

New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2022

Issue 48

DECOMMISSIONED NYPL BRANCHES



Above: Rivington Street rooftop reading room 1910.

Right: Apartment building formerly Rivington Street Branch. After decommissioning and conversion, several new stories, including a penthouse, were added to the top.

Story on page 4.



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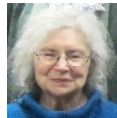
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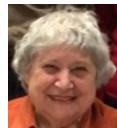
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ASSOCIATION WEBSITE:

www.nyplretirees.org

We are proud of our website, which is administered by Polly Bookhout. If you have not yet looked at it, why not take a look now?

Two of the most popular features you will find there are “People” and “Newsletters.” When you select “People,” you will see a list in alphabetical order by surname of all of the people who have been written about in our association’s newsletters. Included are the issues and page numbers where they appear. By clicking on the link, you will be taken to that issue and can then go to the page on which to read about the person you have chosen.

The “Newsletters” feature brings you a list of past newsletters all the way back to issue #1, which was published in 1993, the year our association came into being. You can select any of these and will then be able to read the entire issue as it appeared.

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retireesnypl@gmail.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Valentin Colon

Cheryl Raymond

IN MEMORY OF

Lucia Burke

Julio Castro

Barbara Hillman

Mike Malinconico

Alison Ryley

Alexandra Sax

LOOKING BACK: BECKY KOPPELMAN'S LONG SERVICE

By Polly Bookhout

Becky said, "I remember Juanita in 2004 when, at a Board meeting, she announced that she was "stepping down" from the presidency. I was there as Social Committee chair. I remember vividly her plea for someone on the Executive Board to take over the presidency. There was silence. But then she continued to talk, asking, "What will happen to our Association? Is it worth having a retirees association? Do you like being part of it? Do you like our activities and keeping in touch with your fellow retirees?"

"I, for one, did like being part of our Association. And yes, I was enjoying it; it meant a great deal to me. Everyone around that table liked being part of the Association. But being the president? Even though I was one of the newer committee chairs, someone in the room said she thought I should be president! I considered it very seriously for a few minutes and then heard myself saying, "I'll try!" I knew I would need a lot of help from the rest of the Board. And I've received that."

Becky was right. None of us seated there wanted to be president. I was willing to be almost anything else, vice president, membership chair, newsletter editor, email and website provider, but not president.

Becky brought a positive attitude and warmth to her presidency. All of us on the board felt included and encouraged. Her Midwestern Kansas nice way brought us together. In 2007, she wrote, "Spring is finally here. How wonderful! The sun is shining brightly and the sky is a luscious blue. Spring always makes me happy and feeling energetic. I'm ready to shed the heavy winter coat and clothes, and get out the spring garments and take a brisk walk, practice my recorder outside, or arm myself with pencil and pad and do some sketching in the park. I'm ready!"

In the Fall of 2016, she told us, "I want to tell you that I am retiring from the presidency of our retirees association. I have been president since Juanita Doares, past president, "stepped down." I have been thinking about this for a while, but something interesting is always going on. I have enjoyed being your president, but now it is my time to "step down." I

will remain, as President Emeritus, but someone younger is needed to lead the association with vitality and new ideas."

Not surprisingly, no one "stepped up" and said "I'll try" in 2016. For six more years, Becky has continued as our president because she is that sort of person; she wouldn't let us down. Now she has "stepped down" for good.

We all do value the association and want it to continue, but we must find someone willing to be president. We all enjoy the social activities, the annual lunch, our newsletter and emails that keep us informed about our fellow members and more. Beyond what we enjoy, finding out about the city's plan to put us in a Medicare Advantage plan has shown a serious side of our organization.

We want and need to continue the NYPL Retirees Association—but how?



Becky Koppelman

THE RE-PURPOSING OF DECOMMISSIONED NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES

By Pat Pardo

At the turn of the 20th century, the Rivington Branch was exciting, an adventure to visit, and sometimes a little intimidating for the children in the award-winning novel *All-of-a-Kind-Family* by Sydney Taylor.



*“It was heavenly to be able to borrow
books from the library.”
All-of-a-Kind Family*

What made all this happen? The original building was located on the Lower East Side at 61-63 Rivington Street between Eldridge and Allen Streets. It was not just a book library but a welcoming social center for the diverse neighborhood. The McKim, Mead & White library was financed by several sources, including Andrew Carnegie (building), Mrs. Anna Goldstein (land parcel A), the University Settlement (land parcel B), NYPL (interior furnishings, staff, utilities, and taxes), and donors from all social classes (SSG Funds) at a cost of \$122,327.99. Rivington was named after George Washington's spy, James Rivington. The grand opening was on June 10, 1905. The branch was famous not only for the free enriching activities offered to everyone; it was also the first NYPL branch with a rooftop reading area. Depending on the time of day and the patrons' ages, the reading area was used for quiet casual conversations and reading and cultural programs such as live concerts,

discussions with literary figures, and children's story hours. The area had a retractable awning for sunny and drizzly days. Open every day of the year from 9:00-6:00 for children and 6:00-10:00 for adults, there was plenty of time to enjoy the rooftop's fresh clean air. Amenities of chairs, tables, benches, and night illumination were provided.

Patrons enjoyed this remarkable branch until January 18, 1943, when it was decommissioned because of a demographic shift and war time expenses. What a shame and loss to the neighborhood! However, everyone was invited to the Seward Park and Hamilton Fish branches which also had rooftop reading areas.

The subsequent history of the Rivington Branch is interesting. When first closed to the public, it was used as an annex to store mostly furniture. Then, after some time, it stood empty until 1953, the year the Nazarene Church purchased it. When Nazarene Church relocated in 2007, another church, The Lamb's Church, occupied the building. Recently purchased by Serhant New Development, the real estate developer had a very different re-purpose in mind—that of turning it into *The Library*, an eleven-suite luxury apartment building featuring a multi-level glass-walled penthouse. The interior and exterior transformations can be seen on the Serhant website. Incidentally, the average price of a condo is \$2,332,189 (not including the penthouse.) *The Library* opened in 2021.

