



Highlighting the Museum's Veterans Research Center

In this issue of the Newsletter, we feature the work of the New York Military Museum's Veterans Research Center — a repository for documents, letters, diaries, books, photographs and many other items related to New York's part in America's military history.

Led by Museum Librarian/Archivist Jim Gandy, and assisted by a group of dedicated volunteers (most of whom are retirees), the items that come in to the Research Center are examined, cataloged, organized, labelled and shelved. According to Gandy, the primary purpose of the Research Center is to support the Curators in designing the Museum's exhibits. An ancillary purpose is to preserve materials, so they will be available to researchers who want to access them and members of the public who may have an interest in reviewing them.

The Research Center is usually located in the basement of the building. But since the Museum's re-opening last July, it has been temporarily relocated to the public space at the back of the Museum floor due, as work continues on building renovations.



Jim Gandy, the Museum's Librarian/Archivist, is shown in the space currently occupied by the Veterans Research Center.



John Jozwiak and Mary Ann Adams, two of the volunteers in the Museum's Veterans Research Center.

According to Jim Gandy, the Research Center acquires materials in various ways. Many of them are donated by people in the Capital Region or elsewhere, who have served in the military or have ancestors who served. Some items are purchased by the Research Center for its collection, often with funds provided by the Friends of the New York State Military Museum. Still others are obtained from armories throughout the State, which may have closed or lack sufficient space to preserve the materials.



Current space being used by the Veterans Research Center. Much of the Research Center's material remains stored in the basement of the building.

Fred Katz has been volunteering for over two years. He concentrates on reviewing and summarizing items such as letters, diaries and periodicals. To him, the opportunity to look at these materials offers a fascinating glimpse at our nation's history and a chance to understand the perspective of the people who served, as well as their families.

Another volunteer, John Jozwiak, has been with the Museum for about 10 years. He processes and catalogs photographs. He says that writing descriptions of the photographs is the most time-consuming aspect of his work.

Mary Ann Adams has been a volunteer since 2018. She gets involved in various ways, including the cataloging of photographs and the overall organization of files. "I am the organizer and fixer," she says.

Thank you to the following people for their efforts in creating and/or distributing this issue of the Newsletter: Fred Katz, Robert Kazalski, Tim Sinnott, Mary Ann Adams, Curt Auerbach, John Jozwiak, Courtney Burns, Mark Koziol, Chris Morton, Jim Gandy, Wayne Rozen, Colleen Maheux, Lucille Millarson, Bruce Farley and Francis Crandall (Flight Creative Group).

Research Center Receives Items from Museum's Grand Opening

On the heels of the Museum's re-opening celebration last October, the Veterans Research Center received some items which relate to the Grand Opening of the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center in its current, permanent location in Saratoga Springs. The items were donated by Linda Otto, a former Museum volunteer, and have been added to the existing collection of materials from the Grand Opening.

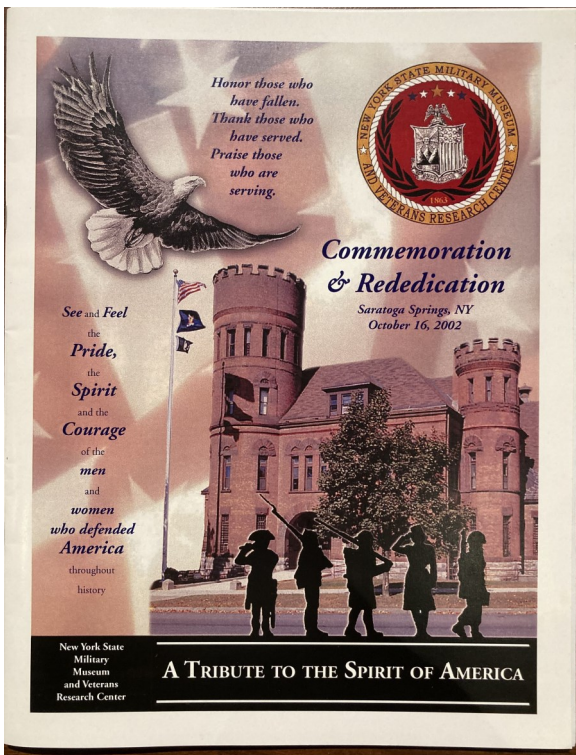
The opening of the Museum's current location was the culmination of a long effort to house New York State's collection of military artifacts in a permanent location. The collection had been located in the State Capitol in Albany for over 100 years following the Civil War. In 1985, many of the items in the collection were relocated to the Washington Avenue Armory, also in Albany. The collection was moved to the Watervliet Arsenal in 1997, while a search was undertaken for a permanent home. In 2001, Governor George Pataki announced that the collection would be relocated to a permanent home at the New York Army National Guard Armory in Saratoga Springs.

