

Tours and Tales of New York

An email newsletter of Take a Walk New York

September 2017

September signifies the return to school, the start of autumn—a time for renewed beginnings. In recent years, it has also become the time to remember victims of the worst terrorist attacks in U.S. history. Below we recall an earlier catastrophe attributed to terrorists. We offer you two opportunities this month to take a walk to the site of that incident to see the lasting scars.

We also have other scheduled tours this month. If you can't join us for a scheduled tour, consider a custom tour. Contact us at takeawalknewyork@gmail.com to plan a custom tour that meets your needs, interests, and timetable.

Laurie Lewis, Alan Cohen, and Deborah Harley

An Almost Forgotten Terrorist Attack

By Laurie Lewis

When you think of a terrorist attack in New York, the first thing that comes to mind doubtless is that horrendous morning of September 11, 2001. Few New Yorkers, even those who routinely walk by its vestiges, know about an incident on another September day nearly 100 years ago.

The Trinity Church bells had just tolled the noon hour on September 16, 1920, when a gigantic blast rocked Wall Street. Bodies and debris flew everywhere. Shattered windows rained down. When the air cleared, thirty people lay dead, and several hundred were injured, including eight who would later succumb to their wounds.



The explosion came from a horse-drawn wagon that was parked by the U.S. Assay Office, across from J.P. Morgan's bank headquarters at 23 Wall Street. Plenty of people reported seeing the wagon stop and the driver run off, but, as often happens with eyewitness accounts, details varied.

While investigators were examining the crime scene and conducting interviews, cleaning crews came in. By the next morning, Wall Street almost looked normal. No blood or glass in the streets, but makeshift covers replaced panes in many windows.

As any fan of the television procedural *CSI* knows, the quick return to a semblance of normalcy was a mistake. Evidence had been washed away, hampering the investigation into the people behind the mayhem.

The most likely culprits, it was eventually decided, were anarchists. Flyers demanding the release of political prisoners, signed by “American Anarchist Fighters,” were found in the area. But after years of diligent investigation, nobody was ever charged with the crime.

The presumed target of the attack was J.P. Morgan and his banking enterprise. The Wall Street side of the Morgan building still bears scars from the blast (*see photo on right, below*).

The intersection of Wall and Broad Streets was a dream location for an anarchist—or even a bank robber. Next to the Assay Office, which had nearly \$1 billion in gold, was Federal Hall (*the building with steps and columns on the right in the picture on the previous page*). It housed the U.S. Subtreasury, the predecessor of the Federal Reserve Bank and a much larger repository of the nation’s wealth. Across Broad Street was the New York Stock Exchange. Brokers who couldn’t practice there conducted business outside on Broad Street, at what was called the Curb Exchange. Any of these institutions could have been the target.

Given the passage of time since the Wall Street bombing, we’ll never know for certain who was responsible, what the mastermind hoped to accomplish, and what was the intended target. We do know, however, that this was the deadliest act of terrorism on U.S. soil until the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. And then, of course, came September 11.

The Morgan Bank Building Today



September 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 or 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).

Greenwich Village: In the Footsteps of Writers

Take a 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, such as Edna St. Vincent Millay and e. e. cummings, lived and spent time with friends. You'll hear about the history of the area while seeing for yourself why it appealed to so many writers and remains a choice residential community.

Laurie gives this tour on **Sunday, September 10, at 1 PM**. To sign up and to learn the starting point, email the guide at lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com.

Hidden Treasures of the Financial District

On the anniversary of the 1920 Wall Street bombing, pay homage to the victims of that attack and see the scars etched into the Morgan bank building. Discover other treasures hidden in plain sight, including relics of the Dutch and English colonial periods, and stop at park-like oases. Of course, you'll also see major attractions like the New York Stock Exchange, the *Charging Bull* statue, and the recent addition staring down the bull, *Fearless Girl*.

Laurie offers this tour on **Saturday, September 16, at 1 PM**. To reserve a spot on the tour and to learn the meeting location, email her at lewislaurie2nyc@gmail.com.

If our scheduled tours don't work for you, see our website, www.takeawalknewyork.com, for ideas for a custom tour.

Email us at takeawalknewyork@gmail.com to tell us what you would like for your personalized walking tour.

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. Hear stories about heroes like them as well as rogues like William “Boss” Tweed. Look at beautiful buildings, including the first department store, and see vestiges of the 1920 Wall Street explosion.

Alan is offering this tour on **Sunday, September 17, at 10 AM**. To make a reservation and to learn the meeting location, please email him at alan.r.cohen@verizon.net.

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? Are you aware of the role this area played in early American wars? You’ll make all these discoveries as you take a walk through the less crowded part of Central Park.

Join Alan to explore the northern half of Central Park on **Wednesday, September 20, at 11 AM**. To reserve a spot and to learn where to meet, email him at alan.r.cohen@verizon.net.

SEPTEMBER						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
10 Village Writers 1 PM						16 Financial District 1 PM
17 400 Years of History 10 AM			20 Central Park North Half 11 AM			
Please contact the tour guide (alan.r.cohen@verizon.net or lewislaurie2rny@gmail.com) to reserve a space and to learn the starting location.						