



# STATE LIBRARY NEWS

For the People, the Government and the Libraries of New York State

Winter 2011

## LEGISLATORS: FOLLOWING FACEBOOK

What's happening this week at the State Library? You and your constituents can now find out instantly on our new FACEBOOK page. Check it for information about stimulating classes such as computer instruction, resources for small businesses, walking tours for genealogists, new acquisitions and old treasures, exhibits, grant applications, and a host of other unexpected possibilities. Just go to <<http://www.facebook.com/NYSLibrary>>.

## FRIENDS ELECT BOARD

Jane Schneider, Clesson Bush, Mary Redmond, Barbara Mladinov, and Zebulon S. Robbins, Jr. were reelected president, vice president, treasurer, and governing board members of the Friends at the annual meeting on March 15. They will serve until March 31, 2013. Jean Burns and Arden Leach will serve until March 31, 2012. Edmund Morris, author of the recently released *Colonel Roosevelt*, was the featured speaker.

### New York State Library News

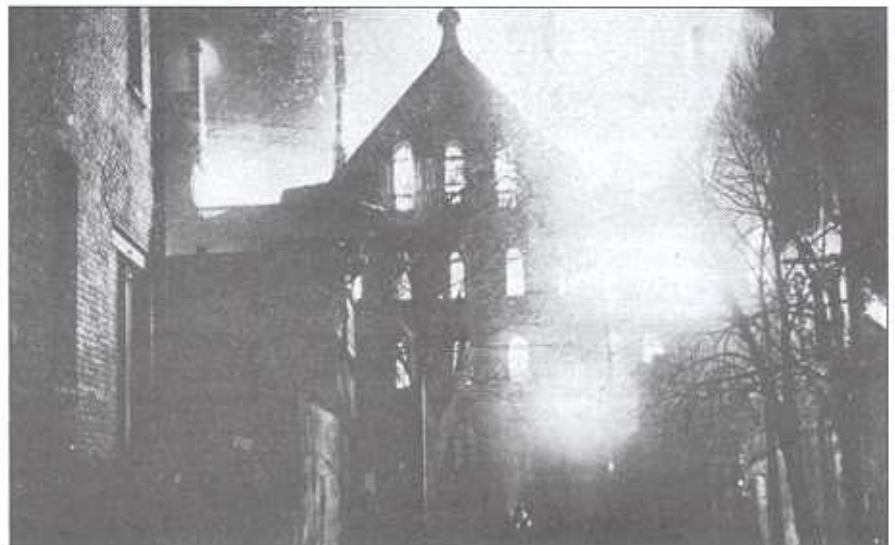
is produced by the Friends of the New York State Library to inform New Yorkers about the collections and services of the State Library.

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Student: Sarah Morse

This newsletter is not published at state expense.

## RIISING FROM THE ASHES



From the collection of the New York State Library

This dramatic photo of the New York State Capitol in flames was taken by Albany businessman **Harry Roy Sweny**.

*Images of America: The New York State Capitol and the Great Fire of 1911*, by Paul Mercer and Vicki Weiss, marks the centennial of the blaze that destroyed and damaged large portions of the State Library, then housed on the fourth floor of the State Capitol.

The New York State Library, founded in 1818, had become "one of the finest research libraries in the country and home to innumerable manuscripts and printed rarities," say Mr. Mercer and Ms. Weiss

in the introduction to the book. They "culled rare images and documents from the very special collections of the modern State Library, which arose from the ashes of the 1911 fire."

Both librarians at the State Library, the coauthors generously assigned all royalties from the sale of the book to the Friends of the New York State Library. You can purchase this book at the Friends' new online store, in local bookstores, or through online booksellers.

## IN MEMORIAM: JOSEPH F. SHUBERT

Joseph F. Shubert, State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries from 1977 to 1996, died November 24, 2010 in Plano, Texas.