Three other branches that were re-purposed are the Jackson Square, Bond Street, and West 40th Street branches. The original Jackson Square Branch opened in 1888. In 1901, the financier George W. Vanderbilt gifted the city with a new building, interior furnishings, and a new location. The branch's architect Richard Morris Hunt also designed the Lenox Library. The branch's West Village location at 261 West 13th Street was ideal for many artists, writers, and readers. It was decommissioned in 1967. Currently, it is a private home.

The 457 West 40th Street Branch opened in 1915. After the branch was no longer in use as a library, NYPL used the building as an annex. It was later

demolished, leaving the basement and first floor facade partially intact. Since 2019, Covenant House, situated on the property, has been in the planning stages of preserving and incorporating the basement and the facade into their complex. [Note: It has recently been demolished.]

The Bond Street Branch, 49 Bond Street, was decommissioned in 1919. The branch is now a private home. Bond Street was the oldest branch of New York Public Library. It was opened in 1880 as the first branch of the New York Free Circulating Library. In 1901, Bond Street joined our system as the first NYPL branch, followed by the Ottendorfer Branch, founded in 1884. Ottendorfer is the oldest still-in-use NYPL branch.

There are two exceptions to re-purposed, decommissioned branches—St. Gabriel's Park and Nathan Straus. In the case of these two branches, the land was needed for urban development projects. St. Gabriel's Park Branch was located at 303-5 East 36th Street, near the park of the same name. It was opened in 1908. The branch had a rooftop reading room as well as the Manhattan Central Registration Office of NYPL. During the late 1930s, it was demolished, with the land being utilized as part of the entrance to the Queen's Mid-Town Tunnel.

The Nathan Straus Branch was located at 348 East 32nd Street in the converted Nathan Straus Pasteurized Milk Laboratory, Milk Depot and free clinic. Straus was part of a nation-wide health initiative providing pasteurized milk to ensure that children's exceedingly high death rates from unpasteurized milk declined. Nathan Straus provided the funding, and Dr. Abraham Jacobi offered medical research and the idea of Milk Depots.

In 1941, NYPL librarian Margaret Scoggin's dream of a “Laboratory Library” came to fruition. The milk machines, bottles, and clinic were removed and replaced with reading and listening materials for children and young adults thirteen through twenty-one years of age. It became a center to study the younger generations' use of those materials and their personal interactions with other users, similar in purpose to the one-time Early Childhood Center at Hudson Park Branch. In 1951, a film, *The Impressionable Years: American Children and the Public Library*, was shot at the branch. The narrators were Henry Fonda and

NYPL Librarian Frances Clarke Sayers. The US Information Agency sponsored film was shown world-wide after its premiere at the Museum of Modern Art in 1952. There are two film versions, possibly because of Carl Sandburg's suspected Communist ties. The “laboratory library” transferred the children and young adult materials to Donnell in 1955 when the building was demolished for the Kips Bay Plaza (stores and housing.) In the complex is a grassy knoll where the branch once stood. Many of the baby boomers of Kips Bay Branch still say they miss Nathan Straus because it was such an exciting, special place.

As Children's Librarian Naomi Noyes used to say,
*“Each branch has a special story to tell.
We only need to listen.”*

THE LIBRARY SHOP

NYPL's Library Shop is located in Room 102M of the Stephen A. Schwarzman building. Every purchase supports the library. You can shop the full line of products on their website and have your order shipped for a flat rate of \$8.95, order online and schedule a pickup at the shop, or visit in person. For answers to more questions, e-mail libraryshop@nypl.org.

Because, as retirees, we have a special connection to the library, of particular interest at the shop are the NYPL related items such as an NYPL Lion Tote, NYPL Library Card Blanket, Rose Main Reading Room Puzzle, NYPL tee shirts, journals, and bookmarks. To see all the merchandise in this category, go to shop.nypl.org/collections/only-at-nypl.



ROOFTOP READING ROOMS AT NYPL

By Emily Cohen

Currently, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library has the only free rooftop terrace in New York City. It is a place for reading and study and computer use. It can be booked for events. There are monthly happy hours on Fridays with drinks, mingling, crafts, and curated readings to enjoy.

However, rooftop reading rooms began at NYPL in 1905. In Nora Dolliver's article "A Look Back at NYPL's Rooftop Reading Rooms," we read that in the early twentieth century, in the summer, some libraries located on the cramped Lower East Side operated rooftop reading rooms for children. Rivington Street was the first to open in 1905, followed by St. Gabriel's Park, Hamilton Fish Park, Columbus, and Seward Park. *The New York Times* reported that "readers flocked to the upper levels undismayed by the rather long flight of steps which must be negotiated." Given the popularity of the five existing rooftops, the *Times* noted: "There are upwards of fifty public branch libraries in New York which may be readily equipped with roof gardens, and the plan will doubtless be extended." This turned out to be false optimism on the part of the *Times*. The rooftop reading rooms were initially very popular, according to the 1910 *New York Public Library Bulletin*, with attendance in the rooftop reading rooms making up a significant portion of total attendance during the months that they were open. The *Bulletin* explained that in neighborhoods that were densely populated, libraries were providing open-air spaces for reading and study where such opportunities were very limited.

As it happened, in 1911 attendance went down. This decrease was attributed to both weather and to the increase in the number of day camps that attracted the children. Another factor was the building of playgrounds. The NYPL librarians held storytimes in playgrounds and parks. When public pools opened near two of the libraries with rooftop reading rooms, librarians held storytimes there. The *Bulletin* does note, though, that "At Hamilton Fish Park, story hours were held on the roof of the library at such times as the children were not admitted to the swimming pool." Although the children did not use the rooftop reading rooms as much as before, most of the rooftops continued to be used as event spaces for meetings and community events into the 1920s and 1930s.

