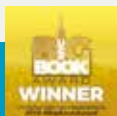


T.M. RIVES, MICHELLE YOUNG AND HANNAH FRISHBERG

SECRET NEW YORK

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

CONTENTS

Below Chambers

SUGAR HOUSE PRISON WINDOW	14
CITY SEALS OF THE SURROGATE'S COURT	16
GHOST STOPS ON THE 6 TRAIN	18
THE LIBERTY POLE	20
THE CROWN ON ST. PAUL'S PULPIT	22
THE OBELISK OF WILLIAM MACNEVEN	25
<i>HARBORS OF THE WORLD</i>	26
IRISH HUNGER MEMORIAL	28
A SECTION OF THE BERLIN WALL	30
SIDEWALK CLOCK ON MAIDEN LANE	32
SCALE MODEL AT THE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL BUILDING	34
20 EXCHANGE PLACE	36
TRINITY'S TOMBSTONE RIDDLE	38
BLAST MARKS ON THE MORGAN BANK	40
THE BUTTONWOOD TREE	42
FOUNDATIONS OF LOVELACE TAVERN	44
ELEVATED ACRE	46
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S TOOTH	48
THE FENCE AT BOWLING GREEN	50
BELGIUM ON THE CUSTOMS HOUSE	52
MY LOVE MISS LIBERTY	54
NETHERLANDS MONUMENT FLAGPOLE	56
AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINERS' MEMORIAL	58
GRAFFITI COLUMNS OF ELLIS ISLAND	60

Chambers to Houston

CROTON AQUEDUCT MANHOLE COVERS	66
<i>THE NEW YORK EARTH ROOM</i>	68
THE FLOATING MAP ON GREENE STREET	70
THE HAUGHWOUT BUILDING	72
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE	74
HUA-MEI BIRD MEN OF SARA D. ROOSEVELT PARK	76
THE SLAVE GALLERIES AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S	78
39-41 HENRY STREET	80
DOYERS STREET TUNNEL	82
SHEARITH ISRAEL CEMETERY	84
MMUSEUMM	86
CORTLANDT ALLEY	88

HOLLOW SIDEWALKS	90
WAMPUM	92
THE SPRING STREET SALT SHED	94
DREAM HOUSE	96
CRIMINAL COURT	98

Houston to 14th

FACE OF ST. ANN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH	105
A.T. STEWART'S BROKEN VAULT	106
STUYVESANT STREET	108
THE REWARD POSTER FOR JOHN WILKES BOOTH	110
THE HARE KRISHNA TREE	112
LENIN ON NORFOLK	114
ROOF HOUSES	116
NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY	118
MERCHANT'S HOUSE AND THE GHOST OF GERTRUDE TREDWELL	120
<i>SYLVETTE</i>	122
<i>TIME LANDSCAPE</i>	124
THE MEDALLIONS OF THE AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS	126
IFC CENTER'S PEEPHOLES	128
<i>ANGEL IN ADORATION</i> AT JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH	130
TRACKING MINETTA BROOK	132
WASHINGTON'S MOTTO ON THE MEMORIAL ARCH	134
DE FOREST HOUSE	136
18 WEST 11TH STREET	138
THE LAST GASLIGHT LAMPPOST	140
MARIE'S CRISIS	142
THE HESS SPITE TRIANGLE	144
PALAZZO CHUPI	146
WESTBETH RESIDENCE AT THE OLD BELL LABORATORIES	148
"MONEYBAGS"	150

14th to 42nd

7000 OAKS	154
THE OLD NABISCO FACTORY	156
THE REMAINS OF PIER 54	158

CONTENTS

THE PLAYERS	160
APPELLATE COURT HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL	162
METROPOLITAN LIFE TOWER	165
THE ROSCOE CONKLING MONUMENT	166
GRAND LODGE OF THE FREEMASONS	168
STONE FOXES AND THE FUR TRADE	170
THE EAGLES OF OLD PENN STATION	172
HERALD SQUARE CLOCK	174
URBAN FOSSILS	176
DAILY NEWS BUILDING LOBBY	178
MANHATTAN SOLSTICE	180
BRISTOL BASIN	182

