

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered APR 9 1980

**1. Name**

historic Bowling Green Fence & Park

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Foot of Broadway, at Beaver Street S. not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 17

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

**3. Classification**

|                                          |                                            |                                                       |                                            |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Category</b>                          | <b>Ownership</b>                           | <b>Status</b>                                         | <b>Present Use</b>                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied          | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)     | <input type="checkbox"/> private           | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure       | <input type="checkbox"/> both              | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress             | <input type="checkbox"/> educational       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                  | <b>Accessible</b>                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object          | <input type="checkbox"/> in process        | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted              | <input type="checkbox"/> government        |
|                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial        |
|                                          |                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> no                           | <input type="checkbox"/> military          |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> museum            |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park   |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> religious         |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific        |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation    |
|                                          |                                            |                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> other:            |

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of New York: Gordon Davis, Commissioner

street & number Department of Parks & Recreation, The Arsenal, 830 Fifth Avenue

city, town New York vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state New York 10021

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Landmarks Preservation Commission has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no  
LP-0548

date July 14, 1970 federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ ☒ local

depository for survey records New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
305 Broadway

city, town New York state New York

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

An elliptical-shaped area of approximately 1/2 acre, Bowling Green Park in lower Manhattan is presently surrounded by tall office buildings. To the south is the old United States Customs House, while the east and west are bordered by two halves of Broadway which join at its northern end. The areas between the park and the customs house and a small section to the north of the park are limited to pedestrian traffic and laid in bluestone paving. This has the effect of increasing the size of the park beyond that which is inside the iron fence.

A simple iron fence of thin spikes and posts surrounds the entire park, with entrance gates at the north and south ends. The fence has undergone many restorations through the years but parts of it are thought to be original. The gates are similar but not identical and are composed of iron spikes with a diagonal element running across them. From the gates, paths lined with wooden benches lead to and surround the large, circular fountain in the middle of the park. Grass fills the rest of the enclosed area and rows of trees outline the ellipse, just inside the fence. Six lampposts, similar to the original design but with stock electrical lanterns, were restored to the fence and are spaced around it. The fence is buttressed throughout its length by thin iron rakers on the park side.

The park has undergone many changes of plan and individual elements throughout the many years of its existence. In 1843, the neighboring property owners installed a fountain to celebrate the completion of the Croton Aqueduct which, for the first time, provided the city with an adequate water supply. The fountain consisted of a circular basin with a pile of rocks in the center, from which jets of water flowed. During this period deer and geese were kept in the enclosure. The public was not uniformly happy with this arrangement however, and caused the basin to be replaced with an ornamental iron fountain around 1850. Since that date Bowling Green has been open to the public as "a pleasing ornament to the lower part of the city." A bronze statue of Abraham de Peyster was installed in the park in 1896. De Peyster had been a successful merchant and had served as Treasurer under the English and later as Mayor of New York from 1691-1695. In the course of the later 19th century, the area became completely commercial, and in 1914 the fence was dismantled to allow for construction of the subway beneath the green. It was removed to Central Park -- and there lay forgotten until 1919 when the greater part of the fence was rediscovered and restored to Bowling Green.

In 1938, the park was rebuilt to a new design which included a path running across the park from east to west, a subway entrance and a newspaper kiosk. The fountain was removed from the center of the park and the de Peyster statue installed there. Electric lanterns were placed on the fence and the walk was paved with flagstone and lined with benches.

A five-year restoration of the park was undertaken in 1971 by the City and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, with the aid of the Delacorte Foundation. The intent of this restoration was to return the park as much as possible to an historic plan,

(See Continuation Sheet)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
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| RECEIVED          | FEB 29 1980 |
| DATE ENTERED      | APR 9 1980  |

Bowling Green ~~Fence~~ & Park  
CONTINUATION SHEET New York County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

keeping in mind the needs of its present users. The fence was repaired and restored following the original design but without the finials. The gate at the northern end was brought back from a museum. The subway entrance and newspaper stand were removed from the park itself. Wooden benches, lanterns similar to those on the original fence but of modern design, and London plane trees were added as part of the restoration. In addition, the street to the south, in front of the Customs House, was closed to vehicular traffic.

