

## Spring Comes to Central Park

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It is almost as hard to believe in spring right now as it is to believe that the New York Parks Department is about to begin rehabilitating Central Park. And yet, the long-awaited repair plan that has appeared and disappeared through two administrations is at long last going forward.

Betsy Barlow has been appointed Central Park Administrator, an office made possible through a private grant. Contracts have been signed and Federal funds are in hand for the dredging of the Duck Pond near 59th Street in April, with landscaping of the eroded and abused area around the pond to follow.

Later this year, after the last of the summer rock concerts, bids will be taken for the reconstruction of the Wollman rink. Under the snow that covers a multitude of sins of neglect, a bit of grass is already beginning to appear from the reseeded done around the Mall and bandshell last fall. Strategies are being considered

for dealing with the dust-bowl condition of the Sheep Meadow. And with the Parks Administration adding all of the city's stadiums to its jurisdiction in March, perhaps more sensible coordination of sites for future public events will be possible. Until New York has an appropriate public space, like the great squares in European cities, to accommodate festivals and rallies, Central Park will continue to be assaulted.

Although it may seem impossible, New York could create such a space if its planners address the issue. Central Park itself, after all, was created by denying its manifest real estate destiny. Until the 1850's, this prime land was officially mapped as a gridiron with salable parcels of constantly rising value. The park was once as illusory as its daffodils and flowering fruit trees seem right now. If it is a far cry today from Olmsted and Vaux's original "greensward," there is hope of some tangible improvement this spring.

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