Secrets of New York “Cinema”

* First complete studio still stands in Brooklyn. American Vitagraph studios.
* In 1894 on Broadway, Edison has first commercial showing of kinetoscope film, first place you could pay to see cinema
* New York was destination for country’s first major African American film director. Oscar Michaeux.
* Edison invented motion pictures in West Orange, NJ. Edison then took a studio in Chelsea. Vaudeville provided performers for early films
* Smith and Blackton – Blackton made the first stop-motion animation. They opened Vitagraph studios.
* Warner Bros took over Vitagraph in 1925
* Sound stage at JC Studios is where Vitagraph studios used to be. It’s where they shot the Cosby show.
* Ironically, Vitagraph helped kill Vaudeville, but their movies are some of the only recordings of these acts
* Oscar Micheaux. The Homesteader. There was a plotline with interracial romance. If he wanted an accurate film of his novel, he had to make it himself.
* 132nd st and 7th ave – theater used by Lafayette Players
* Bray Studios on 26th Street. Bray removed the character from the background, but inking it on a transparent cell, celluloid. Then you wouldn’t have to redraw the background for every frame.
* Betty Boop was originally a dog. She had long ears and a kind of snout, but a woman’s body. They changed her appearance after 4 or 5 cartoons.
* Sound technology for cartoons was in New York.

Secrets of New York “New York City: The Most Valuable”

* Nothing too interesting

Secrets of New York “Theatre”

* Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes Booth, was a fmous actor. Booth saved Robert Lincoln’s life when the boy fell onto train tracks. Meanwhile, his brother killed Abraham Lincoln.
* Junius Booth and his son, Edwin Booth, were both famous for playing Hamlet. There was a man hanged, and he requested that his skull be given to Junius. Junius and Edwin both used the man’s skull when they played Hamlet. The skull now sits in Edwin’s bedroom at the Players’ Club in Gramercy.

<http://www.historynet.com/edwin-booth-saved-robert-todd-lincolns-life.htm>

Secrets of New York “Medicine in New York City”

* Trinity Church graveyard – people as early as 1600s were living to 70s, 80s, 90s on average. 1900s people were dying earlier from communicable diseases. Brought in by faster ships. If ship takes 6 weeks to travel from Europe to US, people die on board. If ship takes 3 weeks, sick people arrived on shore.
* Cholera epidemic, 1832
* Problem was keeping an overcrowded city clean. There was no sanitation department. Horse manure built up in the streets.
* Stephen Smith, founder of modern public health. Called for an administration in the city that was above politics. Experts, physicians, made determinations about what was good and bad for the city.
* Smith created a board of physicians to take a survey of how people actually live. 1854 (?) first health report.
* 65 Mott St. Built in 1820s. City’s oldest tenement. Tenants threw their waste out the windows. People who never ventured into poor neighborhoods were shocked by the health report.
* Metropolitan Board of Health
* Old Hospital at the Brooklyn Navy Yard – developed reliable anesthetic. Before then, people either did without any anesthesia and went through surgery with no numbing whatsoever or they risked taking ether and never waking again.
* Edward Squibb took an office in the Watchtower building. Dec 29, 1858 – his lab burned down, and Squibb was severely burned. But he continued his work.
* He refused to protect his formulas with patents because he was determined to help humanity.

Secrets of New York “New York Connections: Bridges of New York”

