

PART ONE

UNDERSTANDING *the* CITY



BOROUGHs, NEIGHBOR- HOODs, *and* “DISTRICTS”

*“New York, New York, it’s a helluva town /The Bronx is up and the
Battery’s down /And the people ride in a hole in the ground.”*
It’s true, it’s easy to remember . . . and you can dance to it. But it’s
only a little bit of the story.

WHEN WE SAY “NEW YORK,” MOST OF THE TIME we really mean the island of **Manhattan**, and so does almost everybody else. Even those who live in other areas talk about going into “the city” when they mean going to Manhattan. In fact, however, Manhattan is just one of New York’s five “boroughs,” which are the equivalent of counties. The others are the **Bronx** to the north across the Harlem River, **Brooklyn** and **Queens** to the east on Long Island across the East River, and **Staten Island** to the south of the harbor. (Manhattanites, incidentally, refer to the other four jurisdictions as “the outer boroughs.”)

Within all five boroughs are areas that have nicknames or historic designations, such as Prospect Park, the Theater District, the Garment District, the Meatpacking District, and Union Square. And with the usual shifts of time and trend, some neighborhoods have merged with others, or upscaled, or run down, and so forth. The old distinctions between Chinatown, Little Italy, and Soho are beginning to blur, and a handful of new neighborhood abbreviations—“Dumbo,” short for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass, for example—demonstrate how quickly an area can shift from dilapidated to date central.

We recommend that you also read, or at least skim, Part Six, New York’s Neighborhoods, once before your visit; these profiles will not

only help you frame your itinerary but also will give you a sense of the historical evolution of New York—how succeeding generations of immigrants, merchants, and millionaires gradually spread up from the southern tip of the island to the top of Central Park, each generation pushing the last before it, moving the less fortunate or simply less picturesque elements up and out away from the prow of prosperity; and how in the early 21st century, the process is repeating itself, so that areas once abandoned in the wake of this northward expansion are once again gathering strength and vitality.

TAKE THE A TRAIN . . . CAREFULLY

MOST OF MANHATTAN IS LAID OUT ON A GRID, which is easy to master, but there are some irregular rules to remember. Occasionally streets change names as well, at least on the maps and signs. Sixth Avenue is officially dubbed “Avenue of the Americas,” but you never hear anybody call it that except perhaps a city promoter. Where 59th Street runs along the south border of Central Park, it is called, not surprisingly, Central Park South; and when Eighth Avenue passes 59th/Central Park South on its way north along the western edge of the park, it becomes Central Park West. (Above that, in the Heights, it’s officially named Frederick Douglass Boulevard, but it’s more often still called Eighth Avenue.) East 110th Street, which runs along the top of Central Park on the Upper East Side, is called Central Park North along the park itself and Cathedral Parkway on the Upper West Side.

However—and these are the ones that can be more confusing—Fifth Avenue, which is the eastern border of Central Park, does not change its name; and Park Avenue, which a visitor might assume was a form of “Central Park East,” is two blocks east of that. Columbus Avenue, which one might assume originated in Columbus Circle, is actually an avenue away; it is the extension of Ninth Avenue, whereas Columbus Circle is on Eighth. And West Street, which is over by the Hudson River in Lower Manhattan, Greenwich Village, and Chelsea, eventually runs over into Twelfth Avenue and becomes the West Side Expressway; don’t confuse that with West End Avenue, which is the extension of Eleventh Avenue on the Upper West Side.

There is a Broad Street not far from Broadway in the Financial District, but it’s less than half a mile long and a couple of blocks east of the real thing. On the other hand, there is a West Broadway that runs parallel to the “big” Broadway from Washington Square Park south to Battery Park, so Soho and Tribeca addresses can be tricky. In the East Village, it is possible to find yourself at such confusing intersections as 2nd and Second, meaning East 2nd Street and Second Avenue, but such addresses are fortunately rare.

Most of the avenues with “names”—Park, Lexington, and Madison—are on the East Side between Third and Fifth Avenues (Park was once Fourth). However, there are some places on the island that are far-

ther east than First Avenue, namely York on the Upper East Side and Avenues A, B, C, and D—in order as they go toward the East River—in the East Village. Tenth Avenue becomes Amsterdam Avenue above West 72nd Street.

As for specific addresses, there are various ornate and unmemorable mathematical equations for pinpointing the nearest cross street, but even these aren’t always exactly the same. We suggest you either pick up one of the various pocket maps that have this formula, or just call ahead and ask; most businesses automatically supply the “between such and such” information.

For more tips see, Part Four, Arriving and Getting Oriented.

“AND THE BATTERY’S DOWN”

THE SENSE OF MANHATTAN’S VARIOUS NEIGHBORHOODS as distinct “towns” with unique histories and characteristics is so strong that almost every part of that island in particular has a sobriquet (or two). (Each of the other four boroughs has their own as well, of course.) Although they sound complicated, they block off into fairly obvious pieces; see the street borders in “How Information Is Organized” in the Introduction if you’d like to mark off a map.

