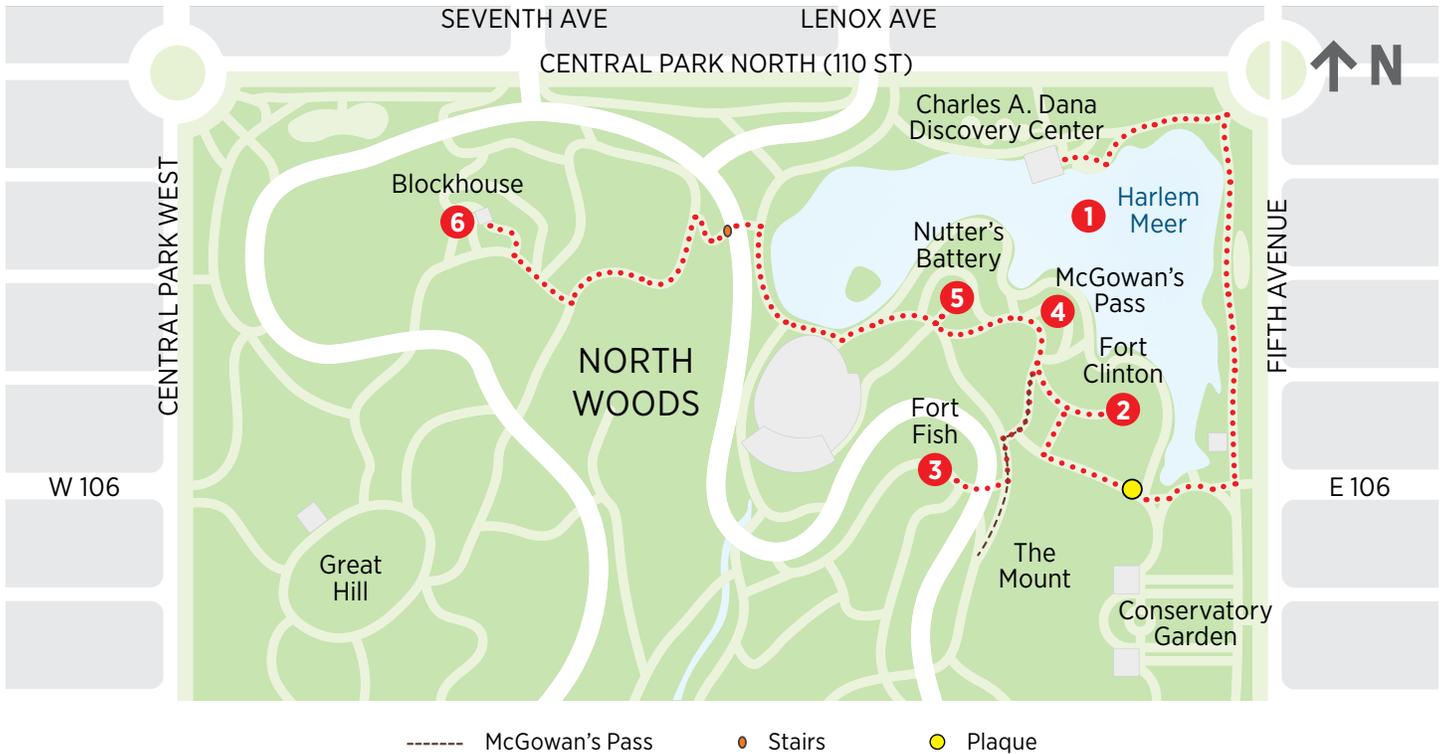


SELF-GUIDED TOUR: THE FORT LANDSCAPE



Discover Responsibly

To minimize your impact on the natural environment, keep dogs leashed at all times, stay on designated paths, and carry out what you carry in. Feel free to observe and photograph wildlife, but please don't feed any animals you encounter.

About the Tour

Beginning and ending at the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, this self-guided tour should take about 45 minutes. If you take the optional trip up to the Blockhouse, plan to add approximately 30 minutes to your tour. The route is uneven, with many hills and stairs. Walk east from the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center. You will see some signs with even more information about some of the stops on the route.