Before becoming New York's 19th State Librarian, Mr. Shubert was the State Librarian of Ohio, and before that, of Nevada, where he began his

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## NEW YORK CENSUS WORLDWIDE FIRST

"The State of New York... is the originator of census taking in the modern world," according to *New York State Census and Substitutes* by William Dollarhide, a book in the State Library's collection. The 1777 State Constitution's provision "for a census of the electors and inhabitants every seven years was the model for the decennial census clause of the Federal constitution of 1787 -- a policy subsequently copied by other nations of the world." Compiled under the direction of the Secretary of State, the first New York Census, taken in 1790, and the following five censuses counted the total population and electors and provided a basis for the reapportionment of senate and assembly districts. An act passed in 1825 provided for future counts of the people of New York state, and useful statistical tables.

The State Library's census collection includes records of the state census from 1807 to 1925, the last state census. The State Constitution of 1821 mandated a census in 1825 and every ten years thereafter. Influenced by an 1845 Boston and the U.S. Census of 1850, the New York State Census of 1855 went beyond counting residents and sought information about age, sex, occupation, and whether native or foreign born. These statistics, also included in the next two censuses, provide such a remarkable inventory of human resources, the New York State censuses of 1855, 1865 and 1875 are among the nation's most valuable 19th century American statistical records.

Historians, genealogists, and other researchers can mine this  
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## FREEDOM FIGHTERS



*This scene of the 55th Massachusetts Colored Regiment marching in Charleston, South Carolina appeared in the March 18, 1865 Harper's Weekly.*

*"Let the conflict begin."*  
Frederick Douglass,  
March, 1861

When the Civil War erupted, many free blacks wanted to enlist in the Union Army but could not. Although blacks had fought in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812, a federal law passed in 1792 prevented them from serving in the War Between the States, sometimes referred to by blacks as "The Freedom War".

Like Frederick Douglass, many blacks saw army service as a key to citizenship and pressed for a law enabling them to enlist. By 1862, with decreasing numbers of white volunteers, increasing numbers of free slaves, and the Union Army's growing need for men, Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act. This made it possible for African Americans to participate in the Civil War. Their activities, however, were limited to non-combatant duties such as cooking, cleaning, and digging trenches. They were eventually authorized for combat by President Lincoln on June

2, 1863 after release of the Emancipation Proclamation. But black soldiers were still segregated, and with few exceptions, served under white officers and black non-commissioned officers. By the end of the war, about 179,000 black soldiers had enlisted in the Army, and 19,000 in the Navy. Almost 40,000 African Americans died during the Civil War. Sixteen blacks were awarded the Medal of Honor. Though unable to enlist, black women also joined the struggle as nurses.

Over 4,000 black soldiers trained at Rikers and Hart Island and served in the Twentieth and Thirty-first Regiments of the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Many African-American New Yorkers served in the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth

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### TELL US

Send comments and questions  
about the New York State  
Library and its newsletter to:  
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## Visit the State Library's Website

<<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov>>



- o Access national and regional databases
- o Search Excelsior, the Library's online catalog
- o Access NOVEL, the State Library's online library

For more information, call (518) 474 5355  
Or email: <[refserv@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:refserv@mail.nysed.gov)>

## CENSUS

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collection for information about the evolution of agriculture and the rise of manufacturing; effects of the Civil War; emancipation, immigration, and a vast variety of state and national trends. In addition to statistics of tremendous significance, the collection contains some fascinating nuggets about the workings of state government. Among them is an account of the deadlock between Governor David B. Hill and the Legislature about holding the 1885 census. Governor Hill objected to the expense and time of gathering the detailed information the Legislature favored. As a result of the disagreement, no state census was held until 1892.

Another document in the State Census collection tells of the 1928 conviction of Mrs. Florence E.S. Knapp, the state's

first female secretary of state and supervisor of the 1925 census. A former superintendent of public schools, a dean at Syracuse University, and a descendant of John Hancock's brother, Mrs. Knapp was accused of graft, investigated, tried, and convicted of grand larceny. She served 30 days in the Albany County jail and died in obscurity.

