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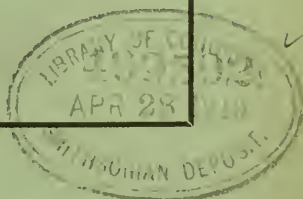
An Appeal  
for the Preservation of  
CITY HALL PARK  
NEW YORK

with

A Brief History of the Park

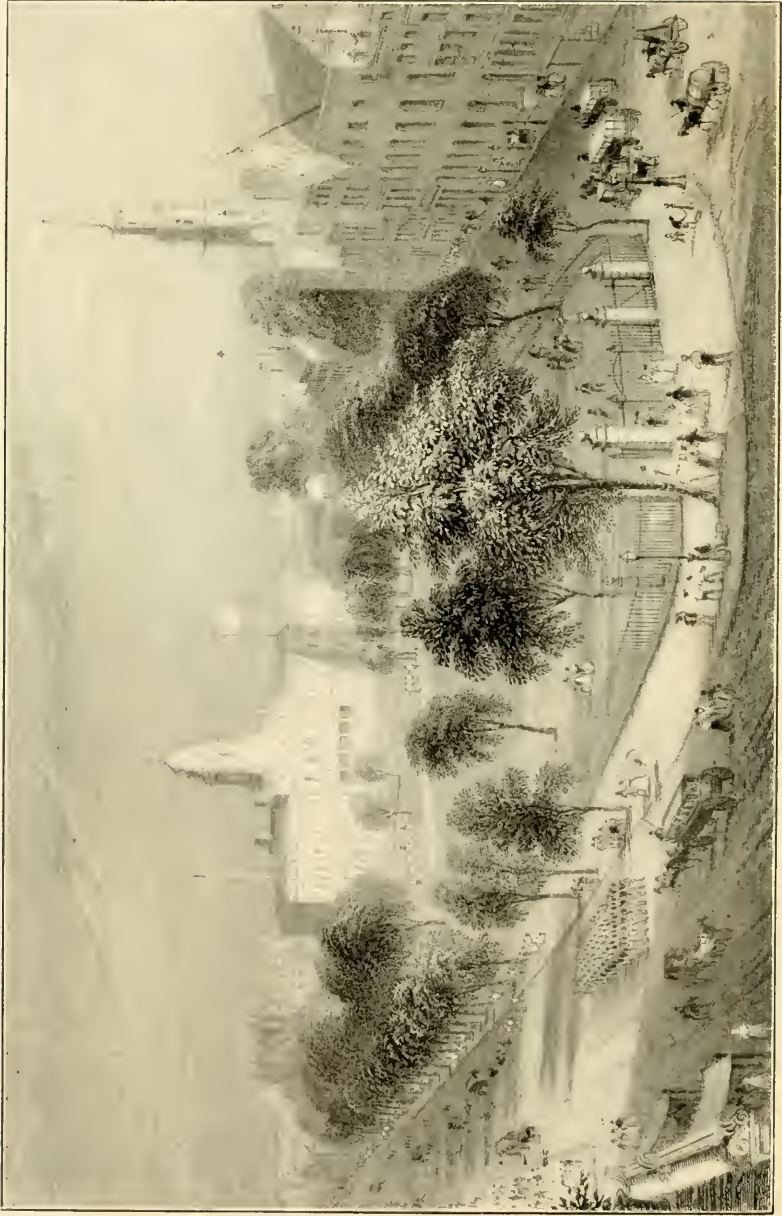


The American  
Scenic and Historic Preservation Society  
Tribune Building, New York  
April, 1910









City Hall Park as it appeared before the Post-office was built, and as it should be restored.

An Appeal  
for the Preservation of  
CITY HALL PARK  
NEW YORK

with

A Brief History of the Park

*by*

*Edward Hagaman Hall, L. H. D.*



The American  
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# The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society

Headquarters :  
Tribune Building, New York

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AN APPEAL FOR THE  
PRESERVATION OF CITY HALL PARK  
IN NEW YORK CITY

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The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society appeals to all public spirited citizens to use their influence to prevent the appropriation of park space in City Hall Park, New York, for an enlarged County Court-house, by addressing their remonstrances to the Chairmen of the following Boards in whose hands the decision of the question rests :

BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND APPORTIONMENT

His Honor William J. Gaynor, Mayor, as *Chairman* of the Board, City Hall.

Hon. Wm. A. Prendergast, Controller, No. 280 Broadway.

Hon. George McAneny, President of Manhattan Borough, City Hall.

Hon. Alfred E. Steers, President of Brooklyn Borough, Borough Hall, Brooklyn.

Hon. Cyrus C. Miller, President of Bronx Borough, 3d avenue and 177th street, Bronx.

Hon. Lawrence Gresser, President of Queens Borough, Borough Hall, Long Island City.

Hon. George Cromwell, President of Richmond Borough, Borough Hall, New Brighton.

Hon. John Purroy Mitchel, President of the Board of Aldermen, City Hall.

COUNTY COURT-HOUSE BOARD

Hon. Morgan J. O'Brien, *Chairman*, 2 Rector street.

Hon. Edward M. Grout, 111 Broadway.

L. Laffin Kellogg, Esq., 115 Broadway.

E. Clifford Potter, Esq., 137 Broadway.

Charles Strauss, Esq., Secretary, 141 Broadway.

The situation is as follows: City Hall Park, which fifty years ago contained  $10\frac{3}{4}$  acres before the Postoffice site was sold, now contains about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres. This space contains the City Hall, the County Court-house at its rear facing Chambers street; the City Court-house east of the latter; the kiosks of the subway; the superstructures of the underground public conveniences; a fountain and the statue of Nathan Hale.

The Court-house board now proposes to erect on the site of the County Court-house an enormous structure extending almost the entire distance along Chambers street from Broadway to Centre street. If such a project be carried into execution,

It will greatly reduce the open space of what has been the City Common for over two centuries;

It will encroach further than heretofore upon land made sacred by venerated traditions of every period of our City's history;

It will overshadow the City Hall, which is one of the architectural treasures of the City;

It will prevent the symmetrical architectural development of a Civic Center around City Hall Park commensurate with the dignity of the Metropolis of the New World and similar to those of other large cities in America and Europe;

It will increase the congestion of traffic at a point already greatly congested;

It will impair the City's financial credit by a confession of past improvidence and by proclaiming that the city's financial resources are at last so exhausted that it cannot afford to buy a building site and must therefore consume its park space—reserved for future generations—in order to house its courts;

And it will establish a precedent for still further encroachments in this and other public parks, the ultimate effect of which cannot be foreseen.

It is apparent that a crisis has arrived in which every public spirited citizen, as he values the city's parks, should rally to their defence.

For seven years successive Court-house Commissions have been seeking a site for a larger building, considering at various times sites in City Hall Park, Battery Park, Washington Square and Union Square. Last year, when the Court-house Commission appeared to favor placing the Court-house in Washington Square, this Society at its Annual Meeting Jan. 21, 1909,



adopted a resolution declaring "that in the opinion of this Society, it is against the interests of the city and contrary to its settled policy and the sentiment of the people that any part of a public park should be used for a court-house or other municipal building."

The Washington Square site was abandoned, and this year the Court-house Board secured an amendment to the law under which it is acting permitting it to locate the building in City Hall Park. This plan has aroused the most earnest protest from the public. Popular sentiment on this subject was unmistakably manifested at the hearing before the Board of Estimate and Apportionment in the City Hall on March 18, 1910, when the chamber was crowded almost to suffocation and when the limits of the hearing did not suffice to allow all the protestants to speak. At the present moment the Court-house Board is considering alternative plans and will soon make final recommendations to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, the final arbiters.

The objections of this Society are based on the ground that the appropriation of public park space for a building is a violation of the principle upon which our public parks are created, is contrary to public policy, and in the present instance is unnecessary as other sites are available. For 22 years persistent efforts have been made to encroach upon City Hall Park for a public building and for 22 years public opinion has successfully resisted the effort. In 1888 the Legislature constituted a Commission, "To select and locate a site, conveniently situated, in the neighborhood of the County Court-house Building in said City, but *not in the City Hall Park*," for a Municipal Building. In 1889 the Legislature authorized this Commission to locate a site within the City Hall Park, but public sentiment revolted against it and in 1890 the Legislature again imposed upon the commission the prohibition "*but not in City Hall Park*." In 1892 the Legislature again authorized the selection of a site for a municipal building in City Hall Park, and the intense indignation which prevailed in that year and in 1894 compelled *the abandonment of the project*. Public sentiment is no less sensitive upon this question today than it was then. In fact the agitation last year which prevented the location of the Academy of Design on the site of the Arsenal Building in Central Park, demonstrates how jealous the people are of any diminution of their park area.

As the city finally found means to erect its municipal building on property which was not a public park, we believe that a place can be found for the new Court-house without going into a public park.

Within a period of thirty-five years and forty-three years respectively, both the Post Office and Federal Court-house at the south end of the Park and the County Court-house at the north end have been outgrown, and there is every probability that the new County Court-house proposed for City Hall Park would be outgrown in an equal period and the city eventually compelled to go elsewhere for a larger site or encroach still further upon the park. It would therefore seem to be the policy of wisdom to look at least fifty years ahead and provide for future needs by locating the new Court-house, not only where it will not encroach upon present park space, but also where it will have room for future expansion.

The growth of population, the increase in the holding capacity of the buildings and the augmented congestion at and around City Hall Park counsel the removal of all buildings from the Park except the City Hall itself, and the recovery of the area occupied by the Post Office, rather than the establishment of the principle that the city can use up its park areas for building lots.

