

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

October 2016

We're introducing two new tours this month. Alan will escort you through 400 years of history in less than a mile. Laurie will take you on a walk through Greenwich Village, identifying where famous writers lived. Both the Village tour and Alan's Washington Heights tour have homes that Deborah cited in the story below about haunted Manhattan. And so we celebrate Halloween.

October also is about fall foliage. Join Laurie to discover one of the best spots to view the changing colors in Manhattan as she takes a walk through the northern part of Central Park.

If you can't make one of our scheduled tours or if you have a different itinerary in mind, please inquire about a custom tour. Use the contact form on our website, www.takeawalknewyork.com, or send an email to takeawalknewyork@gmail.com. We hope to see you on a tour!

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

Haunted Manhattan

By Deborah Harley

Do you believe in ghosts? With all the murder and mayhem that have occurred in 400 years of New York history, the city's numerous reported hauntings should surprise no one. In the spirit of October, here are our top picks for ghostly haunts in Manhattan.

A Civil War-era mansion at 14 West 10th Street has become so legendary for its deaths and hauntings that it has earned the nickname "the house of death." Several ghosts, including that of former resident Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), have reportedly been seen by residents.

In 1957 Jan Bryant Bartell and her husband moved into an apartment in the building. She started hearing footsteps behind her and felt an occasional brush against the back of her neck. Her dogs would bark and growl at some invisible presence. A shriveled grape would appear in the middle



of a clean plate—even though there were no grapes in the apartment. Chairs would become inexplicably rearranged. A medium finally convinced the couple to leave. Jan Bryant Bartell died a few years later of a heart attack, right after completing the manuscript for a book (*Spindrift: Spray from a Psychic Sea*) about her experiences at 14 West 10th Street.

St. Paul's Chapel is the oldest church in Manhattan, built in 1762. It is also the final resting place of British Shakespearean actor George Frederick Cooke, who died in 1812. Unhappy with reviews in the British press of his performances, Cooke had come to America in search of a more appreciative audience. Although he initially had been well received, his career eventually floundered. He took to drinking and soon amassed a large amount of debt. In lieu of payment, he made an agreement to donate his head to science after his death. But his detached head never was sent to a laboratory. Instead, it began to be used as a stage prop for the skull of Yorick in *Hamlet*. Passersby have since reported seeing Cooke's headless body walking among the graves at St. Paul's, as if looking for its head. Incidentally, the skull is still being used as a prop.

The Witch on the Terrace

One of the most unusual sculptures decorating Bethesda Terrace in Central Park is a witch on a broomstick. Her hat is a bit unusual, because she is an Irish witch. A jack-o'-lantern is also there, suggesting Halloween.

Halloween originated from an ancient Celtic festival of the dead. During the festival, a candle was carried in a hollowed-out turnip to ward off evil spirits. When the Irish came to America, they used pumpkins instead of turnips, leading to the modern Halloween practice of carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns.

The witch on the terrace was probably placed there in honor of the large number of Irish immigrants who helped build Central Park. The Irish were the largest immigrant group in New York at the time.

Probably the best documented ghost story happened far uptown, at the oldest residence in Manhattan—the Morris-Jumel mansion in Washington Heights, which was built in 1765. The mansion's haunting is said to be related to the death of Eliza Jumel's first husband, whom she allegedly murdered. In 1964, an elementary school class was playing outside the mansion while waiting for an early morning tour when suddenly a woman dressed in period clothes appeared on the second-floor balcony. She shouted to them that her husband was ill and they had to be quiet, and then she quickly disappeared into the building. When the museum curator arrived, the children told her about the woman, and the puzzled curator said that no one was in the locked building. The children went inside and stopped in front of a mannequin of Eliza wearing a dress that once belonged to her. They pointed to it and shouted, "That's her! That's her!"

Do you believe in ghosts? **Boo!**

October Tours

Most Take a Walk New York tours cover 1 to 2 miles, last 2 to 2½ hours, and cost \$15 per person. Advance registration is required. To register and to learn the meeting place, please email the guide (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net). Please arrive a little before the start time. Tours are cancelled if nobody has registered or if the weather is extreme; call or text Laurie (917-306-2868) or Alan (917-363-4292) if in doubt.

Central Park: Marvels of the Northern Half

If you have never explored the northern end of Central Park, now is the perfect time to do so. Year-round it offers some of the city's best landscapes, including a secret garden and charming water bodies. The shore of one of those pools is planted with one-of-a-kind trees that dazzle the eye as they turn color in the autumn.



It's hard to predict exactly when the trees will peak, so Laurie is offering this tour twice this month: on **Monday, October 10 (Columbus Day)**, and on **Sunday, October 23**. The tours begin **at 1 PM**. Because different trees change color at different times, both tours are likely to be awesome. The tours include inclines, steep steps, and woodchip trails, but we'll go slowly so you can enjoy the scenery. Email Laurie (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to learn where to meet.

NEW! 400 Years of History in Less Than a Mile

Lower Broadway is like an illustrated history textbook, with the pages out of order. This stretch of Manhattan illustrates New York and American history from colonial times to the 21st century. Take a walk in the footsteps of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. See beautiful buildings, including the very first department store, and hear stories of heroes and rogues like William "Boss" Tweed.

Alan is offering this tour on **Friday, October 14, at 11 AM**. To reserve your space and to learn the meeting location, please email him at alan.r.cohen@verizon.net.

NEW! Greenwich Village: In the Footsteps of Writers

Many writers and other creative people have called Greenwich Village home. On this tour, you'll meander through charming Village streets and view a few hidden cul-de-sacs as you learn where some famous writers lived. On one of the Village's loveliest streets, which has been home to about half a dozen writers, you'll see a haunted house described in this newsletter.

Laurie gives this tour on **Saturday, October 22, at 1 PM**. To reserve your space and to learn the meeting location, email her at lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com.

Lower Washington Heights

Washington Heights is a microcosm of New York, steeped in history from the American Revolution to the assassination of Malcolm X and beyond. Discover the Hamilton connection in northern Manhattan. This vibrant residential neighborhood boasts beautiful brownstones, a brick-lined street with three-story wood-frame homes, and the oldest house in Manhattan. Will you see the ghost of Eliza here? There's only one way to know.

Join Alan on Halloween, **Monday, October 31, at 11 AM** to take a walk through Lower Washington Heights. Please email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location. Come in costume if you wish.

OCTOBER						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	10 Northern Central Park 1 PM				14 400 Years of History 11 AM	
						22 Greenwich Village 1 PM
23 Northern Central Park 1 PM						
	31 Washington Heights 11 AM					
Laurie's tours in green			Alan's tours in blue			
For reservations and meeting information, please contact the tour guide (lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net).						