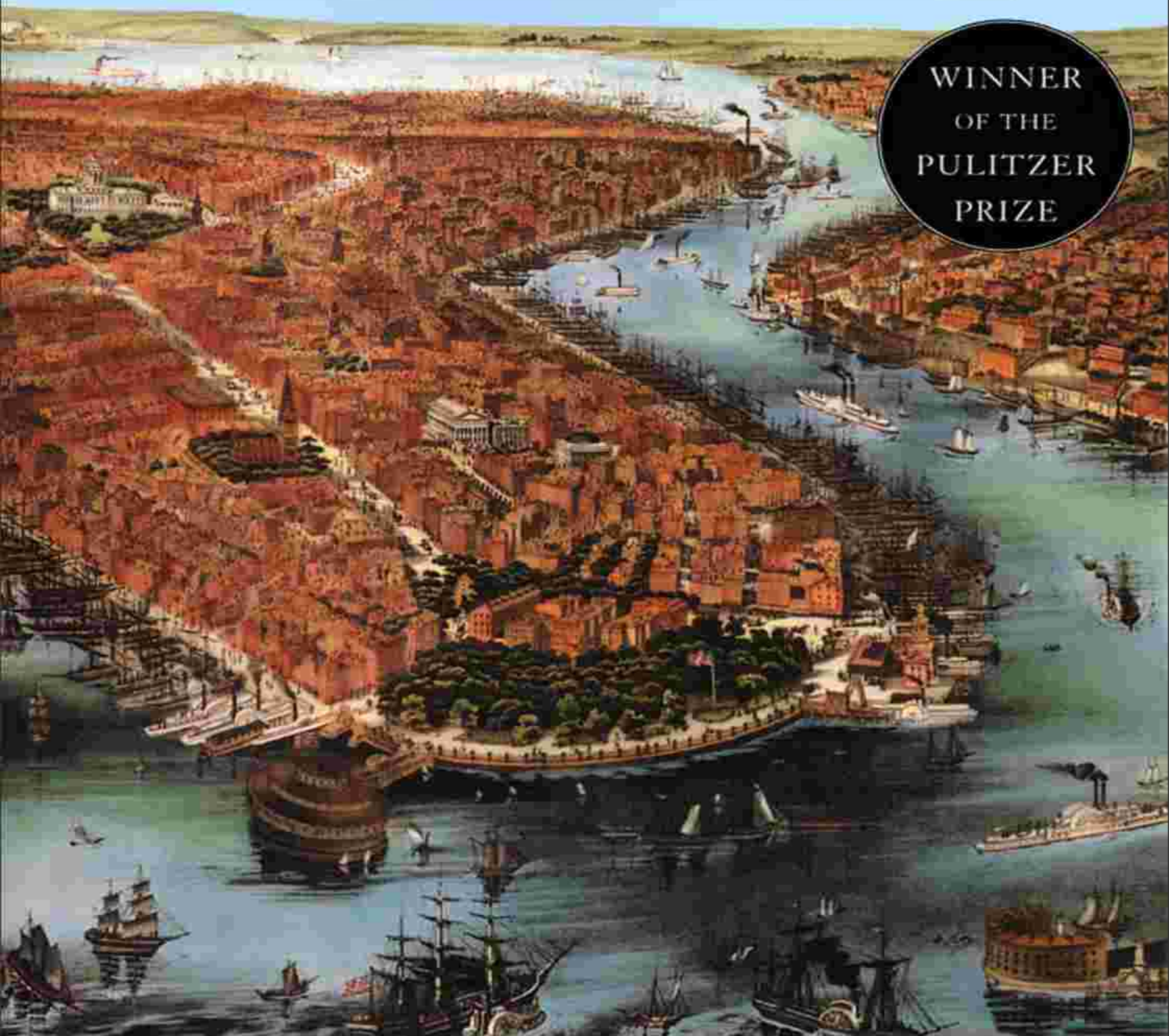


GOTHAM

A HISTORY OF
NEW YORK CITY TO 1898

WINNER
OF THE
PULITZER
PRIZE



EDWIN G. BURROWS & MIKE WALLACE



Contents

Introduction

PART ONE LENAPE COUNTRY AND NEW AMSTERDAM TO 1664

1. First Impressions *The physical setting. From Ice Age to Indian ecosystems. European exploration of the lower Hudson Valley in the sixteenth century.*

2. The Men Who Bought Manhattan *Holland breaks with Spain. The Dutch West India Company, the fur trade, and the founding of New Amsterdam in 1626.*

3. Company Town *New Amsterdam's first twenty years. Race, sex, and trouble with the English. Kieft's War against the Indians.*

4. Stuyvesant *Peter Stuyvesant to the rescue. Law and order. Slavery and the slave trade. Expansion of settlement on Manhattan and Long Island.*

5. A City Lost, a City Gained *Local disaffection with Stuyvesant's rule and the organization of municipal government. Stuyvesant's conflict with Jews, Lutherans, and Quakers. Anglo-Dutch war and the English conquest of 1664.*

PART TWO BRITISH NEW YORK (1664-1783)

6. Empire and Oligarchy *The persistence of Dutch law and folkways under the duke of York's lenient proprietorship. Slow economic and demographic expansion. The Dutch briefly recapture the city.*

7. Jacob Leisler's Rebellion *Taut times in the 1680s. Protestants and Catholics, English and Dutch, new grandees and disaffected commoners. Leisler's uprising as Dutch last stand and "people's Revolution."*

8. Heats and Animosityes *The English anglicize New York: church and state, docks and lots, scavengers and constables, Stadthuis to City Hall. Privateering, piracy, and Captain Kidd.*

Domestic politics and international conflict through Queen Anne's War (1715).

9. In the Kingdom of Sugar The West Indian connection: white gold, black slaves, yellow fever. The town that trade built: shipyards and refineries, barristers and Jack Tars. Germans and Irish, Catholics and Jews.
10. One Body Corporate and Politic? A new charter establishes the colonial city as self-governing corporation. Rules and regulations for dealing with disobedient servants, rebellious slaves, the disorderly poor.
11. Recession, Revival, and Rebellion Trade slump. The Zenger affair, religious revivals, and the "Negro Conspiracy" of 1741.
12. War and Wealth Imperial wars in the 1740s and 1750s as route to riches: provisioners and privateers. Empire and industry. Refined patrician precincts, artisanal wards, municipal improvements.
13. Crises Peace and depression. Hardship after 1763. The British crackdown and local resistance. The Sons of Liberty and Stamp Act rioters. A temporary victory.
14. The Demon of Discord Renewed imperial extractions. Revived opposition to Great Britain, 1766-1775. Popular politics and religion. Whigs and Tories.
15. Revolution Radical patriots take control of the city, 1775-1776. The Battle of Long Island. New York falls to the British.
16. The Gibraltar of North America The military occupation of New York City, 1776-1783. Washington's triumphal return.

PART THREE MERCANTILE TOWN (1783-1843)

17. Phoenix Rebuilding the war-ravaged city. The radical whigs take power. New New Yorkers. The Empress of China.
18. The Revolution Settlement Hamilton negotiates a rapprochement between radical and conservative whigs, securing the revolution. Daughters of Liberty, the reconstruction of slavery.
19. The Grand Federal Procession Adoption and ratification of the Constitution. The great parade of July 1788. Washington's

Inauguration in 1789.

20. Capital City *New York as seat of the national government, 1789-1790. Hamilton, Duer, and the “moneyed men.” From capital city to city of capital. First banks, first stock market, first Wall Street crash.*
21. Revolutions *Foreign and Domestic Impact of the French Revolution. Party struggles in the 1790s. The election of 1800. Prying open the municipal franchise. The Burr-Hamilton duel.*
22. Queen of Commerce, Jack of All Trades *The city’s explosive growth in the 1790s as local merchants take advantage of war in Europe, westward expansion, and the demand for southern cotton. Transformation of the crafts, the end of slavery.*
23. The Road to City Hall *Demise of municipal corporation, rise of city government. Attending to civic crises: water, fever, garbage, fire, poverty, crime. A new City Hall.*
24. Philosophes and Philanthropists *Upper-class life styles in the 1790s and early 1800s. Learned men and cultivated women. Republican benevolence: charity, education, public health, religious instruction.*
25. From Crowd to Class *Artisan communities. Turmoil in the trades. Infidels, evangelicals, and the advent of Tom Paine. Africans and Irishtown. Charlotte Temple and Mother Carey’s bawdy house.*
26. War and Peace *The drift toward a second war with Britain, 1807-1812. Embargo and impressment, destitute Tars and work-relief. Battles over foreign policy. Washington Irving and Diedrich Knickerbocker. The gridding of New York. War: 1812-1815.*
27. The Canal Era *Postwar doldrums give way to the 1820s boom. Erie Canal, steamboat, packet lines, communication, emporium and financial center. Real estate boom and manufacturing surge. The role of government.*
28. The Medici of the Republic *Upper-class religion, fashion, domestic arrangements, invention of Christmas, Lafayette returns, Greeks revive, patricians patronize the arts and architecture (Cooper, Cole, et al.).*

29. Working Quarters Callithumpian bands, plebeian neighborhoods, women and work, sex and saloons, theater and religion, jumping Jim Crow, "running wid de machine."
30. Reforms and Revivals Poverty and pauperism, urban missionaries, schools, reformatories, poorhouses, hospitals, jails.
31. The Press of Democracy Fanny Wrightists, democrats and aristocrats, workers and bosses, birth of the penny press.
32. The Destroying Demon of Debauchery Finney v. Fanny, temperance and Graham crackers, Magdalens and whores.
33. White, Green, and Black Catholics and nativists, drawing the color line, white slaves and smoked Irish, abolitionists and the underground railroad.
34. Rail Boom Railroads, manufacturing, real estate, stock market, housing high and low. Brooklyn: the Second City. Good times, pleasure gardens.
35. Filth, Fever, Water, Fire Garbage, cholera, Croton, and the Great Blaze.
36. The Panic of 1837 Labor wars, equal rights, flour riot. The boom collapses, whys and wherefores.
37. Hard Times Life in depression. Battles over relief and the role of government. Revivals and Romanism. Gangs, police, and P. T. Barnum.

PART FOUR EMPORIUM AND MANUFACTURING CITY (1844-1879)

38. Full Steam Ahead The great boom of the 1840s and 1850s: immigration, foreign trade, manufacturing, railroads, retailing, and finance. The Crystal Palace and the Marble Palace.
39. Manhattan, Ink New York as national media center: telegraph, newspapers, books, writers, art market, photography.
40. Seeing New York Flaneuring the city. Crowds and civilization. Lights and shadows. Mysteries and histories. Poe, Melville, Whitman, and the city as literary subject.
41. Life Above Bleecker The new bourgeoisie repairs to its squares. Uppertendom opulence and middle-class respectability. Sex,

feminism, baseball, religion, and death.

42. City of Immigrants New immigrant and working-class neighborhoods in the 1840s and 1850s. Irish and Germans at work and play. Jews and Catholics. B 'hoys and boxing. The underworld and the world of Mose.
43. Co-op City Plebeian opposition to the new urban order: the Astor Riot, land reform, co-ops, nativism, red republicanism, unionism.
44. Into the Crazy-Loved Dens of Death Upper- and middle-class reformers debate laissez-faire and environmentalism. Welfare, education, health, housing, recreation. Central Park.
45. Feme Decovert The homosocial city. Female discontents and feminist demands. Prostitution exposed. Abortion defended. Free love and fashion. Jenny Lind and commercial culture.
46. Louis Napoleon and Fernando Wood Eyeing Haussmann's Paris. City-building, Tammany style. Municipal politics indicted. Mayor Wood as civic hero. The loss of home rule. Police riots and Dead Rabbits.
47. The Panic of 1857 The boom falters. New Yorkers divide over how to deal with hard times.
48. The House Divides Sectional and racial antagonisms. Republicans, blacks, the struggle for civil rights. John Brown's body.
49. Civil Wars The city's mercantile elite first backs the South, then swings into the Union camp. B'hoys, g'hals, and reformers to war. New York's role in financing and supplying the war effort forges the Shoddy Aristocracy. Carnage and class.
50. The Battle for New York The politics of Emancipation and death. The Draft Riots. The plot to burn New York.
51. Westward, Ho! The merchant community, its historic ties to the South ruptured, turns westward. Railroading sustains boom into the late 1860s and 1870s. Wall Street and the West. The West and Wall Street.
52. Reconstructing New York Radical Republicans seek to reform housing, health, and fire fighting and to win the black franchise.

53. City Building Boss Tweed builds roads, bridges, sewers, rapid transit, and parks. Urban expansion: upper Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. Rapid transit and Brooklyn Bridge. Downtown business districts: finance, rails, communication, Ladies' Mile, and the Radio.
54. Haut Monde and Demimonde The wealthy fashion a culture of extravagant pleasure, modeled on the lifestyle of Parisian aristocrats (plus a dash of Dodge City).
55. The Professional-Managerial Class The middle class expands in size, deepens in self-awareness, elaborates distinctive patterns of domesticity, education, religion, amusement, and politics.
56. Eight Hours for What We Will The laboring classes at work, at home, at play. Resurgent union, radical, and nationalist movements.
57. The New York Commune? The Tweed Ring toppled in early 1870s, for running up a massive municipal debt and for failing, at a time when the Paris Commune has unnerved local elites, to "manage" the Irish working class (as evidenced in the bloody Orange riots along Eighth Avenue).
58. Work or Bread! The boom collapses in 1873, pitching the city into long-lived depression. Working class demands for unemployed assistance, paced by German socialists, are met by grim assertion of order at Tompkins Square, and cutbacks in welfare.

**PART FIVE INDUSTRIAL CENTER AND CORPORATE COMMAND POST
(1880-1898)**

59. Manhattan, Inc. The economy revives. New York facilitates national industrialization, spawns corporate economy. Banks, exchanges, trade, advertising, marketing, communication flourish, housed in ever taller commercial buildings.
60. Bright Lights, Big City T. A. Edison, J. P. Morgan, and the electrification of the city.
61. Châteaux Society New industrial and financial elites gatecrash old mercantile society. Manhattan Medici create lavish upper-class order, for genteel cultural institutions.

62. “The Leeches Must Go!” Henry George’s 1886 mayoralty campaign. Irish nationalists, German socialists, radical priests, and unionists vs. Tammany Hall, Catholic hierarchy, and propertied reformers.
63. The New Immigrants Jews, Italians, Chinese.
64. That’s Entertainment! The Broadway stage, Pulitzer, vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, boxing, baseball, Coney Island. New York generates cultural commodities, hawks them to the nation.
65. Purity Crusade Henry George militancy and burgeoning immigrant quarters rouse middle-class reporters, writers, ministers. Genteel reformer uphold decency, oppose sin—particularly prostitution and saloons.
66. Social Gospel Salvation Army, Crane, Charity Organization Society, the institutional church, YWCA, ethical culture, settlement houses, Howells and Crane, Jacob Riis.
67. Good Government Collapse of the economy in 1893. Genteel and business reformers capture City Hall in 1894. Eastern sound-money forces, headquartered in NYC, beat back western challenge to corporate order in 1896 presidential campaign.
68. Splendid Little War Teddy Roosevelt, José Martí, William Randolph Hearst, and Empire as Rx for depression.
69. Imperial City Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island consolidate—not without acrimony—forming Greater New York.

References

Bibliography

Acknowledgments

Indexes

Introduction

The origin of many a great city lies swaddled in myth and legend.

In Nepal, so the story goes, there was once a mountain valley filled with a turquoise lake, in the middle of which floated a thousand-petaled lotus flower. From it emanated a radiant blue light—a manifestation of the primordial Buddha—and the devout came from near and far to meditate upon the flower. At first they had to live in caves along the shore, but then the sage Manjushri flew down from the north and sliced through the southern valley wall with his flaming sword of wisdom, draining the lake and allowing the city of Kathmandu to rise upon the valley floor.

In Meso-America, according to another urban origin myth, the Aztecs departed their ancestral home and wandered south for centuries, searching for the sign priests had prophesied would reveal their new homeland. Finally, guided by Huitzilopochtli, the Hummingbird God, they reached Lake Texcoco, where, as foretold, an eagle perched on a cactus was devouring a serpent. There the Aztecs built Tenochtitlán, the precursor of Mexico City.

