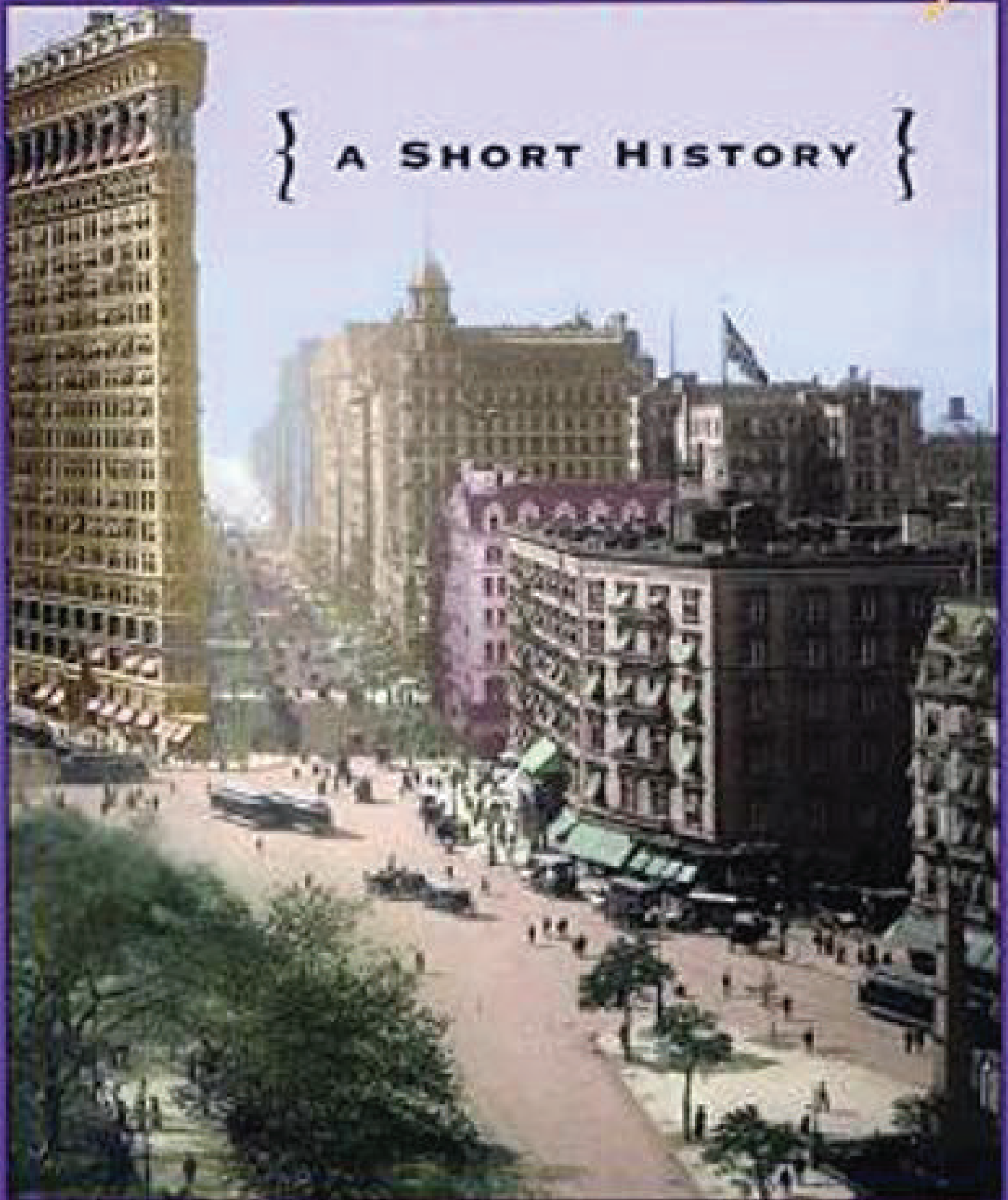


New York City

{ A SHORT HISTORY }



A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY

New York City has a long and sprawling history, but looking at the city today, it's hard to tell what it looked like in the past. Luckily, an enterprising coder has solved that problem by creating a Google Street View map for New York City for the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Developer Dan Vanderkam collaborated with the New York Public Library to plot all the old photos from the Photographic Views of New York City, 1870s-1970s collection on an interactive map.



