

SO YOU THINK YOU
KNOW THE
BIG APPLE?

A Story of
New York City
Told in
100 Buildings

DOUG GELBERT



CRUDEN BAY BOOKS

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A STORY OF NEW YORK CITY TOLD IN 100 BUILDINGS**

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**Cruden Bay Books
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INTRODUCTION

If those walls could talk...this is what they would say. A story about New York City.

"The Jewel of Staten Island"... Worlds Fairs... oysters... iron horses... aviation history... rattlesnakes... "Burnham's Folly"... Leo Astor and Leo Lenox... the CCC... cast iron architecture... The Garden... the golden age of motoring... corned beef... fire watch towers... The Fourth estate... summer city halls... "Andy Green's hobby"... the Armory Show... cathouses... "theaters of nature"... illegal booze... co-ops... public hangings... lighthouses... "the Golden Door"... Googie architecture... chorus lines... carousels... Dutch souvenirs... This book will have you telling stories like a native in no time.

The photos and stories collected here are a fast and fun way to learn the explanations behind the quirks, the traditions and the secrets that make New York City uniquely the Big Apple. Who was the first New Yorker described in the newspapers as a millionaire? Solved. Where was the country's first public golf course? A mystery no more. What unlikely structure has the most solar panels in the city? Identified. Who was the only person elected unanimously to the Hall of Fame of Great Americans? Revealed. Who detonated the 1920 Wall Steet Bombing? No one knows.

Imagine a group of settlers arriving in an undeveloped location. First come shelters in which to live and then structures in which to work and shop. There are buildings for worship and education. As the community grows government buildings are required. With prosperity comes places in which to spend leisure time. And each step along the way builds a story only New York City can call its own. A story told in 100 buildings. Almost all of the selections within are open to the public, or at least visible from public spaces. So, if you haven't seen these landmarks in person, fire up your GPS and get out and see the story of the Big Apple standing in plain sight on NYC streets!

Wyckoff House

Brooklyn

1652



New York is not a town prone to sentimentality. Some of the greatest buildings ever constructed have been torn down when they happened to be inconveniently placed or were no longer in lockstep with the architectural tastes of the moment. Even the deepest pockets could not save condemned treasures. It wasn't until the 1960s that New York City got a preservationist movement with a backbone and in Big Apple fashion the city soon had America's largest agency of historical watchdogs. When the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission went looking for its first landmark property they headed for the city's oldest building - the Dutch frame saltbox house of Pieter Claesen Wyckoff. Wyckoff's American experience began in 1637 as an indentured servant. After fulfilling his six-year contract Pieter was free to chart his own destiny. The Dutch government was giving away land for farmers to develop as a bulwark against English expansion and Wyckoff took a plot in New Amersfoort - the ancestral beginnings of East Flatbush. Pieter and Grietje Wyckoff raised 11 children in the house, all of whom grew to adulthood. After eight generations there were still enough Wyckoffs around in 1937 to band together and privately stave off demolition until the Preservation Commission cavalry arrived. There are now nearly 40,000 properties that have received landmark status in the five boroughs.

Billop House

Staten Island

1680



With George Washington's army bottled up on Manhattan in the summer of 1776, the British sent word to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia that they would be willing to discuss peace. Heavy hitters Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Edward Rutledge went to New York even though General William Howe declined to meet, sending his brother Richard, an admiral, instead. The setting was the handsome stone house built by Captain Christopher Billopp of the Royal Navy on Ward's Point, the very southernmost tip of New York state. His British loyalist grandson Christopher was commander of the Corps of Staten Island Militia. The two sides met on September 11. Howe would not recognize American independence and the Congressional delegation was not about to consider anything less. The only peace conference of the Revolutionary War was cordial, meaningless, and necessarily brief. On the losing side after the Battle of Yorktown, the "Tory Colonel" fled to New Brunswick, Canada where he entered politics. The State of New York confiscated his house with nary a penny for the Billop family.

Quaker Meeting House

Queens

1694



John Bowne was an Englishman who moved from Boston to Vlissingen in 1661, a section of New Netherlands that had attracted many of his countrymen over the years. His troubles began when he started inviting neighbors over to sample a new form of Christianity called Quakerism. For governor Peter Stuyvesant worship meant Dutch Reformed Church or nothing. Bowne was hauled off to jail where he showed no inclination to repent or, more importantly, pay a fine. Stuyvesant deported him. Bowne had no intention of staying in England. He sailed to Holland and appealed his case to the Dutch West India Company on the principle of "liberty of conscience" guaranteed in the 1645 Charter of the Town of Flushing. Bowen returned to his home in 1664 as the board ordered Stuyvesant to allow freedom of religion in New Netherlands. That was the least of the governor's problems as England was in the process of mounting a fleet to sail on the Dutch colony, which Stuyvesant surrendered without a fight. After setting the precedent for religious freedom in America Bowne prospered and helped build the second Quaker meeting house in New York. It is still in use as the oldest house of worship in the Big Apple. Bowne's original Anglo-Dutch saltbox house also survives as the oldest building in Queens.

Fraunces Tavern

Manhattan

1719



Etienne de Lancey, a wealthy merchant, built an elegant townhouse here in 1719. The family moved on in 1737 and used the building as a warehouse. Samuel Fraunces, a West Indian of African and French extraction, bought the property in 1762 for about \$260. "Black Sam" converted the space into the Queen's Head Tavern, which he leased, and devoted himself to operating a wax museum. The Queen's Head,

with a spacious meeting room known as the Long Room, was a popular gathering place and it was here, on December 4, 1783, that George Washington bade an emotional farewell to his senior officers in the Continental Army. Fraunces was rewarded by Congress for his kindness to Patriot prisoners entombed in the city's notorious jails during the long British occupation and he became Washington's steward when he returned to New York as president in 1789. He followed the chief executive to Philadelphia, where he died in 1795. The tavern is one of the Big Apple's most tangible souvenirs from the Revolutionary War.

