

Spring · 2026



Carl Schurz  
**PARK**  
Conservancy

# Park Notes

*CIRCA 1500*



*CIRCA 1910*



*TODAY*

## FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

O

n a planet over four billion years old, the notion that humans are in possession of any part of the natural world is quite humorous.

It may be wise to take a page from the Lenape who considered land to be sacred and interconnected to life, but a gift bestowed by Mother Nature and, therefore, exempt from ownership.

This sentiment urges us not only to show humility and deep appreciation, but also, to acknowledge a grave sense of responsibility for that which we are simply borrowing.

Time and again, we are seeing that the way forward is to embrace the past.

In this issue of Park Notes, we highlight the ways in which we are honoring the land on which Carl Schurz Park sits and our efforts to restore it to reflect the vegetation that existed in the days of the Lenape; a restoration which will allow the land to nurture all the vital creatures who rely on it.

Enjoy as we “take a walk on the wild side” in our first major reclamation, the Peter Pan Garden.

Also, new this year, “Historic Highlight”, a column written by respected author Kate Kelly who tells little known stories of America’s past. Learn why our Park bears the esteemed name of Carl Schurz.

*Judy Howard*

Judy Howard,  
Board Chair



COVER STORY

# REWILDING PETER PAN

BY  
BANFORD WEISSMANN  
MASTER GARDENER

# W

hile humans have dramatically changed Manhattan Island since the days of the original Lenape people, many native plant species still exist, mostly in the small pockets that make up our park system. At Carl Schurz, we showcase those native plants in all our restoration projects. Our most recent installation is the forested slope behind the Peter Pan statue.

If you haven't already, come explore new paths we have opened there and witness the unfolding of a fully revitalized landscape.

Over many years – decades even – the hill had severely eroded, leaving the ground

bare and lifeless. Plants couldn't establish adequate root systems and mud washed down onto the stonework during rainstorms. In addition, only 12% of the area's plants were native, providing few benefits for birds and insects that are a vital part of our region's ancient ecosystem.

Last year, we were fortunate to receive a generous donor gift that has enabled us to fully restore this part of the park. It's the largest horticultural project that the Conservancy has undertaken - so far.

To repair the damage in Peter Pan, we installed an erosion control system using 25 natural coconut fiber logs. We were able to bring in crews with heavy machinery to





PETER PAN CIRCLE, EARLY 1990s

move about 2 tons of soil and help shore up the slope. Our wonderful volunteers pitched in, and a Boy Scout troop helped mulch the new paths. We planted over 1,000 native plants, including more than 100 shrubs, 500 groundcovers and perennials and 400 early spring bulbs. We also excavated, restored and reinstalled historic fencing from the 1930's that had been buried under the soil.

The new plants, including Elderberry, Hazelnut, and Wintergreen were sources of food for the Lenape. Other plants you'll see, like Black Chokeberry and Bush Honeysuckle,

were used for their medicinal properties. Today, we leave the bounty of the garden for birds and wild animals to consume.

You may notice that some of the plants in the garden, like Mountain Laurel, Wood Asters, Hay-scented ferns and Christmas ferns, are what you find when you go hiking in nearby state parks.

As we have done for many years now, we will continue improving our landscape, planting native species that will support our distinct natural ecosystems well into the future. We'll keep you posted on the next project!



Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)



Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*)



Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)



Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)



Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*)



Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)