Activities associated with the use of the property may have produced significant archeological remains. However the archeological potential has not been assessed.

## 8. Significance

| Period                                        | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below   |                                                            |                                                         |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning                | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture         | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> law                            | <input type="checkbox"/> science                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input type="checkbox"/> economics                         | <input type="checkbox"/> literature                     | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> education                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military                       | <input type="checkbox"/> social/                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                          | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899            | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy                     | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900–                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation             |
|                                               |                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |                                                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
|                                               |                                                 |                                                            |                                                         | History                                             |

Specific dates 1733/1771/1776

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bowling Green Park and Fence, in lower Manhattan, is a unique survivor of the period immediately preceding the American Revolution and has historical associations with some of the earliest settlements of New York City. Throughout the various changes which the surrounding streets have undergone, Bowling Green has remained in use as a park and meeting place for nearby residents and business people for almost 250 years.

Legend has it that on the site of Bowling Green Park Peter Minuit made the bargain in which he bought Manhattan Island from the Indians for 24 dollars. In the 1630's and 40's, the area was part of a large hog and cattle market. British soldiers, stationed at the fort which stood on the site of the present customs house, used Bowling Green as a parade ground in 1684. In 1733, the area was fenced and leased to nearby residents for their use as a bowling green, for a term of eleven years, on payment of an annual rental of one peppercorn.

A gilded equestrian statue of George III was erected in the park in 1770 to celebrate "his eminence" and "to perpetuate...the singular benefits received from him..." The 4,000 pound lead statue was made in London and was modelled after that of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. The following year, in 1771, the existing iron fence was installed, enclosing the oval space that transformed an awkward plot into an elegant design. Its purpose, according to the Common Council, was to prevent the area from becoming "a recepticle (sic) of all the filth and dirt of the neighborhood."

The statue soon became the hated symbol of tyranny and was pulled down and hacked apart by a crowd of soldiers and civilians on July 9, 1776 -- the day the Declaration of Independence reached New York from Philadelphia and was read to the troops. Parts of the statue were melted down and cast into bullets for the Continental Army. The fence fared better than the statue, although it too was partially pulled down during the Revolution. The small ornaments, which originally capped the posts and were variously described as royal crowns or iron balls, were broken off by patriots and used for ammunition.

The fence was repaired in 1786. Old views show that graceful lamps, set at intervals above the posts, once adorned it. In 1791, the fence and the English stonework in which it was embedded, were raised two feet above the original level. A beautification program was inaugurated in 1819, when the Common Council granted the request of neighborhood residents that they be allowed to plant trees and shrubbery in the green, and in 1825 it was "laid down in grass." In those days, Bowling Green was the center of an elegant residential neighborhood, surrounded

(See Continuation Sheet)



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

A complete bibliography may be found in the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission research file: Bowling Green Park & Fence.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Jersey City

Quadrangle scale 1: 24000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Manhattan Tax Map, Block 12, Lot 28, See attached map. Elliptical Park dividing Broadway at its southern end.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Kurshan, Research Consultant for Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph  
Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator 518-474-0479, Div. for  
Historic Preservation

organization Landmarks Preservation Commission date August, 1979

street & number 305 Broadway telephone (212)566-7577

city or town New York state New York

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau date 2/21/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Bruce Mac Donnell date 4/9/80  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Lynn A. Beebe date April 7, 1980  
Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                   |                    |
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| DATE ENTERED      | APR 9 1980         |

Bowling Green Fence & Park

CONTINUATION SHEET New York County    ITEM NUMBER 8    PAGE 2

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by handsome red brick Federal houses.

The green has had many alterations in the more than 250 years of its existence. Different fountains, statues and path arrangements have been installed and removed. The three-story houses which surrounded the park have given way to large skyscrapers. Throughout all the changes and events which have taken place both inside and outside the fence, the park has maintained its historic name and public use and continues to serve the nearby commercial areas as a park and meeting place.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered

APR 9 1980

BOWLING GREEN FENCE

Continuation sheet NEW YORK COUNTY

Item number 9

Page 1

Belden, Ezekiel Porter. New York -- as it is. New York: J.P. Prall, 1949.