42nd to 59th

ACTORS' CHAPEL, ST. MALACHY'S	186
THE BRILL BUILDING	188
TIMES SQUARE SOUND SCULPTURE	190
CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN	192
CHRISTIE'S AUCTIONS	194
THE PIG OF SAINT PATRICK'S	196
AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM	198
LEVER HOUSE PLAZA	200
THE CITIGROUP CENTER'S HIDDEN FLAW	202
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY	204
GREENACRE PARK	206
MARILYN MONROE SUBWAY GRATE	208
THE COLE PORTER PIANO	210
THE FRED F. FRENCH BUILDING	212
FORD FOUNDATION ATRIUM	214
THE GRAYBAR BUILDING RATS	216
THE WHISPERING GALLERY IN GRAND CENTRAL	218
U THANT ISLAND	220

Upper West Side (59th–110th)

33 WEST 63 RD STREET	224
THE PYTHIAN	226
SEPTUAGESIMO UNO PARK	228
LORD CORNBURY	230
ID DAY AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY	232

MILLSTONES OF THE COLLEGIATE REFORMED	
PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH	234
JOAN OF ARC ISLAND	236
THE LOTUS GARDEN	238
NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM	240

Upper East Side and Central Park

GLACIAL ERRATICS	246
PHRENOLOGY IN CENTRAL PARK	248
THE ELM TREES OF CENTRAL PARK	250
THE WITCH OF BETHESDA TERRACE	252
KENTUCKY COFFEE TREES	254
ROCK TUNNEL TRANSVERSE	256
EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF KING JAGIEŁŁO	258
GRANITE STATUE OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON	260
SENECA	262
ANDREW HASWELL GREEN MEMORIAL BENCH	264
PAINTINGS IN THE STETTMEYER DOLLHOUSE	266
GARBAGE MUSEUM	268
SQUADRON A ARMORY	270
THE ZIEGFELD HEAD	272
THE MURALS OF BEMELMANS BAR	274
DWELLINGS ON MADISON AVENUE	276
VETERANS ROOM IN THE SEVENTH REGIMENT	
ARMORY	278
MOUNT VERNON HOTEL MUSEUM	280

Upper Manhattan

THE PORTALS OF PARADISE	284
BLESSING OF THE BICYCLES	286
THE PEACE FOUNTAIN	288
CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME	290
HARLEM FIRE WATCHTOWER	292
THE WISHING TREE	294
BEAR AND FAUN	296
THE HIDDEN OWL OF ALMA MATER	298
RUTHERFURD OBSERVATORY	300
RIVERSIDE CHURCH CARILLON	302
RIVERSIDE LABYRINTH	304

CONTENTS

BUTTERFIELD STATUE	306
AMIABLE CHILD MONUMENT	308
FREEDOM TUNNEL	310
OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH	312
HAMILTON GRANGE	314
AUDUBON'S GRAVE MARKER	316
PORTOLAN CHART	318
BRUSH STAIRWAY AND OLD POLO GROUNDS	320
MANHATTAN PETROGLYPHS	322
THE LITTLE RED LIGHTHOUSE	324
AMERICAN REDOUBT MARKER	326
LOEWS 175TH MOVIE PALACE	328
TOP OF THE HIGH BRIDGE TOWER	330
BENNETT PARK	332
MOTHER CABRINI SHRINE	334
THE LAVAUDIEU TORSO OF CHRIST	336
DYCKMAN FARMHOUSE	338
MILESTONE NO. 12	340
THE LAST SALT MARSH	342
INDIAN CAVES OF INWOOD HILL	344

