



The Parks Library Room 240, The Arsenal, Central Park 64th Street & Fifth Avenue

# *The Library Branch*

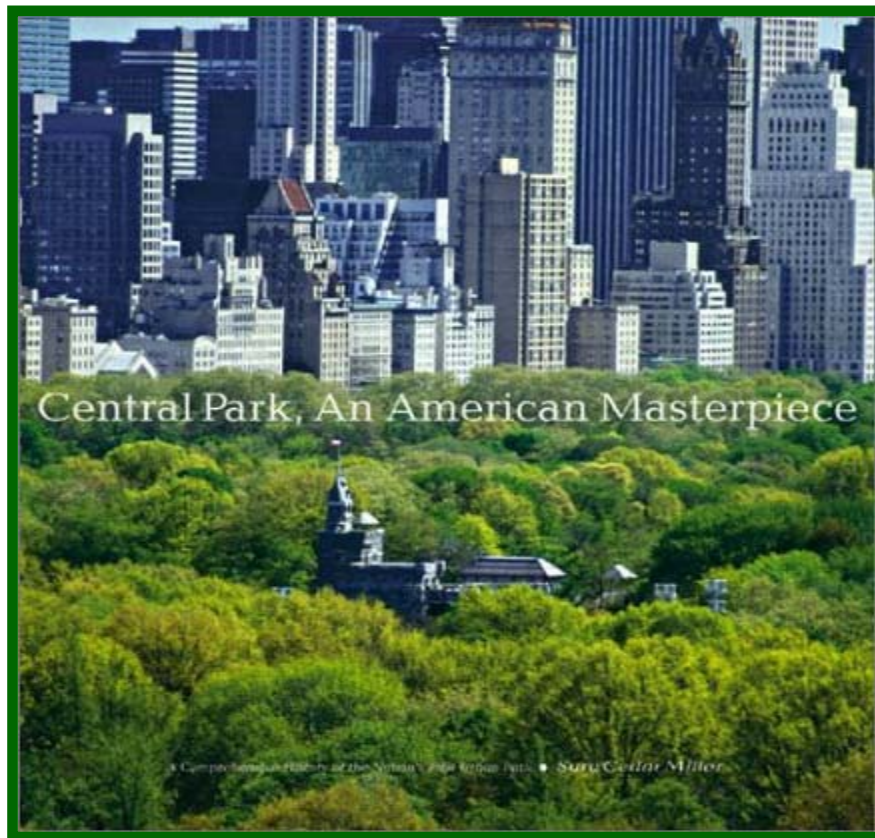
Number 18

May 2003

---

## CENTRAL PARK TURNS 150

Sara Cedar Miller releases new book



### *Central Park: An American Masterpiece*

Released in coordination with the start of Central Park's 150th birthday celebration, this new book by the Central Park Conservancy's official Historian and Photographer, Sara Cedar Miller, is a masterpiece ten years in the making that takes a new look at Central Park. For example, it places new emphasis on the contributions of Jacob Wrey Mould. While Calvert Vaux's plan indicated columns and stairs at Bethesda Terrace, it was Mould's sculptural visions, which ultimately defined the park's architectural focal point.

With dozens of stunning, contemporary color photographs and many historic black and whites, you could just flip through the book for the pictures, but you would miss an extensive amount of ground-breaking historical information. The narrative is ordered geographically, and detailed maps show where every item mentioned in the book is located. As a hybrid of art and history, *Central Park: An American Masterpiece* should appeal to a wide variety of readers.

On Monday, May 19, at 6:00 p.m., Sara Cedar Miller will present a lecture and slide show in the Arsenal Gallery. Afterwards, the book will be on sale for \$30, the lowest price available anywhere, and you can get your copy signed by the author during the small reception following her lecture.

---

Monday, May 19, at 6:00 p.m. in the Arsenal Gallery  
RSVP at 212-360-8240 or [Library@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Library@parks.nyc.gov)

---

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner

John S. Mattera, Librarian

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

---

## NEW BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY

Our collection continues to grow, thanks to generous donations from organizations and authors. Here are descriptions of just a few of our new items:

In our international parks section you will find a new set of books about the Royal Parks of London. The colorful, informative books review each of the London parks. The reader quickly sees the inspiration for places like Central and Prospect Parks but also realizes how the differences between “people’s parks” and “royal parks” are manifested in their designs.

Closer to home, the southern shores of Brooklyn have been a place for New Yorkers to seek respite from the torments of the city for more than a century. Michael Immerso’s *Coney Island: The People’s Playground* gives a full history of the place where amusement in America rode the wave of twentieth century innovation. Providing excitement to the masses became a major industry, and Coney Island set the standard for amusement parks worldwide. In its heyday people had so much fun there that it was called Sodom by the Sea.

---

## THIS MONTH IN PARKS

1819 May 31: Walt Whitman’s birth in Huntington, Long Island, where he lived with his family until 1823. Unable to support his household on a carpenter’s salary, Whitman’s father moved the family to the City of Brooklyn, where he enrolled his son in a local grammar school. Although souring economics forced the Whitmans to return to Long Island in 1833, young Walt stayed behind and took work as a printer’s apprentice, his first foray into the world of words. It was not until 1855 however, that the man often referred to as “America’s Poet” found his literary voice. During the spring of that year, Whitman published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

1890 May 31: Washington Arch cornerstone laid. The first Washington arch was made of wood and erected in 1889 for the centennial of George Washington’s inauguration. Residents liked it so much they commissioned a permanent replacement.

1895 May 4\*: Washington Square Arch dedicated. After five difficult years this classical monument was dedicated, although not as we see it today. The spandrel panels depicting War, Peace, Fame and Posterity remained unadorned for more than twenty years. In 1916, *Washington as Commander-in-Chief Accompanied by Fame and Valor* was installed at the arch. *Washington as President, Accompanied by Wisdom and Justice*, was installed at the site two years later.



Washington Square Arch ca 1930:  
New York City Parks Photo Archive

On April 30, 2003 Parks initiated a major conservation project for the arch. The program of work will include repairing the statues of Washington, cleaning and chemical consolidation of the marble masonry, securing loose and fragmentary pieces, recarving selected sculptural and ornamental elements, replacing the roof, upgrading the interior, bird-proofing, and fully illuminating the arch.

1955 May 23: Local law names Walt Whitman Park in honor of the centennial of the first publication of *Leaves of Grass*. The property, located next to the Red Cross building in Downtown Brooklyn at Cadman Plaza East and Adams Street, was acquired by the City in 1945, but only transferred to the Parks Department in 1954.

1973 May 31: Dedication of the Washington A. Roebling memorial in Brooklyn’s Columbus Park.



Washington A. Roebling  
1837-1926

Under the shade of a tree, in a small lawn in front the New York State Supreme Courthouse in Brooklyn, this bronze bas relief honors the man who built the Brooklyn Bridge. His father, John Roebling, designed the great bridge, but died during the surveying stage.

Washington Roebling served in the Civil War as an engineer and built two military bridges. He also met his future brother-in-law General Gouverneur Kemble Warren (a statue of him stands in Brooklyn’s Grand Army Plaza) when they were assigned to survey Little Round Top at Gettysburg.

During the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge’s caissons, which lie below the riverbed and support the masonry towers, Roebling suffered the “bends,” forcing him to oversee the remainder of construction from his Brooklyn Heights bedroom window. Although he was born in Pennsylvania and died in New Jersey, Brooklyn remains forever indebted to Washington Roebling.

\* This was the rain date, the ceremony was supposed to happen on April 30, the exact date of Washington’s inauguration.