Many European metropolises also traced their beginnings to wandering and divinely guided heroes. Aeneas, Virgil tells us in the *Aeneid*, led a group of Trojan War survivors to the mouth of the Tiber. There he founded Lavinium, parent town of Alba Longa, from whence Romulus and Remus—offspring of the war god Mars—would later go forth to found the city of Rome. Londoners, too, long believed their metropolis had been established by a group of exiled Trojans and called their ur-London Trinovantum (New Troy). Lisbon, according to Portuguese tradition, was begun by Ulysses himself. The citizens of Athens were thus unusual in believing themselves autochthonous—sprung, as Homer claimed in the *Iliad*, from the soil itself. “Other cities, founded on the whim of the dice, are imported from other cities,” the playwright Euripides had one of his characters say pridefully, but Athenians “did not immigrate from some other place; we are born of our earth.”

“THE THRICE RENOWNED AND DELECTABLE CITY OF GOTHAM”

These origin stories celebrated the founding of urban civilizations as epic acts. Each narrative provided its city with a symbolic bedrock, conferring upon the citizenry a sense of legitimacy, purpose, identity. The cities Europeans built in the New World, however, were of too recent a vintage to allow for legendary beginnings, a fact Washington Irving bemoaned when he sat down to write *A History of New York* (1809). Irving regretted that his town was bereft of the imaginative associations “which live like charms and spells about the cities of the old world, binding the heart of the native inhabitant to his home.” Indeed Irving found New Yorkers sadly disconnected from their past; few of his fellow citizens “cared a straw about their ancient Dutch progenitors” or even knew the town had once been called New Amsterdam.

In the very opacity of Manhattan’s origin, however, Irving discerned a literary opportunity. Its annals were open, “like the early and obscure days of ancient Rome, to all the embellishments of heroic fiction.” Irving decided to portray his native city as “having an antiquity thus extending back into the regions of doubt and fable.” He would piece together a saga out of local memories and written records, supplemented with the workings of his lively imagination, and provide New York an epic pedigree, one that ran “from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty.”

In truth, Irving’s *History* is a cheeky mock-epic, a potpourri of fact and fiction that plays knowingly and ironically with myth and history. Its invented narrator, the pedantic and pompous Diedrich Knickerbocker, envies his predecessors “Dan Homer and Dan Virgil” for being able to summon up “waggish deities” to descend to earth and “play their pranks, upon its wondering inhabitants.” So Knickerbocker spins a foundation story of his own, a takeoff on a tale Virgil tells in the *Aeneid* of how Queen Dido tricked Libyans out of the land on which she founded Carthage. The Dutch, Knickerbocker says, struck an “adroit bargain” with the local Indians by asking “for just so much land as a man could cover with his nether garments,” then producing Mynheer Ten Broeck (Mr. Ten Breeches) as the man

whose underwear would be so deployed. The “simple savages,” Knickerbocker goes on, “whose ideas of a man’s nether garments had never expanded beyond the dimensions of a breech-clout, stared with astonishment and dismay as they beheld this bulbous-bottomed burgher peeled like an onion, and breeches after breeches spread forth over the land until they covered the actual site of this venerable city.”

Irving had begun his efforts at coining a lineage for New York in the *Salmagundi* papers (1807), a set of sardonic essays, penned with two equally irreverent and youthful colleagues, in which he affixed the name Gotham to his city. Repeatedly *Salmagundi* referred to Manhattan as the “antient city of Gotham,” or “the wonder loving city of Gotham.” In the context of the pieces—mocking commentaries on the mores of fashionable New Yorkers—the well-known name of Gotham served to underscore their depiction of Manhattan as a city of self-important and foolish people.

Gotham—which in old Anglo-Saxon means “Goats’ Town”—was (and still is) a real village in the English county of Nottinghamshire, not far from Sherwood Forest. But Gotham was also a place of fable, its inhabitants proverbial for their folly. Every era singles out some location as a spawning ground of blockheads—Phrygians were accounted the dimwits of Asia, Thracians the dullards of ancient Greece—and in the Middle Ages Gotham was the butt of jokes about its simpleminded citizens, perhaps because the goat was considered a foolish animal.

The Gothamite canon, which had circulated orally since the twelfth century, was eventually printed up in jest books, the first being *Merie Tales of the mad men of Gotam* (c. 1565). It included such thigh-slappers as the one about the man who rode to market on horseback carrying two heavy bushels of wheat—upon his own shoulders, in order not to burden his mount. Another tells of the man of Gotham who, late with a rent payment to his landlord, tied his purse to a quick-footed hare, which ran away.

Manhattanites would not likely have taken up a nickname so laden with pejorative connotations—even one bestowed by New York’s most famous writer—unless it had redeeming qualities, and indeed

some of the tales cast Gothamites in a far more flattering light. In the early 1200s—went the most famous such story—King John traveled regularly throughout England with a retinue of knights and ladies, and wherever the royal foot touched earth became forever after a public highway (i.e., the King's). One day, John was heading to Nottingham by way of Gotham, and he dispatched a herald to announce his arrival. The herald reported back that the townspeople had refused the king entry, fearing the loss of their best lands. The enraged monarch sent an armed party to wreak vengeance, but the townsfolk had prepared a scheme to turn aside John's wrath. When the knights arrived, they found the inhabitants engaged in various forms of idiotic behavior: pouring water into a bottomless tub; painting green apples red; trying to drown an eel in a pool of water; dragging carts atop barns to shade the wood from the sun; and fencing in a cuckoo. The chortling knights reported back to the monarch that the townsfolk were clearly mad, and John accordingly spared them.

THE
MERRY TALES
OF THE MAD-MEN
OF GOTTAM.

Gathered together by *A. B.* of Physicke Doctor.



Printed at London by *B. A.* and *T. F.* for *Micha[l]*
Sparke, dwelling in *Greene Arbor* at the signe of
the *Blue-Bible*, 1630.

The people of Gotham, according to another of the tales, reasoned that as spring disappears when the cuckoo flies away, capturing the bird would ensure the season's eternal

duration. They therefore corralled a cuckoo—in a roofless fence—and when summer came, it flew away. This image is taken from a 1630 edition of the *Merie Tales*. (General Research, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

This rival variant—that Gothamites merely acted silly to gain their ends—was reflected in the old English saying “More fools pass through Gotham than remain in it” (and echoed in Shakespeare’s depiction of Edgar in *Lear*, “this fellow’s wise enough to play the fool”). It was doubtless this more beguiling—if tricksterish—sense of Gotham that Manhattanites assumed as an acceptable nickname.*

THE \$24 QUESTION

Irving’s pseudo-classical foundation story never passed into popular lore, but a simpler version did, and it too plays with the notion of New York as a city of tricksters. Encapsulated in a sentence, it asserts: the Dutch bought Manhattan from the Indians for twenty-four dollars. For a century and a half now, this story, like all proper myths, has been transmitted from generation to generation, through all the capillaries of official and popular culture—by schoolteachers and stand-up comics alike—and to this day is well known to New Yorkers young and old, and even to many far from the Hudson’s shore.

On its face, the twenty-four-dollar story is not a legend on the order of, or in the same dramatic league as, that of Kathmandu or Rome. Nor is it mythic in the commonplace sense of being readily proved false. Though no deed of sale exists, the event is generally accepted as having taken place. In a 1626 letter, a Dutch merchant reported he had just heard, from ship passengers newly disembarked from New Netherland, that representatives of the West India Company had “purchased the Island Manhattes from the Indians for the value of 60 guilders.” In 1846, using then-current exchange rates, a New York historian converted this figure into twenty-four U.S. dollars. In 1877, another historian asserted (on the basis of no apparent evidence) that the sum had been paid over in “beads, buttons, and other trinkets.”

What gives the story its legendary quality is the host of meanings attached to the event, starting with the notion—smuggled in via the word “purchased”—that the “Island Manhattes” was a piece of property that could be owned and transferred. This was a European conception, and whatever transpired in 1626 was almost certainly understood by the local side in a profoundly different way.

More to the point, the tale is almost always recounted with glee. What tickles the tellers is that the Dutch conned the Indians into handing over—in exchange for a handful of worthless trinkets—what became the most valuable piece of real estate in the world. There’s racial condescension here, with primitive savages dazzled by baubles of civilization. There’s urban conceit as well: New Yorkers love yarns about city slickers scamming rural suckers. The selling of the Brooklyn Bridge to country bumpkins is another staple of local lore. But the twenty-four-dollar hustle stands alone. It is our Primal Deal.

One can also recognize the tale’s mythic dimension in its invulnerability to carping critics and deconstructionists. It’s possible, for example, to raise an eyebrow at the figure’s imperviousness to inflation. If recalculated in current dollars, with the conversion rate pegged to the quantity of gold in the early-seventeenth-century guilder, the sum would come out—so Amsterdam’s Nederlandsche Bank tells us—to \$669.42. Yet, a variable-rate myth being a contradiction in terms, the purchase price remains forever frozen at twenty-four dollars.

Still, even \$669.42 is a bargain basement price by today’s standards, and in contemporary Dutch terms, too, sixty guilders was a trifling sum. In 1628, by way of comparison, the capture of a single Spanish treasure fleet netted fifteen million guilders. This fact cannot be gainsaid by indulging in “what if” financial legerdemain, as do those who suggest that if the Indians had invested their twenty-four dollars at 6 percent interest for three and a half centuries they would now have, before adjusting for inflation, somewhere in the vicinity of sixty-two billion dollars, a figure more in line with current Manhattan real estate prices.

A more cogent objection to the “great steal” scenario notes that the values were in fact incommensurable. When the Dutch “bought” Staten Island, we know, they paid for it in axes, hoes, needles, awls, scissors, knives, and kettles. If similar trade goods were involved in the Manhattan arrangement, then the Dutch were engaged in high-end technology transfer, handing over equipment of enormous usefulness in tasks ranging from clearing land to drilling wampum.

More telling still, it appears from a later repurchase agreement that the people who made the original arrangement didn’t live in Manhattan and so were in no position to offer up even use-rights or visiting privileges. Perhaps it was the credulous Europeans who got skinned.

But once again mere facts are beside the point. The story, like all good myths, has easily resisted such assaults because it ratifies the popular conviction that deal driving and sharp practice and moneymaking and real estate lie somewhere near the core of New York’s genetic material.

The twenty-four-dollar story is also mythically akin to Aztec and Roman fables in bestowing on New York a fundamental legitimacy. It proclaims a city whose acquisition was based not on conquest but on contract. As another local historian put it in 1898: “It was an honest, honorable transaction worthily inaugurating the trade and traffic of America’s mercantile and financial capital; satisfying the instincts of justice and equality in the savage breast.”

Here, quite apart from the underlying implication that history didn’t begin until the Europeans arrived, the myth glosses over uncomfortable realities. It is true and important that in North America the Dutch preferred purchase to pillage. But they were prompted less by ethical niceties than by realistic appraisals of the Indians’ superior strength and their indispensability as trade partners. The Dutch, however, were no shrinking tulips: when their power waxed and their need waned, they would engage in ferocious wars of conquest, and Indian heads would roll—quite literally—down Bowling Green.

Finally, however, as is usually the case with myths and legends, the notion that New York is rooted in a commercial transaction gets at a deeper kind of truth.

New York would not become a warrior city, living by raids on its hinterland. Even when centuries later it emerged as an imperial center, it was never a military stronghold. True, the most prominent building in the Dutch town was a fort. But it was never much of one—pigs rooted at its foundations and cows wandered in and out of its crumbling walls—and the Netherlanders never assembled here the kind of military resources they deployed elsewhere in their empire. For all their occasional bellicosity, the Dutch were a trading people, and their town would ever after bear the imprint of its creators.

Nor would New York become an urban theocracy, a citadel of priests. No shrines or temples were erected to which swarms of pilgrims flocked to pay religious tribute or receive inspiration. Despite the formidable number of churches established here, Mammon ruled, not God.

Nor would New York become a great governmental hub, with grand baroque avenues radiating out from imposing seats of state power. There was no regal court to dispense largesse to all comers or lure peasants to bask in its splendors. No monarch founded seats of learning so preeminent as to attract truth-seekers from the ends of the earth. Its civic chieftains would be merchants, bankers, landlords, lawyers; its mightiest buildings, office towers.

As the twenty-four-dollar saga suggests, New York would become a city of deal-makers, a city of commerce, a City of Capital. This book will trace the nature and consequences of that development.

POINTS OF VIEW

We are going to present New York's story as a narrative. Our book will journey along through time, taking each moment on its own terms, respecting its uniqueness. We will adopt the perspective of contemporaries as we relate their experiences, remaining mostly in their "now." Yet, like all histories, *Gotham* is not the simple reflection of an underlying reality, but a construction. The narrative embodies our selections, our silences. It is organized around patterns we discern amid the swirl of events.

So what's our take, our angle, our shtick? Do we concentrate on a particular slice of the city's story? Is this primarily an economic history? Social? Cultural? Intellectual? Political? In truth it's all of the above, or, more precisely, it's about making connections between aspects of municipal life that are usually, of necessity, best studied in isolation. This book is only possible because in recent decades a host of scholars has investigated afresh every imaginable aspect of New York's history: sex and sewer systems, finance and architecture, immigration and politics, poetry and crime. Our intention is to suture these partial stories together and present a picture of urban life as a rounded whole, something that probably only novelists can really do well but that nevertheless seems a goal worth aspiring to.

Do we then have a central argument that has allowed us to reduce New York's mammoth story—especially as defined in such an all-encompassing fashion—to manageable (if hefty) proportions? In fact, no overarching plot line or tidy thesis unfolds incrementally throughout this book; the history of New York is not reducible to a sound bite or bumper sticker. Every page, however, does bear the mark of our central conviction: that it is impossible to understand the history of New York City by looking only at the history of New York City, by focusing, that is, exclusively on events that transpired within the boundaries of what are now its five boroughs. It's hard to understand any place in isolation but utterly hopeless here, because linkages—connections to the wider world—have been key to the city's development.

We do not believe that municipal history was determined from the outside. Rather our claim is that external events provided the context within which the men and women of New York, in conflict and compromise, repeatedly reshaped their city. It seems useful, however, to summarize at the outset those framing forces we think had the greatest impact on local actors. Those inclined to get on with the narrative can turn immediately to chapter i, which takes up the prehistory of the Primal Deal—recounting Europeans' expansion into the New York area and chronicling their fateful intersection with local peoples. But for those who would prefer to reconnoiter the vast

forest that lies ahead before plunging off into its trees, we offer in the remainder of this introduction a sketch of some of our principal arguments.

EDGE TO CENTER

At our highest level of analysis, we chart the ways New York's development has been crucially shaped by its shifting position in an evolving global economy.

From its beginnings as a constellation of Indian communities encamped around the mouth of the Hudson River, the area was pulled into the imperial world system Europeans had begun fashioning in the aftermath of Columbus's voyages. Founded as a trading post on the periphery of a Dutch mercantile empire, New Amsterdam lay at the outermost edge of a nascent web of international relationships. It remained a relatively inconsequential backwater, to which its Dutch masters paid but minimal attention, as they had far greater interest in harvesting the profits available in Asia (spices), Africa (slaves), and South America (sugar).

Once forcibly appended to the rising British Empire, however, New York assumed a more prominent role in the global scheme of things. It became a vital seaport supplying agricultural products to England's star colonial performers—the Caribbean sugar islands—while also serving the English as a strategic base for hemispheric military operations against the French, the latest entrants in the imperial sweepstakes.

After the American Revolution, New York emerged as the fledgling nation's premier linkage point between industrializing Europe and its North American agricultural hinterland. The city adroitly positioned itself with respect to three of the most dynamic regions of the nineteenth century global economy—England's manufacturing midlands, the cotton-producing slave South, and the agricultural Midwest—and it prospered by shipping cotton and wheat east while funneling labor, capital, manufactured and cultural goods west.