King Manor

Queens

1730



American independence was spurred on by passions and idealism. Rufus King would not have been effective at the first Continental Congress. But years later his political realism was a major asset at the Constitutional Convention called to craft a framework for the new nation. Although still only in his twenties King was one

of the key framers of the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787, which formally divided America's new western territories into townships, provided a government for the territories, and established a formal procedure for the admission of new states into the Union. The Massachusetts native was a vocal advocate for a strong federal government and the leading Federalist, Alexander Hamilton, urged him to move to New York. King became one of the Empire State's first U.S. senators in 1789 along with Philip Schuyler; he remained in office until George Washington appointed him Minister to Great Britain in 1796. King was so respected that after Democrat Thomas Jefferson won the White House he kept his job, becoming the first ever political appointment across party lines. Rufus King would be the last man standing in the Federalist Party of Washington and Hamilton. He was the party's last candidate for president, winning just three states against James Madison's 16 in the 1816 election. One of the states King failed to carry was New York, where he was once again a sitting Senator. The Federalist Party had long since disbanded when King left the Senate in 1825. As a man without a party his was one of the strongest voices in the nation's capital against slavery. King purchased this manor home in 1805 upon returning from England and lived here until his death in 1827.

Bowling Green

Manhattan

1733



Legend has it that this was the very spot where in 1626 Peter Minuit, in the employ of the Dutch West India Company, handed over 60 guilders - the equivalent of 24 dollars - to the Lenni Lenape Indians to take possession of Manhattan Island. Purchasing power aside, the Indians likely considered they had made a shrewd bargain. After all, land ownership wasn't really among their canon of beliefs. And they received metal objects useful to their farming activities and hammered out

some important trade alliances. Regardless, after the negotiations this became "The Plain" where Dutch settlers congregated and sold cattle. Under English control after 1664 the ground was designated as a park in 1733. New York City's first park received a spiffy wooden fence "for the Beauty & Ornament of the Said Street as well as for the Recreation & delight of the Inhabitants of this City." It would be replaced by the current landmark iron fence in 1771. The year before New Yorkers displayed their fealty to King George III by erecting a statue in his honor in Bowling Green. After the first reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 9, 1776 fired-up patriots dragged George off to the dock and put him on a boat for Connecticut to be melted down into ammunition. Despite that act of defiance New York remained in British control for the duration of the Revolution.

Morris–Jumel Mansion

Manhattan

1765



The two-story brick house, one of Manhattan's oldest surviving residences, was a British and Hessian quarters during the American Revolution. More importantly, George Washington lived in a suite of rooms on the second floor from September 14 to October 18, 1776 from which the commander-in-chief directed the Battle of Harlem Heights. British troops landed at Kip's bay and marched north to American fortifications in the high ground at the Harlem River. The next day they were spotted by Lt. Colonel Thomas Knowlton, one of Washington's brightest young officers, at dawn. Knowlton fought a successful delaying action as General Washington arrived to organize an offensive and in heavy skirmishing the British were pushed back. Fearing a major showdown, Washington did not press the action and was satisfied to return to the Morris-Jumal house with a rare, morale-boosting victory. It had come at a price - Colonel Knowlton was one of the 30 Americans killed.

St. Paul's Chapel

Manhattan

1766



Manhattan north of this point was virtual wilderness in 1764 when master craftsman Andrew Gautier began constructing St. Paul's Chapel with locally quarried brownstone, working from plans drawn by Thomas McBean. St. Paul's is the only remaining colonial church in Manhattan. Governor George Clinton had a designated pew and British officers worshipped here during the American Revolution. Several are buried in the churchyard, as is General Richard Montgomery, whose body was moved here in 1818 from Quebec where he fell in 1775 attempting to win Canadian support for the patriot cause. George Washington also had a pew at St. Paul's and a special service was conducted on April 30, 1789 in his first hours as the first American President. Until the mid-19th century the spire of St. Paul's Chapel could be seen across the city.

Dyckman House

Manhattan

1785

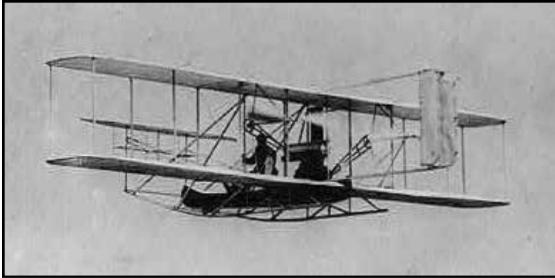


Jan Dyckman was a cobbler in Westphalia in the Rhine River Valley but he knew there would be no shoes in his future as he sailed to New Amsterdam in 1661. With a fellow settler, Jan Nagel, he bought most of Manhattan Island north of 155th Street. The Dyckmans and Nagels planted cherry and apple and pear trees and settled into their new lives in America. During the American Revolution the Dyckmans fled the city rather than submit to British occupation. When they returned the family farmhouse was in ruins. The house went back up, the orchards replanted and life carried on as before on the farm until the property was sold in the 1870s. One thing led to another and by 1915 the farmhouse was somehow still standing when all of its contemporaries had vanished. Two sisters of the last Dyckmans raised in the house bought and restored the property. The following year the Dyckman farmhouse was donated to the City Of New York. Even then the city's agrarian roots were a distant memory and the farm was opened to a curious public. Today, Manhattan's oldest farmhouse still brings in crops from a 1/2 acre garden.