However, it helps to have some general notion of up and down—meaning uptown and downtown, not that hole in the ground. If you think of the island of Manhattan as running north-south, which it very nearly does, you can fix it in your head as a sort of skinny, slightly bottom-heavy watch, a Salvador Dalí affair with an oversized stem, a squiggly right edge, and Central Park more or less at the center of the dial.

The northernmost part of Manhattan, which sticks up like the extra-long clock stem, is called the **Heights**, shorthand for the series of areas called Morningside Heights, Hamilton Heights, and Washington Heights. These are divided from New Jersey on the west by the Hudson River and across the top and east by the Spuyten-Duyvil Creek. The lower eastern bulge of this area, from about 12 to 1 o’clock, is **Harlem**.

On either side of Central Park and matching it top and bottom are, logically, the **Upper East Side** and **East Side**, a long two o’clock hour, and the **Upper West Side** and **West Side** at ten. (Remember, the clock face is stretched out a little, so it’s longer at the bottom.)

From the southern edge of Central Park (59th Street) it gets a little trickier, but if you imagine a line running down the middle of the rest of Manhattan—generally along Sixth Avenue and Broadway—then you can place **Midtown** at three o’clock, **Gramercy Park/Madison Square** at four, with the **East Village** and then the combined **China-**

unofficial TIP
Be careful about subway names: The Sixth Avenue subway does generally go below Sixth Avenue, but the famous A Train is on the West Side, a world (almost literally) away from Avenue A on the Lower East Side.

town/Little Italy/Lower East Side filling up from around 4:30 almost to 6, where **Lower Manhattan** and the **Battery** hang at the very tip.

Swinging back around from the bottom from about 6:30 toward 8 are **Soho/Tribeca** and **Greenwich Village**, then **Chelsea** at 8, **Midtown West/the Theater District** at 9, and back to the West Side.

The **Bronx** is indeed “up”—it curves alongside the Heights above Harlem. In fact, if Manhattan were a pocket watch, the Bronx would be the fob it hung from. **Queens** is opposite the East and Upper East Side, **Brooklyn** a little southeast (4 to 5:30-ish), and **Staten Island** drops off almost directly below Manhattan, as if the tip of Lower Manhattan had let go a teardrop. Having these vague compass points in mind is especially helpful when you are trying to figure out which subway platform you want to be standing on, as most signs include “uptown,” “downtown” or a borough name as a general direction. Of the five boroughs, only the Bronx is attached to the continental United States; and though most of the island’s waterside culture has been almost obscured by modern development, it was integral to many areas of New York—and it also means that boats, and occasionally intrepid swimmers, can actually circumnavigate Manhattan.

A VERY SHORT HISTORY *of an* EXTREMELY COMPLEX CITY

NEW YORK IS ONE OF THE OLDEST CITIES in the United States, the nation’s first capital and still one of the financial and cultural capitals of the world, and as such it has all the ingredients of a rousing history: founding fathers, first brokers, big money, political corruption, cultural diversity, ethnic riots, artistic enterprise, struggling immigrants. It was the site of many of the legendary “firsts” of America: Robert Fulton’s first steamboat was launched on the Hudson River in 1807; Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message from New York in 1837; the first organized baseball team, the New York Knickerbockers, was organized in 1845; and the first World’s Fair was held in Manhattan in 1853. The first real battles of the American Revolution were fought there. Even the first antitax uprising took place in Manhattan, led by merchant Jacob Leisler more than 300 years ago.

New York has always welcomed the iconoclast: It was not the first city to have a fine church built with the donations of a retired pirate (in this case, William Kidd, who contributed much toward the construction of Trinity Church), but colonial governor Lord Cornbury, who was appointed just after the turn of the 18th century, was surely the first public official in America to appear in drag.

New York is still the great melting pot; it only covers 300 square miles—Manhattan a mere 22—but it has a population of about 9

million, speaking between 90 and 100 languages. Some schools in the outer boroughs, especially in Queens and Brooklyn, report having students who speak three dozen languages at home. Sixty percent of city residents place their city of origin outside the United States. Add the parts of Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Long Island, and the upstate region considered within the greater metropolitan area, and New York becomes a nation of more than 20 million speaking some 160 languages.

COLONIALISM AND CAPITALISM

IF IT WEREN'T FOR A DETERMINED JAG OF GEOGRAPHY (or, rather, political arm-twisting), New York City might not even connect with the rest of the state. It's like the little tail on a stylized comma, or the pointed throat of some vulturous bird cutting down the Hudson River toward the Atlantic.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the region was inhabited by two groups of related native tribes: the Algonquians (which included the Canarsie, who lent their name to a section of eastern Brooklyn, and the Delaware as well as the "Mohegans" or "Mahicans," immortalized by James Fenimore Cooper) along the Hudson and on Long Island; and the Iroquois Confederacy, among them the Mohawks and Seneca, who roamed to the west and upstate. Some historians theorize that the colony reportedly established in the year 1010 by Greenlander Thorfinn Karlsfensi was in fact on the island of Manhattan, but if so, the three years of his village's existence left no trace.