The following historical sketch of City Hall Park and its buildings will serve to indicate the deep interest attaching to this place and how deserving it is of preservation and restoration.

## AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CITY HALL PARK

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City Hall Park has been known at various periods as the Vlacte or Flat, the Second Plains, the Common, the Fields, the Green, the Square, the Park, and finally City Hall Park.

During the Dutch régime the Vlacte was part of the unappropriated lands of Manhattan Island and was used as a common for the pasturage of cattle.

### **Title Vests in the City**

The title to this area was given to the Corporation of the City of New York in 1686 by the terms of the Dongan Charter, which says: "I do by these presents give and grant unto the said Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the said City of New York all the waste vacant unpatented and unappropriated lands lying and being within the said City of New York and on Mannattans Island aforesaid extending and reaching to the low water mark," etc. At this period the Common was a wild, uncultivated tract on the outskirts of civilization.

### **Delimitation of the Park**

The outlining of the form of the Park was a process of gradual evolution. The first boundary was made by the rambling old Post Road, which came down approximately along the line of the Bowery and Chatham street (now Park Row) to Broadway, just south of the present post-office. This road followed one of the routes designated in the act of June 19, 1703, entitled "An act for the Laying out Regulateing Clearing and Preserving Publick Comon highways thro'out this Colony." The Commissioners appointed under this act filed their survey June 16, 1707, laying out the road "to begin from the gate at Spring Garden to Fresh Water, the course east by north." The Spring Garden occupied the southern half of the site of the present Saint Paul Building, which stands on the southern corner of Ann street and Broadway. The new road was named Chatham street in 1774.

The western boundary of the future park was indicated in the first half of the eighteenth century by a farm road which,

running between the King's Farm on the west and the Common on the east, extended from the junction of the Post Road with Broadway at the present Vesey street northward to Anthony Rutgers farm at about Worth street (formerly Anthony street). On this road, extending along almost the entire length of the present Park, was a rope-walk, which appears on a map of 1728 without the owner's name. This appears on a map of 1730 as Dugdale & Searls' rope-walk, and on a map of 1742 as Van Pelt's. It stood in what is now Broadway.

In 1760, 53 years after Chatham street was surveyed on one side of the Common, Broadway (first called Great George street) was surveyed on the other side. The Common Council archives record that "Mr. Marschalk, one of the City Surveyors, produced to this board the draft or plan of a road which he hath lately laid out by direction of the Corporation, viz., beginning from the Spring Garden House where the street is now of the breadth of 82 feet 6 inches, and extending from thence north 37 degrees 30 minutes east until it comes to the ground of the late Widow Rutgers, leaving the street thereof 50 feet in breadth, which is approved by this Board."

Between these two diverging highways, property boundaries at and immediately north of the present Chambers street were indefinite and the Common gradually merged into the negroes' burial ground beyond. In June, 1796, the boundaries were adjusted by the establishment of Chambers street, thus completing substantially the triangular outline of the Park.

At the beginning of the last century the triangle at present bounded by Centre street, Park Row and Chambers street was a part of the Park area and constituted its northeast angle. In 1835 the Board of Aldermen voted that Centre street be opened from Chatham to Pearl street 75 feet wide; and that the grounds between Tryon Row and the old Hall of Records be thrown open to the public and be made a part of Centre street. In 1852 the intersection of Chatham street (now Park Row) and Centre street was widened, the railing and coping of the Park from the Hall of Records northward being set back  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet. From that point to the south end of the Park the curb was also set back a few feet; and from time to time other alterations have been made in the fence and curb lines. In 1867, as more fully stated elsewhere, came the crowning disaster to the Park when the southern end was cut off and sold to the Federal Government for a post-office.

## A Place of Execution

Returning now to the period prior to this delimitation when the area thus included was a formless Common, we may recall the uses to which it was successively devoted and trace its physical development to the Park of today.

During the latter part of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century this remote and unimproved tract was considered an appropriate place for the expiation of capital crimes. It is believed that Lieut. Gov. Leisler and his son-in-law, Jacob Milborne, who were executed for alleged treason in 1691, were hanged on the Common nearly opposite the place of their burial, which latter was on the Leisler estate on the east side of Park Row, opposite the Park. Gallows were erected "at the usual place of execution on the Commons" from time to time as occasion required. Resolutions to that effect may be found in the proceedings of the Common Council in December, 1725, June, 1727, and doubtless many other dates. On May 5, 1756, the Common Council ordered the gallows removed "to the place where the negroes were burnt some five years ago at the foot of the hill called Catiemuts Hill near the Fresh Water." The Fresh Water was a pond on the site of the present City Prison and Criminal Court building.

### The First Building—1728-1776

The first building within the area of the present park appears on the map of 1728 on the western margin of the Common about opposite what is now Murray street. It stood in front of the rope-walk, from which it was separated by an interval of only 40 or 50 feet and to which it apparently belonged. This or some other small building appears on this site up to the building of the Bridewell in 1775.

### The First Almshouse—1736-1797

The first *public* building was an Almshouse, which was erected in 1736 on the site of the present City Hall. To distinguish this building from its successor, we will call it the first Almshouse. An advertisement in that year invites proposals from suitable persons, stating the terms on which they will perform the duties of Keeper of the House of Correction and Overseer of the Poorhouse and Workhouse. Adjacent to the Alms-

house were two small outhouses. In 1757 a small piece of ground, "of the length of two boards," to the eastward of the Workhouse fence, was ordered to be enclosed for a burial place for the poor of that institution. This Almshouse remained standing until the second Almshouse was completed in its rear in 1797, when it was demolished.

#### **City Wall, Blockhouse and Powder Magazine—1745**

In 1745, the year after France had declared war against England, the citizens of New York, fearing an attack by the French, put the city in a posture of defence. Among the fortifications erected was a wall of palisades, similar to that which gave the name to Wall street. The second city wall, however, was built farther north, beginning at Mr. Desbrosses' house (No. 57 Cherry street) and crossing the island in a zigzag course to the North river near the foot of Chambers street. It was built of cedar logs 14 feet long, and was perforated with loopholes for musketry. Within the wall was a banquet four feet high and four feet wide. Six blockhouses with portholes for cannon were situated at commanding angles, and strong gateways were built at the intersection of the wall with the Post Road, Broadway and Greenwich road. One of these blockhouses and gateways was in the angle of the wall at Broadway and Chambers street. David Grim, who was living at the time when the wall was built, has recorded that in 1746 a large party of Mohawk and Oneida Indians came down the Hudson river in their canoes, landed near the foot of Laight street, and passed through the Broadway gate on their way to have an interview with Governor Clinton on Bowling Green. About the time when the wall was erected, a powder magazine was built on the Common a short distance southeast of the Almshouse. The powder magazine appears on Maerschalc's survey of 1755 and again on Montresor's survey of 1775.

#### **The New Gaol—Old Hall of Records—1757-1903**

In 1757 the Common Council appointed a committee to purchase materials for a new gaol to be erected just east of the first Almshouse on the Common, and instructed it to proceed with all speed to construct the same. At that time and for several years previously, the basement and garret of the old City Hall, which stood at Wall and Nassau streets, on the site of the present United States Sub-Treasury, had afforded ample

accommodations for transgressors of the law; but the city was growing in wickedness as it was growing in population, and it was decided to erect more commodious quarters on the Common. This building, which stood 135 feet east of the present City Hall, and which, at the time of its demolition in 1903, was the oldest municipal building in town, had a varied and stirring history, being known at various periods as the New Gaol, the Debtors' Prison, the Provost, the Register's Office, and lastly the Hall of Records. Originally it was a square stone building about 60 by 75 feet in size, three stories high and facing, as the present City Hall faces, west of south.

The basement consisted of three rows of three arched vaults each, varying from 15 by 19 feet to 18 by 28½ feet in size. The arches were 9 feet high in the center, built of brick, and rested on stone foundations 3 feet thick and stone piers 7 feet 8 inches square at the base. The partition walls of the cellar were 2 feet thick. There appear to have been no exterior openings to these dungeons originally. The doorways connecting them were closed with heavy doors. Above the ground the building was constructed of rough stone three stories high. A picture of the period shows the entrance in the middle of the first story on the southwestern face, with two windows on either side, and five windows each in the second and third stories. The side view shows four windows in each story. The roof was square, with a pediment and four dormer windows in the front view and four dormer windows in the side view. Above the centre of the roof arose a cupola which contained a bell. This bell was used to give alarms of fire, the location of the fire being indicated at night by a lantern suspended from a pole protruding from the cupola toward the endangered quarter. The building is said to have cost less than \$12,000. It was the first one erected for exclusive use as a jail. It was an imposing edifice in its day, and standing, as it did, the most conspicuous object to the traveler as he entered the town by the old Boston High Road, was a powerful admonition to all comers to lead a sober, righteous and upright life—and to pay their debts. The latter was by no means the least important of its warnings, for in those days they had not adopted the modern beneficent bankrupt law by which a man can swear off his superfluous financial obligations and begin life anew with a clean ledger, if not a clear conscience. At that time the law permitted a creditor to cast a debtor into prison, a

proceeding which, if it curtailed the debtor's money-earning capacity, at least gave the creditor the consolation to be derived from the knowledge that he was not the only person suffering inconvenience.