Governor's House

Manhattan

1794



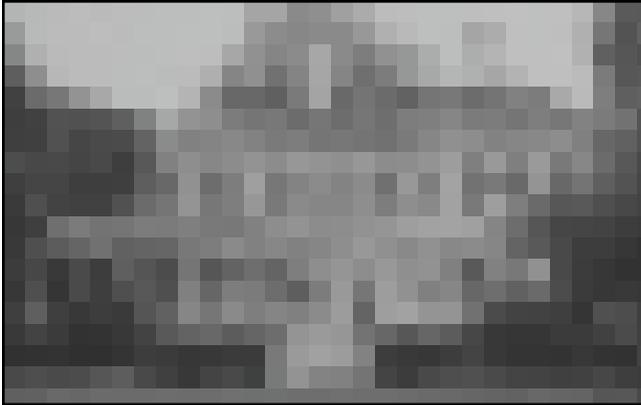
On December 17, 1903 Orville Wright became airborne over the North Carolina sand dunes and stayed aloft for 12 seconds, traveling about the distance between the cockpit and coach class in a modern jetliner. That was enough to

claim the immortality of executing the first powered, controlled flight. The Wright brothers eventually got out to 852 feet that day but seven years later there was still no practical purpose for flying. Wilbur and Orville seemingly spent more time fighting to protect their patents than in the air. Although the Wrights were setting aeronautic records in Europe the famously secretive brothers had never flown in public in America and competitors such as Glenn Curtiss were nipping at their heels. The Wrights accepted a \$15,000 challenge to fly 10 miles in New York City as part of the state's blowout celebration of the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson sailing the *Half Moon* up the river that would bear his name. The makeshift airfield would be landfill on Governor's Island that had been a military fortification since the Continental Army built defensive fortifications in 1776; permanent structures date to Fort Jay and the Governor's House in 1794. In anticipation of his flight Wilbur Wright strapped a 14-foot canvas canoe to the bottom of his biplane - not that he would actually hit water if he crashed as there were an estimated 1,600 vessels in New York Harbor to watch the historic first flight anywhere over water. Wright successfully flew around the Statue of Liberty, executing crowd-pleasing dips and turns as he went. A few days later Wilbur flew up the Hudson River and around Grant's Tomb, staying aloft 150 feet over the water for a mesmerizing 33 minutes to easily cover the ten miles. Governor's Island was the longest continuously operating base in the 1920s when Wright's airfield was proposed for the city's first airport. Although incredibly convenient but there wasn't enough room for safe runways.

Gracie Mansion

Manhattan

1799



Archibald Gracie parlayed his gamble to sail to America in 1784 with his own goods at risk into a partnership with Alexander Hamilton and one of New York City's first great fortunes. For a summer home he purchased land atop a knob along

the East River, five miles north of the city and constructed a two-story frame Federal-style mansion that today is one of the oldest wooden structures remaining in New York City. Gracie's house became a popular hub for society soirees with the guests arriving by water. Financial reversals in the 1820s forced Gracie to sell his popular retreat; in 1896 the city became proud owner after unpaid taxes. It was Robert Moses' idea in 1942 to make Gracie Mansion the official residence of New York City mayors. Few American cities have such a home waiting for the new mayor. Most feel it is "good politics" to live modestly among the people. When Michael Bloomberg became mayor in 2001 he refused to sleep in Gracie Mansion, even though he personally spent millions to refurbish the house and spent many daytimes in residence. Bloomberg argued that no taxpayer expense should be lavished on a mayor's residence and Gracie Mansion should be available to the public free of charge for events and tours. Others feel Gracie Mansion is the Big Apple's White House and should be revered as such. Ed Koch, who planned to go on living in a rent-controlled Greenwich Village apartment when he was elected mayor in 1977, became a convert to the latter camp: "Anybody who can live in Gracie Mansion and doesn't has to be nuts!"

Hamilton Grange

Manhattan

1802



Alexander Hamilton strode across the Revolutionary landscape with an insatiable desire for fame that was known in the 18th century as “a craving for distinction.” He rose from illegitimate beginnings in the West Indies on the strength of his towering intellect and unwavering ambition, which won him enemies and admirers alike. Although better known for his later contributions to the forging of the Republic, Hamilton served brilliantly in the war from its incep-

tion. He was commissioned an artillery officer in March 1776, only four years after arriving in New York City. Although scarcely 21 years of age his writings and clear abilities soon attracted attention within the Continental Army. Washington made Hamilton an aide-de-camp on March 1, 1777 and for four years he served by the commander’s side. Knowing his aide was eager for glory on the battlefield Washington gave him a regiment under the Marquis de Lafayette in Virginia and Hamilton indeed earned accolades during the British surrender at Yorktown. After the war Hamilton was a leading voice in the creation of the Constitution and molded American fiscal policy as Secretary of the Treasury from 1789 until 1795. Even his longtime adversary Thomas Jefferson mourned when he was fatally wounded by a bullet from Aaron Burr in a duel on July 11, 1804. The Grange was Alexander Hamilton’s last home, a Federal-style country estate built on sixteen acres of then rural land.

Brooklyn Navy Yard

Brooklyn

1805



When John Adams became the nation's second President the United States Navy, such as was, consisted of a few frigates. Adams created the position of Secretary of the Navy and put Benjamin Stoddert in charge but things moved slowly with Congress appropriating funds only for the construction of two ship docks. Stoddert started an end run around Capitol Hill by authorizing the purchase of land for six naval shipyards in Portsmouth NH, Boston,

New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Norfolk. But after Adams lost his re-election bid to Thomas Jefferson the new administration slow-walked naval development; Brooklyn was the most contentious as there were debates over the location and the first ground was not broken until 1805. Even as America fought the War of 1812 the only orders at Brooklyn were converting merchant vessels into warships. The first gunship built at the navy yard, the *USS Ohio*, did not launch into the East River until 1820. A highpoint for Brooklyn brass came during the Civil War when the first ironclad warship, the *USS Monitor*, was outfitted in the yard before fighting the armored Confederate warship *CSS Virginia* to a draw in the Battle at Hampton Roads. During World War II the Brooklyn Navy Yard became the largest naval construction facility in America and the largest employer in New York State with 71,000 men and women working in shifts around the clock. When the Navy shuttered the yard in 1966 for civilian redevelopment it was the oldest continually operated industrial plant in the Empire State.