Examples include weekly marionette plays, a Yiddish literary forum, English classes for beginners, and, at one branch, an annual meeting of the principals of all the area's schools.

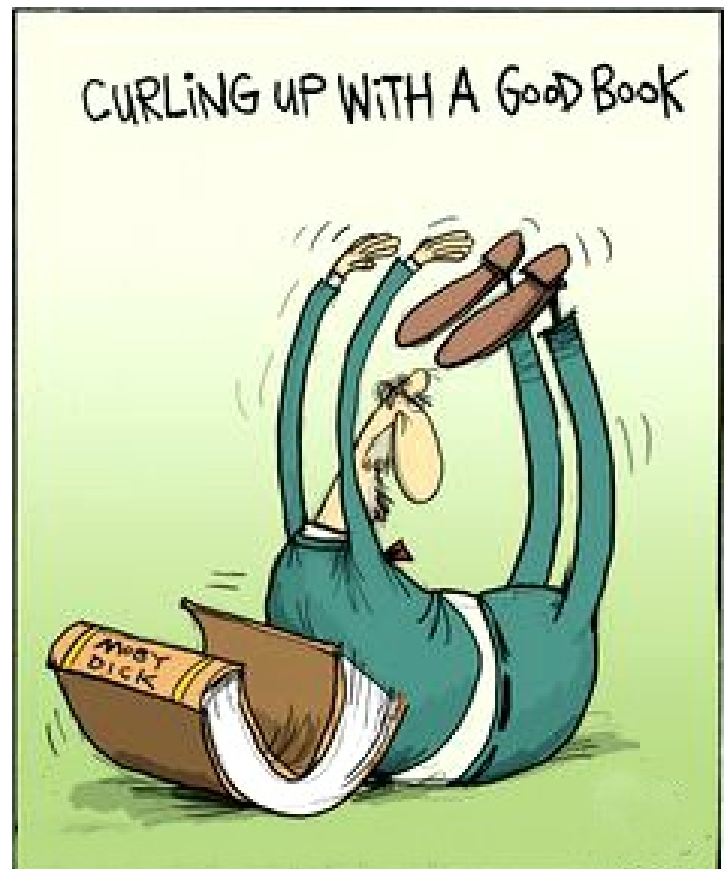
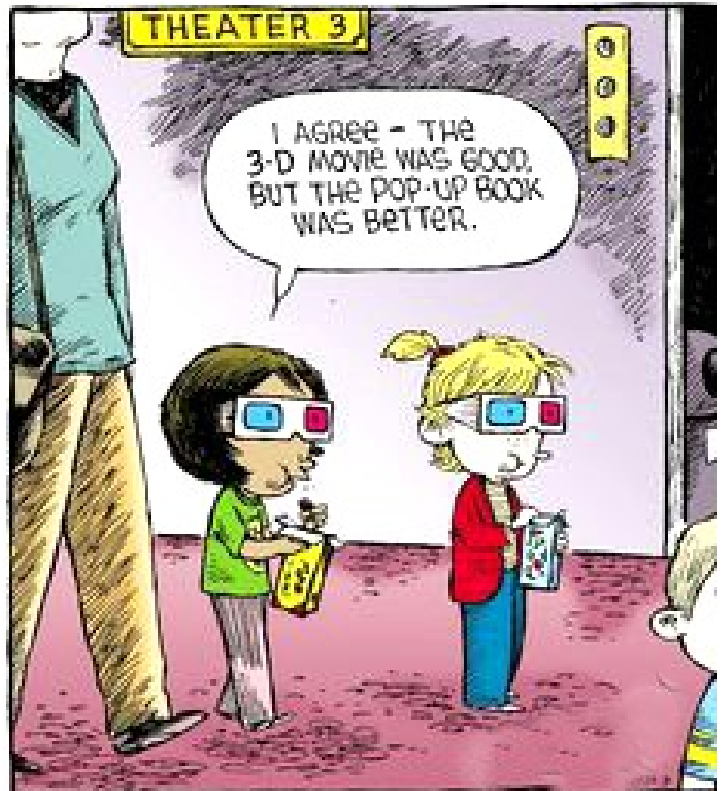
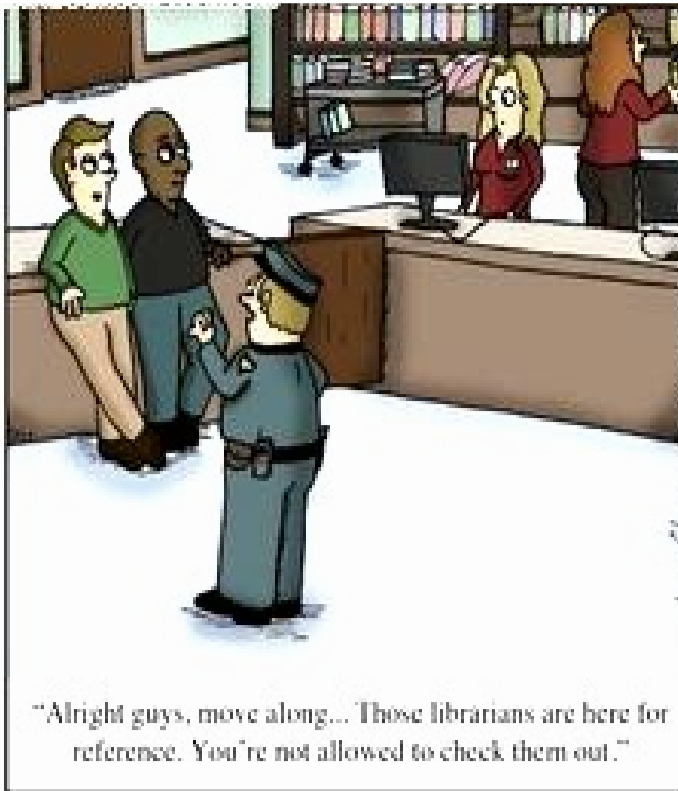


Children reading at the Seward Park Library rooftop reading room, 1910



Children reading on the roof of St. Gabriel's Park Library.