Bronx and Queens

THE CROTON TRAIL	348
THE GRAND CENTRAL TEST PILLARS	350
WEST 230TH STREET	352
MARBLE HILL	354
SUPERMAN PORTRAIT AT LEHMAN COLLEGE	356
STRAUS GRAVESITE	358
CANOEING THE BRONX RIVER	360
PRIMEVAL FOREST	362
LORILLARD SNUFF MILL	364
MONKEY HOUSE, BRONX ZOO	366
POE COTTAGE	368
THE HALL OF FAME	370
LIGHTHOUSE AT THE TOP OF 950 UNIVERSITY AVENUE	372
LORELEI FOUNTAIN	374
NEW FULTON FISH MARKET	376
NORTH BROTHER ISLAND AND THE AUDUBON ECOCRUISE	378
HELL GATE	380

<i>THE MARRIAGE OF MONEY AND REAL ESTATE</i>	
SCULPTURES	382
TROMA HEADQUARTERS	384
BROOKLYN GRANGE	386
THE PANORAMA	388
STEINWAY PIANO FACTORY	390
MARINE AIR TERMINAL	392
LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE	394
QUAKER MEETING HOUSE	396
GEORGE FOX STONE AND THE FLUSHING REMONSTRANCE	398
THE GANESH TEMPLE	400
THE GRAVE MARKER OF THE MATINECOC INDIANS	402
THE ALLEY POND GIANT	404
LIVING MUSEUM	406

Staten Island

BREEZY POINT	410
CHINESE SCHOLAR'S GARDEN	412
THE WATERING PLACE STONE	414
MOSES MOUNTAIN	416
NEW YORK'S WILDEST PLACE	418
STATEN ISLAND RANGE LIGHT	420
THE JACQUES MARCHAIS MUSEUM OF TIBETAN ART	422
CONFERENCE HOUSE	424
ALPHABETICAL INDEX	426

STUYVESANT STREET

③

The only true east-west street in Manhattan

N and R trains/8th St – NYU; 4 and 6 trains/Astor Pl

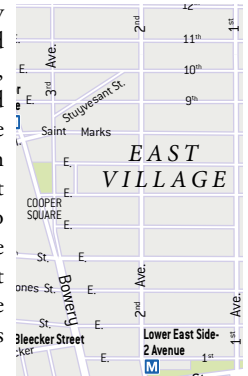


Stuyvesant Street is the one true, compass-tested east-west street in Manhattan. New Netherland director Peter Stuyvesant, who despised disorder, would be pleased.

Stuyvesant is the closest thing New York has to a mythical founder. Sent here in 1647 by the Dutch West India Company to put the fear of business into the locals, he managed within a few years to convert the lower Manhattan landscape of hogs and mud into a profitable port town, with row houses, canals, a stockade wall, and a stone fort. He had only one leg – the other was pulped by a cannonball – and stumped about on a piratical peg, sword hanging at his side. Clues to the man’s puritanical nature and the general tenor of New York life at the time are found in his first decrees: outlawing drinking on Sundays and knife fighting in public, and stiff fines for sex with Indians. His farm bordered much of today’s Bowery (old Dutch *bouwerij* means “farm”) and he and his family came to own virtually all of what we now call the East Village.

The street named after “Pegleg” Stuyvesant has an almost cosmic authority: it flouts the grid plan, making St. Mark’s one of the only churches in Manhattan besides Trinity that command a street approach. The church stands on the site of the chapel of Stuyvesant’s manor house, where the director lived after his surrender of New Amsterdam, thereafter called New York, to the English in 1664. Stung by how readily the city accepted English rule, Stuyvesant played out the rest of his life in the pastoral doldrums of what was then the city’s far outskirts. He died in 1672.

By the early 1800s a small community called Bowery Village had formed around Stuyvesant’s old manor. Petrus Stuyvesant III, the director’s great-great-grandson, anticipated the grid by laying out a street system in the area that was faithful to the compass. When the Commissioners’ Plan of 1811 was put into effect, magnetic north was discarded so avenues would follow the natural cant of the island: 29 degrees. Because Stuyvesant Street was by then heavily trafficked – and because you don’t mess with the Stuyvesants – it was allowed to stay true.



