



SANDY SCHUMAN
Storyteller, Musician, Educator

Sandy Schuman is a storyteller, musician, and educator. He tells stories about songs and song-writers, personal adventures, historical sagas, folk tales, and stories in the Jewish storytelling tradition. His programs include:

Familiar Songs and their Unfamiliar Stories

Learn how some of the best-known American songs came to be written. This program features songs from the *Great American Songbook* and stories about the people who wrote them.

Singer, Songwriter, Murderer; “King of the 12-String Guitar”

Was Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter justly sentenced to prison for murder? Twice? Was he exploited by the man who discovered him? Did he have to share credit for writing the #1 hit song of 1950!

New York Tales: Tall & True

Some of New York State’s folklore is truly unbelievable. Some of its history is even more so. “The Great American Hoax,” “The Goldarndest Liar,” “How New York State Got its Western Border,” “The Curse of Mamie O’Rourke,” ...

My Father Was a Storyteller

From help wanted ads to front page headlines, beaches to skyscrapers, my father’s longed for saxophone to my sister’s required piano, this personal and historical saga stretches across “the stories of a lifetime.”

Jewish Stories Every Person Should Know

A Rabbi, a Prophet, and a King Walk into a Bar – and other stories, old and new, that reveal Jewish humor, tradition, and values.

Welcome to Chelm’s Pond ...

... where the ridiculous stories of Chelm meet the preposterous tall tales of the Adirondacks, where “every acre is two acres, you can till the soil with a teaspoon, and there are not only four seasons, there are five.”

How to Tell a Story

A workshop for beginners – teenagers, educators, grandparents – who want to learn or sharpen their storytelling skills.

*There is always
another side to the
story.*



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ANOTHER SIDE TO THE STORY

New York Tales: Tall & True



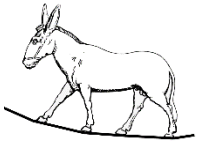
**HISTORY & FOLKLORE
OF THE
EMPIRE STATE**

A Tribute to Sal



Sal and her partner – dedicated, reliable workers who knew their trade well – were displaced by advanced technology. Learn the “low down” on *Low Bridge Everybody Down*.

The Paul Bunyan of the Erie Canal



“Red” McCarthy is little known today, but stories of his exploits on the Great Western Canal helped many a canaller pass the time, stretching the wind.

At Schoharie Crossing



Walter Edmonds’ story, which first appeared in 1929, tells of the early days of the Erie Canal, when crossing Schoharie Creek during high water presented a deadly challenge.

OK



In Texas, they say the first word spoken on the moon was “Houston – Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.” But in New York, and especially in Kinderhook, we know the first word was “OK.”

The Rhythm Changes



In music, there are many commonly used chord progressions. This one has its own special name. George wrote it; Ira named it. When Ethel sang it –holding one note through the chorus – it made her famous. You can do it too!

George had Chutzpah, Ira Didn’t!

Porgy and Bess was written by George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward. But they needed help with the lyrics from George’s brother, Ira. The story begins in 1909, at Ira’s *Bar Mitzvah*.

If God Blessed America for Me



The finale for *Yip Yap Yaphank* was not a good fit for the show, so he didn’t use it. Twenty years later it was a #1 hit song and is #19 in the *Best Songs of the 20th Century*. But, could the parody be even more be more popular than the original?

Lead Belly: Singer, Songwriter, Murderer; King of the 12-String Guitar



Was “Lead Belly” justly sentenced to prison for murder? Twice? Was he exploited by the man who discovered him? Did he have to share credit for writing the #1 hit song of 1950!

Tzena Tzena Tzena



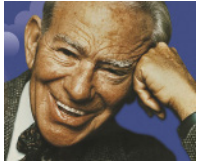
The Weaver’s 1950 recording, which rose to #2 on the charts, had English lyrics to what they thought was an Israeli folk tune. It took a legal proceeding to establish the song’s true origins.

Get Happy



Harold Arlen quit high school to pursue a career as a pianist, singer, and music arranger. When the *Buffalodians*, the hottest band in town, moved to New York City, he went with them. When they retreated to Buffalo, Harold stayed.

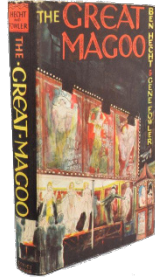
The Forgotten Man



Edgar Harburg's electrical appliance business was roaring in the '20s – until the Great Crash. He had no way forward – until his old high school buddy suggested he try writing songs.

