

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

July 2016

Whether you're a New Yorker or a visitor, we can show you the city as you've never seen it before. Join us on a tour this month, and you'll find out for yourself.

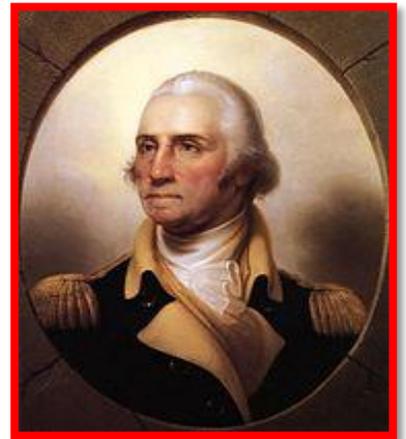
If you don't see a tour listed when you want to take it, ask us about a custom tour. Use the contact form on our website, www.takeawalknewyork.com. You also could send an email to takeawalknewyork@gmail.com or to one of us personally; our individual contact information appears on page 3 of this newsletter.

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

July in the City, 1776

By Alan R. Cohen

July 1776 was a vexing month for General George Washington, who had arrived in New York in the spring. War against the world's then most powerful army and navy seemed inevitable, and the loosely federated colonies lacked the personnel and resources to be victorious. Some colonies, including New York, were dependent on trade with England and had strong pro-British and pro-Royal sentiments. While some colonists were proud to be under British rule and protection, other New Yorkers fervently argued for independence and harassed their loyalist neighbors and British soldiers, sometimes destroying or defacing their property. Mob action became increasingly common and was denounced by loyalists as well as by reasonable men who sought independence.



For months, since fighting against the British began near Boston, New Yorkers had been fleeing their city, and many houses now stood empty. In late June, British reinforcements began to arrive in large numbers. The city found itself in the midst of a building boom: not houses, but trenches, barricades, and forts to defend against the British onslaught. Welcome to summer in the city, July 1776–style.

On July 4, Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence and printed copies to be distributed and read throughout the new United States. General Washington ordered that the Declaration be read to troops and civilians in New York on July 9 at the Common, then public land for pasturing cattle and now City Hall Park. Hearing this document of the new nation, the crowd became stirred with anti-Royal sentiment. Many then marched to Bowling Green, at the southern tip of Manhattan, to express their disdain for the King of England.

King George Loses His Head

In 1766, in recognition of repeal of the odious Stamp Act, which taxed colonists to help debt-ridden Britain pay for their defense, New York's colonial General Assembly commissioned a lead equestrian statue to honor King George III. The gilded statue, erected in Bowling Green, depicted King George in Roman garb, laurels on his head. A decorative fence with a crown atop each wrought-iron post was placed around the park.

Ten years later, American sentiment had changed. Once considered a benevolent ruler, by 1776 King George was viewed as a tyrant. After the Declaration of Independence was read on July 9, a mob toppled the Bowling Green statue, decapitated it, and chopped the rest into pieces small enough to transport. Lead from the statue went to a Connecticut foundry to be turned into bullets. Not all the pieces made it; chunks may have been taken as souvenirs, some by loyalists aghast at how their king was being treated.

According to one urban legend, King George's damaged head was impaled on a spike in Upper Manhattan. In other versions, loyalists rescued the head and sent it to England. Although the fate of the head is unknown, some pieces of the statue still exist. A few are in the New-York Historical Society.

The fence at Bowling Green is the original one; it is the oldest fence in New York. It is still rough where the crowns were torn off in the passion of the moment.

On July 12, the British sent two warships up the Hudson to test American defenses and to display the might of the Royal Navy. The only casualty was an inexperienced American gun crew whose cannon blew up. The unscathed British warships sailed up the river and back, firing several volleys into the city, causing more concern than actual damage.

The British in charge of the invading forces met with General Washington to offer terms of peace and amnesty for the rebels. Washington declined the offer.

The Battle of Brooklyn (also called the Battle of Long Island) began in August 1776. Although the British routed the American forces from the city, it was also a victory, of sorts, for General Washington. After retreating from New York, he eventually was able to shape his ragtag army into a disciplined force that could win other battles and, in the long run, win the war.

July 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. Please email the guide (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com or alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to register and to learn where the tour begins. Plan to arrive a little early so we can start promptly. 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.

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 **Sunday, July 3, 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 best landscapes, as well as an interesting history from early American days. 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!

Celebrate Independence Day with Laurie by taking a walk in the northern part of Central Park. The tour, on **Monday, July 4, at 1 PM**, includes inclines, steep steps, and woodchip trails. If you can handle the terrain, email Laurie (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to learn the meeting place.

Green Spaces and Great Places on 42nd Street

On this tour through a busy commercial area, from Bryant Park all the way to the East River, see wonderful parks and iconic buildings, including Grand Central and the Chrysler Building. You'll discover words of wisdom embedded in the sidewalk and a plain office building bursting with plants. You're guaranteed to fall in love with this side of 42nd Street.

Laurie gives this walk on **Friday, July 15, at 1 PM**. Email her (lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the exact meeting place.

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. The vibrant residential neighborhood has beautiful brownstones, a brick-lined street with three-story wood-frame homes, and the oldest house in Manhattan. Discover a neighborhood that is both untouched by time and simultaneously redefining itself for present-day residents.

Alan gives this tour on **Sunday, July 17, at 11 AM**. Email him (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net) to reserve your space and to learn the meeting location.

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, July 24, at 12 noon** to explore the parks of the East 90s. Email her (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a spot and to learn the meeting location.

JULY						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
3 Public Art 11 AM	4 Central Park North 1 PM					
					15 42 nd St 1 PM	
17 Washington Heights 11 AM						
24 E 90s 12 noon						
Alan's tours in blue			Laurie's tours in green			
Please contact the tour guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						