

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

March 2017

Did you enjoy the taste of spring in February? March should present us with many more such days. Because the best place to detect early signs of spring is in the city's parks, we offer several scheduled tours this month that explore parks. Another scheduled tour takes you on the route of ticker tape parades, the topic of the feature story below, but in the opposite direction.

In addition to scheduled tours, we offer custom tours, where you tell us what you'd like to do and when. Contact us at takeawalknewyork@gmail.com to plan a custom tour. The more time we have to prepare a custom tour, the more you'll enjoy it.

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

Ticker Tape Parades: An Ancient Tradition, New York Style

By Alan R. Cohen

Q: When is it acceptable to throw trash at a head of state, an astronaut, or a winning team?

A: Whenever New York City honors one with a parade, usually along Lower Broadway, also known as the Canyon of Heroes.

In ancient times, a victorious Roman general might be feted with a parade, and spectators would throw rose petals. New York City has often hosted parades to celebrate a civic accomplishment or holiday. But instead of throwing rose petals, spectators throw something uniquely New York: ticker tape.

The custom of throwing ticker tape during parades in New York City began spontaneously at the October 26, 1886, celebration to commemorate the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty.

Photo: Ticker tape parade honoring crew of Apollo 11, August 13, 1969. Photo by NASA/Bill Taub.



Ticker tape was invented in the 1860s by Edward A. Calahan, who piggybacked on the relatively new telegraph to create the first electronic digital information system. Ticker tape machines replaced runners who scurried between Wall Street offices with the latest stock prices. At first the system used Morse code, but in 1869 Thomas Edison refined stock tickers to use an alphanumeric system.

When ticker tape became obsolete by the 1960s, it was uncertain whether the parade tradition would continue. Mayor John V. Lindsay ultimately decided to hold parades to honor the moon landings and the Mets 1969 World Series championship. Lindsay started the custom of riding with the honorees rather than awaiting their arrival at City Hall. The absence of ticker tape provided an opportunity to repurpose tons of wastepaper, which could be cut into strips similar to ticker tape or chopped more finely into confetti. New York found a way to turn garbage into our own version of rose petals!

Some Ticker Tape Parade Factoids

- The most frequently honored person: explorer Richard E. Byrd (3 parades)
- The most frequently honored sports team: NY Yankees (9 parades)
- The only musician honored: pianist Van Cliburn, in 1958
- The only scientist honored: Albert Einstein, in 1921
- The most trash collected: over 5,400 tons, after the Victory over Japan parade in 1946
- Where to find names of honorees and the date of their parade: on plaques in sidewalks of Lower Broadway

Since 1886, there have been 206 ticker tape parades. The largest, on January 12, 1946, celebrated the Allied victory of World War II. This massive parade featured tanks, self-propelled howitzers, an aerial fly-by, and nearly 13,000 troops. The parade route was different from the usual path up Broadway, from Battery Park to City Hall. This parade went up Fifth Avenue, starting at Washington Square and extending four miles to 106th Street.

New Yorkers, in their celebratory zeal, have sometimes done odd things. During the 2012 parade to honor the New York Giants, winners of Super Bowl XLVI, spectators tossed footballs at them for autographing, and the athletes obliged by signing the balls and tossing them back. Marriage proposals were thrown to Olympic athletes in a 1984 parade. In the early 20th century, an overly enthusiastic parade-viewer seemed intent on tossing pages from a telephone book but neglected to rip them out first, knocking a bystander unconscious.

References

<http://www.downtownny.com/canyon-of-heroes>

<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-ticker-tape-parades>

<http://time.com/3950093/ticker-tape-parades/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ticker-tape_parades_in_New_York_City

March Tours

Take a Walk New York tours usually cover 1 to 2 miles, last 2 to 2½ hours, and cost \$25 per person. Advance registration is required. To register and to learn the meeting place, email the guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com). Please arrive a little before the start time. Tours are cancelled if nobody has registered or if the weather is extreme; if in doubt, call or text Alan (917-363-4292) or Laurie (917-306-2868).

Fort Tryon Park

Built on a high ridge with commanding views of the Hudson River and New Jersey Palisades, 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. Take a walk to see what's blooming in early March.

Alan offers this tour, which is about 1½ hours long and ends at but does not include the Cloisters Museum, on **Sunday, March 5, at 11 AM**. The route includes inclines and stairs. To book the tour and to learn the meeting place, email Alan at alan.r.cohen@verizon.net.

400 Years of History in Less Than a Mile

Lower Broadway is like an illustrated history textbook, with the pages out of order. This stretch of Manhattan illustrates American history from colonial times to the 21st century. Take a walk in the footsteps of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. See beautiful buildings, including the very first department store, and hear stories of heroes and rogues like William "Boss" Tweed. This tour takes you on the route of most ticker tape parades, except you'll end where the parades usually begin (and nobody will be throwing paper tidbits at you!).

Alan is offering this tour on **Sunday, March 12, at 11 AM**. Remember to change your clock to daylight savings time the night before so you don't miss the tour! To reserve your space and to learn the meeting location, please send an email to alan.r.cohen@verizon.net.

Central Park: Highlights of the Southern Half

In the popular southern half of Central Park, you'll recognize some of the most filmed and photographed sights in New York, including Strawberry Fields, the Sheep Meadow, and Bethesda Terrace. We'll be looking for signs of spring as the park turns green. Robins? Daffodils?

Take a walk with **Laurie** through the southern half of Central Park on **Sunday, March 19, at 1 PM**. Please email the guide (lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to register and to learn the meeting location.

Central Park: Marvels of the Northern Half

The northern end of Central Park features some of the city's most surprising landscapes. Did you know we have woods, complete with a lovely (and newly restored) creek, in the middle of Manhattan? Have you ever visited New York's own Secret Garden? These are just a few of the treats that await you as you take a walk through the lesser known part of Central Park.

Laurie offers this tour on **Saturday, March 25, at 1 PM**. The tour includes slightly challenging terrain, but we'll go slowly so you can savor the views. To reserve a spot and to learn where to meet, please email **Laurie** at lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com.

M A R C H						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
5 Ft Tryon 11 AM						
12 400 Years of History 11 AM						
19 Central Park S 1 PM						25 Central Park N 1 PM
Please contact the tour guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						