Before the construction of Central Park, the landscape just south of what is now the Harlem Meer played an important role in our city's—

and nation's—history. These rock outcrops became key strategic locations for the British military during the American Revolution and by the Americans for the same purpose during the War of 1812.

1 Harlem Meer

Central Park designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux named this man-made water body “the Meer”—Dutch for “lake.” It memorializes the former village of Harlem that was established in the 17th century by European settlers. The Harlem Meer is a thriving wildlife habitat and home to fish, turtles, and waterfowl.

On your way to the Fort Clinton Overlook, notice the plaque on the rock (marked on the map) that mentions the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Mount Saint Vincent de Paul.*

Up the hill, you can see the foundations of a retaining wall from this convent and school (1847). Today, this area is the site of the Conservancy's composting operation.

2 Fort Clinton Overlook*

The British built a fortification here in 1776, following their invasion of Manhattan, as part of a defensive line extending west to the Hudson River. During the War of 1812, the Americans, concerned about a British attack on New York, rebuilt a fort in the same location. This defense was named Fort Clinton in honor of DeWitt Clinton, then mayor of New York.

The two cannons that can be seen here were originally from the HMS Hussar, a British warship that sunk in the East River during the American Revolution. They were placed here at the Fort Clinton Overlook during the early 1900s, but were removed in the 1970s. In 2014, the Conservancy completed a restoration of the Fort Clinton Overlook and cannons.

3 Site of Fort Fish

Fort Fish was named for Nicholas Fish, the Chairman of New York's Committee of Defense during the War of 1812. Fort Fish is located at the highest point in the northeast quadrant of Central Park. Today, the site is a green space featuring a bench dedicated to Andrew Haswell Green, who was important both in the creation of Central Park and in the overall history of New York City.

4 McGowan's Pass*

This name refers to the area where the main road through Manhattan (Kingsbridge Road) descended through a small valley in the rocky landscape. This road was also known as the Boston Post Road—because it connected to the mail delivery routes to Albany and Boston. It was named for the McGowan family, local landowners who operated a popular tavern, one of many in the area built to serve travelers.

5 Nutter's Battery Overlook*

This overlook marks the site of a military fortification built during the Revolutionary War and rebuilt for the War of 1812. This important strategic position was named Nutter's Battery after Valentine Nutter, a local landowner. The Central Park Conservancy completed work at Nutter's Battery in 2014, rebuilding the wall and adding new paving and plantings. This work emphasizes the impressive rock outcrop at the center of the site, as well as the surrounding views.

*For more information, see signage posted in this area.

6 The Blockhouse

Central Park's oldest structure, the Blockhouse is also the only remaining fortification of the many built during the War of 1812 to defend Manhattan against the British. The stone structure once had a sunken wooden roof and cannon that could be deployed quickly, and was one of four blockhouses in this area of Central Park.

Visit the Blockhouse

From the west side of the Harlem Meer, cross the East Drive (the road within the Park). You will see a small set of stairs that connects to a path. Take this path through the North Woods to arrive at the Blockhouse. At 40 acres, the North Woods is the largest of the three woodlands in Central Park.

Complementary Resources for Learning About Central Park's Fort Landscape

Join us on our guided Northern Forts Tour and learn more about the history of this landscape and its role in the American Revolution and War of 1812. Tour schedule available at centralparknyc.org/tours

Visit the exhibit at the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center!

LANDFORMS
A HISTORY OF CENTRAL PARK'S FORT LANDSCAPE

About the Central Park Conservancy

Funded primarily by individual donations, the nonprofit Central Park Conservancy cares for the entire Park, tending to the largest and smallest details of its maintenance and restoration.

Get Involved

Join. Become a member and enjoy access to exclusive member programs and Park perks as a thank you for your contribution.

centralparknyc.org/membership

Volunteer. Explore programs available for all ages and schedules. Find out more at centralparknyc.org/volunteer