

FRIENDS COMMITTEE *Gazette*

Summer 2009

www.FortTryonParkTrust.org

Rock Star: Sid Horenstein on Fort Tryon's Geologic Features

Linda Huntington, Special Projects Coordinator, Northern Manhattan Parks

For geology beginners, the expert Sidney Horenstein captures New York's rocky underbelly in a few memorable sentences: "The Bronx is gneiss, but Manhattan is full of schist. Inwood has lost its marbles, and New York is full of faults."

Horenstein cultivated his encyclopedic knowledge of geology, ecology and history, especially of Northern Manhattan, during his 47-year career at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). He continues

But not all of his travels were far from home. In the 1980s, Horenstein began leading his geology students from Hunter College on excursions to Fort Tryon Park. Of all the places he's traveled, he finds Fort Tryon one of the finest sites to interpret and one of his favorite parks. He describes Fort Tryon as geologically, historically and aesthetically compelling. And thanks to the artful Olmsted Brothers' design, Fort Tryon's rocky features are easily accessible from the network of paths that traverse its steep slopes and wind through its open meadows and wooded areas making it seem much larger than its 67 acres.

Glacial potholes and striations, faults, and varieties of schist are among Fort Tryon's many geologic features created during the last glacial period that ended more than 12,000 years ago. The rocks of Fort Tryon may be between 565 and 450 million years old. Here are a few of the most notable geologic features according to Horenstein:

- At the northern end of the park, above Anne Loftus Playground in one of the massive rock outcroppings that are prominent in the park, sits New York City's largest glacial pothole. Today, only half of the pothole remains because during the initial construction of the park, the other half was blasted away to create the pathway.
- Glacial striations or scrape marks can be found on many rock surfaces throughout the park including those found in the Heather Garden. These

were formed as the mile-high mass of ice embedded with rocks advanced from the north exerting immense pressure on the Manhattan schist. Smoothness, also notable in the rock, indicates glacial polishing by the rock particles in the glacier.

- North of Fort Tryon, the Dyckman Street Fault appears as a low-lying area. But geologically, it marks the site of a fracture in the bedrock of northern Manhattan. Faults are often the sites of seismic activity, but no activity has been reported in historic times in this area. Beneath the low-lying areas surrounding the park is the weaker Inwood Marble.
- Manhattan schist appears in several forms in the park. This metamorphic rock is formed of mud from the sea floor that was transformed and recrystallized by profound heat and pressure; it is categorized by its mineral content. Mica schist looks like it contains small shards of a broken mirror, and garnetiferous schist is peppered with tiny crimson garnets.

Horenstein also notes that Fort Tryon is replete with rocks imported from other areas. The curbing is from Stony Creek, Connecticut. The blue stone paths are from the Catskills. The granite on Billings Terrace came from Deer Island, Maine, while the granite of The Cloisters is from New London, Connecticut. Horenstein is still researching the source of the stone used to form the park's water fountains.

Support for the geology programs in the Northern Manhattan Parks is provided primarily by the Greenacre Foundation. ■

Before beginning his career at the AMNH, Horenstein prospected for uranium in the western US in low-flying airplanes.

to lead geology walks in Fort Tryon Park several times a year. In the colder months, he presents slide-illustrated lectures on the history and geology of Northern Manhattan Parks.

Growing up in Long Island City, Horenstein was fascinated by rocks: their colors, textures and shapes. Meandering through the streets and parks of Queens, he collected pebbles and taught himself how to identify them. His childhood fascination crystallized into a lifelong passion and led to adventures around the world: Corsica, Sardinia, Greenland and China.



Letter from Nancy: A New Era

It's a new era for The Friends of Fort Tryon Park. We are formalizing our partnership with the Fort Tryon Park Trust that we entered into two years ago by transitioning operations to the Trust's Friends Committee. As the Friends Committee, we will serve as the community outreach arm of the non-profit Fort Tryon Park Trust. Our new charter delineates how we'll take the lead in engaging community volunteers in the beautification of the park, provide programs to keep the park and its surrounding community vital, and inform the community of park happenings. We'll also continue our role of working within the community to identify needed improvements in the park.