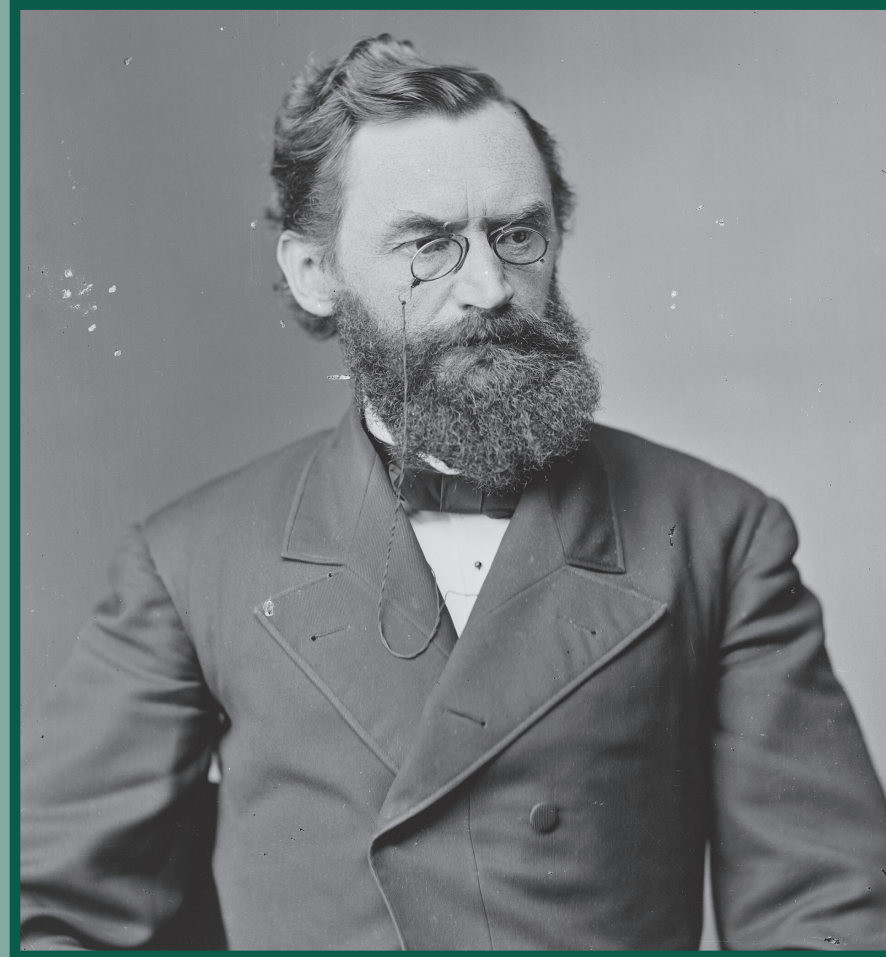
Wood Asters (*Eurybia divaricata*)



Hay-scented ferns (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*)



Christmas ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)



## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHT

# WHO WAS CARL SCHURZ?

BY  
KATE KELLY



This beautiful Tiffany pitcher was presented to Carl Schurz at a banquet at Delmonico's in New York City to celebrate his seventieth birthday. Carl Schurz Park Conservancy was honored to receive this pitcher from Annie Cox (Mrs. Thomas R. Cox) through the kindness of Clinton Standart. The inscription reads, "Carl Schurz from J. and E.L. Goodkin March 2, 1899."

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

KATE KELLY PUBLISHES LITTLE-KNOWN STORIES OF AMERICA'S PAST ON HER WEBSITE, AMERICA COMES ALIVE. SHE HAS ALSO WRITTEN NUMEROUS BOOKS FOR BUSINESS AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AS WELL AS SEVERAL BOOKS ON HISTORY. SHE IS AN UPPER EAST SIDE RESIDENT WHO FULLY ENJOYS CARL SCHURZ PARK FOR FREQUENT WALKS AND VISITS WITH HER GRANDCHILDREN.

# CARL SCHURZ

## 1848-1906

In 1910, the New York City Board of Aldermen opted to rename East River Park after the highly esteemed leader Carl Schurz (1829–1906), who was greatly admired by New Yorkers for his tireless advocacy for ethical government.

Though Schurz never lived in the area bordering the park, he spent his final years just a short walk away on 91st Street near Madison Avenue. This local connection, coupled with his pioneering environmental work, makes this green space a perfect monument to a man whose life embodied the quintessential American story.