LIBRARY HUMOR



PAGES ABOUT PAGES

DAVID BEASLEY

I was new to the Economics and Social Sciences Division in the Research Libraries, having transferred from cataloguing to reference. The librarian in charge of the pages was leaving on a week's vacation, and since I was selected to oversee the pages—several young men and their page supervisor—he said that should I have any trouble, I should not discipline anyone until he returned. Within days, there was trouble. The pages, who were white, were acting indifferently to the page supervisor, who was black. I spoke to them about behaving properly. Later, I caught them huddled in the stacks rather than at their station in the reading room, and one of them was asleep on a book truck. I told them to get back to work but felt I could not discipline them further, owing to the vacationing librarian's instruction. I sympathized with the page supervisor, who was disturbed by their attitude, which did not much improve. After admonishing the chief troublemaker, who indicated that he would respect his supervisor, I had him apologize and shake hands with the supervisor, who must have wondered at my tolerance although he accepted the solution like a gentleman.

Shortly afterwards, the librarian returned, and I told him of the trouble we had had with the pages. He fired the lot of them on the spot and hired a new batch. Later, in a personnel review, I had to respond to the problem I had had with the pages and mentioned I had dealt with it as instructed until the librarian returned. The Department supervisor questioned me about this remark in front of the librarian, who indicated that he had not made such a suggestion. I let it go at that, as I understood that he felt that admitting it would harm him in some way. The harm actually came to me because I was tainted with the reputation of a poor supervisor, something that was seized upon in later years when library management found ways to penalize me for leading the union organizing.

Years later, I met the page supervisor on the street. He was working as a deliveryman, and he greeted me warmly.

JANE KUNSTLER

My senior clerk and I were interviewing teens for a page position at Hunt's Point. One of our questions was "Do you know the difference between fiction and non-fiction?" The young man answered, "Yes, one is scarier than the other." We were so surprised we didn't think to ask which one was scarier. We did, however, manage not to laugh.

FRED MICHEL

This is a reminiscence about a young adult patron who visited my branch a long time ago. When he reached the Info Desk, he asked me for a red book. A bit surprised at first, I thought maybe it was a red book he had read, but I let that one slip by. Instead, I tried to limit his choices. I asked him if it was fiction or non-fiction; he replied fiction. So I pointed to our robust fiction section, and there he went. After a few minutes, he returned and asked if there was something more appropriate for him. I brought him to the Young Adult section. He returned shortly with several books (none red), applied for a library card, and checked them out. But to top it all off, he then asked if the library needed workers. I gave him an enthusiastic "yes" and handed him an application. This by far is my most memorable experience at NYPL.

DAVID OCKENE

Two things I remember from being a page around sixty years ago in the Allerton Library: using a drill press to make holes in periodicals so that they could be bound together, with covers and backing, by using some kind of rope or similar material; and a tray, where each of the ten sections was tilted, into which transaction cards could be sorted by thousands, possibly, and then by hundreds, and then by tens.

KAYE COKE WALKER

I was a page at the Tremont Branch for five years, starting on September 23, 1953, when I was a junior at Cathedral High School. I stayed a page until my senior year at Hunter College (Bronx). I worked ten to fifteen hours a week for sixty-three cents an hour. I still have my pay stub for \$52.25 from December 31, 1954! We were paid once a month. My "earnings-to-date" were \$669.35! I stayed a page because the hours were more flexible; clerks had to work twenty hours a week.

One summer, a male page and I split the Branch Page Allotment Hours. Bobby(?) worked in the adult section, and I worked in the children's room. That was the worst decision ever made! Branch staff had to find work for us. We manned the clerical desks, filed cards, typed reports, answered phones, etc., etc. We did everything that clerks did except custodial duties. We even hosted a High Tea!

Polly Post Nelson was the Branch Librarian for my entire stay at Tremont. Very classy lady! However, many times she would forget to remove her hat and gloves until some very brave staff or public would very diplomatically remind her—hopefully before lunch hour.

Tremont was a training center for CR librarians, but I remember only two—Haidee Binns, who moved to Hawaii, and Mary Barrett. I remember only one famous person who visited the Children's Room—Coretta Scott King.

JAMES CAGNEY: HIS LIFE AS A PAGE

In the mid-1910s, James Cagney lived in a brand new small apartment building at 420 East 78th Street. Because of his address, most people assume he worked at Yorkville Branch as a page. This, however, is not true. He diligently worked at the Webster Branch, which was on Avenue A, later renamed York Avenue. The original branch is still in operation and is located between East 77th and 78th Streets. Mr. Cagney was a strict, rule-following honor student at Peter Stuyvesant High School and chose to work at NYPL because he loved books and felt that they,

along with the library building and staff, should be respected. After his first day at work, he found out this was not exactly the idyllic book shrine he thought it would be. His duties varied, which meant not only shelving books but also cleaning the spittoons on the floor at the end of each adult table. Sweeping was also required. He had issues with the number of books patrons piled around them when they used the tables as makeshift sleeping areas. He remembered quite well being reprimanded by the staff for removing these piles and re-shelving them as the patrons' slept. He also had complained about the gum wads under the table tops and the paper wads left behind on the floor and tables and mentioned that he received no visible support from his immediate supervisor or the branch librarian. He thought he might like to go to people's homes to collect overdue books. However, his supervisors thought differently since he would occasionally tell patrons what he thought of their rude behavior. Although his earnings were good and the hours were better than many other places, he decided to quit his public service job for someplace where people cared about good service and took pride in their work areas. He went to Macy's and worked in wrapping and packing. Throughout his life, Mr. Cagney continued to be a devout reader, author, and advocate of reading.