After the Civil War, the metropolis became the principal facilitator of America's own industrialization and imperial (westward)

expansion. Capital flowed through and from its great banking houses and stock exchanges to western rails, mines, land, and factories; it became the preeminent portal for immigrant laborers; and it exported the country's industrial commodities as well as its traditional agricultural ones.

By century's end, New York had gained the ability to direct, not just channel, America's industrialization. Financiers like J. P. Morgan established nationwide corporations and housed them in the city, making Manhattan the country's corporate headquarters. When World War I ended European hegemony, and the United States became a creditor nation, New York began to vie with London as fulcrum of the global economy.

It finally captured that position after World War II when the United States emerged as a superpower. In subsequent decades, when American corporations and banks expanded overseas, New York became headquarters for the new multinational economy; and the arrival of the United Nations made New York a global political capital as well as a financial one. When European and Japanese competitors revived in the latter decades of the twentieth century, the emergence of a more decentered transnational capitalism challenged New York's former preeminence, but it remained most prominent among the handful of world cities directing the workings of the global capitalist order.

Since its inception, therefore, New York has been a nodal point on the global grid of an international economy, a vital conduit for flows of people, money, commodities, cultures, and information. Its citizens were always well aware of this, and in the intermittent jubilees we call Festivals of Connection, they hailed each development—ratification of the Constitution, opening of the Erie Canal, laying of the Atlantic Cable, Lindbergh's solo flight to Paris—that wove the city tighter into the networks of trade and communication on which its livelihood depended.

More than simply a point of confluence, however, New York was a place of ever-increasing potency in global affairs, and as the United States evolved from colony to empire, the city migrated from the edge to the center of the world.

CITY AND COUNTRY

In its relations with the country, New York traveled a more bell-shaped trajectory.

When still a Dutch town, tiny New Amsterdam was as peripheral to the continent as it was to the planet, and it affected relatively few people beyond the Indians with whom it traded or warred. When integrated into England's empire, its impact grew as it drew an expanding hinterland into widening networks of regional and international commerce. New York became the political capital of the new nation after the Revolution but soon lost that status, in part because southern gentry were leery of leaving affairs of state in the ambit of northern merchants. Departure of the Federal City meant that New York would never become the urban colossus of the United States, the way London was for England, or Paris was for France.

Though no longer de jure capital, New York emerged as de facto capital over the course of the nineteenth century, its centrality reflected in the accepted custom of identifying points in its landscape with nationwide functions. Wall Street supplied the country with capital. Ellis Island channeled its labor. Fifth Avenue set its social trends. Madison Avenue advertised its products. Broadway (along with Times Square and Coney Island) entertained it. Its City Hall, as befit an unofficial capitol, welcomed heroes and heroines with keys and parades and naval flotillas, and paid farewell respects to national leaders by organizing processions along Manhattan's black-draped streets. New York, moreover, was the nation's premier source for news and opinion; like a magnet, it attracted those seeking cosmopolitan freedom; and as the biggest city of the biggest state it exercised extraordinary influence in national politics.

Hegemony generated ambivalence. The country envied and emulated the city, but feared and resented it too. Farmers, planters, and industrialists needed its capital but disliked their indebted and dependent status. New York's connections to Europe gave it a glamorous sheen but made it seem the agent of imperial powers and host to an "alien" population that spawned political machines, organized crime, labor unions, anarchists, socialists, Communists,

and birth controllers. In the 1920s, relations between New York and its national hinterland came to a rancorous boil, and Governor Al Smith's defeat in 1928 stemmed in part from widespread repudiation of his metropolis.

With Franklin Roosevelt's accession to the presidency, however, New York's national influence expanded again. Under his aegis, unionists, settlement workers, professors, and politicians flocked to Washington, winning a tremendous expansion of federal power to deal with the Depression (along lines pioneered in the city). Ironically, the New Dealers' success undermined their city's position. Strengthening Washington saved New York from catastrophe but also directed a huge and transforming flow of resources to the West and South, converting former dependencies into regional rivals—a process accelerated by the Second World War.

The power of the federal state was enhanced yet again during the Cold War, in part at the behest of a New York-based foreign policy elite. In terms of U.S. relations with the world, Washington and New York emerged as partners: the city on the Hudson the multinational empire's commercial center, the city on the Potomac its military core. In domestic matters, however, no such parity existed. Washington commanded the heightened federal taxing power; New York was just another hard-pressed metropolis. Cold War Washington, moreover, speeded the transfer of wealth from Northeast to Sunbelt, from cities to suburbs. The arms economy bypassed the demilitarized city, industrial jobs fled to other states, and other harbors undercut the aging port. Population shifts diminished New York State's power in federal councils. The consequences for the city became evident in the urban crises of the 1960s, the so-called fiscal crisis of the 1970s ("Ford to City: Drop Dead"), and the 1980s ascendancy to national power of suburban and Sunbelt/Gunbelt constituencies.

MUNICIPAL REMAKINGS

As the city shifted position and function in global and national arenas, the ways in which its citizens went about earning their livings and generating wealth for collective endeavors underwent repeated rearrangement.

Indian peoples lived off the bounty of the harbor, fields, and hills—fishing, farming, and hunting. The Dutch supported themselves and developed a rudimentary infrastructure chiefly by trading with the Indians for beavers (a rodent duly honored in the city's seal). The English-era merchants who oversaw New York's transformation into a significant seaport accumulated their profits from the West Indian trade—as supplemented by privateering, slaving, fencing pirate loot, and provisioning British forays against the French. These enterprises in turn spawned a subsidiary artisanal sector, which manufactured the tools of trade (ships, barrels) and processed raw materials (sugar, hides).

From the Revolution to the Civil War, New York remained preeminently a seaport, as did the adjacent city of Brooklyn, but a host of associated enterprises sprang up to accommodate and enhance the city's mercantile outreach. New Yorkers built canals and railroads; established banks, insurance companies, and a stock market; developed means of communication (newspapers, telegraph); fostered new forms of wholesale and retail merchandising (auction houses, department stores); and augmented their capacity for hosting and entertaining (hotels, restaurants, theaters). Manufacturing capacity surged as entrepreneurs and workers churned out consumer goods for the new markets tapped and created by an expanding commercial network, and New York became the nation's largest manufacturing center. An ever-widening stream of immigrants provided the labor power for all these activities and, in swelling the internal market, further increased demand for clothing, food, housing, and popular amusements.

Between the 1870s and the 1940s, New York's mercantile sector underwent relative decline. The financial sector, meanwhile, expanded to underwrite continental industrialization and western expansion. A business services sector emerged to manage the new corporate economy and merchandise its products. The industrial sector burgeoned, fueled by new immigrants. And the entertainment industry emerged as an independent powerhouse, with New Yorkers hawking plays, vaudeville acts, books, magazines, newspapers, sheet music, records, movies, and radio shows to the nation.

V-E Day ushered in a brief Augustan age when New York was simultaneously major port, largest manufactory, financial center, headquarters of a corporate sector rapidly expanding to multinational dimensions, and vortex of cultural production. But World War I's convoys proved the seaport's last hurrah, and though its loss was partially counterbalanced by expanded air traffic, the growth of alternative hubs—notably West Coast ports attuned to Pacific Rim trade—undermined its gateway status. Manufacturing, which had begun to slip away into the national hinterland, now scattered across the globe, its departure offset only in part by the expansion of local government services. The culture industry remained potent, though regional competitors (and federal funding) continued to undermine its former predominance. Pieces of the corporate command post were dismantled and reassembled in outer suburbs, leaving finance, once an inconsequential component of the city's economy, as its central and precarious prop.

OSCILLATING RHYTHMS

These large-scale municipal remakings provide our book its macrostructure, its division into parts. There are five such parts in this volume, the first two of which—"Lenape Country and New Amsterdam to 1664" and "British New York (1664-1783)"—hinge on the establishment or loss of imperial power. The remaining parts encompass eras marked by relatively coherent and stable macroeconomies, with transitions between them marked, provoked, or accelerated by war, economic crisis, and/or internal conflict. These eras include "Mercantile Town (1783-1843)," "Emporium and Manufacturing City (1844-1879)," and "Industrial Center and Corporate Command Post (1880-1898)." The last of these closes out this volume with an account of the consolidation of once separate cities and townships into Greater New York, whose hundredth anniversary we marked in 1998.

When blocking out the city's centuries-long story as a whole, it is these grand epochs of municipal development that command our attention. But when telling New York's story on a year-by-year basis, a more sinuous rhythm demands consideration: the alternation of

peaks of prosperity with troughs of hard times that dominated the experience of everyday life.

When the city was still subordinate to the interests of either Holland or Great Britain, the pattern of ups and downs was shaped primarily by imperial decisions. Irving's brief Dutch "dynasty" had time for only one such cycle. In the twenty years preceding the mid-1640s, while the Dutch empire prospered, New Netherland's fortunes ebbed; in the twenty subsequent years, when the empire declined, the town's situation improved. Under the subsequent century of English rule, imperial dynamics of war and trade sustained an undulating cadence of abundance and adversity.

It was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, when imbricated in the U.S. nation-state and the world capitalist economy, that New York commenced its characteristic roller-coaster ride in earnest, now surging to heights of affluence, now plunging into sloughs of depression. The city first rose to national preeminence in the wartime trade boom of the Napoleonic nineties; then its ascent was punctured by embargo and peace. The canal era boom of the 1820s and 1830s raced to culmination and crisis in 1837, then tumbled into a seven-year depression. The rail-spurred prosperity of 1844-57 was interrupted by the Panic of 1857, reignited by the Civil War, then snuffed out by the Panic of 1873, which inaugurated a lengthy period of hard times.

Industrialization-based resurgence in the 1880s gave way to depression in the 1890s. Corporate consolidation and war with Spain ushered in prosperity in the 1900s, which subsided after the Panic of 1907. World War I and a consumer goods revolution led to the 1920s boom, which collapsed into the 1930s depression. Lifted again by the Second World War, the city flourished during the long postwar boom, until laid low by the mid-1970s recession. A 1980s quasi-boom buckled in 1987, making way for the stagnant early 1990s and the brisker but still problematic *fin de siècle*.

These cycles created characteristic and remarkably similar cultures of boom and bust. The jaunty and expansive 1830s, 1850s, 1900s, 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s (times of comparably frenetic construction and high living in the city) gave way to the depressed

1840s, 1870s, 1890s, 1930s, and 1970s (periods marked by unemployment, homelessness, and contentious protest movements).

This pattern inscribed itself in the city's skyline and streetscape. In boom times, speculative capital cascaded into real estate, generating frenzied building sprees. When the fever broke, office and housing construction halted abruptly. By the time the economy regathered its energies, a new generation of promoters and architects had come along, new cultural fashions were in vogue, new technologies and construction practices had materialized, and the latest spurt of building bore little resemblance to its predecessor. This spasmodic evolution of New York's spatial geography allows us to "read" the cityscape, rather as archaeologists decipher stacked layers of earth, each of which holds artifacts of successive eras. Here, remnants of built environment offer clues to New York's periodization.

Working from the bottom up, we find traces of New Amsterdam's prosperous upswing in the archaeological remains of the gabled Stadt Huys (the Dutch City Hall) uncovered beneath Pearl Street, visible now through a Plexiglassed hole in the ground. Nearby Fraunces Tavern, a conjectural reconstruction of the De Lancey family's urban town house, recalls a heyday of England's mid-eighteenth-century empire. Federal mansions betoken 1790s affluence. The upsurge of the 1830s is immortalized in Wall Street Greek temples like the Merchants' Exchange and Federal Hall, and that of the 1850s lives on in Italianate mansions like the Salmagundi Club and Litchfield Villa. Turn-of-the-century flush times are traceable in neo-Roman artifacts like the New York Stock Exchange, and remains of the 1920s boom include exuberant art deco skyscrapers like the Chrysler Building. The post-Second World War surge is invoked in modernist glass boxes, from modest Miesian beginnings to berserk apotheosis at the World Trade Center, built just before the crash of the mid-1970s. And the totems bequeathed by the economic upsurge of the 1980s are postmodernist structures ranging from the World Financial Center to AT&T's (now Sony's) jocular pink Chippendale tower.

PAST AS PROLOGUE

It is indeed remarkable that so many tangible traces of earlier eras remain, given that few structures in New York were ever hallowed by mere age. As the city's economy shifted from commercial to industrial to corporate, older buildings were exuberantly torn down to make way for newer ones—higher, more fashionable, more convenient, more profitable—and these ruthless remakings gave the cityscape a chameleon-like, quicksilver quality that matched the mutability of its economy, its populace, and its position on the planet.

The city's well-merited reputation as a perpetual work-in-progress helps explain why from Washington Irving's day New Yorkers were famous for being uninterested in their own past. "New York is notoriously the largest and least loved of any of our great cities," wrote *Harper's Monthly* in 1856. "Why should it be loved as a city? It is never the same city for a dozen years together. A man born in New York forty years ago finds nothing, absolutely nothing, of the New York he knew."

One of our ongoing avenues of inquiry follows New Yorkers as they slowly developed the conviction that their past was worth knowing, even worth preserving. Indeed we believe there is a greater degree of interest in Gotham's history today than was ever the case before. We hope to nourish this ripening historical sensibility by telling the city's story in a spirited way—a relatively easy task given that it's intrinsically dazzling, a claim we think transcends both the fond boasting of all historians for their subject and the legendary conceitedness of New Yorkers (we notorious braggarts).

More difficult, perhaps, because it goes against the American ahistorical grain, we also hope to show that temporal analysis can be as useful as it is entertaining, that it can be helpful for New Yorkers (and Americans) to better situate themselves in time. This does not mean adopting the narrow presentism that runs through some of the narratives advanced by present-day commentators—sagas of rise and dirges of decline aimed at providing a pedigree for their purveyors' optimistic or pessimistic takes on the state of the contemporary city.

Optimists portray New York as a magnificent and never-better metropolis. They point to the inrush of new immigrants, no longer

streaming past the Statue in the harbor but airlifting their way into Kennedy, as evidence that much of the world sees New York as a place of opportunity, a mecca for the talented and ambitious. The newcomers' belief that they can survive and prosper (say the optimists) rests on solid foundations. Wall Street's enormous corporate and financial sector churns out professional and business services jobs. New York hosts the nation's publishing, advertising, fashion, design, and network television industries. Its museums, concert halls, playhouses, nightclubs, and festivals draw vast numbers of tourists, who in turn help sustain an enormous array of restaurants and hotels. Some see a high-tech, Silicon Alley, bio-medical future lying just around the corner.

New housing blooms amid the outer borough ruins, these boosters note, and new capital improvements head toward completion. Refurbished subways are cleaner and swifter. Crime is down dramatically. The City University of New York, though under attack, provides opportunities for the newly arrived and the less advantaged, while the city's tradition of social caring sustains a network of public support services, albeit one in parlous condition. Despite cultural antagonisms, moreover, the city remains a model of rough-hewn cosmopolitanism and multicultural tolerance, with an astonishing mix of peoples living side by side in reasonable harmony. Indeed the incessant interplay among its heterogeneous citizens makes New York a font of creative human energy, an unsurpassed site for personal development, a stupendous collective human accomplishment, and the glorious, glamorous, greatest city in the world.

Pessimists reject this cheery portrait and fashion from the shards of morning headlines and nightly newscasts a grim mosaic of urban decay. They point to the homeless who line up at soup kitchens, camp out in parks or under bridges until driven off by police, or burrow into subterranean warrens: subway tunnels, abandoned railway shafts, the roots of skyscrapers. A vast army of the unemployed poor subsists on welfare, living in squalid ex-hotels, rat-ridden tenements, bleak housing projects. Infant mortality rates in parts of the city match, even surpass, those of "underdeveloped"

countries. And its vaunted opportunities are, as they long have been, largely limited to those with the means to seize them. “You can live as many lives in New York as you have money to pay for,” ran a contemporary judgment in *The Destruction of Gotham*, an apocalyptic novel of 1886, which also recorded the maxim that the “very first of the Ten Commandments of New York [is]: ‘THOU SHALT NOT BE POOR!’”