### EARLY YEARS

Born in Cologne, Germany, Carl Schurz joined the 1848 fight for democracy against the Prussian Army when he was a youth. When defeat became certain, he escaped through a storm sewer, later returning in a daring mission to rescue his mentor from prison. This courage defined his life, eventually leading him to America and a career in public service.

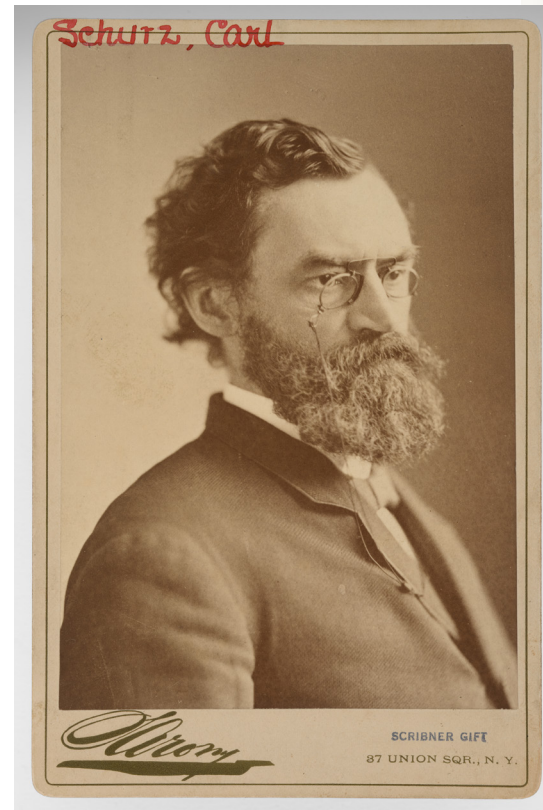
### WISCONSIN

In 1852, Schurz and his wife, Margarethe Meyer Schurz (1832–1876), emigrated from Germany. They settled in Watertown, Wisconsin, where Carl Schurz practiced law and entered politics. He aligned himself with anti-slavery causes and campaigned for Abraham Lincoln, who came to rely on Schurz.

Margarethe had her own career and established the first kindergarten in the United States. Though she taught only in German, she shared her methods with Boston educator Elizabeth Peabody. Peabody's additional efforts sparked a nationwide movement that transformed early education in the U.S.

### ELECTED SENATOR

When the Civil War broke out, Schurz served as a general in the Union Army. After the war, the family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where Schurz became part-owner and editor of a German language newspaper. This gave him a job and a political base. In 1868, he became the first German-born Senator to serve in the U.S. Senate. (1869-1875).



From Left,  
1. Carl Schurz c. 1876,  
National Portrait Gallery.  
2. East River Park, c. 1906  
New York Historical Society.

Throughout his time in government, he fought against corruption and advocated for merit-based hiring. He also saw the decimation of American forests and pushed for conservation. When President Rutherford B. Hayes took office in 1877, he appointed Schurz Secretary of the Interior. Schurz laid the groundwork for the National Park System.

In 1881, Schurz returned to journalism, moving to New York City. He worked at The New York Evening Post, The Nation, and Harper's Weekly.

### YORKVILLE

At the turn of the century, the neighborhood surrounding what was then the East River Park was the center of German-American life in New York City with many

social clubs, bakeries, and churches. While Schurz worked as an editor, he must have spent much time with friends in Yorkville.

He died in New York at the age of 77 (May 1906).

In 1910, four years after his death, the Board of Aldermen renamed East River Park to honor Schurz's lifelong fight against corruption. It was a peak moment in the Progressive Era—a time that

resonated with Schurz's own famous motto:

**'Our country, right or wrong. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right.'**

Today, the park stands as a monument to his enduring American spirit and his understanding of the importance of green space.

## DESIGN IN FOCUS

# HOOP DREAMS

**S**pring may just be the most beautiful time in Carl Schurz Park. Almost nothing is as hotly anticipated as the Cherry Tree Allée in full bloom. Except, that is, the 86th Street Hoop Garden located at the back of the Allée.