THE REASONS I BECAME A CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN FOR NYPL

By Emily Cohen

One would think that, when choosing a career, a person would be inspired by a person or persons in that profession. It was the opposite with me. When I used the children's room in my neighborhood in Brooklyn, I had only bad experiences with the librarian there. I learned to use the card catalog by myself, as I didn't even know there was a children's librarian. I had received my library card at age four when I first began to read and could sign my name. That was the last contact I had with the library staff until years later when our teacher assigned committees to write reports, and my committee members and I needed help with the card catalog. Our subject was "Euthanasia," and we couldn't find it in the card catalog, perhaps because we couldn't spell the word. A librarian saw us and asked if she could help. We told her our situation. She left, and then returned with several books—on "Youth in Asia." That did not inspire me to become a children's librarian. We thought that she was some kind of a nitwit.

Even when I had graduated to the Young Teen section, I still had a deep interest in reading collections of folk and fairy tales, so I spent some time in the Children's Room. One day I noticed a line of children forming by a door in the room adjacent to the Folk and Fairy Tale section where I was perusing the books. I asked why they were lining up there and was told that they were going to Story Hour. Story Hour? I had never heard of it. No staff member had ever mentioned it to me. When the librarian came to open the door and lead the children downstairs to the room where the stories were to be told, she asked me how old I was. When I answered "Twelve," she said that I was too old to attend Story Hour. I explained that I had used that library since age four and had never heard of Story Hour, but I thought that, loving folk and fairy tales, I would enjoy attending. She said I could join the line, but just for that one time. I was disappointed in the program. The librarian was not much of a storyteller, and I found myself feeling drowsy.

When I was in high school, I volunteered to work as a page in the school library. There were two librarians

working there. I shelved the same section all the time, except when I was asked by one of the librarians to phone to make a beauty salon appointment for her. I also typed headings on catalog cards, a job that should have been done by the staff.

So why did I become a children's librarian? I kept my love of children's books and wanted to share that with children. I was inspired to be a better children's librarian than the ones I'd come in contact with. In my senior year of college, with only six credits remaining to graduate and already accepted by Pratt Institute Library School, I went to Brooklyn Public Library and asked for a job as a clerk, with the understanding that I would stay and work my way up to be a children's librarian. I was given a typing test and did fifty-nine words-per-minute. However, I was denied a job on the grounds that they would be wasting their time training me to be a clerk if I would only hold that position for a short time.

Thinking that being trained as a clerk would be a good background for someone who aspired to become a children's librarian, I approached the New York Public Library. I was accepted and was placed in the Office of Children's Services as assistant to Aileen O'Brien Murphy, the Materials Specialist. Working in the office with Anne Pellowski as Storytelling Specialist, Augusta Baker as Coordinator of Children's Services, Sally Helfman, and Adele Requena, the most efficient Administrative Assistant, I was truly inspired.



Emily in retirement

RETIREE NEWS

DAVID BEASLEY

In March, I published a revised edition of my novel, *That Other God*. The review in the *Midwest Book Review* read thusly. "Critique: A deftly crafted work of metaphysical fiction that includes such elements as mysticism, telepathy, collective unconscious, Sufism, and global humanism. *That Other God* is [an] extraordinary, entertaining, thought-provoking, and original work of fiction that is especially and unreservedly recommended for personal reading lists, as well as community, college, and university library collections."

This review will also appear in Cengage Learning and in Gale's interactive CD-ROM series "Book Review Index," which is published four times yearly for academic, corporate, and public library systems.

Additionally, this review will be archived on our *Midwest Book Review* website for the next five years, and the June 2022 issue of our online book review magazine, *Small Press Bookwatch*, features a review of *That Other God*. A revised second edition of *Spiral* and a second edition of *Hypocrites and Other Stories* were issued in January. *Sarah's Journey*, always in demand, was reissued last November. My books may be ordered through www.davuspublishing.com

HELEN BROADY

This is Helen Broady, librarian who retired in 2019. Hello to all, and I miss you.

As some of you may know, after retirement I left New York for San Diego, where my daughter Karla lives with her husband Jorge and their two young children, Aiyana and Omari (seven and five.) I planned to try living there for six months and was fortunate to secure a part-time job at the Central branch of San Diego Public Library.

The biggest challenge here is public transportation, or the lack thereof. Like many New Yorkers, I'm almost a nondriver, though I have a license and will drive short distances if I have no choice. However, we do

what we can to help the planet and take public transport where possible, even if it takes three to four times as long as driving or involves waiting for an hourly bus. There's a lot of talk about improving public transit, but change is very S-L-O-W.

I worked there until the pandemic closed the branches. Full-time staff mostly continued to work at their locations, but we "hourly" staff were given the opportunity to work for other city agencies where needed. Believe it or not, since volunteers were not allowed to work, some fellow librarians and I filled in at the rose garden, safely outdoors (though often hot), where we learned about pruning, weeding, maintaining sprinkler systems, and much more.

In the fall of 2020, I was invited to go back to the library, where I worked again until this past March, when I "retired" again, to spend more time with my grandchildren, as well as with Phil, my partner, whom I met out here—the last thing I expected! Phil, a native of Lemon Grove, a suburb of San Diego, still lives in the house where he grew up. I met him through hiking. He's a retired botanist who loves growing all manner of flowers, succulents (it's very dry here), and the many delicious vegetables that grace our table. I'm learning about gardening every day.