That there were many creditors ready to take that sort of satisfaction is evident from the fact that the new gaol soon came to be known as the Debtors' Prison. A notice in *Gaines' Gazette and Mercury* of July 27, 1772, indicates that the public hospitality extended by the gaol was not of the most comfortable kind, and was supplemented by the kind offices of a sympathetic and "respectable publick." "The Debtors confined in the Gaol of The City of New York"—so the notice runs—"impressed with a grateful sense of the obligations they are under to a respectable publick for the generous contributions that have been made to them, beg leave to return their hearty thanks, particularly to the worshipful the Corporation of The City of New York, the reverend the Clergy of the English, Dutch and Presbyterian Churches and their respective congregations, by whose generous donations they have been comfortably supported during the last winter and preserved from perishing in a dreary prison with hunger and cold."

In 1764 the Common Council authorized the Committee on the New Gaol to erect opposite the gaol a public whipping post, stocks, cage and pillory "in such manner as they shall think proper."

After the Revolutionary War the building continued to be used as a city prison until 1830. By that time the city had come to need better quarters for its public records, and a committee of the Common Council selected the old gaol for such use. About \$15,000 was then spent in remodeling and refitting it. The original three stories were transformed into two by changing the floors and windows; the cupola and the roof with its dormer windows were removed and a flat roof substituted, and the building was lengthened at each end about seventeen feet by the addition of a Grecian portico and steps. The six columns of each portico were of the Ionic order, and supported a perfectly plain entablature and pediment. These changes having been made, the rough stone exterior was nicely smoothed over with a uniform coating of stucco, and the whole transformation was alleged to have given the one-time gaol something of the classic beauty of the Doric Temple of Diana at Ephesus, one of the



Seven Wonders of the World. The result, however, was an architectural nondescript possessing neither the substantial simplicity of the original building nor any recognizable resemblance to the beautiful heathen temple of the Goddess of the Silver Bow, which it was supposed to imitate. The old bell that was used to sound the primitive fire alarms was placed over the neighboring Bridewell. When the Bridewell was removed, in 1838, the bell continued to ring out its alarms from the roof of Naiad Hose Company, in Beaver street, until, a short time later, it was destroyed by the element against which for so many years it had given its warnings.

In 1832, while the reconstruction was in progress, an epidemic of cholera broke out in the city, driving many of the inhabitants to the outlying villages and paralyzing business. During the prevalence of the scourge, the work of remodeling the gaol was suspended, and it was used temporarily for a hospital.

Upon the completion of the repairs it was occupied by municipal offices and became the depository of the city records. Within twenty-five years, however, even these accommodations were outgrown, and in 1858 the Surrogate was obliged to move to other quarters. In the following year the Street Commissioner followed suit, and in 1869 the Comptroller evacuated, after which time the building was in sole possession of the City Register, and was known indifferently as the Register's Office and the Hall of Records.

During the supremacy of the Tweed ring (some of whom may well have desired to obliterate any possible suggestion of the original character of the building), the city fathers spent \$140,000 more on the ancient gaol. Their "improvements" consisted of the erection of another story above Diana's entablature and pediments, and the further enlargement of the interior accommodations by the simple expedient of filling up the interspaces between the columns of the southwestern portico so that these columns were converted in appearance from pillars to pilasters.

In 1897 the City Government made provision for the erection of the new Hall of Records on the north side of Chambers street, and in December, 1897, the Board of Aldermen voted to place the historic old building, when vacated, in the care of the National Historical Museum for use as a public museum of historical relics. Soon thereafter the underground rapid transit

tunnel was begun, and the Subway Commission, desiring to locate one of its stations opposite the Brooklyn Bridge, applied for the removal of the old Hall of Records. The demolition of this old building, hallowed by the sufferings of American patriots during the Revolution and many other traditions, was earnestly opposed by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society and other civic and patriotic organizations, and a strong sentiment of opposition was also voiced in the press ; but an application was made to the Supreme Court for the removal of the building on the affidavits of Inspectors of the Department of Buildings alleging that the building was "unsafe" and "dangerous to life"—a condition which was not apparent to others who inspected the building at the time. After earnest arguments in opposition, however, Justice Leventritt announced on October 10, 1902, that he would issue an order for its demolition, and by April, 1903, the sunlight was shining into the uncovered dungeons of the cellar in which Continental soldiers had suffered for their country's sake.

#### The Upper Barracks—1757-1790

In the same year (1757) in which the New Gaol was erected some military barracks, known as the Upper Barracks to distinguish them from those at the Battery, were erected on the south side of the present Chambers street partly on the site of the present Court-houses. The Common Council records show that the committee appointed to confer with the carpenters building the barracks reported the following resolution :

Ordered, That the said building be forthwith carried on under the direction and inspection of the above-named committee, who are hereby empowered to treat with such persons and provide such materials for the carrying on and completing said work as they shall judge proper ; and further ordered, that the said building contain 20 rooms on a floor, two stories high, to be 21 feet square, 420 feet long, and 21 feet wide, etc.

During the Revolution, to accommodate the increased number of the King's troops, two other long buildings were erected between the Bridewell (which stood west of the first Almshouse) and the original barracks on Chambers street. In 1784, the year following the evacuation of the City by the British, the Barracks were leased to various persons for residences. In 1790 the Common Council ordered that the Treasurer sell the Barracks before April 20, the purchaser to remove all the materials by June 1.

### The Bridewell—1775-1838

On March 17, 1775, the Common Council approved plans for a new Bridewell drawn by Theophilus Hardenbrook. This building was erected between the first Almshouse and Broadway and was finished in April, 1776. This institution was erected with the aid of a lottery, and the Treasurer of the City was authorized to take 1,000 tickets of the lottery "on and for the risque of the Corporation."

This building, which made some pretence of architectural attractiveness, was built of dark gray stone. The central portion, which had a pediment in front and rear, was three stories high, while the wings were two stories high. It was used as a prison for American soldiers during the Revolution. On Jan. 4, 1777, according to the authority of N. Murray, there were 800 men in the Bridewell, and to reduce their number it was alleged that the doctors gave them poison powders.

The prison was demolished in 1838, and furnished some of the material used in the Tombs Prison, which was then in course of construction in Centre street. This application of building material for a similar use, but in a different form, led David T. Valentine to quote somewhat lamely Hamlet's remark to his father's ghost: "Thus it is permitted to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon."

### The Second Almshouse—1797-1857

In 1794 the Common Council resolved to apply to the Legislature for leave to establish a lottery to raise \$10,000 for a new Almshouse (which, by way of distinction, we will call the second Almshouse) to take the place of the first one, which had become ruinous and unfit for use. In 1796 it was resolved to erect the second Almshouse to the north of the first house and on the site now occupied by the County Court-house. In 1797 the second Almshouse was ready for occupation, and Mr. Harsen was instructed to take down the first one. In 1812 the functions of the Almshouse were transferred to the new buildings erected for that purpose at Bellevue, and the vacated building, under the name of the New York Institution, was devoted to various enterprises of a public or semi-public nature. Among the various institutions harbored therein were the New York Historical Society, the Academy of Arts, the Academy of Painting under charge of Alexander Robinson, the American Institute and the

City Library. John Scudder's American Museum moved into the west end of the building in 1816. The Deaf and Dumb Institute, incorporated in 1817, opened its school in this building in 1818 and continued therein until 1828. The Lyceum of Natural History, incorporated in 1818, also made its home there. On March 26, 1818, the Chambers Street Savings Bank, the first bank for savings, opened for business in the basement. In 1824 the first Egyptian mummy ever brought to this country was exhibited here. In 1832 rooms were assigned in the building for the use of the United States Courts. In 1857, a year of great financial distress, the building was finally torn down, partly to relieve distress by giving work to the unemployed.

#### The City Hall—1803-1910

The next building in historical order erected in City Hall Park was the City Hall itself. On the map of 1803 it appears plotted on the site of the first Almshouse (its present location) as "the new Court-house." The first City Hall or Stadt Huys stood at No. 73 Pearl street. The second stood on the site of the present United States Sub-Treasury at Nassau and Wall streets.

The first foundation stone of the third and present City Hall was laid by Mayor Edward Livingston, September 20, 1803, when City Hall Park was on the outskirts of the city. The plans were by Macomb & Mangin. The names of the building committee, clerk, sculptor, architect, master stone cutter, master masons and master carpenter are engraved on two marble slabs now set up in the main corridor of the building as mural tablets. The edifice is a beautiful structure in the style of the Italian Renaissance, 215 feet long by 105 deep. The south front and sides are of Stockbridge (Mass.) marble, but the rear was built of brownstone from motives of economy and in the belief that the city would not grow so as to extend to the northward of the building. It cost something more than \$500,000. When completed it was pronounced the finest public edifice in the United States.

The city government first met in this City Hall on July 4, 1810, while it was yet uncompleted. The finishing touches were not put on the building until 1812. (Further details concerning the erection of the City Hall and the historical incidents connected therewith may be found in the Ninth Annual Report

(1904) of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society).

#### **Dispensary and Fire Houses—1817-1906**

Upon the map of 1817 there appears at what would now be the corner of Centre and Chambers streets, where until recently a fire-house stood, a City Dispensary and Soup House, established by the Almshouse Commissioners. A little later the building was shared by the Dispensary and a Hook-and-Ladder Co., such being the case in 1835. In June, 1859, contracts were awarded for a new building to accommodate the steam fire engines and for Engine Company No. 42. This was a temporary frame building between the Hall of Records and the building on the corner of Chambers and Centre streets. The corner site appears to have been dedicated continuously to the uses of the Fire Department, which occupied it with a succession of buildings until the last one was vacated Dec. 31, 1905, and was demolished in March, 1906.

