

WOMEN'S HISTORY WALK

Since its creation, women have helped make Central Park a welcoming and thriving public space. This self-guided walk highlights some of the women who created, inspired, and placed monuments and memorials—in the form of sculptures, playgrounds, landscapes, or recreational facilities—throughout this masterpiece of landscape architecture.



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

**CENTRAL PARK
CONSERVANCY**



1 [William Tecumseh Sherman Monument](#)

Augustus Saint-Gaudens unveiled this bronze gilded masterpiece in 1903, when it was common to use live models to strike immortal poses for sculptures. “Victory,” the golden goddess leading the Union Army General William Tecumseh Sherman in this artwork, was modeled by an African-American woman named Hettie Anderson. She was a popular artist’s model in New York City and would go on to model as “Liberty” on some U.S. minted coins.



4 [Women's Rights Pioneers Monument](#)

This monument honors the trailblazing work of women’s rights advocates Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Sponsored by the group Monumental Women and unveiled in 2020, the *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument* commemorated the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. The monument is the first in Central Park to depict actual women and was also created by a woman, Meredith Bergmann.



2 [Doris C. Freedman Plaza](#)

This plaza has been home to innovative works of public art since the 1970s. Doris Freedman, for whom this plaza was dedicated shortly after her death, was an activist, administrator, and New York City’s first director of cultural affairs. She founded the Public Art Fund, which brings art to plazas, building lobbies, and parks throughout the City. In 1982, in part due to her tireless efforts, the City passed the Percent for Art law that requires one percent of public building construction costs go to the purchase or commission of public art.



5 [Rumsey Playfield](#)

This open playfield is best known as the venue for SummerStage. Originally the location of a restaurant known as The Casino, it was converted in 1937 into a playground. It was distinctive at the time because it was named to honor Mary Harriman Rumsey, a social reformer and playground advocate who founded the first Junior League (one of the oldest and largest women’s nonprofit volunteer organizations). In 1985, the Conservancy remade the playground as a place to play sports; soon after, it became the popular venue for performances that it’s known as today.



3 [Wollman Rink](#)

The Wollman Memorial Recreation Center, commonly referred to as Wollman Rink, was named in honor of philanthropist Kate Wollman’s parents, Betty and Jonas, and Kate’s three brothers, William, Benjamin, and Henry. In 1928, William proposed a memorial gift to honor his mother, a Kansas-based abolitionist. His idea for a Mother’s Rest House (staffed by a professional nurse and fitted with milk-heating facilities) was never realized—but Kate’s later gift for Wollman Rink has the similar purpose of providing a space for families.



6 [Bethesda Fountain](#)

Bethesda Terrace boasts one of New York City’s most iconic fountains. The statue itself is called *Angel of the Waters*, which was created by Emma Stebbins in 1873. It recalls the story from the Book of John where an angel gives healing powers to the pool at Bethesda. This sculpture is the only artwork in Central Park that was commissioned by the Park’s designers, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Stebbins was also the first woman to receive a public art commission in the City.

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