



The Library Branch

The Parks Library

Room 240, The Arsenal, Central Park

64th Street & Fifth Avenue

Number 3

November 2001

NOVEMBER LIBRARY EVENTS

PARKS LIBRARY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION, Thursday November 29

Commissioner Stern and the City of New York/Parks & Recreation invite you to celebrate the second anniversary of the Parks Library. Please join us on Thursday November 29, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Parks Library, Room 240, 830 Fifth Avenue at 64th Street for refreshments and festivities.

Sara Cedar-Miller, the Central Park Conservancy's official historian and photographer will give the keynote address entitled "The Making of a Legend — Central Park Then, Now, and Forever."

The event will begin at 5:30 p.m. Space is limited; please RSVP by calling 212-360-8240 or email Library@parks.nyc.gov

THE HISTORY OF THE PARKS LIBRARY

The City of New York/Parks & Recreation opened its first public library on October 20, 1999. Located in the historic Arsenal in Central Park, the library features books and research materials on parks and open spaces, New York City history, politics and architecture, urban studies, wildlife, landscaping and recreation.

The Arsenal, built between 1847 and 1851, has been the home of three other Parks libraries. The first indications of a Parks library are apparent in the plans for the 1922-24 renovation. These plans include a "Library and Museum" on the east side of the building, the present location of room 242. A "Records" room was located opposite to it, on the west side of the building.

When Robert Moses became Parks Commissioner in 1934, the building was again remodeled. The plans from 1934 show that the third floor "Files" room (room 301) was changed into a "Technical Library and Conference Room." It is assumed that the materials from the old library on the second floor and the materials from the "Record" room were combined to form the second library. The 1935 plans show that the room that was "Records" then became "Files" and the room that was "Library and Museum" became an office and conference room.

The floor plans of 1935 also show a "Plan File Room" in the basement of the Arsenal. This room was another type of library. Its maps and renderings provided information on the historical design and construction of parks. It was located in the Arsenal until a few years after the 1964-65 World's Fair, when Parks's division of Capital Projects moved to the Olmsted Center in Queens. This collection is now known as the Map File.

The holdings of the second library were used as reference materials for Parks employees only. The majority of this library consisted of reports and brochures produced by Parks. The library materials included complete sets of *Parks* and *New York Zoological Annual Reports*, the *Proceedings of the Board of Estimate*, and copies of the *City Record*. In the early 1970s, the Parks Library moved to room 242, due to the increasing pressure for space. The library became a conference room and lounge for Parks employees, as well as a storage room for books. In the mid-1980s, the room was changed into the Management, Planning and Analysis office, and later, in 1991, the Budget office.

In 1999, Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern created the first public Parks Library. The new facility, located in room 240 of the Arsenal, provides materials for employees, while educating the public about the subjects that comprise the many aspects of Parks. The library also contains the personal collection of Robert F. Wagner, Jr. (1944-1993) who served as New York City Councilman (1973-77), Chairman of the City Planning Commission (1978-79), Deputy Mayor for Policy (1979-86) and as the President of the New York City Board of Education (1986-90). A generous donation from Borders Books, donations of brochures, master plans, and annual reports from various Parks employees, as well as salvaged books from the old library, provide the foundation for this growing collection.

Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor

Henry J. Stern, Commissioner

Kate Clark, Librarian

www.nyc.gov/parks

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Crabgrass Frontier

By Kenneth T. Jackson

*"Jackson's critique should be heard by all who care about the future of Urban America."
—The New Republic*

The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York

By Vincent J. Cannato

*"Vincent Cannato has given us a penetrating and interpretive biography that provides a window into this tumultuous era in American history."
—Kenneth T. Jackson, editor in chief of The Encyclopedia of New York City*

Unearthing Gotham

By Ann-Marie Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall

*"Cantwell and Wall offer the reader just the right combination of the mystery of archaeological discovery, insightful cultural explanations, and a holistic view of the past."
—Robert L. Schuyler, University of Pennsylvania.*

The Politics of Park Design

By Galen Cranz

*"For contemporary park planners, administrators and users, this book contains insights that should aid in the design and clarify the function of our cities' parks."
—Ann L. Bittenwieser, APA Journal*

Sidewalk Critic: Lewis Mumford's Writings on New York

By Lewis Mumford

*"Filled with peerless zingers, burning anger, and a modernist's rich commitment to the project of making things better for everyone, Mumford's wonderfully stylish and incisive writing remains the unsurpassed model for an engaged architectural criticism. Lewis Mumford—whose eye was as good as his conscience—is our greatest critic. These pieces are among his best."
—Michael Sorkin*

LAST MONTH'S LIBRARY EVENT

For those of you who could not make last month's event, Marc Matsil, Chief of the Natural Resources Group (NRG) gave a lecture in the Parks Library on October 23 titled "The History of Natural History". Mr. Matsil discussed the history of NRG's quest to rejuvenate the City's existing ecological preserves and to develop new ones. By explaining the importance of the food chain, Matsil proved that microscopic bacteria are just as important as trees and birds in a well balanced ecosystem.

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

The Parks Library is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you have any questions, please feel free to call 212-360-8240, or you can write us at our new, easy to remember e-mail address: Library@parks.nyc.gov to find out more about the library.