To access statistical reports from the collection, New York State Census, go to: <<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/scandocs/nyscensus.htm>>. Additional documents about the census are available on microfilm at the State Library. Federal censuses, first taken in 1790 and every ten years thereafter, are also available in various formats at the State Library.

*To join Friends of the New York State Library, complete the form below and mail it with your check.*

## New York State Library News

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Make check payable to *Friends of the New York State Library* and mail to: Treasurer, Friends of the New York State Library, PO Box 2247 Empire Plaza Station, Albany, NY 12220.

## BE A FRIEND

Join the Friends of the New York State Library. Get the deep satisfactions of preserving your heritage and sustaining a world-renowned public research library. You can also get special discounts at local bookstores. Select:

- **Sustaining Membership.** \$25. Receive a 20% discount on any single, in-stock title at the Book House & Little Book House (Stuyvesant Plaza) or Market Block Books (Troy) and 25% off one purchase at the Open Door Bookstore in Schenectady.
- **Contributing Membership.** \$50 or more. Receive all of the above plus database access, a gift, and recognition in *New York State Library News*.
- **Excelsior Membership.** \$100 or more. Receive all of the above plus a behind the scenes tour of the State Library, a \$10 copier card, and an invitation to a private special exhibit or program.

Every Friend also receives:

- **Free admission** to the Friends Annual Meeting featuring a talk by an author of a recently published book
- **Invitations** to other stimulating programs at the State Library.
- **A subscription** to the *New York State Library News*, an illustrated quarterly newsletter.

## MR. SHUBERT

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**Joseph F. Shubert**

career. The New York State Library, the nation's flagship state library, showed continuous improvement under Mr. Shubert's expert leadership. Among the many programs he expanded or initiated are improved statewide interlibrary loan and the nation's first state-funded program for preservation of rare books and other fragile library materials. He also planned and participated in White House conferences on library services.

Mr. Shubert was a major force in founding the Friends of the New York State Library. He received many awards throughout his career. After he retired in 1996, in recognition of his many accomplishments, the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries established the

Joseph F. Shubert Library Excellence Award. The Friends of the State Library fund the award.

## FRIENDS LAUNCH ONLINE STORE

**PUZZLER SETS.** Solve challenging riddles from Victorian newspapers.

**DVD.** Journey to the 17th century settlement of Rensselaerswyck, the New Netherland colony that encompassed much of the land that became Albany and Rensselaer counties.

**NOTECARDS.** Write thank-you notes on cards with quotes from late 19th and 20th century newspapers.

You can buy these and other products from the Friends of the State Library's new online store. Proceeds support the State Library. Visit <http://nyslfriends.org/products-page/>.

## STATE LIBRARY WINS AGAIN

NYLA/GIRT (New York Library Association/Government Information Roundtable) recently presented a Notable Documents award to the State Library for "Impact Report 2010: Opportunity Online Hardware Grant". The winning document tells how the State

Library's partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation helps libraries make a major difference statewide. To read this report, go to: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/gateslib/hardware/impactreport.pdf>.

## FREEDOM

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Massachusetts Infantry Regiment (Colored).

The State Library has a microfilmed collection from the National Archives and Records Administration of Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with the United States Colored Troops from the Fifty-Fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment (Colored), 1863-1865.

The regiments gathered in Massachusetts, but many who joined came from New York state and other regions outside of New England. The collection includes a jacket-envelope for each soldier with his name, rank, and unit. Documents also include enlistment papers, substitute certificates, casualty sheets, death reports, prisoner-of-war memorandums, and correspondence. Many other materials about blacks in the Civil War are available at the State Library. For more information about this collection, call (518) 474-5355.

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New York State Library  
N.Y.S. Education Department  
Albany, NY 12230

### State Library Hours

Monday through Friday  
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
For more information, call  
(518) 474-5355 or e-mail  
[refserv@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:refserv@mail.nysed.gov).