The Trust will serve as the major fundraiser for the park's endowment, secure government and foundation grants for capital improvements, provide funds for free public programs and events, and supplement horticultural and maintenance staff and equipment to enhance the quality of the park, among other initiatives. By joining forces, we can coordinate fundraising activities, avoid duplicating administrative tasks, manage a more comprehensive database for communicating with the community and increase efforts to protect this triple-landmarked park from fluctuations in the city's economy.

As you've noticed, the Gazette also has a new look. As part of the new era, the new Friends Committee Gazette will continue to be published and mailed quarterly, and you can also expect regular postcards from the Trust to keep you up to date on park improvement activities, programs, and events.

In the midst of these structural changes, I'm happy to report that all the good work continues as usual. Volunteer clean-up opportunities are available every month through October. In addition to our year-round Fitness Walking, the Friends Committee has expanded our spring programming to include Sunset Yoga, Sunrise Tai Chi, and evening Qi Gong.

If you'd like to become more actively involved in the Friends Committee or have questions about our more formal partnership with the Fort Tryon Park Trust, please contact us at Friends@FortTryonPark.net. We'd love to hear from you.

Nancy Bruning
Chair, Friends Committee
Fort Tryon Park Trust

Success at Sunset on the Hudson

More than 200 guests attended the Trust's fourth Sunset on the Hudson benefit on Thursday, May 14th on the Stan Michels Promenade overlooking the Hudson River and the Heather Garden. The event raised over \$130,000 for the park's ongoing horticultural care, special projects, improved maintenance and free public programs. Honored guest, Joan K. Davidson, the Chair of the Governor's Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission, remarked that the Fort Tryon benefit was the perfect way to kick-off a series of events celebrating the Hudson River, which John D. Rockefeller went to great lengths to feature in Fort Tryon Park, and purchased property in New Jersey across the river to protect its vistas.

Upcoming Events

If you missed the benefit, we hope you'll join us in supporting the park on these dates:

June 14th, Pancakes in the Park & Neighborhood Yard Sale
11-1 PM Pancakes, music and magicians on the Linden Terrace
11-4 PM Neighborhood Yard Sale on the Promenade

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 at www.FortTryonParkTrust.org.

Nature Adventures for Kids:

Lovely Ladybugs, What Dinosaurs Ate, and Wiggly Worms
Free for children ages 4 to 6 at Bennett Park, Fort Tryon Park, Isham Park, J.Hood Wright Park, and Lily Brown Playground.

Registration required. For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/lukufo>.

Mission

Fort Tryon Park Trust's mission is to promote the restoration, preservation, and enhancement of this historic and scenic landmark for the benefit and use of the surrounding community and all New Yorkers.

Contacts

- Fort Tryon Park Trust and Friends Committee website: www.FortTryonParkTrust.org; Phone: 212-795-1388; Email: Friends@FortTryonPark.net
- To volunteer in the Heather Garden: 212-795-1388
- Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator, Jennifer Hoppa: 212-795-1388, Ext. 300 or jennifer.hoppa@parks.nyc.gov
- Council Member Robert Jackson: 212-928-1322
- To report dangerous conditions or graffiti and other vandalism: 311
- Forestry (tree pruning, dead tree and limb removal): 311
- For event permits, parties of 20 or more, and professional photography, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/qsffj9>.

Teamwork Advances the Broadway Initiative

**Marechal Brown, Director of Horticulture
Northern Manhattan Parks**

What a difference a week makes! In the spirit of a traditional barn-raising, 20 Parks Department gardeners, arborists and assistant gardeners, and 10 seasonal horticultural workers from our Parks Opportunity Program joined forces for a week in early March to clean up the wooded slopes on all sides of Fort Tryon's Alpine Garden, an historic garden once buried under decades worth of English ivy. As part of the Fort Tryon Park Trust and Parks Department's Broadway Initiative, our goal was to clear weeds, woody overgrowth, and dead and dying trees. We chipped what we removed, and returned the chips to the hillside as a ground-holding mulch. These efforts will not only prepare the site for Alpine Garden plantings, but will make the eastern side of the park

around the Alpine Garden more visually open and accessible.

