

THE
CITY OF

NEW YORK

A
PHOTOGRAPHIC
JOURNEY
— INTO THE —
DAZZLING
PAST
— OF A —
METROPOLIS

THAT NEVER CEASES
TO AMAZE

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NIEUW AMSTERDAM OFTE NIEUW IORX OPT





THE PERFECT BAY

New York has never seemed closer. We hardly think twice about a weekend trip to the Big Apple. But America used to be incredibly far away. And earlier still, albeit only twenty or so generations ago, it didn't even exist, at least not for us Europeans. All that separated us from the Far East, or so we thought, was a vast expanse of navigable water. To our surprise, there was an entire continent in the way. Initially, it was of little interest: all we wanted was a passage to Asia.

Captain Giovanni da Verrazzano was the first to explore the east coast of North America in his search for that obscure passage. The Italian entered the bay of New York in 1524. Shaped like an hourglass, the tapering part – The Narrows – is now spanned with a monumental bridge bearing his name. Looking across it from our office window, we imagine Verrazzano's boat sailing beneath. What we see instead are container ships and fourteen-deck cruise liners, the latter of which barely fit under the bridge.

Verrazzano did not even disembark. He christened the territory Nouvelle-Angoulême in honor of the French king, his patron, and sailed onwards. His peregrinations ended in Guadeloupe, where he was devoured by cannibals. In 1526, the bay was explored by Captain Gomez, a Portuguese mariner in the service of the Spanish king. He sailed upriver but returned discouraged. Eighty years would elapse before another European ship entered the bay, in 1609. Once more under a foreign commander, the Englishman Henry

M A N
Gelegen
Riu

Staten Eylandt.

Staten Eylandt



A T V S
op de Noot
er



Afzetting der woonwonen der Heeren op de
MANATUS

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| 1. Comp. Bouwrij met de Stoffel | 10. Boven van Tuillier in de Kogel | 37. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 2. Lijck Hoog | 11. Boven van Leikent | 38. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 3. Lijck uerwalle Bouwrij met de Stoffel | 12. Boven van Aertse in de Kogel | 39. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 4. Lijck uerwalle Bouwrij met de Stoffel | 13. Boven van Jan Clatton | 40. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 5. Plantage van Thuis Kintre | 14. Boven van David de Brouwer | 41. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 6. Plantage van de Leeuw | 15. Boven van Hendrick de Brouwer | 42. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 7. Plantage van de Leeuw | 16. Boven van Geynggyn | 43. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 8. Plantage van de Leeuw | 17. Boven van Geynggyn | 44. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 9. Plantage van de Leeuw | 18. Boven van Geynggyn | 45. Boven van Geynggyn |
| 10. Plantage van de Leeuw | 19. Boven van Geynggyn | |
| 11. Plantage van de Leeuw | 20. Boven van Geynggyn | |
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| 34. Plantage van de Leeuw | 43. Boven van Geynggyn | |
| 35. Plantage van de Leeuw | 44. Boven van Geynggyn | |
| 36. Plantage van de Leeuw | 45. Boven van Geynggyn | |

- A: de Twee Imperiumen
B: Corvus Alleen
C: Seng Alleen
D: Seng Alleen
E: Seng Alleen
F: Seng Alleen

THE PERFECT BAY



Hudson. On this occasion, however, the voyage was not funded by a king but a capitalist enterprise: the Dutch East India Company. Hudson's *Halve Maene* [Half Moon] sailed northwards for days, along the river that now bears his name, before the captain was forced to concede that he too was unable to find the route to China. But the Dutch stayed.

While Hudson neither reached his goal nor discovered gold or silver, he did find something that was of interest to the Dutch: fur. Fur was an extremely desirable commodity at the time. The Dutch, who lived in poorly heated homes, even wore their fur coats indoors. Until then, they had imported skins from Russia and paid for them in gold. Yet the Indians that Hudson encountered on his trip were willing to barter beaver and otter skins for beads and other inexpensive goods. The fur trade became the engine of colonization, and the beaver still adorns New York's coat of arms. Piracy – robbing Spanish and Portuguese ships that sailed home with their colonial spoils – was another important source of income.



The first European inhabitants of what we know today as New York were not Dutch, but Walloon. They had fled to Holland because the Spaniards were after their Protestant skins. In Amsterdam, they were recruited by the newly formed West India Company and tasked with manning the New World trading outposts. In 1623, the hirelings were deposited on Governors Island, just off the south coast of Manhattan. It seemed safer than the other nearby island, which was larger and densely forested. But before too long they were forced to contend with a shortage of drinking water, especially for the cattle they had brought with them. They consequently moved to the bigger island, which the Lenape Indians named Manaháhtaan or Mana-Hatta. But we are not certain. Nor are we sure of the exact meaning of the name. Some say it can be translated as 'island of many hills', others as 'place to gather wood for making bows', and yet others still as 'island where we got blind drunk'.

