

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

April 2016

This month we're offering seven different tours, including a new, free walk in Central Park. We're also offering our previous Central Park tours; one covers the entire southern half of the park and the other the northern half. We visit other parks as well: Fort Tryon, at the northern end of Manhattan, and several parks on the Upper East Side. Lower Manhattan is the destination for our other two tours. One seeks out hidden gems there, and the other examines public art. We hope you'll join us to take a walk and enjoy the city as it rewards us with its spring glory.

All three of us are looking forward to leading a Jane's Walk on the first weekend in May. See the end of this newsletter for a preview of these free walks. As the weekend gets closer, check our website (www.takeawalknewyork.com) and the Jane's Walk site (<http://janewalk.org/united-states/new-york-city-ny>) for updates.

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

The Greatest Hoax

By Deborah Harley

“Awful Calamity” screamed the front-page headline on November 9, 1874. “Terrible Scenes of Mutilation.” “Savage Brutes at Large.” *The New York Herald* reported that a large number of animals had escaped from the Central Park Zoo the night before. Innocent bystanders had been brutally attacked by fierce creatures, including a jaguar, rhinoceros, and Bengal tiger. Forty-nine people were known dead; hundreds more were injured. The mayor urged all citizens to remain indoors until the animals were captured or killed. Then in the very last paragraph, in small print, the *Herald* confessed that it was all a hoax. But few people noticed those final words, and true panic gripped the city that day.

This wasn't the first time a New York daily had printed a ruse. The granddaddy of them all was an elaborate concoction printed in *The Sun* during six days of serial installments at the end of August 1835. Supposedly reprinted from the *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, the story went that



renowned British astronomer Sir John Herschel had invented a telescope so powerful that he was able to observe life on the moon. According to *The Sun*, when Herschel and his team used the telescope to explore the lunar surface, they found a vast forest, spacious plains, great mountains and deep valleys, and oceans and lakes. Animals, some resembling bison and flocks of sheep, roamed freely. Most startling of all were the human-like creatures with semi-transparent wings that ran from the shoulder to the leg. These beings appeared to converse with one another. The astronomers marveled how all the lunar creatures seemed to be living in a “universal state of amity.”

Media for the Masses

Before the 1830s, only the affluent could afford a daily newspaper, which sold for six cents an issue. Not that anyone else wanted to buy one. The newspapers of that day were stodgy sheets covering subjects such as market conditions and ship schedules. The papers were filled with legal notices and verbatim congressional speeches.

Benjamin Day, a young journeyman printer, started *The Sun* in 1833, launching a new type of newspaper called the penny press. He wrote for and about the ordinary New Yorker and made the newspaper cheap enough for the average working man: a penny. Day concentrated on local news and sensational stories that would interest a mass audience. He sold the papers in a new way, too, using newsboys to peddle them on the street by shouting out the latest headlines.

The Sun became a quick success. Within four months, its circulation reached 4,000; it soared to 15,000 a year later. During the moon hoax series, circulation reached 24,000, making *The Sun*, at least for a short time, the largest selling newspaper in the world.

New York newspapers and magazines gave the story extensive coverage. Soon it spread up and down the eastern seaboard and as far west as Cincinnati. Within a month the story made its way to Europe and was translated into several languages. Everywhere it appeared it generated great excitement and speculation. With its reach and ability to influence the public, the hoax was on the way to becoming the world’s first mass media event.

The Sun never admitted the hoax, even after it was exposed as a fraud. Although many newspapers, including *The Sun*’s archrival *The New York Herald*, had been skeptical of the revelations, many people believed that the articles were true. The Great Moon Hoax was written about, analyzed, reprinted, and exaggerated for decades afterwards. It is considered one of the first published examples of science fiction.

April Tours

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

Advance registration is required. Please email the guide (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com, alan.r.cohen@verizon.net, or धारley@moonspray.com) to register and to learn the meeting place of the tour you would like to take. 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; call or text Laurie (917-306-2868), Alan (917-363-4292), or Deborah (347-620-2128) if in doubt.

Central Park: Highlights of the Southern Half

The popular southern half of Central Park has some of the most filmed and photographed scenes of New York, including Strawberry Fields, the Sheep Meadow, Bethesda Terrace, and the Ramble. As spring bursts forth, every day offers a new thrill. It's a treat you don't want to miss!

Join Alan on **Saturday, April 2 at 11 AM** for a walk through the southern half of Central Park. This tour covers a lot of ground and involves some stairs and climbing. Please email Alan (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to register and to learn the meeting location.

Hidden Treasures of the Financial District

Walking through the canyons of Wall Street, you can easily miss some gems hidden in plain sight, including relics of colonial times and parks in unlikely places. Discover these secrets, and you'll see why the Financial District has a lot more going for it than stock trades and megadeals.

Laurie gives this tour on **Sunday, April 10 at 1 PM**. Email her (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to reserve a place on the tour 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. Discover an amazing 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 Manhattan!

Laurie leads this walk through her favorite part of Central Park on **Saturday, April 16 at 1 PM**. Email her (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the exact meeting place.