The project, called OldNYC, lets you browse 19th-century New York as easily as you would click around on Google Maps. The collection contains over 80,000 original photographs.

Visit the OldNYC site here, or look below for some of the best photos we saw from the late 1800s and early 1900s, marked with their locations in the city.

17th Century New York

An Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano discovered New York Harbor in 1524. In 1609 an Englishman, Henry Hudson, sailed up the Hudson River. Then in 1624 the Dutch founded the first permanent trading post. In 1626 the first governor, Peter Minuit, bought the island of Manhattan from the Native Americans.

The Dutch built a little town on the southern tip of Manhattan Island. It was called New Amsterdam and it flourished by selling skins. The settlers sold otter, beaver, mink and seal skins. However New Amsterdam was a tiny town with only about 1,500 inhabitants in the mid-17th century. However some farmers cultivated the land on Manhattan and at Brooklyn. (The Bowery takes its name from Bouwerie the Dutch word for farm).

Furthermore by no means all the early settlers were Dutch. They included Walloons (from what is now Belgium), French people and English people. The first Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654. Meanwhile the first black slaves arrived in 1628. Slaves played a major role in building the colony.

In New Amsterdam buildings were, at first, made of wood but in time houses of stone or brick were erected. Thatched roofs were banned in 1657 (because of the risk of fire).

18th Century New York

By 1700 New York had a population of almost 5,000 and it continued to grow rapidly. By 1776 the population was about 25,000. In 1800 New York City had about 60,000 inhabitants.

In the 18th century the main industry in New York was milling. Grain was ground into flour by windmills. Meanwhile New York Merchants also traded with Britain and the West Indies. There was also a shipbuilding industry in New York in the 18th century. The first shipyard opened in 1720.



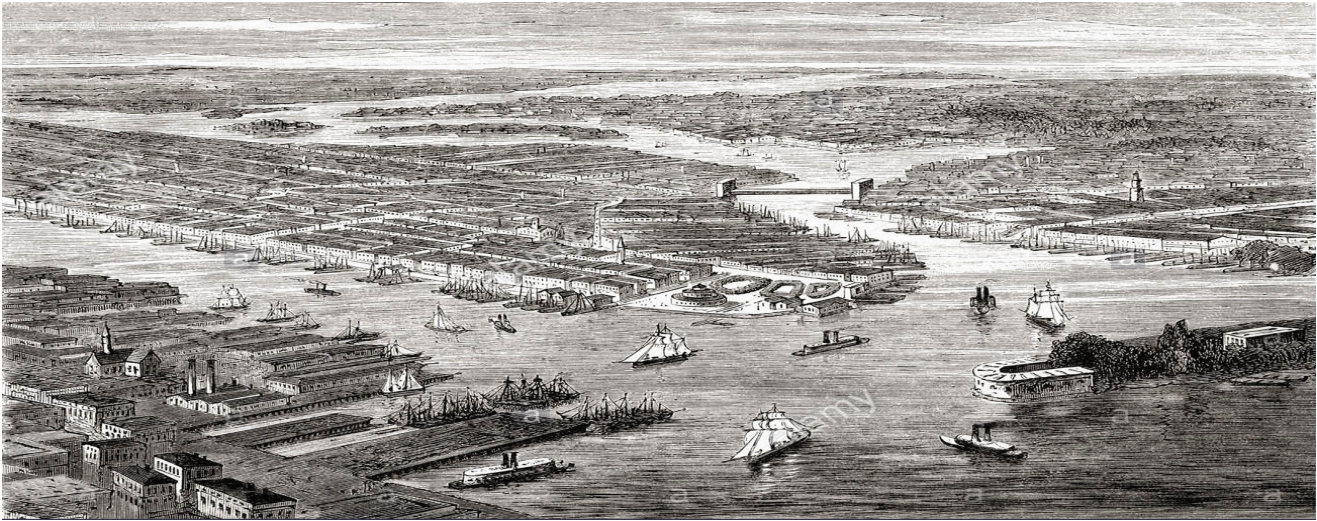
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There were still many slaves in New York in the 18th century. In 1712 slaves set fire to a building in Maiden Lane. They also killed 9 white people who attempted to stop the fire. When soldiers arrived 6 slaves committed suicide and another 21 were captured and executed.

