

# Archives Week in the United States?

by Larry J. Hackman

*RESOLVED, that the first week in October be observed annually as "United States Archives Week."*

## A United States Archives Week

The 1989 and 1990 New York Archives Week were productive in several ways. It expanded and deepened awareness of archival issues and the benefits of archives, both among the general public and by teachers, librarians, lawyers, state and local officials, corporate leaders and the press—groups whose support is important to archival programs. It has increased cooperation and pride within the archival community itself, strengthened our awareness of the importance of public relations, and given us greater experience in a variety of approaches toward that end. As we continue New York Archives Week, I believe we will become ever more effective in our individual programs, within our associations and regions, and statewide. Colleagues across the nation can draw on our Archives Week experience and, I hope, will join us in an ongoing learning process which promises to be productive for all of us.

I propose that a first United States Archives Week be declared for October 1992. This is the month after the International Archives Conference in Montreal and the month before the next Presidential election—a good time to draw attention to America's documentary heritage! To reach this point, formal sponsorship by

the Society of American Archivists is important, and I hope that the Council will approve it. Early adoption by regional archival associations is extremely important; in fact, the SAA's Committee on Regional Archival Activity has already begun to discuss the idea of an annual nationwide archival observance. Endorsement from the National Archives and Records Administration and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission also would be very helpful, and perhaps the NHPRC would provide grant support for one or more products, e.g. videos, posters, public service announcement materials, idea kits, or other timely items, which would assist grassroots archives week efforts nationwide. If experience in New York is indicative, it won't take long for a United States Archives Week to catch on. By mid-decade it can become a vital part of the continuing campaign we need to increase understanding and support for what archives and archivists can contribute to a democratic, productive, and literate society. A brief history of New York Archives Week follows.

## Overview

In 1989 and 1990, the first week in October has been celebrated statewide as "New York Archives Week." Archives Week is emerging as a major opportunity to draw attention to the importance of New York's archives as programs and as research resources. To address this public relations and educational objective, Archives Week activities are sponsored by archival associations, by repositories acting individually and in groups, and by other organizations and service providers interested in archival affairs. After only two years, Archives Week is becoming widely accepted as an important event by archivists and their allies.

The early popularity and success of Archives Week suggests that similar efforts would be well-received elsewhere. It is proposed, therefore, that archival organizations endorse Archives Week and treat it as a focal point for archival public awareness efforts nationwide beginning in 1992. Perhaps our Canadian colleagues would consider joining us to make this a North American event.

## Background

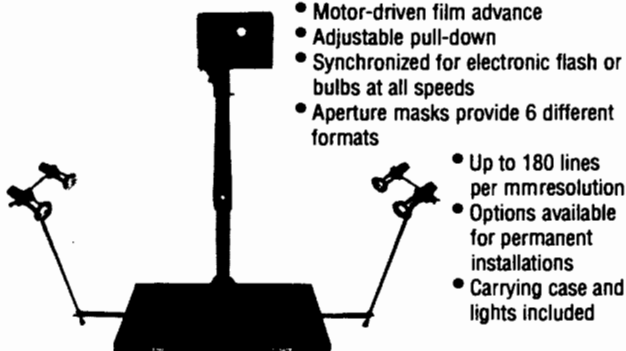
An archives week in New York was explored in the spring of 1988 by the new New York Association of Local Government Records Officers and the Capital Area Archivists, and several upstate local governments obtained an archives week resolution or proclamation from their officials. A much more ambitious initiative was undertaken by the Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York. Under the leadership of its chairperson, Barbara Haws, the Roundtable created a planning committee and a variety of special subcommittees in late 1988 to coordinate an initial Archives Week in New York City in 1989.

As the Roundtable's plans developed in early 1989, they were shared with the director of the State Archives and Records Administration (SARA). SARA, in turn, helped make the Roundtable's plans known to other parts of the archival community and instituted its own modest Archives Week program for 1989. SARA also obtained a resolution from the State Legislature and a Proclama-

## MICROFILMERS FOR THE FAST LANE

The Gordon 16 and Gordon 35 Portable Microfilm Cameras answer the quick response needs of today's location filming. Everything you require for document microfilming fits into a large, briefcase-size carrier that you can have unpacked and assembled ready for work in only five minutes. Both models offer all these features:

- Single-lens reflex viewing
- Vacuum platen for maximum sharpness
- Motor-driven film advance
- Adjustable pull-down
- Synchronized for electronic flash or bulbs at all speeds
- Aperture masks provide 6 different formats



- Up to 180 lines per mm resolution
- Options available for permanent installations
- Carrying case and lights included

GORDON 16: up to 18" x 24" in comic mod.... \$5,480

GORDON 35: ideal for books & engineering.... \$4,875

For More Details Contact our Microfilm Dept today:

**alan gordon enterprises inc.**

1430 CAHUENGA BLVD., HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90078, USA  
TEL: (213) 466-3661 • TWX: 910-321-4526 • FAX: (213) 871-2193



“RESOLVED, that the first week in October be observed annually as 'United States Archives Week'.”