Parks of the East 90s

Besides the large parks where visitors can escape from the urban scene, New York City boasts many small neighborhood parks. They are as different as the communities they serve. You'll see that on a walk through two adjacent neighborhoods, Yorkville and Carnegie Hill.

Join [Laurie](#) on **Sunday, April 17** at **1 PM** to explore the parks of the East 90s. Email her (lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com) to reserve a spot and to learn the meeting location.

Fort Tryon Park

It's 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. And the site has a fascinating history to boot!

[Alan](#) leads this 1½-hour walk on **Saturday, April 23** at **11 AM**. It involves steep inclines and stairs. The tour ends at the Cloisters Museum, so you might want to visit there afterward. Email [Alan](#) (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve a space and to learn the meeting place.

NEW! The Romantic Park

Central Park is more than just a pretty face. It was designed to reflect mid-nineteenth century spiritual and political aspirations—a movement called Romanticism. See how the park continues to embody this philosophy as we walk through some of the best-known areas, including the Sheep Meadow, the Mall, Bethesda Terrace, Bow Bridge, and the Ramble.

Join [Deborah](#) to see the romantic features of Central Park on **Sunday, April 24** at **2 PM**. Email her (धारley@moonspray.com) to reserve a spot on this FREE tour and to learn where to meet.

Public Art of Lower Manhattan

You don't need to go to a museum to see great art. New York has a lot of outdoor public art, and it's available to enjoy at any time. Explore public art on this interactive tour in Lower Manhattan.

[Alan](#) offers this tour on **Monday, April 25** at **11 AM**. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to make a reservation and to learn the meeting place.

A P R I L						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						2 Central Park S 11 AM
10 Financial District 1 PM						16 Central Park N 1 PM
17 E 90s 1 PM						23 Ft Tryon 11 AM
24 Romantic Park 2 PM	25 Public Art 11 AM					
M A Y—Jane’s Walk						
					6 42 nd St 1 PM	7 Central Park 8:30 PM
8 Washington Heights 12 noon						
Green: Laurie’s tours Brown: Deb’s tours Blue: Alan’s tours Contact the tour guide (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com , dharley@moonspray.com , or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to register for a tour and to learn the starting location.						

Jane’s Walk—May 6, 7, and 8

Jane’s Walk is a global event held annually the first weekend in May. The event is named for Jane Jacobs, an urban activist born 100 years ago who spent much of her life in Greenwich Village. So it is fitting that New York hosts the largest Jane’s Walk festival in the world. Last year more than 200 walks explored all five boroughs over the course of three days (Friday through Sunday).

All Jane’s Walks are free, and registration is not required. These outings are meant to be walking conversations. You might talk with your leader and fellow walkers about how a neighborhood has changed or what is in store for it. You might hear about and perhaps meet some local residents. Anything can happen on a Jane’s Walk!

See the next page for a description of the walks we are leading. Some information, such as starting time, length of the walk, and other details, could change. For updates, please check our website (www.takeawalknewyork.com) or <http://janewalk.org/united-states/new-york-city-ny>. We hope you’ll join us on a Jane’s Walk!

Green Spaces and Great Places on 42nd Street

A Jane's Walk led by Laurie Lewis on Friday, May 6, starting at 1 PM (approx. 2½ hrs)

Meet at the northwest corner of 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue in front of Bank of America

Laurie will lead a Jane's Walk that explores 42nd Street from Sixth Avenue all the way to the East River. This busy commercial area has wonderful parks, some almost unknown, and iconic buildings, including Grand Central and the Chrysler Building. You'll discover words of wisdom embedded in the sidewalk and a plain-looking office building bursting with plants. You may even meet a famous 42nd Street resident if he has returned from his long absence.

Central Park at Night

A Jane's Walk led by Deborah Harley on Saturday, May 7, starting at 8:30 PM (approx. 1½ hrs)

Meet on Fifth Avenue between 59th and 60th Streets, in front of the statue of General Sherman

For many years, few people dared venture into Central Park after dark. But the city has changed, and more and more people are discovering the pleasures awaiting the nighttime visitor. With Deborah as a guide, enjoy the serenity, the ethereal lights, the activity of nocturnal animals, and the company of other brave souls as you experience the mystery and magic of Central Park at night. Please bring a light; cell phones are perfect.

Preservation and Change in Washington Heights

A Jane's Walk led by Alan Cohen on Sunday, May 8, starting at 12 noon (approx. 1 hr)

Meet at Mitchel Square (W 167th Street between Broadway and St. Nicholas), at the World War I memorial statue

Washington Heights is a microcosm of New York, steeped in history from the American Revolution to the assassination of Malcolm X and beyond. The neighborhood is a vibrant refuge for immigrants and migrants and a place where the desire to preserve the past clashes with present and future needs of the community. On this 1-hour walk, Alan will introduce you to the Audubon Ballroom, the Jumel Historic District, and the Morris–Jumel Mansion. At the end of the walk, 20 registrants (first come, first served) may take a 1-hour docent-led tour of the mansion. (The Morris–Jumel Mansion asks for a \$5 contribution, reduced from the usual \$10.)