Castle Clinton

Manhattan

1808



The Battery is one of New York City's oldest public open spaces. Located at the confluence of the Hudson and East rivers, the first Dutch settlers anchored here in 1623, and the first "battery" of cannons was erected to defend the young settlement of New Amsterdam. Castle Clinton was built in anticipation of the War of 1812 during the reign of Governor DeWitt Clinton. A decade later it was renamed Castle Garden and was transformed into the town's premier cultural center. By 1855, successive landfills had enlarged the Park to encompass Castle Garden and the structure became America's first immigrant receiving center, welcoming 8.5 million people before the establishment of Ellis Island. In 1896, the Castle was transformed into the much-loved New York Aquarium, one of the nation's first public fish museums. The wrecking ball started swinging here in 1941, touching off a major preservation battle that got the original fort walls declared a National Monument by an Act of Congress in 1946. Restored to its fortification appearance by the National Park Service in 1975, the Castle currently houses a small interpretive display and the ticket office for the Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island ferry.

City Hall

Manhattan

1812



New York's first government home was erected by the Dutch in the 17th century on Pearl Street. The city's second City Hall, built in 1700, stood on Wall and Nassau streets. That building was renamed Federal Hall after New York became the first official capital of the United States and George Washington took the first Presidential oath of office on the front steps. Plans for building a new City Hall were discussed by the New York City Council as early as 1776, but Revolutionary War concerns and debts delayed construction until 1812. Joseph Francois Mangin and John McComb, Jr. won \$350 for their design which blended elements of the French Renaissance and English Georgian styles. Austerity-minded officials balked at its extravagance so the plan was scaled back and less expensive brownstone ordered to contain costs. DeWitt Clinton, who could appreciate the sense of the moment as founder and president of the New York Historical Society, was the first mayor to come to work here. Every mayor since has done the same in America's oldest city hall still doing its original job.

Sailors' Snug Harbor

State Island

1833



Tom Randall was one of England's most feared privateers on the high seas in the middle of the 1700s, amassing a sizable fortune. During the Revolution Randall became thoroughly Americanized to the point that he served as coxswain rowing George Washington to the nation's first Presidential inauguration. When Randall died his son Robert used a chunk of his inheritance

to buy much of today's Greenwich Village. Alexander Hamilton drew up Robert Randall's will to set up a marine hospital for "the purpose of maintaining aged, decrepit, and worn-out sailors." It was one of the first charitable institutions in America and said to be the richest. Challenges to the will delayed its execution until Lower Manhattan engulfed the land. It was off to Staten Island, including Randall's remains. Snug Harbor became a self-sustaining retirement community with recreation halls, farms, a power plant, and a hospital. Sailors were all addressed as "Captain," regardless of their rank in service. The three original buildings expanded to 50 - a virtual textbook of 19th century architectural styles: Greek Revival then Italianate then Second Empire then Renaissance Revival. The original Randall bequest lasted into the 1950s. Deteriorating structures were demolished but the chapel and five interconnected buildings known as Temple Row were saved. Today's "Jewel of Staten Island" has evolved into an art center, botanical garden, music hall, and museum.

The Octagon

Manhattan

1834



Orson Squire Fowler was responsible for two wildly different fads in the middle of the 19th century. One was phrenology, the practice that mental acuity could be determined by the bumps on ones head. The other was eight-sided houses that he championed in a book called *The Octagon House, A Home for All*. Neither are much in vogue these days but the octagon at least made sense. They offered a greater space-to-surface ratio and thus were

cheaper to construct than rectangular houses and there was plenty of much-appreciated pre-air conditioning cross ventilation. But the lack of square corners played havoc with interior designers. Fowler did not invent octagons, he likely got his ideas from buildings like this one on Roosevelt Island from esteemed architect Alexander Jackson Davis. The five-story blue-gray stone tower was the main entrance for the convicts and patients of the New York City Lunatic Asylum. Obviously Franklin Roosevelt's name wasn't attached to the island yet. Neither did anyone else want to be associated with the place. When the Queensboro Bridge - the world's largest cantilever bridge at the time - was constructed across the island there wasn't even an offramp built (vehicles used an elevator to reach the deck, if necessary). The hospital closed in the 1950s and residential communities began appearing. The Octagon is the only remaining building from the asylum days still standing; it does duty as the gatehouse for an apartment complex. Boasting more solar panels than any structure in the city the project was a "Green Apple Award" winner for sustainability.

Bartow–Pell Mansion

Bronx

1836



From his post as commissioner of the Department of Parks for New York City Robert Moses did more to shape the face of New York City than anyone ever had from his appointment in 1934 until his departure in 1960. Moses engineered the addition of 2.6 million acres to the state park system; in New York City alone he built 658 playgrounds. One of his first public works projects was also one of his most impressive - hauling three million cubic acres of landfill between Hunter and Twin islands in Long Island Sound to create Orchard Beach. In the process he created the Big Apple's largest park, Pelham Bay Park. The area was sprinkled with large ancestral mansions but only one remains, Robert Bartow's handsome Greek Revival confection he constructed on the ruins of his ancestor's 1670 house. In the 1930s mayor Fiorello La Guardia decided the mansion would become New York City's first ever "Summer City Hall." La Guardia moved in during 1936 and liked the idea so much he set up hot weather offices around Queens. None of his successors used the summer city halls and the idea died away.

