

New cultural link between Annan and New York set to be launched

Sandstone from Corsehill was used in the original steps of the New York State Capitol Building's Great Western Staircase

[Sharon Liptrott](#)

Dumfriesshire's Hugh Bryden and New York artist and curator, Maddy Rosenberg, admire the "The Million Dollar Staircase" made from Annan's Corsehill quarry sandstone which inspired a new cross-Atlantic arts project

A new cultural link between Annan and New York, forged from a shared heritage with sandstone quarried at Corsehill, will be launched this weekend.

It will see a new arts project created which will involve poets, musicians and artists from both sides of the Atlantic and a platform for a programme of events next year.

It is being revealed as part of Annan History Town's summer festival exhibition on Industries and Buildings which is being held tomorrow and Sunday in St Andrew's Church Hall.

Dumfriesshire's Hugh Bryden is behind the cross-Atlantic project and he'll be there both days – from 11am to 4pm tomorrow, and from 1pm to 4pm on Sunday – with artist Maddy Rosenberg, who is curator for an interdisciplinary gallery in New York, called Central Booking.

Hugh, who is an artist, illustrator and Roncadora Press publisher, said: "If you are interested in music, poetry, visual art or just the fascinating history of Annan's interaction with New York, come along this weekend to learn more and find out how you can be involved in this project."



Corsehill was extensively worked throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries

Corsehill was extensively worked throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries with much of the quality building

stone used locally as well as on many prominent buildings in the UK and abroad.

It closed in the 1940s and reopened in 1982 with a small section still being worked today– although the greater part of the quarry is backfilled as a council refuse dump for Annan.

Structures for which Corsehill sandstone is known to have been used include the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, London's Liverpool Street Station and the original pedestal for the Duke of Wellington's Monument at Admiralty Arch.

It also features in New York State Capitol Building's Great Western Staircase's original steps, which have 77 famous faces carved by hand into the stone.

Designed by architect Henry Hobson Richardson and built by Isaac Perry, work started on the project in 1883 with the Annan sandstone shipped over the Atlantic and took more than 14 years to complete, costing more than a million dollars – hence its nickname "The Million Dollar Staircase".

Around 500 stone carvers worked on the project.

Spanning 444 steps and four floors of the New York State Capitol Building, the staircase is 119 feet in height and features 77 famous faces carved by hand into the stone, along with intricate carvings of flora and fauna as well as

symbols like the Eye of Providence, and scenes from American history.

A 2.8 million dollar restoration of the staircase was completed in 2006.

Hugh taught at Annan Academy before becoming staff tutor in art with the council's education department until he took early retirement in 2015 to concentrate of his artwork.



The sandstone was used for the New York State Capitol Building's Great Western Staircase's original steps

He said: "The project is called Sandstone Steps. It is a multi-disciplinary cultural event in a box, an artist's book in three parts: with a musical element, a literary element

and a visual art element.

"The box, in a shape of a staircase with drawers, will contain specially commissioned music, poetry and relief prints in each of its three "steps."

SIMILAR ARTICLES TO THIS

He added: "Produced by prominent practitioners from Dumfries and Galloway and New York, next year it will be at the centre of a programme of exhibitions, concerts, poetry readings and related events.

"As well as exploring and celebrating the cultural links between Dumfries and Galloway and New York, dating back over one hundred and fifty years, these elements will be brought together into a cultural compendium. We will build on these links and strengthen the bond between the two places."

[The pair will spend the weekend chatting to visitors about the project and will give a short presentation about the project at 2pm and 3pm each day.](#)