Neighbors visit daily so as not to miss the ever-changing display. Among the burning questions are—what colors will the tulips be and what design will eventually be revealed?

The pilgrimage lasts throughout much of April when people snapping photos is a constant from morning to night. Our Master Gardener, Banford Weissmann, works for hours throughout the year to create this annual spectacle.

First, she settles on a design known only to her. Then, she chooses a color palette making sure tulip height and bloom time are similar. The bulbs are ordered in July and delivered to us at the end of October. Over a period of about a week, in December, the Hoop Garden is prepared and planted.

Then we all sit back and, like the community, await another thrilling April reveal.



# THANK YOU

CARL SCHURZ PARK CONSERVANCY IS GRATEFUL TO ALL THOSE WHO  
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Heartfelt thanks to  
**The Chapin School**  
for hosting a spectacular evening for the  
*2025 Party on the Park*  
And continued thanks for hosting  
our annual Volunteer Appreciation Day.

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cont'd next page...

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**Sincere additional thanks to:**

Dorian's Seafood Market for helping to underwrite our summer events.  
 The Mansion Diner for their donation of hot chocolate and The Candystore for their donation of candies for the Holiday Tree Lighting.  
 Yura on East End for their donation of breakfast for the Gracie Square Art Show artists.

**In Memoriam:**

**Jan Krukowski,  
an extraordinary man.**



Jan will be remembered with great admiration and respect. For many decades he lived on East End Avenue with his wife, composer and vocalist Nancy Harrow. Throughout those years, Carl Schurz Park held a special place in his heart, and he remained one of the Conservancy's most loyal and steadfast supporters.

Guided by a deep sense of civic responsibility and a genuine affection for the park, Jan chose to donate annually towards the salary of a gardener. His generosity, and the trust he placed in the Conservancy, allowed us to sustain the horticultural care and thoughtful improvements that keep the park vibrant and welcoming.

We remain profoundly grateful for Jan's enduring commitment to Carl Schurz Park and to the mission of Carl Schurz Park Conservancy. His legacy lives on in the beauty and vitality of the gardens he helped sustain.

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# Honoring History

## Inspiring The Future



In the last four months (2025/2026), many of our donors have also made contributions 'above and beyond' to the Restoration of the Hoop Stairs.

With the goal met, CSPC was supremely grateful that this landmark project was able to begin this Spring. We are thrilled with the unequivocal response to this transformative undertaking.

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In Memory of  
Robert and Christine Beshar

### River View \$150,000

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## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

# FROM VISITORS TO CARETAKERS

BY  
PATRICK K. MCCLUSKEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LACEY MARROQUIN



ALI PROW

One of the quiet joys of Carl Schurz Park is that many of the gardens you admire are cared for by volunteers.

This season I had the pleasure of speaking with two of our newer volunteer gardeners, Lacey and Ali, about what drew them into the work, and why they keep coming back.

For Lacey, the Park quickly became part of daily life after she moved to the Upper East Side with her husband and their dogs.

“We chose Yorkville because we could walk easily to Carl Schurz Park and the dog park,” she says. “We immediately fell in love with the Park, and I started noticing the little signs that say ‘this garden is cared for by a volunteer.’”

Originally from Texas, Lacey grew up tending a large yard and missed working in the soil. After watching both her dogs and, later, her children enjoy the Park, she felt it was time to give something back.

“After having two dogs benefit from the dog run, and then two kids playing and exploring here, I

felt the Park deserved something from us in return,” she said. **“Volunteering felt like taking care of my own backyard.”**

Lacey especially enjoys learning sustainable gardening practices and supporting biodiversity in the Park’s landscapes.

“I love being outside and getting my hands dirty,” she said. “Learning how gardening can encourage biodiversity and then actually doing the work, and seeing the benefits, is incredibly rewarding.”