\_\_\_\_\_. New York: Past, Present and Future. New York: G.P. Putnam's  
Sons, 1949.

Board of Assistant Alderman. City of New York Document 8, New York. May 1834-  
May 1835.

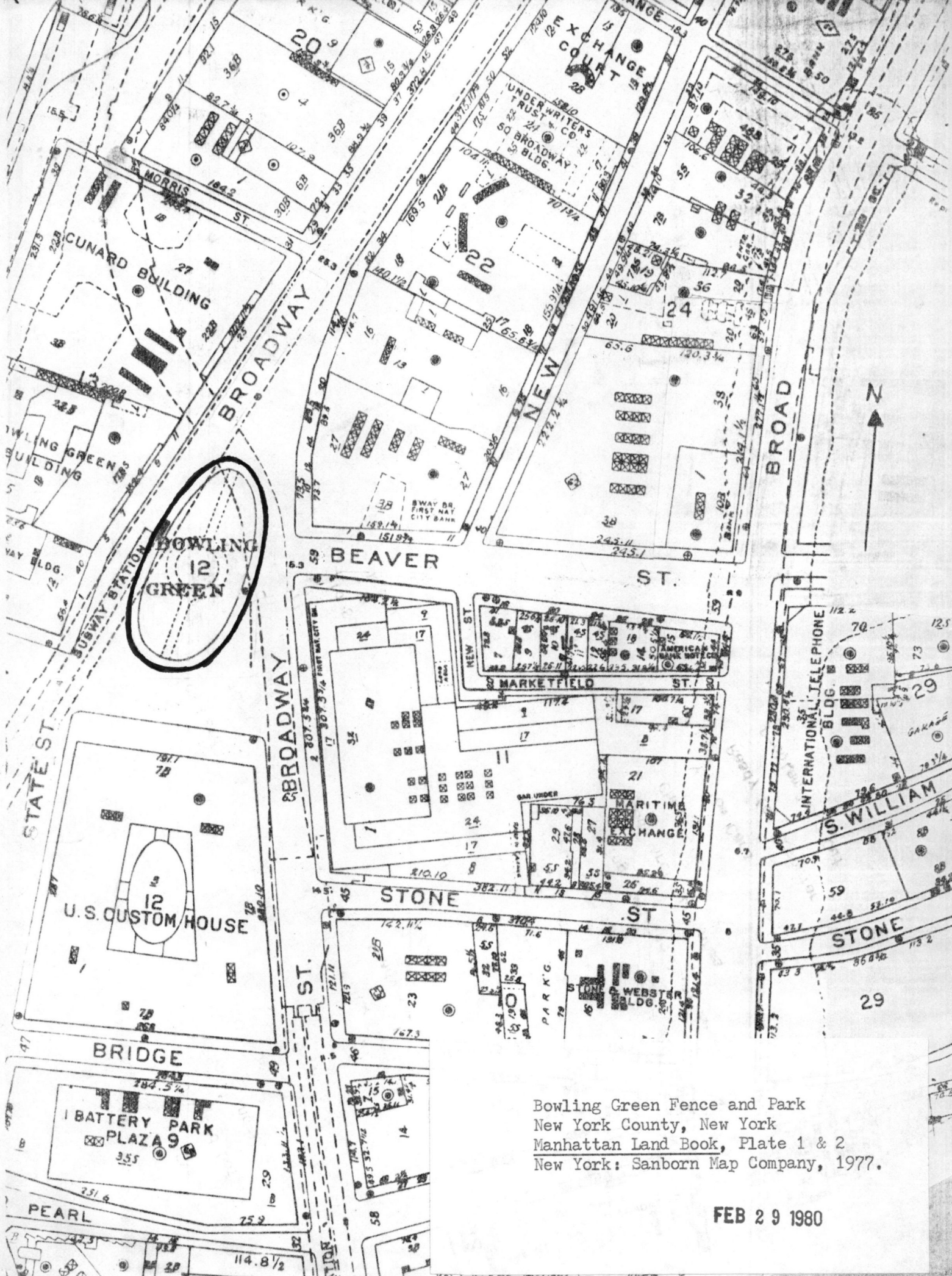
Goodrich. Picture of New York and Stranger's Guide. New York: Privately Printed,  
1828.