NEARBY

You can see Stuyvesant’s tomb at St. Mark’s Church-in-the-Bowery, built into the east side of the foundation. The stone says he died at 80, but it’s twenty years off: Stuyvesant was born in 1612. He was only 35 when he first terrorized New Amsterdam.

TRACKING MINETTA BROOK

15

An underground river flows through the Village

Around Washington Square Park

Steve Duncan's site: undercity.org

A, B, C, D, E, F and M trains/W 4 St; N and R trains/8 St – NYU



One of the most suggestive, eerie, and seemingly fictitious features of the Village is Minetta Brook, a river that flows secretly underground. There are tales of flooded restaurants, and men with fishing poles gathered around holes in the concrete floors of basements, and garden fountains tapping the black water deep below. But Minetta exists. It was once a creek full of trout; sometime in the early 1800s it got entombed by a blanket of humming metropolis.

Today you can follow the course of the buried stream as it flows from about Fifth Avenue and out to the Hudson River. With an ordinary flashlight you can even see it, but you'll need the tour plan of Steve Duncan, Internet personage and expert on all things subterranean. "From the tops of bridges to the depths of sewer tunnels," according to Duncan, "these explorations of the urban environment help me puzzle together the interconnected, multidimensional history and complexity of the great metropolises of the world." The hidden stream is the subject of his doctoral thesis. It's also very clearly his obsession: when he talks about it – gesturing with scuffed hands, a rolled cigarette wagging from his lip – you know you've found an authority. Here are the highlights of his recent tour of the Village's own hidden river.

45 West 12th Street

This house is a relic of the old stream course. It overlaps its neighbor oddly, and actually has a wedge-shaped floor plan. The creek used to cut a diagonal across the lot, and the structure was built to skirt it.

60 West 9th Street

The address doesn't interest us: what does is the manhole cover in the street out front. It's a DPW (Department of Public Works) type, with large holes. Look in one hole and shine a flashlight down another. The water you see, according to Duncan, is a combination of "natural water flow and water used by residents in the area." Minetta, in other words, has been channeled into the city's infrastructure.

Minetta Street

Here, as the name indicates, is deep in Brook territory. The kinked shape of this street (unique in Manhattan) is said to follow the path of the old water. If you hunt out the manhole cover – a DPW "hexagon" model like the one above – you'll see a steady flow, and be as close to the original stream as you can get without a crowbar and hip waders.

18 WEST 11TH STREET

18

The bomb factory of the Weather Underground

L train/6th Av; N, Q, R, L, 4, 5 and 6 trains/Union Sq



The townhouses on 11th Street from Nos. 14 to 24 resemble the other stately homes on the block, and are virtually identical to each other – with one conspicuous exception. No. 18 has a jutting wedge angling from its face, as if some force neatly spun part of the house clockwise. You might be thinking there’s a tale here somewhere. There is.

In the spring of 1970, No. 18’s owner James Wilkerson left on vacation to St. Kitts, unaware that his daughter Cathlyn would use the subbasement as a meeting house for the Weather Underground, a radical leftist organization born from student opposition to the Vietnam War. On March 6, Wilkerson and four other Weathermen were making bombs from nails and dynamite. Just before noon the bomb factory became a bomb, period. No. 18 blew up.

Wilkerson stumbled out of the flaming house naked: the blast had ripped her clothes clean off. Three other bomb makers were killed with such violence that a neighbor summoned later to identify them (Dustin Hoffman, strange to say) had trouble telling what body part he was looking at. The intended target of the bomb was probably Columbia University. When James Wilkerson was later asked if he ever talked to his daughter about her involvement, he reportedly said, “Never.” He added: “And she never offered.”

What do you do with a blown-up historic townhouse? Whatever you can get away with. The angular design that sets the house apart was drawn up by architect Hugh Hardy, who soon afterward sold the property to Norma and David Langworthy. The Langworthys had to fight the stuffy Landmarks Commission to let them go through with construction. “Hugh wanted to make a statement,” says Norma, “that this was a new building, not an old building redone, and that’s the way it was.” No. 18 stands out for another reason: for the last thirty-two years, Norma has kept a Paddington bear doll in the front window and changes its costume according to the season and the weather. “It has nothing to do with the Weathermen,” she says. “My husband is dead, bless his heart. But he loved bears. We have all kinds in the house.”

