

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

June 2016

June is a great time to take a walk in New York City. We hope you'll join us this month as we explore parks, residential neighborhoods, and public art.

Have you seen our website, www.takeawalknewyork.com? We have a Facebook page too (<https://www.facebook.com/takeawalknewyork>). Be sure to "like" it!

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

Birth of the Gay Rights Movement

By Laurie Lewis

Look at the Stonewall Inn, and you can see traces of its origin as two adjacent horse stables. Architecturally, the building is as uninteresting as they come. It is not the façade that spurred the recent call to declare the Stonewall Inn a national monument. No, it is what happened in June 1969.

Then, as today, the Stonewall Inn was a well-known gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. Police raids on gay bars were common in those days. Customers who did not have identification or who were dressed "wrong"—in drag or without at least three items of gender-appropriate clothing—would be arrested.

Usually, bar-goers cooperated with the police. But not in the wee hours of June 28, 1969. Police conducting a raid on the Stonewall Inn that night let customers with identification go. Rather than leave, those customers stayed outside the bar. Soon they were joined by others out late on this Saturday night, and the crowd swelled into a mob. Civilians clashed with police when patrol wagons came to haul away the detained customers. Some police, fearful for their safety, retreated into the bar. The angry mob battered the building until more police, in full riot gear, arrived to rescue their colleagues trapped inside, and they arrested anyone they could.



Of course, Twitter did not exist yet, but the news spread fast. For several nights, huge crowds gathered outside the Stonewall Inn and spilled onto nearby streets, shouting for gay rights. Each demonstration led to more clashes with the police and more arrests.

To put what became known as the Stonewall Rebellion in context, the late 1960s was an era of public protests, minority empowerment, and consciousness raising. The birth of the gay rights movement coincided, more or less, with peak activity in the black civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement. One difference was that an individual's identity as a black person or a woman was obvious. The Stonewall Rebellion encouraged many closeted homosexuals to come "out" and reveal their sexual orientation.

Gay Street

Although only two short blocks from the Stonewall Inn, Gay Street neither was named for nor lent its name to the group of people who frequented the bar.

The origin of the name Gay Street is difficult to trace. An R. Gay advertised a horse for sale in the area in a 1775 newspaper, which fits with the original purpose of this street: an alley with stables for nearby wealthy residents. A less likely possibility is that the street was named for abolitionist and editor Sidney Howard Gay. However, he would have been a teenager when the alley was widened for residential use in the 1830s and officially named Gay Street.

Despite its small size, Gay Street has multiple claims to fame. When speakeasies occupied the street during Prohibition, Mayor Jimmy Walker made a home for his mistress at 12 Gay Street. A generation later, puppeteer Frank Parris created Howdy Doody in the same building. The McKenny sisters moved into 14 Gay Street in 1935, and Ruth McKenny wrote stories for *The New Yorker* that were later published as the book *My Sister Eileen*. A neighbor at 18 Gay Street was Mary McCarthy, whose 1963 novel *The Group* was a long-running best-seller beloved by many in the women's liberation movement. Both books became movies. Across the street, civil rights activist William Kunstler kept his law office.

By the way, the term "gay" to refer to male homosexuals was in use by the 1920s, long before the Stonewall Rebellion.

A year after the Stonewall riots, a march began in front of the famous gay bar to celebrate "Christopher Street Liberation Day." It became an annual event, not just in New York but in other cities, too, with a name reflecting the emotions of many original protestors and current marchers: the Gay Pride parade.

June 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 (lewislaurie2nyc@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.

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 along 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 **Monday, June 6, at 11 AM**. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) 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. Discover charming bodies of water and a secret garden, and take a hike in the woods. You won't believe you're in the middle of Manhattan!

For a great treat, join Laurie on **Saturday, June 11, at 1 PM** for a walk through the northern end of Central Park. This area of the park is more rugged than the southern end, and the tour includes some inclines, steep steps, and woodchip trails. If you can handle the terrain, please email Laurie (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the meeting place.

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 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 this area was the lovely park it is today.

[Alan](#) offers this tour, which will be about 1 hour long, on **Thursday, June 16, at 11 AM**. This tour involves inclines and stairs; please come only if you can handle the terrain. The tour ends at the Cloisters Museum; you might want to plan 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 100 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 buildings and the people who lived in them: New York's own rich and famous.

[Laurie](#) gives this tour twice this month on **Saturday, June 18, at 1 PM** and on **Tuesday, June 21, at 5:45 PM** (taking advantage of the second longest day of the year). Email Laurie (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location.

Public Art of Lower Manhattan

You don't need to go to a museum to see great art. This interactive tour includes some of the most interesting and varied art in New York City. The artworks are as old as the doors of Trinity Church and as new as the SeaGlass Carousel. Tell us what you like most about this public art.

[Alan](#) gives this tour on **Monday, June 20, at 11 AM**. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location.

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 idealism as we walk through some of the best-known areas, including the Sheep Meadow, the Mall, Bethesda Terrace, Bow Bridge, and the Ramble.

Deborah gives this tour on **Saturday, June 25, at 2 PM**. This tour is offered on a pay-what-you-want basis. Email Deborah (धारley@moonspray.com) to reserve a space and to learn where to meet.

JUNE						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	6 Brooklyn 11 AM					11 Central Park North 1 PM
				16 Ft Tryon 11 AM		18 Mansions 1 PM
	20 Public Art 11 AM	21 Mansions 5:45 PM				25 Romantic Park 2 PM
Alan's tours in blue Laurie's tours in green Deb's tours in brown						
Contact the tour guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net , lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com , or धारley@moonspray.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						

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