



Morningside Park is named for the sunny eastern side of the cliff that separates Morningside Heights from Harlem in Northern Manhattan. It is one of four designated Historic Harlem Parks. The others are Marcus Garvey, St. Nicholas and Jackie Robinson Parks.

In 1867, Andrew Haswell Green, Commissioner and Comptroller of Central Park, recommended that a park be located in Morningside Heights. He argued that it would be impractical to extend the Manhattan street grid over the steep topography. The City received jurisdiction over the 30-acres property in 1870 but did not begin constructing the park until 1883.

Designing the Park

The Board of Commissioners rejected an 1871 design by Parks Engineer-in Chief M.A. Kellogg and an 1873 plan by landscape architects **Frederick Law Olmsted** and **Calvert Vaux**, the co-designers of Central and Prospect Parks. In 1880, the Board hired Architect Jacob Wrey Mould to rework Olmsted and Vaux's plans. Mould designed the promenade and buttressed masonry wall that encloses the park along Morningside drive. Although a construction contract was awarded in 1883, Mould died in 1886 before the work was completed. Fourteen years after rejecting their original proposal, the Board hired Olmsted and Vaux to continue improvements to Morningside Park. The architects planted vegetation tolerant of the dry, rocky soil and created two paths, one broad, one meandering, to cross the lower portion of the park. Retained as a consultant, Vaux saw the work to completion in 1895, the year he drowned. Parks Superintendent Samuel Parsons, Jr. wrote of Vaux's work, «...perhaps Morningside Park was the most consummate piece of art that he had ever created».

New Monuments

The park's design continued to evolve in the 20th century. Monuments raised in and around the park included Lafayette and Washington (1900) by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, the Carl Schurz Memorial (1913) by Karl Bitter and Henry Bacon, and the Seligman (bear and Faun) Fountain (1914) by Edgar Walter, one of the fountain sculptors for the great San Francisco world exposition in 1915. Between the 1930's and the 1950s, playgrounds, basketball court and softball diamonds were constructed in east and south parts of the park.

In 1968, student and community protesters halted construction of a gymnasium in the park intended for use by Columbia University and the public. The excavated foundation was converted into a pond and waterfall in 1989-90. The project also included installing new play equipment, creating a picnic area, planting new trees, and rebuilding the ballfields.

