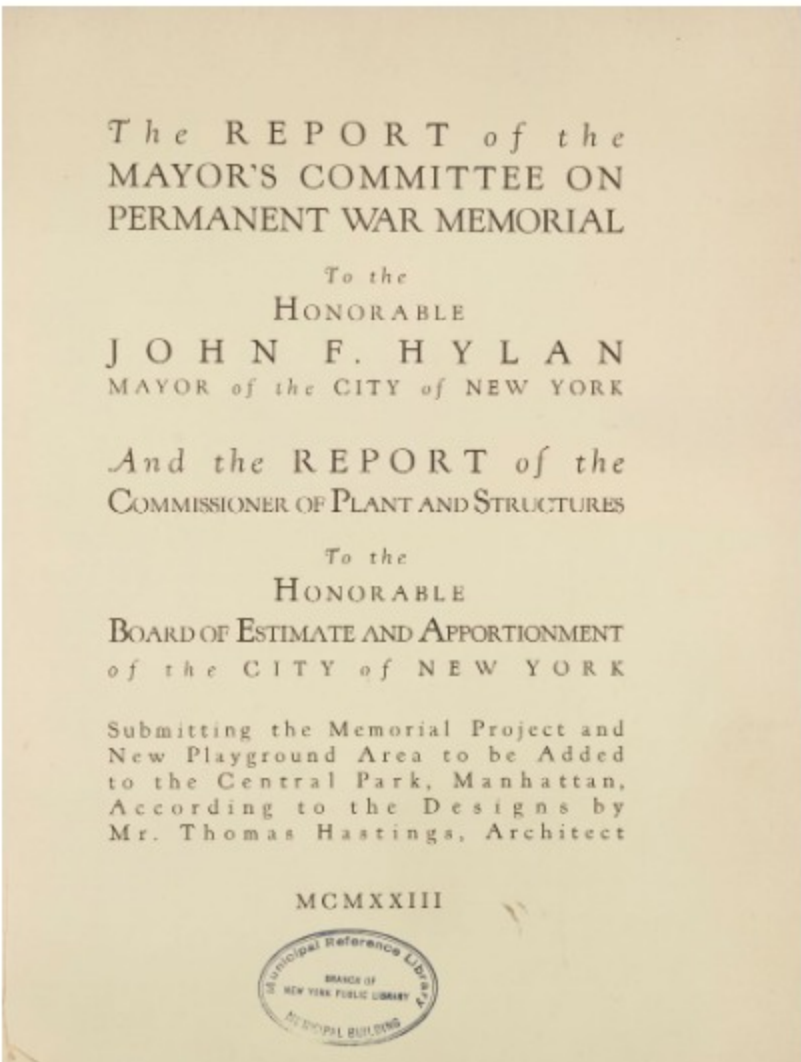


Municipal Library Notes May 19, 2025

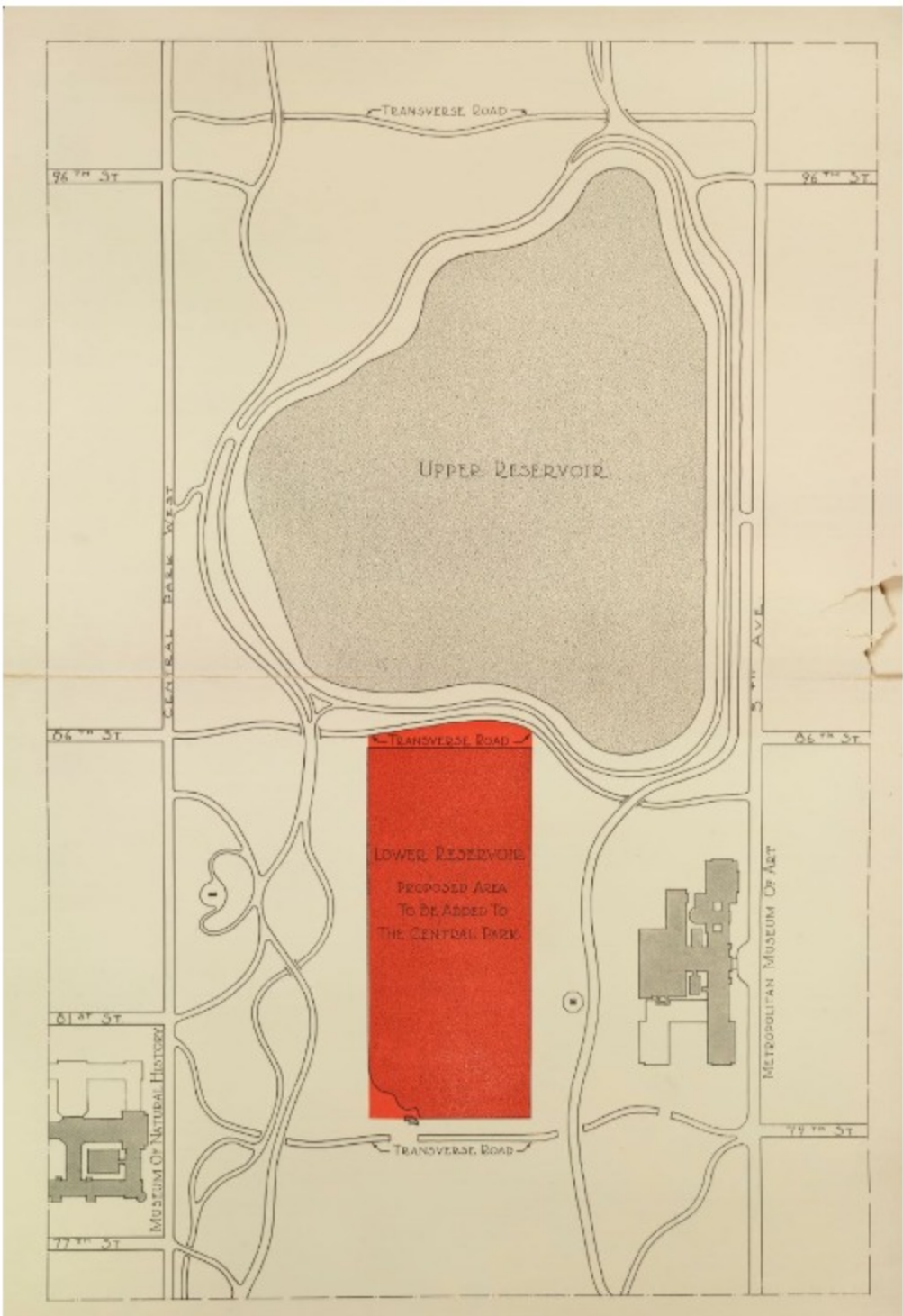
The War Memorial of the City of New York