Green-Wood Cemetery

Brooklyn

1838



For tourists the 19th century equivalent of the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and Yellowstone was Mount Auburn Cemetery in Massachusetts. Before Mount Auburn was founded in 1831 burials took place on private estates or in downtown graveyards that were anything but permanent. If new development came along cemeteries would be ripped out and moved to a less crowded part of the city. Jacob Bigelow, a Boston physician, saw

these congested city burial grounds as a health nuisance. It was his idea to build permanent resting places outside the city on landscaped grounds, a rural cemetery if you will. The Rural Cemetery movement caught on in major cities across the country, most of which had never had public parks before. Folks of all classes could come to the cemeteries and enjoy nature, picnic, and stroll through sculpture gardens. All for free. Henry Evelyn Pierrepont swallowed the Mount Auburn play-book whole for The Green-wood Cemetery Corporation that raised \$300,000 for 200 acres of hilly land on the Gowanus Bay. Green-Wood quickly became the gold standard for funerary art, landscaping, and rural necrology. By the 1860s a half million visitors a year were coming through Richard Upjohn's Victorian Gothic entrance gates, second only to Niagara Falls as a tourist destination in America. There are more than 570,000 "permanent residents, an impressive number but far from the Big Apple's largest cemetery. The Cavalry Cemetery in Queens is the largest in the nation with more than three million burials.

Lorillard Snuff Mill

Bronx

1840



French native Pierre Lorillard is said to have ground America's first smokeless tobacco in a rented house in Lower Manhattan in the 1760s. The tobacconist was killed during the British occupation of New York City during the Revolution and after peace came his sons Peter and George moved the operation to the Bronx. When Peter died at the age of 80 in 1843 his obituary introduced the world to the term "millionaire" for the first time. As Philip Hone observed at the time, "He led people by the nose for the best part of a century, and made his enormous fortune by giving them that to chew which they could not swallow." The mill that stands as the country's oldest extant tobacco manufacturing buildings was constructed to supplement the original mill that had ground out that great snuff empire. The Lorillard operation moved to Jersey City in the 1870s and the 600-acre estate and 45-room estate were given to the City and became the New York Botanical Garden.

Battery Weed

Staten island

1845

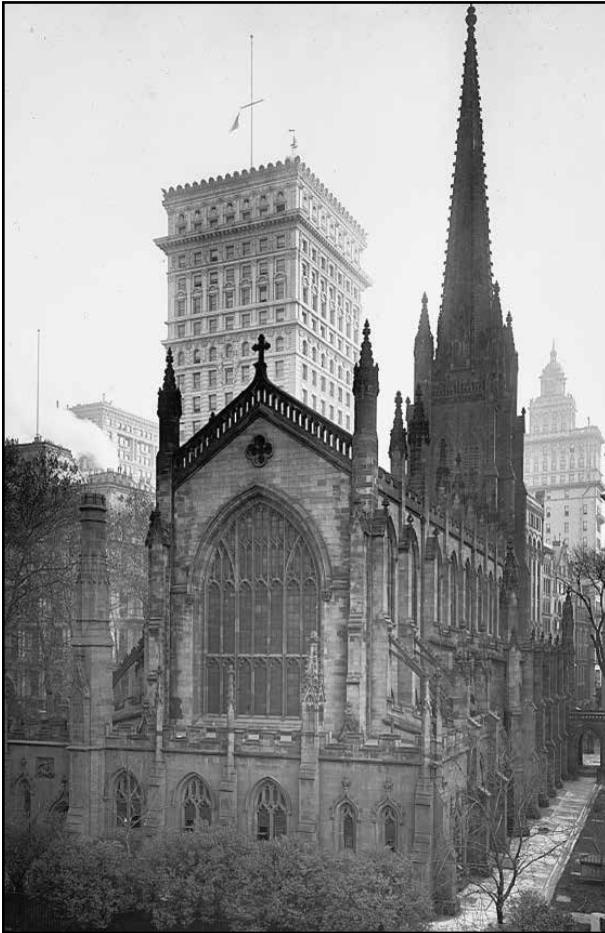


If you were scouting for a military position to defend New York City this is where you would come, the narrow tidal strait holding Staten Island apart from Brooklyn and known by mariners as the gateway to the Big Apple. Despite this primo location the defensive statistics are not good. The Dutch reportedly built a blockhouse here in 1663; they lost New Amsterdam to the British a year later. American patriots built a redoubt here called Flagstaff Fort in June of 1776 and it was taken by the British a few weeks later. The British built the fort out significantly but it saw no use until it was evacuated with the American victory. In 1806 New York State tore down the fortification and constructed four red sandstone forts of its own to protect from...an invasion by sea from New Jersey? The buildings did not become part of the federal system of fortifications until the 1840s when they were rebuilt, most conspicuously being the four-tiered Battery Weed as the centerpiece of Fort Wadsworth. When the installation was shut down in 1994 it may or may not have been the longest garrisoned position in America. Fortunately the most action troops ever saw here was the construction of the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge in its front yard, the longest suspension bridge in the world when it opened in 1964.

