



The Library Branch

The Parks Library

Room 240, The Arsenal, Central Park

64th Street & Fifth Avenue

Number 2

October 2001

OCTOBER LIBRARY EVENTS

Marc Matsil, Chief of the Natural Resources Group (NRG) will give a lecture in the Parks Library on Tuesday, October 23, at 6 p.m. titled *The History of Natural History*. Mr. Matsil will discuss the two-step approach to Parks ecological restoration, guiding and gliding you through NRG's internationally acclaimed forest, wetland, and grassland restoration and acquisition programs.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. Space is limited; please RSVP by calling 212-360-8240.

HISTORICAL SIGNS UPDATE

Over the summer, more than a dozen writers and researchers worked in the Parks Library creating hundreds of historical sign texts. More than 2001 historical signs have been written. Some are up now and the rest will be soon. All 600 installed signs can be read on our webpage at www.nyc.gov/parks. Below are excerpts of signs from each of the five boroughs.

BRUCKNER PLAYGROUND / the Bronx / Phillips Ave. and East 177th St. / 1 acre

The playground, which lies near the Bruckner Expressway, honors Henry Bruckner (1871-1942), United States Congressman and long-time Bronx Borough President. In 1892, he and his brother founded Bruckner Beverages on 410 East 161st Street. It became the city's largest soda water bottler. Bruckner began his political career as a state legislator in 1900. The following year he was appointed Commissioner of Public Works, a position he held until his election to Congress in 1912. Bruckner also served on the Committee of Public Buildings and in the Merchant Marine. A staunch Bronx Democrat, Bruckner became Bronx Borough President in 1918, and maintained a close affiliation with the Tammany Hall political machine. Bruckner died of chronic nephritis on April 14, 1942 in his Bronx home at 858 Grant Avenue.

SPUYTEN DUYVIL CREEK / Manhattan / Inwood Hill Park

The name Spuyten Duyvil is Dutch in origin and can be translated in two ways depending on the pronunciation. One translation is "devil's whirlpool," and the other is "to spite the devil." This second translation was popularized by Washington Irving's story in which a Dutch trumpeter vowed to swim across the turbulent creek during the British attack on New Amsterdam "en spijt den duyvil (in spite of the devil)." Running from the Hudson River to the Harlem River, the Spuyten Duyvil Creek marks the northernmost tip of Manhattan Island. Native Americans lived near this creek and in the surrounding area, later the Dutch settled here, and finally industry altered its natural course, making this area a commercial center. Eventually renamed the Harlem River Ship Canal, this tidal strait has splendid views, and a variety of natural wildlife.

ALICE AUSTEN HOUSE / Staten Island / Edgewater St., Hylan Blvd. and Maryland Ave. / 14.63 acres

Alice Austen (1866-1952) was an accomplished photographer who mastered her medium by age 18. She photographed people from all walks of life from high society to new immigrants. Austen did not gain recognition for her work until the last years of her life. She left behind more than 7,000 negatives that the Staten Island Historical Society preserves as a photographic record of the late 19th and early 20th century. The rustic cottage where Austen lived most of her life is now a National and City Landmark. The house was acquired by the City, along with the park, in 1975 and is maintained by the Historic House Trust of New York City. With the aid of Austen's extensive photography, it was restored in 1984-85 to look as it did in the 1890s.

LADY MOODY TRIANGLE / Brooklyn / Village Road North, Lake St. and Ave. U / .052 acre

Lady Deborah Moody (ca. 1583 -1659), a wealthy, Protestant widow, left England for America in 1639, and in 1645, settled in Brooklyn, founding the town of Gravesend in an unprecedented fashion. She was the first woman to receive a land patent in the new world, the patent was the first written in English in New Netherland, and the town Moody established was one of the first conceived with a square block plan. Lady Moody founded the town hall government, started a school, and established a church. As the only English town in Brooklyn, Gravesend quickly developed a proud, self-sufficient manner, and their policy of religious freedom set them apart from most colonial settlements and made the town a haven for Anabaptists and Quakers.

Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor

Henry J. Stern, Commissioner

Kate Clark, Librarian

www.nyc.gov/parks

CAPTAIN TILLY PARK / Queens / Highland Ave., Upland and Gothic Pkwy. and 85th Ave. / 9 acres

Captain George H. Tilly Park honors a local son of a prominent Jamaica family, who was killed while fighting in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. Captain Tilly (1863-1899) was assigned to the Army Signal Corp and stationed at Lloilo, Philippines, on the Isle de Panay during the war. On May 22, 1899, Tilly was dispatched to Escalante, a town on the Isle de Negros to repair a damaged telegraph cable. Although Captain Tilly and his landing party were informed that the residents of Escalante were peaceful, he was warned nonetheless not to wear his uniform so as not to inflame resentment. Ignoring the warning, Tilly and his group landed and were fired upon from all sides. Some of Tilly's men panicked and put the launch to sea before Tilly and the rest of the party could reboard. Tilly and his men swam for the launch and all but he made it safely.

In 1941, a monument dedicated to the heroes of the Spanish-American War was erected in the park by the Captain George H. Tilly Camp No. 66 of Jamaica. For the next 20 years, until the climb up the hill became too difficult, the veterans of Tilly Camp No. 66, along with women in the Auxiliary, made a pilgrimage to the park every Memorial Day, holding a brief service at the monument and laying a wreath upon it.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Dirt-The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth

By William Bryant Logan

“In these brief, elegant essays, the author raises the concept of dirt to new levels. Dirt is a natural history of the soil and our connection with it.”

—Publishers Weekly

The Making of Urban America-A History of City Planning in the United States

By John W. Weps

“An exhaustive research document on the history of city planning in the U.S.... A cartographic gem.”

—The New York Times

New York Running Guide

By Bob McCullough and Miles Jaffe

“New York Running Guide tames the concrete jungle of New York. When people envision New York, they think of concrete, glass, and steel. For runners, this couldn't be further from the truth. This book is a must for visiting runners as well as those runners who have lived here for years.”

—Allan Steinfeld, president, New York Road Runners Club, Inc.

The Art Commission and the Municipal Art Society Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture

By Margot Gayle and Michele Cohen

“I take great pride in sharing with you Manhattan's outdoor sculpture through this important guidebook.... I hope that you will take to the streets and discover for yourself these wonderful treasures.”

—Mayor Edward I. Koch

Inside City Parks

By Peter Harnik

“City parks serve, day in and day out, as the primary green spaces for the majority of Americans. Our national parks are justly famous. Now, finally, comes a book that sheds light on the marvelous park systems of our biggest cities.”

—Bruce Babbitt

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

The Parks Library opened in October 1999, in the Arsenal in Central Park. Our collection focuses on New York City history and politics, urban studies, and wildlife. We also house the Robert F. Wagner Jr. Collection, and a special collection of Parks-produced materials dating back to the 19th century. Everyone, from the interested passerby to the advanced researcher will find something at the Parks Library.

We welcome donations of books specifically on New York City, parks, wildlife, and urban studies. Please Call Kate Clark at (212) 360-8240 to find out more information on book donations.

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