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TOP STORY

Allegrone Cos. wraps up \$40M restoration of Statue of Liberty project

By Clarence Fanto, The Berkshire Eagle

Feb 16, 2026



The Lenox-based Allegrone Cos. recently completed a \$40 million, two-phase, five-year contract to shore up the granite Fort Wood Walls that form the base of the Statue of Liberty.

ALLEGNONE COS.

LENOX — Five years ago, as the multi-generational Allegrone family prepared to mark the 100th anniversary of their construction company's opening in Pittsfield, they had good reason to pop the cork on a favorite Italian red wine.

The National Park Service had just awarded the Allegrone Cos. a \$40 million, two-phase, five-year contract to shore up the massive granite Fort Wood Walls structure built in 1807 to defend New York Harbor.

The structure forms the pedestal base of the Statue of Liberty, which was gifted by France and dedicated in 1886 on Liberty Island, across from Ellis Island.

Just in time for celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence signing, the five-year mega project has been completed on schedule and on budget, according to Michael Mucci, Allegrone's director of masonry, during a presentation at their Berkshire Design Center headquarters on Pittsfield Road.



The project was challenging, the leadership team said, since the key vantage points and the museum remained open to the public throughout the five-year renovation, restricting work to one-third of the site at any given time.

ALLEGRONE COMPANIES

“The goal was 'giving Lady Liberty the justice of what she deserves, a proper lifelong fix,’” he said.

Landing the project was “a long journey,” Mucci explained, citing the company’s reputation for historic restoration in the Berkshires and statewide.

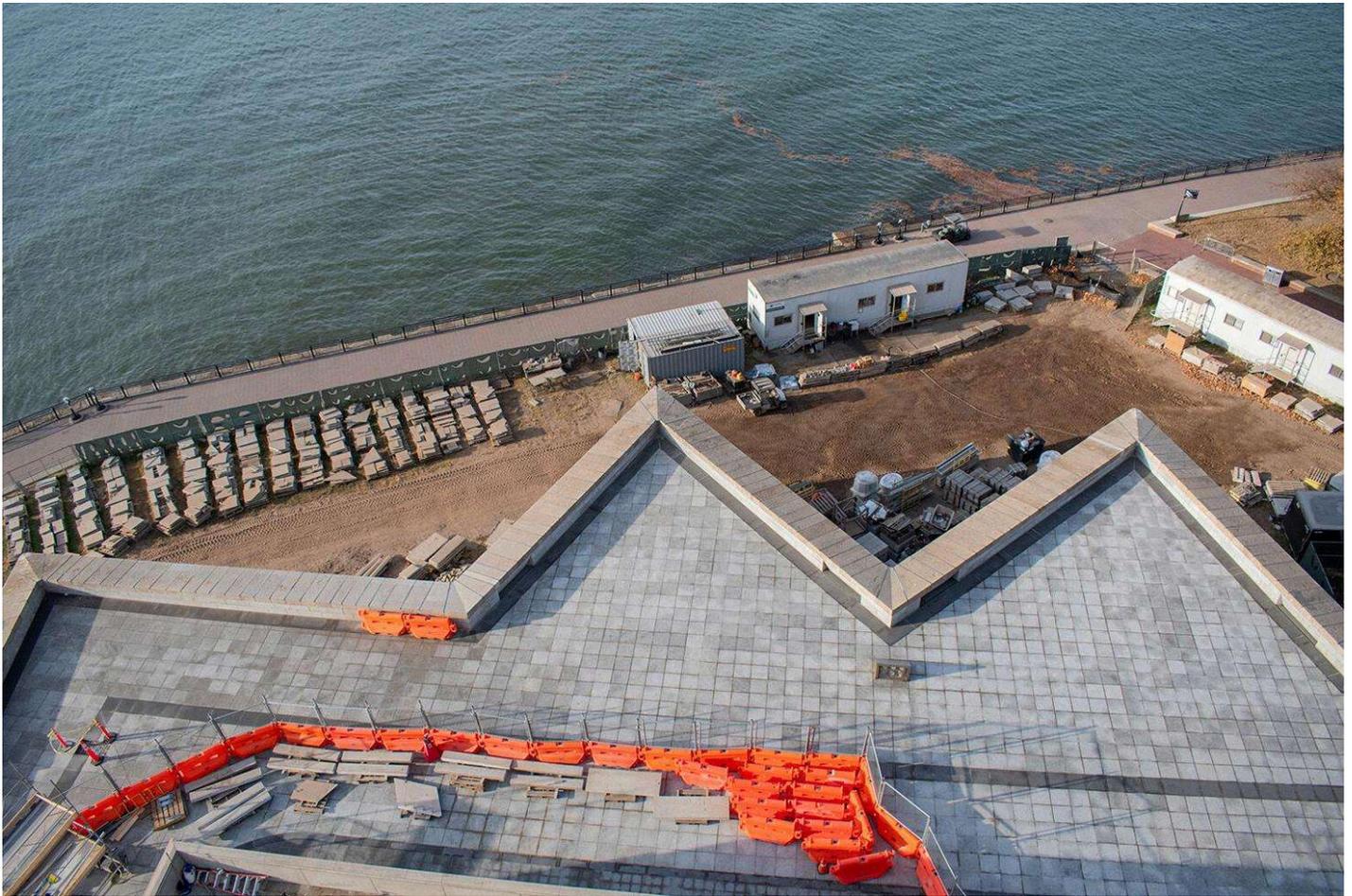
Going after National Park Service projects first became a priority for the company about 10 years ago with its restoration at the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site in Hyde Park, N.Y.