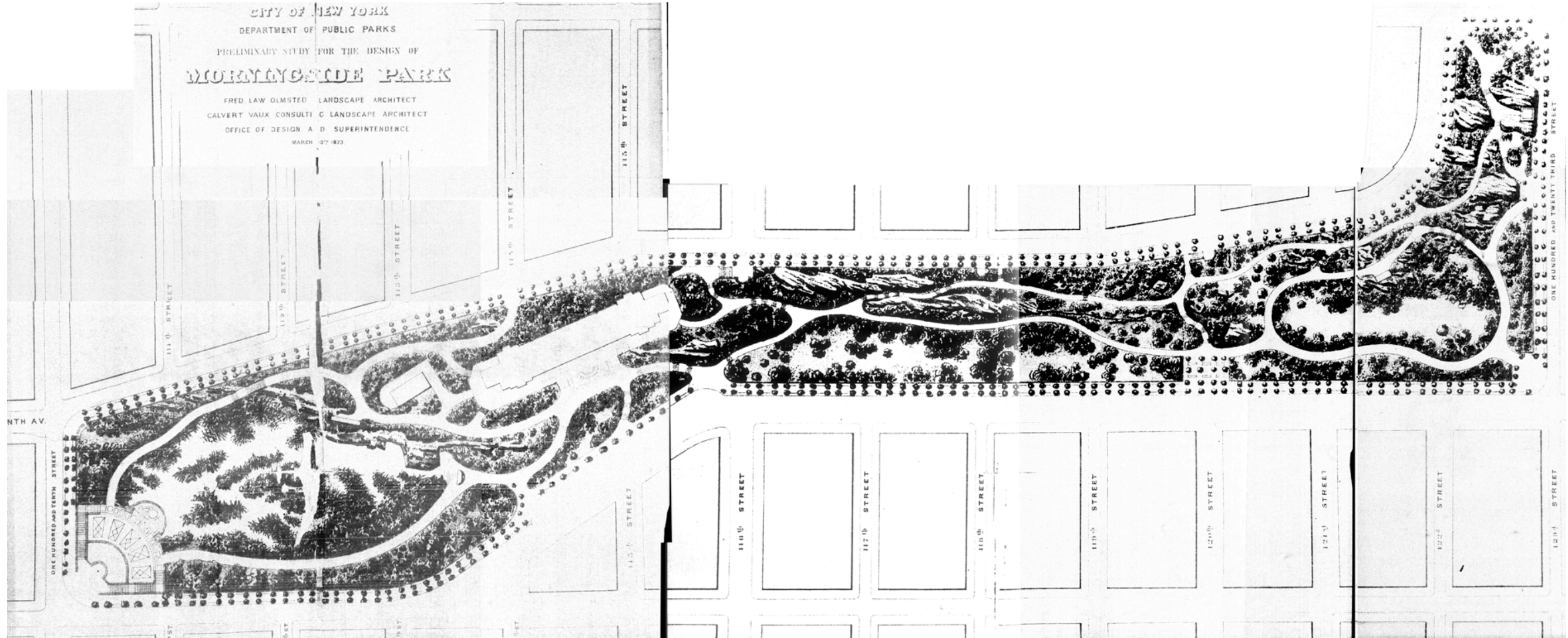
Recent Improvements

The park has undergone improvements in recent years. In 1997, the Lafayette and Washington monument and the Seligman Fountain were conserved under the City Parks Foundation Monuments Conservation Program. In 1998, the Dr. Thomas Kiel Arboretum was planted and the bluestone steps and paths at 116th Street and Morningside Avenue renovated. The new stairway provides a magnificent entrance to the eastern side of the park.

In 2003 the Parks Foundation Monuments Conservation Program returned to the park to begin extensive conservation work on the Carl Schurz Monument at 116th St. and Morningside Drive. You may read more about the conservation project [here](#).

CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PARKS
PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR THE DESIGN OF
MORTYNSIDE PARK

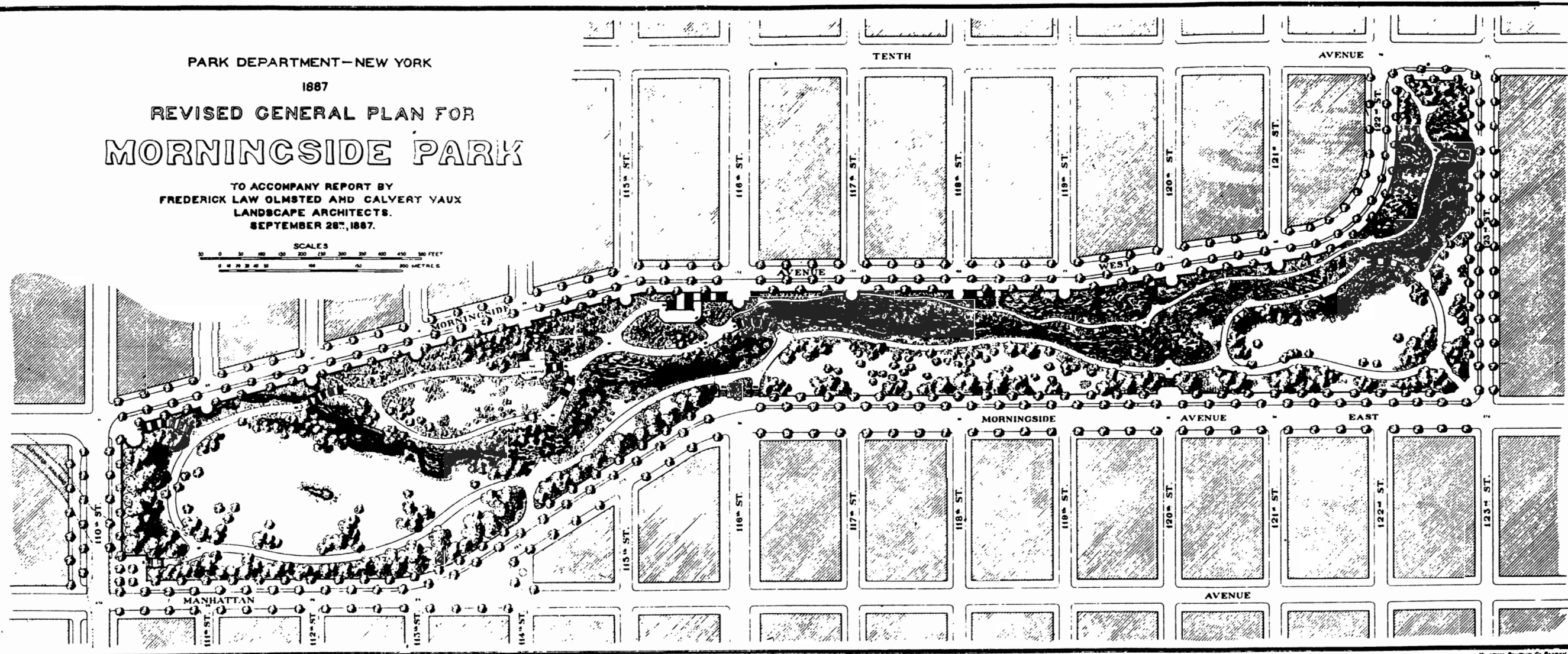
FRED LAW OLNSTED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
CALVERT VAUX CONSULTING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
OFFICE OF DESIGN AND SUPERINTENDENCE
MARCH 1877 1873.