"Past and Present Blend," New York Downtown News, (October 1, 1977), no page.

New York Times. September 24, 1977

Stathos, Harry. "Visitors Declare Old Customs House a Big Hit," Daily News,  
July 2, 1976, page unknown.

Tanner, H.S. Stranger's Guide to the City of New York and its Environs. New York:  
T.R. Tanner, 1845.



Bowling Green Fence and Park  
New York County, New York  
Manhattan Land Book, Plate 1 & 2  
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1977.

FEB 29 1980





APR 9 1980

Property

Bowling Green, Fence + Park

State

N.Y. - New York

Working Number

2-29-80 682

8000 2673

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 5Maps 2

HISTORIAN

Resource is significant as an urban park. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Although specific features of the park have been changed over time (~~restored~~ in 1971), the area has functioned as an open space for public use since the mid 17<sup>th</sup> c. Although the physical develop-  
ment around the park has changed from commercial to military to

residential to commercial, the park has ~~remained~~ remained throughout centuries, as the focus of the street pattern in the area + the single constant element in the identity of this urban area. Portions of the fence are believed to be early 19<sup>th</sup> c. The significance lies in the association with a variety of public uses; ~~and continuation of the appearance~~ the continuing use as a public park allows the park to convey its historic function. (Site of ~~destruction~~ destruction of Gen. M's statue, upon the reading of the Declaration of Independence)

ARCHEOLOGIST

Accept  
L. Beebe  
4/7/80

OTHER

HAER

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept  
L. Beebe  
4/7/80

BRANCH CHIEF

CONCUR WITH BEEBE'S COMMENTS. IN SPITE OF  
NUMEROUS ALTERATIONS OVER THE YEARS TO THE  
"FURNISHINGS", THE SPACE AS CURRENTLY DEFINED  
HAS BEEN THE SAME SINCE THE 1700'S. THE EXISTING  
FENCE DATES FROM 1771.

Accept  
MAC DOUGAL  
9/9/80

KEEPER

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_

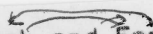
Entered APR 9 1980

Federal Register Entry 2.3.81

Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_



1 of 5



Bowling Green Park and Fence, New York, NY Co.  
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979.  
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission.

**FEB** ~ 9 1980

View to the North.

APR 9 1980

THIS PAPER MANUFACTURED BY KODAK





2 Bowling Green Park and Fence, New York, NY Co.  
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979.

of 5-Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission.

FEB 29 1980

Section of Park and Fence with lampposts.

APR 9 1980

**CURB  
YOUR  
DOG**

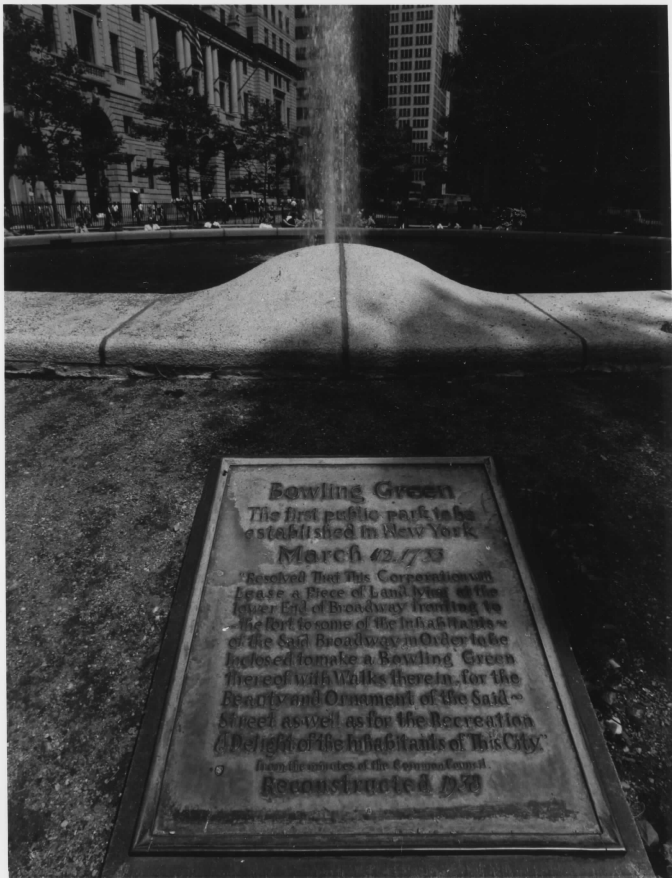
**DEPOSIT  
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3 off  
Bowling Green Park and Fence, New York, NY Co.  
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979.  
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission.

