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MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS AT MCGOLRICK PARK

Recent improvements to Monsignor McGolrick Park were celebrated on Wednesday, May 30.

Commissioner **Henry J. (StarQuest) Stern** presided over a ceremony to celebrate the completion of renovations to this Greenpoint jewel, once called "the garden spot of America." Borough President **Howard (Brooklyn) Golden** and Council Member **Kenneth K. (Rising Star) Fisher** provided \$608,000 for the reconstruction of the landscape of the west side of the park. The improvements include new lawns and plantings, a new drainage system, and reconstructed pavements, curbs, fences and benches. New squirrel sculptures guard atop the fence at the park's entrance.



Photo by Malcolm (Cinema) Pinckney

On the eastern side of the park, the *Monitor* and *Merrimac Monument* was conserved. Rising Star provided \$50,000 for this work, and the project was completed with the assistance of the Laboratory for the Conservation of Fine Arts. The monument was sculpted by Antonio de Filippo in 1939 to commemorate the battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* on March 8, 1862. The *Monitor*, the Union navy's first iron-clad ship, was designed in Greenpoint by John Ericsson. It was sent to reinforce the Union's blockade of the southern ports, which prevented the Confederacy from trading with Europe. The Confederacy's armor-clad *Merrimac* was sent to destroy the Union navy but the *Monitor's* arrival balanced the chances and the blockade held. This battle established a new standard for naval fleets and rendered wooden vessels obsolete.

McGolrick Park also is the site of the *McGolrick War Memorial*, a winged victory sculpture by Carl Heber, erected 1923 as a tribute to the soldiers of Greenpoint who lost their lives in World War I. This monument was recently restored by the City Parks Foundation's Monuments Conservation Program, with funding from the Florence Gould Foundation, the American Express Company, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The monuments technicians removed corrosive streaking, repatined the bronze, applied protective coating, and modeled and recast the statue's long missing laurel and palm frond.

Approximately 150 people turned out to enjoy Wednesday's ceremony. It featured a musical interlude from **Arthur Kirmss**, representing the Sons of Union Veterans and the Greenpoint Monitor Museum. He played a pleasing tune on the pipe as the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* Monument was rededicated. Members of the John Ericsson Junior High School Band were also on hand to provide entertainment, and guests were treated to "Monitor-sandwiches," designed in the shape of the ship.

Featured speakers at the ceremony included Rising Star; StarQuest; **Jeannette (Forsythia) Gadson**, Special Assistant to the Borough President; **Kjersti Board**, Information Officer of the Swedish Consulate; and **Kjell Lagerstrom**, President of the John Ericsson Society. The Greenpoint Monitor Museum was also especially helpful in organizing this event.

By Philip (Kane) Abramson