As was common in the 16th and 17th centuries, the explorers who sailed for one European empire were often citizens of another, so fascinated by the prospect of travel that they accepted commissions from rival powers. So John Cabot of Genoa became a citizen of Venice, then moved to Bristol and sailed for England; he landed in Newfoundland in 1497 and returned to the region in 1498. His son Sebastian, who may have reached the Hudson Bay a decade later, sailed for the Spanish. Venetian Giovanni da Verrazano, who sailed into New York Bay in 1524, was in the pay of the French. Esteban Gomez, who sighted Manhattan a year later, was a Portuguese Moor flying the Spanish flag. Henry Hudson, who was English, was working for the Dutch. At least Samuel de Champlain, who was also carrying the French flag when he mapped eastern Canada, was working in his own language.

With its fine natural port, access to Canada via the Hudson River, and the agricultural wealth of the surrounding territory—not to mention European dreams of a vast paradise of gold in the land beyond and a marine shortcut to the Asian trade—New York was destined to be the target of political and colonial struggles. Champlain and Hudson worked their way into almost the same area at the same time, in 1609, and left their names behind as a handy reminder:

The Frenchman sailed south from Canada along what is now known as Lake Champlain to its tip, while the Englishman sailed north along the route, ever after called the Hudson River, nearly as far as modern Albany.

The French, who had earlier allied themselves with the Huron in Canada, immediately became embroiled in trade and territorial struggles with the tribes of the Iroquois, a strategy that would haunt them for more than a century. The Dutch, on the other hand, went right for the open water: In 1624, representatives of the newly created Dutch West Indies Company famously acquired the land at the south end of the island of Manhattan from the easy-going Manates tribe for trinkets worth less than \$25, naming the settlement New Amsterdam. They were sometimes referred to as the Manhattan Indians, as they called the area Man-a-hatt-ta. However, that may have been a bad omen: One other possible interpretation of the word derives from “island of drunkenness,” because Hudson’s landing apparently turned into quite a party. Under a series of practical-minded Dutch administrators, the port prospered and expanded, and they almost certainly got their money’s worth in the next 40 years. Workers, whether voluntary or involuntary, were highly desirable: the first African slaves were imported in 1625, and the first Jewish settlers arrived in 1664. By the 1660s, there were about 300 permanent homes listed in the records.

But during the Second Dutch War, England redeclared its right to the region, basing its claim on the voyages of John Cabot; in 1664, when the English fleet sailed into New York Harbor, then-governor Peter Stuyvesant struck his colors and quietly surrendered. (Actually, his constituents surrendered for him; a puritanical tyrant with a wooden leg, Stuyvesant ordered every tavern in the city to close by 9 p.m., which clearly proves he was in the wrong place.) He left behind the names of Wall Street (so called because a protective wall was raised there); Broadway (originally Breede Wegg), a cobbled route that ran the entire length of the island; the Bowery (from his own country home or “bouwerie”) in the farmland a mile north and east of the city; Harlem; and of course, Stuyvesant Square. With one very brief resurgence of the Dutch in 1673, New York—now renamed in honor of King Charles’s brother, the Duke of York (later James II)—was firmly in the hands of the British.

Back in Europe, the imperial and often internecine struggles between Britain and France only intermittently gave way to peace. So the colonial governor, Thomas Donegan, increasingly wary of French expansionism from the Canadian border, assiduously cultivated friendly relationships with the Iroquois. It was a good strategy, and the tribes were an invaluable ally during the decades of the French and Indian Wars that stretched from the late 17th century into the mid-18th. The Battery got its name early in those wars, when nearly a hundred cannon

were lined up along the waterfront to prevent an attack on the harbor. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 confirmed the British domination of the North American territories, and the long and bitter campaigns gave way to a burst of settlement and expansion.

There was a brief period of self-satisfied prosperity. The area was covered in wheat fields and farms, like the one in the Bronx on which the Van Courtland House, now a museum, was built in 1748. King's College (now Columbia) was founded in 1754; St. Paul's Chapel was dedicated in 1766.

Then, in one of those ironies history is made of, the British crown tried to pay off its war debts by levying huge taxes on the very American colonies it had fought so hard to retain. With the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, the resentment of many formerly loyal colonists reached a crisis. Shippers and "bolters" (millers) turned to smuggling and tariff-dodging. Fledgling Sons of Liberty took on the British authorities in the "Battle of Golden Hill" as early as 1770, and in 1774 they threw a "tea party" of their own in New York Harbor. Tensions increased to the point that many older landowners returned to England. William Tryon, the popular colonial governor of North Carolina, was transferred to New York in an attempt to contain the troubles, but he was forced out in 1775. Rebellion-minded New Yorkers—notably including English-born but radical-hearted Thomas Paine and 19-year-old Alexander Hamilton, whose eloquence would later be turned to persuading the colonies to ratify the Constitution—published scathing denunciations of the Crown's policies toward the colonies. With the capture of Fort Ticonderoga later that year, war was all but declared.

