

# Tours and Tales of New York

*An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York*

June 2017

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*Summer is here, and the longer days of shirt-sleeve weather make it a perfect time to take a walk in New York. If you can't join us for a scheduled tour, consider a custom tour. Please contact us at [takeawalknewyork@gmail.com](mailto:takeawalknewyork@gmail.com) to plan a custom tour that meets your needs, interests, and timetable.*

*Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley*

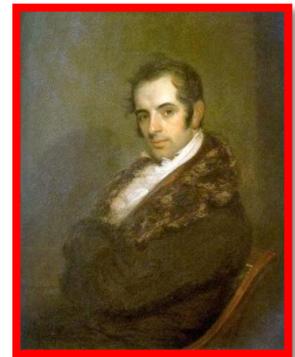
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## How New York Got the Nickname “Gotham”

By Deborah Harley

Have you ever wondered how New York City ended up with the nickname “Gotham”? The name can be traced to Washington Irving’s satirical magazine, *Salmagundi*.

Irving co-wrote the *Salmagundi* periodicals with his brother William and James Kirke Paulding. The series of twenty satirical essays, which were published in 1807 and 1808, lampooned New York politics and culture. *Salmagundi* repeatedly referred to New York as Gotham, as in the “the renowned city of Gotham” or “the wonder loving city of Gotham.” The scathing commentary of the mores of fashionable New Yorkers depicted a city filled with pompous yet dim-witted people.



Washington Irving  
(by John Wesley Jarvis, 1809)

Gotham was then and still is a real English village not far from Sherwood Forest in the county of Nottinghamshire. In Old English, the name referred to a place with goats. Tales of Gotham, a village of eccentric behavior and folly, had circulated since the twelfth century. The first written account was a pamphlet titled *Merry Tales of the Mad Men of Gottam* (1565). It described, among other things, a group of men who sat in a circle and whose legs became so intermingled that they couldn't identify which legs belonged to whom when it came time to stand. Another story told of a man who had grown tired of carrying a new three-legged kettle back from market. Upon realizing that the pot had one more leg than he did, he put down the kettle and insisted that it walk the rest of the way home on its own three legs.

Given such unflattering associations with the name Gotham, it's a wonder that New Yorkers took so readily to the moniker. They adopted it because the villagers of old Gotham were actually quite clever.

The story goes that during the early 1200s, King John of England—known as England's evil king and often called the worst king in English history—planned to travel towards Nottingham by way of Gotham. At the time, any road traveled by the king had to be made a public road. The villagers did not want to lose any of their land to a public road, and they denied the king access through their town. The king became enraged and swore vengeance. But the townsfolk had a plan. When the king's knights arrived at Gotham, they found the people engaged in the most idiotic behavior. Here was someone pouring water into a bottomless tub. There was a fellow painting green apples red. And that guy over there was trying to drown an eel in a pool of water. The knights reported back to the king that the inhabitants of Gotham were crazy. Believing that insanity was contagious, King John avoided the town.

There is an old English adage “More fools pass through Gotham than remain in it.” Such echoes of beguiling trickery and cleverness made the nickname acceptable—even desirable—to nineteenth and twentieth century New Yorkers, and they eagerly adopted it.



## Superheroes' Cities

Bill Finger, co-creator of DC Comics' Batman, named the superhero's home Gotham City. He picked the name of the fictional town by leafing through a Manhattan phone book, where he spotted the name of a store, Gotham Jewelers.

Gotham City is not necessarily New York. Many sources place Gotham in New Jersey and locate Superman's Metropolis across the bay in Delaware. But there may be a more direct connection between these two imaginary cities and New York. According to Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, authors of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, a Batman editor said that Gotham City represents New York's dark side, while Metropolis embodies its “cheerier” side.

# June Tours

*Most Take a Walk New York tours 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 ([lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com) or [alan.r.cohen@verizon.net](mailto:alan.r.cohen@verizon.net)). 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 Laurie (917-306-2868) or Alan (917-363-4292).*

## 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 there are woods, complete with a lovely (and newly restored) creek with waterfalls, 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 less crowded part of Central Park.

Join Laurie to take a walk through the northern half of Central Park on **Saturday, June 10, at 1 PM**. To reserve a spot and to learn where to meet, email her at [lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2rnyc@gmail.com).

## 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 present. 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.

Alan is offering this tour on **Sunday, June 11, at 10 AM**. To reserve your space and to learn the meeting location, please email him at [alan.r.cohen@verizon.net](mailto:alan.r.cohen@verizon.net).

Looking for a perfect gift for Father's Day or graduation?  
Having out of town visitors this summer?

Consider a custom tour! See [www.takeawalknewyork.com](http://www.takeawalknewyork.com) for ideas, and email us at [takeawalknewyork@gmail.com](mailto:takeawalknewyork@gmail.com) to start planning a New York experience that's sure to please.

## Mansions of Fifth Avenue

Some magnificent mansions built about a hundred years ago remain on Fifth Avenue on the Upper East Side. They are interspersed among luxury apartment buildings—mansions in the sky. Hear about these palatial homes and the people who lived in them—New York City’s own rich and famous.

Laurie is offering this tour twice this month: on **Saturday, June 17, at 1 PM**, and on **Tuesday, June 20, at 5:45 PM**. The latter walk takes advantage of one of the longest days of the year, as the official start of summer is the next day. To reserve a place on this tour and to learn the meeting location, email the guide at [lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com).

## Green Spaces and Great Places on 42nd Street

Walking from Bryant Park all the way to the East River, you’ll discover parks among famous Midtown buildings. Learn why so many “pocket parks” occupy prime Manhattan real estate. Make a brief visit to several buildings, including the public library, Grand Central, and the Chrysler Building. End by discovering Tudor City, the first residential skyscraper complex in the nation, which offers both green spaces and interesting architecture.

Laurie leads this walk as a prelude to Fourth of July weekend, on **Friday, June 30, at 1 PM**. To reserve a space and to learn the exact meeting place, email her at [lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com).

JUNE						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						10 Central Park N 1 PM
11 400 Years of History 10 AM						17 Mansions 1 PM
		20 Mansions 5:45 PM				
					30 42nd St 1 PM	
Please contact the tour guide ( <a href="mailto:alan.r.cohen@verizon.net">alan.r.cohen@verizon.net</a> or <a href="mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com">lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com</a> ) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						