

Roosevelt Island Historical Society
supported by Amalgamated Bank
and New York Public Library
Presents 2016 Spring Lecture Series

IS IT TRASH OR IS IT TREASURE
Tuesday, January 12 at 6:30 p.m.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and even garbage can be beautiful. To the municipality, garbage is a constant headache. To the city's residents, it is a disagreeable nuisance. According to Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D., garbage is a treasure trove of information to the urban archaeologist. An urban archaeological site, the 175 Water Street block in lower Manhattan, invites the question: *Is it Trash or is it Treasure?* Literally created from 18th-century detritus, and then the repository of 18th- and 19th-century trash, the block's debris included a merchant ship that was sunk to structure the garbage-laden landfill. The derelict hulk was the site's most extraordinary example of urban trash, as well as its most spectacular artifact.

THE STORIES OF THE SUITCASES
Tuesday, February 9 at 6:30 p.m.

When Willard Psychiatric Center closed in 1995, an employee discovered a large collection of suitcases in storage in an attic. Many of these pieces of luggage contained the personal belongings of former patients. John Crispin has photographed the suitcases and their contents; his images offer a window into the lives and personal stories of patients admitted between 1910 and 1960. He will share the photos and what they reveal about the past.

THE SS COLUMBIA AND RETURN OF THE HUDSON RIVER DAY LINER
Tuesday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Steamboats ruled the Hudson River and many of America's waterways in the early 20th century. The *SS Columbia* is one such steamboat; it transported fun-seeking residents from downtown Detroit on an 18 mile, 90-minute pleasure trip to Bois Blanc Island in Canada. Liz McEnaney, Executive Director of the *SS Columbia* Project, will share the history of the 113-year old boat, its status as a National Historic Landmark vessel and plans to revive the great tradition of steamboats on the Hudson River.

CHILDBIRTH IN 19TH-CENTURY AMERICA: THE ROLE OF CHARITY HOSPITAL
Tuesday, April 12 at 6:30 p.m.

For centuries, childbirth was a dangerous experience, for both women and their babies. In the 19th century, midwives, nurses and doctors at Charity Hospital, which operated on Roosevelt Island until 1957, were recognized as leaders in making childbirth a safe experience. Janet Brickman, Professor of History at the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, will describe some of their practices.



Willard Suitcase



S.S. Columbia



Maternity Hospital