That was followed by renovations at the Robert Gould Shaw 54th Regiment War Memorial across from the state Capitol in Boston, honoring the commander of one of the state's first all-Black units during the Civil War.

Responding to the government's invitation to bid on the Lady Liberty restoration against at least five competitors, "we thought it was time to go for a project like that, something bigger that still kept us in the Northeast," Mucci said.

Since it was focused on masonry, the company's skill set and project portfolio played a major role in securing the contract, he noted.

Company President Louis J. Allegrone said his family's roots as immigrants from Italy from 1917 through the 1920s made this project extra special.



Masons with Allegrone Cos. reset the granite blocks along the Fort Wood walls on Liberty Island as part of a five-year restoration of the Statue of Liberty's 1807 pedestal structure.

ALLEGRONE COS.

“It gives you pause when you think back to whether my grandfather, Luigi, who started the company and came through Ellis Island ever would have thought we’d be working down on the Statue of Liberty,” he said.

Company founder Luigi Allegrone's son, Louis C. Allegrone, was a mason by trade and expanded the masonry preservation and restoration business.

His son, Louis J. expanded the firm into the construction services company that exists today. Louis E. (current company vice president) and Anthony (director of design and principal architect), siblings, and their team make up the fourth generation.

A phone call from the National Park Service following a month-long evaluation and scoring of bids sealed the Lady Liberty deal, Louis E. recalled. “They said, 'By the way, we’re going to send you over a contract – congratulations, you guys won the job, when can you start?’”

“It was a grim time, COVID had just hit,” said Tony Zaniboni, general superintendent and principal of the company. “You’re working on an island, an area where you’ve never worked before, completely different than working somewhere locally.”



Listing the challenges of the Lady Liberty restoration, Allegrone's General Superintendent Tony Zaniboni pointed out that “you’re working on an island, an area where you’ve never worked before, completely different than working somewhere locally.”

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Working with Mucci, the team had reached out to subcontractors and vendors to gather pricing for the bid, which covered restoration of the walls and replacement of the hard deck – also known as a terreplein – surface.

With the contract in hand, the next step was putting together the day-to-day operations, Zaniboni explained, including hiring masons from the union locals in New York City.

While most of the rebuilding work was done during the warmer nine months of the year, Mucci noted, pavers in heated tents on the island allowed production to continue during the winter.

The Liberty Island project was especially challenging since the key vantage points and the museum, a prime tourist attraction, remained open to the public throughout the five-year renovation, restricting work to one-third of the site at any given time.

Dealing with as many as 20,000 visitors a day required workarounds, said Zaniboni. A greater challenge was dealing with the elements and the howling winds that are common on the island.

"The pressure of restoring and preserving a national landmark and coordinating it speaks volumes for the work we do here for adaptive reuse and restoration in the local community," Louis E. stressed.

The National Park Service is expected to host a celebration this summer, perhaps on July 4.

Among the greatest challenges for the company's team involved the logistics of getting material to and from the site, Louis J. recalled.

Material, equipment and workers had to be transported by ferries and barges from nearby New Jersey. Work went on year-round; only two days a year were missed when coastal storms were too fierce.

Although work was completed last November, a punch list is pending for March and April to complete landscaping.

“Maintaining quality craftsmanship and a professional manner four hours from here took a lot of time, effort, strategy and conversations,” Mucci said.



Landing the National Park Service contract for restoration work at the Statue of Liberty was "a long journey," Allegrone Cos. director of masonry Michael Mucci explained.

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Key company personnel were housed onshore "to maintain core values, means, methods and procedures for restoration while bringing local laborers into the program," he added.

Of the company's roughly 100 employees, up to 25 worked on site while others were involved in the Lenox headquarters. Overall, there were 200 to 300 personnel involved, including subcontractors.

“The site is very unique, not like working in downtown Manhattan,” Zaniboni said. “We set up the right teams, everybody knew about the preservation goal and historical nature of the company.”

