

BETHEL WOODS RISES

By Matthew Phair – Suffolk Construction leads the effort to create a new music and performing arts center at the site of 1969 Woodstock Music Festival.

Areas all over New York are in need of an economic shot-in-the arm, and one formerly famous one in Sullivan county is getting its. World-class music and entertainment is coming back — permanently — to the site of the Woodstock Music Festival in Bethel, N.Y., starting with a July 2006 opening performance of the New York Philharmonic.

As a vehicle to help energize the economy of Sullivan County, the Gerry Foundation, founded by Cablevision founder Allan Gerry, acquired the festival site in 1996. In order to reach the full potential of the location, the foundation has subsequently purchased several hundred acres of surrounding property, creating a 2.57-km² performing arts center district.

The Gerry Foundation is developing the area as a world-class performing arts venue that will attract visitors and future homeowners to Sullivan County. The town of Bethel created a Performing Arts Center Development District in December 2002, allowing the project to go forward. The decision followed approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) after an extensive 17-month review, including public hearings.

Boston-based Suffolk Construction will be providing construction management services for the Bethel Woods project. Senior Superintendent F. Wesley Baker has run the day-to-day construction on the job since its inception. John Lemarre is Suffolk's project manager, while Mike DiNapoli is the project executive.

According to Dan Antonellis, marketing director at Suffolk, the placement of the final beam brings the amount of steel used in construction to 930 tons. Ground was broken on the 263,046.7-m² development in July 2004. By the time the project is completed, the contractor will have moved 152,911 cubic meters of earth and paved 39,297.99 square meters. At 5,202.57 square meters, the pavilion roof is more than an 4,046.87 sq. meters. The pavilion will have 1,600 light fixtures, 220 doors, 150 windows, 9.33 km of plumbing and sprinkler piping, and 128,747.5 kg of copper roofing.

When Phase One opens summer 2006, a 4,800-seat covered pavilion and room for 12,000 on the lawn; interpretative center; permanent farmers market; and outdoor festival stage with a capacity of 30,000 will be complete. Phase two will include a 650-seat community theater, inn and conference center.

A. Servidone Inc. of Castleton, N.Y., has performed the sitework portion of the project, led by Guy Richi. Foundation work has been handled by Vinny DiNota at Villa Construction of Hawthorne, N.Y. The steel for the project was fabricated by Cives Steel of Gouverneur, N.Y. Brownell Steel of Scotia, N.Y., provided the erection services with the help of Ironworkers Local 417 out of Newburgh. Oldcastle Precast of South Bethlehem supplied the decking portion of the cast stage area.

Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP is the project's civil engineering consultant. The executive architect is Westlake Reed Leskosky, specializing in designs for the cultural and performing arts. To its credit, Westlake has designed two of the three largest performing arts centers in the country — the Denver Arts Center and Playhouse Square in Cleveland. Landscape architect on the project is The Olin Partnership, which has designed the grounds at Bryant Park in New York City. The firm responsible for creating the Bethel Woods Museum is Gallagher & Associates. The firm's clients have included The International Spy Museum, and The National Museum of Natural History, The National Museum of American History located in Washington, D.C; and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York.

According to David Carlucci, the executive director and president of the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, who also helped run the Saratoga Performing Arts Center for 17 years, top talent is eyed for Bethel. In March, when asked by the Times Herald Record newspaper who the center is likely to host, he replied: "A who's who in music, theater and dance...including Genesis, the Grateful Dead, Kid Rock, Keith Urban, Rascal Flatts, Ozzfest, the New York City Ballet, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Circle in the Square Repertory Theatre featuring Patti Lupone and Kevin Kline...I think it's the best of everything. It's the history of the site that makes it special. There's no other place in the country that has had the impact of that event and the '60s."

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