After the explosion Cathlyn Wilkerson and fellow bomb maker Kathy Boudin disappeared for ten years. Wilkerson served a short prison term in 1980; Boudin, also found guilty of other crimes, wasn’t released until 2003.

THE REMAINS OF PIER 54

③

The would-be destination of the Titanic

Under Little Island at Pier 55 between 13th and 14th Street in Hudson River Park



Over 112 years after the most famous shipwreck in history, all that remains of the vessel's intended destination is tens of rotting wooden posts in the Meatpacking District.

On 10 April 1912, the RMS *Titanic* set sail from Southampton, England on its maiden voyage, bound for New York City's Pier 59. But of course, the purportedly "unsinkable" ship never did arrive, and only her lifeboats ever made it to Pier 59, dropped off there days late by the rescue vessel RMS *Carpathia*, which subsequently went south, bringing those spared the Atlantic's icy waters to Pier 54, where thousands warily waited to learn if their loved ones were among the living.

Once one of the numerous Chelsea Piers which lined Manhattan's west side, Pier 54 experienced more than its fair share of prominent wrecks: Three years after hosting the *Titanic* survivors' grievous homecoming, the ocean liner RMS *Lusitania* – briefly the biggest passenger ship on Earth – launched from Pier 54 on what would be her final trans-Atlantic crossing. From the pier, the *Lusitania* with almost 2,000 passengers sailed north to Liverpool, never getting past Ireland: On 7 May 1915, a German submarine torpedoed the vessel, sinking it, killing 1,195 of its passengers and becoming the cause of such public outcry that the incident was considered a significant reason the US entered World War I two years later.

Then, in the small hours of 6 May 1932, catastrophe came for the pier itself when a trash fire beneath it grew into a roaring inferno. It took 800 firemen to control the blaze, and by the time it was out, Pier 54 was no more. In time, it was rebuilt, and the decades passed. Then, decay set in. In 1991, Pier 54's crumbling superstructure was demolished; in 2015, its concrete slab went too, to make way for the public park Little Island.

Today, all that remains of the once grand pier is its steel archway, still emblazoned with the faded words "Cunard White Star," and, on the park's southern side, an array of mostly submerged wooden pilings, left to create a habitat for aquatic life. For those who happen to look down near the arch, a small round plaque offers a glimpse into the site's history, telling the story of the *Titanic* in brief beneath the words "The Unsinkable Ship."

LEVER HOUSE PLAZA

8

Big art for working stiff

390 Park Avenue

212-421-7027

Monday to Friday 7am–7pm; Saturday 7am–1pm

E and M trains/5th Av – 53rd St



The Lever House has always been an icon: it's the first "curtain wall" skyscraper, where the outer shell is hung on a load-bearing structure within. Recently the building has come to notice for a different reason: as an unexpected contemporary art museum.

Constructed in 1950-52, the building was initially the headquarters of British soap manufacturers Lever Brothers. The crystalline slab, 24 stories high, sparked a rage for curtain walls: within ten years, the mile of Park Avenue from Grand Central to 59th Street shimmered with glass. Landmarked in 1982 and restored by real estate company RHR Holding, today the Lever House looks like it did half a century ago. With one compelling difference: the outdoor plaza now features large, even monumental sculptures and installations by prominent artists.

This is thanks to Richard Marshall, a friend of the owners and for twenty years a curator at the Whitney Museum. Originally RHR Holding mulled a commercial application for the spot, but the building's landmark status limited the options. Marshall pushed the idea of an ever-changing exhibition space, where artists would present large sculptural works in the plaza, supplemented by other work in various media in the glass-encased lobby. Now the project is Lever House policy.