As Memorial Day approaches, we are looking back at a 1923 plan for a never-built war memorial in Central Park. In November 1918, at the close of the First World War, Mayor John H. Hylan created the Committee on Permanent War Memorial, which was tasked with producing a plan for an appropriate monument. In 1923, a design from landscape architect Thomas Hastings of the firm Carrère and Hastings was accepted by the Committee and presented in a report to the Mayor and the Board of Estimate. A copy of this publication (see below) is housed in the Municipal Library.



The Report of the Mayor's Committee on Permanent War Memorial, 1923.

The plan, which was approved by the Department of Plants and Structures, the Art Commission, and the Department of Parks, called for a permanent memorial in Central Park between 79th and 86th Streets on the 37-acre site of the lower reservoir of the Old Croton system, which had been superseded by the Catskill Water System (see map below).



The Report of the Mayor's Committee on Permanent War Memorial, Plate I: General Map of the Central Park, New York City.

Along with removing the reservoir walls, the plan called for a long lagoon bordered by trees on either side, "similar to the one in the Mall in Washington, which leads to the new Lincoln Memorial." The monument itself would be reflected in the water approach and feature statues representing allegorical or historical features of the "Great War," along with war relics and inscriptions (see below).

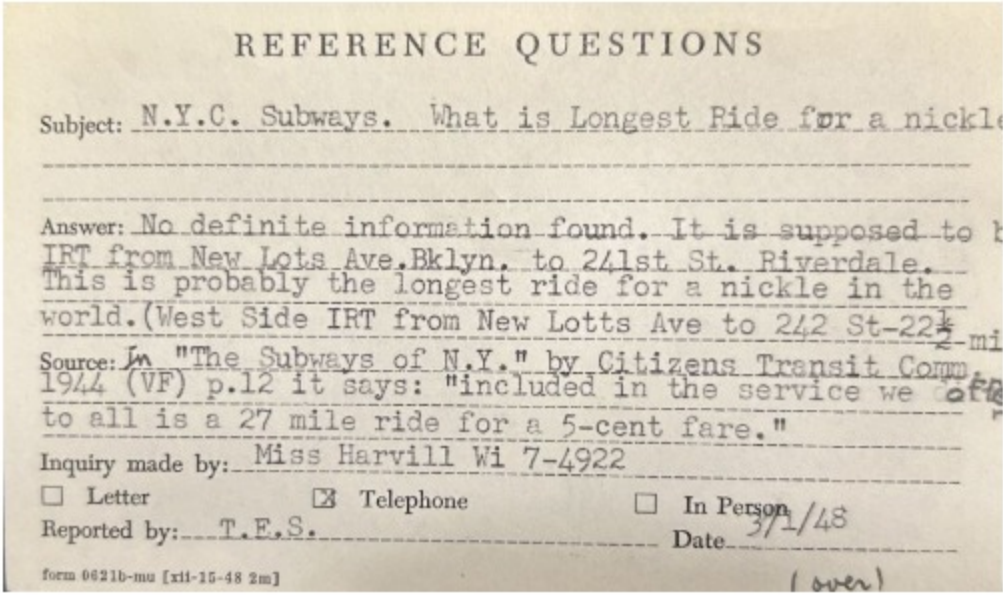


The Report of the Mayor's Committee on Permanent War Memorial, Plate VI: Perspective of Lagoon and Memorial.