Perched one precarious step above these nether ranks are millions more working poor—the sporadically or marginally employed who cobble together a living from minimum-wage jobs that might vanish in an instant—for jobs, the city’s lifeblood, have been draining away for decades. Hundreds of thousands of manufacturing slots, many of them unionized and decently paid, have vanished since the 1960s (though it is true that a new sweatshop sector is busy being reborn, with immigrants once again serving as entrepreneurs and exploited workforce, a dubious achievement). Many corporate headquarters have departed, downsized, or dispatched their back offices elsewhere, and the financial sector remains all too vulnerable to the next downturn. Giant department stores have gone bankrupt, and while mailed superstores replenish some retail positions they (together with soaring commercial rents) knock out mom-and-pop shops. The seaport is long gone to Jersey—only rotted wharves and tombstone pilings recall the once flourishing waterfront—and rusted railyards have been converted to high-priced condos, with airport and truck traffic picking up only some of the slack.

Despite recent improvements, pessimists note, a once magnificent infrastructure continues to crumble. Ancient water tunnels explode, flooding brownstones, drowning avenues, shorting out decrepit subway lines. Tired bridges and eroded highways close repeatedly for repairs. Pitted streets clog with traffic. JFK has been voted the world’s worst airport. Garbage has piled to mountainous heights in Staten Island. More oil lies beneath the streets of Brooklyn than was spilled by the *Exxon Valdez*. For all the brave new housing efforts, block after Bronx block remains lined with shuttered factories and abandoned apartment houses, while the tendrils of a long-stymied nature creep through the rubble of burned-out buildings.

Those who present such stark readings of New York's present and future often supply matching versions of the past. Those convinced of New York's decline recall its glory days, the better to indulge in rueful nostalgia or stoke a bitter anger at what has come to pass. They see the past as a reverse *Guinness Book of Records*—a catalog of fabulous accomplishments now, alas, never to be surpassed. Those more sanguine about New York's future assemble an indictment of the bad old days. They seize on catastrophes past: the British invasion and torching of the town; the great fever and cholera plagues, when coffin carts rattled through the streets and rats swam across the East River to gnaw the corpses piled high on Blackwell's Island; the horrific draft riots when African-American New Yorkers were lynched from lamp poles and armies bivouacked in Gramercy Park; the tenement squalor and sweatshop misery; the horrors of the Great Depression and myriad littler ones. Such a legacy, they argue, renders contemporary misfortunes modest by comparison.

We strongly endorse the idea of New Yorkers' turning to the past for perspective on their present—comparing different eras can bring balance to contemporary judgments—but *Gotham* is not about ransacking the past for evidence of Spenglerian decline or Panglossian progress. Straight-line scenarios, whether optimistic or pessimistic, usually pose false questions and offer false alternatives. Our hope, rather, is that a history that respects the complexity and contingency of human affairs can offer well-grounded insights into our current situation.

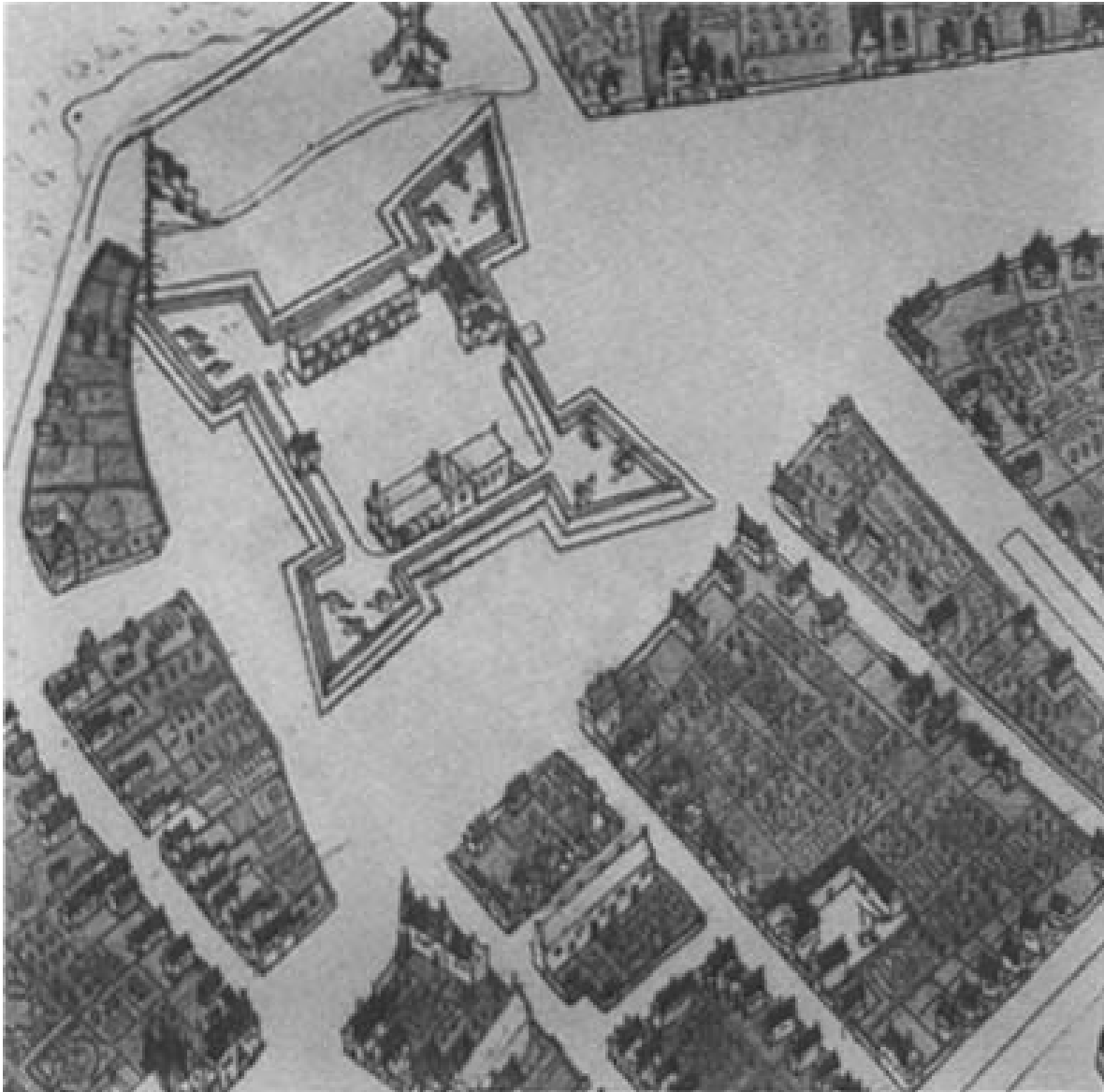
We believe that the world we've inherited has an immense momentum; that actions taken in the past have bequeathed us the mix of constraints and possibilities within which we act today; that the stage onto which each generation walks has already been set, key characters introduced, major plots set in motion, and that while the next act has not been written, it's likely to follow on, in undetermined ways, from the previous action. This is *not* to say that history repeats itself. Time is not a carousel on which we might, next time round, snatch the brass ring by being better prepared. Rather we see the past as flowing powerfully through the present and think

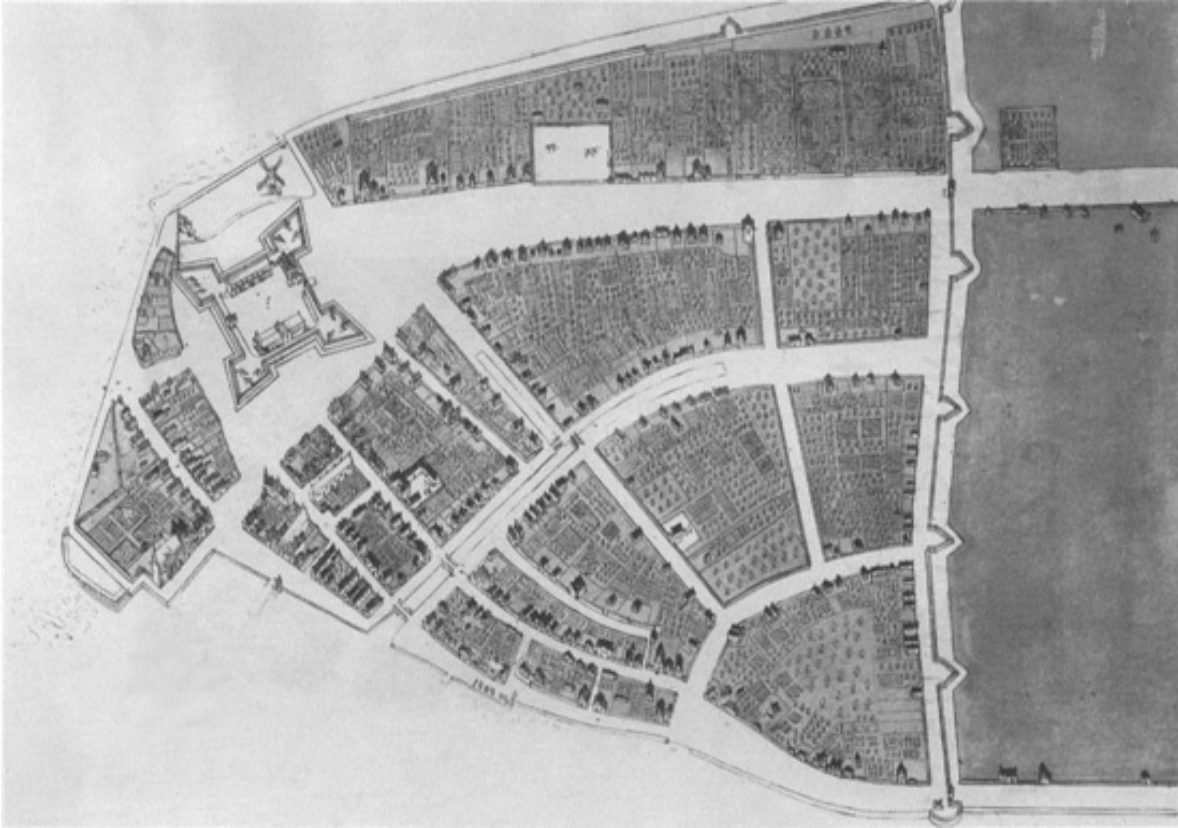
that charting historical currents can enhance our ability to navigate them.

We are historians, not mythmakers, but like Washington Irving we appreciate the power of the past and its centrality to the life of a place, and our choice of title represents a tip of the hat to his endeavor. Our Gotham is not Irving's, but like Diedrich Knickerbocker we think that the more we know about the city's past the more we will care about its future. We therefore dedicate this book to the citizens of New York City and to the many historians who have labored to tell its story.

Now, on with the show.

PART ONE
LENAPE COUNTRY AND NEW AMSTERDAM TO
1664





The Castello Plan of New Amsterdam, c. 1660. (I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

First Impressions

O this is Eden!” exulted the Dutch poet Jacob Steendam. A “terrestrial *Canaan*” echoed the English essayist Daniel Denton, “where the Land floweth with milk and honey.”

That was the usual reaction of the Europeans who began to settle the lower Hudson Valley and the islands of New York’s harbor, three and a half centuries ago. Nowhere else in North America would the beauty and abundance of the physical environment evoke such consistently extravagant praise.

Initially it was what Denton called the “sweetness of the Air” that bewitched explorers and travelers. “Dry, sweet, and healthy,” Adriaen van der Donck wrote. “Sweet and fresh,” the missionary Jaspas Danckaerts noted in his journal as his ship came up past Sandy Hook. “Much like that of the best parts of France,” declared the Rev. John Miller. What could produce such air, or where it came from, was the subject of extensive speculation. Miller traced it to the surrounding “hilly, woody Country, full of Lakes and great Vallies, which receptacles are the Nurseries, Forges and Bellows of the Air, which they first suck in and contract, then discharge and ventilate with a fiercer dilation.” Denton, too, emphasized the region’s sweeping woods and fields, “curiously bedecked with Roses, and an innumerable multitude of delightful Flowers” whose fragrance could be detected far out at sea. The effect was magical, and there was speculation that it might cure colds, consumption, and other respiratory ailments.

But it was the miraculous size and quantity and variety of things—the sheer prodigality of life—that left the most lasting impression. Travelers spoke of vast meadows of grass “as high as a mans middle” and forests with towering stands of walnut, cedar, chestnut, maple, and oak. Orchards bore apples of incomparable sweetness and “pears larger than a fist.” Every spring the hills and fields were dyed red with ripening strawberries, and so many birds filled the woods “that men can scarcely go through them for the whistling, the

noise, and the chattering.” Boats crossing the bay were escorted by schools of playful whales, seals, and porpoises. Twelve-inch oysters and six-foot lobsters crowded offshore waters, and so many fish thrived in streams and ponds that they could be taken by hand. Woods and tidal marshlands teemed with bears, wolves, foxes, raccoons, otters, beavers, quail, partridge, forty-pound wild turkeys, doves “so numerous that the light can hardly be discerned where they fly,” and countless deer “feeding, or gamboling or resting in the shades in full view.” Wild swans were so plentiful “that the bays and shores where they resort appear as if they were dressed in white drapery.” Blackbirds roosted together in such numbers that one hunter killed 170 with a single shot; another bagged eleven sixteen-pound gray geese in the same way. “There are some persons who imagine that the animals of the country will be destroyed in time,” mused Van der Donck, “but this is an unnecessary anxiety.”

IMMIGRANT ICE

The formation of this lush ecosystem had begun seventy-five thousand years earlier, when packs of glaciers crept down from Labrador into the almost featureless plain that then stretched east of the Allegheny Mountains to the Atlantic, and halted in the middle of modern New York City. Approximately fifty thousand years ago, a sheet of ice a thousand feet thick lay across the area. Its immense weight, and the continual flow of ice from the north, crushed and flayed the land beneath, depressing riverbeds, scooping out deep valleys, and dragging along boulders, gravel, sand, and clay like a huge conveyor belt. In parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, it peeled away everything above the bedrock—layers of gneiss, marble, and schist, five hundred million years old, that now lie naked to the passing eye, scarred and battered by their ordeal. So much of the earth’s water was captured in this and other ice sheets that the sea level fell three hundred feet or more and the shoreline bulged out a hundred miles. Arctic gusts blew off its face across a desolate tundra, inhabited only by mosses and lichens, that reached as far south as Philadelphia.

About seventeen thousand years ago, the climate of the northern hemisphere began to warm. As the ice sheet melted back, the line of

its furthest advance was marked by a terminal moraine—the still-visible ridge of glacial debris that arcs down from northern Queens through places named Jamaica Hills, Highland Park, Crown Heights, and Bay Ridge (which in turn overlook such neighborhoods as Flatbush and Flatlands, settled on the ice sheet's sandy outwash plain). Extending across to the south side of Staten Island, the moraine reaches its maximum elevation of 410 feet at Todt Hill (the highest natural point on the Atlantic seaboard south of Maine), then turns north across New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Trapped behind the moraine, runoff from the retreating ice pooled into icy lakes that drowned the region for several thousand years before their waters broke through a mile-wide gap, now called the Narrows, and drained off toward the ocean. Scrubby pines and birches took root in the thawing tundra, then gave way, perhaps twelve thousand years ago, to stands of spruce and fir, interspersed with open meadows. Woolly mammoths, mastodons, bison, musk oxen, bears, sloths, giant beavers, caribou, sabertoothed tigers, and other large animals moved in. Trailing behind them came small bands of nomadic hunters—the region's first human occupants—who stalked game for a couple of thousand years, leaving behind only flint spear points and heaps of bones as evidence of their presence.

The hunters left nine thousand years ago, when the effects of continued climatic warming drove away the big beasts on which they depended. Hardwood forests of oak, chestnut, and hickory took over from the pines and spruce. Fed by the melting ice packs, the ocean rose again, inundating coastal lowlands and pouring back through the Narrows, creating the commodious Upper Bay that would serve as the harbor of New York. In the glacially scoured terrain north of the terminal moraine, it sculpted a fantastic topography of new islands, fjords, inlets, tidal marshes, and peninsulas. The Hudson River gorge was transformed into a broad estuary, while drowned valleys became Long Island Sound, the Harlem River, the East River, and Arthur Kill. Below the Narrows, protecting the Upper Bay from the Atlantic Ocean, sprawled the great Lower Bay—a hundred-square-mile watery expanse whose entrance was guarded by

Rockaway Peninsula, a barrier beach on the Queens shore of Long Island, and by Sandy Hook, a long sandspit that jutted up from New Jersey. A broad underwater sandbar running between Sandy Hook and Coney Island, pierced here and there by navigable channels, presented arriving mariners with the only natural obstacle to the 770 miles of waterfront that lay beyond.