* Oldest standing bridge is high bridge
* Brooklyn Bridge – John Roebling, original engineer, died in a freak accident (foot crushed by ferry boat) just 4 months after Brooklyn Bridge plans were approved. His son, Washington, took over the project
* It was the tallest structure in the nation at the time, almost twice the height of the statue of liberty
* Cables are galvanized (covered in steel coating)
* 200 miles of cabling. Were hand tied and hand built. Cables are till in place today.
* First construction to use caissons, so that they could use explosives to get into bedrock under the river.
* During a fire in one of the caissons, Roebling succumbed to caisson disease. He was left crippled and unable to oversee work directly. He established himself in an apartment on the Brooklyn side and watched construction. His wife took over direct overseeing. She carried messages back and forth and trained herself as an engineer. Some think she had a significant impact on its construction. Emily Roebling was the first person to walk across it.
* Brooklyn Bridge is the oldest bridge still in use in the US.
* Williamsburg Bridge was the second to be built to Brooklyn.
* Took 7 years to build, while Brooklyn Bridge took 14. It also cost half as much.
* Towers are made entirely of steel. First of its kind in the world.
* People saw the bridge as completely utilitarian, people didn’t like the look of it.
* Williamsburg Bridge became the longest bridge in the world, beating the Brooklyn Bridge by just 4.5 feet.
* Hydrogen embrittlement – metal, especially high strength steel, is exposed to hydrogen atoms. This happens when water gets into the cable, which has hydrogen in it.
* Buck decided not to galvanize the cables, unlike Roebling.
* Williamsburg Bridge has undergone a $1 billion renovation.
* Williamsburg Bridge essentially ended the tenement life of LES. Thousands of people moved to Williamsburg, which briefly became the most densely populated neighborhood in the country.
* George Washington Bridge: was twice as long as any suspension bridge in the world when it was built.
* Was initially called Hudson River Bridge, but was renamed on opening day to honor country’s first president.
* Home to world’s largest free flying American flag. 60 x 90 feet.
* GW Bridge is located at the narrowest point of the Hudson River.
* Original design for the bridge called for the towers to be encased in granite. But the Great Depression hit and public didn’t want to spend the extra funds, so they canceled the plans. Towers were already structurally sound.
* Second level was built 30 years later.

Secrets of New York “Prohibition and the Mob”

* Speakeasy cards guided people to the new places every week, because they were so often shut down
* In Queens, there’s an island that was perfect for rum running. It was very isolated, so prohibition allowed residents to make a few bucks.
* Broad Channel was called Little Cuba during Prohibition.
* Waterfront homes had trap doors under the floor. Boats would come under the houses and booze was passed through the floor hole.
* Shipyards made small boats for rum runners. Made them fast enough to outrun the police boats.
* Houses had hidden cabinets where booze could be hidden if there was a raid.
* The only was to get to Broad Channel was ferry or rail. If police were coming, the town would be warned well ahead of time.
* Federal prohibition officer could make up to $50,000 dollars on the side.
* Jimmy Walker, mayor of NY, kept showing up at speakeasies.
* He opened the Central Park casino, a restaurant, but allowed drinking of alcohol. Owned by the city. It lasted for 4 years.
* Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith. Federal officers. Made about 20% of all the raids in New York. They wouldn’t take bribes. They disguised themselves as women, rabbis, etc. They became legendary.
* Orchard St. Feb 1922. Cobbler shop. Moe and Izzy went inside saying they needed to get their shoes fixed.
* The attention they got in the media angered the government. They were fired.
* Ratner’s restaurant had a secret room called the Amber Room. Jewish gangsters liked to come there because it was a kosher restaurant. Meyer Lansky. There were 8 weighs out of the Ratner basement.
* West 52nd St was dubbed “The Wettest Block in Manhattan.” The 21 Club aspired to be the best, for the best. Imported authentic French wines, cognacs, etc.
* They were raided in 1930. They had an architect design a hidden cellar in the building next door. That way, if officers asked the staff if alcohol was on the premises, they could truthfully say no.
* There is a secret entrance to the cellar. A thin meat skewer is stuck through a hole in a “brick wall.” It clicks open a lock. Door weighs 4,000 lbs, made from the building’s original foundation. Vintage bottles are still labeled and waiting for celebrities like Marilyn Monroe.
* Ownie Madden, owned the Cotton Club in Harlem
* Legs Diamond. Some say he got the nickname Legs because he was a great dancer, some because he outran the cops.
* Park Central Hotel on 7th Ave. Room where Rothstein was fatally shot. Arnold Rothstein. Wall St, Taminy Hall, police, mobsters. He could go between all the different facets of corruption. He was nicknamed “The Brain” by the underworld.
* High stakes poker game. Rothstein lost $330,000. He concludes that the game is fixed. McManiss called him to a meeting. Rothstein thinks he’s going to be safe, doesn’t bring a gun. McManiss is tired of waiting. McManiss shot him. He died a day later.
* His death unfurled the entire corruption system in New York. By the end of it, taminy hall was destroyed, mayor Walker was in exile in Europe. Led to FDR becoming President.