Robert R. McComsey, current board chairman; and Richard Thompson, dean of the School of Art and Design. Actual construction will not begin for another six or seven months because first the University must take steps to preserve its past. South Hall, once the Alfred public school building that was turned over to the University several decades ago, will have to come down, a painstaking effort since all the terra cotta roof tiles have to be removed individually and saved. South Hall is within the Village of Alfred's historic district and permission to demolish it was granted only after the University did an architectural feasibility study to determine if the building could be adapted for reuse as a museum. Also to be torn down to make way for the new museum is the Crandall Health Center, which also houses the Counseling and Development Center. The University is looking at alternatives to relocate the health and counseling center closer to the residence halls to make it more convenient for students. Some houses on Terrace Street will either be torn down or moved to provide adequate access to the museum site and parking for museum visitors. The new Museum is expected to be completed in 2005. The new 30,000-square foot museum will actually be a monument to "15 generations of Alfredians: artists, engineers, scientists, business people and politicians who have gone before us," said McComsey, who credited Coll with leading the effort to secure funding. Coll retired in 2000, after raising nearly \$4 million in private funding to complement the \$7.95 million in state funding for construction, and to create an endowment for the museum's operation. Among the donors is Alfred University Trustee Pamela Joseph, whose initial \$2 million gift began the museum endowment fund. The museum bears her name, as well as that of her late husband, Jay Schein, an AU alumnus and former member of the Board of Trustees. Other major donors include Marlin and Ginger Miller; Otto Heino, who gave \$400,000 in memory of his late wife, AU alumna Vivika Heino; and Robert and Sue Turner, long-time residents of Alfred, who donated \$100,000. Bob Turner is an emeritus professor of ceramic art. Those private donations were a critical element in persuading the state Legislature to allocate funds, noted Kuhl. The State Senate also recognized that the museum would enhance not only the quality of life, but economic development efforts in the Southern Tier. The Museum is now located in newly renovated space on the second floor of Binns-Merrill Hall on the AU campus.