For Ali, the connection to the Park began in the spring of 2020. “I moved to Yorkville during the early days of Covid,” she explained. “The Park was one of the only places where I could be outside, socially distanced, and still surrounded by something beautiful.”

During those visits, she noticed volunteers in green shirts tending the gardens and began to wonder if she could join them.

“I come from a family of gardeners in North Carolina, and I had a little container garden at home,” she said. “But there’s nothing like digging in real dirt.”

**“BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES  
DON’T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT—  
PEOPLE TAKE CARE OF THEM.”**

Ali soon joined the Wednesday Wonders volunteer group and quickly found herself hooked.

“I started protecting those Wednesday mornings at all costs,” she laughed. “Pruning bushes, hauling mulch, weeding roses — it’s incredibly satisfying. You work on the garden, and the garden works on you.”

Last fall she helped plant more than 140 native plants in the North 89th Street garden, imagining the role the space might play in supporting pollinators moving through the city.

“We like to think of it as a pit stop on the pollinator highway between the East River and Central Park,” she said.

Both volunteers spoke about the deeper meaning behind their work.

“It’s easy to walk through a park and enjoy it,” Ali reflected. **“Beautiful public spaces don’t happen by accident—people take care of them.”**

At Carl Schurz Park, we’re grateful that volunteers like Lacey and Ali are helping ensure that care continues for generations to come.

# *Spirit Stories*

*A musical soundwalk  
for Carl Schurz Park*

**R**ecent volunteer, Zone Gardener trainee and concert pianist, Ali Prow has shared a special project with us.

“Spirit Stories” is a soundwalk of piano music tailored to Carl Schurz Park. It is essentially a virtual piano concert, performed by Ali, paired with narration that guides the listener to popular areas of the Park.

The walk takes about 40 minutes to complete, and the only equipment required is a smartphone and a pair of headphones.

She relates that this project is fundamentally a thank you to all those who make the Park such a spectacular place and her hope is to further deepen the connection between visitors and the Park. “This small offering of shared attention is a nod of gratitude for the care that has been given to this space,” says Ali.

Visit our Carl Schurz Park website or Ali’s site directly and listen:

[www.alexandraprow.work/soundwalk](http://www.alexandraprow.work/soundwalk)



Ann Meschery

**A**fter decades of service, our beloved Director of Public Events, Ann Meschery, has stepped down. Ann recently moved to sunny California to be closer to her brother and family. While we are so happy for her, we will all miss her deeply.

Fortunately, we have the perfect person to carry the torch. Longtime Board Member and former Chair of the Playground Committee, Lisa Latcholia, has graciously stepped in to take on the role.

Lisa is a true professional when it comes to managing events of all kinds and sizes. After years of leading our beloved Egg Hunt and Harvest Festival, this work is second nature to her.

We could not be more thrilled to have her running the show.



Lisa Latcholia

**A New Chapter,  
Thank you Ann, Welcome Lisa!**

# Carl Schurz PARK Conservancy

# 2026 Calendar of Events

## DIRECTING NATURE

**BREEANA "BEE" GEORGE  
PROMOTED TO  
DIRECTOR OF HORTICULTURE**



If you have walked through Carl Schurz Park in recent years and noticed the gardens looking particularly vibrant, chances are you have been seeing the quiet work of Breeana George, known to many simply as "Bee." A familiar presence in the Park for nearly a decade, Bee has now been promoted to Director of Horticulture.

Working full time, year-round, Bee identifies and carries out projects that restore and strengthen the health of the Park. Much of this work happens collaboratively: Bee works closely with the Conservancy's Gardening Committee, Zone Gardeners, neighborhood volunteers, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to guide both ongoing maintenance and new horticultural projects across the park.

Bee's path to Carl Schurz Park began in Seattle, Washington, where she was born and raised. While working with the Nature

Consortium, she attended South Seattle College and earned an Associate's Degree in Horticulture.

