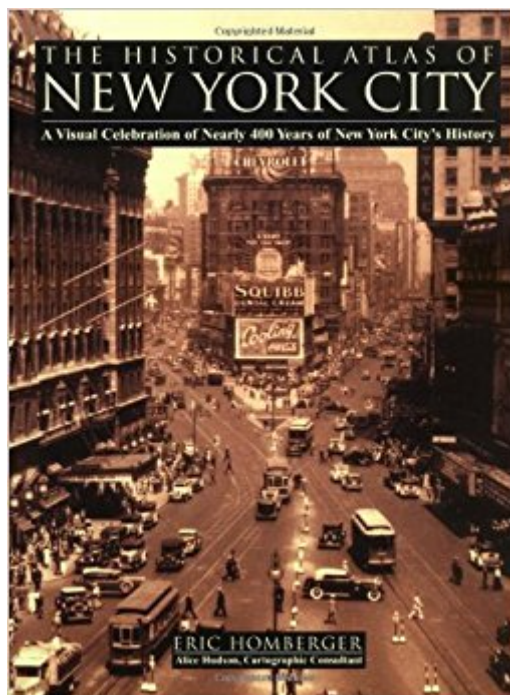




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# **The Historical Atlas Of New York City: A Visual Celebration Of Nearly 400 Years Of New York City's History**



## Synopsis

A New York Public Library Outstanding Reference Book A visual celebration of nearly 400 years of New York City's history. To celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of Greater New York, what Alfred Kazin calls "a treasure of a book" is now a gorgeous paperback. The New York Times Book Review raved that The Historical Atlas of New York City "may be as close to a printed CD-ROM as paper can get." Now, this visual cornucopia of full-color maps, charts, photographs, and drawings covering four hundred years of the city's history is a trade paperback. Neighborhood by neighborhood, the Atlas takes the reader back through history, detailing such crucial events as the initial settlement of 270 people in thirty log houses; John Jacob Astor's meteoric rise from humble fur trader to the richest and most powerful man in the city; Frederick Law Olmsted's design for Central Park; and the fascinating ethnic mix of modern Queens. For both history buffs and the twenty-five million people who visit New York each year, The Historical Atlas of New York City is the guide to America's first city.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Holt Paperbacks (May 15, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805060049

ISBN-13: 978-0805060041

Product Dimensions: 8.3 x 0.5 x 10.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,342,781 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in [Books > Travel > United States > New York > New York City](#) #822 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historical Maps](#) #1083 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historical Geography](#)

## Customer Reviews

Eric Homberger's The Historical Atlas of New York City shows what can be achieved within a very narrow frame of discussion. With just one city to depict, Homberger explores the rich variety of details in the city's 400-year history with vivid drawings and illustrations as well as beautifully rendered maps. The atlas takes on the geologic history of New York, major eras (Indian, Dutch, and British), and the formative 19th century, as well as the consolidation of Greater New York,

neighborhood histories of Coney Island and Greenwich Village, and the Big Apple exploits of 1945 through 1996. But there's room for the small stuff, too, such as the political and cultural role of New York's taverns in the late 1700s. --Stephanie Gold

"Atlas" is almost a misnomer for this encyclopedic overview of the history of New York City. Homberger (American studies, Univ. of East Anglia; *Scenes from the Life of a City: Corruption and Conscience in Old New York*, LJ 9/1/94) details the growth and development of the Big Apple from earliest times, with attention to geological formation, pre-Colonial settlement, and transformation to first city of the young republic. Detailed color maps abound, accompanied by a running commentary of major historical and cultural eras. Many of the most detailed maps are rendered schematically for easier reading. Each period treated features historical photos and illustrations along with accompanying map(s). Some of the best-known aspects of the city, e.g., the UN, Rockefeller Center, receive individual treatment, as do neighborhoods such as Harlem, Greenwich Village, the Lower East Side, and Chinatown. Two fascinating illustrations are stylized diagrams of Broadway, the longest street in the city, and Fifth Avenue, arguably the city's main street. A detailed, illustrated chronology of important events in the city's history concludes the volume. A visual delight; highly recommended for all libraries. Edward B. Cone, *New York City* Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It would be impossible to do justice to the history of New York City in a couple of hundred pages, so approaching this book with realistic expectations is important. With that in mind, this book is a wonderful overview of a fascinating metropolis, beginning with the formation of the land mass and continuing through its inhabitation by the Manahatta, the Dutch, the Brits and the Americans. Key historical eras are covered including the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and many areas of interest are addressed such as immigration, politics, sports, the arts and architecture. There are many photographs, drawings, charts and maps, and I appreciated that the scales were similar so that a reader can compare various maps easily. Articles are well-written and graphics are clean and well-designed. I would call this more an historical almanac of NYC, but whatever you call it, it is a fun and interesting read.

