

## Wintry Greetings ~

We're well into the cold and snowy season now - a good time to attend conferences and plan for new spring projects. We've got some pretty interesting ones in the queue that we're excitedly looking forward to.



Pile of coins found on the window ledges of the Old Post Office in Washington DC during conditions documentation.

You know, we often find interesting things in old buildings during investigations - like the names of original workers carved in wood, 9/11 prayers scribbled in dust on stained glass windows in the inner reaches of St.

Patrick's Cathedral, and forgotten tools left in place during original construction, but we've never found a pair of old shoes as told in this article from the *Newport Daily News*. Placing shoes in the floorboards while a house was being built was a good luck custom in the 1800s.

Good luck in 2014!  
Vertical Access Staff

## Conferences and Events

[Architectural Ceramics in the 21st Century](#), March 22-23, Boston Society of Architects, Cambridge, MA. Berta de Miguel and Kristen Olson attending.

[Guastavino exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York](#), opens March 26.

[World Steel Bridge Symposium](#), March 26-28, Toronto. Evan Kopelson attending.

[World Urban Forum - WUF7](#), April 5-11, Medellin, Columbia. Kent Diebolt attending.

[SMPS Northeast Regional Conference](#), April 30 - May 2, Atlantic City, NJ. Franny King attending.

[Society for Industrial Archeology Annual Conference](#), May 15-18, Portland, ME.

## About Vertical Access

Vertical Access LLC

## Who's buried in Grant's Tomb? \*



Once one of the most popular attractions in New York City, today Grant's Tomb is off the beaten track tread by most visitors to Manhattan. Constructed with the assistance of donations from 90,000 people totaling \$600,000, the most money raised for a public monument at the time, the structure later suffered from neglect and fell into decline. [1] Although it stands on a prominent point of Riverside Park overlooking the Hudson River, Grant's Tomb is hidden in plain sight, with relatively few people venturing inside the mausoleum that contains the remains of President Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia Dent Grant.

As part of a site inspection of the General Grant National Memorial performed in 2012, National Park Service staff identified areas of cracking at the interior plaster at the drum level of the rotunda. They requested the services of Vertical Access to perform a hands-on investigation of the plaster pilasters to better understand the causes of the cracks and determine whether the current condition presented an immediate public safety hazard.

[Read full article and see photos of the inspection.](#)

\* Who's buried in Grant's Tomb? The correct answer is no one, since Ulysses S. Grant and his wife Julia are entombed but not buried in the tomb. From Groucho Marx in the game show "You Bet Your Life".

[1] Keister, Douglas. *Stories in Stone New York: A Field Guide to New York City Area Cemeteries & their Residents*: Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2011. Page 142.

## It's Time for New York to Reform the 1885 Scaffold Law

By Kent Diebolt



One of the state-specific challenges of doing business in New York has to do with two little-known New York State Labor Law statutes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Described as necessary and good laws when they were passed in

1885, things have changed in the last century, particularly with the advent of mandatory Workers' Compensation insurance and federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations passed in the early 1970s.

Intended to protect construction workers and also known as NYS Labor Laws 240/241, these statutes place "absolute liability" on the contractor and building owner for injuries or fatalities resulting from a fall from height. In cases such as this, the entire onus is on the employer and no findings of liability on the part of the employee are permitted. Liability on the part of the employer is assumed in all cases and the concept of proportionality of responsibility or use of recalcitrant worker or culpable conduct defense may not be considered by the courts and by statute, are considered irrelevant to these cases.

In the last year, I have attended two excellent programs on this topic. The first was organized in March 2013 by the

collaborates with architecture, engineering and construction firms, and real estate professionals nationwide to perform specialized inspection services and condition assessments on buildings and civil structures using industrial rope access techniques and direct-to-digital information systems. [Visit our website to learn more.](#)

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### Newsletter Archives

View earlier *Vertical Access Quarterly* [here](#).



Greater New York Construction User Council. The second was in mid-January of this year, and was organized by the New York City Master Riggers Association, which hosted keynote speaker Tom Stebbins of the [Lawsuit Reform Alliance of New York](#). A link to download the presentation is provided below.

🔗 [Read the full article here.](#)

### Additional Information

[The Scaffold Law and the Campaign for Reform](#) (Tom Stebbins' presentation, PDF download)  
[Scaffold Law Reform website](#)  
[Contractors and Workers at Odds Over Scaffold Law](#), article by Kirk Semple, New York Times, December 17, 2013.

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### Staff Updates



VA welcomes Kristen Olson to the team. Kristen brings over five years' experience in historic preservation outreach and technical services, including nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. Kristen has a BA in Studio Art from Colby College, and an MA in Historic Preservation Planning from Cornell

University. She is a SPRAT Level I certified rope access technician. Welcome Kristen!

Kelly Streeter is now a registered engineer in the state of Illinois, along with NY, MA, PA, and CT.

New and renewed Level 3 SPRAT certifications for Kevin Dalton and Keith Luscinski. [Read about their week of training and evaluation in the blog.](#)



Kent Diebolt traveled to Barcelona, Spain in November to deliver a series of lectures to a class of graduate level architecture students and other practicing professionals at the [Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya Tech Talent Center](#). He spoke about using industrial rope access and [TPAS™](#) for building inspections.