WHERE THE LENAPES DWELL

About sixty-five hundred years ago, this altered environment attracted a second generation of human residents. The newcomers were small-game hunters and foragers who subsisted on a diet of deer, wild turkey, fish, shellfish, nuts, and berries. Although they possessed a limited repertoire of tools, their campsites may have been occupied by as many as two hundred people at a time. Roughly twenty-five hundred years ago, they discovered the use of the bow and arrow, learned to make pottery, and started to cultivate squash, sunflowers, and possibly tobacco. Later, about a thousand years ago, they may also have begun to plant beans and maize. These changes supported larger populations. By the time Europeans appeared on the scene, a mere five hundred years ago, what is now New York City had as many as fifteen thousand inhabitants—estimates vary widely—with perhaps another thirty to fifty thousand in the adjacent parts of New Jersey, Connecticut, Westchester County, and Long Island. Most spoke Munsee, a dialect of the Delaware language in which their name for themselves was Lenape —“Men” or “People.” Their land was Lenapehoking—“where the Lenapes dwell.”

The Lenapes comprised a dozen-odd groups living between eastern Connecticut and central New Jersey. To the west were the Raritans (of Staten Island and Raritan Bay), the Hackensacks (of New Jersey’s Hackensack and Raritan river valleys), the Tappans (northern New Jersey), and the Rechgawawanches (Orange County). Their counterparts (and sometime enemies) to the east included the Wiechquaesgecks (northern Manhattan, the Bronx, and Westchester) and the Siwanoy (along the northern banks of the East River and Long Island Sound as far as the Connecticut line), as

well as the Matinecocks, Massapeguas, Rockaways, Merricks, and others of Long Island.

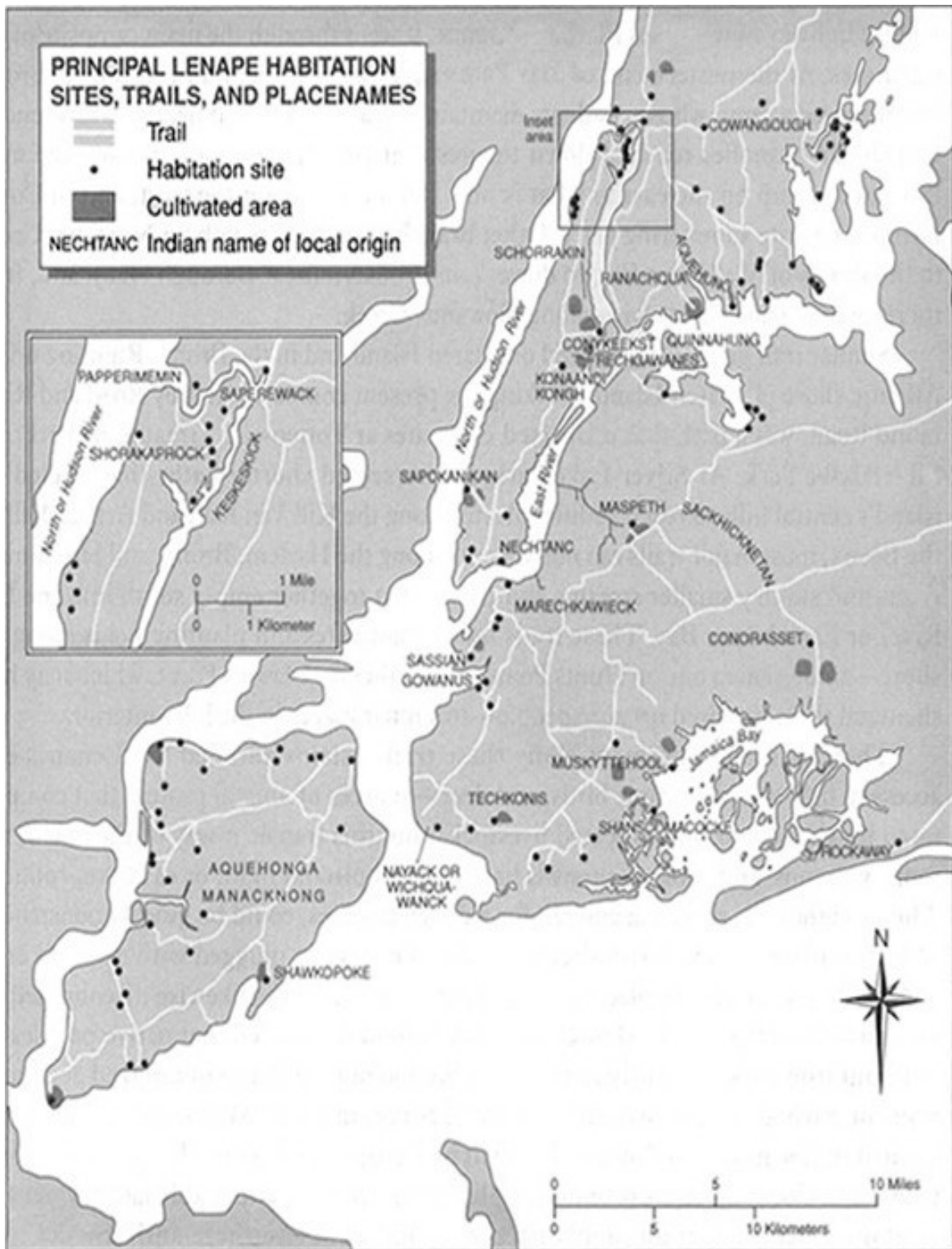
These weren't the well-defined, organized "tribes" or "nations" that populated the imaginations of European colonizers. Except under very unusual circumstances, the Lenapes identified themselves primarily with autonomous subgroups or bands consisting of anywhere from a few dozen to several hundred people. Nor did they reside in "villages" as that word was understood by Europeans, but rather in a succession of seasonal campsites. In the spring or early summer, a band could be found near the shore, fishing and clamming; as autumn approached, it moved inland to harvest crops and hunt deer; when winter set in, it might move again to be nearer reliable sources of firewood and sources of smaller game. As the Rev. Charles Wolley put it, the Lenapes lived "very rudely and rovingly, shifting from place to place, accordingly to their exigencies, and gains of fishing and fowling and hunting, never confining their rambling humors to any settled Mansions."

Within the five boroughs of modern New York alone, archaeologists have identified about eighty Lenape habitation sites, more than two dozen planting fields, and the intricate network of paths and trails that laced them all together. On Manhattan, the primary trail ran along the island's hilly spine from what is now Battery Park in the south to Inwood in the north. Just north of City Hall Park it passed by an encampment near a sixty-foot-deep pond, fed by an underground spring, which together with adjacent meadow and marsh lands almost bisected the island. Farther north, where the trail passed Greenwich Village, a secondary path led west to Sapokanikan, a site of fishing and planting on the Hudson River near the foot of Gansevoort Street. At about 98th Street and Park Avenue the trail ran by a campsite known as Konaande Kongh and, on the broad flats of Harlem just to the north, still more fishing camps and planting fields. (From an East River landing at about 119th Street, fishermen paddled out in tree-trunk



The largest Lenape habitation sites were occupied by several hundred or more people and probably resembled these villages depicted in western New Netherland, but

without the enclosing palisade. Detail from a map by Nicolaes Visscher, 1656. (I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)



canoes to net or spear striped bass.) Its northern terminus was a cluster of three camps along the Harlem River, two of which now

actually lie on the mainland, severed from Manhattan by the Harlem Ship Canal.

Across the East River, in Brooklyn and Queens, another major artery ran just below the terminal moraine, following the present course of Jamaica Avenue west from the Nassau County line. At Evergreen Cemetery, on the Brooklyn-Queens border, it dropped down along the route of Kings Highway, looped across the outwash plains of south Brooklyn, then swung west along Bay Ridge Parkway toward the Narrows. Where Kings Highway now crosses Flatbush Avenue, it went through the main campsite of the Canarsees. At the western end of Bay Parkway, in the Fort Hamilton section of Brooklyn, it passed a camp whose residents maintained planting fields at nearby Gravesend. A half-dozen branches reached down to sites that ringed Jamaica Bay from the main Rockaway camp on the east to what is now Bergen Beach on the west, and to Coney Island, a favorite summering place. Other branches ran to Maspeth on Newtown Creek, to the shores of Wallabout Bay, to downtown Brooklyn (near Borough Hall), and, from there, over to maize lands lying along Gowanus Creek.

Similar trail grids can be traced on Staten Island and in the Bronx. Running up the Atlantic shore of Staten Island, marking the present course of Amboy Road and Richmond Road, was a path that connected campsites at Tottenville, Great Kills Park, and Silver Lake Park. At Silver Lake Park, it intersected shorter paths that circled the island's central hills to reach additional sites along the Kill Van Kull and Arthur Kill. In the Bronx, most major trails ran north-south along the Harlem, Bronx, and Hutchinson rivers and sundry smaller streams and creeks that together empty south into the East River or Eastchester Bay. These trails linked campsites and planting fields along the shore—among them one on Hunts Point and another on Clasons Point, which may have sheltered three hundred or more people—to similar places in the hilly interior.

Their seasonal movement along these trail systems afforded the Lenapes easy access to fish, shellfish, game birds, and deer—sources of animal protein that compensated for the lack of domesticated livestock—but this transient way of life meant that

tools, weapons, and cooking utensils had to be simple and light, or easily reproduced. Their longhouses, some big enough for a dozen families, could be quickly constructed of bent saplings covered with sheets of bark, the crevices plugged with clay and cornstalks. Moving from one place to the next every few months likewise discouraged the accumulation of property. (Dutch fur traders soon discovered that native peoples did not want iron pots in trade because they were too heavy.) It also minimized accumulations of garbage and waste—though Pearl Street in lower Manhattan would get its name from the mounds of oyster shells left by Lenape bands along the East River shore. Constant relocation also prevented depletion of firewood and arable land: when supplies dwindled, the group simply packed up and went elsewhere until the site could again support human habitation. And by discouraging the storage of more food than could be carried to the next camp, seasonal relocations helped minimize the human impact on local plant and animal populations, giving them a chance to rebound before the Lenapes returned the next year.

Lenape bands prepared and maintained their woodland planting fields by the slash-and-burn method, clearing out all but the largest trees and bushes, then burning off the rubbish and undergrowth every spring. This brought fallow land into cultivation quickly and returned essential nutrients to the soil, extending its productive life well beyond the two or three years possible with the European system of crop rotation. Sowing a variety of crops together in the same field—maize, sunflowers, beans, squash, melons, cucumbers, and tobacco—maintained high concentrations of nitrogen; it also required less work, because cornstalks, for example, could support the beans as well as man-made poles. What was more, the simple stone and wood implements of the Lenapes turned the soil easily without the damage caused by European plows and draft animals.

No less than the colonists who came after them, in other words, the Lenapes had “settled” the land by manipulating it to their purposes. Consciously or not, they used it in ways that extended the diversity of plant and animal life on which their survival depended. The heavy use of firewood around their principal habitation sites,

combined with the annual spring burnoff of active planting fields, left vast, open, parklike forests where deer, rabbit, birds, and other game flourished. Their abandoned planting fields became the meadows and prairies that were home to a tangle of flowers and edible berries. And because Lenape spiritual beliefs emphasized the interdependence of all life, hunting was an enterprise loaded with such supernatural significance that excessive killing was avoided. The abundance that so amazed early European visitors was thus no mere accident of nature, for “nature” was an artifact of culture as well as geology.

LAZY AND BARBAROUS PEOPLE

Nothing made it harder for Europeans to see the link between the Lenapes and their environment than the fact that kinship—not class—was the basis of their society. Private ownership of land and the hierarchical relations of domination and exploitation familiar in Europe were unknown in Lenapehoking. By custom and negotiation with its neighbors, each Lenape band had a “right” to hunt, fish, and plant within certain territorial limits. It might, in exchange for gifts, allow other groups or individuals to share these territories, but this did not imply the “sale” or permanent alienation known to European law. In the absence of states, moreover, warfare among the Lenapes was much less systematic and brutal than among Europeans. As Daniel Denton said disdainfully: “It is a great fight where seven or eight is slain.”

More perplexing still, kinship in Lenape society was traced matrilineally. Families at each location were grouped into clans that traced their descent from a single female ancestor; phratries, or combinations of two or more clans, were identified by animal signs, usually “wolf,” “turtle,” and “turkey.” Children belonged by definition to their mother’s phratry: if she was a turtle, they were turtles. Land was assigned to clans, and the family units that comprised them, for their use only: they did not “own” it as Europeans understood the word and had no authority to dispose of it by sale, gift, or bequest. If the land “belonged” to anyone, it belonged to the inhabitants collectively.

On one point European and Lenape societies seemed similar: the division of labor by gender. Lenape women, along with cooking and childrearing, did the bulk of agricultural work—planting, weeding, harvesting, drying, packing, sorting—which made them responsible for as much as 90 percent of the food supply. During seasonal changes of settlement, it was also their job to strike and rebuild dwellings as well as to carry the communal goods.

Lenape men, by contrast, thought agriculture unmanly and devoted their energies to hunting and fishing. European observers were often appalled to find them relaxing after their return while their women toiled away in the fields, though this reaction had less to do with sympathy for the women than with ideas about “laziness.” Europeans believed that agriculture was a respectable occupation for men, while hunting and fishing were chiefly recreational: one was work, the other mere sport. (“They labour not much, but in absolute necessity,” Charles Lodwick reported to the Royal Society, and “mostly employ themselves in hunting and fishing.”) Indeed, the apparent reluctance of their men to work only reinforced the impression that the Lenapes had done little to subdue and develop the land.

History, Local History & Genealogy Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

The sexual division of labor and the matrilineal organization of clans and phratries accorded women considerable importance in communal affairs. Each sachem was chosen from among the sons—sometimes even daughters—of a sister of the old sachem, and the actual choice might well have been made by the older women of his phratry. There is also evidence that after divorce, which was a simple matter for Lenape women (as well as for men), they retained possession of all household effects and that their children invariably remained with them because they were of the same lineage.

Seasonal habitation sites, few tools and personal possessions, the lack of domesticated animals, disorderly planting fields, a classless and stateless social system, matrilineal kinship, indifference to commerce—what all of this added up to, for many Europeans, was a deeply inferior way of life, mired in primitive poverty. It seemed the very antithesis of civilized existence, a devilish inversion of the proper order of things. To the Dutch, all Indians were *wilden*—savages—while the English likened them to the despised “wild Irish,” whose seasonal migrations with their sheep and cattle appeared utterly incompatible with civilization.

True, they didn’t appear to be suffering. “It is somewhat strange,” Nicholaes van Wassenaer admitted, “that among these most barbarous people, there are few or none cross-eyed, blind, crippled, lame, hunch-backed or limping men; all are well-fashioned people, strong and sound of body, well fed, without blemish.” “Some have lived 100 years,” Charles Lodwick marveled. “Also,” Jasper Danckaerts added, “there are among them no simpletons, lunatics or madmen as among us.”

Indeed, that the Lenapes lived so contentedly in what looked to Europeans like a setting of wonderful “natural” abundance made them all the more contemptible. How could people living in such a place fail so utterly to take advantage of the opportunities that lay all around them? They ought to have been civilized and rich, but they weren’t. It was only a short step to the conclusion that they didn’t deserve to be there at all.

THE FUR TRADE

A map of the New World drawn by Juan de la Cosa in the first decade of the sixteenth century hints that Europeans—probably anonymous fishermen looking for cod—may have visited Lenapehoking when Christopher Columbus was still exploring the Caribbean. The first solid evidence of such a visit, however, comes with the arrival of a French vessel, *La Dauphine*, piloted by the Florentine navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano. King Francis I of France and a syndicate of Lyons silk merchants had commissioned Verrazzano to find a northern route to China and Japan—the same “Indies” that Columbus dreamed of finding. In March 1524, after a fifty-day crossing from Madeira, *La Dauphine* began crawling up the coast from Cape Fear. By mid-April she passed Sandy Hook and anchored in the Narrows between Staten Island and Brooklyn.