This was the crucial region of the American Revolution. Fully a third of all battles were fought in the state, including the tide-turning Battle of Saratoga. New York produced both America's first martyr, Nathan Hale, who was hanged in the city, and its most infamous hero-turned-traitor, Benedict Arnold.

But for all its cathartic rhetoric, New York City's active role in the Revolution was very short and not too sweet. General Washington suffered a series of defeats in the fall of 1776, including the battles of Long Island, Harlem Heights, and White Plains, and though the Americans held onto most of the upper and western part of the state, they eventually had to abandon the city to the British forces, who sailed into the harbor in a fleet of 500 ships and occupied it for the full seven years until the end of the war.

During the British occupation, unfortunately, the city was swept by two massive and somewhat suspicious fires, one right after the occupation that destroyed a thousand homes and Trinity Church, and the second in 1778. Consequently, there are few buildings from the colonial period visible outside Historic Richmondtown and the Alice Austen House, both on Staten Island; even the Fraunces Tavern,

site of Washington's famous farewell to the troops in 1783, is a partial re-creation of the original.

THE EMPIRE STATE

ALMOST FROM THE MOMENT PEACE WAS PRONOUNCED, New York boomed—and bickered. From 1785 until 1790, New York served as the nation's capital; it was here that Washington was sworn in as the first president; and it was from here that Hamilton, John Jay, and Virginian James Madison published the so-called Federalist Papers, which eventually persuaded the states to ratify the Constitution. Hamilton, who had married the governor's daughter, served as Washington's secretary of the treasury and founded both the Bank of New York and the *New York Post*. But he and John Adams opposed the French Revolution, which widened the gap between the Federalists and the Jeffersonians, among whom were Hamilton's former collaborator Madison and the brilliant young senator Aaron Burr, strongman of the Tammany Society. (For an explanation of the Tammany Society, see the section on The Upper West Side in Part Six, New York's Neighborhoods.) Burr succeeded in becoming Jefferson's vice president, but Hamilton's jealous maneuvering prevented Burr's becoming president instead; and when Hamilton later blocked Burr's election as governor, Burr challenged him to a duel. The 1804 shootout left both Hamilton and Burr's political career fatally wounded.

About the time that political power shifted, first to Philadelphia and then to the new capital at Washington, the New York Stock Exchange opened, and New York's indefinite term as a financial capital began. The agricultural order gradually began to yield to an industrial and shipping society. Staten Island ferry boy Cornelius Vanderbilt gradually bought up the local freight lines and built his shipping force into an empire, becoming a millionaire while still in his teens. German-born John Jacob Astor, whose China trading, land sales, and fur trade companies enjoyed comfortable monopolies in the nation, was the first in New York's long line of millionaire tycoons (and first to establish the city's philanthropic tradition by leaving money for what became the New York Public Library). Confident of its own importance as early as 1804, the city established the New York Historical Society collection.

Already it was the largest city in the country, with more than 33,000 residents; ten years later the population had nearly doubled. In 1811, city planners tried to impose some order on the labyrinth of haphazard roads by laying out the famous Manhattan "grid" above 14th Street. A series of virulent epidemics—yellow fever, cholera, typhoid, smallpox—gradually drove residents from the old downtown area into what is now Greenwich Village. Another huge fire in 1835 and a third in 1845 again destroyed most of lower Manhattan and cleared the way for ever more ambitious construction. They also inspired the creation of Cro-

ton Reservoir in 1842, in the heart of Midtown where the New York Public Library is now; this project marked the beginning of fresh public water and a city-wide sewer system.

The Erie Canal was completed in 1825, drawing even more trade, and immigrants as well, through its already booming port. The great potato famine forced a huge influx of Irish immigrants—at least 200,000—in the 1840s and 1850s. A wave of German immigrants followed in the 1860s; the Chinese began arriving in the 1870s; and in the 1880s, an estimated 1.5 million Eastern European Jews flooded the Lower East Side. They were accompanied by thousands of Italians, Irish, and displaced Southern blacks, and by 1900 the city held an astonishing 3.4 million people. That would double again, to 7 million, in just 30 years. And those were just the ones who settled down; an estimated 17 million more transient immigrants passed through the city between 1880 and 1910.

The widespread poverty and incredibly unsanitary living conditions of the underclass produced not only disease, but rampant and almost institutional crime—that is, street gangs at one level, and political machines at the other. The Five Points neighborhood, recreated by Martin Scorsese in his 2002 epic *Gangs of New York*, was only blocks from Cherry Street, where William “Boss” Tweed held court. Tweed and his Tammany Hall organization looted the city of more than \$160 million over the years, though they did do the immigrants the favor of registering them as Democrats by way of maintaining control.