#### **The Rotunda—1818-1870**

About the year 1818 a building called the Rotunda was erected on Chambers street east of the second Almshouse. At the time of its removal in 1870 it stood between the present City Court-house and the fire-engine house which was removed in 1906. There was no space between it and the City Court-house on the west, and only an alley-way between it and the engine-house on the east. The Rotunda, originally a circular, dome-like structure, sometimes called the Round House, was erected by subscription for an art gallery at the instance of John Vanderlyn, the artist, to whom the city granted the use of the ground free for a period of ten years upon condition that at the end of that period the building should become the property of the city. Panoramic views of the Battle of Waterloo, the Palace and Garden of Versailles, the City of Mexico, etc., were among the pictures represented. After the great fire in the lower part of the city in 1835 the Post Office moved into the Rotunda and continued there until 1845. On July 24, 1848, the Common Council directed the New York Gallery of Fine Arts, which then occupied the Rotunda, to vacate the premises within ten days; and in August the sum of \$2,000 was appropriated for the purpose of converting the Rotunda into public offices. In the course of time the exterior appearance of the building was

changed and its interior accommodations were enlarged by additions which squared it out on the north and south sides. On the south side the addition of a portico with four Doric columns gave it quite a classical aspect. When the newly created Board of Park Commissioners entered upon their duties in May, 1870, they gave City Hall Park particular attention, taking away the old iron fence which surrounded the Park, removing the rubbish in the northwest corner left from the building of the County Court-house, improving the unsightly conditions at the south caused by the building of the Post Office, and removing the Rotunda and an old fire-engine house in the northeast corner. At the time of its removal the Rotunda had been occupied for 20 years by the Croton Aqueduct Board in company with various other municipal offices.

#### City Court-house—1852-1910

On June 5, 1851, the Mayor approved a resolution awarding contracts to the lowest bidders for a three story building to be erected "between the new City Hall and the Rotunda for Court rooms and offices, and that said building be completed on or before the 1st of May, 1852." At the same time, \$96,716 was appropriated for the erection of the building. This building, mentioned in the old municipal registers as "No. 32 Chambers Street," was erected on the west of and close to the Rotunda. It is still standing bearing the inscription: "Erected A.D. 1852. William Adams, Commissioner; Job L. Black, Superintendent Public Buildings." It is about 75 by 105 feet in size. In 1904 an additional story was added, and it is now 4½ stories high.

This building has variously been known as the Marine Court, the Court of Sessions and the City Court.

#### The County Court-house—1861-1910

The County Court-house, which fronts on Chambers street in the rear of the City Hall and the replacing of which is the subject of the present public agitation, was begun in 1861 and completed in 1867, but it was not then and it is not now completed. It is of Corinthian architecture, 3 stories high, 250 feet long and 150 feet wide. Its walls are of Massachusetts white marble. It was designed to be crowned with a handsome dome, the summit of which was to be 210 feet above the sidewalk. Erected during the extravagant days of the Tweed Ring, after

it had been the medium of legitimate expenditures and illegitimate speculations amounting to the enormous aggregate of \$16,000,000 the County stopped pouring money into this apparently bottomless financial pit and left the building incomplete. It has been variously occupied by state and county courts and several city departments. One of the singular contrasts so often encountered in history is presented by this building, which, erected upon the site originally dedicated to the relief of the poor as an Almshouse, cost, according to common estimate, \$16,000,000. This monumental piece of extravagance is popularly known as the Tweed Court-house.

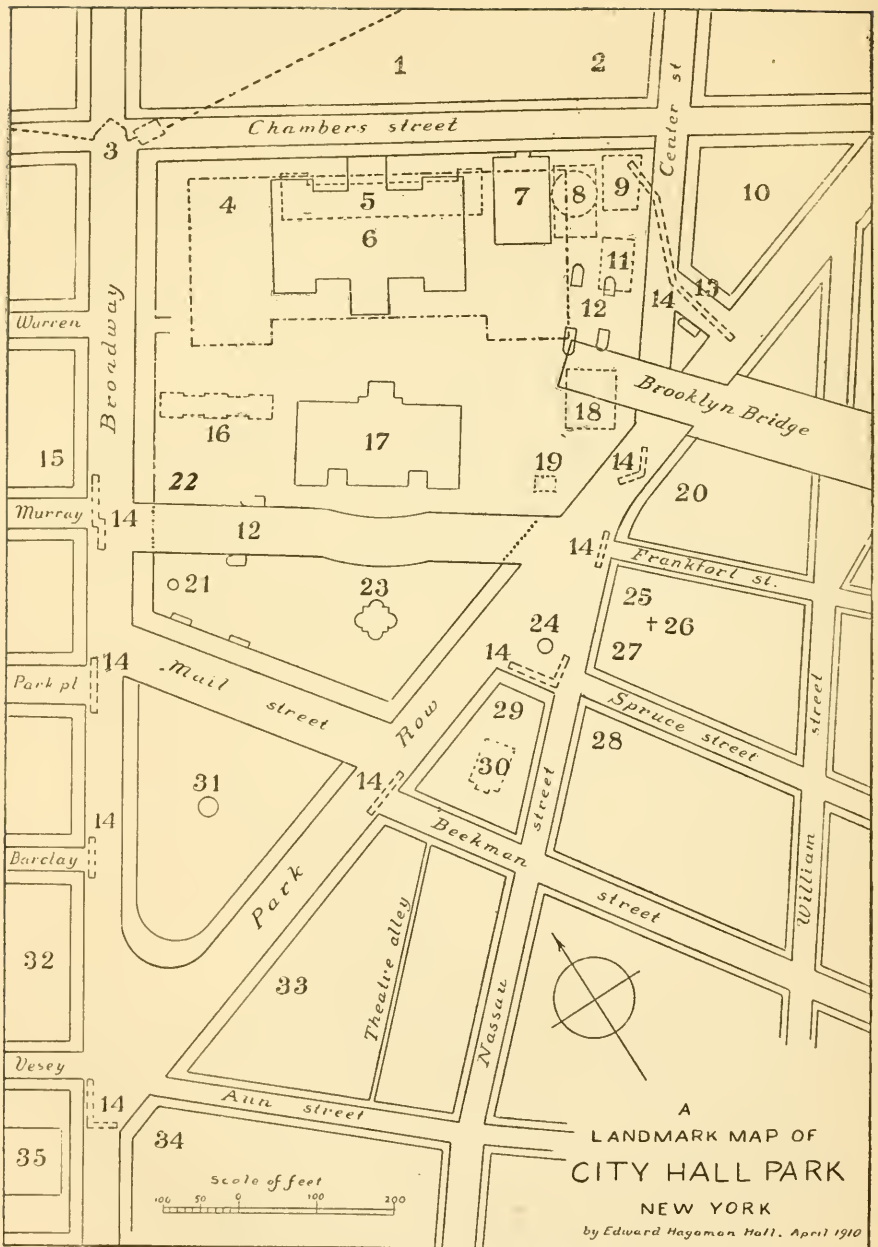
#### The Postoffice—1875-1910

In 1867 the City committed the lamentable mistake of parting with the southern end of City Hall Park for a United States Postoffice and Court-house, and the present building was occupied in 1875. As there appears to be in print no collated data concerning the Postoffice in New York City, it may not be inappropriate to give here a few facts concerning the establishment of the postal service as one catches occasional glimpses of it in the various records.

Concerning the postal service during the Dutch period, we have no data at hand. It is to be presumed that letters were carried informally by travelers and captains of vessels at such rates as the senders were willing to pay.

Early in the English régime the office of the Governor's Secretary in the old Fort at the foot of Bowling Green appears to have been the depository of the post "bagg" where letters were received for despatch to their destination out of town. Such was the case as early as 1672.

By letters patent granted by William and Mary under the Great Seal of England, dated Feb. 17, 1691, to Thomas Neal, the colonial postal service was established on a more systematic basis. This patent gave to Neal and his successors authority for 21 years to carry letters at such rates as the senders might agree to give. Andrew Hamilton was deputed to act as Postmaster General for all their Majesties' Plantations and Colonies and by an act of the Colonial Assembly passed Nov. 11, 1692, was authorized to establish "a general Letter office" in the city of New York "from which all Letter's and Pacquet's whatsoever may be with Speed and Expedition Sent into any part of



For explanation of Map see opposite page.



out Neighboring Collony's and plantations on the main Land and Continent of America or to any other of their Majesties Kingdom's and Dominions beyond the Sea's;" and he was authorized to appoint "one Master of the Said generall Letter office." The rates of postage were fixed at 9 pence for a single letter to or from beyond the seas; 9 pence for a letter between

#### EXPLANATION OF MAP

The old Common was substantially identical with the triangle bounded by Broadway, Chambers street and Park Row. The northeast corner was gradually worn off until, with the opening of Centre street, the Park was bounded by Broadway, Chambers street, Centre street and Park Row. It thus remained until 1867, when the Postoffice site was sold, since which time the Park has been bounded by Broadway, Chambers street, Centre street, Park Row and Mail street (the latter the shortest street in the city).

