Today in History - May 23

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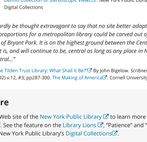
The New York Public Library

President William Howard Taft presided over the dedication of the New York Public Library on **May 23**, 1911.

Built on the site of the Croton Reservoir, the immense marble Beaux-Arts structure required a decade of preparation and construction. With room for exhibitions as well as a picture gallery, the New York Public Library was designed to meet a variety of educational needs. Strategically situated above seven floors of stacks, its main reading room provided researchers with requested materials as quickly as possible.

The New York Public Library building, c[between 1910 and 1920], Detroit Publishing Company. Prints & Photographs Division

Upon his death in 1886, former New York governor Samuel J. Tilden (1814-86) left money in trust for the creation of a free public library and reading room in New York City. Nearly ten years later, the Tilden Trust combined with two existing research institutions—the Lenox Library and the Astor Library—to form the New York Public Library. The Library also assumed management of both the New York Free Circulating Library and a new branch library system funded by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.



New York City Public Library, c[ca. 1191-]. Robert N. Dennis Collection of Stereoscopic Views. New York Public Library Digital Collections

"It can hardly be thought extravagant to say that no site better adapted for a structure of suitable proportions for a metropolitan library could be carved out of any part of the city than this of Bryant Park. It is on the highest ground between the Central Park and the Battery; it is, and will continue to be, central as long as any place in New York is ever likely to be central..."

"The Tilden Trust Library: What Shall It Be?" by John Bigelow, Scribner's Magazine. (September 1892) v.12, #3, pp287-300. The Making of America. Cornell University Library

Learn More

- Visit the Web site of the New York Public Library to learn more about the Library's origins. See the feature on the Library Lions. Or, "Patience" and "Fortitude." Plan to visit the New York Public Library's Digital Collections.
- Pictures of the interior and exterior of the New York Public Library are available in the collection, Detroit Publishing Company.
- Read newspaper articles about the New York Public Library found in the collection of historic American newspapers, Chronicling America. Start with selected articles included in New York Public Library: Topics in Chronicling America.
- See the Robert N. Dennis Collection of Stereoscopic Views which includes 12,000 photographs of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The views show buildings and street scenes in cities, towns, and villages as well as natural landscapes. They also depict agriculture, industry, transportation, homes, businesses, local celebrations, natural disasters, people, and costumes.
- View film footage of the NYPL. *Panorama from Times Building, New York*, available through the collection The Life of a City: Early Films of New York, 1898 to 1906 provides a glimpse of the Library in 1905. See also the film, *RM4 flag service on the steps of New York Public Library*, 1919, (Monagram Pub. Corp.), which has as its final scenes a flag ceremony sponsored by the (Theodore) Roosevelt Memorial Association on the steps of New York Public Library, October 25, 1919.
- From Congress.gov: View Congressional Record Issues celebrating THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY — HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY (Extension of Remarks – May 19, 1995) Section of Record: Extension of Remarks.
- The Digital Collections contain numerous images of public libraries across the country. To explore this assemblage, search the collections of Photos & Prints on public library. To narrow your selection, add the name of a city or state, as in *public library Norfolk*.

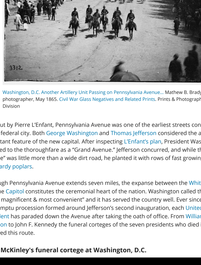
Pennsylvania Avenue

On **May 23**, 1865, the Army of the Potomac celebrated the end of the Civil War by parading down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. Only weeks before, mourners watched Abraham Lincoln's funeral cortege travel the same thoroughfare. With many buildings still dressed in black crepe, this joyous procession could not help but remind spectators of that unhappy occasion.

When Johnny comes Marching Home Again, Hurrah, hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then, Hurrah, hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout, The ladies, they will all turn out,
And we'll all feel gay, When Johnny comes marching home

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Words and music by Louis Lambert (pseudonym of Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore). Boston: Henry Tolman & Co., 1863. Civil War Sheet Music Collection. Music Division

Washington, D.C. Infantry Unit with Fixed Bayonets Followed by Ambulances Passing on Pennsylvania Avenue... Mathew B. Brady, photographer, May 1865. Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. Prints & Photographs Division



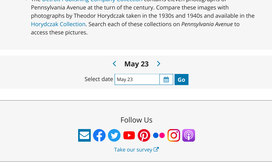
Washington, District of Columbia. Grand Review of the Army. Presidential Reviewing Stand with Guests and Guard. Mathew B. Brady, photographer, May 1865. Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. Prints & Photographs Division

Washington, D.C. Another Artillery Unit Passing on Pennsylvania Avenue... Mathew B. Brady, photographer, May 1865. Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. Prints & Photographs Division

Laid out by Pierre L'Enfant, Pennsylvania Avenue was one of the earliest streets constructed in the federal city. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson considered the avenue an important feature of the new capital. After inspecting L'Enfant's plan, President Washington referred to the thoroughfare as a "Grand Avenue." Jefferson concurred, and while the "grand avenue" was little more than a wide dirt road, he planted it with rows of fast growing Lombardy poplars.

Although Pennsylvania Avenue extends seven miles, the expanse between the White House and the Capitol constitutes the ceremonial heart of the nation. Washington called this stretch "most magnificent & most convenient" and it has served the country well. Ever since an impromptu procession formed around Jefferson's second inauguration, each United States president has paraded down the Avenue after taking the oath of office. From William Henry Harrison to John F. Kennedy the funeral cortages of the seven presidents who died in office followed this route.

President McKinley's funeral cortege at Washington, D.C.



President McKinley's Funeral Cortege at Washington, D.C.. United States: Thomas A. Edison, Inc., September 1901. The Last Days of a President: Films of McKinley and the Pan-American Exposition, 1901. Motion Picture, Broadcasting & Recorded Sound Division

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Not just the scene of official functions, Pennsylvania Avenue is the traditional parade and protest route of ordinary citizens. During the depression of the 1890s, for example, Jacob Coxey marched 500 supporters down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol to demand Federal aid for the unemployed. Similarly, on the eve of Woodrow Wilson's 1913 inauguration, Alice Paul masterminded a parade highlighting the woman suffrage movement. In July 1932, a contingent of the Bonus Expeditionary Force carried flags down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House where they planned to form picket lines. Pennsylvania Avenue also has served as a background for more lighheartedness celebrations, including a series of day and nighttime Shriner's parades in the 1920s and 1930s.

Learn More

- Photographs of the Grand Review of the Army, probably the work of Mathew Brady, are available in the collection Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. Use the Timeline of the Civil War, 1865 to locate more images of the final days of the war.
- The collection The Last Days of a President: Films of McKinley and the Pan-American Exposition, 1901 contains film footage of McKinley's ride down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol were he took the oath of office for the second time. The President's funeral cortege, also captured on film, made the same journey just six months later.
- The Detroit Publishing Company Collection contains eleven photographs of Pennsylvania Avenue at the turn of the century. Compare these images with photographs by Theodor Horydczak taken in the 1930s and 1940s and available in the Horydczak Collection. Search each of these collections on *Pennsylvania Avenue* to access these pictures.

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