Our team consisted of highly suited experts and able assistants who tackled all aspects of the work from identifying and removing invasive saplings to deftly pruning and shaping a large swath of forsythia. At any given moment, gardeners could be seen cutting dead tree limbs with chainsaws in one section of the woods, while down the slope others pulled invasive garlic mustard and Japanese honeysuckle that, if left to their own devices, would choke out other good plant material and trees. Up the hill, team members wielded weed wrenches to pull Norway maple saplings and spades to dig pasture roses, while others cut back English ivy threatening to smother the entire hillside: trees, rocks and all.

We knew we were heading in the right direction, when midway through the week a gentleman stopped by to tell us that he worked in Fort Tryon Park 40 years ago. He was thrilled, as were many passersby, to see the park returning to an earlier time of more open vistas, a very welcome sight to all that have stopped by to see our handiwork. ■

Dedicated teams from the Parks Department reclaimed the slopes of the Alpine Garden.



Photo by Marechal Brown

Fort Tryon Park Trust

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Gazette

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Beautification Underway

Mike Klein

Spring cleaning for 2009 began on March 29. Despite cold mist and heavy fog, 40 enthusiastic volunteers, including a high school community service club from far off Queens, converged on the upper and lower terraces near the subway entrance at Fort Washington Avenue and 190th Street. Seizing gloves and garbage bags, sheers and rakes, the volunteers removed weeds, invasive plants, trash and fallen trees. They pruned trees, raked leaves and cleared the English ivy from tree trunks and the southeast wall near the volleyball court and horseshoe pitch area. Volunteers also cleaned out the stone culvert, and the drainage system is now functioning again. Their efforts filled 50 large garbage bags with debris.

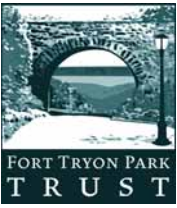
Another 35 adult volunteers and many children pitched in for the Earth Day clean-up on April 22. Despite the near record-breaking heat, volunteers weeded, tilled topsoil and planted a variety of perennials, especially astilbes and viola 'heartthrob.' Volunteers also removed English ivy from tree bark and from sections of the walls of the Linden Terrace while also picking up garbage in the area.

Remember, everyday is Earth Day. Help keep Washington Heights clean and green. ■

High school student volunteers a smile and a lot of muscle.



Photo by M. Ryan-Maher



Friends Committee of the Fort Tryon Park Trust

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www.FortTryonParkTrust.org

Fitness at the Fort

FREE

Fitness walks continue

Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

Saturdays 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

All levels are welcome for this full-body, walking-based workout. Meet at the entrance to the Heather Garden at Margaret Corbin Circle. Optional walk to the Green Market after Saturday's class.

Sunset Yoga salutes its sixth year

Wednesdays, June 10 to August 12 6:45 PM - 8:00 PM

Abby's Lawn

Classes are suitable for all skill levels. Please arrive early; bring a towel or yoga mat and drinking water.

Enter the park at Fort Washington Ave and continue north along the promenade, veer right at Linden Terrace, then left as you walk around the terrace, under the arch and down the path to Abby's Lawn.

Step into Sunrise Tai Chi

Wednesdays, April 29 to August 26 6:30 AM- 7:30 AM

Linden Terrace

Enter the park at Fort Washington Avenue and continue north along the promenade, up the steps to Linden Terrace.

Slow down with Sunset Qi Gong

Mondays, June 1 to Sept 14 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Linden Terrace

All classes are free and led by experienced instructors. All programs are weather permitting; rain cancels. For more information on park programs, log on to www.FortTryonParkTrust.org. Sponsored by the **Friends Committee of the Fort Tryon Park Trust**, the New York City Council, and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.



Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe presents Joan K. Davidson with a miniature park bench at Sunset on the Hudson; a park bench will be named in her honor.