

# Tours and Tales of New York

*An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York*

August 2017

---

*It's the last full month of summer. Before the season slips by, be sure to take a walk in New York with us. 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. The more time we have to prepare a custom tour, the more you'll enjoy it.*

*Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley*

---

## The Ghost Clinic of Greenwich Village

By Laurie Lewis

Along the winding streets of Greenwich Village, situated between nineteenth-century townhouses now selling for eight figures and the Stonewall Inn (the birthplace of the Gay Rights movement), is a red brick building on a triangular plot. The building bears a plaque identifying it as the Northern Dispensary. The low fence around it is always locked, and nothing is visible through the windows. It is as desolate as a saloon in a Wild West ghost town.



The Northern Dispensary has been here since 1831, when Greenwich Village was beginning to develop as a residential community. The first people to make their homes this far north in the city were well-to-do. They were followed by tradesmen and servants who catered to their needs. Soon others looking for affordable housing filled the streets of the Village.

They may have found decent housing here, but affordable health care was a different matter. The nearest option was the New York Infirmary near City Hall, a time-consuming trip without a good public transportation system. The city came to the rescue, deeding the triangular plot in the Village for health care for the poor. The facility was named the Northern Dispensary because it was at the northernmost border of the city.

For well over a hundred years, the Northern Dispensary treated those who could not otherwise afford health care. Edgar Allan Poe visited the clinic in 1837, complaining of a head cold. The overnight facilities were so well used that the top story was added about 20 years after the building went up. But by the mid-twentieth century, as other affordable health care options became available, the Northern Dispensary was no longer the first choice for medical treatment. Inexpensive dental care became the clinic's main offering.

Then came the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. All potential modes of transmission of this deadly disease were uncertain in the early days, leading some health care personnel to refuse treatment of patients with AIDS or HIV, the virus that causes it. When the Northern Dispensary dental clinic denied care to two men with HIV, the outcome was costly: fines, a lawsuit, and the shut-down of the Northern Dispensary in 1989.

Since then, the building has had no permanent occupants. The main reason is the nearly 200-year-old deed that requires the site to be used only for medical care for the poor. Other deed restrictions ban abortions and anything obscene.

In 1998 an eccentric real estate tycoon named William Gottlieb purchased the abandoned building. He frequently bought property in the Village, only to leave it unoccupied. He died a year after buying the Northern Dispensary. His real estate firm, now managed by his nephew, has no plans for the building that once looked after the health of tens of thousands of New Yorkers who had no other place to go.

## The Corner of Waverly Place and Waverly Place

Greenwich Village is famous for streets that do not conform to the rectangular grid found elsewhere in the city. Perhaps the oddest configuration is at one corner of the roughly triangle-shaped Northern Dispensary, where Waverly Place intersects Waverly Place. Those are the two streets seen in the picture. As a result of this strange intersection, two of the three sides of the Northern Dispensary are on Waverly Place.



Adding to the amusement, Waverly Place was not named for someone called Waverly. It honors the Scottish author Sir Walter Scott, who wrote *Waverley* and other historical novels. For some unknown reason, the second e was dropped in the Village street name.

# August 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 ([lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@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).*

## Mansions of Fifth Avenue

Some magnificent mansions built about a hundred years ago still stand 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.

To take advantage of the long summer days, Laurie is offering this tour on **Friday, August 4, at 5:00 PM**. To reserve a place and to learn the meeting location, email her at [lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com).

## Hidden Treasures of the Financial District

Walking through the canyons of Wall Street, you can easily miss gems hidden in plain sight, including relics of the Dutch and English colonial periods and park-like oases. Discover these secrets while seeing major attractions like the New York Stock Exchange, the *Charging Bull* statue, and the recent addition staring down the bull, *Fearless Girl*. You’ll realize that the Financial District has a lot more going for it than stock trades and megadeals.

Laurie offers this tour on **Saturday, August 12, at 1 PM**. To reserve a spot on the tour and to learn the meeting location, email her at [lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com).

We also offer custom tours. See our website, [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.

## Fort Tryon Park

The high ground in Upper Manhattan that appealed to the new American army for a defensive fort later attracted millionaires who wanted to build castles on the Hudson. We'll walk from the site of Fort Washington to Fort Tryon Park, exploring vestiges of a Gilded Age estate. We'll take in the Heather Garden and the park's extraordinary Hudson River views. You'll hear about a fearless woman who was a good shot with a cannon, a self-indulgent tycoon, and a very generous Rockefeller. We'll end at the Cloisters Museum, which you may want to visit on your own.

Alan leads this 1½-hour tour on **Sunday, August 13, at 10 AM**. To make a reservation and to learn the meeting location, please email him at [alan.r.cohen@verizon.net](mailto:alan.r.cohen@verizon.net).

## Greenwich Village: In the Footsteps of Writers

On this tour, we'll walk through the western part of Greenwich Village, which has been home to many writers and other creative people. Meander through charming Village streets and peek into hidden cul-de-sacs as you learn where some famous writers lived and spent time with friends.

Laurie gives this tour on **Sunday, August 20, at 1 PM**. To sign up and to learn the starting point, email the guide at [lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com](mailto:lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com).

### Central Park in Bronze

We have collaborated with two other tour guides to create [www.centralparkinbronze.com](http://www.centralparkinbronze.com), a website devoted to the statues and other ornamental artwork in the park. The website includes:

- Multiple photos of more than 70 pieces of art
- A brief write-up about the artist or the work
- Maps showing the location of each piece

Enjoy a virtual tour of the art of Central Park, or take a walk with the website open on your phone to learn about the statues you see. Or inquire about a custom tour of statues on the Contact form on the website.

[www.centralparkinbronze.com](http://www.centralparkinbronze.com)

## 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 [Alan](#) to take a walk through the northern half of Central Park on **Wednesday, August 23, at 10 AM**. To reserve a spot and to learn where to meet, email him at [alan.r.cohen@verizon.net](mailto:alan.r.cohen@verizon.net).

AUGUST						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
					4 Mansions 5 PM	
						12 Financial District 1 PM
13 Ft Tryon 10 AM						
20 Village Writers 1 PM			23 Central Park North Half 10 AM			
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.						