As they had already done many times before, the crew of *La Dauphine* lowered the ship’s longboat and rowed out to see what they could see. They soon found themselves, Verrazzano said, in “a very beautiful lake”—the Upper Bay—where they were surrounded by several dozen small boats whose occupants, “clad with feathers of fowls of diverse colors,” greeted them “very cheerfully, making great shouts of admiration.” This happy encounter ended almost as soon as it began, however. A sudden squall forced *La Dauphine* to stand out to sea again, so Verrazzano decided to resume his search further to the north—“greatly to our regret,” he added, for this was a “hospitable and attractive” country, “and, we think, not without things of value.” He dubbed the “lake” Santa Margarita, in honor of the king’s sister, and the surrounding land Angouleme, the name of the king’s principal estate. (When the Verrazano Narrows Bridge opened in 1964, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, in its wisdom, spelled the explorer’s name with one z rather than two.)

One year after Verrazzano’s brief visit, Esteban Gomez, a black Portuguese pilot who had sailed with Magellan, ventured a fair distance up the Hudson (which he named Deer River) before concluding it didn’t lead to China. Various French and English pilots are thought to have scouted the region as well in the years that followed. An Englishman supposedly crossed the Hudson in 1568

during an epic overland trek from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada. Marooned sailors and fishermen are rumored to have wintered along the Delaware or lower Hudson rivers in the late 1590s and early 1600s. On occasion, English and Spanish skippers raided the area to take slaves, an enterprise inspired by Gomez, who had seized fifty-seven New England Indians for sale on the Lisbon slave market.

But the most numerous and persistent successors of Verrazzano and Gomez were fur traders. Furs had always figured importantly in the European luxury trades; beaver in particular was highly prized for both its soft, deep pelt and its alleged medicinal properties. As Adriaen van der Donck would explain midway through the seventeenth century, beaver oil cured rheumatism, toothaches, stomachaches, poor vision, and dizziness; beaver testicles, rubbed on the forehead or dried and dissolved in water, made an effective antidote to drowsiness and idiocy.

Traditionally, most of the furs marketed in Europe came from Russia. Trapped in Siberia or along the shores of the Baltic, they were dressed and marketed in the ancient city of Kiev. But when French explorers and traders opened the St. Lawrence River valley in the 1580s, the influx of Canadian skins created a wider market in Europe and prompted rival traders to seek additional sources of supply elsewhere in North America. By 1600 exchanging beaver and other pelts for European wares had become routine for at least some Indian peoples along the Atlantic coast, the Lenapes undoubtedly among them. European trade goods from the 1570s have turned up in habitation sites well into the interior of New York State, and Dutch traders claimed to have “frequented” the lower Hudson Valley as early as 1598, “but without making any fixed settlements, only as a shelter in winter.”

Not all the Lenapes were anxious to do business with Europeans. Some must have heard stories of captives carried off into slavery. Others seemed unwilling to get into the spirit of a market economy. “They take many beavers,” Johannes de Laet remarked in 1615, “but it is necessary for them to get into the habit of trade, otherwise they are too indolent to hunt the beaver.” Even a half century later, Daniel Denton would note that many Long Island Lenapes still showed a

marked indifference to material possessions. “They are extraordinarily charitable to one another,” he wrote, “one having nothing to spare, but he freely imparts it to his friends, and whatsoever they get by gaming or any other way, they share to one another, leaving to themselves commonly the least share.”

What the Europeans offered the Lenapes—blankets, brass kettles, iron drills, hoes, knives, combs—were nonetheless obvious improvements on familiar things and could readily be incorporated into prevailing patterns of production and exchange. Slowly at first, then more rapidly after the addition of guns and alcohol as trade goods, even reluctant curiosity would give way to habit, and habit to dependency. By the early seventeenth century, the demand for items of European origin among the Lenapes had begun to undermine their way of life.

Even as the first colonists arrived on the scene, Lenape men were devoting more and more of their time to gathering furs for exchange with Europeans rather than for the use of their families and clans. They were away from home longer and returned with less food, which every spring left a few more communities a little closer to real famine when their stores from the previous harvest finally gave out (and in time virtually exterminated fur-bearing animals throughout the lower Hudson region). Then, too, as the work of men shifted from stalking to setting and checking traps, territorial boundaries became a matter of escalating controversy. The reciprocity that sustained complex kin networks weakened. Bands dissolved, re-formed, and dissolved again in a search for stability. Old intergroup alliances broke up. War became increasingly likely and, with the spread of firearms, increasingly deadly.

As European commodities supplanted their Lenape equivalents, a widening array of traditional skills, duties, and knowledge became less and less important. Lenape women assumed ever greater responsibility for supplying the camp with food and managing its internal affairs. Lenape sachems gained new prestige as the managers of trade with Europeans, though every year it would be more and more difficult to manage their often conflicted communities, let alone mobilize them for resistance. Alcohol

hastened the disruption of earlier ways. As early as 1624 Nicolaes van Wassenaer could report that excessive drinking had destroyed the authority of at least one sachem, who “comes forward to beg a draught of brandy with the rest.”

Another danger for the Lenapes had meanwhile appeared to the north in the form of the Iroquois League. According to legend, the idea of the league originated around the middle of the sixteenth century with a Huron prophet and philosopher named Deganawidah, who wandered among the Iroquois-speaking peoples of upper New York State preaching a gospel of unity, brotherhood, and equality. Around 1570, assisted by a certain Ha-yo-went'-ha (Longfellow's Hiawatha), Deganawidah brought the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca “nations” together in a single federation known as the League of the Great Peace. The league stretched from the Hudson to Niagara, encompassing perhaps a dozen semipermanent, stockaded villages whose combined population approached fifteen thousand.

Once Deganawidah and Ha-yo-went'-ha had gone—not died, it was said, merely moved on to spread their message among less fortunate peoples elsewhere—the league entered a new, aggressively expansionist phase. Its armies, sometimes numbering more than a thousand warriors, ranged west to the banks of the Mississippi, south to Virginia and the Carolinas, east into New England, and north, across the St. Lawrence, deep into Canada. Not unlike the crusading chivalry of medieval Christendom, they ventured out among the infidel with news of the Great Peace of Deganawidah and Ha-yo-went'-ha, a scourge to all who opposed them. Like the crusading chivalry, too, they had practical motives as well.

Their initial encounters with European commodities and weapons, which must have occurred around the same time that Deganawidah and Ha-yo-went'-ha were finishing their work, impressed upon the Iroquois the importance not only of direct access to the traders but also of controlling the supply of furs. In the 1580s, a decade or so after the league had been formed, the Iroquois attempted to establish a foothold on the St. Lawrence but were turned back by a combined force of Hurons and Algonkians, armed with French

weapons. The erection of a French trading post at Quebec in 1609 completed the Iroquois defeat and enabled the Hurons and their allies to organize a vast, complex trading empire in which they used European goods to obtain food from agricultural peoples living above Lake Erie, exchanged the food for skins brought in by hunting groups in the far north, then brought the skins to Quebec and exchanged them for more trade goods.

In desperation, the Iroquois turned south toward the Susquehanna, Delaware, and Hudson valleys. Before 1600 they had subjected or driven off many of their original inhabitants. The Algonkian-speaking Mahicans who lived on the west side of the Hudson, near modern Albany, were the next in line. If they too succumbed—when they succumbed—all the peoples of the lower Hudson would be endangered in turn. With Europeans at their front door and Iroquois at their back, the Lenapes were doomed.

The Men Who Bought Manhattan

On the second day of September 1609, a three-masted Dutch carrack, the *Halve Maen* (Half Moon) dropped anchor off Sandy Hook. Her skipper, an English seaman named Henry Hudson, had started out six months earlier to find an Arctic shortcut to the Indies. Blocked by ice in the waters off Novaya Zemlya, and with his half-frozen crew threatening mutiny, Hudson then turned west and ran five thousand miles across the Atlantic to Nova Scotia. Since July, the *Halve Maen* had been scouting the coast between Cape Cod and Chesapeake Bay in search of the same northwest passage that Verrazzano failed to find eighty years before.

For more than a week Hudson and his men explored the Lower Bay, marveling at its wild beauty and fertility. Robert Juet, one of Hudson's officers, said the surrounding hills were "as pleasant with Grasse and Flowers, and goodly Trees, as ever they had scene, and very sweet smells came from them." The inhabitants seemed "very glad of our comming, and brought greene Tabacco, and gave us of it for Knives and Beads," Juet added. "They appear to be a friendly people," Hudson himself reported, "but are much inclined to steal, and are adroit in carrying away whatever they take a fancy to." That may explain why the situation suddenly turned ugly. A fight broke out, a crewman named Coleman was killed with an arrow through the neck, and Hudson decided to move on.

On September 12 Hudson guided the *Halve Maen* through the Narrows between Staten Island and Long Island. Crossing the Upper Bay, he warily purchased "Oysters and Beanes" from some "people of the Country" who paddled out to his ship in canoes, then entered the river that now bears his name—"as fine a river as can be found," in the words of another contemporary report, "wide and deep, with good anchoring ground on both sides." One week later and ninety miles upstream, near the present site of Albany, Hudson realized that he wasn't going to reach the Pacific. He turned back, disappointed yet deeply impressed by what he had seen. "The land

is the finest for cultivation that I ever in my life set foot upon,” he asserted, “and it also abounds in trees of every description. The natives are a very good people; for, when they saw that I would not remain, they supposed that I was afraid of their bows, and taking the arrows, they broke them in pieces, and threw them in the fire.”

Nor did he leave empty-handed. The “loving people,” in Juet’s words, “came flocking aboard, and brought us Grapes and Pompions, which wee bought for trifles. And many brought us Bevers skinned, and Otters skinned, which wee bought for Beades, Knives, and Hatchets.” That they made better hosts than the inhabitants of the seaboard was confirmed as the *Halve Maen* sailed down “that side of the River that is called *Manna-hata*” and dodged a hail of arrows fired by “savages” on the shore. (The meaning of “Manna-hata” has been debated ever since; the preferred translation nowadays is “hilly island.”)¹

MIGHTY AMSTERDAM

Though Hudson’s reconnaissance was no more successful than that of Verrazzano or Gomez, it proved the more important because the political climate of Europe had changed markedly by the early 1600s. At issue was the condition of Hapsburg Spain, still the most powerful European state but surrounded now by adversaries. Over the course of the sixteenth century, under Charles V and his son Philip II, the Spanish had absorbed Portugal, taken possession of the Holy Roman Empire, overrun the principal islands of the Caribbean, subdued Mexico and Peru, and invaded the Philippines. At the same time, they became involved in a series of costly military adventures aimed at rolling back the Protestant Reformation. Eventually, despite the riches extracted from its far-flung possessions, the crown ran out of money and embarked on a disastrous program of forced loans and debt repudiations that sent shock waves through European political and financial systems. France and England, would-be entrants on the global imperial stage, preyed mercilessly on Spanish shipping and launched their own colonizing projects in those parts of the western hemisphere where Spanish power seemed weakest.

Nowhere were Spain's afflictions more apparent than in the Low Countries, or Netherlands. Inherited by Charles V and subsequently granted by him to Philip II, they had flourished under Spanish rule. Their leading cities—Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels—grew rich as the marketplaces where Spain obtained, with gold and silver from the New World, the food, clothing, manufactures, naval stores, and luxuries that it could not produce for itself. But when Protestantism spread across the Netherlands in the 1560s, a revolt broke out against Spain. The seven Dutch-speaking provinces of the northern Netherlands formed the United Provinces or Dutch Republic (foreigners called it Holland after the largest and wealthiest of the seven). Its governing body was the States General, in which each province had a single vote.

The United Provinces occupied a mere corner of Europe, not much bigger than the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island combined, and inhabited by fewer than two million people. Its struggle for independence would nonetheless become a central event of the early modern era. Year after year, Spanish armies ravaged the Netherlands. Year after year, the rebels fought back, fired by Calvinist zeal and led by the brilliant Prince William of Orange. Along the way they assembled the greatest fleet in Christendom, owning, Sir Walter Raleigh once estimated, more ships than eleven other nations combined.

Even before Dutch fireships helped England fend off the Spanish Armada in 1588, the war in the waters had spread far beyond the confines of Europe. Dutch squadrons, flying their orange, white, and blue banners, plundered Spanish ports throughout the Americas, Asia, and Africa. *Oranje boven!* was their war cry—"Orange above!" They hounded Spanish shipping in the Caribbean and swept Spain's Portuguese allies from the Indian Ocean. Dutch troops fought in Puerto Rico, Africa, South America, India, China, Japan, and Malaysia. Holland was already one of the world's great maritime powers when, in 1609, weary, frustrated, and bankrupt, the Spanish at last agreed to a twelve-year truce that gave their former subjects *de facto* independence.

Although true independence did not come for another forty-odd years, Holland's Golden Age had begun. Dutch traders, never far behind the fleets and armies, cornered the international markets in African slaves, Brazilian sugar, Russian caviar, Italian marble, Hungarian copper, fish from the North Sea, and furs from the Baltic. "The factors and Brokers of Europe," Daniel Defoe called them. "They *buy* to *sell* again, *take* in to *send* out, and the greatest Part of their vast Commerce consists in being supply'd from All parts of the World, that they may supply All the World again."

The fates of faraway kingdoms were decided in the countinghouses of Dutch bankers. Dutch investors bought Russian grain fields and German vineyards. Dutch engineers taught foreign princes the most advanced methods of building forts and draining swamps. Rich merchants and aristocrats across Europe collected the works of Dutch painters, filled their homes with the fine china and glass produced by Dutch artisans, and shipped their sons off to Dutch universities to study at the feet of scholars and philosophers who were changing the face of Western law and science.

Integral to Holland's success was the city of Amsterdam. Protected by a forbidding network of estuaries, Amsterdam rose to international prominence as the home base, nerve center, and symbol of the Dutch revolt. It expanded rapidly as the struggle wore on, nourished by the spoils of war and the capital of merchants fleeing the devastated cities of the south. With them came religious outcasts of every denomination—Walloons (French-speaking Protestants from what is now Belgium), Huguenots (French Protestants, many of whom joined Walloon churches), Baptists, Quakers, Sephardic Jews, and a party of English Calvinists (known to their day as Separatists and to ours as the Pilgrims)—all drawn by the city's tolerance for diversity and dissent. Together they made Amsterdam one of Europe's liveliest and most cosmopolitan urban centers. In 1585, the year that a Spanish army laid waste to Antwerp, Amsterdam's population numbered a mere thirty thousand. When Spain and Holland called their truce in 1609 it had risen to nearly sixty thousand. By mid-century it would exceed 150,000.

Amsterdam's burghers, moreover, were open to newer ways of doing business. Profitmaking and capital accumulation, still the objects of medieval scorn in much of Europe, were civic virtues in Amsterdam. Before the seventeenth century was more than a decade old, the city could already boast of the world's most up-to-date credit and banking facilities. It had Europe's most important stock exchange, specialized commodity exchanges, and a legal system swept clean of medieval obstructions to the free circulation of money and goods. Out of its well-equipped shipyards came swarms of privateers and fleets of a cheap but efficient new cargo ship—the *vlieboot* or flyboat—with which Dutch traders prowled the seas in search of gain. When they returned, holds bulging with the merchandise of distant lands, it was to an ingenious new system of canals that linked the waterfront with blocks of new warehouses and municipal markets, sharply reducing the time needed to find buyers, make up an outward-bound cargo, and set off again.

In time, half Europe's foreign trade would be in Dutch hands, and half its ships would have been built in their yards. Andrew Marvell, the English poet, linked the city's preoccupation with moneymaking to what he thought was its appalling indifference toward dissenters. "Staple of sects and mint of schism," he called Amsterdam—a "bank of conscience, where not one so strange/Opinion but finds credit and exchange."