1. Site of ancient burying ground for negroes, paupers and criminals and for American patriots under British rule during the Revolution. 2. New Hall of Records. 3. Site of barrier gate and blockhouse in angle of second City Wall of palisades erected in 1746 (Maerschalc's survey, 1755). 4. Large broken outline, 480 by 215 feet, plan of proposed new county Court-house. 5. Small broken outline, plan of second almshouse, 1797-1857; also site of Upper Barracks of larger extent 420 by 21 feet, 1757-1790. There were additional Barracks between sites 5 and 16 during the Revolution. 6. Solid outline, present County Court-house, begun 1861. 7. Present City Court-house, erected 1852. 8. Site of Rotunda, 1818-1870. 9. Site of dispensary and soup-house, 1817 and later; also of fire engine house, removed 1906. 10. New Municipal Building in course of erection. 11. Site of temporary fire engine house built 1859. 12. Subway kiosks. 13. Approximate site of old State Arsenal; later, Free School No. 1, circa 1809. 14. Fortifications built by Americans in 1776 (Hills' survey, 1782-5). 15. Postal Telegraph Building, 253 Broadway; site of Montagnie's Tavern, headquarters of Sons of Liberty, 1770 and earlier. 16. Plan of Bridewell, 1775-1838 (Mangin's survey, 1804); a Revolutionary prison. 17. City Hall, begun 1803; site of first Almshouse, 1736-1797. 18. Site of Gaol, the "Martyrs' Prison" of the Revolution, later Hall of Records, 1757-1903 (Mangin's survey). 19. Site of Powder Magazine (Maerschalc's survey 1755, and Montresor's survey, 1775). 20. New York World Building. 21. Nathan Hale Statue. 22. Approximate site of first building on the Common, early 18th century. 23. Fountain, built 1871. 24. Statue of Benjamin Franklin in Printing House Square. 25. New York Sun Building, built 1811, first permanent Tammany Hall. 26. Approximate site of grave of Jacob Leisler as located on Grim's recollection map, but may have been a little farther north. 27. New York Tribune Building; statue of Horace Greeley in vestibule. 28. American Tract Society Building; site of Martling's Tavern; rendezvous of Sons of Liberty and "Martling's Men"; Wigwam of Tammany Society, 1798. 29. Building formerly occupied by New York Times. 30. Site of Brick Presbyterian Church built 1768. 31. Site of Croton Water Fountain in what was once part of City Hall Park; triangle is now occupied by United States Post-office and Court-house. 32. Astor house, built 1834-38; site of Drovers' Inn and other early hostelries. 33. Nos. 21, 23, 25 Park Row, site of successive Park Theatres, 1798-1848, frontage of 78 feet on Park Row and 85 feet on Theatre Alley. Part of this site (No. 21 Park Row) is now occupied by the Park Row Building. 34. Saint Paul Building; southern half of this property is site of Spring Garden House. On this property stood Bicker's Tavern, bought by Sons of Liberty after they left Montagnie's and named Hampden Hall. Later site of Scudder's Museum and Barnum's Museum. 35. Saint Paul's Chapel, begun in 1764.

New York and Boston or between New York and Maryland; 12 pence between New York and Virginia, and 4½ pence between New York and any place not exceeding 80 miles distance. This law was renewed from time to time, with changes in the rates, for several years.

For over a century—during the remainder of the English régime and the beginning of the American—the Post-office itself was an extremely rudimentary establishment, generally maintained at the residence of the postmaster. It was also a very nomadic institution, moving from place to place with the changes of postmaster. The New York Gazette of July 30, 1753, for instance, gives notice that “The Postoffice will be removed on Thursday next to the house of Mr. Alexander Colden opposite to the Bowling Green in the Broad-Way where the Rev’d Mr. Pemberton lately lived.”

The first postmaster of the city after the Revolution was Sebastian Bauman, appointed by President Washington, and the post-office was then located in his residence at the corner of William street and Garden street (now Exchange Place). In 1807 the Postmaster was General Theodorus Bailey, who had taken up his residence in the same house and continued the post-office there. The post-office then consisted of a room about 25 or 30 feet deep, having two windows fronting on Garden street and a little vestibule on William street containing about 100 boxes.

The post-office remained at the latter site until July 4, 1827, when it was removed to the basement of the new Exchange in Wall street, which had been opened May 1 of that year. The Exchange was burned in the great fire of 1835. Then the post-office was removed to the Rotunda in the northeastern corner of City Hall Park. This location gave great dissatisfaction to business men at that time on account of its *great distance* from the business center of the town! In 1845 the post-office was removed from the Rotunda to the Middle Dutch Church, which occupied the block on the eastern side of Nassau street from Cedar street to Liberty street. Upon the building of the Mutual Life Insurance Co. of New York, which now occupies that site, is a tablet reading as follows: “Here stood the Middle Dutch Church. Dedicated 1729. Made a British Military Prison 1776. Restored 1790. Occupied as the United States Postoffice 1845-1875. Taken down 1882. The Mutual Life Insurance Co. of New York.”

As early as 1853 the postoffice had become so inadequate that the United States began to look around for a new site. In April and May, 1857, the Mayor was authorized by the Common Council to negotiate with the Federal authorities for the cession of the land at the southern angle of the Park or a portion of the upper part of the Park fronting Chambers street between Broadway and Centre street, for a new Postoffice, but nothing definite was effected and in 1861 came the interruption of the Civil War.

Immediately after the War, efforts were renewed to find a site, and the lower end of City Hall Park was chosen. On December 15, 17 and 18, 1866, respectively, the Councilmen, Aldermen and Mayor of the City consented to the sale of the site embracing an area of 65,259 square feet, for the purposes of a United States Postoffice and Court-house. The property was conveyed by the Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the City of New York, parties of the first part, to the United States of America, parties of the second part, by deed dated April 11, 1867 (Liber 1012, page 142 *et seq.*, of Conveyances, Hall of Records), the consideration being the sum of \$500,000. The conveyance was made

“Upon the express condition, however, that the premises above described and every part and parcel thereof, and any building that may be erected thereon, shall at all times hereafter be used and occupied exclusively as and for a postoffice and court-house for the United States of America and for no other purpose whatever, and upon the further condition that if the said premises shall at any time or times cease to be used for the purposes above-limited or for some one of them, or if the same shall be used for any other purposes than those above specified, the said premises hereby conveyed and all right, title, estate and interest therein shall revert to and be revested in the said parties of the first part, their successors and assigns, and the said parties of the first part shall thereupon become the absolute owners of the said premises and every part thereof with the appurtenances and they may then re-enter the said premises and forever thereafter use, occupy or alien the said premises and every part thereof in the same manner and to the same extent as if these presents had not been executed.”

The erection of the postoffice was not begun at once and it was proposed to use another part of the Park for the purpose. On June 17, July 19 and July 20, 1869, respectively, the Aldermen, Assistant Aldermen and Mayor approved of the following resolution:

“Resolved that a joint committee of three members of each Board be appointed by the respective Presidents thereof to confer with Messrs. Horace Greeley, William Orton and Alexander T. Stewart, Commissioners on the part of the United States, respecting a proposed exchange of the 65,259 square feet of land in the City Hall Park heretofore deeded by the City to the United States for another plot of ground of similar area at a different location in said Park, which proposed exchange has been recently authorized to the City by the Legislature and requested on behalf of the United States by the above-named Commissioners.”

The foregoing resolution is interesting as indicating the names of the representatives of the United States Government in the Postoffice matter, but it did not result in any change of plan. The present postoffice was begun in 1870 and was first occupied August 25, 1875. The building cost between \$6,000,000 and \$7,000,000. This edifice, in turn, is already outgrown and inadequate for the transaction of the business of the General Postoffice, and a new postoffice in another part of the City is being planned. In view of these plans, it is to be hoped that the municipal authorities will bear in mind and enforce the conditions of the deed to the United States, which provide that the present Postoffice site shall revert to the City when any part of it shall cease to be used for a United States Postoffice and Court-house or shall be used for any other purpose. Indeed it is a question whether the Federal Government's tenure has not already been forfeited by the use of the building for a private library, and we are informed that the Hon. George B. McClellan, during his recent incumbency as Mayor of the City, gave notice to the Federal Government of the latter's violation of the conditions of the deed.

#### **Building Propositions Rejected**

Not every building proposed to be erected in City Hall Park has materialized. On August 19, 1771, a proposition to erect a public market in the Fields was voted down by the Common Council by a vote of 11 to 4. In October the proposition was renewed, but was again voted down.

During Mayor Paulding's incumbency in 1824 it was proposed to remove to the North River the Bridewell and Jail which stood on either side of the City Hall and to construct two-story houses in the Park facing Chatham street (Park Row) and lease them for the sake of the revenue which the City might derive.

On another occasion it was proposed to erect a City Hospital near the Bridewell, and the Corporation actually voted to give the land for the purpose, but public sentiment was so strongly opposed to the project that the action was rescinded.

At still another time, early in the last century, it was proposed to erect a reservoir in the Park for the purpose of supplying the City with water from the Bronx River.

In 1888 the Legislature authorized a commission to select a site in the neighborhood of the County Court-house for a Municipal building. The proposition to locate the building in the City Hall Park was indignantly resented, and for several years, as stated elsewhere (page 5), there was a "tug of war" between the Commission and the people. At one time the Commission would get the advantage with a law permitting the building in the Park. Then the remonstrants would prove the stronger and drag the Commissioners from their ground by an amendment excluding them from the Park. After several oscillations of fortune, the protestants finally won and the Municipal building was located where it is now in course of construction, on the triangle at Centre street and Park Row.

#### **Park Improvements**

As the city grew in population and the structures erected upon the old Common grew more pretentious, a natural desire to improve the grounds gradually found expression until the wild and uncultivated cow-pasture of colonial days became, just before the Civil War, one of the most beautiful city parks in America. Perhaps the first intimation of the increasing dignity of the Common is afforded by Col. John Montresor's map of 1775, which entitles the Fields "The intended Square, or Common." The names of the Fields and the Common, however, still continued in popular use at this period, with the occasional use of the name Green. In June, 1785, appears the first movement for the enclosure of the Fields with a fence. In that month the Common Council approved the plans of the Almshouse Commissioners to that effect, "if it could be done without expense to the Corporation." It is not surprising, perhaps, that upon these economical terms the fence failed to materialize. In 1787 the improvement of the Green advanced a stage farther when the Council ordered that the paupers in the Almshouse be employed in collecting street dirt and spreading it on the Com-

mon in front of the Almshouse, to manure the ground and prepare it for grass seed.