New York took on the role of intellectual capital as well. The rest of the state might be known to have a sort of wild and bucolic beauty, thanks to the efforts of such writers as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant, and the Hudson River School artists, including Thomas Cole and Frederick Church; but New York City was determined that everything be modern and smart.

Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, the most influential newspaper before and during the Civil War, was founded in 1841; the *New York Times* followed in 1851. The University of the City of New York was chartered in 1831; the Philharmonic Society of New York gave its first concert in 1842. The Crystal Palace, modeled on the pavilion erected for London’s Great Exposition of 1851, hosted the first World’s Fair in 1853 (and later burned to the ground, just as the London palace had). Numerous progressive and reformist movements made New York their headquarters, including the suffragettes (the first women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls in 1848); Greeley’s *Tribune* editorialized in favor of organized labor, profit sharing (both of which he instituted at his paper), abolition, and women’s suffrage. The California gold rush electrified Wall Street in 1849; a scheme by Jay Gould to corner the gold market 20 years later would nearly bankrupt it.



And in 1858, one of New York's most beloved landmarks, Central Park, opened its gates, ensuring that even the poorest sweatshop employee in the city would always have a place to walk like a prince.

CIVIL WAR AND THE "SECOND EMPIRE"

NEW YORK WAS NO STRANGER TO SLAVERY. The first slaves had been imported by the Dutch in 1625, and in fact it was slave labor that built the original fortress, including the "wall" that was Wall Street. With painful irony, Wall Street also featured the first slave market, a mercenary operation that predated the Stock Exchange by nearly a century. But New York was also in the vanguard of the abolitionist movement, outlawing slavery in the city as early as 1799 (phasing it out over 30 years) and increasingly agitating for nationwide abolition. Frederick Douglass's influential *North Star* newspaper was headquartered in Rochester; Greeley's *Tribune* was the country's most vociferous antislavery mainstream paper (though originally a passivist one). It was the growing split between the outspoken antislavery and laissez-faire elements within the long-dominant Democratic Party that helped swing New York to the Republicans and Abraham Lincoln in 1860.

Nevertheless, while the progressive intellectual element in New York favored abolition, not even all of them—and even fewer members of the laboring class and immigrant communities, who could not hope to raise the \$300 "replacement fee" that was the rich man's alternative to active service—supported a war to free the Southern slaves. With the passage of the Conscription Act, draft riots broke out all over the country; those in New York City, which lasted four days in July 1863 and resulted in the death of 120 men, nearly all black, and the displacement of close to a thousand more, were the most serious. It required the mobilization of the police, navy forces, militia, and even West Point cadets, along with the troops already in the field, to restore order.

In general, however, New York vigorously supported the war effort, especially as the need for continual military supplies and transportation fueled the city's industries: battleships (including the ironclad *Monitor*) and freighters, textiles for uniforms and supplies, provisions, and, most important, the railroads that carried them. And for all the occasional Wall Street panics, the momentum never really slackened: the end of the war was for New York the beginning of what Mark Twain christened the "Gilded Age."



Luxury hotels such as the (original) Waldorf-Astoria and the Plaza opened their doors; so did the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway. Fifth Avenue became known as "Mansion Row." Henry Villard, publisher of the *New York Evening Post* and founder of the Northern

Pacific Railroad, began his gilded palace (now the New York Palace) at 50th Street in 1881; W. K. Vanderbilt built an Italianate mansion at 51st and Fifth, just one of a long line—or avenue—of Vanderbilt family extravagances leading up to his cousin Cornelius II's fantastic French Renaissance chateau at the foot of Central Park (the house seen in the painting in the Plaza Hotel's Oak Bar).

Elevated railroads, or "Els," running above Second, Third, Sixth, and Ninth avenues suddenly made it easier to get uptown, and newly electrified streetlights made it safer. Telephone and telegraph wires crisscrossed the city, at least until the blizzard of 1888 ripped them down and launched the city on a buried-cable program. The first great luxury apartment building, the Dakota, designed by the architect of the Plaza, staked out a new frontier on Central Park West at 72nd Street. Henry Frick constructed his mansion on the east side of the park at 70th, within easy reach of the new Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Statue of Liberty, St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Brooklyn Bridge, Carnegie Hall—all these monuments to the New York spirit were in place within a quarter century of war's end.

And the city was stretching in other directions, too, especially to the southeast. The Brooklyn Academy of Music had been founded in 1858; Brooklyn's Prospect Park, designed by Central Park architects Frederick Olmsted and Calvert Vaux (and considered by many to be superior to the Manhattan park), was finished in 1867; the Brooklyn Museum of Art opened in 1897. In fact, Brooklyn was the third largest city in the country on its own—it would still be the fourth largest today—but in 1898, the modern city of New York, the combined five boroughs, was officially consolidated.

