New York’s Central Park: A Retrospective

The 350th Anniversary of Central Park comes at an opportune moment. One hundred and fifty years ago, the idea of Central Park was described as a dream. Yet, through the civic leadership of William Colman, Bryan, and Andrew Jackson Downing, and capitalizing on the holistic vision of designer Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Central Park eventually became one of the most renowned parks in the world. And over the years Central Park has inspired the creation of hundreds, if not thousands, of other urban parks.

Today parks recognize coming to the forecourt of a movement to build livable cities. In June 2003 New York City will host “Great Parks/ Great Cities: Celebrating 350 Years of Central Park,” an international conference designed to bring together those who care about urban parks and their role in contemporary life. At the conference, Central Park’s immense achievements and influential history will serve as a starting point for discussions about current trends in design and management of urban parks and an exchange of lessons on these topics from around the world. This special section of The Parks, incorporating an illustrated timeline of Central Park, is intended to help inform that discussion and honor the role of this great park in the life of New York City.

"Great Parks/ Great Cities: Celebrating 350 Years of Central Park" is jointly organized by the Central Park Conservancy, the Parks Project, Public Spaces, City of New York Parks & Recreation, City Parks Alliance, City Parks Foundation, Cuningham Institute, New Yorkers for Parks, and the Prospect Park Alliance.