A ceremony was held on October 16, 2002, to mark the opening. The ceremony was attended by various public officials, including Governor Pataki, State Senator Joseph Bruno, and various other officials, as well as members of the Staff of the Museum. We highlight on the next page some of the items from the Grand Opening Ceremony which are in the Museum's collection — a page from the Visitors Register signed by people in attendance at the Ceremony, a photograph of Governor Pataki speaking at the Ceremony, and a Souvenir Program which was published for the occasion.



Photo courtesy of
Colleen Maheux

Photo taken at the Museum's Grand Opening Ceremony on October 16, 2002. Among those included in the picture are Governor George Pataki, State Senator Joseph Bruno, as well as current Museum Staff members Chris Morton, Eric Stott and Colleen Maheux.



Cover of the Souvenir Program from the Grand Opening of the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center on October 16, 2002.

First page of the Visitors Register signed by Governor George Pataki and others at the Museum's Grand Opening on October 16, 2002.

VISITORS REGISTER				
DATE	VISITOR'S NAME	ADDRESS	TIME	REMARKS
Oct 16 2002	Gov. E. Pataki	550 Canal Rt 28 New York	11:30	Congratulations!
Oct 16 2002	Gov. George Pataki	22 Red coach trail Saratoga	11:31	"The Road"
Oct 16 2002	Gov. Pataki	"J.M.A."	11:31	Gov. Pataki
	Hotels Johnson			
	John C. Connors	178 MAIN ST. COHUES	11:30	GOOD JOB
	John C. Connors	22 Red coach trail	11:32	"Great" Job
	John C. Connors	10 N. Church St Saratoga NY		
	John C. Connors	109 A. D. Post Commander		
	John C. Connors	Madison Post #1450		
	John C. Connors	573 Chestnut Ave Saratoga		
	John C. Connors	1111 N. 1st St Saratoga NY		
	John C. Connors	1005 Assembly Dist		Great!



Governor George Pataki speaks at the Museum's Grand Opening on October 16, 2002.

Volunteers Find Treasures in Research Center

The Museum's Veterans Research Center serves various purposes, such as offering assistance to people who want information on a relative's military service, and maintaining a digital library of oral history interviews with veterans. But to some, the most interesting aspect of the work done at the Research Center may involve the receipt and cataloging of materials sent in by people who have found items that relate to the military service of a family member (with a New York connection) who served in a past war or military conflict, including the Vietnam and Korean Conflicts, World Wars I and II, and even the Civil War.

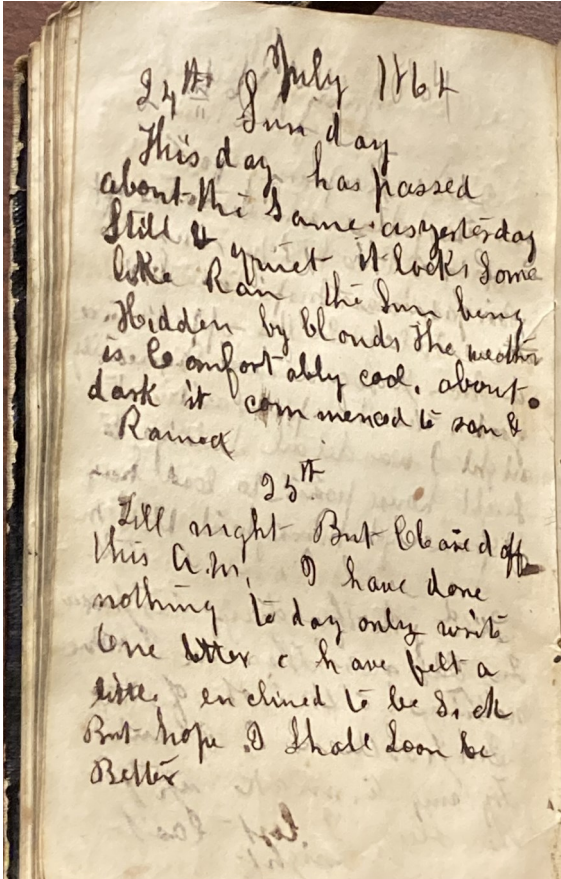
Museum Librarian/Archivist Jim Gandy is assisted in his work by several volunteers. Some of them are self-described "history nerds." They even include former high school history teachers and a local town historian. The regular volunteers are Mary Ann Adams, Wilma and John Jozwiak, Fred Katz, Curt Auerbach and John Berry. In addition, various individuals from the Capital Region Living Resources Center come in weekly to provide assistance.