Major sculptures by (among many others) Damien Hirst, Keith Haring, and Jeff Koons have been shown here. Artists are attracted by the chance to install their work in a part of town that no one would think to call edgy, and RHR Holding makes gains in the nebulous area of cachet. But it's basically a public service. "Galleries have shows to sell something, and museums ask admissions," notes Marshall. "We don't do either. We don't sell anything. We don't charge anything. And it's open every day." Asked if the art isn't maybe a bit much for the office crowd (for instance, Hirst's 35-foot bronze sculpture *Virgin Mother* is a pregnant woman with half her skin peeled off), Marshall says, "I hear complaints and I hear compliments."

Cross the street to 375 Park Avenue to visit another icon of functionalist architecture: Mies van der Rohe's 38-story Seagram Building, erected five years after the Lever House.

VETERANS ROOM IN THE SEVENTH REGIMENT ARMORY

17

Interior decorating for old warriors

643 Park Avenue

armoryonpark.org

See online calendar for events; for tours call 212-616-3930

4 and 6 trains/68th St – Hunter College; F train/Lexington Av – 63rd St



Built in 1880, Seventh Regiment Armory is the only armory in the United States that was privately funded. Every detail reflects the taste of the members: scions of New York's great Dutch and English families who were in general so well-off, the Seventh's nickname was the Silk Stocking Regiment. "It's the wealth of New York," says Kirsten Reoch. "This is it."

Reoch is project director at Park Avenue Armory, the nonprofit that is laboriously restoring the building and reinventing it as a cultural arts center. Today the best way to see the inside is to attend an event – for example a concert of the New York Philharmonic – and then wander through the ground floor until you come upon the remarkable Veterans Room. Here you'll see how well a limitless budget agrees with the military.

"At that time the decorative arts weren't considered womanly," says Reoch. "It was part of fine art, in a way. Men were very involved." To say that the decoration is manly falls short: the room might as well be lacquered in testosterone. Studded timber beams, wrought iron, polished woods; dragons, eagles, jousting knights, gladiators. The painted frieze around the ceiling cornice tells, in individual panels, the entire history of warfare. Even more remarkable: it all hangs together. The Veterans Room is an early effort by the decorators who would soon conquer the city as the design collaborative Associated Artists: Lockwood de Forest, Samuel Colman, Candace Wheeler, and Louis Comfort Tiffany. Tiffany was the guiding hand, and the Veterans Room is considered his most complete interior anywhere.

One detail summarizes the whole spirit of the place: the large pillars wrapped in tightly coiled iron chains. The effect is handsome, tactile, martial. During the Civil War, a regiment officer had the idea that a long chain attached between two cannonballs would skim across the field and, as Reoch tells it, "chop all the men on the other side in half." It might have worked, except field cannons are impossible to sync. The only time the man-chopping chain system was tried, the first ball shot out and whipped around behind the line. The chains here are a Seventh Regiment inside joke.

The metallic touches embedded in the design were meant to be seen under 19th-century gas lighting. In the constant flicker of flames, the Veterans Room would have glittered like treasure.

THE WISHING TREE

⑥

Rub the stump

Apollo Theater, 253 West 125th Street
 apollotheater.org

*Tours must be scheduled in advance, contact historic.tour@apollotheater.org or 212-531-5337. Tour reservations are offered to groups of 20 or more. Individuals and groups with less than 20 participants can join an existing tour if one is scheduled on your preferred date
 2, 3, B, C and D trains/125th St*



The big acts that have crossed the Apollo Theater stage are countless. But so are the small ones: the unknowns, the would-have-beens, the newly discovered. On Wednesdays for over seventy years the Apollo has hosted “Amateur Night,” where anyone can perform to a raucous crowd. Next to the wings, on its own pedestal, sits an unlikely object: a section of a tree stump. The Wishing Tree, according to Apollo tradition, must be rubbed for good luck before testing your talent onstage. The hopefuls have polished the wood to a shine. Some of them stepped into the lights, took up the microphone, and moments later became Whitney Houston, or Ella Fitzgerald, or James Brown. Others stayed who they were: just people. Still, the stump contains dreams.