THE WEST INDIA COMPANY

Amsterdam was also the headquarters for a pair of giant trading companies whose fortunes would determine the course of Dutch exploration and settlement around the world. Their purpose was to reduce destructive competition among smaller firms while simultaneously prosecuting the war with Spain. To that end, each had its own private army and navy, almost unlimited powers of peace and war, and control over vast human and material resources.

Senior of the two was the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie—the United East India Company—created in 1602 by the States-General to manage all Dutch trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. Capitalized at over six million guilders, an enormous sum at the time,

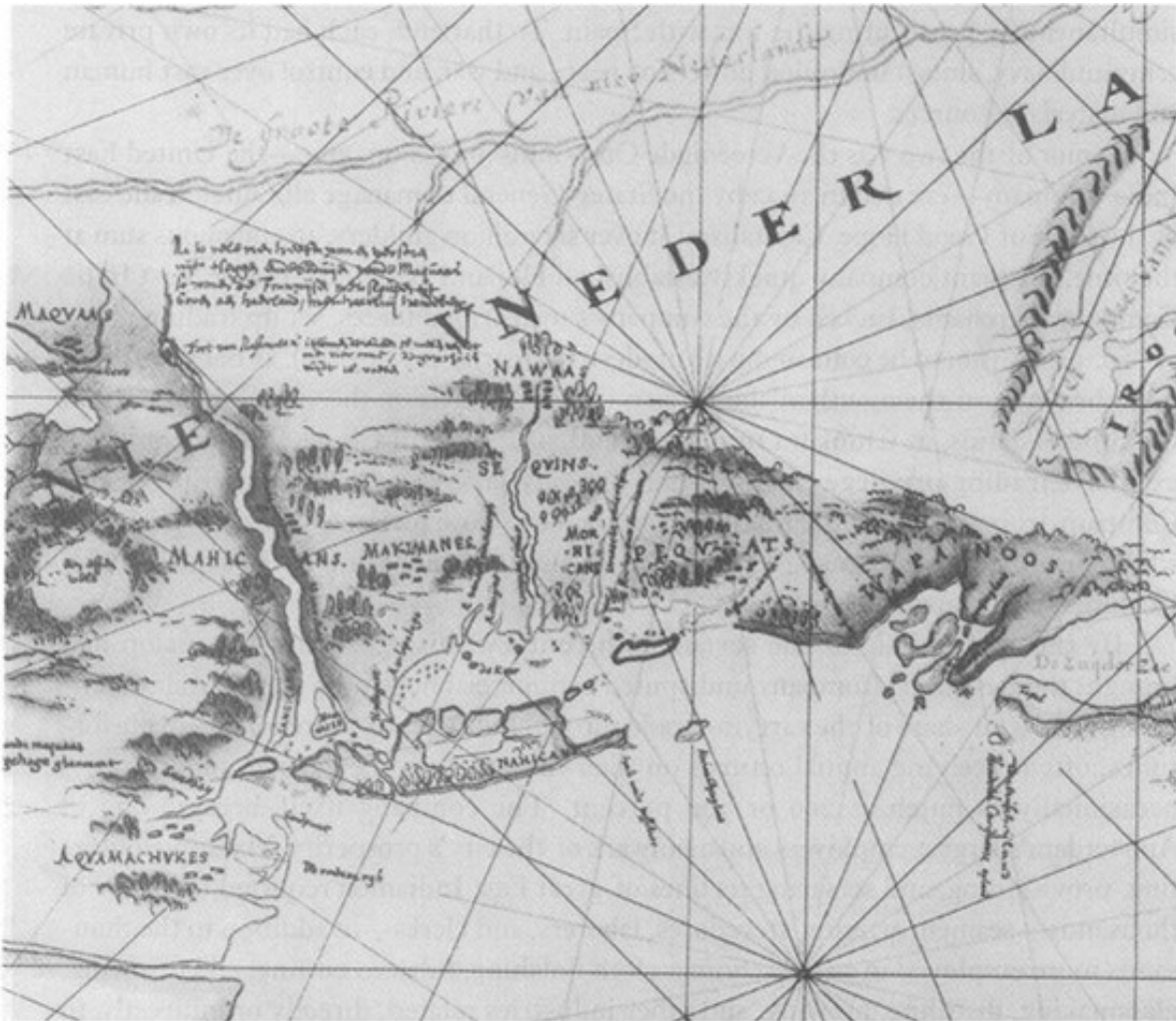
the giant company quickly established Holland as a global power. East India Company merchants, backed by the company's own armed forces, set up trading posts, or "factories" (not to be confused with modern industrial enterprises), at Bandar-Abbas (Gombroon) near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, at Batavia on the vital Sunda Strait in the Spice Islands, at Chinsura in Bengal, and at Canton in China. They negotiated exclusive trading privileges in Nagasaki, the only Japanese port open to Europeans. Company troops expelled the English from Bantam, close by Batavia, and they seized a whole network of strategic bases from the Portuguese, including Malacca, Colombo, Cochin, Negapatam, and Macassar.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, this aggressive expansion had brought the East India Company undisputed commercial hegemony in the Malay archipelago and a fat share of the carrying trade throughout Asia. Its shareholders made fortunes, often receiving annual returns on their investments in excess of 30 percent—occasionally as much as 200 or 300 percent. The company itself became one of Amsterdam's largest employers and a bulwark of the city's prosperity. Manning, outfitting, provisioning, and servicing its lines of great East Indiamen required the labor of thousands—seamen, artisans, stevedores, laborers, and clerks—in addition to the thousands more employed in sugar refining, cloth finishing, tobacco cutting, silk throwing, glassmaking, distilling, brewing, and other industries related, directly or indirectly, to the company's operations.

In 1609, encouraged by the prospect of a long truce with Spain, the East India Company commissioned Henry Hudson to find a northeast route to the Orient. When he failed, it turned its attention to other matters, not least of all the 329 percent dividend it had just declared for 1610. For merchants outside the company, though, Hudson's report that he and the crew of the *Halve Maen* had carried on a brisk trade in furs with obliging natives was tantalizing news. Despite the recent settlement of a French trading post at Montreal, the European market for furs remained so strong that smaller traders could still expect high returns with only a modest initial investment and little risk.

In 1610 a company of Amsterdam *particuliere kooplieden* (private merchant-traders) sent a single ship to the river “called Manhattes from the savage nation that dwells at its mouth” (soon renamed the Mauritius and, eventually, the North River). Rivals were close behind, and in the vigorous competition that followed, flinty Dutch captains like Hendrick Christiaensen, Cornelis May (after whom Cape May is named), and Adriaen Block won fame if not fortune.

Block’s voyage of 1613—14, his fourth to the Hudson, must have been the talk of the Amsterdam waterfront. When fire destroyed his first ship, the *Tyger*, he and his men wintered on Manhattan and, with Indian help, built a new ship, the *Onrust* (Restless), with which they explored the East River and Long Island Sound in the spring of 1614.



New Netherland, 1613/1614 Detail of the chart drawn by Adriaen Block. (© Collection of The New-York Historical Society)

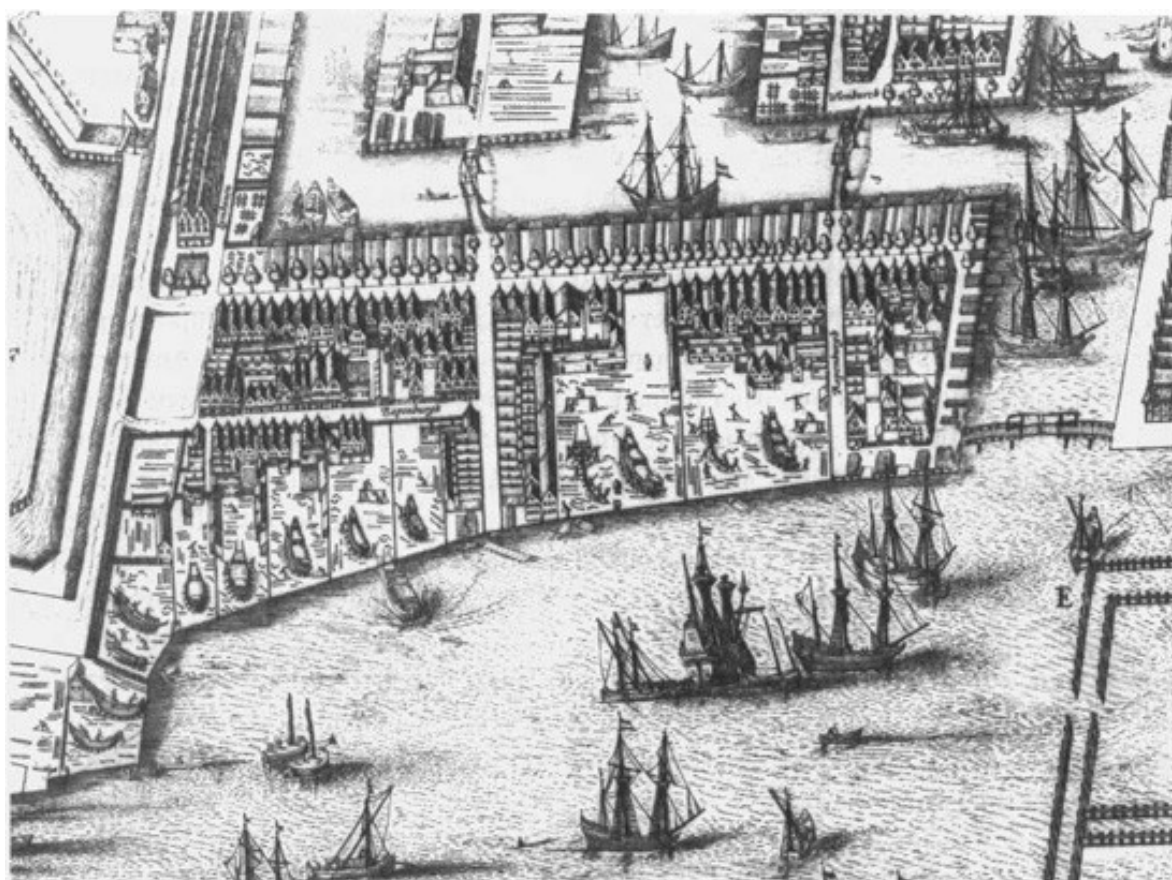
(A mulatto from San Domingo named Jan Rodrigues remained on Manhattan with a stock of goods to organize trade pending Block's return.) The "Figurative Map" that Block brought back to Amsterdam later that year was the first to apply the name "Manhates" to Manhattan, first to show Long Island as an island, first to show the Connecticut River and Narragansett Bay, and first to use the name "New Netherland" for the lands between English Virginia and French Canada. (Block's monument is the small island off the eastern end of Long Island that bears his name.)²

In 1614, knowing that competition was better for discovery than for profits, a group of Amsterdam's principal merchants persuaded the States-General to set up a single firm, the United New Netherland Company, with exclusive rights to traffic in American pelts (much as had been done earlier in the East Indian trade). The company sent out at least four expeditions and established a fortified year-round factory, or trading post, on Castle Island in the North River, just below modern Albany. It was called Fort van Nassouwen (Nassau), a name already applied to two other Dutch factories elsewhere in the world, one on the Amazon River in Brazil and the other at Mouree, in West Africa. A contemporary report described the fort as "a redoubt, surrounded by a moat eighteen feet wide" and garrisoned by ten or twelve men with a dozen-odd cannon. Under its protection, company traders began to tap the river's "great traffick in the skins of beavers, otters, foxes, bears, minks, wild cats, and the like." A smaller "redoubt or little fort," apparently not intended for year-round occupation, was erected the following year "about the Island Manhattans."

Expiration of the New Netherland Company's charter at the end of 1617 touched off another competitive free-for-all. The end of the Twelve Year Truce with Spain was approaching, moreover, and a controversy raged about what would come next. One party, known as the Remonstrants because of their opposition to dogmatic Calvinism, advocated peace; the other, whose less tolerant

interpretation of Calvinist doctrine gave them the name Counter-Remonstrants, urged the resumption of all-out war. The war party scored its first major victory in 1619 at the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort in English), which gave the Dutch Reformed Church a strictly orthodox foundation and identified it irrevocably with a new, more aggressive Dutch nationalism.

A second Counter-Remonstrant victory came in 1621, when the States-General handed New Netherland and the fur trade over to a new and far larger enterprise, the Geocroyerde West-Indische Compagnie, or West India Company. Capitalized at 7.5 million guilders, the West India Company received a monopoly over all Dutch trade with west Africa and the Americas. Like the East India Company, it had two purposes: to make money by trade and to make money by making war on Spain.³



Amsterdam's waterfront The West India Company's compound can be seen at the foot of the bridge on the right.

Detail of a map by Balthasar van Berckenrode, 1626.
(Municipal Archives, Amsterdam)

Shares in the West India Company sold briskly, and the company geared up for business. In 1623 it launched a campaign to seize the Portuguese sugar plantations in Brazil. In 1624 it sent out some seventy ships to prey on Spanish commerce. In 1625 it attacked and sacked San Juan, Puerto Rico. Over the next dozen years it would dispatch some seven hundred additional ships manned by sixty-seven thousand men. They took over five hundred prizes worth almost forty million guilders. Counting damages as well as booty, they are said to have cost Spain alone nearly 120 million guilders. *Oranje boven!*

NEW NETHERLAND

Nor did the company neglect its interests in North America. As early as 1622, according to a contemporary English account, its agents had appeared along “the river Manahata and made plantation there, fortifying themselves in two several places” where “they did persist to plant and trade.” One of the company’s ships spent the winter of 1623-24 trading in the Hudson and Long Island Sound. She was still anchored in the East River in the early summer of 1624 when Captain Cornelis May brought in the *Nieu Neder-landt* with thirty families, mostly Walloons from Leyden who had previously tried without success to get permission to settle in Virginia. May immediately sent eighteen families north to establish a base along the west bank of the Hudson, not far from the site of Fort Nassau (now fallen into disrepair), which they called Fort Orange. Some sixty years later a female survivor recalled that “as soon as they had built themselves some hutts of Bark,” the people there were doing a good business in furs with the local Mahicans, who were “all as quiet as Lambs.”

The remaining families of colonists were sent to establish outposts along the Delaware and Connecticut rivers—the western and eastern boundaries, respectively, of New Netherland. (Perhaps because no one could think of a better name, the Delaware site, like its North River counterpart, was also called Fort Nassau.) A small

party also occupied Noten (now Governors) Island and were soon at work clearing and planting at least one farm on nearby Manhattan.

By December of that same year, the company's ships had returned to Amsterdam with pelts worth fifty thousand guilders and the cheerful news that New Netherland had begun "to advance bravely and to live in friendship with the natives." And such was the region's astounding abundance and fertility, according to one report, that the colonists lacked almost nothing. "Had we cows, hogs, and other cattle fit for food (which we daily expect in the first ships) we would not wish to return to Holland, for whatever we desire in the paradise of Holland, is here to be found."

Several more company ships arrived in the spring of 1625. Led by Willem Verhulst, who replaced May as director of New Netherland, this second expedition deposited over a hundred additional colonists (again, mostly Walloons) plus a wide variety of livestock (103 head in all) and a mountain of supplies—wagons, plows, tools, clothing, food, seeds, plant shoots, firearms, and cheap goods for the fur trade. The cattle were put to pasture on Manhattan ("a convenient place abounding with grass"), and Verhulst ordered more land there to be cleared for planting wheat, rye, and buckwheat.

Verhulst and Cryn Fredericks, an engineer, also chose Manhattan's southern tip as the best location for a massive fortification whose masonry walls, bristling with cannon, would anchor West India Company operations throughout New Netherland (in light of the fact, it was said, that "the Spaniard, who claims all the country, will never allow any one to gain a possession there"). They called it Fort Amsterdam, and Fredericks had the site staked out before the end of the year.

Nobody liked Verhulst. He bullied the colonists, doctored the books, and managed to lose track of vast quantities of trade goods. In the spring of 1626 he was replaced as director by forty-year-old Peter Minuit, a Walloon whose family had lived in Wesel, Germany, until driven out by a Spanish army a couple of years earlier.

FARMS OR FACTORIES?

