

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

January 2016

Welcome to the new year! We're looking forward to sharing the history and places of New York with you in the coming months. We're making a few changes as the year begins. We now ask that you let us know you are coming on a tour. So we are no longer listing starting locations in the newsletter; you need to email us (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to learn where to meet. This winter we are offering tours on a pay-what-you-want basis. Our website will be up soon (Deborah is working on it rather than giving tours this month), and we'll be adding more tours throughout the year. But why wait? Join us to Take a Walk New York!

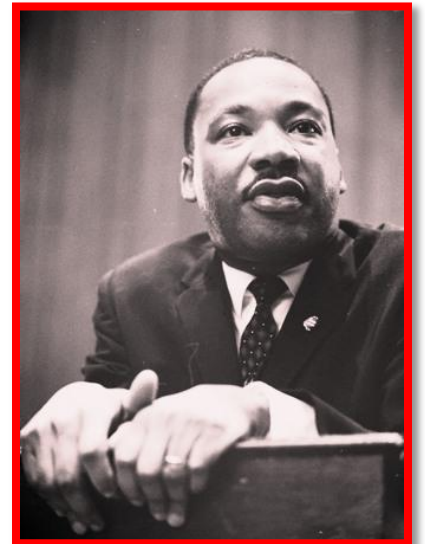
Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Alan R. Cohen

On January 18, our country celebrates the only national holiday honoring an American who was not a president, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. We may think of Dr. King's work as focused in the American South, where racism was institutionalized. But a man of such national significance of course spent time in New York City. We recall three NYC events here.

In 1958, shortly after publication of his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, Dr. King appeared at a book signing in Harlem. Without warning, a woman in the crowd stabbed him with a letter opener, narrowly missing his aorta. Doctors at Harlem Hospital performed a life-saving four-hour operation, and Dr. King lived to spread his messages of civil rights, elimination of economic injustice, and international peace until the fatal attack 10 years later.

Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C., on August 28, 1963, is one of the most important and moving speeches in American history. Earlier that year, Dr. King gave a sermon at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn Heights in which he worked with many of the same ideas. Here is a brief excerpt:



...America is essentially a dream—a dream yet unfulfilled. The substance of the dream is expressed in these sublime words: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” This is the “dream” and the first thing we notice is an amazing universalism. It does not say “some men,” it says “all men.” It does not say “all white men,” it says “all men,” which includes black men. ...It says that there are certain rights that are basic to every individual, that are neither conferred by nor derived from the State. ...This is a great dream. But as we think about this dream, we find ourselves saying that ever since the Founding Fathers of our nation dreamed the dream, America has been something of a schizophrenic personality, tragically divided against herself. On the one hand, we have proudly professed to great principles of democracy, but on the other hand, we have sadly practiced the very antithesis of those principles.

See <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/american-dream-0#> for the full text of the American Dream sermon.

An Earlier Fiery Preacher

Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), the first pastor of Plymouth Church, was considered the country’s best orator of his day. Huge crowds from Manhattan crossed the river to Brooklyn on “Beecher boats” to hear him preach. Like his sister Harriet Ward Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the pastor was a staunch abolitionist.

Like Dr. King, Beecher advocated disobedience to immoral laws. The rifles he helped provide to anti-slavery settlers in Kansas became known as “Beecher Bibles.” He held mock auctions to purchase freedom for individual slaves. The most famous was the auction of a nine-year-old girl known as Pinky. She stood beside Beecher as he raised \$900 from the pulpit to buy her from her owner. He put a ring that a congregant had placed in the collection plate on her finger and declared, “With this ring I wed thee to freedom.”

In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, followed a year later by the Voting Rights Act. Both measures were due in no small part to Dr. King’s leadership.

During what would be the last three years of his life, Dr. King shifted his focus to economic injustice and the peace movement. On April 15, 1967, Dr. King, along with Dr. Benjamin Spock and Harry Belafonte, led a march from Central Park’s Sheep Meadow to the United Nations to protest the war in Vietnam. Police estimated that a total of 100,000 to 125,000 people gathered in Central Park. Dr. King believed the total was closer to 400,000. It took four hours for the crowd to leave the park and head south. Dr. King was among the speakers at UN Plaza, but many of the marchers didn’t hear him there because they were still making their way through the streets of New York.

January Tours

These are walking tours. Most cover 1 to 2 miles and last 2 to 2½ hours. The cost usually is \$15 per person. However, during winter months, when weather may create obstacles to enjoyment of a walking tour, we are instituting a pay-what-you-want policy. Advance registration is required. Please email the guide (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to register and learn the meeting point. We don't want to keep punctual tour-takers waiting in the cold, so please plan to 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.

Brooklyn Heights

The nation's first suburb, Brooklyn Heights is notable for beautiful architecture and magnificent views of New York Harbor. Learn how this area developed in the nineteenth century, and see some of the twentieth century highlights. Walk through brownstone-lined residential streets, and stop by Plymouth Church, where Henry Ward Beecher mesmerized throngs of worshippers with his famous oration skills. Visit the site of a former brothel, the home where Truman Capote wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and a setting for *Moonstruck*. Enjoy views of bridges connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan, as well as the hip area known as DUMBO.

Alan gives this tour on **Saturday, January 9 at 11 AM**. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location.

Central Park: Highlights of the Southern Half

Central Park is glorious in every season. If the weather continues to be unusually mild, we'll take you through almost the entire southern half of the park. We'll modify our walk to accommodate freezing temperatures or icy paths. Either way, you'll see why this is one of the most visited places in New York City. Highlights include Strawberry Fields, the memorial to John Lennon; the Sheep Meadow, closed for the winter to rest the turf, once a site of large gatherings like peace demonstrations and now a favorite sunbathing and picnicking area in the summer; Bethesda Terrace, with its magnificent sculptural features; and picturesque Belvedere Castle.

Both Laurie and Alan enjoy Central Park so much that they can't stay away in the winter. Laurie will lead a tour on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, **Monday, January 18 at 1 PM**. Alan's tour is **Saturday, January 23 at 11**. Email the leader for the day you want (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.

Wide-Open Midtown Spaces: The East 50s

This is a perfect winter tour! Midtown Manhattan has surprising indoor atriums as well as beautiful outdoor spaces. Although the outside waterfalls have been turned off to prevent freezing, you can still appreciate the effect of open spaces on a busy business district. Learn why such valuable real estate has little commercial activity and why park-like settings appear inside and between giant buildings—not just in Midtown but throughout the city. Stop by landmarks like the Seagram Building and Lever House. Warm up in indoor atriums. Enjoy “pocket parks” that are popular year-round for offering calm in the midst of a fast-paced commercial district.

Laurie offers this tour on two weekend days, when most businesses are closed but the wide-open spaces still beckon: **Sunday, January 10, and Saturday, January 30, both at 1 PM**. Email her (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.

JANUARY						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						9 Brooklyn 11 AM
10 Midtown 1 PM						
	18 CP South 1 PM					23 CP South 11 AM
						30 Midtown 1 PM
Alan's tours in blue			Laurie's tours in green			
Contact the tour guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						

Book Your Custom Tour NOW

In addition to the scheduled tours described above, Take a Walk New York offers custom tours designed to fit your interests and schedule. To discuss the custom tour of your dreams, contact Alan (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) or Laurie (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com). We are extending last month's holiday special: a custom tour for a maximum of 4 hours for as many as 6 people for only \$150. A custom tour makes a perfect gift for a lover of all things New York or a unique treat for out-of-town guests. Book your tour this month, and enjoy it before the end of 2016.