In 1792 the Fields were enclosed for the first time with a fence of posts and rails. In 1797, when the structural encumbrances of the Fields had been reduced to the second Almshouse, the Gaol and the Bridewell, and when the Fields were surrounded by a rail fence, the old Common first appears on the map under the dignified title of "The Park."

Early in the last century the rail fence was superseded by one of wooden palings, and then, as the civic pride increased, nothing less than an imported iron fence would do. On Dec. 31, 1821, the iron railing for the Park arrived from England. In order to avoid duty, it was complete only in parts. When the fence was erected, it had at the southern gateway four marble pillars surmounted by iron scroll-work supporting lanterns. Coins and other mementoes were deposited in one of them. The completion of the improvement was celebrated with public exercises, including the delivery of an address by Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill. Trees were then set out in the enclosure, and two generous ladies—Mrs. Sages of their day—gave rose-bushes, which were planted within the railings and which withstood the frosts of winter, the vandalism of boys and the depredations of flower-thieves for more than a year.

In 1832 the Superintendent of Buildings was directed to cause the grass plats in the Park to be surrounded with iron chains supported on turned locust posts; and in 1834 some of the walks in front of the City Hall, from Broadway to Chatham street, were laid with flag-stones two feet wide. When the Croton Water Works were nearing completion, a beautiful fountain was erected in the lower part of the Park. This portion of the Park, now obliterated by the Post Office, was then tastefully laid out with gravel walks and adorned with trees. On Oct. 14, 1842, the climax was reached when, amid a celebration such as the city had never before witnessed, and with demonstrations of joyful popular enthusiasm seldom if ever excelled, the Croton water arrived and gushed forth from the fountain. The procession on this occasion, estimated to have been seven miles long, was reviewed at the Park by the Mayor and Aldermen. Here the water-works were formally delivered to the city. A brilliant illumination in the evening ended the festivities. For days the great fountain continued to be an object of extraordinary curiosity,

and for years it added grace and beauty to the supremest period of this once beautiful Park. The fountain was so important a feature of the Park at that time that a special office was created for its care. Thus we read that, in 1848, for instance, Thomas Cole was appointed "Keeper of the Park Fountain."

From this time on, until the sale of the Post Office site, the Park was the object of minor improvements, such as the substitution of iron posts for the entrance gates in 1852 to facilitate ingress and egress, but nothing could be done materially to enhance its beauty. Then came the Post Office on the south and the County Court-house on the north, and the Park was reduced to its present disennobled proportions.

#### Historical Events—Aboriginal Period

Having now reviewed the history of the physical development of the Park and its buildings, we may return to the beginning and glance briefly at the history of the spot.

It has been surmised \* that before the advent of Europeans this was the site of one of the villages of the Manhattan Island Indians. The eligible situation of this comparatively level tract, sloping downward on all sides—to the Lispenard Meadows and swamps and the Fresh Water Pond on the north, the Beekman swamps on the east, and the slightly lower land on the south and west—would have made it a desirable location for a village, and the finding of a large admixture of oyster shells of apparent age in the soil would tend to indicate the presence or proximity of aboriginal occupancy at some time; but there is no positive evidence that there was a village here.

#### Historical Events—Dutch Period—1626-1673

During the Dutch period the Common was one of the parade grounds of the soldiers when they marched up from Fort Amsterdam on training days.

In 1664, when the little city of New Amsterdam was captured by the English, the troops of the latter who remained in the Bowery until the Dutch had evacuated the Fort, marched down over this tract.

In 1673, when the Dutch fleet under Capt. Anthony Colve arrived to repossess the City, the Dutch captain landed 600 men on the Island and put them in battle array on the Common in

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\* D. T. Valentine in the Corporation Manual for 1856.

preparation for the march on the City, which then lay below the City Wall at Wall street. Capt. Manning, who commanded the City, sent Capt. Carr, Thomas Lovelace and Thomas Gibbs to negotiate terms with Colve, but the latter detained Lovelace and Gibbs as hostages on the Common and sent Carr back to the fort with a summons to surrender within a quarter of an hour. No reply being received, Colve in a passion ordered his men to march from the Common to the Fort. They proceeded down Broadway, and as they approached the fort they were met by a messenger from the English commander who offered to surrender if the garrison were allowed to march out with the honors of war. The request was granted and the city again changed hands.

Under the second Dutch régime the Common became the place of general parade.

#### Historical Events—English Period, 1674 to 1765

Under the English the Common continued to be a popular rallying place, particularly on festive occasions. This was more especially the case after the old parade ground in front of the fort was authorized in 1732 to be enclosed as a Bowling Green, thus forming the first city park. On the Common, the King's Birthday, the anniversary of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and other festive occasions were observed with bonfires and other demonstrations of loyalty or joy. But the demonstrations began to assume a different color in 1764 when a press gang's boat was seized by a mob who carried it to the Common and burned it.

Another stirring event of that year was the arrest and incarceration of Major Rogers of the King's troops in the New Gaol. The gallant Major had been cutting a pretty prominent figure in the town, and living beyond his means, until his creditors became tired of airy promises to pay and put him in prison. His comrades, stationed in the neighboring barracks, took his arrest as an insult to His Majesty's arms and an infringement of their superior authority, and demanded his release. The jailor shook his keys contemptuously at the enraged soldiers, and told them, in effect if not in words, that if they wanted their Major they would have to come and get him. This they proceeded to do, breaking open the jail doors with muskets and axes, releasing Rogers, and giving the other prisoners an opportunity to escape. The latter, however, standing more in awe of the civil power than their riotous



and uninvited deliverers, declined to avail themselves of this temporary and unauthorized amnesty and remained in prison. The riot, which was finally quelled by the militia, cost the soldiers the life of one of their Sergeants.

#### Historical Events—English Period, 1765 to 1775

The next year, made memorable by the adoption of the Stamp Act, the Common became the stage upon which, in the succeeding decade, were enacted many scenes which foreshadowed the coming Revolution. On Nov. 1, 1765, the first mass meeting in opposition to the Stamp Act was held here, being signalized by the erection of a gallows upon which the Lieutenant Governor was burned in effigy. On the following day another popular meeting was held with a view to seizing the stamps, but action was deferred. From that time until the repeal of the Stamp Act in March, 1766, other meetings of a similar character were held.

On June 4, 1766, a great meeting was held on the Common to celebrate the repeal of the obnoxious act. The jubilant populace erected a flagstaff inscribed "King, Pitt, and Liberty," and further manifested its joy by consuming a roast ox, 25 barrels of ale, and a hogshead of rum punch.

For the peace of the community, however, it was not the most fortunate thing that the Upper Barracks, in which the King's troops were quartered, were so close to the rallying place of the Liberty Boys, and after the Liberty Pole had been up a little more than two months, the soldiers cut it down. Promptly the next day (Aug. 11) a meeting was held on the Common to erect another, but the soldiers attacked the people and wounded several of them, and the attempt was deferred several days, when another pole was successfully raised.

On Sept. 23, 1766, the second Liberty Pole was cut down by unknown persons, but a third pole was erected two days later. On March 18, 1767, the third pole was destroyed. The next day a fourth pole was erected, secured by iron braces and bands and watched by a citizens guard. On March 21 the soldiers tried to destroy this emblem of liberty but were repulsed by the citizens. On Dec. 17, 1767, a mass meeting was held on the Common in opposition to the Mutiny Act.

So affairs continued until 1769-1770 when the Liberty Pole contests culminated in the Battle of Golden Hill, which has been called the first bloodshed of the Revolution.

In December, 1769, a handbill was printed and circulated, addressed to the "betrayed inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York," sharply reproofing the Assembly for voting supplies to the King's troops, accusing it of betraying the common cause of Liberty, and inviting the citizens to meet at the liberty pole in the Fields to express their sentiments. It was signed "A Son of Liberty." The authorities were scandalized by the handbill and sought its author. While the search was going on, the soldiers, on Jan. 13, 1770, again attacked the Liberty Pole but were repulsed. On Jan. 16, however, the soldiers succeeded in felling the pole, sawing it up, and piling it in front of Montagnie's door, the headquarters of the Sons of Liberty, on Broadway. On Jan. 17 upwards of 3,000 indignant citizens assembled on the Common and erected another Liberty Pole. This pole, strongly reinforced with iron, was surmounted by a topmast and vane, the latter bearing the word "Liberty" in large letters. On January 18 three soldiers were caught posting on the Fly Market, at the foot of Maiden Lane, a scurrilous placard impugning the character of the Sons of Liberty, and signed "The Sixteenth Regiment of Foot." Several citizens, led by Isaac Sears, took the soldiers before the Mayor. A number of armed soldiers from the Fort demanded their release. The two parties of citizens and soldiers moved tumultuously to Golden Hill, about at John and William streets. Here the soldiers turned and fired on the citizens, killing one, wounding three, and injuring many others. Many of the soldiers were badly beaten.

A sequence of the placard-posting was the arrest of Alexander MacDougall. Through the confession of the printer, the handbill of December, 1769, was traced to MacDougall, one of the leading spirits of the Sons of Liberty, and he was cast into the New Gaol in the Fields, as the Common was now called.