The theater’s history echoes the history of Harlem. Originally a burlesque house, under the management of Jewish partners it became the first venue in New York to introduce black performers to white audiences. “The way black people danced,” says historian and Apollo tour guide Billy Mitchell, “the way we played our music, our theater, our poetry, our intellect, our activism – our whole swagger, as they say. Our white brothers and sisters wanted to see black people perform.” Once they did, they wanted more: American culture changed forever. And this wider success of black culture inspired the unknowns of Amateur Night who took to the stage, rubbed the stump, and prayed for discovery.

The roots of the Wishing Tree go beyond the Apollo, and beyond the Harlem Renaissance, stretching deep into black city lore. The stump is one section of a great elm that grew on 131st Street, in front of the old Lafayette Theater, in the early 1900s the foremost African-American venue in the country. Performers thought that standing in the tree’s shade, or touching its bark or wearing its twigs and leaves would bring work, and luck. After the Wishing Tree was felled in 1934, pieces were sold off for souvenirs and firewood.

RIVERSIDE LABYRINTH

Still mysterious after a thousand years

490 Riverside Drive

trcnyc.org

212-870-6700

Thursday to Sunday 9am–5pm

1 train/116th St – Columbia University

11



On the floor of the Riverside Church chancel you'll find an interesting hallmark of the building's medieval roots: a stone labyrinth.

Labyrinths first started appearing in the floors of Christian churches (although they predate them) around the year 1000. One theory holds that meandering along the loops and switchbacks served as a proxy journey for devout Christians who couldn't make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem: the hassles of travel in a conveniently concentrated form. If bumping around a maze sounds like a surer path to rage than to spiritual fulfillment, keep in mind that labyrinths are patterns, not puzzles. Everyone who walks the labyrinth walks the same inevitable route: there's only one.

Completed in 1930, Riverside Church is modeled after Chartres Cathedral in France and inherited the labyrinth along with the architecture. Chartres has the most well-known church labyrinth in the world: over 40 feet in diameter, it fills the entire nave of the cathedral. The design in the floor of Riverside is mostly symbolic: formed by contrasting polished marbles, it's only 10 feet across – borderline unwalkable. Still, since the 1990s the church has attracted labyrinth enthusiasts with a larger, portable version that can be spread out on the floor. The practice began with Riverside Church member Richard Butler, who first helped create a paper labyrinth for Easter Holy Sunday, and later had the design painted on canvas. "I experience a clearing of my mind," Butler told the *Times* about walking it.

Labyrinths are a wider phenomenon. Diana Carulli, an artist who has designed large public labyrinths in Union Square and other parts of the city, says there's a growing public need for walking around in circles. "Labyrinths go through these tremendous revival periods," she says. "They work through strengthening your core in some mysterious way."



The Chartres labyrinth

Riverside's Parish Life Ministry hosts labyrinth walks on a more or less quarterly basis. Anyone can come and try it.

PORTOLAN CHART

18

America, terra incognita

The Hispanic Society of America
 Broadway between West 155th and West 156th Streets
 hispanicsociety.org – 212-926-2234
 Library: Tuesday–Saturday 12pm–3:30pm
 Admission free
 1 train/157th St; C train/155th St



If there's anything more compelling than a map of the world, it's an ancient map where things are patchy and strange, and whole continents of *terra incognita* fade off into the margin. The Hispanic Society of America Museum has one hidden away in the library: a giant portolan chart on parchment from 1526 by Juan Vespucci, nephew of the great Italian explorer Amerigo.

Created for the purposes of trade, the portolan charts are the first no-nonsense maps of the known world. The one in the Hispanic Society is believed to be the official Spanish exploration atlas called the *padrón real*, or royal register. “When sailors returned from America to Spain,” says library curator William Delgado, “they had to draw the contours of the coast that they saw, and make a report.” The resulting chart, regularly updated, was a state secret: the New World glimmered in the imaginations of contending European powers like a vast tract of solid gold. The person in charge of compiling the fresh information was called the *piloto mayor* or master navigator. The explorer Amerigo Vespucci held the title until his death in 1519, when it fell to his nephew Juan. The master navigator had to perform a political balancing act: both correctly record the buzz of new discovery and keep a lid on it. At some point, Juan tripped. “He got fired,” Delgado smiles, raising his eyebrows at the 500-year-old scandal.