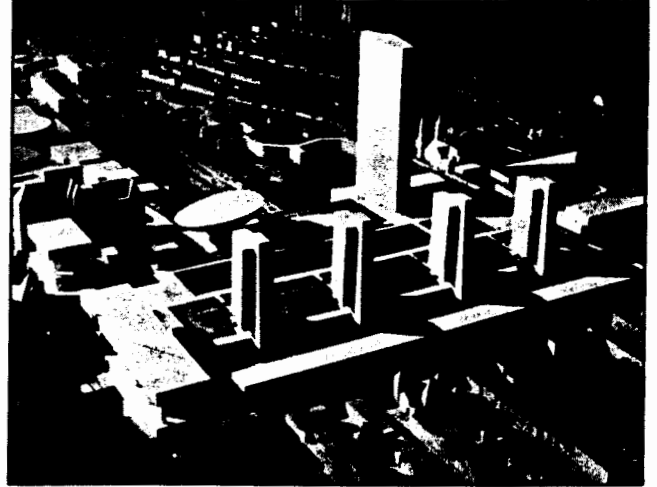
tion by Governor Cuomo declaring the first full week in October to be Archives Week in New York for 1989. The Proclamation was sent to archives, library and local government groups statewide, and many of them secured similar resolutions from local officials as a basis for obtaining cooperation or support from those governments or to draw public attention to Archives Week.

The Roundtable's Coordinating Committee developed an impressive calendar of first year activities. These included the Roundtable's first annual Archives Week Awards, one for archival advocacy and one for innovative use of historical records. The awards and entertainment were the feature of the Archives Week opening gala at the Museum of Modern Art. Members of a large honorary committee for Archives Week ranged from John Brademas and Leonard Bernstein to Allen Ginsberg, David Rockefeller, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Other first year Roundtable events included exhibits, lectures, tours, and panel discussions offered by a wide variety of repositories and organizations. A story in the Sunday, October 8 *New York Times*, summarized Archives Week and highlighted the final event, a Roundtable-sponsored "Family Heritage Day," which provided archival advice to individuals concerned about their personal or family documents.

Even with very limited time for preparations, several other organizations participated actively in New York Archives Week in 1989. For example, fifteen repositories in Buffalo cooperated in scheduling open houses during the week and the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society sponsored an exhibit and collection opening on industry and labor history. The *Buffalo News* provided a Sunday feature article on Archives Week and also an overview of archives in the region. The New York Association of Local Government Records Officers instituted an annual award to a local official for leadership on local government records issues.

An internal SARA Archives Week committee received enthusiastic support from SARA staff. The 1989 activities featured behind-the-scenes tours for the public, state agency records officers, and staff of the state legislature. The new SARA audiovisual production, *Let the Record Show: Practical Uses of Historical Documents*—which received the 1989 SAA Hamer Kegan Award—was shown continuously throughout the week in the state museum video theatre. The video was also shown several times on the Capital region public affairs cable television station and on at least seven other cable stations throughout the state. Other press coverage included a radio interview with the director of SARA's Bureau of Archival Services, feature stories in Albany's leading daily and in *The Legislative Gazette*, and a particularly good ten minute segment on SARA on the weekly public affairs television program, "Inside Albany," which is carried by public television stations in all parts of the state.

The results of the first year of New York Archives Week were shared within the state and beyond. SARA staff assembled copies of announcements, proclamations, and press clippings statewide and distributed these to archives groups and others who had shown a special interest. Two sessions at the 1990 SAA annual meeting in Seattle included discussion about planning for New York Archives Week and its benefits.



An architectural model of the proposed Empire State Plaza, ca. 1962. The photo was one of nearly 30 in a 1990 New York State Archives "Archives Week" exhibit on the construction of major government buildings in the vicinity of the State Capitol. Note that this model included an Arch of Freedom at the end of the Plaza farthest from the State Capitol. This site is now occupied by the Cultural Education Center, which houses the State Archives, State Library, and State Museum. The Arch was eliminated.

### New York Archives Week in 1990

The second year of Archives Week in New York can be summarized in three words: more and better. A February meeting called by the chair of MARAC's New York Caucus provided an early opportunity for a dozen interested organizations from many parts of the state to share experience from 1989 and ideas for 1990. It was agreed that the first week in October should become New York Archives Week annually. SARA agreed to play a modest clearinghouse role by assembling a statewide Archives Week calendar and sharing it among archival associations and with other key organizations identified by participants in the February meeting.