A horrific episode in the history of New York happened in 1741. At that time a series of fires broke out. Fires were not unusual, of course, but many people feared they were the result of arson.

19th Century New York

In 1811 a new fort called West Battery replaced Fort George. In 1815 it was renamed Castle Clinton after the mayor DeWitt Clinton.



At first New York City grew in a haphazard way. However in 1807 the governor of the state of New York appointed a commission to draw up a plan for the city. The commission reported in 1811. The plan proposed that new streets should be laid out on a grid pattern. There would be 12 avenues running north to south and 155 streets running east to west. As New York City grew the grid pattern spread north across Manhattan.

By 1820 New York had become the USA's largest city with a population of 123,000. It continued to grow rapidly. By 1840 New York had a population of 312,000. By 1860 it had 813,000 inhabitants.

19th Century New York

Meanwhile the Statue of Liberty was dedicated by President Grover Cleveland on 28 October 1886. Then in 1888 New York City was struck by a terrible blizzard and 400 people froze to death.

The Statue of Liberty

In the mid-19th century many Germans and Irish went to live in New York. In the late 19th century many Italians arrived and in the 1890s many Eastern European Jews came to New York.

In 1892 the United States Immigration Station opened on Ellis Island. Between 1892 and its closure in 1954 almost 17 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island. However restrictions were placed on Chinese immigration in 1882, on Japanese in 1907 and on illiterate people in 1917. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th many African Americans went to live in Harlem.

At that time many poor New Yorkers lived in tenements. They were overcrowded, poorly ventilated and rooms often lacked windows.

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In 1892 a notorious slum called Five Points was demolished and replaced by Columbus Park. Seward Park was created in 1901.

20th Century New York

In the 20th century New York City continued to grow. In the 1980s large numbers of Asians migrated to the city. By 1980 New York had a population of 7 million.

Many famous buildings were built in New York City in the early 20th century. The Flatiron Building was built in 1902.

Public Library opened in 1911. The Woolworth Building was erected in 1913. The Grand Central Station was built in 1913. The Chrysler Building was erected in 1930 and the Empire State Building was erected in 1931. Also in 1931 the General Electric Building was built. The Rockefeller Center was built in 1932-1940.



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"Here, as in New York itself, may be found everything and everyone, from the first inept Dutch leader, William Verhulst, to the number of saloons in 1820 . . . to the budget debacles of the 1970s." —*New York Times Book Review*

"Lankevich has done the near-impossible and packed almost four centuries of New York City into one slim history . . . a deft survey." —*New York History*

"A splendid work of history that expands our understanding and appreciation of New York City . . . a concise, clear, and meaningful guidebook covering New York's long past." —*Journal of American History*

MAGNET FOR THE AMBITIOUS, LODESTONE FOR TALENTED AND OPPRESSED alike, mecca for business people and immigrants, New York City has stood for over 350 years as the critical center of American life. From its origins as a primitive Dutch outpost to the sprawling urban complex it is today, the defining characteristic of New York has been continual, dramatic, and rapid change.

This new edition features a new preface by the author in which he discusses the impact of the events of September 11 on the city, as well as an updated final chapter on the Giuliani administration and the recent history of New York. In this classic text, Lankevich illustrates how New York has always combined principle and pragmatism in its role as a pace-setter in business, communications, education, urban policy, and cultural life. Emphasizing the cyclical nature of New York's history through tides of crisis and renewal, Lankevich offers the definitive short history of America's most important and vibrant city. By understanding the history of New York, we obtain a vital sense of what America was, is, and can become.

GEORGE J. LANKEVICH is Professor Emeritus at the Bronx Community College, CUNY. He has written over thirty books and contributed essays to the *Encyclopedia of New York City* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Cover photo: Flatiron Building, circa 1902.
Courtesy of *New York Times* Pictures.
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