

A modern city, full of history: worksheet n°1

History of New York City

Early history of New York (pre-colonial era until the 17th century)

In the pre-colonial era the area of present-day New York City was inhabited by various bands of Algonquian tribes of Native Americans, including the Lenape.

An Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano discovered New York Harbor in 1524. In 1609 an Englishman, Henry Hudson, sailed up the Hudson River.

Then in 1624 the Dutch founded the first permanent trading post. In 1626 the first governor, Peter Minuit, bought the island of Manhattan from the Native Americans. The Dutch built a little town on the southern tip of Manhattan Island. It was called New Amsterdam and it flourished by selling skins. The settlers sold otter, beaver, mink and sealskins. However New Amsterdam was a tiny town with only about 1,500 inhabitants in the mid-17th century. In New Amsterdam buildings were, at first, made of wood but in time houses of stone or brick were erected. In 1653 a wall of wooden stakes was built across Manhattan Island to protect the little town of New Amsterdam. The street next to it was called Wall Street. Meanwhile in 1647 Peter Stuyvesant (c. 1592-1672) became governor of New Amsterdam. In 1653 Stuyvesant established a municipal government for New Amsterdam based on those of Dutch cities.

However in 1664 an English fleet arrived. Fearing the English would sack the colony Stuyvesant surrendered. The Dutch briefly recaptured New Amsterdam in 1673 but they lost it to the English again in 1674. This time it was renamed New York in honor of the Duke of York, brother of King Charles II.

18th Century New York

By 1700 New York had a population of almost 5,000 and it continued to grow rapidly. By 1776 the population was about 25,000. In 1800 New York City had about 60,000 inhabitants. In the 18th century the main industry in New York was milling. Grain was ground into flour by windmills. Meanwhile New York Merchants also traded with Britain and the West Indies.

During the 18th century amenities in New York improved. The first newspaper the New York Gazette began publication in 1725. The first theater in New York opened in 1732. Kings College (now Columbia University) was founded in 1754.

In 1776 George Washington withdrew from New York leaving the British army to occupy it. Then on 21 September 1776 New York was struck by a great fire, which destroyed hundreds of houses. Altogether about one quarter of the city was destroyed. The British continued to occupy New York until the end of the war. George Washington entered New York on 25 November 1783. On 20 April 1789 Washington took his presidential oath at Federal Hall.

The Bank of New York was founded in 1784. Until 1792 trading in stocks and shares took place informally in and around Wall Street. However in that year a group of merchants signed an agreement to only deal with each other. That was the beginning of the New York Stock Exchange.

19th Century New York City

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

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

However in 1835 fire destroyed much of the old district of New York but it was soon rebuilt

From the 1830s horse drawn buses ran in the streets of New York. The first elevated railway in New York was built between 1867 and 1870 by Charles I. Harvey (1829-1912). It began carrying passengers in 1868. It was soon followed by many other elevated railways or 'els'. The first line of the New York subway opened in 1904.

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In the early 20th century Broadway became famous for its theaters. Meanwhile the Statue of Liberty was unveiled by President Grover Cleveland on 28 October 1886. Then in 1888 New York City was struck by a terrible blizzard and 400 people froze to death

In the mid-19th century many Germans and Irish went to live in New York. In the late 19th century many Italians arrived and in the 1890s many Eastern European Jews came to New York .In 1892 the United States Immigration Station opened on Ellis Island. Between 1892 and its closure in 1954 almost 17 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island.

Meanwhile in 1898 the 5 boroughs were united under a single municipal government. The city of New York had a population of 3.4 million.

20th Century New York City

In the 20th century New York City continued to grow. By 1980 New York had a population of 7 million.

Many famous buildings were built in New York City in the early 20th century. The Flat Iron Building was built in 1902. New York Public Library opened in 1911. The Woolworth Building was erected in 1913. The same year, 1913, Grand Central Station opened. The Chrysler building was erected in 1930 and the Empire State Building was erected in 1931. Also in 1931 the General Electric Building was built. The Rockefeller Center was built in 1932-1940.

World Fairs were held in New York in 1939-40 and 1963-64. However in 1965 there were also race riots in Harlem. Also in 1965 New York suffered a power blackout. Another blackout happened in 1977.

21st Century New York City

In 2001 tragedy struck when the World Trade Center was destroyed in a terrorist attack. However New York recovered from the attack. Today New York is still a busy port. It is also a major industrial and financial center. New York City is also, of course, an important tourist destination. Today the population of New York City is 8.2 million.

From <http://www.localhistories.org/newyork.html>

Tasks

1) *Read the text carefully*

2) *Using the text, complete the timeline of the history of New York City including the following periods/dates and the corresponding events/facts: pre-colonial era/1524/1609/1626/1647/1664/1700/1754/1776/1783/1789/1792/1800/1811/1820/1860/1868/1886/1892/late 19th c./1898/1904/1913/1931/1939-40/1963 -1964/1965/1977/2001/2012.*

3) *Answer the following questions:*

a) *To what extent is New York City a recent city?*

b) *Distinguish the periods when New York City area was under Dutch, English and American rule. Draw lines to distinguish the first two periods on your timeline.*

c) *Show that New York City has a history full of events.*