Much of the work of the volunteers involves reviewing and cataloging the materials that are sent in. To the volunteers, the opportunity to look at these materials provides a wonderful opportunity to look at our nation's history.

The items that are submitted take many forms. These are some of them: Documents relating to a particular person's time in the military, such as service records; documents regarding an entire military unit, such as a Civil War Muster Roll; correspondence between a service member and his family; photographs of service members, either in stateside training or at an overseas location; combat medals; and, military publications such as Stars and Stripes or other periodicals. There are also books on military matters — books which are not generally available at a bookstore or library — with practical titles such as How to Repair an Engine on an A-1 Tank or How to Field Strip a Browning Automatic Rifle.

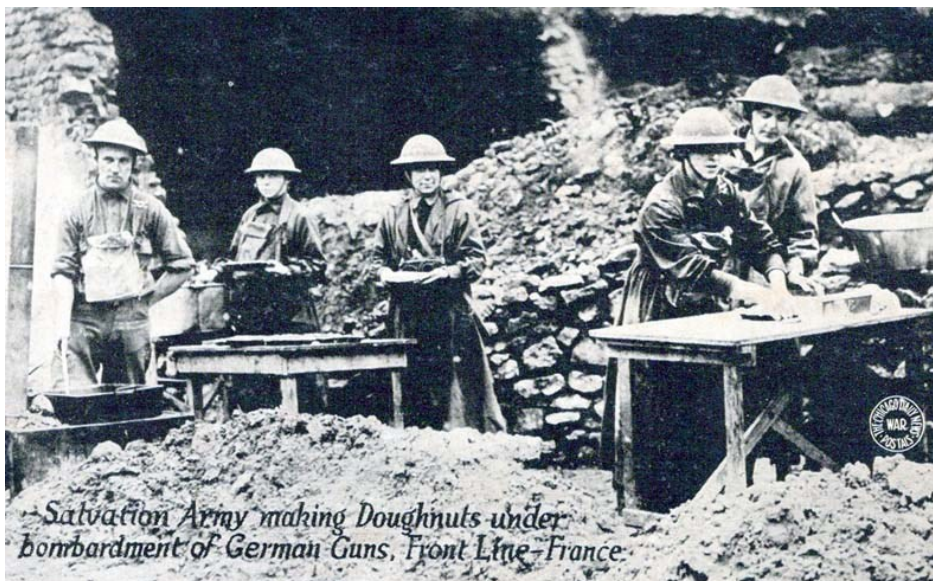
We highlight below several of the items which have been reviewed recently by the volunteers in the course of their activities at the Veterans Research Center.

David O. Beckwith, a Union soldier from Washington County, NY, kept a diary during his time in the service during the Civil War. Beckwith enlisted in the Army at the start of the War; he was wounded and discharged, but he later re-enlisted and was killed in battle in August 1864. The Research Center receives a surprisingly large number of diaries and letters of soldiers who served in the Civil War.



Page, dated Sunday, July 24th, 1862, from the diary of David O. Beckwith, a Union soldier in the Civil War.

This WWI photo is self-explanatory: As the caption notes, it depicts members of the Salvation Army in France, making doughnuts while under German bombardment.



Salvation Army making Doughnuts under bombardment of German Guns. Front Line-France

Curt Auerbach is a long-time Museum Docent who has recently started volunteering in the Veterans Research Center. He is working on a project examining and arranging many photographs on file and noting key features about them. As he says, “there are a number of combat photos snapped ‘in the moment’ as events unfolded. I was amazed at one showing a burning Japanese fighter plane on fire, still relentlessly attempting to dive into a US escort carrier in WW II in the Pacific Theater. The fact that a sailor paused to take that picture astounds me.”



Photo of Japanese plane being shot down during the attack on the Marianas Islands in World War II.

Here’s an interesting picture. It was included in the file of a serviceman from World War II. To some, the fellow with the cap looks like a baseball immortal, wearing his team’s cap. But research revealed that the person with the cap is a member of the crew of the Enola Gay, in a picture taken shortly before its mission to Hiroshima; the cap is a Brooklyn Dodgers cap. Curt was right.



Ellsworth Uniform Returned to Exhibit



Long-time members of the Friends may remember the coat that belonged to Elmer Ellsworth, the first officer killed on either side of the Civil War. Ellsworth was killed on May 24, 1861 as he took down a Confederate flag being flown at a hotel in Alexandria, Virginia. Ellsworth's coat was previously part of the Museum's Civil War exhibit.