Here, the Walloons constructed new houses and were soon joined by other settlers. In its first year alone the trading post exported the skins of 4,000 beavers and 700 otters. By the following year, 1625, a village and a fort had been established. New Amsterdam was born.

Streets were laid. The main thoroughfare being an Indian trail that the settlers widened and called *de brede weg* [the broad road]. Today, it is called Broadway. A wooden defensive wall was built around the northern border of the colony. The street that ran along it was called Walstraat. You can guess what it's called nowadays. Even today, the layout of a large section of New York south of Wall Street is based on that of New Amsterdam – hence the narrow streets. In Dutch times, you would have strolled past low houses; today you walk amongst towering skyscrapers, as though through a canyon deprived of sunlight.

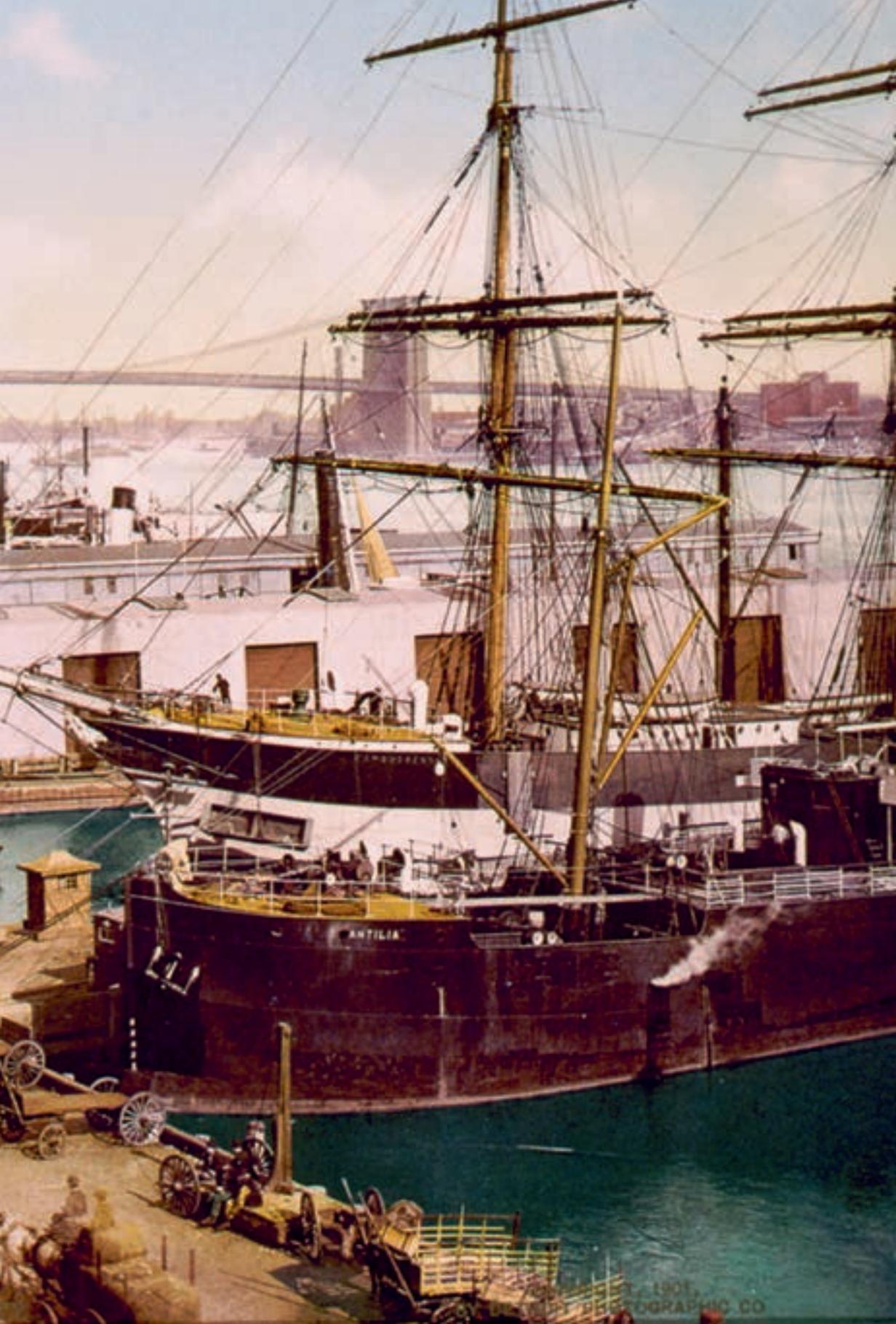
North of the aforementioned wall lay the virgin Manaháhtaan (later known as Manhattan). What a paradise it must have been! Rolling hills, majestic forests with over seventy species of trees, and teeming with deer, bears and other game, glistening rivers full of fish, beavers and otters, swamps with over two hundred kinds of plants, lakes that formed resting places on the migration route of millions of birds, a bay in which dolphins, seals, whales and hundreds of species of fish swam. Lobsters and shellfish for the taking. A veritable cornucopia.

