



The New York Public Library New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Artifacts and Memorabilia Collection

ca. 1896-2001

Compiled by Jim Moske; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Summary

Creator: New York Public Library.

Title: Artifacts and Memorabilia Collection

Date: ca. 1896-2001

Abstract: In 1895, the Astor Library and the Lenox Library were consolidated with the Tilden Trust to form the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. The Astor Library was a public reference library begun in 1839 and incorporated ten years later under the will of John Jacob Astor (1763-1848). The Lenox Library, founded in 1870, was made up of the collections of rare books and manuscripts, especially Bibles, early printing, Americana, and voyages and travels formed by James Lenox (1800-1880). To this was added a \$2 million endowment and 15,000 volumes from the trust of political leader Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886). While the New York Public Library is a private corporation its charter stipulates it to be both free and open to all. The Library is organized into 4 groups: the Board of Trustees, Central Administration, Research Libraries, and Branch Libraries. The directors of both the Research and Branch Libraries report to the Central Administration which is headed by the Director of the Library who reports to the President and the Board of Trustees. After consolidation, both the Astor and Lenox Libraries continued to operate separately until the opening of the Central Building in 1911. Initially, John Shaw Billings (the Library's first Director) handled many of the functions which would become the responsibility of the director of the Research Libraries. Between 1901 and 1906, 14 already extant free circulating libraries (including the Aguilar Free Library, Cathedral Library, and the New York Free Circulating Library) were united to form the nucleus of the branch libraries. Andrew Carnegie's 1901 gift established the financial foundation of the branch system which serves three of the five New York City Boroughs: the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. NYPL Archives Record Group 12 contains artifacts and memorabilia that document NYPL activities, programs and special events. Materials include Library signage, promotional buttons, artifacts of the construction of The Library's Central Building and a variety of commemorative objects such as medals and plaques.

Conditions Governing Access:

Access to the collection is restricted to qualified scholars and researchers through the Office of Special Collections, Room 316.

Preferred citation: Record Group 12, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public

Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Compiled by Jim Moske; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Creator History

In 1895, the Astor Library and the Lenox Library were consolidated with the Tilden Trust to form the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. The Astor Library was a public reference library begun in 1839 and incorporated ten years later under the will of John Jacob Astor (1763-1848). The Lenox Library, founded in 1870, was made up of the collections of rare books and manuscripts, especially Bibles, early printing, Americana, and voyages and travels formed by James Lenox (1800-1880). To this was added a \$2 million endowment and 15,000 volumes from the trust of political leader Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886). While the New York Public Library is a private corporation its charter stipulates it to be both free and open to all. The Library is organized into 4 groups: the Board of Trustees, Central Administration, Research Libraries, and Branch Libraries. The directors of both the Research and Branch Libraries report to the Central Administration which is headed by the Director of the Library who reports to the President and the Board of Trustees. After consolidation, both the Astor and Lenox Libraries continued to operate separately until the opening of the Central Building in 1911. Initially, John Shaw Billings (the Library's first Director) handled many of the functions which would become the responsibility of the director of the Research Libraries. Between 1901 and 1906, 14 already extant free circulating libraries (including the Aguilar Free Library, Cathedral Library, and the New York Free Circulating Library) were united to form the nucleus of the branch libraries. Andrew Carnegie's 1901 gift established the financial foundation of the branch system which serves three of the five New York City Boroughs: the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

Scope and Content Note

NYPL Archives Record Group 12 contains artifacts and memorabilia that document NYPL activities, programs and special events. Materials include Library signage, promotional buttons, artifacts of the construction of The Library's Central Building and a variety of commemorative objects such as medals and plaques.

Container List

- b. 1 Beacons used during the Centennial Ceremony 1995
- b. 2 Textiles - T-shirts, Local 1930 AIDS Walk 1996-2000
- b. 2 Textiles - Handkerchiefs with Image of Central Building n.d.
- b. 2 Textiles - Banner, Adopt-A-Branch n.d.
- b. 3 Textiles - Banner, Yorkville Branch Library n.d.
- b. 4 Printing blocks n.d.
- b. 5 Microfilm camera n.d.
- b. 6 Drinking glass with image of Central Building 1940
- b. 7 Buttons from NYPL advertising and publicity campaigns n.d.
- b. 8 Central Building construction - Fragment of plaster from Main Reading Room, signed by workman Peter Comandini 1909
- b. 9 Wood block placeholder for volume missing from stacks 1963
- b. 10 Central Building construction - Facsimile of decorative plaster heads in Main Reading Room n.d.
- b. 11 Seal of The New York Public Library 1904-1905 (Three copies, two signed by John Bigelow)
- b. 12 Signage from miscellaneous Branch Libraries and Research Library divisions v.d.
- b. 13 Signage from miscellaneous Branch Libraries and Research Library divisions v.d.
- b. 14 Branch Libraries flag n.d.
- b. 15 New York Public Library Medal Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Library at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street 1961 (4 copies)
- b. 16 New York Public Library paper tape roll n.d.
- b. 17 United States Postal Service 10 cent stamp with New York Public Library Lion 2000 (3 first day covers, 3 brochures, 2 framed copies of artwork, 1 lapel pin, news clippings and four samples of stamp)
- b. 18 Pewter Cup - Salisbury Pewter cup given to The Library by the Manuscripts Society 2001
- b. 19 Research Libraries - Humanities and Social Sciences Library - Berg Collection hand fan n.d.
- b. 20 Bailey Myers Collection of Americana metal plaque n.d.
- b. 21 Rotary telephone - last phone in use in NYPL system (ca. 2002) from a Staten Island Branch n.d.
- b. 22 Central Building construction - Ceremonial trowel presented by Carrere & Hastings to Mayor Seth Low for laying of the cornerstone 1902
- b. 23 Central Building construction - Core drilling samples for foundation of building, "Giles Drilling Corporation for Bloche & Hesse" ca. 1896 (7 loose samples and 4 bottles)
- b. 24 Branch Libraries - Hunt's Point Branch coffee can telephone n.d.
- b. 25 Central Building - wooden flooring block from courtyard ca. 1911
- b. 26 Textiles - Throg's Neck Branch banner n.d.