PARK DEPARTMENT—NEW YORK
1887
REVISED GENERAL PLAN FOR
MORNINGSIDE PARK

TO ACCOMPANY REPORT BY
FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED AND CALVERT VAUX
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.
SEPTEMBER 28th, 1887.

SCALE
0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450 500 FEET
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 METRES



ALLOTTE PRINTING CO. BOSTON.

1887 Revised General Plan for Morningside Park to accompany report by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Landscape Architects.





1908 View (elevated trains operated 1891 - 1940)



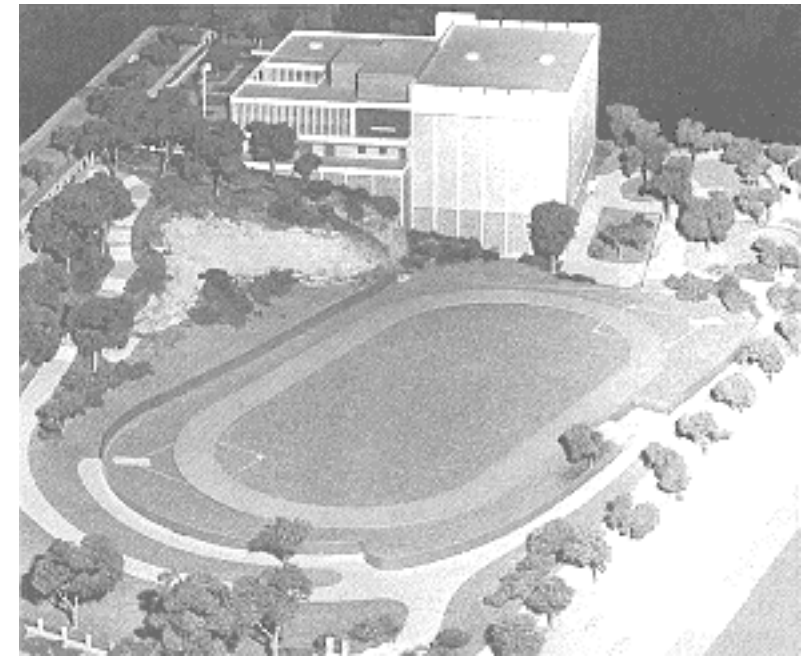
St. Luke's Hospital.
1906



51 years ago



Maria Miller, Justus Poole, Marchall Garcia, Christiane Collins with her dog Kim, Bob McKay (partly hidden) and Suki Ports in front of a bulldozer on the Columbia Gym site in Morningside Park in 1968





1889 view of the 116th Street overlook along Morningside Drive. This is taken six years before the park opens. As can be seen the planting plan has yet to be implemented. The tinted photo below shows another view looking up from below with the early plantings in place. Both views show the original design of the grand overlook which was drastically altered in 1913 with the construction of the Carl Schurz monument which focusses inward. Still, if one moves to the side of the monument or peers over its built-in benches you'll be rewarded with one of the best views of Harlem!