Prior to Hudson's arrival, the Lenape Indians had lived in harmony with this beautiful landscape for hundreds of generations. They had hunting and fishing camps, as well as temporary settlements that now include present-day Chinatown, the Upper East Side, Washington Heights and Inwood. Here, they cultivated corn, beans and pumpkins.

In 1626, Peter Minuit, the director of New Amsterdam, 'purchased' Manhattan from the Indians for merchandise worth 60 guilders at the time.



1870 SOUTH STREET AND BROOKLYN BRIDGE, NEW YORK



Let us turn to more sympathetic ships: the five boats of The Floating Hospital, which provided sea excursions for 5 million New Yorkers between 1866 to 2003. This was a charitable initiative in response to a pressing need. During the late nineteenth century, outbreaks of infectious diseases were regular occurrences in the overpopulated slums. The heavily polluted air caused countless lung and throat disorders. The Floating Hospital ships made three stops in Manhattan and three in Brooklyn. Hundreds of mothers and children would be waiting. On board, the children were examined by doctors and the mothers educated in child-rearing. Milk was distributed free of charge and the ships would sail out to sea. In New Dorp, on the east coast of Staten Island, the Floating Hospital ran an infirmary where the sickest children and their mothers could be deposited. The boats would then sail a further mile out to sea and weigh anchor. The children would go to the upper deck and sniff the sea air which was widely believed to be a curative treatment. The Floating Hospital initially used steamboats for these journeys but later deployed ships pulled by tugboats. The last vessel was moored at Pier 11, at the foot of Wall Street. It was forced to vacate its berth in 2003 because the ferry services needed the pier. And due to the steep increase in docking fees, the Floating Hospital was unable to find an alternative berth. While the sea excursions are now consigned to the past, the Floating Hospital is still operational. It is now a network of clinics in poorer neighborhoods, focusing on healthcare for families living in shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence. ☹





ARRIVAL "OLYMPIC" 6/21/11







FROM GRID PLAN TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, New York was a cosmopolitan enclave in an almost homogeneous Anglo-Saxon country. In 1810, the French consul reported: “Its inhabitants, who are for the most part foreigners and made up of every nation except Americans, so to speak, have in general no mind for anything but business. New York might be described as a permanent fair in which two-thirds of the population is always being replaced, where huge business deals are being made... and where luxury has reached alarming heights.”

New York had 96,000 inhabitants at the time. The city grew more or less unplanned but remained concentrated on the south side of Manhattan. The remainder of the island consisted of forests, hills, rivers, swamps and lakes, farms in the fertile valleys, villas and villages, such as Greenwich, and hamlets. Just one year later, the city took a decision that, according to architect historian Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, marked the end of ‘the little old city’ and the beginning of ‘the great modern metropolis’: the gridiron, or grid plan, was approved.

The city needed to take action if it wanted to successfully steer its rapid expansion. With the grid plan they opted for efficiency: horizontally running streets, numbered from south to north, traversed by vertical avenues, numbered from east to west. And voilà, Manhattan was ready to be filled. The appearance of present-day New York continues to be defined by the grid

LIBERTY
ENLIGHTENING THE WORLD.







On the Beach,
Coney Island, N. Y.







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ON EARTH





THE PERFUME OF CONEY ISLAND

“Can I smell Coney Island?” I ask the salesgirl. She sprays a cloud of perfume on blotter paper and hands it to me. Hmm... sweet. “It’s inspired by margaritas and caramel,” she says. While the aromas are certainly evocative of Coney Island, I’m missing the main ingredient: sea air. The perfume costs \$178 for a 90-ml bottle. For that price, I can ride the subway to the real Coney Island, back and forth, many times.

The Canarsie Indians called the peninsula *Narrioch*, or ‘place without shadow’. In his book *Delirious New York*, architect Rem Koolhaas described it as “the clitoral appendage at the entrance to the New York Harbor”. The Dutch settlers christened it Coneynen Eylandt [Rabbit Island], which later became Coney Island. It’s a hot Saturday afternoon, an ideal time to explore New York’s clitoris.

The fishing pier is a good starting point. If the weather gods are in a good mood, it’s always insanely crowded. Hundreds of men, women and children stand shoulder-to-shoulder along the railings, all of them fishing. A man cuts open a plastic bag full of worms. A woman fixes a piece of raw chicken into a wirework cage as bait for crabs. At her feet, two toddlers are playing with live crabs. You have to watch your step. We pick our way through glistening fish heads and guts, rancid bait, squashed fries, a puddle of sticky ice cream and scraps of watermelon and coconut. A woman carves a pork roast and starts filling sandwiches. Another prepares hot dogs. You’d think they



018313. CAMEL RIDING, CONEY ISLAND, N.Y.

