



# *The Library Branch*

The Parks Library

Room 240, The Arsenal, Central Park

64th Street & Fifth Avenue

Number 9

May 2002

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**Tuesday, May 14: Library lecture and slide show by Park's Director of Art and Antiquities**

## What is Appropriate Park Use: A Historical Overview

Come see Jonathan Kuhn, the Director of Art and Antiquities, discuss the various ways in which New York parks have been used throughout the city's history. The slide show of images taken from our vast photo archive and the accompanying discussion should pique the interest of anyone who wants to learn more about parks.

*5:30, May 14 in the Parks Library, Rm. 240, the Arsenal, 830 Fifth Avenue (at 64th Street)*

*Please RSVP by phone: 212-360-8240 or email: [Library@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Library@parks.nyc.gov)*

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## **GOT BOOKS ?**

### *Parks Library first ever Citywide book search*

The Parks Library is a public facility dedicated to maintaining a collection of publications and documents relating to the history and operations of the parks in New York City. At the present moment the collection consists of more than 2,500 books, reports, pamphlets, and periodicals relating to New York City history, Parks history, landscape design, urban planning, natural science, art, and architecture.

The heart of our collection consists of dozens of unpublished reports produced by Parks and other local, state, and federal government offices that discuss the condition of our parks or make plans to change or improve them. These unique resources draw high school, undergraduate, and graduate level students who seek detailed information about New York City's parks to our Library. In order to continue to attract scholarly research, the Parks Library must acquire more primary documents and publications relating to New York City's parks, ecology, and urban planning.

Primary documents provide the foundation of good scholarly research. Raw information, no matter what the discipline, provides the researcher with the most direct link to the subject matter. In the case of history, an old letter, brochure, or map could speak volumes about the time it came from and the people who created it.

So take a look around your attic and basement. If you went to a playground opening in 1939 and kept the program, you've got an important historical document that we'd love to have. Perhaps you have an old magazine with a feature on Robert Moses or one of his major projects, or maybe you served on a community board that produced a report on a particular neighborhood park or the need for more open space in the area. Let us make that report available to the public so that anyone can come and learn from your accomplishments.

If you find something and you're not sure if it's what we're looking for, give us a call at 212-360-8240 or e-mail [library@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:library@parks.nyc.gov). Even if we already have the book or document you wish to donate, we might like a second copy. Most importantly, do not underestimate the value of an original document. A postcard, a flier, a news clipping, or a letter may contain unknown or lost information about a park or person in Parks history.

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner

[www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)

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## ***THIS MONTH IN PARKS***

Now in its fourth month, this column highlights notable events in Parks history that occurred any number of years ago during the current month.

- 1847 **May 11:** Bryant Park was designated as public space. The land became available after the 1842 completion of the Croton Aqueduct reservoir at Fifth Avenue. Originally called Reservoir Square, it was renamed on **May 21**, 1884 in honor of poet, editor, and parks advocate William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878). The completion of the New Croton Aqueduct in 1890 made the old reservoir obsolete. It was drained in 1899, and in 1911 The New York Public Library opened on the site.
- 1887 **May 13:** New York State Legislature passed the “Small Parks Act,” a pioneering law that enabled the city to acquire new small parks in crowded neighborhoods. The city did not take advantage of the funds made available by the law until the 1890s, but by 1902 many small parks, including Mulberry Bend (now Columbus) Park, Hudson (now James J. Walker) Park, and De Witt Clinton Park were acquired through the Small Parks Act.
- 1923 **May 15:** the Coney Island Boardwalk opened. Although it had been a resort spot since the first hotel opened in 1824, only the completion of the BMT line in 1920 necessitated the construction of a boardwalk. With the pleasures of Coney Island only a five-cent ride away from the steaming city, attendance on a hot summer day could reach as high as a million. Under the leadership of Brooklyn Borough President Edward Riegelmann the \$3 million boardwalk construction began in 1921. The project made use of 120,000 tons of stone, 7,700 cubic yards of reinforced concrete, and 3.6 million feet of timber, including long leaf yellow pine for the flooring.
- 1934 **May 18:** Parks adopted café-au-lait as its official color. Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the legendary figure in the history of New York City who became infamous for wielding the meat ax, early in his administration chose to wield the palette.
- 1968 **May 23:** last “No” sign replaced with “Yes, Enjoy” sign at Rockaway Beach. The late 60s were a time for revolution both big and small. On the small end of the spectrum was the sense that telling people what they couldn’t do at a park was no longer hip. Instead Commissioner August Heckscher told people YES !
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## ***BOOKS OF THE MONTH***

### **Great City Parks**

By Alan Tate

*Great City Parks* is a celebration of some of the finest achievements of landscape architecture in the public realm. It is a comparative study of twenty significant public parks in fourteen major cities across Western Europe and North America (including Central Park and Bryant Park). As a collection they give a clear picture of why parks have been created, how they have been designed, how they are managed, and what plans are being made for them at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### **Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery**

By Jeffery I. Richman

This book is for everyone who enjoys a good story about New York, its people, and their legacy. Not only does the book include more than 450 images of Green-Wood, but the discussion of those buried there amounts to a history survey of New York City. Green-Wood Cemetery is the final resting place of many famous people including Leonard Bernstein, Samuel F.B. Morse, Peter Cooper, Horace Greeley, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Henry Ward Beecher, General Henry Halleck, Lola Montez, Laura Keen, Elias Howe, and Frank Morgan. There are also some infamous people including William “Boss” Tweed, Albert Anastasia, Joey Gallo, and Johnny Torrio. *Green-Wood* gives you all the dirt on the New Yorkers who are under it.