Museum Chief Curator Mark Koziol says that Ellsworth's coat "is the most important and historic artifact in the Museum's collection. The blood-stained coat represents the immense sacrifice thousands of New York soldiers made defending the Union."

Ellsworth only wore this coat for a brief time. But according to Koziol, "its active post-1861 existence included being on display and helping raise funds and supplies for the Union at the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair in New York City. The garment was carelessly dry-cleaned nearly a century later during the Civil War Centennial years. In recent decades, conservators have performed surface cleaning and stabilization on the [coat]."

Koziol adds that as per Museum policy, Colonel Ellsworth's coat "cannot be kept on permanent exhibit because constant exposure to light, plus fluctuations in temperature and humidity, will damage [it] over time. So it is necessary to periodically return the coat to a climate-controlled storage area for an extended rest period." That explains why the coat has not been included in the Civil War exhibit for some time, but can now be returned to the Museum floor for a period of time.

New York State Military Museum & Veterans Research Center
61 Lake Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
Phone: (518) 581-5100
Website: www.museum.dmna.ny.gov

Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM
Also open on Mondays from mid-July through Labor Day,
10:00 AM—4:00 PM

Museum Bookstore and Shop: Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 AM —4:00PM

Oral History Interview — Vietnam Veteran Robert Stuart

The Rev. Robert Stuart joined the United States Marine Corps in June 1967, after having started college at the University of Oregon. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion 3rd Regiment of the 3rd Marine Division. He was shipped to Vietnam in December 1967, where he served a tour of duty until December 1968, with 11 months in the DMZ and one month in the Da Nang area.

Stuart was a rifleman, “ammo humper” and machine gunner. He was also a Chaplain’s Assistant, serving as a bodyguard for Chaplains of three faiths — Southern Baptist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian.

Stuart first saw combat immediately upon his arrival in Vietnam. As he stated in his interview, as soon as his unit arrived on the airfield in Da Nang, they were hit with enemy fire. “You knew you were in a war the second we hit the airfield,” he said. He was involved in combat, among other times, in Operation Auburn during the Tet Offensive.

Stuart gave the following assessment of his experience and that of his comrades: “We fought for each other. As we got to know each other better, we trusted each other. We did all we could to keep each other alive.”

Stuart notes that his M16 was often unreliable; he says that he would have much preferred an AK-47. Stuart also recalls an Australian Captain, who he says was an excellent line officer.

After completing his tour in late 1968, Stuart returned to the United States, and after discharge, he returned to college. He later studied in France, taught history in Africa, and became a Presbyterian Minister (he is now retired).



Robert Stuart, who served with the Marines in Vietnam from December 1967 to December 1968, is shown here during his time in the country.

How to view the Museum’s Oral History Interviews —

The Museum has conducted over 2,000 oral history interviews over the years. Those interviews can be viewed by accessing the Museum’s website at museum.dmna.ny.gov, clicking on the Research tab and then clicking on the Veteran’s Oral History Project tab; the interviews are separated alphabetically, according to the first letter of the veteran’s last name.

Remembering Lou Schneider

The Friends of the New York State Military Museums mourns the passing of Lou Schneider, who passed away in Albany on January 23, 2024, thirty-six hours after the passing of his beloved wife Sandy, to whom he had been married for 70 years. His survivors include three children and their families, including eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Lou graduated from Lafayette High School in Brooklyn. After that, he attended City College of New York. Lou entered the United States Army before he completed his college education, during the Korean Conflict, joining the U.S. Army Medical Corps. After completing training, he was assigned to the Army Prosthetics Research Lab at Walter Reed Army Hospital, where he worked on research and development of plastics for prostheses. He served in the Army until 1955, when he was honorably discharged at the rank of Corporal (E-4). After his discharge, Lou completed his college studies, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering.

Lew worked in the plastics injury, with jobs in Massachusetts and Michigan, as well as New York State. Among those jobs, he worked at Oak Mitsui, an electronics manufacturing firm, where he retired as a Vice President.

Lew had a wide variety of interests, including chess, piloting, reading and playing racket ball. In addition to his service to the Military Museum, Lew was a member of the Lions Club, the Jewish War Veterans, the Korean War Veterans and the Knights of Pythias.

Long-time Docent and Friends Member (and Trustee) Robert Kazalski remembers Schneider: “Lou was a dedicated docent for several years at the Museum, and also a member of the Board of Trustees for the Friends of the New York State Military Museum. He also volunteered his time with the Docent Advisory Committee of the Military Museum. His sense of humor and contagious smile [are] already dearly missed.”



Photo courtesy of
Lucille Millarson