Gate on North side of Park. FEB 29 1980

APR 9 1980



## Bowling Green

The first public park to be  
established in New York

March 12, 1733

"Resolved That This Corporation will  
lease a Piece of Land lying at the  
lower End of Broadway fronting to  
the Port to some of the Inhabitants  
of the said Broadway in Order to be  
Inclosed to make a Bowling Green  
thereof with Walks therein for the  
Beauty and Ornament of the said  
Street as well as for the Recreation  
& Delight of the Inhabitants of This City"

from the minutes of the Common Council

Reconstructed 1939



4 of 5

Bowling Green Park and Fence, New York, New York

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979.

county

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission.

Fountain and tablet laid during 1930's  
reconstruction.

FEB 29 1980

APR 9 1980



5 of 5

Bowling Green Park and Fence, New York, NY.<sup>Co</sup>  
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission.

Overall view from West.

FEB 29 1980

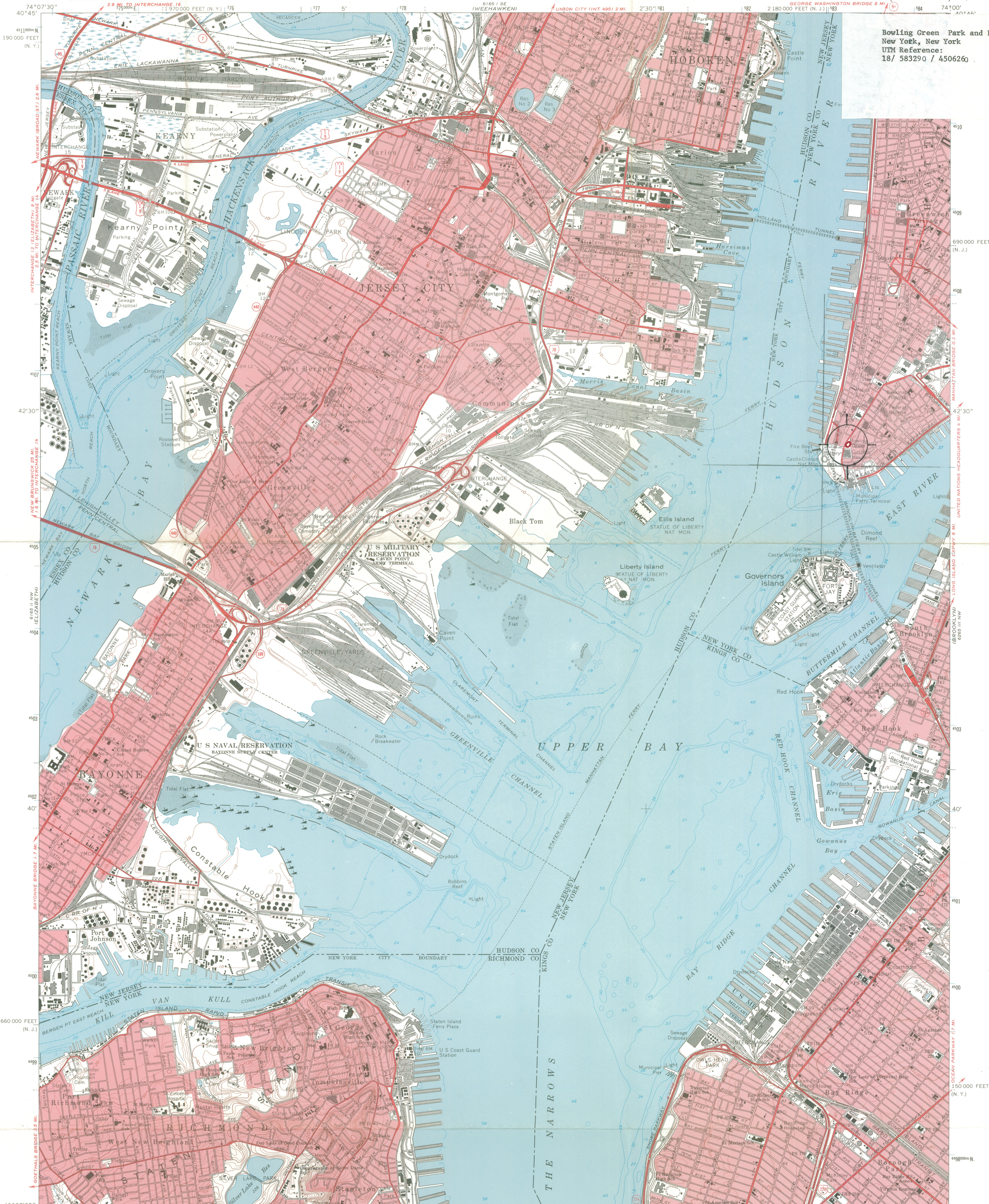
APR 9 1980



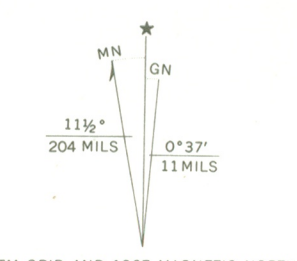
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

JERSEY CITY QUADRANGLE  
NEW JERSEY-NEW YORK  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Bowling Green Park and Fence  
New York, New York  
UTM Reference:  
18/ 583290 / 4506260



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Revised in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, New Jersey Geodetic Survey,  
and City of New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and from USC&GS  
Charts T-5111, T-5277, T-5332, T-5450, T-5453, T-5454,  
T-5460, T-5461, T-5466, T-5468, T-5469, and T-5470  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1954 and planimetric surveys 1955  
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 285, 287, 541,  
and 745 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum. 10,000-foot grids based on  
New Jersey coordinate system, and New York coordinate system, Long Island zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.4 FEET IN  
