



The Library Branch

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Lecture Event by James Gill: *The Past, Present, and Future of Battery Park City*



Throughout his life James Gill has devoted himself to New York City. Desirous to leave something behind (especially for his two young grandchildren) Gill wrote, *For James and Gillian: Jim Gill's New York*. Gill's interesting life story amounts to a journey though the recent past. One particularly significant aspect of his life work is his status as chairman and member of the board of trustees of the Battery Park City Authority. The attack of September 11 brought stronger emphasis to this aspect of his career. It also resulted in a closer working relationship with Parks. The Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) has provided security services at Battery Park City for years, and the Parks Rangers developed a new relationship with the residents of Battery Park City when they rescued hundreds of household pets after the attacks.

Come hear him lecture about these and other topics from his book.

**Tuesday, July 1, at 6:00 p.m. in the Arsenal Gallery
RSVP at 212-360-8240 or Library@parks.nyc.gov**

TALES FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE

The Parks Photo Archive contains more than 200,000 images, dating from 1856 to the present day. This unique collection of images is the product of many photographers who were employed by or had contracts with the Parks Department. What these pictures have in common is that each captures a moment in time. In groups, the photos tell a story. Here's one such story.

During the rehabilitation of Washington Square Park in 1970, a time capsule was discovered under the Giuseppe Garibaldi statue, (see photo right). Garibaldi (1807-1882) was a founding father of "Modern Italy" in the nineteenth century. The



history of his role in the unification of the country is well documented and maintained in places like the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum in Staten Island.

The statue, created by Giovanni Turini (1841-1899), an Italian-American sculptor/scholar who joined Garibaldi's Army in 1866, was unveiled on June 4, 1888. On October 8, 1970, Parks held the press conference announcing the discovery of the historic newspapers and documents (see photo left).



THIS MONTH IN PARKS

- 1874 June 2: Cornerstone laid for the Museum of Natural History in Manhattan Square. The property under and around the Museum of Natural History has been designated as a park since 1807. After the creation of Central Park, it became an annex to its younger, larger neighbor. The Museum was founded in 1869, and it first made its home in the Arsenal, the present-day Parks Department Headquarters. Before the museum moved to its current site, planners considered using the land for a zoo or a botanical garden. Calvert Vaux (1824 -1895) and Jacob Wrey Mould (1825-1886) directed the museum’s construction, and it opened in 1877. A 1958 local law renamed the park in which the museum stands for former New York City Police Commissioner (and the only native of this city to serve as President of the United States) Theodore Roosevelt.
- 1884 June 14: Grover Cleveland (Governor of New York) signs New Parks Act, which leads to acquisition of 4,000 acres in the Bronx between 1888 and 1890. Those acquisitions are now Van Cortlandt, Claremont, Crotona, Bronx, St. Mary’s and Pelham Bay Parks and the Mosholu, Pelham and Crotona Parkways. The new properties increased the City’s parkland fivefold, from about 1,000 acres to about 5,000 acres.
- 1891 June 6: James Stranahan monument unveiling. In 1860 a Parks Commission was created which selected the site for Prospect Park. The Commission was led by James S.T. Stranahan (1808–1898), known as “the Father of Prospect Park.” Stranahan served as the commission’s president for 22 years. The monument that honors him is by Frederick MacMonnies and stands in Brooklyn’s Grand Army Plaza.

1923 June 9: Dedication of the Pleasant Plains Memorial. The bronze victory figure created by sculptor and Tottenville resident George Thomas Brewster (1862–1943) honors the 493 soldiers and sailors from Staten Island’s Fifth Ward who fought, and the 13, who died in World War I. The female figure stands on a granite pedestal, holding a sword and palm frond high in the air, while an eagle with its wings spread sits at her feet. The statue was placed in a narrow traffic island at the juncture of Amboy and Bloomingdale Roads.



Pleasant Plains Memorial
ca. 1940, Parks Photo Archive

1932 June 3: Fred Lebow’s birth. Best remembered as the founder of the world-renowned New York City Marathon, Lebow was born Fischel Lebowitz in Arad, Romania, the sixth of seven children. In his youth he hid from the Nazis and later fled from the Communists; he eventually settled in the United States. Lebow began running to improve his stamina for tennis, but soon realized that running was his true passion. In 1970 he organized the first New York City Marathon, which was run entirely in Central Park with only 127 participants. Now the five borough race draws tens of thousands of participants and countless fans. Shortly after his death in 1994, a monument of Lebow was dedicated in Central Park.

1997 June 8: Re-dedication of Pleasant Plains Memorial. The Pleasant Plains Monument was damaged by vehicles in 1968 and 1970. After the second accident it was removed to storage. At some point afterward, it mysteriously disappeared. The current statue, by Glenn Hines, is a recreation, modeled from historic photographs. It was fabricated by the Modern Art Foundry of Queens, and reinstalled in an expanded and improved site.



Pleasant Plains Memorial
2002, Monuments File

2001 June 25: Opening game at Keyspan (Cyclone) Stadium. Professional baseball existed in Brooklyn as early as 1849. The Brooklyn (Trolley) Dodgers’ 68-year tenure became the stuff of baseball legends. Despite their triumph in the 1955 World Series, the Dodgers moved to California in 1957. After 44 years of silence Brooklyn fans can “root, root, root for the home team” once again.

