

A little oasis in concrete jungle

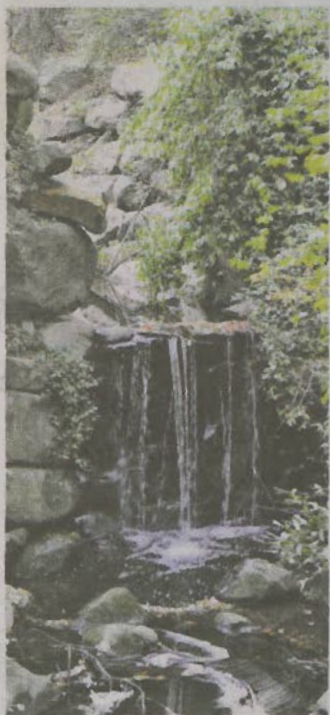
BY ELIZABETH LAZAROWITZ

IN SECLUDED woods, gentle waters stream over mossy rocks and crash over small cliffs into calm pools.

It sounds like a scene in upstate New York, but it's right smack in the middle of Brooklyn, stretching through the southern half of Prospect Park.

The park's manmade watercourse, built around 1870, travels about three-quarters of a mile and offers an escape from the city's hustle and bustle.

"The water course was designed as this rugged, wild space of gently parting and crashing water," said Christian Zimmerman, the park's vice president of design and construction.



From the tiny Fallkill Pool down into the Lullwater just above Prospect Park Lake, the course includes no less than six waterfalls and rocky minidams known as weirs. Originally fed by a well and now by city water, gravity keeps things flowing, thanks to a 76-foot drop from start to finish.

All of it is bounded by nature trails that the park's original creators, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, designed to wind nearer to and farther from the water, offering only small glimpses at a time.

"They wanted the water to seem bigger than it was, so it has this illusory effect," said Zimmerman, who led a restoration of the course that ran from 1996 to 2003. "It was all choreographed."

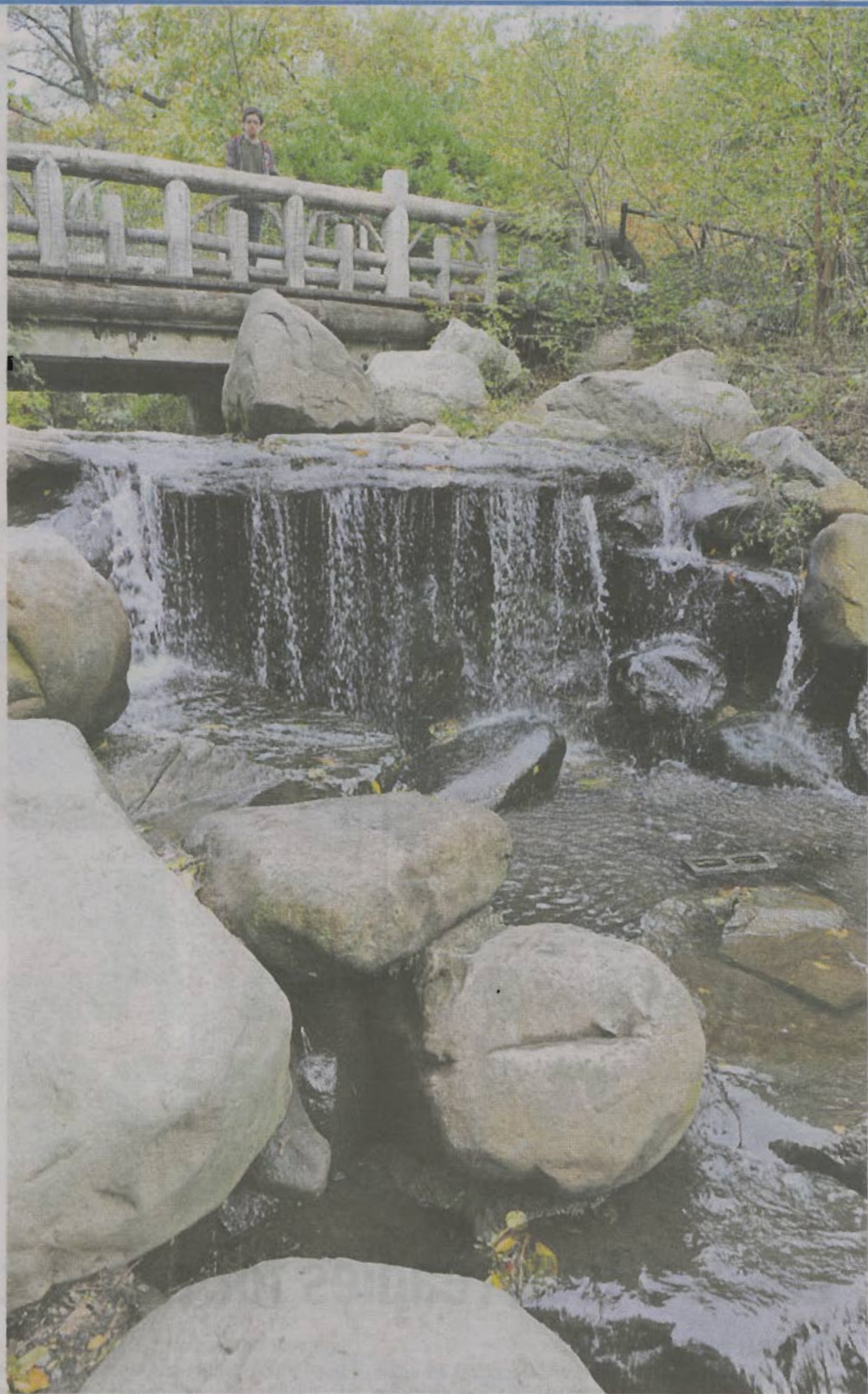
A good starting point for a walk is the entrance at Ninth St. and Prospect Park West, which leads south over a wooden bridge that gives a view of the Fallkill Falls, one of the park's three main waterfalls.

Further east is the nearly hidden Ambergill Falls, where the water drops 19 feet into a rocky gorge. A nature trail winds west again through the mountainous ravine, and then south past the quirky Music Pagoda, with its tapered columns and bowed ceiling.

The water hits a dramatic crescendo at the eight-foot-wide Binnen Falls, where it tumbles down into the start of the Lullwater, an area often dotted with ducks. To get the best view, Zimmerman said, stand at the northern end of the Lullwater Bridge across from the Audubon Center.

Maps are available at prospectpark.org/visit/plan/map.
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Binnen Falls is one of three main waterfalls in Prospect Park where walkers can catch glimpse of nature in all its glory. At left is another waterfall, Ambergill Falls. Photos by Linda Rosier