Trinity Church

Manhattan

1846



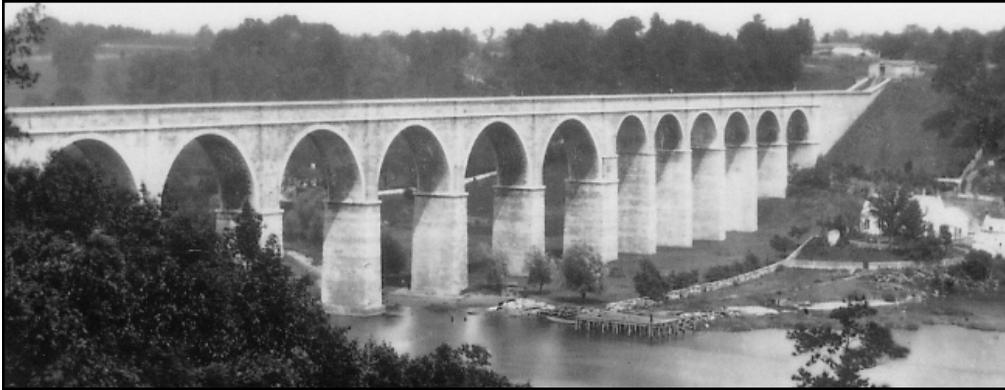
Founded in 1697, Trinity Church is the oldest Episcopal congregation in a city where Episcopalianism was once the official religion. By royal charter of King William III of England, the Parish of Trinity Church once owned most of the land that is today among the most valuable in the world. When the present Trinity Church was consecrated on Ascension Day May 1, 1846; its soaring 280-foot Neo-Gothic spire, surmounted by a gilded cross, was the tallest structure in Manhattan and would be so for 50 years. There have been three Trinity Church buildings at Broadway and Wall Street; the present house

of worship, designed by Richard Upjohn is considered a pure example of Gothic Revival architecture and became a standardbearer for similarly ornate churches across the country. The original burial ground at Trinity Church includes the graves and memorials of such historic figures as Alexander Hamilton, William Bradford, Robert Fulton, and Albert Gallatin.

High Bridge

Bronx/Manhattan

1848



"Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink." Samuel Taylor Coleridge was bemoaning the fate of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in 1834 but he may as well have been speaking to New Yorkers. Manhattan's rivers were mostly nasty affairs, infiltrated by seawater and pollution as development surged northward on the island. The city put up with the occasional outbreaks of yellow fever but when cholera caused by bad water struck in 1832 the hunt for fresh water became urgent. The solution was audacious - diverting water from the Croton River and sending it 41 miles to reservoirs in Manhattan using only gravity. Construction began on one of America's greatest aqueduct systems in 1837 and water was making the 22-hour journey just five years later. There was, however, a problem at the Harlem River that was being crossed by temporary pipes. A tunnel? Impractical given the technology available. A low bridge? Quick and cheap but disruptive to river traffic. A high bridge? Costly but necessary. The series of arches were in place by 1848 and when a walkway was added atop the pipe High Bridge became an instant tourist attraction. The city's best stroll spawned restaurants and hotels and pleasure cruises. The Old Croton Aqueduct stayed on the job for more than 100 years. When it was proposed to tear down the bridge to improve navigation on the river howls of protest kept New York's City's oldest standing bridge in place. After closing for four decades for restoration the High Bridge is once again a pedestrian's delight, crossing atop the original pipe.

Plymouth Church

Brooklyn

1850



Built shortly after the organization of this congregation in 1847, the first to stand behind the pulpit in Plymouth Church was fiery abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, brother of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* mega-selling author Harriet Beecher Stowe. During the 1800s the only book to sell more copies was the Bible. Slavery had actually not been made illegal in New York until 1827 so Beecher was picking at recent scabs when he staged flamboyant mock slave auctions in the church to get congregants to "buy" freedom. "Beecher Boats" were kept busy bringing curious New Yorkers to the church for a Beecher screech against slavery. The church itself was one of dozens of New York City area stations on the underground railroad. The simple barn-like design features pews arranged in arcs in front of the pulpit that became a prototype for Protestant congregations around the country. The statue of Beecher in the churchyard is by Gutzon Borglum who went on to blast Mount Rushmore out of the Black Hills of South Dakota.

E. V. Haughwout Building

Manhattan

1857



Daniel Badger was born on the family island off the New Hampshire coast in 1806. He began his working life in a blacksmith shop and by his thirties had his own foundry and rolling mill in Boston. Badger claimed to be the first ironmaster to craft building exteriors in the early 1840s and although that probably is false, there is no doubt he became one of the most famous. After coming to New York City his Architectural Iron Works covered an entire block in the East Village and shipped cast iron building fronts around the world. Badger was so proud of the Haughwout Building and its 92 keystone arches that he put its picture on his widely-distributed catalog. The architect of the Venetian-inspired five-story building was John Gaynor and the client was Eder V. Haughwout, who sold fancy cut glass, porcelains, mirrors, chandeliers and more here. To whisk customers to his wares Eder installed the first ever elevator from Elisha Graves Otis who invented the safety brake. Otis had theatrically introduced the safety elevator by dramatically slicing the rope to his hoisting platform at the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition three years before. Although Elisha Otis never saw a building taller than five stories his invention paved the way for 100-story skyscrapers.

Harlem Fire Watchtower

Manhattan

1857



Like all American cities New York City was no stranger to "Great Fires." There was the suspicious 1776 conflagration shortly after the British enforced military law that consumed probably 20 percent of the city's buildings. Then there was the blaze in 1835 that wiped out 17 blocks and caused \$20 million of damage. Finally, the third Great Fire in 1845 that destroyed 345 buildings in the Financial District. City officials had recognized the danger of wooden buildings in 1815 and restricted wood-frame construction in densely populated areas but New York was growing so rapidly through the 1800s that fire-fighters could not keep pace. In the 1850s the City responded by erecting 11 cast-iron watchtowers, designed by James Bogardus who had just pioneered the use of cast-iron in construction. If

a watcher spotted smoke from the 47-foot high towers they would ring the bell to spread the alarm; later telegraph lines would feed directly into fire stations. In 1890, Francis Robbins Upton patented the design of the modern fire alarm with a pull box and the watchtower days were numbered. All were dismantled except for the lone survivor that stands in Marcus Garvey Park.