MacDougall's case was so similar to that of John Wilkes, who had been imprisoned in England for a famous article on individual liberty, printed in No. 45 of "The North Briton," that his friends adopted "45" as their cabalistic number. Holt's Journal of February 15, 1770, records the following visit of the "Forty-five" to MacDougall in his new quarters: "Yesterday, the forty-fifth day of the year, forty-five gentlemen friends of Captain MacDougall and the glorious cause of American Liberty, went in decent procession to the New Gaol and

dined with him on forty-five pounds of beef steaks, cut from a bullock forty-five months old." So great was the pressure of MacDougall's callers that he had to establish regular reception hours, and under date of the "New Gaol, February 10, 1770," he published a notice to his friends, stating that he would be "glad of the honor of their company from three o'clock in the afternoon until six." He was released on bail in April. During the Revolutionary War he became a Major-General in the Continental Army, and at one time had command at West Point.

On March 26, 1770, the soldiers made an attempt to remove the topmast and Liberty vane of the Liberty Pole and a contest ensued between them and the citizens, but without fatal results. On May 10 a mass meeting was held in the Fields to oppose the importation of English goods, and in June a quantity of English wares seized by the Sons of Liberty were brought here and burned.

On July 6, 1774, a great meeting was held in the Fields in opposition to the act of Parliament known as the Boston Port Bill. At this meeting one of New York's most distinguished citizens, Alexander Hamilton, first appears as a public orator. Hamilton was a student at old King's College (now Columbia University) which stood two blocks west of the present City Hall Park on a site indicated by a tablet at Murray street and West Broadway. Irving, in his *Life of Washington*, referring to Hamilton on this occasion, says: "Hamilton was present, and, prompted by his excited feelings and the instigation of youthful companions, ventured to address the multitude. The vigor and maturity of his intellect, contrasted with his youthful appearance, won the admiration of his auditors; even his diminutive size gave additional effect to his eloquence."

On Sunday, April 23, 1775, a travel-stained horseman dashed down the old Post Road, past the Common, and to the center of the city, spreading the news of the Battle of Lexington. The crisis in the affairs of the colonies had come, the loyal citizens at once took measures for enlisting soldiers, and a Citizens Committee assumed the government of the city. On May 26 the *Asia* man-of-war arrived and the Royal Irish Regiment remaining in the Upper Barracks on the Common evacuated their quarters and withdrew to the ship on June 6, 1775. In doing so, they attempted to remove five cart-loads of spare arms. At Broad and Beaver streets they were boldly halted

by Marinus Willett and others, deprived of the five carts containing the arms, and were then permitted to embark without further molestation.

#### Historical Events—Revolutionary Period—1776-1783

With the evacuation of Boston by the British on March 17, 1776, and the transfer of the seat of war to New York, the Fields became the camp-ground and the drilling place of the Americans.

The Americans at once set themselves actively at work fortifying the city and barricading the streets. The Fields were almost completely hemmed in with fortifications, every avenue of approach being guarded. At St. Paul's Church there were two barricades at right angles to each other one extending across Broadway and one across the front of the church-yard. Other barriers extended across the heads of Barclay, Robinson (now Park Place) and Murray streets. On the Chatham street side a barricade was erected across the head of Beekman street; another, right-angular in form, was in the present Printing House Square, one face commanding George (now Spruce) street, the other commanding the Presbyterian Church Yard (on the south side of the Square) and Nassau street; another confronted Frankfort street; another, forming an obtuse angle, occupied Chatham street in front of the present World Building; and another long one extended from the site of the Brooklyn Bridge entrance diagonally across Chatham street to the upper eastern end of the Barracks on Chambers street.

A notable figure in the history of the Park at this period was Alexander Hamilton, who, in March, 1776, became Captain of artillery in a newly raised provincial corps. It was while exercising his company here that he became the object of one of those interesting concurrences of events which oftentimes mark the turning point, not only in individual careers, but also in the course of historic events. We can best describe this occurrence, which brought together Hamilton and Washington and which had a profound influence on the future of both men and the cause of Independence itself, by quoting Irving. Speaking of the middle of the year 1776, he says:

“About this time we have the first appearance in the military ranks of the Revolution of one destined to take an active and distinguished part in public affairs and to leave the impress of

his genius on the institutions of the country. As General Greene one day, on his way to Washington's headquarters, was passing through a field—then on the outskirts of the city, now in the heart of its busiest quarter and known as the Park—he paused to notice a provincial company of artillery, and was struck with its able performances and with the tact and talent of its commander. He was a mere youth, apparently about 20 years of age; small in person and stature, but remarkable for his alert and manly bearing. It was Alexander Hamilton. Greene was an able tactician and quick to appreciate any display of military science; a little conversation sufficed to convince him that the youth before him had a mind of no ordinary grasp and quickness. He invited him to his quarters and from that time cultivated his friendship. . . . Further acquaintance heightened the General's opinion of his extraordinary merits and he took an early occasion to introduce him to the Commander-in-Chief."

It may truly be said that City Hall Park was the birthplace of Hamilton's public career.

The Park was also the scene of another historic event which alone should have dedicated it forever to the cause of Liberty in the hearts of the citizens of New York. That was the reading here of the Declaration of Independence on the receipt of that immortal document on the 9th of July, 1776. Washington had given orders that the Declaration be read to the several brigades quartered in and about the city at 6 o'clock that evening. According to the relation of an eye-witness to the historian Henry B. Dawson, the brigade encamped on the Fields was drawn up in a hollow square on the southern part of the Park, now occupied by the Post Office, and the Declaration was read by one of the aids of Washington, the Commander-in-Chief himself being present.

In August occurred the Battle of Long Island and in September the Americans evacuated New York, and for seven long years not a Continental soldier was seen in the Fields except as a prisoner of war. In the latter capacity nearly 4,000 American troops fell into British hands as the result of the Battle of Long Island (Aug. 27) and the Battle of Fort Mifflin (Nov. 16). The Gaol and Bridewell in the Fields were filled to their utmost capacity, and churches, sugar houses, the old City Hall, the King's College, private dwellings and prison ships were brought into requisition to accommodate the rest. The Gaol in the Fields was reserved for the more notorious "rebels,"

and the memory of the sufferings which the Continental soldiers endured under the inhuman Provost Marshal, Wm. Cunningham, adds still further to the sacred character of this historic place. The Gaol was now called the Provost.

Cunningham's figure is one of the most repulsive in the history of the war. He was a corrupt, hard-hearted and cruel tyrant, who hesitated at nothing that would add to the miseries of his helpless victims or to his own wealth and comfort. His hatred for the Americans found vent in the application of torture with searing-irons and secret scourges to those of his charges who, for any reason, fell under the ban of his displeasure. His prisoners were crowded so closely into their pens that their health was broken by partial asphyxiation; and many of them were starved to death for want of food which the Provost Marshal had sold to enrich his own purse. The abused prisoners were refused permission to see their nearest relatives and were allowed to suffer unattended when ill. They were given muddy water to drink, although beautifully clear water was obtainable from neighboring springs; and a prisoner's weekly ration was restricted to two pounds of hard tack and two pounds of raw salt pork, with no means of cooking it.

An admission to this Bastille, with its known and unknown horrors, was enough to appall the stoutest heart. Henry Onderdonk, Jr., in a contribution to Valentine's Manual for 1849, says:

“The northeast chamber, turning to the left on the second floor, was appropriated to officers and characters of superior rank, and was called Congress Hall. So closely were they packed that when they lay down at night to rest (when their bones ached) on the hard oak planks and they wished to turn, it was altogether, by word of command, ‘Right-Left,’ the men being so wedged as to form almost a solid mass of human bodies. In the day time the packs and blankets of the prisoners were suspended around the walls, every precaution being taken to keep the rooms ventilated and the walls and floors clean to prevent jail fever.”

“In this gloomy abode were incarcerated at different periods many American officers and citizens of distinction, awaiting, with sickening hope, the protracted period of their liberation. Could these dumb walls speak, what scenes of anguish might they not disclose! The Captain and his Deputy were enabled to fare sumptuously by dint of curtailing the prisoners' rations, exchanging good for bad provisions, and other embezzlements. In the drunken orgies that usually terminated his dinners, Cun-

ningham would order the rebel prisoners to turn out and parade for the amusement of his guests, pointing them out with such characterizations as, 'This is the d——d rebel, Ethan Allen,' 'This is a rebel judge,' etc."

In the allusion to Allen we recognize the presence of the celebrated patriot who had captured Ticonderoga, "in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress." After taking the Lake Champlain stronghold he had joined the expedition against Montreal, and been captured on September 25, 1775. He was taken to England, thence to Halifax, and in the autumn of 1776 was brought to New York, where he was at first allowed the freedom of the city on his parole. Here he was subjected to every persuasion by General Howe to induce him to desert the American cause and serve the King. He was offered a commission in the King's army and promised large tracts of land in Vermont at the close of the war; but his loyalty to the Colonies was so true that he indignantly rejected all attempts to purchase his integrity, and his confidence in the outcome of the struggle for independence was so strong that he openly predicted his Majesty's inability to fulfill his promises in regard to the land.

It may readily be imagined that the failure of these persuasions to move the steadfast patriot did not tend to ingratiate him in the favor of his captors, and in January, 1777, they clapped him into jail on the charge (which he stoutly denied) of having broken his parole.

Allen was just the sort of "rebel" whom Cunningham liked to have in his clutches, and he was promptly assigned to a solitary dungeon, without bread or water for three days. Then he was given a bit of fat pork and a hard biscuit with which to break his fast.

