

NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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NYS MUSEUM ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF HISTORIAN

ALBANY, NY – A native New Yorker and nationally recognized historian, who has held various leadership positions on the state and national level for the past 28 years, has been appointed the new chief historian.

Robert Weible, the current director of public history at the State Museum of Pennsylvania, a unit of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), will take on his new role as New York State's chief curator of history in late March.

"Robert is a public historian who has built strong partnerships throughout his career with diverse community groups, universities, cultural organizations and local historical societies," said Museum Director Dr. Clifford Siegfried. "His proven leadership skills will also be important to his internal role at the Museum as we plan for the renewal of the Museum galleries and the transfer of our extensive history collection to a new storage facility."

Weible will work with Museum management and history staff to plan and implement movement of the history collections and staff to a new collections facility. He also will be instrumental in planning for a new history gallery at the Museum, slated to open in 2010, which is part of an overall plan to renew the Museum galleries. Weible also will work with local historians and academic and cultural institutions to increase the public's understanding of New York State history and its role in U.S. history. He will also oversee management of the Museum's history collections and help develop content for public programs and teacher workshops.

Weible was selected following an exhaustive search that began in 2006 as soon as funds became available for the position. Following the budget crisis of the 90's the Museum has faced an uphill battle to obtain the funds necessary to rebuild capacity as several key positions were vacated due to retirement and other budgetary factors. Kenneth Ames, the Museum's last state historian, left in the mid-1990s. Joseph F. Meany Jr. assumed the role of acting state historian, retiring in 2001. Hugh Hastings, the first state historian, was appointed in 1895.

Born in Queens, Weible grew up in Seaford on Long Island. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Penn State University and a master's in history from the University of Rhode Island. In his most recent position at PHMC, he developed partnerships with professional organizations, historical societies, universities and others to create and support public history programs for adult audiences. He also directed content management for ExplorePAhistory.com, an award-winning website developed in partnership with PBS and NPR affiliate WITF. The website is designed to make Pennsylvania and American history more exciting and accessible to public audiences. It also promotes tourism and provides teaching resources for K-12 teachers. Previously, Weible was the acting director of the Pennsylvania State Archives. He also worked as the chief of the division of history for PHMC from 1989 to 2003, and managed a staff of professional historians, librarians and educators to provide research, writing and programming for diverse public audiences.

In 1979 he became the first historian at Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Massachusetts, serving there through 1989. During this time he helped draft the park's General Management Plan and develop its major museum and interpretive facilities. Lowell has since become a model for the development of other national parks and many state and federal heritage projects.

Weible was president of the National Council on Public History from 2005-06, and on the nominating committee for the Organization of American Historians from 1987-89. He also has served on various boards and committees for the American Historical Association, the American Association for State and Local History, the Mid-Atlantic American Studies Association, the Pennsylvania Historical Association and others.

Books he has edited include "*The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*," "*The Popular Perception of Industrial History* (with Francis R. Walsh)," and "*The World of the Industrial Revolution: Comparative and International Aspects of Industrialization*." He has published articles and reviews in *The Public Historian*, *The Journal of American History*, *Pennsylvania History*, *Pennsylvania Heritage* and elsewhere.

The New York State Museum is a program of the New York State Department of Education, the University of the State of New York and the Office of Cultural Education. Started in 1836, the Museum has the longest continuously operating state natural history research and collection survey in the United States. Located at the Empire State Plaza on Madison Avenue in Albany, the Museum is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. except on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is free and the Museum is fully accessible. Further information about programs and events can be obtained by calling (518) 474-5877 or visiting the museum website at www.nysm.nysed.gov.

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