Times Building

Manhattan

1858



In no city are its newspapers more central to everyday life than the Big Apple. According to the 1865 census there were 373 newspapers publishing in the United States and 54 were in New York City. The first was issued William Bradford's *New-York Gazette*, a weekly that appeared as a single sheet on November 8, 1725 and lasted for 19 years. As a rule newspapers liked to be close to the source of news - city hall. So that was where all the biggest players - the *Times*, *Sun*, *World*, *Herald*, *Tribune*, *Press*, and more - set up shop to battle each other for scoops. Three lined up at the front steps. The *Times* Building was a five-story Romanesque newspaper plant that was dwarfed by Horace Greeley's *Tribune* building in 1874 that even the *Times* would one day admit was "a pioneering skyscraper masterpiece." Both would soon be looking up at Joseph Pulitzer's 309-foot wonder that was the world's tallest building in the first half of the 1890s. From his *New York World* desk inside the copper dome atop the tower Pulitzer proclaimed his creation nothing less than "The Greatest Newspaper Building in the World." As the news world became bigger than the mayor's office the scribes of the Fourth Estate moved elsewhere. The *Herald* was the first to defect, decamping to Herald Square and *The New York Times* departed soon afterwards for what would be called Times Square. Today no major newspaper operates on Newspaper Row and only the *Times* Building stands to recall the ink-stained wars of the 1800s.

Tweed Courthouse

Manhattan

1861



William Maeger Tweed came by his nickname “Boss” honestly. Tweed’s political career began at the age of 30 when he was elected as a U.S. congressman in 1852. He found no paths to power in Washington but things picked up when he came home to New York after one term. He built a stranglehold on local and state Democratic politics like no one had before or since. Along the way Boss Tweed became the third largest landowner in New York City with banks, railroads, and iron mines all funneling money into his personal coffers. The Tweed Courthouse, officially known as the New York County Courthouse, was the first built since Tweed seized control of Tammany Hall. John Kellum was a Long Island native who trained as a carpenter and taught himself architecture well enough to create one of Gotham’s greatest civic buildings in 1861. Tweed used the construction project to camouflage the embezzlement of huge chunks of money. He would eventually be tried here in an unfinished courtroom in 1873, convicted and sent off to prison where he died.

A.T. Stewart Store

Manhattan

1862



In 1846, Irish-born entrepreneur Alexander Turney (A.T.) Stewart established the country's first department store on Broadway's east side between Chambers and Reade streets. Offering a wide variety of European wares with slender mark-ups, the store's policy of providing "free entrance" to all behind oversized French plate glass windows made it an instant retail success. By 1850, Stewart's department store was the largest in the city and his four-story Italianate-designed building, clad in distinct Tuckahoe marble, was known around town as the "Marble Palace." In 1862 Stewart relocated his business, the most lucrative dry goods enterprise in the world, to this six-story "Iron Palace." The emporium consumed an entire block and employed 2,000 people. Stewart was not through revolutionizing American retailing. In the 1870s he began receiving letters requesting items from his Iron Palace shelves. He had to hire a small platoon of clerks to answer the mail and fill the orders. Before he died in 1876 in his mansion - the first of the grand palaces constructed on Fifth Avenue - A.T. Stewart had launched the nation's first large scale mail order business.

97 Orchard Street

Manhattan

1863



In the 1800s twelve million immigrants came to America and 70 percent entered through New York City, known around the world as the "Golden Door." Many of the new arrivals settled in the room closest to that door, the Lower East Side. Speculating developers began building multi-unit dwellings on lots meant for single family homes and rented out rooms and apartments to the growing working class. New York passed the nation's first housing reform law with The Tenement House Act of 1867

that required buildings to have fire escapes and one toilet for every 20 tenants. Those changes require money and tenement owners were slow to comply if they attempted at all. A second law in 1879 required all new construction to have windows to the street or an interior court. In 1901 New York required buildings to have running water and ventilation. Laws are one thing, funds for enforcement another. 97 Orchard Street is now a museum dedicated to the immigrant experience in New York City. The five-story tenement housed some 7,000 people from over 20 countries in its time until closing in 1935. The 22 apartments offered three rooms and 325 square-feet of living space from which to pursue the American Dreams.

Belvedere Castle

Manhattan

1869



When he wasn't exploring the American South to write travelogues for New York newspapers or managing a gold mine in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California or co-ordinating the U.S. Sanitary Commission to care for sick and wounded soldiers during the Civil War, Frederick Law Olmsted was founding the profession of landscape architecture. Olmsted made his reputation with Central Park, which he won the opportunity to design with partner Calvert Vaux over 32 competitors. The partners blended formal and informal spaces in a mosaic spread over 843 acres. There were three types of serpentine paths - for pedestrians, horses and carriages. The park's hills pay testament to the landscape that remained after decades of levelling what the Lenni Lenape Indians called "Manahatta" - island of many hills. While Olmsted worked the grounds Vaux crafted Belvedere Castle to rise seamlessly from the Vista Rock outcropping. The downscaled castle has done time as a weather station and currently does duty as a visitor center for the 42 million park users each year - far more than any other American park.

Cooper Union

Manhattan

1869



Inventor and businessman Peter Cooper, who gave America its first steam locomotive in 1830 and the first structural iron beam to fire-proof buildings, cut a large swath across 19th century political and social life in New York City. In 1859 he established the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, with three

schools dedicated to architecture, art and engineering. Today every student is on full-tuition scholarship, one of the few such institutions of higher learning in America. Fewer than one in twenty applicants become students, always ranking Cooper Union as one of the country's most desirable schools. The Italianate brownstone building was the first to employ rolled iron I-beams in its construction, a means of support devised by Cooper. While the school is select, Cooper Union has always provided a public reading room and library to encourage the mingling of artists and inventors. Leading speakers of the day have presented their ideas in the 900-seat Great Hall. Before they were elected, Presidents U.S. Grant, Grover Cleveland, William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt and Barack Obama all spoke in the celebrated auditorium. Most famously, Abraham Lincoln gave his "Right Makes Might" speech from the Great Hall podium, assuring him the presidency. Woodrow Wilson and Bill Clinton are the only Presidents to speak in Cooper Union while in the Oval Office.

