

Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover, Told as Equals for the First Time

WEST BRANCH, IA, UNITED STATES, August 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [BRC Imagination Arts'](#) redesign of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum opens to the public today, reframing one of America's most misunderstood presidencies through the story the Hoovers actually lived, together.

The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum (HHPLM) reopens today after the most extensive renovation in its history, the first since 1992, with a complete reimagining of its exhibitions and guest experience by BRC Imagination Arts, the Burbank, California-based company that strategizes, designs, and delivers [story-led museums and cultural destinations](#) that shape how people feel, think, and act. The \$20.3 million project, funded by the Hoover Presidential Foundation's "Timeless Values | Modern Experience" capital campaign, adds 2,300 square feet to the facility, including a new lobby, expanded gift shop, and flexible exhibit space, and brings the museum up to modern standards for accessibility, display, and interpretation.

Where the museum previously told a single chronological story, it now traces



Matching marble busts of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover displayed side by side at the entrance to the redesigned Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum ©2026 Jonathan David Sabin
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The "Circle the Globe" gallery at the redesigned Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum ©2026 Jonathan David Sabin
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the parallel lives of President Hoover and First Lady Lou Henry Hoover side by side, from childhood through marriage and decades of humanitarian work and public service. HHPLM becomes the first presidential museum to treat a First Lady as a co-equal subject alongside her husband, not a supporting figure in his.

The new displays also reframe a presidency long defined by the Great Depression: a humanitarian legacy that fed close to 100 million people, achievements that came largely before and after Hoover's time in office, and a partnership between two people whose travels, reconstructed from the museum's own archive of notes and ship manifests, took the family the equivalent of fourteen times around the globe in fifteen years. At just under 9,500 square feet of long-term exhibition space, it is the smallest presidential museum in the federal system.



The Great Depression gallery at the redesigned Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum
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Matthew Solari, VP of Story and Creative, BRC Imagination Arts

Entrance busts of Bert and Lou, digitally sculpted from historical photographs by Hollywood special-effects artist Rod Maxwell, are designed to be touched, extending the invitation to visually impaired guests and anyone curious enough to reach out. A layered soundscape, built gallery by gallery, carries guests from cicadas and blacksmith tools in West Branch through to the sounds of a world at war. In one room, windows align precisely with a view of Hoover's actual birth cottage, letting visitors pose for a photo as if at the inauguration itself while looking out at the two-room house where his story began. The approach favors storytelling over documentation, giving visitors the experience of time spent in the Hoovers' company rather than observing a record of it.

"This is the smallest presidential museum in the country, and we believe it now tells one of the biggest stories," said Mundi McCarty, President and CEO of the Hoover Presidential Foundation. "What our preview visitors keep telling us is that they didn't simply learn about Bert and Lou, they felt like they had spent time with them. That was the ambition from the start. The Hoovers devoted their lives to serving other people, most of it without any expectation of recognition,

and if visitors leave here thinking about how they might do the same in their own communities, then everything our donors made possible will have been worth it."

"Herbert Hoover is one of the most misunderstood presidents in American history, and most people walk in certain they already know his story," said Matthew Solari, Vice President of Story and Creative at BRC Imagination Arts. "A hundred years of scholarship says otherwise, and our job was to put that research in front of people in a way they could feel rather than just read. There isn't a single touchscreen in this museum. A lot of institutions don't trust their story, or their audience, enough, so they reach for technology to compensate, and more often than not it clouds the very thing they were trying to say. Sometimes the most radical choice you can make is to put the technology away and let people spend time with the Hoovers instead."

That idea, "Lead an Uncommon Life: Serve, Lead, Make a Difference," runs through the whole museum and culminates in its closing gallery, Uncommon Iowans, where visitors are invited to make their own commitment to service. The gallery also houses a living awards program recognizing public service among Iowan public servants and students today.

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