I'm also helping residents prepare for the citizenship exam, and I'm planning to get more involved with our local historical society and with collecting oral histories. I enjoy hiking and playing recorder with a local quartet, continuing the tradition from New York, where I played with Mary Kay Conwell and others.

I've been here a little over two years, getting adjusted and meeting great people at work but still seriously experiencing culture shock. Suburban life would not have been my first choice, but it has its perks; we have a huge vegetable garden and can grow crops year round. It's much harder to meet neighbors and make friends, but work keeps me connected with people, both staff and patrons.

Again, greetings and best wishes to all. Looking forward to hearing more news from others.

VALENTIN COLON

My beginnings at Clason's Point and the Hunt's Point Region were followed by my years at the Fordham Library Center. Being on the ground floor in establishing the New Amsterdam Library, along with my years in Mid-Manhattan administration, especially working with Chief Librarian Robert Goldstein—Mr. G—were high points of my career. I miss Mr. G!

I am currently enjoying retirement! Yeah!! Spending more time at home and helping out at my antiques store. Love doing estate sales with my hubby of twenty-nine years Peter. Planning several more months of quiet time before I consider doing more volunteer work. I'm currently still the co-convenor for the Metropolitan New York Library Council's (METRO) Library Assistants and Support Staff Association and a member of various labor organization constituency groups.

ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

HADAR'S WEDDING

I have discovered in today's world that nothing is impossible. When my granddaughter, Hadar, who is a veterinarian living in Seattle, became engaged, she was determined to be married in the land of her birth and surrounded by family and friends. How she arranged it, I shall never understand.

She located an old, multi-level, renovated building in Jaffa, a few blocks from where her mother, my daughter-in-law, was born and raised. She also located a rabbi who was fluent in both Hebrew and English to perform this bi-lingual ceremony. The ceremony itself took place on a terrace overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The seven blessings were read in both Hebrew and English by different members of the family, thus allowing everyone to participate. Hadar was married with the same ring with which I was married seventy-one years ago. It fit perfectly.

As the rabbi welcomed Jeff into our family, so, too, were we welcomed into his. Jeff then broke the glass, and everyone broke into applause and congratulations. Jeff's family was overwhelmed by the warmth in which they were enveloped.

We all then went downstairs to the dining room where soft music was playing. A combo was playing in another room for those who wished to dance.

Hadar then arranged for Jeff's family to travel around the country, visiting sites such as the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, the ancient city of Jerusalem, the city of David, etc. They loved the beauty of the country, and a happy time was had by all.



JOAN JANKELL

I have been incredibly lucky during the pandemic to have bonded with my next-door neighbor. After twenty years of polite and pleasant hellos in the elevator, we discovered that we have a lot in common, including, most important of all, a similar sense of humor. So we walk daily in our backyard—Central Park—order in food, drink wine, and watch television. And we are beginning to eat out and go back to museums and theater.

In May, I spent a week in Glasgow, where my grandson is studying drama at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. My daughter and son-in-law rented a B&B for a month, and we explored every nook and cranny of that fascinating city. At home, my only beef is that The Jewish Museum doesn't plan to restart docent tours for several months, so I won't be doing any volunteering until then.

But there will be family visits here and upstate this summer, and let's hope that life will get back to some kind of normal very soon!

I hope my fellow retirees and their families are in good health and are managing to weather the storm. Warm wishes to all.

JANE KUNSTLER

The Biblioknitters met recently for lunch at the Bryant



Park Grill; we hadn't, of course, been together in person for more than two years. Here's the photo. Mark is an honorary member.

Shown above, clockwise, are: Jennine Porta, Mark McCluski, Amy Spaulding, Jane Kunstler, Fran Rabinowitz, Gennie Perez and Irene Martin. Three knitters were AWOL—Ma'lis Wendt, Larry Petterson, and Alexandra Lutz.

SAM MEMBERG

To paraphrase Prufrock, "I grow old, I grow old..." except that I don't "wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled." Living in Florida, all I wear are shorts and flip-flops—yes, even in "winter."

Carmen and I were incredibly fortunate to have worked much of our lives at NYPL. Together we spent almost seventy years of combined time there (I wonder if that's some sort of record).

We met in the early 60's in the stacks of 42nd Street when we were both pages in SM&D (Stack

Maintenance and Delivery). Through a series of totally unpredictable happenstances, I wound up in the systems office and, over the years, somehow became the first CIO of the Library. It was a time of great transitions in technology, and I was lucky to be in a position to help position NYPL as a leader in the Information Age.

Carmen, on the other hand, worked her way up by being incredibly talented and wound up managing multi-million-dollar renovations for Mid-Manhattan and the Library for the Blind. She ended her career as the Operations Manager for SIBL. After she retired, she started attending the Art Students League and, eventually, was asked to join their Board. She was the first Puerto Rican ever to do so—talent is talent. Carmen and I were together for fifty-two years until she passed away, peacefully, in her sleep, more than five years ago, in our Greenwich Village apartment. Shortly after that, I gave up that apartment and moved to our place in downtown St Petersburg, a vibrant location with museums, art galleries, live theater, and blocks of upscale restaurants with year 'round outdoor seating overlooking the bay—all within easy walking distance of the condo that we had bought in 2004 but had used only occasionally. I still "dare to eat a peach," as well as pretty much everything else. I'm sorry that Carmen never got to live in the quasi-resort that is our waterfront high-rise, right across the street from the St. Pete Yacht Club; yes, this little kid from Brownsville belongs to one of the best yacht clubs in the country. Go figure!

I now alternate my time between swimming, having martinis with friends at the Club's outdoor Tiki bar, and serving on the condo board, where—again via a series of improbable events—I am responsible for millions of dollars of projects. So much for retirement. Regards to all!!