Queen of Greene Street

Manhattan

1872



What became SoHo was to have been the locale of two enormous elevated highways of the Lower Manhattan Expressway before the project was derailed and abandoned in the 1960s. The city was still left with a large number of historic buildings that were unattractive to manufacturing and commercial interests. Many of these buildings, especially the upper stories which became known as lofts, attracted artists who valued the spaces for their elbow room and large windows admitting natural light. The cheap rents were nothing to sneer at either. The source of these airy, well-lit lofts are the cast-iron facade buildings that were constructed during the period from 1840 to 1880. Cast iron enjoyed a brief flurry of popularity as a building material - it was easy to form into ornate French- and Italian-influenced architectural styles, it was quick to assemble and it was inexpensive. There was a profusion of cast iron foundries in New York whose badges can be spotted on many SoHo buildings - Badger's Architectural Iron Works, James L. Jackson's Iron Works, and Cornell Iron Works. The strength of the metal allowed building frames to be stretched and once dreary interiors of the industrial district were suddenly flooded with sunlight through the newly enlarged windows. SoHo boasts the greatest collection of cast-iron architecture in the world with approximately 250 such buildings. This commercial building was dubbed the "Queen of Greene Street" for its fanciful French Second Empire style.

Coignet Building

Brooklyn

1873



Concrete is the most widely used building material in the world, so commonly used it is second to water as the most utilized substance on the planet. But this miracle substance wasn't always obvious, even when it was standing right there. François Coignet pioneered the use of ferro-concrete in France with a mixture that could easily be molded before setting and washed and scored afterward to resemble cut stone. In America the New York and Long Island Coignet Stone Com-

pany built the Big Apple's first concrete building as an advertisement for their new concrete being made in the factory next door. The novel building caught the attention of local papers who wrote glowingly about it but not each customers came knocking on the door and the company was gone in a few years. Ernest Ransome was having the same luck at the same time across the country in San Francisco. He patented a system for twisted iron rods in ferro concrete in 1884 and built a couple structures around town. No one cared and he came back east. In 1906 after an earthquake destroyed 80% of the city Ransome's buildings were still standing. Reinforced concrete hasn't looked back since.

Mink Building

Manhattan

1876



Despite its very English-sounding name it was German immigrants who converted Upper East Side farmland in Yorkville into their slice of the Rhineland in the mid-1800s. The newcomers also contributed to America's shifting tastes in beer from British ales and porters to lighter, Bavarian-style beers.

By the 1880s there were 79 breweries in Manhattan and by the end of the century the island was producing more beer than any other city in the country - apropos for the site of America's first commercial brewery established by the Dutch West India Company in 1632. David Yuengling was a German immigrant who did not settle in Yorkville but in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. He opened the eagle Brewery which remains the oldest operating brewery in the United States in 1829. In the 1870s the Yuengling Brewery set up in this German-influenced building that boasted stables for 100 delivery horses and lofts that could double as beer halls. After several successful decades the company pulled back all operations to Pennsylvania. When Prohibition came in 1919 there were 2,156 American brewing companies but only a fraction made it to 1933 when alcohol became legal again. New York brewers were similarly staggered - the final Big Apple heritage brewer Rheingold limped to the finish line in 1976 as the last when it closed its Brooklyn brewery.

Museum of Natural History

Manhattan

1877



In 1886 the *American Architect and Building News* polled 75 American architects to determine the nation's ten most admired buildings. Works by Henry Hobson Richardson, a New Orleans-born architect working out of Boston, filled five of the ten spots. So 1886 was a good year for Henry. It was also a bad year because he would die prematurely at the age of 47. Afterwards his brawny interpretation of the popular Romanesque style was wildly in vogue for the next decade. In that time nearly every civic structure built in America received the same treatment of rough-hewn stone, broad gables, a powerful arched entranceway, windows grouped in sets of three, multiple colors, and perhaps a tower or two based on Richardson's work. One critic snarked that "they looked old when they were built." The brawny Richardsonian Romanesque style was ideal for the moment when the American Museum of National History, co-founded by Theodore Roosevelt's father, was ready to expand in 1889 - the collection today numbers some 30 million specimens with 20 buildings and 46 permanent exhibition halls displaying a tiny fraction of it. The Beaux Arts confection later to face Central Park was created in 1936 as a tribute to Roosevelt although the south facade speaks more to the rugged outdoorsman President.

Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse

Manhattan

1880



New York Harbor is one of the world's great natural ports - large and deep, sheltered from the ocean, and at the mouth of a major river. A bevy of lighthouses and lightships have guided mariners into the harbor since a light was built at Sandy Hook, New Jersey in 1764 to help navigate around shifting sandbars. The first American lightship anchored in the open sea was placed off Sandy Hook in 1823. Manhattan's only lighthouse began life on Sandy Hook as well where it projected a red light from its 40-foot tower and a fog signal from a 1,000-pound bell. Neither were of much use to modern ocean-going ships of the 20th century and the tower was dismantled in 1917. But

they could be of value in the Hudson River where Jeffrey's Hook inconveniently jutted into the navigation channel. The crimson-colored light tower was reassembled at its new Hudson home in 1921. Meanwhile there were plans afoot to construct one of the world's great bridges across the river at exactly this spot. Beginning in 1931 the Jeffrey's Hook Light was in the shadows of the George Washington Bridge whose bright lights and 570-foot towers overpowered the now barely noticeable lighthouse. Useless once again, the Coast Guard turned off the lamp for the last time in 1948. In the interim, however, Hildegard Swift had made the structures beloved in her children's tale, *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge*. So many letters swamped the Coast Guard that the lighthouse was redirected from the scrap metal yard to the city parks department.