Allen grew restive under his confinement, and evidently considered himself neglected by his friends, as appears in a letter from Joseph Webb to Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut ("Brother Jonathan"), arranging for an exchange of prisoners. "Ethan Allen begs me to represent his situation to you," wrote Webb, "that he has been a most attached friend to America; and he says he's forgot; he's spending his life, his very prime, and is confined in the Provost, and they say for breaking his parole," etc. In May, 1778, he was exchanged for Colonel Campbell of the British army.

Major Otho Holland Williams was another unfortunate confined in the Provost.

It is impossible to relate all the dark deeds done by the inhuman Cunningham during the seven years in which he had charge of the Gaol, or recount a tithe of the suffering therein endured by those who had championed the cause of American independence, for no records were preserved, and the greater part of the dramatic and pathetic history of that period of the building's existence is known only to Him "from whom no secrets are hid." But enough is known to make the site of the building one ever to be held in sacred remembrance.

The war at length came to an end, and on November 25, 1783, the British evacuated New York. Most of the city prisons had been emptied before the close of hostilities, but the Provost was continued in use until Evacuation Day.

"I was in New York November 25," wrote General Johnson, "and at the Provost about 10 o'clock a. m., when an American guard relieved the British guard, which joined a detachment of British troops then on parade in Broadway, and marched down to the Battery, where they embarked for England."

It is chronicled that as the Deputy O'Keefe was about to depart, the prisoners called out asking what was to become of them.

"You may go to the devil," was the reply.

"Thank you," rejoined one of the prisoners, "we have had enough of your company in this world."

It would, in a measure, appease one's sense of justice if the reported fate of the inhuman Provost Marshal could be confirmed. It is stated with a degree of precision that, having been convicted of forgery—an offence which would appear to have been more serious in English estimation than the torture and murder of helpless prisoners—he was hanged in London August 10, 1791. But there is no official confirmation of this, or of the "dying confession" which he is said to have made in the following words :

"I was appointed Provost Marshal to the Royal Army, which placed me in a situation to wreak vengeance on the Americans. I shudder to think of the murders I have been accessory to, both with and without orders from the Government, especially while we were in New York, during which time there were more than 2,000 prisoners starved in the churches by stopping their rations, which I sold. There were also 275



American prisoners and obnoxious persons executed, which were thus conducted: A guard was dispatched from the Provost about half-past 12 o'clock at night to the Barrack street, and the neighborhood of the Upper Barracks, to order the people to shut their window shutters and put out their lights, forbidding them at the same time to look out of their windows and doors on pain of death; after which the unfortunate prisoners were conducted, gagged, just behind the Upper Barracks, and hung without ceremony, and there buried by the black pioneer of the Provost."

Whether or no the foregoing ever proceeded from Cunningham's lips, there is only too much reason to believe that it represents the truth.

#### Historical Events—War of 1812-1815

Hardly had the new City Hall been completed when the declaration of the second war with Great Britain again made the Park the scene of stirring patriotic events. The news of the declaration of war reached New York on June 20, 1812, and at noon on the 24th a great public meeting was held in the Park to take the matter under consideration. The venerable Col. Henry Rutgers, an old Revolutionary officer, presided, and Col. Marinus Willett, one of the Sons of Liberty and also a Revolutionary hero, was Secretary. The Act of Congress and the President's proclamation having been read, a preamble and resolutions supporting the Government were read. The preamble began:

"In one of those awful and interesting moments with which it has pleased Heaven that states and kingdoms should be visited, we consider ourselves convoked to express our calm, decided and animated opinion on the conduct of our Government."

The preamble continued in this impressive manner, and was followed by resolutions approving of the efforts of the Government to preserve peace, but declaring the belief that the crisis had arrived when peace could no longer be retained with honor—and justifying the Government's appeal to arms. The appeal now being made to the sword, the meeting called upon all fellow-citizens to yield the Government their undivided support. "Placing our reliance in the Most High," said the last resolution, "and soliciting his benediction on our just cause, we pledge to our Government, in support of our beloved country, 'our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.'"

Two years later (August 21, 1814), when the city was threatened with attack, the people again assembled in the Park to renew their pledges. Col. Rutgers again presided. Oliver Wolcott was Secretary. They sat on the balcony of the City Hall. Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill, Dr. W. J. McNeven, and Messrs. Wolcott, Riker, Anthony, Bleecker and Sampson were appointed to draft resolutions, and those which they presented had the same ring as those of 1812. Col. Willett was also there and addressed the assemblage with patriotic fervor. "Three score and fourteen years," he said, "have brought with them some bodily infirmities. Had it been otherwise, and had my strength of body remained as unimpaired as my love for my country and the spirit that still animates me, you would not, my friends, have seen me here today. I should have been amongst that glorious band that on the waters of Erie and Ontario have achieved so much fame and lasting glory for their country. . . . Fifty years ago I was at a meeting of citizens on this Green. Then the acclamation was 'Join or die!' The unanimity of that day procured the repeal of some obnoxious laws." Then he ran over the events leading up to the Revolution, and events of the war itself; and continued: "In the War of the Revolution it was a favorite toast: 'May every citizen be a soldier, and every soldier a citizen.' Our citizens must now again become soldiers, and those soldiers good citizens. . . . As to this mistaken idea that American militia are unequal to the contest with British regulars, I am a living witness to the contrary. I have met them when their numbers were double mine and I have routed and pursued them."

One cannot read the whole of the speech from which the foregoing words have been taken without thrilling and feeling that the lofty sentiments expressed at that crisis still further dedicated the Park with very sacred traditions to the generations which have come after.

On October 23, 1814, Gov. D. D. Tompkins, Commander-in-Chief of the New York Militia and, by appointment by the President, in command of the Third Military District of the United States, made his headquarters in the City Hall, and during the remainder of that critical period the City Hall and Park were the base from which the military operations in this neighborhood were conducted.

### Historical Events Between the Wars—1815-1861

During the period between the War of 1812-15 and the Civil War, City Hall Park was the focus of almost every festive demonstration of a public character that occurred in the city. Among these the Independence Day celebrations were notable events. Here was the culmination of the Fourth of July Parade, which was composed of the militia and civic societies and which generally formed at the Battery, and here the procession was reviewed by the Mayor and Aldermen and dismissed with a *feu de joie*.

For many years it was customary on the eve of Fourth of July to erect around the Park booths where roast pig, eggnog, cider and spruce beer were among the viands dispensed. On June 29, 1841, a vote was taken in the Board of Aldermen on the proposition to refuse permits for the erection of these booths, but the custom had such a firm hold that the motion was lost and the practice was continued for a few years longer before it was abolished.

Besides these Fourth of July celebrations, many other interesting events occurred at this place. Here Lafayette was given a brilliant reception on Aug. 16, 1824; here was the focus of the land celebration of the opening of the Erie Canal on Nov. 24, 1825; here was the center of the Croton Water celebration Oct. 14, 1842; here the laying of the Atlantic cable was celebrated in August, 1858, by an illumination of the City Hall from which the building caught fire; from here the funeral of Gen. Wm. J. Worth took place Nov. 25, 1857; and here in 1860 the Prince of Wales, now Edward VII of England, was received with great ceremony. These are only a few of the ceremonies which, during the period mentioned, marked City Hall Park as the civic center of the City.

An occurrence of less agreeable aspect was the riot precipitated by Mayor Fernando Wood in 1857. In that year the charter was amended and the Metropolitan Police system established having jurisdiction over the counties of New York, Kings, Westchester and Richmond. Mayor Wood refused to accede to the new system and, gathering the old police force around him, defied the Metropolitan Police and threatened with violence those who attempted to get the offices in their control. When Daniel D. Conover was appointed Street Commissioner by Gov. King, Mayor Wood drove him from the City Hall. Conover secured a warrant for Wood's arrest and proceeded to execute it with the aid of fifty Metropolitan police. Arriving at the City Hall he

found it closed against him and filled with armed policemen of the old force. A conflict ensued. The Mayor had the sympathy of the worst class of the population and a mob gathered for his support. A bloody riot ensued. Just at this juncture the Seventh Regiment came down Broadway, en route to embark on a steamboat for a trip to Boston. It stopped long enough to support the Metropolitan Police in enforcing order and serving the warrant, and then continued on its way. But the spirit of defiance of the law thus encouraged by Mayor Wood was aroused and broke out in other parts of the city in bloody riots, which were not quelled until six persons had been killed and a hundred wounded.

#### Historical Events—Civil War Period, 1861-1865

With the outbreak of the Civil War the Park again became the scene of martial activity. In the very first month of the war, in April, 1861, the Common Council passed a resolution authorizing the State authorities to erect a building in the Park for barracks and to provide an eating place for volunteers. In February, 1862, when the Common Council directed the removal of all tents and booths from the public parks, the barracks in City Hall Park were specifically excepted. From time to time during the war permits were granted for the erection of recruiting tents.

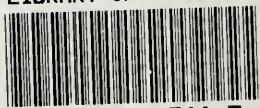
#### Our Cradle of Liberty

In bringing to a conclusion this very imperfect sketch, the words of Henry B. Dawson, the historian, concerning this storied Park, may be quoted with as much force today as when he uttered them 55 years ago:

“It must not be forgotten that the Park is still the refuge of the people. . . . Here they have met La Fayette and other friends of freedom and their country, making the welkin ring with their joyous shouts; and here they have mingled their tears over the memory of Jackson, Clay and other departed worthies. On all occasions, whether of joy or sorrow, of prosperity or calamity, of welcome or of separation, the Park is now, as it ever has been, the resort of the people. Nor does it possess much less interest to others than to us. The past—the common property of all—shows the Park to have been *the Faneuil of New York*, the cradle in which the much-lauded ‘cradle of liberty’ in Boston was itself rocked in its infantile years.”



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