MARCIA PURCELL

A COLORFUL VISIT TO MAINE

I was invited to visit Pointed Firs in Ellsworth, Maine, the home of Jean Paul Michaud and his husband, Jerry Wentland. The house is named after Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Dates didn't work out for the summer, and this was fortunate because early October was glorious—perfect weather and the foliage in its glory. Ellsworth is surrounded by

interesting communities—Camden, Belfast, Bar Harbor. First stop—a photo op of the Steven King House. Cadillac Mountain, two lobster wharfs, Maine Kiln Works—many interesting activities followed.

JP collected books from the early last century that featured wonderful covers by women designers, especially Sarah Wyman Whitman. We visited the Farnsworth Museum, which displayed many Wyeths AND a gallery highlighting early women book-cover designers. Two of the featured books I had held in my hands the night before since JP owns even better copies than those displayed!

A lovely visit with a dear library friend. This visit to Maine will always remain a treasured memory.

Marcia Purcell and Jean Paul Michaud



Jerry Wentland and Jean Paul Michaud



TREASURES TOUR

By Estelle Friedman and Jane Kunstler



Part of the May tour group

At the end of May and the beginning of June, Keith Glutting, the manager of the Visitor Volunteer Program at the Schwarzman Building and also a librarian, led tours of the Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures (<https://www.nypl.org/spotlight/treasures>) for two groups of retirees. The exhibit focuses on some of the fifty-six million items collected by the Library over the past one hundred twenty-five years. While a number of us had visited the exhibit on our own, Keith's expansive knowledge of the pieces in the exhibit, as well as his sense of humor, added greatly to our enjoyment of the tour.

The exhibition is divided into nine themes—Beginnings, Explorations, Performance, Fortitude, The Written Word, The Visual World, Childhood, Belief, and New York City—with items spanning four thousand years. They include, among many other items, cuneiform tablets; Jefferson's fair copy of the Declaration of Independence; the Bill of Rights; a lock of Beethoven's hair, as well as sketches of a Piano Trio; five of Toscanini's batons; the handwritten draft of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; Virginia Woolf's walking stick; an illuminated Scroll of the Book of Esther; and many items of New York history.

Also in the collection is a Gutenberg Bible, but Keith didn't spend any time on it with one group because he said that we could see one elsewhere [there are forty-eight others]. He did tell us an amusing story



Tour guide Keith Glutting

concerning Dickens' writing desk and chair. Former Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia sat in the chair and broke it. After it was repaired, no one was permitted to sit in it ever again.

The exhibit is a permanent one, though items will be changed from time to time. Keith also told us that the current gift shop is to become another exhibit area and that a new gift shop and café are being built on the south side of Gottesman Hall.

JENNINE PORTA'S THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TREASURES TOUR

On May 16, 2022 I attended a tour of The New York Public Library Treasures in the Schwarzman Building.

Keith Glutting, who is the Manager of the Visitor Volunteer Program, led the very interesting and informative tour.



I am so glad that Winnie-the-Pooh and Friends are on permanent display. (I had previously seen them when they were at Dutton Publishing headquarters.)

Editor's note: Pooh and friends had lived in the Central Children's Room for years.

Some of my favorite items were Charles Dickens chair and desk, the first printing of the King James Bible, the Gutenberg Bible, Thomas Jefferson's hand written copy of the Constitution and a collection of very tiny children's books.

Above: Charles Dickens chair and desk

Left: Winnie the Pooh display

MORE PICTURES FROM THE TREASURES TOUR



Above left: King James Bible



Above Right: Collection of miniature books

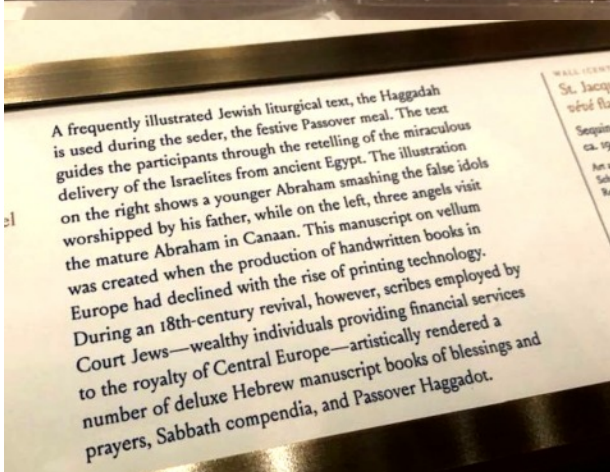


Right: Viewing the exhibition

MORE PICTURES FROM THE TREASURES TOUR

Left: Hand written Haggadah on vellum

Below: First printing of the King James Bible



First printing of the King James Bible

London: Robert Barker
1611

Rare Book Division

The King James Bible is recognized as the most influential and widely published English-language book. Produced under the aegis of its namesake, King James I of England, the King James Bible represents the culmination of eight years of work by a team of 47 scholars. Its text is based heavily on the earlier, unauthorized Tyndale Bible, the first English translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew sources, and also the first to be issued in a mass-produced printed edition.

Beyond its broad scriptural reach, the King James Bible's distinct phrasing—its cadences, imagery, and syntax—has exerted an outsized influence over the development of the English language itself, and has inspired literary works by writers as diverse as John Milton, William Blake, and Herman Melville.