Though \$300,000 was initially allocated by the Board of Estimate under Mayor Hylan, the project met with a storm of protest from civic groups opposed to any encroachment of public park space. By 1927, the new Mayor, Jimmy Walker, rescinded the former allotment in a cost-cutting measure, and the plan stalled completely. The space that had been designated for the war memorial is now occupied by the Great Lawn and Turtle Pond.

From the Question Files

The card catalog in the Municipal Library includes several drawers of answers to reference questions from the past, sorted by subject and arranged alphabetically. Having easy access to common (and not-so-common) questions prevented duplication of efforts and lightened the workload of the reference staff. These cards were compiled over nearly a century, and in addition to the query and the best answer the librarian could provide, always included the source where the response was found.



On March 1, 1948, a Miss Harvell telephoned (from W7-4922) with the question, "What is the longest ride for a nickel?" (The subway fare was only a nickel from the inauguration of the system in 1904 through July 1, 1948. It is possible that news about the upcoming fare increase prompted this speculation.)

While "no definite information" was found, the librarian (identified by initials T.E.S.) reported that it was most likely "the I.R.T from New Lots Avenue, Brooklyn, to 241st Street, Riverdale." The IRT, or the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, was one of the private subway operators whose lines were acquired by the City of New York in 1940 and are now the numbered routes in the system.

News from the Archives



Booklet published by the Anti-Defamation League, 1947

NHPRC Grant to process City Commission on Human Rights

The agency received a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to process the archival records of the Human Rights Commission and its predecessor entities. The Archives team began processing the early records of the Committee on Unity, and have discovered remarkable correspondence, minutes, and research materials documenting the beginnings of the Committee (see above). Look for social media and blog posts on their progress and finds! @nycrecords

Acquisitions

The Municipal Archives worked on various acquisitions this month including photographic and architectural renderings from the Department of Parks and Recreation, and a series of Board of Estimate contract blueprints, specifications, and drawings.

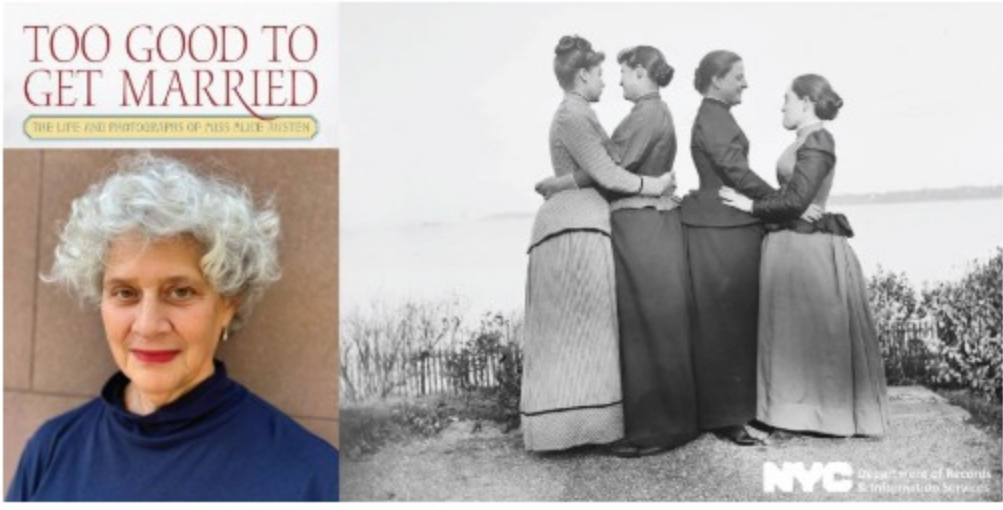
Transcription Projects

- [Records of Slavery](#)
- [1890 Police Census](#)
- [1949 Death Record Index](#)

New Collection Guides

- 1980s Tax Photos
- Waterfront Survey Maps
- New York Police Department Bertillon cards
- City Planning lot rezoning photographs

Lunch & Learn



Join the [NYC Department of Records and Information Services \(DORIS\)](#) virtually via Zoom from 1-2 PM on Tuesday, June 17th for our Lunch & Learn, Too Good to Get Married.

Alice Austen was an amateur photographer known for documenting Victorian society life on Staten Island. Austen became known for a group of humorous photographs in which she and her friends challenged gender norms — “smoking” cigarettes, feigning drunkenness, and dressing in men’s clothing — and for “Street Types of New York,” a portfolio depicting people who worked on Manhattan’s streets. Since then, her former home has become a museum, and she is celebrated as a photographer and an LGBTQ+ icon.

On June 17th, art historian and curator **Bonnie Yochelson** will discuss her new book, *Too Good to Get Married: The Life and Photographs of Miss Alice Austen* and share what inspired Yochelson to write about Alice Austen, how Austen challenged and conformed to the ideals of Staten Island society, and the historical significance of her photography.

When: Tuesday, June 17th @ 1 PM EST
Location: Online (via Zoom)
RSVP for “Too Good to Get Married”