UPPER BAY AND 4.8 FEET IN NEWARK BAY

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
Unimproved dirt ———  
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

JERSEY CITY, N.J.-N.Y.  
N4037.5-W7400/7.5

1967  
AMS 6165 II NE-SERIES V822





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON OFFICE

FOLLOW-UP SLIP

To: Bruce

Date 4/7/80

You might want to take a closer than usual look at this one — the integrity issue. I find it an unusual case — since so little in the way of specific features remain — but am inclined to accept on basis of the park's role as the focus + identity of ~~the~~ Lower Manhattan — See what you think —

~~There is a possibility that the park is not the focus of the Lower Manhattan area. . . .~~  
Signature Lynn

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered APR 9 1980

| <u>Name</u>                               | <u>Location</u>             |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| St. Monica's Church                       | Jamaica<br>Queens County    |
| Williamsburgh Savings Bank                | Brooklyn<br>Kings County    |
| New Utrecht Reformed Church and Buildings | Brooklyn<br>Kings County    |
| Bowling Green Fence and Park              | New York<br>New York County |
| Sea and Land Church                       | New York<br>New York County |
| St. Thomas Church and Parish House        | New York<br>New York County |
| Marble Collegiate Reformed Church         | New York<br>New York County |

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Jacob K. Javits  
Honorable Joseph P. Addabbo  
Honorable Frederick W. Richmond  
Honorable Leo C. Zeferetti  
Honorable John M. Murphy  
Honorable S. William Green

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Orin Lehman  
Commissioner  
Parks and Recreation  
Agency Building #1  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

NR

Byers/bjr 4/16/80

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.