If You Believed in Me

Billy Rose wanted just one song for his production of *The Great Magoo*. With a script by Ben Hecht, following *The Front Page*, it was sure to make Broadway history. It did!



And Called it Macaroni



While visiting the Van Rensselaers at Fort Crailo, Richard Shuckburgh – a British military surgeon – wrote a song deriding the ragtag New England soldiers arriving at the fort. In a “now, what do you think of us” turnaround, it became America's first patriotic song.

Dueling Campaign Songs

No one remembers *Let's Get Behind Herbert Hoover*, the incumbent's campaign song. But, in a battle for the 1932 Democratic nomination, the winning candidate's song was ranked #47 in the Songs of the Century.

The Prize Inside



How can you light a cigar when you don't have a lighter or match? My father's solution left a lasting impression on five-year-old me.

We're in the Same Boat, Brother



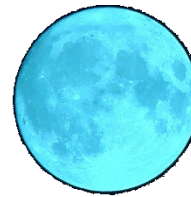
“Lead Belly” sang it, and most assumed he wrote it, although they can't understand his lyrics. In India, Bhupen Hazarika sang it, and think Paul Robeson wrote it! Will the real authors please stand up!

The New Woman of 1908

Even though she still couldn't vote, the “New Woman” was taking her place in society, bolstered by this 1908 song. Today, ranked #8 in the Songs of the Century, everyone knows the chorus!



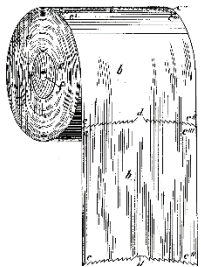
Blue Moon



The Bad in Every Man was the third attempt to make this a hit song but, even though it was featured in MGM's *Manhattan Melodrama*, it didn't take off. Three strikes and you're out. But, in this case, the fourth time was the charm.

Best Thing Before Sliced Bread

With his 1891 patented “Toilet-Paper Roll,” Seth Wheeler's Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Co. made a lasting contribution to personal hygiene. Also, we will resolve the great “over or under” debate.



Ararat: A City of Refuge for the Jews



Grand Island's Town Hall displays a cornerstone heralding the founding of Ararat: “A City of Refuge for the Jews” by Mordecai Manuel Noah, September 1825.

NEW YORK TALES: TALL & TRUE

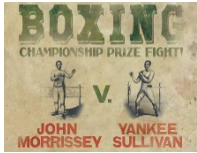
Some of New York State's folklore is truly unbelievable. Some of its history is even more so.

The Goldarndest Liar



Move over Paul Bunyan & Pecos Bill. It's time for a New York tall-tale character. But, could it be that Bill Greenfield, "the goldarndest, most unreasonable liar," was a real person?

Land Beyond Law



The inhabitants of Boston Corners desperately petitioned the Legislature to be separated from Massachusetts and annexed to New York. Six years and a prizefight later, it was done.

How the Empire State got its Western Border



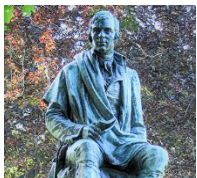
Why does New York's border make an abrupt turn at its western corner? It's a story of wilderness adventuring, international tension, and desperate conflict resolution.

The Curse of Mamie O'Rourke



For 37 years no horse won the Triple Crown, thwarted by *The Curse*. How was *The Curse* lifted, enabling American Pharaoh to win in 2015? Horse racing pundits are mystified.

The MacPherson Legacy



Little is known of John and Mary MacPherson. Nonetheless, the obscure inscription – engraved in the base of this monument – reads, "MacPherson Legacy to the City of Albany."

The Great American Hoax



P. T. Barnum said, "There's a sucker born every minute." George Hull, the Binghamton cigar manufacturer who created The Cardiff Giant, would tell you that is not true.

The First Fountain



Col. Henry King wanted a fountain erected as a memorial to his father. Completing the task fell to Henry's brother, creating a work of art to tell a familiar story that would need no explanation.

A Month of Sundaes



The research of two Ithaca high schoolers provided unassailable, documentary evidence, but rival stories still abound, unjustly claiming the "Birthplace of the Ice Cream Sundae."

The Sea Serpent of Silver Lake



A hundred swore they saw it, a repulsive, horrid, monstrous serpent. Many came to see it, some to contest it; a whaler came to harpoon it. Walker's hotel gladly accommodated.

The World's Most Popular Instrument



"John and Will Smith work all alone, in a tiny factory without a sign on it. They haven't got a phone. But real connoisseurs of jew's-harps beat a track to their door." ~ *The New Yorker*