The Archivists Round-table again led the way with impressive events including a gala opening reception at the Equitable Center where annual awards were presented by hostess Estelle Parsons on behalf of the Roundtable to Henry Hampton for his use of archival sources in the PBS documentary, "Eyes on the Prize" and to State Assemblyman Edward Sullivan of Manhattan for his support on several archival issues. A benefit concert at Carnegie Hall was held the following evening. Overall, the Roundtable raised more than \$40,000 for Archives Week programs from American Express, Chase Manhattan, Con Edison, Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield, the New York Stock Exchange, and others. An attractive Archives Week calendar listed more than forty separate tours, walks, talks, films, exhibits, and special events in Roundtable territory.

On the concluding Saturday the Roundtable sponsored a highly successful "Family History Fair" at New York University

Continued on page 20

# United States Archives Week

Continued from page 15

providing workshops, publications, and individual assistance. The widely-publicized fair was visited by more than 900 individuals, a huge increase over the first year family heritage event. A *New York Times* article noting Archives Week overall, gave special attention to the fair because of its general interest. In 1990 the Roundtable also produced a variety of Archives Week items including pins, a poster, calendar of events, flyers, and press releases. An estimated 10,000 people attended Archives Week events and perhaps millions more were made aware of archives via subway advertisements.

Upstate activities also expanded in 1990. For example, archivists in Western New York, working together via the New York Documentary Heritage Program for that region, promoted a series of events and sponsored archival workshops as well as two two-day workshops for regional teachers, curriculum specialists and school administrators on the use of historical records in the classroom. Further east, an Archives Week coordinating committee—which included a newspaper columnist and a Chamber of Commerce communications expert—sponsored a “One Day in the Life of Syracuse and Onondaga County” project to encourage citizens to keep a journal of their activities and submit it to a Community Archives at the Onondaga Historical Association. This program attracted attention not only locally but also from National Public Radio which reported it and carried a brief interview nationally. The Long Island Archives Conference cele-

brated Archives Week with more than fifteen events in Suffolk and Nassau counties including awards, exhibits, and lectures. Like New York City and Western New York, Long Island also sponsored a family heritage event. Many individual communities statewide sponsored their own events, often centered around the archival records of the local government.

The state archives expanded its activities as well in the second year. Tours were extended to the weekend to permit increased attendance by the general public. An exhibit of photographs from the state archives depicted changes in Albany’s urban landscape resulting from major state government building construction during the past century. The exhibit, along with a new SARA information booth, was located in a busy crossway in the Empire State Plaza Concourse in Albany throughout the week. A “New York: Hollywood Style” festival of four films began on the Thursday during Archives Week and continued on the three subsequent Thursdays in October. Each film (“Knickerbocker Holiday,” “Drums Along the Mohawk,” “Saratoga,” and “Lake Placid Serenade”) was preceded by a brief lecture by an expert in the locale and/or events depicted and by a comment on relevant SARA archival holdings.

A highlight of Archives Week was the announcement of the first annual SARA awards for statewide excellence. Awards were given to a local government archives, a non-government repository, a state agency records program, a user of the State Archives own holdings, and to an effective advocate of archives and records activities statewide. The awards were formally presented at a luncheon sponsored by the State Board of Regents. At that luncheon it was announced that an additional award would begin in 1991, this one a cash award for the product of archival research by students in grades 7-12; the new award will draw on interest from a donation of \$5,000 by a member of the Board of Regents, the governing body for the State Education Department.

The director and an assistant director of the state archives also worked closely with the roundtable and the Governor’s Commission on Libraries to arrange for a special October 4 all day hearing on “Archives, Unique Research Resources, and the Future of New York” in New York City Hall. Witnesses included U.S. Archivist Don Wilson, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the president of the American Council of Learned Societies, a judge for New York’s highest State Court, several state and city officials, teachers and students, and archives and library spokespersons—nearly forty in all. Panelists and witnesses explored a variety of issues and proposed several important legislative and funding initiatives, including a new law for gubernatorial records, creation of a \$10 million State Archives Preservation Trust, promotion of use of archives in New York schools, and legislation requiring the use of alkaline paper for government records and publications.

Several resolutions based on the testimony were adopted at the November New York Governor’s Conference on Libraries and Information Services. The resolution on alkaline paper, submitted during the Archives Week hearing, was signed by Barbara Goldsmith, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Robert Caro, and Tom Wolfe. . . Legislation on alkaline paper and a State Archives Preservation Trust is likely to be proposed in the 1991 legislative session.

## Nitrate Film

### Duplication and Printing

Kim Schäfermeyer, Photochemist  
320 E. Broadway, POB 7151  
Columbia, Missouri 65205  
Phone 314-442-0250

Est. 1975

Price on Request