Vespucci's map still has an appealing air of secrecy about it. For one, it isn't kept in the main museum, but in the attached library. There you have to whisper your desire to an assistant, who will direct you to a curtained wall and, with a certain drama, pull the cord to reveal the known world of half a millennium ago. Europe is well-defined. Africa too, but the blocky elephants were drawn by someone who had clearly never seen one. Brazil is patrolled by mysterious dragons. Most striking is the nascent accuracy of the Americas: the Gulf of Mexico and the Indies are precisely drawn, and Florida appears as a peninsula and not the island it was once believed to be. As you would expect from a chart made by sailors, the details are in the coasts. Inland America grows vague: just a wash landscape of gloomy blue hills that fade into nothing, the very depiction of the unknown.

LIGHTHOUSE AT THE TOP OF 950 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

14

A former company logo

960 University Avenue
Bronx, NY 10452



If you drive on the Major Deegan Expressway, look up as you pass through the Highbridge section of the Bronx. There is a curious detail at the very top of 950 University Avenue: a lighthouse that looks over the Bronx and Manhattan.

Built in 1929, the complex was once the headquarters of H.W. Wilson, a publishing company, known for its *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. The lighthouse was part of the company logo, symbolizing the mission of H.W. Wilson: “To give guidance to those seeking their way through the maze of books and periodicals, without which they would be lost.”

Although it’s hard to see from the Deegan, the lighthouse rests on an opened book and had a working beacon. The interior of the building had pneumatic tubes, the once ubiquitous means of delivering mail in New York City. H.W. Wilson merged into EBSCO Publishing in 2012 and the building was bought by Tuck-it-Away storage, after Tuck-it-Away lost its headquarters in Harlem in an eminent domain battle with Columbia University.

Tuck-it-Away spent over \$2 million refurbishing the building and converted it into offices and storage units. The company painted the lighthouse orange to mirror the colors of the company branding. Nick Spraygren, the CEO of Tuck-it-Away, told the *Bronx Times* in 2013, “By having this prominent light, people will become even more aware of us. We can spread the word and spread the light of what our mission is ... When H.W. Wilson left, they left a tremendous amount of office cubicles and desks.” He also said at the time, “We are very bullish on the Bronx.”

Unfortunately, Tuck-it-Away storage went out of business and in 2018, the brick complex was re clad completely in concrete and repainted in white, gray and green as part of a conversion into Extra Space Storage. During this time, the lighthouse remained orange. In 2020, Spraygren’s son sold the five-building complex for \$28.5 million to Prime Storage Group. The lighthouse remains, although it has since been repainted entirely black. The logo of the Prime Storage Group, a white key with the initials PS inside a shield, is emblazoned on it.

T.M. RIVES, MICHELLE YOUNG AND HANNAH FRISHBERG

SECRET NEW YORK AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



Admire an apocalyptic pillar in a church, relax in secret gardens, visit a secret subway tunnel, find bullet impacts outside the JP Morgan Bank, chase the remnants of the Berlin Wall, find a statue of Lenin, fly your skirt in the same place as Marilyn Monroe, explore a room filled with earth, discover a gigantic Venetian palace above an old stable, visit an island whose independence was proclaimed from a canoe in 2004, discover the “pig” of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, play scrabble with the signs of Queens, find out where George Washington’s last tooth is, have your bike or elephant blessed, visit the remains of the pier where the *Titanic* should have arrived ...

An indispensable guide for those who thought they knew New York City well, or who would like to discover the hidden face of the city.

JONGLEZ PUBLISHING
432 PAGES

£15,99 – US\$ 19.95 – €19,95

info@jonglezpublishing.com
www.jonglezpublishing.com

ISBN: 978-2-36195-726-1