He recalled that barges arriving on the island had to be checked by police officers with sniffing dogs, part of the natural protection and security details at the Statue of Liberty.



The five-year, \$40 million project has just ended in time for an expected celebration at Liberty Island on July 4, marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence signing.

ALLEGRONE COS.

The U.S. government’s decision to remain with Allegrone for the final phase of the renovation was based in part on the company’s ongoing construction management of the Dorchester Heights Monument restoration in South Boston.

That two-year, \$30 million project was completed last summer. The monument commemorates the March 4, 1776, fortification by Continental forces, surprising British troops. Two weeks later, the Brits fled, ending the 11-month long Siege of Boston.

“Being such a prominent project at an iconic landmark, it sets an example of the company’s growth, especially the masonry division,” said Anthony Allegrone, principal architect. “It’s also great example of the consistency of the company’s services. Looking back over 100 years now, the foundation Allegrone was built upon was masonry, restoration and preservation, the quality of craftsmanship from Day 1.”



The senior leadership team at Allegrone Cos. includes, from left; Director of Masonry Michael Mucci, Vice President Louis E. Allegrone, President Louis J. Allegrone, General Superintendent Tony Zaniboni and Principal Architect Anthony Allegrone.

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

“It’s so rewarding to see us as part of the Statue of Liberty project, which is an example of what’s considered sustainable preservation of national landmarks,” he added.

Going forward, the company is currently working on a restoration at the New York state Empire Plaza capitol’s Eastern Approach that began six months ago. It’s a four-year, \$70-million project “bringing together all the aspects of what the company does,” said Louis E.

However, as a company "it's nice to bring back focus to our projects locally," he said. "When we get a chance to design, build and redevelop a property here in downtown Pittsfield, like the Wright Building redevelopment project on North Street, bringing life to it, brings it around full circle."



Allegrone Cos. President Louis J. Allegrone, left, with director of masonry Michael Mucci and company vice-president Louis E. Allegrone detail the challenges posed by the five-year, multi-phase restoration of the pedestal base at the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

The 1898 structure, along with the adjacent former Jim's House of Shoes, is being converted into 35 market-rate apartments, including 20 percent designated as affordable housing, and six storefronts.

Other notable area projects include the 28 studio apartments on West Housatonic Street in Pittsfield, nine units within Zion Lutheran Church on First Street in the city, and the rebuild of the Doris Duke Theatre at Jacob's Pillow in Becket.

The company first opened on Newell Street, where Allegrone family members grew up. The Lenox headquarters was completed in 2016 on the former site of the Edgewood Motel.

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Notable Allegro Projects

Completed, Historic Preservation

Dorchester Heights Monument & Hardscape Restoration, Boston MA (2025, construction management)

Mount Greylock Tower Summit Improvements, Adams, MA (2017, construction management)

Grand Staircase Rehabilitation, Empire Plaza, Albany, NY (2016, construction management)

Robert Gould Shaw & 54th Regiment Memorial Upgrades, Boston, MA (2021, construction management)

Vanderbilt Mansion Rehabilitation, Hyde Park, NY (2018, construction management)

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA (Multi-phase Projects, construction management)

Naumkeag Estate, Stockbridge MA (Multi-phase Projects, construction management)

Chesterwood Museum Studio Rehabilitation, Stockbridge, MA (2014, construction management)

Beacon Cinema, Pittsfield, MA (2010, construction management)

Onota 74 Residences, Pittsfield, MA (2016, design-build)

The Howard Building, Pittsfield, MA (2014, design-build)

Iredale Cosmetics Headquarters, Great Barrington, MA (2016, construction management)

Completed, Noteworthy

Jacob's Pillow: Doris Duke Theatre, Becket, MA (2025, construction management)

Bousquet Mountain Ski Lodge, Pittsfield, MA (2022, design-build)

Lee Bank at Reed/South Street, Pittsfield, MA (2023, design-build)

The First and West Housatonic Apartments, Pittsfield, MA (2026, construction management)

In Progress

Wright Building Block, Pittsfield, MA (design-build)

NYS Capitol Rehabilitation to Eastern Approach, Albany, NY (construction management)

24 North Park, Pittsfield, MA (design-build)

Lake Placid Center of Performing Arts Theatre, Lake Placid, NY (construction management)

Hancock Shaker Village Visitors Center, Pittsfield, MA (construction management)

MORE INFORMATION



A beacon for Pittsfield



The Wright Building redevelopment is on track to welcome tenants next year thanks to \$4 million from the state



A tax deal has cleared the way for Allegrone Cos. to bring two major housing projects to North Street in Pittsfield



Allegrone Construction purchases iconic office building on North Street in Pittsfield

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