No economy—and no underground economy—benefited more than New York's during the postwar period. Shipping, trade, industry, government contracts, and, inevitably, corruption in the awarding of them, made millionaires out of manufacturers, mob bosses, political influence-peddlers, and sweatshop operators alike. Samuel Tilden became an early example of New York's periodic hero, the crusading reformer, when he prosecuted Boss Tweed of the Tammany Hall ring, but he made little real dent in the power of Tammany itself. (A few years later, city police commissioner Theodore Roosevelt would build a more successful political career on his reformist reputation.) The Republicans were not much cleaner, and the semi-underground power struggle led to a more overt political distance between the city's Democrats and the Republicans upstate.

The hundreds of thousands of immigrants who arrived near the end of the 19th century were herded into warehouses, mills, and industrial sweatshops, while labor leaders fought to establish minimal hour and wage (and age) standards. The tenement, the flophouse, the drug den, and the gang took up permanent positions in the city structure. Despite periodic catastrophes—most famously

the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, which killed 140—and the increase of institutionalized poverty, most New Yorkers were intoxicated by the flow of commercial goods and boastfully smug about the prosperity of the city.

To a great extent, both this vast prosperity and the narrowness of its beneficiaries are exemplified by the spread of the railroads and the great fortunes their owners made from them. And one way or another, most of the rail barons had New York connections. The gold rush of 1849 may have lured Collis Huntington from Oneonta, New York, to California; but he quickly realized that the real money was to be made in railroads stretching to the West Coast. The fortunes of Andrew Carnegie and his partner-turned-rival Henry Frick were forged in steel and railroading. “Commodore” Cornelius Vanderbilt expanded into railroads as well and became lord of the New York–Chicago routes. Jay Gould was forced out of the Erie Railroad and other state rails, but he merely headed west and wound up with four more.

New York stockbroker E. H. Harriman took over the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Central Pacific railroads. J. Pierpont Morgan, already extremely wealthy thanks to his financier father, J. S. Morgan, took a lesson from all of these preceding examples, wresting away control of Gould’s eastern railway holdings, founding U.S. Steel with Frick, and lending gold to the federal government at usurious rates during the Panic of 1895. These families, along with the Astors and Villards and their financial rivals, built lavish mansions on the East Side, establishing Midtown and Central Park as the social center of Manhattan and defining what came to be known as the “Four Hundred,” the city’s social elite. (It may be worth remembering that the life of luxury need not be a safe one, however: John Jacob Astor went down on the *Titanic*, and a Vanderbilt, who had originally planned to journey on the same ship, died on the *Lusitania*.)

Of course, there was nonsteel money. John D. Rockefeller’s fortune, grounded in the oil-refining business, was almost incalculable, well into the hundreds of millions by the turn of the century. And he was not alone. By 1900, 70% of the nation’s corporations were headquartered in Manhattan, and 65% of all import trade passed through the harbor.


THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

IN CHARACTERISTIC FASHION, NEW YORK was too impatient to wait for the calendar to announce a new era. The age of American imperialism, such as it was, was hastened by New York newspaper tycoons William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, whose respective (if not entirely respectable) dailies the *Journal* and *World* so twisted coverage of Cuban-Spanish tensions that the United States was eventually lured into the Spanish-American War, from which it

gained the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico, not to mention the toothy New York-born hero Teddy Roosevelt.

Even so, 1900 was a landmark year. Ground for the first subway was broken in 1900; when it was completed, it was suddenly possible to cross the nine miles from City Hall to 145th Street in a little over 20 minutes. (A steam-driven version, a single car that rocketed about 300 feet along Broadway between Warren and Murray streets and then was sucked backward, was constructed in 1870, but it made little impression.)

The city of the future had already been forged from the five boroughs in 1898. New Yorkers were so confident of their home's position as First City that the Vanderbilts launched a railroad line that ran back and forth between Manhattan and Chicago, the "Second City"; it was described as the overland version of a luxury liner, and it was grandly titled *The Twentieth Century*. The "new" Grand Central Station, the Beaux Arts beauty now restored to its original glory, was begun in 1903; Pennsylvania Station (the original, not the existing building) would follow only a few years later. The Staten Island Ferry made its first crossing in 1905; the first metered taxi challenged the old omnibus system in 1907.

 The scramble for the skyline began with the construction of the 300-foot Flatiron Building at Broadway, Fifth, and 23rd streets in 1902; skeptics confidently predicted its collapse, though it stands proudly today as the symbol of its own "district." At 30 stories, the 1913 Gothic Woolworth Building at Broadway and Park reigned for 17 years, until the construction of the 77-story Chrysler Building in 1930, and that topped the city for only a few months, until the 102-story Empire State Building opened in 1931. It was getting so dark above that the city finally passed an ordinance restricting the height and size of buildings in 1931. (The limits were rescinded in 1961, hence the MetLife building that hovers over Grand Central Terminal.)