Thank you very much!

Given as a gift to a NYC native. He liked it.

Though a few facts are inaccurate here and there, the general look and presentation of this book makes it an absolute pleasure to read through. It's not a page for page heart-stopping, boring narrative of historical facts, but rather a full color 400 year history of the greatest city in the world: New York City! Includes maps, authentic photos, amusing stories and very interesting accounts of the evolution of the region. You will enjoy it.

This has been my "give-to" book of New York city history for quite a while: that is, what I hand to house guests who want a quick tour of the city's history. I enjoy looking through it myself -- it is great fun to read, the maps and graphics are highly illuminating, the text is engaging, and the book is well organized. Some reviews cite errors, and I know that in at least some cases those citations are accurate (Rogers and Hart did NOT write "Oklahoma"). The errors, however, seem to me pretty small change for a very good popular history of the city.

I agree with Timothy Durkin's December 1999 customer review that this book contains a number of errors and inconsistencies, but my judgment is not as harsh. I also believe a great deal of information that should appear in a historical atlas about the city is inexcusably omitted. However, this is an appealing, informative book and makes for enjoyable reading and reference. Insofar as positive attributes, the book contains wonderful graphics and color reproductions; is printed on good quality, non-glare paper; and, for a paperback, is well bound. Insofar as flaws, they are both minor and major. Minor flaws consist of editorial oversights such as the misstatement on page 176 that the Broadway musical OKLAHOMA! was written by Rodgers & Hart when it was written by Rodgers & Hammerstein, and the photograph on page 146 reproduced in reverse. (Looking south toward the Flatiron Building, Madison Square Park should be on the left and the World Trade Center Towers should be on the right). Major flaws consist of omission of maps or other graphics pertaining to vanished landmarks such as Jones Wood, an open space on the upper East side once considered as the site for Central Park; Chelsea when it was a country estate; and the Five Points. I had hoped to see maps of large 18th and 19th century upper Manhattan tract holdings; of the boundaries of the Battery before and after Castle Clinton went from island fortification to part of the mainland; of the gradual expansion by landfill of the Manhattan shoreline; and of unique streets and alleys, long vacated. Those, too, are absent. A conflict is presented by the maps of the DeLancey farms on pages 60-61. On page 60, Division St. is shown to traverse the property, but on page 61 it is absent. According to Burrows & Wallace's GOTHAM, Division St. was the boundary separating the

DeLancey and Rutgers estates, hence the derivation of the name [see GOTHAM page 178]. If Burrows & Wallace are correct, the presence of Division St. on page 60 is error. Finally, although not mentioned by the author, the Dutch house appearing on page 30 reappears in subsequent renditions on pages 56 and 62. The house is readily identifiable by its facade numbering scheme. This may be a minor point, but one, I would have thought, worthy of note.

I just finished the Historical Atlas and while the book does a great job of touching on so many subjects in such a small space, it leaves a little to be desired because it does not focus on any one point in the city's development enough. I would have enjoyed the book more if it had a little more detail on how landmarks came to be where they are, and what the political and social culture of the city was at different time points that influenced the way the city developed. I suppose that wasn't the book's intent, though. Also, it would be nice to get a follow up chapter on the city's continued development since 1994. Overall, I thought the book was a good intro to NYC history, but I think I'm going to try a more in-depth history to fill in some gaps.

Mr. Homberger's book, as the subtitle explains, is a VISUAL celebration. And on that level, the book is highly successful. In other words, don't expect any in-depth, thorough analysis of 400 years of NYC history. (For that, read Burrows and Wallace's GOTHAM.) To me, the sections dealing with pre-Revolutionary War New York are the most valuable, and Ms. Hudson's artwork is at its best there. This book is a great introduction to NYC history. I've lent my copy to several people over the years, and I return to it, again and again. Read, learn and enjoy. Rocco Dormarunno  
Author of The Five Points

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