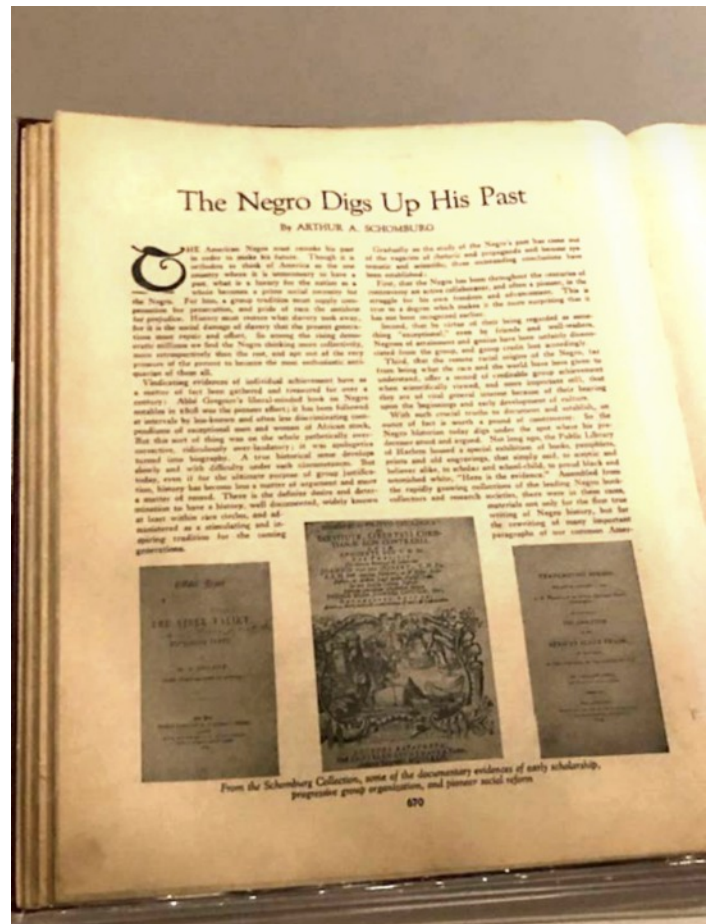
MORE PICTURES FROM THE TREASURES TOUR

Left: Virginia Woolfe's walking stick

Below: Essay by Arturo Schomburg



In early 1941, wartime rationing and isolation exacerbated Virginia Woolf's (1882–1941) depression, and she began to feel she had “lost all power over words.” On the morning of March 28, Woolf wrote to her husband, Leonard, “I want to tell you that you have given me complete happiness. ... But I know that I shall never get over this: & I am wasting your life. It is this madness.” She put on her fur coat, took her walking stick, and walked to the nearby River Ouse, where she placed a large stone in her pocket and drowned herself. Leonard found her stick that afternoon; her body was not recovered until three weeks later.



Arturo Schomburg
(1874–1938)

*“The Negro Digs
Up His Past,”*
published in
Survey Graphic
magazine

New York:
Survey Associates
March 1, 1925

Manuscripts, Archives
and Rare Books Division,
Schomburg Center for
Research in Black Culture

This essay by bibliophile, writer, and collector Arturo Alfonso Schomburg introduces his concept of “vindicating evidences” as records of achievement that not only enabled the “first true” writing of Black history, but also forged a recasting of American history. An early articulation of Schomburg’s collecting philosophy, this essay first appeared in *Survey Graphic* alongside works by other Harlem Renaissance luminaries, and again in Alain Locke’s groundbreaking volume, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*.

Ernestine Rose, a librarian at the 135th Street Branch of The New York Public Library, instigated the Library’s 1926 purchase of Arturo Schomburg’s collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, and art. This “seed library” has since grown to more than 11 million items that remain publicly available today in five research divisions in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

IN CASE OF A RETIREES DEATH

In the event of a retiree's death, it is important that the following be contacted by the next of kin.

NYPL Human Resources Service Center (212) 621-0500, prompt 4, for general NYPL questions.

DC37 Death Benefit Unit
(212) 815-1373 or (212) 815-1374

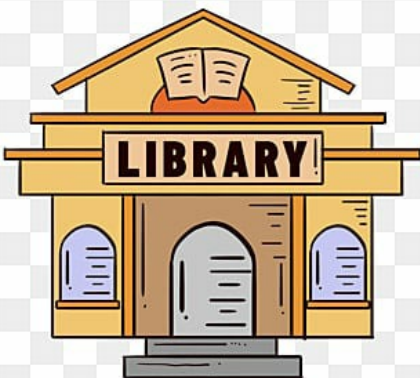
New York State and Local Retirement System (866) 805-0990, toll-free, for pension questions and to inform NYSLRS of the person's death date. A death certificate will be required as proof of death. Callers will need to listen to several prompts and choose the option that best suits their needs.

The NYSLRS website is:
<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/index.php>

The New York Public Library Retirees Association would also like to be contacted so that we may inform the deceased's former colleagues. This may be done by emailing or calling President Becky Koppelman at blekopp@gmail.com or 212 874-6199.

THIS NEWSLETTER is published semi-annually by the New York Public Library Retirees Association.

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DEAR NYPLRA MEMBERS,

It's time to hold an election! Well, in truth, it's way past time. So we are asking you, our members, to nominate candidates and even think about becoming one yourself.

Candidates are needed for the following offices:

President (Becky Koppelman will become President Emerita and will assist with training and transition)

Vice President (Polly Bookhout left this position in 2019)

Also on the slate will be:

Jennine Porta, who is running to maintain her position as Secretary,

Larry Petterson, who has been our appointed interim Treasurer and will be running for that position.

There will be plenty of support for the new President and Vice President, not only from Becky, Jennine, and Larry, but also from our experienced committee chairs:

Bob Bellinger - Obituaries
Polly Bookhout - Website
Emily Cohen - Newsletter
Mary K. Conwell - Oral History
Estelle Friedman - Programming
Jane Kunstler - Membership
Joe Zeveloff - Political Action

Because we are now able to hold meetings via Zoom, New York residency is not required, but willingness to work with Zoom and other conferencing technologies is a must.

You have received pleas to step up before, but we are now down to the wire. Without strong leadership at the top, the Association can't survive, grow, and flourish.

Please email Larry Petterson (larry.petterson@icloud.com), Ad Hoc Nominating Committee chair by July 31st with a nomination or to express your own interest.

Thank you!
NYPLRA Board and Committee Chairs