

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

March 2016

One of the best ways to observe the change of seasons is to take a walk in a park. Alan Cohen is introducing a new park tour, heading to the northern reaches of Manhattan and Fort Tryon Park on two Saturday mornings this month. Laurie Lewis celebrates the first day of spring with a brisk walk through the southern half of Central Park. Alan goes to the northern end of Central Park in the last week of March, when spring is sure to be evident there. Laurie also offers her popular mansions tour, because after all, New York is so much more than parks!

Have you seen our website www.takeawalknewyork.com? We now have a Facebook page too (<https://www.facebook.com/takeawalknewyork>). If you're on Facebook, be sure to like it!

Finally, mark your calendars for the first weekend in May (Friday through Sunday). We'll be leading Jane's Walks then. We'll tell you more about it later and hope you'll join us on free walks as part of this global event.

A Venerable Old Cathedral

By Laurie Lewis

Hear mention of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the soaring Gothic structure on Fifth Avenue across from Rockefeller Center immediately comes to mind. This is not New York's original St. Patrick's Cathedral, however. The first St. Patrick's, pictured at right, was built more than 200 years ago and still stands between Mulberry, Mott, Prince, and Houston streets.



Why, you might wonder, does New York City have two Roman Catholic houses of worship by the name of St. Patrick?

When New York State along with part of New Jersey became a diocese in 1808, it needed a cathedral. The architect Joseph-François Mangin, who was working on City Hall about a mile to the south at the same time, designed the structure in what was then a rural area far removed from most city life. Befitting a cathedral, the original St. Patrick's was quite large for its day: 120 feet by 80 feet, with a vaulted ceiling rising 85 feet.

Dedicated in May 1815, that St. Patrick's Cathedral was the second Roman Catholic church in New York City (St. Peter's on Barclay Street was the first) and the second cathedral in the United States (Baltimore had the first). But it was the first house of worship in the U.S. dedicated to Ireland's patron saint. This choice reflected the majority demographic of New York's Catholic community at the time.

The city's Irish population continued to grow. The Potato Famine beginning in 1845 caused legions of starving men, women, and children to flee Ireland in hope of finding a better life in America. By 1860 New York was the city with the second largest Irish population in the world, surpassed only by Dublin. Many of these Irish immigrants worshipped at St. Patrick's.

The First St. Patrick's Day Parade

New York's first St. Patrick's Day Parade—according to most sources, the first such parade anywhere in the world—took place on March 17, 1762, before the United States even existed! The marchers were Irish soldiers serving in the British army who found themselves an ocean away from their homeland on the feast day of their patron saint. Marching with heads held high, they wore green and sang Irish songs to the accompaniment of pipes and drums. Colonists from Ireland also got together to raise a glass in honor of St. Pat and their motherland. Parades and partying have been staples of March 17 ever since.

After the New York diocese was elevated to an archdiocese in 1850, James Renwick, Jr., master of the Gothic style, was chosen as architect for a new, grander cathedral—the Fifth Avenue church we think of today when somebody mentions St. Patrick's. It took a long time to build, in part because work came to a halt during the Civil War. The new building was dedicated on May 25, 1879, although construction continued long after that.

With the Fifth Avenue building now serving as New York's Roman Catholic cathedral, the original St. Patrick's became a parish church. It is known as St. Patrick's Old Cathedral to distinguish it from its successor. And a venerable old institution it is. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI awarded it basilica status, a title that recognizes the historic significance of a Roman Catholic house of worship.

The Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral continues its two-century-old mission of serving the needs of the local Catholic community. As is common in New York, the makeup of that community has changed over time. Sunday mass now is offered in three languages: English, Spanish, and Chinese. Among those attending English mass are worshippers with Irish surnames. Some things remain the same in this constantly evolving city.

March Tours

Most Take a Walk New York tours cover 1 to 2 miles and last 2 to 2½ hours. But read the descriptions below for exceptions. The cost is \$15 per person, payable on the day of the tour.

Advance registration is required. Please email the guide (lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to register and to find out where to meet for the tour. Plan to arrive a little before the start time so we can begin promptly. Tours are cancelled if nobody has registered or if the weather is extreme; please call or text Laurie (917-306-2868) or Alan (917-363-4292) if in doubt.

NEW! Fort Tryon Park

No wonder John D. Rockefeller, Jr., wanted to build a park on this high ridge, with its commanding views of the Hudson River and the New Jersey Palisades! Designed by Frederick Olmsted, Jr., (son of the Central Park designer), Fort Tryon park features all-season gardens, lush lawns, and dramatic rock formations. The site also has a fascinating history dating way back before it became the lovely park it is today.

Alan offers this tour, which lasts about 1½ hours, on two consecutive Saturdays, **March 19** and **March 26**. Both tours start at **11 AM**. This tour involves steep inclines and stairs; please come only if you can handle somewhat challenging terrain. The tour ends at the Cloisters Museum, so you might want to visit there afterward. Please email Alan (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve a space and to learn the exact meeting place.

Mansions of Fifth Avenue

Some magnificent mansions that the cream of New York society called home about a hundred years ago remain along Fifth Avenue, although they are not necessarily residences today. Luxury apartment buildings—mansions in the sky—sprang up alongside these palatial private homes. Hear about these low-rise and high-rise mansions and the people who lived in them.

Laurie gives this tour on **Sunday, March 6**, and **Saturday, March 12**. Both tours are at **1 PM**. Email her (lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com) to reserve your place and to learn the meeting location.

Central Park: Highlights of the Southern Half

In the popular southern half of Central Park, you'll find some of the most filmed and photographed scenes of New York, including Strawberry Fields, the Sheep Meadow, Bethesda Terrace, and the Ramble. As winter gives way to spring, every day offers a new thrill: a patch of bright green breaking up the drabness of winter, a flower bud promising a burst of color in the near future, a child in an unbuttoned coat running in glee.

Join **Laurie** on an energetic walk through the southern half of Central Park on the first day of spring, **Sunday, March 20**, at **1 PM**. This walk covers more ground than most of our tours and involves some stairs and climbing. Email Laurie (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location.

Central Park: Marvels of the Northern Half

The lesser known northern end of Central Park has some of the city's greatest landscapes, as well as an interesting history. See nature spring back to life in, well, the early days of spring! Discover a secret garden (one of New York's best-kept secrets) and charming bodies of water, and take a hike in the woods. You won't believe you're in the middle of Manhattan!

For a great treat, join **Alan** on Monday, **March 28** at **11 AM** for a walk through the northern end of Central Park. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve a space and to learn the exact meeting place.

| MARCH | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----|----------------------|------|-----|-------------------------|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thur | Fri | Sat |
| 6 Mansions 1 PM | | | | | | 12 Mansions 1 PM |
| | | | | | | 19 Ft Tryon 11 AM |
| 20 CP South 1 PM | | | | | | 26 Ft Tryon 11 AM |
| | 28 CP North 11 AM | | | | | |
| Laurie's tours in green | | | Alan's tours in blue | | | |
| Contact the tour guide (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location. | | | | | | |