

Tours and Tales of New York

October 2015

Great news! Now when you read this newsletter, you will learn about tours being offered by two licensed NYC tour guides, Laurie Lewis and Alan Cohen. In our new partnership, which we're calling Take a Walk New York, we each will develop and deliver our own tours. We also may share each other's tours and develop some together. New York is a big city, and two can cover it better than one.

This newsletter will continue to offer stories about New York past and present. It will still list the planned tour schedule for the month. But now if you'd like to take a tour that is not listed here, you can contact either of us to discuss a custom tour: alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2rmyc@gmail.com.

Please share this newsletter with your friends. Forward it to them, or better yet, ask them to email one of us to be put on the mailing list and receive the newsletter directly.

Laurie Lewis and Alan Cohen

Water Water Everywhere

It's hard to believe that streams once flowed through Manhattan. Those water sources were essential. For while water surrounded the island, it was salt water. The streams provided the fresh water that nourished early residents.

The largest body of water was called the Collect, a corruption of the Dutch word for *pond*. Fed by an underground spring, it was the main source of clean drinking water for centuries. The Collect Pond was so big that in 1796 inventor John Fitch tested the first steam-powered boat on its waters, as illustrated in the historic engraving to the right.

By then, the Collect was polluted with waste from industries essential to 18th century life, such as slaughterhouses, tanneries, and breweries. Soon the city began to drain the Collect and fill it with garbage and dirt. The landfill was paved over, and homes for New York's growing populace rose on it. By 1812, the Collect was a mere memory.



The Collect Pond
Charles Bonwill, artist;
Philip Meeder, engraver.
From the New York Public
Library Digital Collection.

Unfortunately, the spring that fed the Collect still bubbled underground. The bubble turned into a rumble that caused the buildings above to sink. The stench from buried waste was unbearable.

As quickly as residents abandoned the sink-and-stink area for more pleasant dwellings further north, their homes were taken over by those who could afford nothing better, mainly newly arrived Irish immigrants, and black residents who were not welcome elsewhere. They formed gangs. By 1840, the former site of the pastoral pond was a crime-ridden slum called Five Points.

Meanwhile, New York was facing a water crisis. Many streams and brooks that once flowed through Manhattan had, like the Collect Pond, become polluted and were now buried underneath the streets of the developing city. Accessible water was tainted and the source of diseases such as cholera. Fires spread rapidly without ample water to douse the flames.

The water crisis came to an end with the opening of the Croton Aqueduct System in 1842. Propelled by gravity, water came down from the Croton River about 40 miles north of the city. It pooled in a receiving reservoir located in what is today Central Park and then flowed to a smaller reservoir on Fifth Avenue between 40th and 42nd Streets, to be distributed throughout Manhattan.

Remnants of the Aqueduct System

Walk across one of the city's newest attractions, High Bridge, and you're on top of the original water-conveying pipes of the Croton Aqueduct System. Visit the main New York Public Library on 42nd Street, and you can see part of a wall of the old distributing reservoir through an opening in the floor. Between these points, remnants of the aqueduct system blend into the Northern Manhattan landscape. Trace vestiges of the Croton system in the Bronx and Manhattan at <http://forgotten-ny.com/2002/01/theres-no-stoppin-the-croton-from-hoppin-remnants-of-the-croton-aqueduct-old-and-new>.

Before long, a much larger receiving reservoir was built just north of the original one. No longer needed, the first one was drained in the 1930s. In its place came Central Park's Great Lawn.

The remaining reservoir is a nonfunctional place of beauty in Central Park; it was taken out of service as a water source in 1993. So where does the city now get its water? It still comes from upstate New York, from the Catskill and Delaware watersheds northwest of the Croton system.

And what became of Five Points? The lawless slum was demolished long ago. Ironically, the area is now the center of law and order in New York. If you've ever served on jury duty in Manhattan, you likely were at this notorious site that once was home to the lovely Collect Pond.

Although the Collect has totally disappeared, streams still flow under the concrete of Manhattan. After heavy rains, Minetta Brook tends to surface in Greenwich Village. Often before digging, engineers consult an 1874 map that shows hidden streams—to avoid water water everywhere.

October Tours

These are walking tours. Most cover 1-2 miles and last 2-2½ hours. Unless otherwise stated, cost is \$15 per person. If you plan to attend, please email the guide (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net). Arrive 10 minutes before the listed time. Tours are cancelled in severe weather; call or text Laurie (917-306-2868) or Alan (917-363-4292) if in doubt. Tell your friends about these tours!

Featured tour: Central Park: Marvels of the North Half

The north end of Central Park has some of the city's greatest landscapes: the Reservoir; the Pool, which is ablaze with color in the fall; the North Woods, where city dwellers can go for a real hike; the Harlem Meer; and Conservatory Garden, one of New York's best kept secrets. We hope these areas don't become too popular so they remain peaceful treasures, but we simply *must* share these great views with you!



The Reservoir

October 4 is Laurie's birthday, and she can think of no better place to spend it than in the north half of Central Park. To celebrate, she offers this tour for one day only on a pay-what-you-want basis — \$1 to \$100,000!

Meet:

At the northeast corner of 90th Street and Central Park West

When:

Sun, Oct 4 at 11 AM
Birthday special! Pay what you want!

Sun, Oct 25 at 1 PM

Sat, Oct 31 at 11 AM

Public Art of Lower Manhattan

You don't need to go to a museum to see great art. Join [Alan](#) on this interactive tour that includes some of the most interesting and varied art in the city. Some of the art honors the dead; some tells a story; some expresses emotion; some is functional. The art works are as old as the gates of Trinity Church and as new as the SeaGlass Carousel.

Meet on Monday, October 12 (Columbus Day), at 11 AM, left of the main entrance to the Alexander Hamilton US Customs House (Museum of the American Indian) at 1 Bowling Green (between Broadway and Whitehall).

Green Spaces and Great Places on 42nd Street

Not the glitz and glamour of the Theater District, but a different 42nd Street, from Sixth Avenue to the East River. Enjoy stories about New York City landmarks, including the library, Grand Central Terminal, and the Chrysler Building. Discover parks where Midtown workers seek relief from high-pressure jobs. Visit architectural gems where greenery is an essential element.

Meet on the northwest corner of 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue, in front of Bank of America.

Laurie leads this tour on Friday, October 23, at 1 PM.

OCTOBER						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
4 CP North 11 AM						
	12 Art - Lower Manhattan 11 AM					
					23 42 nd St 1 PM	
25 CP North 1 PM						31 CP North 11 AM
Laurie's tours in green			Alan's tours in blue			

Two Ways You Can Win a Free Tour!

Question of the Month

Various animals call Central Park home. The first person who emails us the type of animal that likes to nap in the wisteria pergola in Conservatory Garden wins a free tour, which can be taken any time within a year. The winner will be announced next month. If nobody comes up with the correct answer, the question may be used again. (HINT: Take the tour Central Park: Marvels of the North Half to learn the answer.)

Help Grow Our Mail List

Do you know people who would like to get this newsletter and take our tours? Send us their email addresses (check with them first so we don't spam), or have them email us and mention your name. When we have received four referrals from you of names not already on our list, you will receive a free tour. Take it anytime within a year.

Send emails to lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net