The early years of the 20th century were a golden age for songwriters, playwrights, musicians, and vaudeville performers. Publishing firms crowded into the dilapidated 28th Street neighborhood, giving use to the term Tin Pan Alley.

The Apollo Theater in Harlem opened in 1913. Blacks and Hispanics settled on the West Side, in an area of the 60s then called San Juan Hill (possibly in reference to Roosevelt's great victory in Cuba), and on the north side of Manhattan in Harlem. That had been a prosperous Jewish neighborhood, but it gradually became a center for black art, literature, and music during a period called the Harlem Renaissance. In the 1920s alone, Harlem's population increased from 83,000 to more than 200,000.

World War I only boosted the city's economy, which went into overdrive to supply the troops; stocks continued to rise throughout the 1920s, which roared in New York as nowhere else. Prohibition

became the law in 1920, but just as war boosted profits, so did the relatively genteel, or at least socially tolerated, crime of bootlegging. Smart, brittle, and literary characters went hand in hand with Follies. American women were not only emancipated, in the phrase of the time, but were also finally enfranchised. (Women got the vote; movies found a voice.) The *New Yorker* debuted in 1925, with its quintessential Gilded Age fop of a symbol, Eustace Tilley, on the cover. Charles Lindbergh crossed over the Atlantic Ocean in the *Spirit of St. Louis* while New Yorkers drove under the Hudson River through the brand-new Holland Tunnel. Big bands and Broadway filled the airways; so did Babe Ruth, who in 1927 hit 60 home runs for the Yankees. The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929, and the Guggenheim a year later.

Everything glittered until 1929, when New York once again led the nation, this time into disaster. The crash of the stock market on October 29 turned Central Park into a shantytown and the city's greatest artists into federal employees, thanks to the Works Progress Administration (WPA). At the same time, growing political tensions in Europe, particularly in Germany, inspired a whole new generation of writers and artists to emigrate to America. During the slow reconstruction of the 1930s, Mayor Fiorella La Guardia, the "Little Flower," was able to institute a series of municipal reforms so that the poorer classes could also share in the recovery. He also persuaded President (and former New York governor) Franklin Roosevelt to provide New Deal funds to build the Triborough and Hudson bridges, the Battery Park Tunnel, and dozens of other public projects. In 1939, multimillionaire philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. personally drove the final rivet into the beautiful Art Deco complex at Rockefeller Plaza, and a few months later, flush with visions of a bright new future, the New York World's Fair of 1939–1940 drew a staggering 45 million visitors to Queens.

THE MODERN ERA

ONCE AGAIN, WAR FUELED THE ECONOMY. The outbreak of World War II kicked the stock market back into high gear, and it was not to slow for nearly 30 years. With the ending of the war, America the melting pot took its place at the head of international power as well; the United Nations headquarters were established in New York in 1946. Large numbers of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic immigrants arrived, and many of them moved to the Upper East Side, to what became known as El Barrio or Spanish Harlem; the Chinese arrived in even greater numbers throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Builder and powerbroker Robert Moses remade the face of the West Side, culturally and physically, by sweeping away the crumbling buildings in the San Juan district and designing a huge arts complex, now Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, in its place.

The 1960s were famously feverish in New York, in the arts world and in politics. The Beatles set foot on American soil for the first time at Kennedy Airport, and they played their first U.S. concert at Shea Stadium. Queens's Flushing Meadow hosted another World's Fair, and its symbolic Unisphere still holds up its one-world promise. Columbia University students staged famous sit-ins. *Hair* opened on Broadway, and Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev led the list of Russian dancers and artists who fled to the United States. A new sense of irony, expressed in various ways—Pop art, the stereotypical “neurotic” New Yorker made famous by Woody Allen, among others, and the new Beat generation of writers and so-called bohemians—made New York City seem both exotic and depraved to many conservative Americans.

New York's black intelligentsia, from Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston to James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison, had been exposing racism in scathing essays, novels, and plays throughout the 1950s; now their writings and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* became required reading. The flamboyant lifestyle of Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell and the charges of corruption and political favoritism that surrounded him were reminiscent of the Prohibition-era reign of Mayor Jimmy Walker. Greenwich Village became first the symbol and center of the gay rights movement, and then the equally vivid shorthand for the burgeoning AIDS epidemic. Militant civil rights groups, antigovernment radical political parties, anti-Vietnam demonstrators, and women's groups seemed to have transformed New York society top to bottom.

And perhaps it did—but in New York, money always seems to have more pull than politics. By the early 1970s, Nixon was beginning to withdraw the troops from Southeast Asia, the hippies were on the way out, and the yuppies had arrived. A burst of luxury hotels and apartment buildings and huge, showy corporate structures jacked the skyline ever higher (and led, though too late for Stanford White's Penn Station, to a greater appreciation of historic restoration and preservation).

Moreover, the expansion of New York, specifically the exodus of Manhattanites into the suburbs, began to drain the city of vital income. And as the upper-middle class moved out, the city became a playground for the super-rich and a prison for the poor.