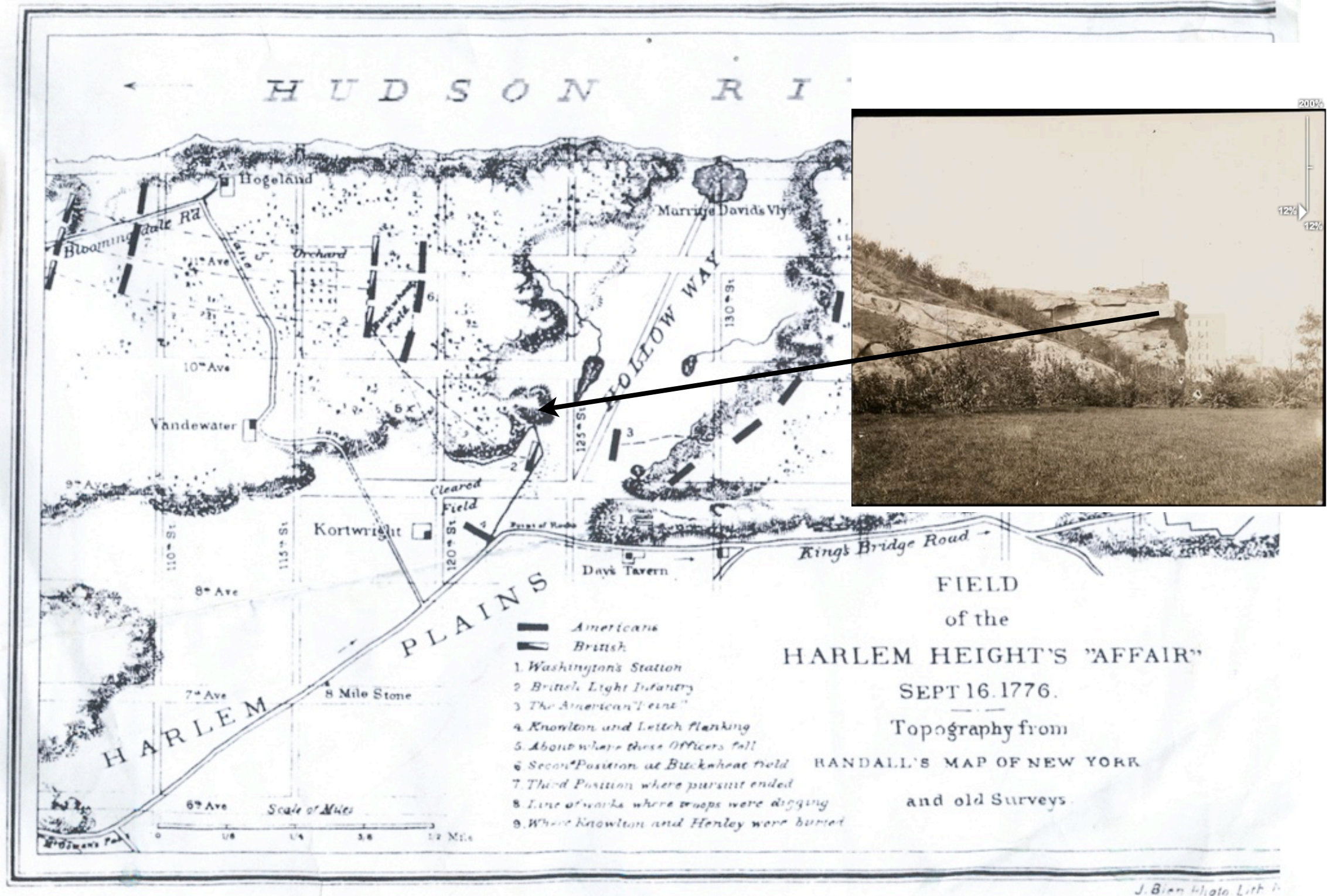
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127th-129th ST.
AMSTERDAM
AVE.

NEW YORK CITY
Borough of
Manhattan



Battle of Harlem Heights - Troop Positions



II.

It was right here, now, just on the crest of the ridge, and when our gallant advance was turning the tide against the enemy, that we suffered the loss of those two noble leaders whose memory is linked with this day's action. In a very short time after the first rush, Leitch was severely wounded not far from Reed, having received three balls in his side in as many minutes; and in less than ten minutes after a bullet pierced Knowlton's body, and he too fell mortally wounded. We can identify the spot where the fall of these brave officers occurred as on the summit of the Bloomingdale Heights below One Hundred and Nineteenth Street, and about half way between the line of Ninth and Tenth Avenues. The site is included within the limits of the proposed "Morningside Park," which will thus have added to its natural attractiveness a never-fading historical association.²⁰⁰

A Glimp of Morningside Park, New York



2678-9

CARL SCHURTS UNVEILING.





April 5, 1968
The Who are photographed
at the Carl Schurz monument
in Morningside Park