Verhulst was really the least of New Netherland's problems, however. Far graver was a sharp division of opinion within the West India Company itself about its long-range expectations for the colony.

The original idea for the company had come from Willem Usselinx, a wealthy Flemish refugee who believed that its primary objective should be settlement, not the establishment of trading posts. To his way of thinking, Holland in particular and the Protestant cause in general would never throw off Spanish rule until Spain's grip on the New World and its resources had been broken. The surest way to do that, he reasoned, was to establish extensive colonies where free European farmers and converted Indians could produce agricultural commodities for the markets of Europe. The company's preoccupation with conventional trade and warfare left Usselinx bitterly disappointed, and he refused its repeated offers of employment. At least a few of its directors nonetheless thought he had been on the right track. Led by Kiliaen van Rensselaer, an Amsterdam diamond merchant, these dissidents fought for years to make something more out of the company's American holdings than a collection of thinly populated trading posts.

From the very beginning, consequently, New Netherland's status was anomalous. In 1624, just before the Walloons set out with Captain May on the *Nieu Nederlandt*, the West India Company promulgated a set of regulations for the colony known as the Provisional Orders. The Orders implied that it would be run as a collection of thoroughly typical factories in which the company's interests came first, the company made the rules, and the company decided what was best. Prospective colonists were explicitly warned "to obey and to carry out without any contradiction the orders of the Company then or still to be given, as well as all regulations received from the said Company in regard to matters of administration and justice." The company would tell them where to live. The company would tell them what to plant on their land. They would work on the construction of fortifications and public buildings at the direction of the company. Their able-bodied men would perform military service for the company as needed.

Yet the Provisional Orders also hinted that other intentions besides those of the company were to be served as well. Perhaps because the Walloons had driven a hard bargain, colonists bound for New Netherland were promised things that matter only to people seeking to put down roots: cheap livestock, easy credit for the purchase of supplies, freedom of conscience in private worship, and, after six years' service to the company, free land on which to settle. The company likewise instructed the director to appoint some of them to a council that would advise him on matters of general concern. It was this council that in 1626 brought in Minuit to replace the unpopular Verhulst.

WAR AND WAMPUM

Complicating the company's confusion about its purposes in New Netherland were momentous changes in the organization of the fur trade. Intensive trapping had severely depleted the Lenape peltries of the lower Hudson Valley by the mid-1620s, with the result that more and more of the furs exported from New Netherland were now coming from Mahicans who lived on the west bank of the Hudson around Fort Orange. The Dutch were not alone in appreciating the significance of this development. Iroquois-speaking Mohawks, recently repulsed from the St. Lawrence by the French and Hurons, saw a chance to recoup their losses by wresting control of the fur trade away from the Algonkian-speaking Mahicans. War between the Mohawks and Mahicans broke out in 1624 and escalated rapidly.

Concurrently, both Dutch and English discovered the value of "sewan" or "wampum." True wampum consisted of long strings of tiny purple and white beads sewn together into belts; a large belt, six feet or so in length, would have contained six or seven thousand beads ("loose" or unstrung wampum was never considered the genuine article). The beads themselves were made from certain clam and whelk shells that could be found only along the shores of Narragansett Bay and Long Island Sound—Sewan-hacky was in fact the Lenape name for Long Island—and the peoples native to those regions had long been accustomed to collecting, drilling, and stringing the shells for trade with groups far into the interior of the continent. With the introduction of European metal awls or drills,

perhaps as early as the final quarter of the sixteenth century, it became possible for them to manufacture wampum in significantly greater quantity.

In 1609 Hudson's men received "stropes of Beades" from some upriver Indians, but it was a crafty Dutch fur trader named Jacob Eelkes (or Eelckens) who became the first European to grasp the significance of wampum. In 1622 Eelkes seized a Pequot sachem on Long Island and threatened to cut off his head unless he received "a heavy ransom." The sachem gave him over 140 fathoms of wampum, which Eelkes then discovered would fetch more furs than conventional European trade goods. Before long West India Company agents were buying up all the wampum they could get from the coastal Algonkians and trekking it north to Fort Orange to buy furs from the Mahicans—which made the Mahicans all the more inviting a target for the Iroquois, who relied heavily on wampum for ceremonial and diplomatic purposes. Isaack de Rasieres, a Walloon serving as the company's chief commercial agent and the colony's official secretary, took the news of wampum up to Governor William Bradford of Plymouth, a settlement of English Separatists founded in 1620. Bradford spread the word, and almost overnight, as he put it, "a great alteration" was wrought in the affairs of the entire region.⁴

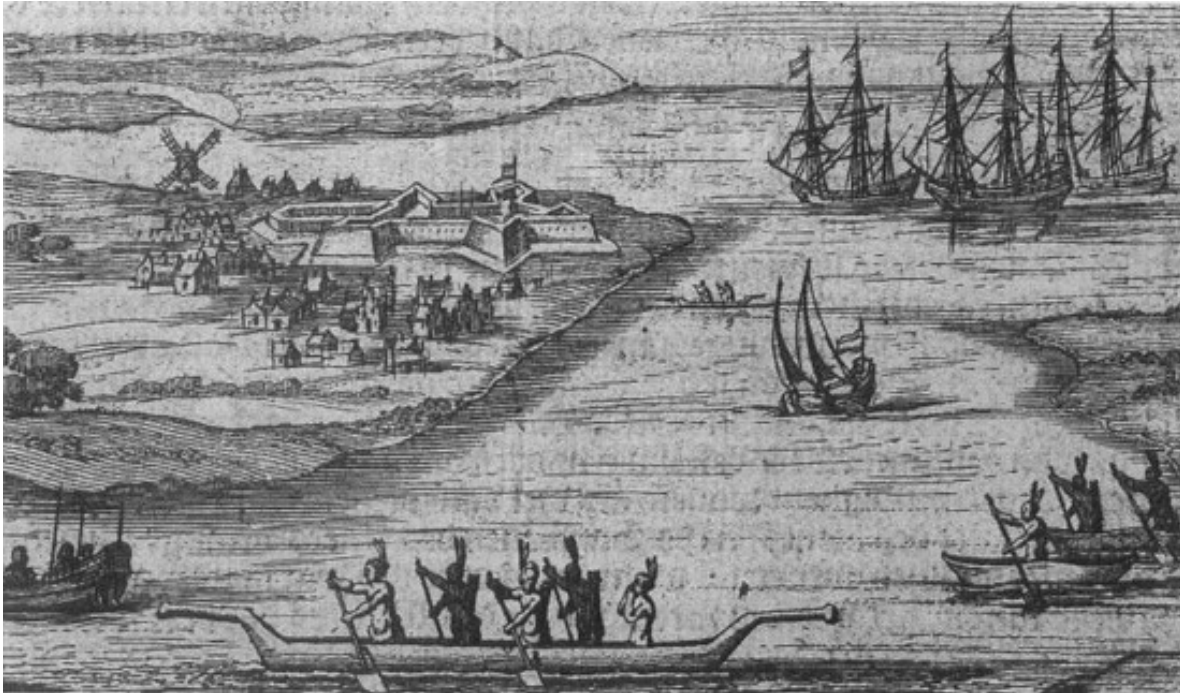
Suddenly the fur trade was no longer a simple matter of direct barter between assorted Europeans and assorted native American peoples. Henceforth it would also involve a pair of transactions in which wampum functioned rather like money. In the first, European traders and coastal Algonkians exchanged manufactured goods for wampum; in the second, European traders used wampum (as well as manufactured goods) to obtain furs at Fort Orange. Not too many years later, wampum would become legal tender throughout both New England and New Netherland.

NEW AMSTERDAM

As the Mohawk-Mahican war intensified, the West India Company weighed the idea of an alliance with the Mahicans. But after Mohawk warriors killed three soldiers from the Fort Orange garrison and "well roasted" a fourth, the company's managers lost confidence in the

Mahicans and cast their lot with the Iroquois. Realizing that New Netherland's far-flung trading posts couldn't be defended if they were caught up in the fighting, the company also resolved to abandon those on the Connecticut and Delaware rivers and move the women and children from Fort Orange to an encampment on the southern tip of Manhattan. This was an attractive site because company agents stationed there could still supervise the flow of commerce out of the Hudson Valley and Long Island Sound. It was big enough for the company to maintain its own farms and herds for provisioning the camp. Apparently, too, many of the island's original inhabitants had recently succumbed to epidemic disease or been driven away by rival groups. (De Rasieres, writing c. 1628, noted that only about two or three hundred of "the old Manhatans" still lived on the island. Along the East River, he added, "is a little good land, where formerly many people have dwelt, but who for the most part have died or have been driven away by the Wappenos [Wappingers].")

In May or June of 1626, shortly after taking over from Verhulst, Director Minuit began to implement the new policy by "purchasing" Manhattan from the Lenapes for sixty guilders' worth of trade goods. It's impossible to say which Lenapes, or what kind of trade goods, because no deed or bill of sale has survived—if indeed there ever was one. However, when he and five other colonists also "bought" Staten Island on August 10, 1626, they paid the local sachems "Some Dimes [duffle cloth], Kittles [kettles], Axes, Hoes, Wampum, Drilling Awls, Jew's Harps, and diverse other other wares"—probably the same kind of trade goods with which they had obtained Manhattan. (Probably, too, those "drilling awls" were the very kind used by coastal Algonkians to manufacture wampum.)



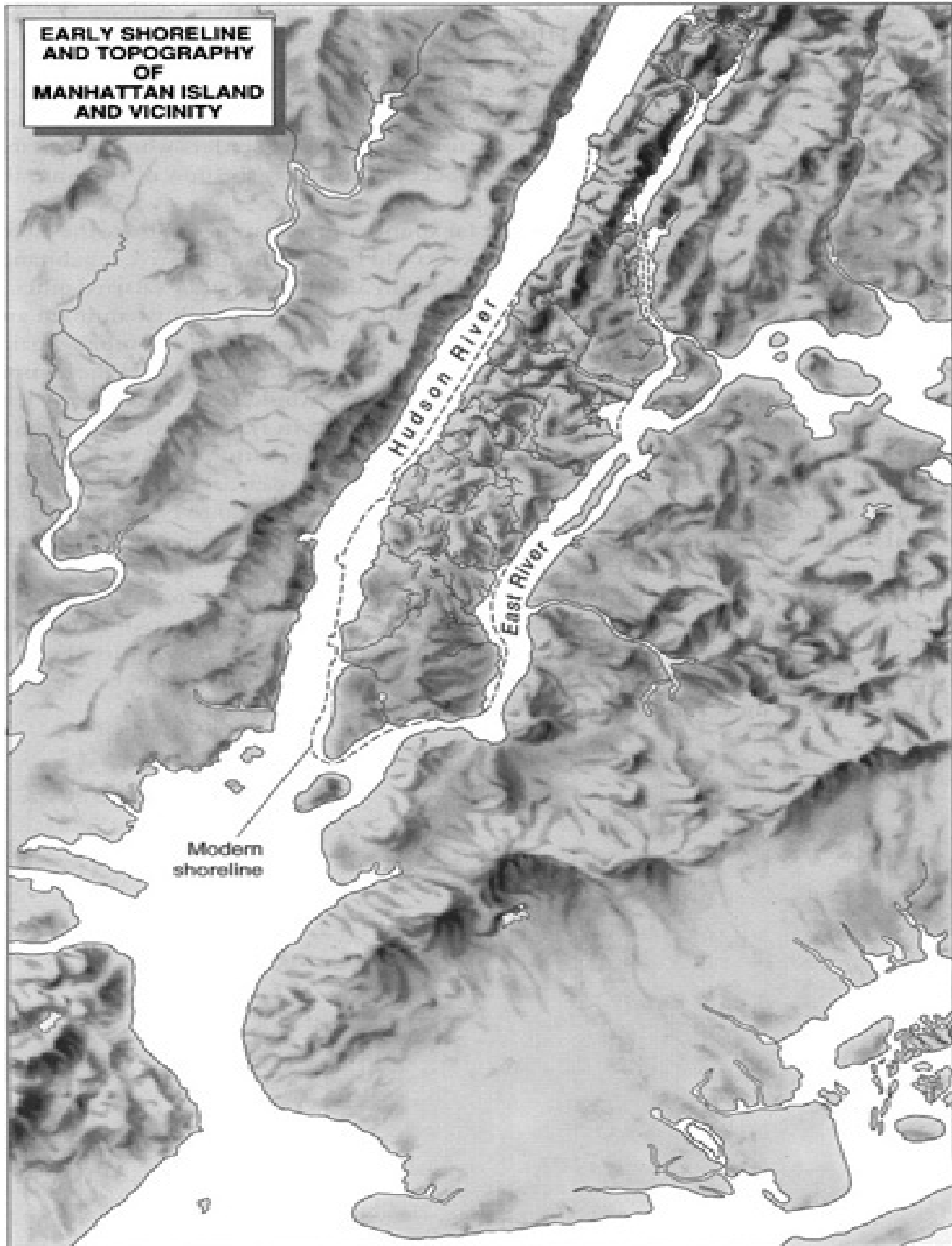
New Amsterdam, c. 1626. Perhaps drawn by Cryn Fredericks, the company's engineer, this view greatly exaggerates the size of the fort but accurately depicts the mill and cabins that huddled outside its walls. Engraved and published by Joost Hartgers in 1651. (© Museum of the City of New York)

Engineer Fredericks and his workers meanwhile scaled back their plans for a real fortress and threw up a simple blockhouse surrounded by a palisade of wood and sod. Other workmen hurriedly erected a sawmill on Noten (Governors) Island, then heavily wooded, and used the lumber to build thirty cabins. These were followed by a stone countinghouse "thatched with reed" and "a horse-mill, over which shall be constructed a spacious room sufficient to accommodate a larger congregation." The mill was to have a tower where bells captured the year before at the sack of San Juan would be hung. The new settlement was dubbed New Amsterdam. It had about 270 inhabitants, including a handful of newborn infants.

Was it a settlement, though? Many of those 270 inhabitants, undoubtedly the Walloons and perhaps Minuit as well, wouldn't have objected to the term. They saw themselves as settlers and thought—

not without reason, considering the terms of the Provisional Orders—that the West India Company did too.

A majority of the company's shareholders saw things differently. Continuing to favor trade over colonization, they viewed New Amsterdam as a commercial "factory" or trading post indistinguishable from dozens of other such installations scattered along the coasts of Africa, India, Malaysia, and China. It wasn't a beachhead of imperial conquest or a citadel to overawe a subject population. It wasn't a seedbed for transplanting Dutch culture in the New World. It wasn't a workshop or plantation for the production of commodities. It was, purely and simply, a place where cheap European manufactured goods (knives, axes, blankets, iron pots, nails) would be exchanged for those items of local origin (dressed and cured pelts) that would fetch a good price back home.



From this perspective, the company would actually do itself more harm than good by promoting a proper colony in New Amsterdam. Settlers would require constant support and protection—both of

which cost money—and the more there were, the trickier it would be for the Company to maintain its authority. Besides, settlers would inevitably squabble with the Indians over land and livestock, jeopardizing the flow of furs into the company's storehouses.

As a factory, New Amsterdam seemed a far sounder proposition. Because the laborintensive drudgery of preparing furs for market could be done by the native inhabitants, the colony would be able to get along very nicely with a skeleton staff of salaried officials plus a small number of hired artisans, soldiers, and laborers. A few husbandmen and farmers could keep it supplied with fresh food (just as, for example, the company maintained cattle herds on Bonaire to feed Curacao). Employees wouldn't expect the company to provide much in the way of amenities, either. They would sleep in company barracks, work with company tools and equipment, and eat in the company mess. Nor would the company have to be particular about who they were: they needn't be Dutch, and they surely didn't need to be respectable. It wasn't even essential for the company to have all of them on the payroll: anyone, strictly speaking, could go to New Amsterdam and deal in furs—as long as they sold them to the company, at the company's price, and bought their trade goods at the company's stores.

Thus the little community that gathered on Manhattan in 1626 was a hybrid—something more than what a majority of West India Company directors intended yet something less than what many of its inhabitants must have hoped, a confused mix of private and public aspirations, of commerce and colonization, of employees and settlers. It wasn't the most solid of foundations.