The pride of the 1970s nearly led to a great fall. Just as the World Trade Center was completed in 1973, the city began to spiral toward bankruptcy, a fate just barely averted with the fraternal assistance of Wall Street. The Great White Way and the entire rest of the city went dark in the Blackout of 1977. Stocks ballooned again, only to crash again in 1987. (This time even Donald Trump, symbol of conspicuous consumption, had to resort to humble refinancing.) The first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, in 1993, killed six people;

eight years later, the death toll would be nearly 3,000. But markets never stay slow in a city that never sleeps; and downtown construction, repair, and improvement of mass transit and the restaurant and entertainment industry are stronger than ever.

Heading into the millennium, and having celebrated its own official first century as a unified city, New York seemed to be turning over its own chronometers, spiritual and literal. That great symbol Ellis Island, which reopened as the Immigration Museum in 1990, is already one of the most visited sites in New York. Chelsea Piers, the crumbling remnants of the once vital Hell's Kitchen port, reopened as a massive playground, while on the east side the South Street Seaport became a sort of historical shopping mall. Another great wave of immigration brought even greater ethnic variety to the city, especially in Brooklyn (where much of the estimated half-million recent arrivals are Caribbean) and Queens, as well as in Manhattan (the Heights and Chinatown). The city's population rebounded by 10% between 1990 and 2000. And crime, the city's long-standing shadow empire, is to a substantial degree succumbing to the police department's continual investigations into corruption both external and internal. During the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, crime rates plummeted and (not to mention his campaign against street vagrancy and the sort of petty panhandling that annoys out-of-towners) are now at the lowest level in a half-century. Times Square, once a byword of prostitution, gambling, and purse-snatching, began an astonishing revitalization campaign that has not only reshaped the entire area but attracted a new generation of theatrical producers and media conglomerates; it is now one of the city's most profitable tourist attractions.

There can be no question, however, that the events of September 11, 2001, have forever changed this great city, sobering its financial, cultural, and architectural hubris. Yet it displayed the city at its best—heroic, united, determined. It has also demonstrated the inherent power of the American Dream: The Statue of Liberty lifts her lamp to illuminate the many monuments of both despair and hope. At press time, the Statue is open to visitors to her feet; the new Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) terminal and Vesey Street pedestrian bridge had been opened to return traffic through lower Manhattan; and a network was taking shape of a dozen public parks and green spaces around the border of the island's southern tip. Despite many delays and design changes, the neighborhood now known as Ground Zero has obviously become fixed in the minds of Americans as a critical landmark. New York may wind up with an even greater sense of its skyline than it had before 9-11.

THE FICTIONAL CITY

THERE ARE FEW CITIES THAT HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT of more novels, plays, or stories than New York, and with the advent of television and movies, the landscape is even more familiar to nonresidents. But again, we want you to see the history beneath the surface of the city, the New York that its founders dreamed of, that its wealthy ordered, and its working class constructed. So among some personal, evocative, and decidedly not modern favorites:

The Age of Innocence and *The House of Mirth*, by Edith Wharton, both titled with heavy irony, bring the heyday of Midtown society to life; so does Henry James's masterpiece *Washington Square*. (The lavish film versions of these books are worth a look for the look, at least.)

The Last of the Mohicans, by James Fenimore Cooper, may have put you off as a child by its old-fashioned prose, but Cooper's history of the colonial state and the era of the French and Indian Wars is far more fascinating. (If you were enraptured by the equally fascinating movie, be warned: Hawkeye did not fall in love with Cora Monroe; he was old enough to be her father.)

Up in the Old Hotel, by Joseph Mitchell, is an astonishing collection of articles and stories, originally written for the *New Yorker*. Mitchell brings back to life the golden era of the oyster beds, the Fulton Fish Market, and the piers and warehouses and taverns of the West Side.

Winter's Tale, by Mark Halperin, is a mystical vision of the city as an engine of pure energy, a sort of transmitter between this world and another—and no description of New York in winter can ever be more enrapturing.

Caleb Carr's two adventure novels, *The Alienist* and *The Angel of Darkness*, take place around the turn of the century, when gangs roved the city, Teddy Roosevelt was a young reformer, and forensic evidence and psychology were new and mysterious sciences. In a similar vein is *Waterworks*, by E. L. Doctorow, with its fantastic vision of the old Croton Reservoir.

In *Time and Again*, Jack Finney manages to imprint the New York City of the late 19th century so thoroughly in his contemporary protagonist's mind that he is transported there and falls in love.

And of course, those least childish of children's books, E. B. White's *Stuart Little*, the picaresque novel of a mouse-sized Manhattanite, and the wonderful *Eloise* (by Kay Thompson), whose portrait hangs in the lobby of her beloved Plaza Hotel and in whose honor one of the authors was once allowed to ride on the back of a carriage horse in Central Park.