After moving to New York City in 2015, Bee spent three years with Riverside Park Conservancy before joining Carl Schurz Park Conservancy in 2018. Since then, she has become a central figure in the care and development of the park's gardens.

Under her stewardship, Carl Schurz Park continues to evolve thoughtfully due to the patience, attention, and long-term vision she provides.

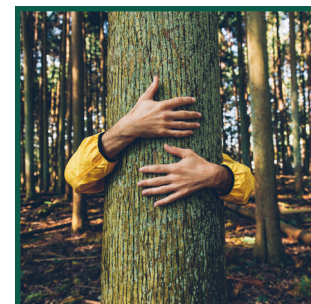
Bee adds, "I am deeply committed to ensuring that this small but beloved public park is not only well cared for, but continually growing greener, healthier, and more welcoming for the community that surrounds it."

We are thrilled to continue watching her grow along with all that she cares for in this special Park.

### VOLUNTEER DAYS

February 7th  
March 7th  
April 11th  
May 16th  
June 13th  
No July Date  
No August Date  
September 19th  
October 17th  
November 14th

*East End Ave/86th Street  
Registration Required*



### EARTH DAY

**Saturday, April 25, 2026**  
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
*Throughout the Park.*



### ANNUAL PLANT "SALE"

**Saturday, May 9, 2026**  
(raindate May 10, 2026)  
9:00 a.m. until Sold Out  
*East End Ave/86th Street*



### SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

#### STEEL IMPRESSIONS CARIBBEAN BAND

**Wednesday, July 15th**  
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
*John Finley Walk at the  
top of 86th Street Stairs*

#### STEVE SHAIMAN & THE SWINGTIME BIG BAND

**Wednesday, July 22nd**  
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
*John Finley Walk at the  
top of 86th Street Stairs*



### SUNSET FILMS

**INSIDE OUT 2**  
**Wednesday, August 5th**  
8:30 p.m.  
*Sport Courts at 84th Street*

**WICKED FOR GOOD**  
**Wednesday, August 12th**  
8:30 p.m.  
*Sport Courts at 84th Street*



### THE 52ND ANNUAL GRACIE SQUARE ART SHOW

**Saturday and Sunday,  
September 12th & 13th**  
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
*East End Avenue  
from 84th to 88th Streets*  
(Rain or Shine)  
[www.gsasnyc.org](http://www.gsasnyc.org)

### HARVEST FESTIVAL

**Sunday, October 18th**  
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
*Peter Pan Walk  
and Gracie Oval*



### HALLOWEEN HOWL & HEALTHY HOUND FAIR

**Sunday, October 18th**  
(Raindate October 25th)  
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
*Sport Courts at 84th Street  
and John Finley Walk*

### HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING

**Sunday, December 6th**  
5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
*East End Ave/86th Street*  
(Rain or Shine)



Swingtime Big Band at Carl Schurz Park



# Carl Schurz PARK Conservancy

## Ways to Support Carl Schurz Park Conservancy

### Give Online

The easiest way to make a gift is through our website at [www.carlschurzparknyc.org](http://www.carlschurzparknyc.org)

### Give by Mail

If you prefer, you may send your contribution to:  
Carl Schurz Park Conservancy  
1483 York Avenue, #20523  
New York, NY 10075

### Matching Gifts

Many employers will match charitable donations made by their employees. By requesting a match through your company, you may be able to double the impact of your generosity.

### Planned Giving

You may also choose to remember the park in your estate plans by joining the Peter Pan Society, helping ensure that Carl Schurz Park remains a treasured green space for generations to come.

### Gifts of Stock

Donating appreciated securities can be a tax-advantaged way to support the park. Please contact our office for instructions on making a stock gift.



## Carl Schurz Park Conservancy Mission Statement

The mission of Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is to restore and beautify Carl Schurz Park, complementing the efforts of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Our goal is to enhance the public's enjoyment and involvement in the Park. The Conservancy organizes volunteers to execute its projects and sponsors community events that are open to all.

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