

Timeline of the Lower East Side

A Thin Green Line-Time line of The Lower East Side-Tompkins Square Area

Compiled by Carolyn Ratcliffe

Prior 1609- Manates Indians occupied Manhatta Island- they were a branch of the Mumsee/Lenape/Algonquin Tribes who inhabited the area from what is now Virginia to the St. Lawrence River in Canada.

Settlement

1609 Henry Hudson discovers/sails into New York Harbor

1616 Dutch West India Company (subsidiary of Dutch East India Company) formed to establish the Colony of New Netherlands with the capitol on Manhattan Island called New Amsterdam.

Precedent set for the development of NYC as commercial enterprise

Unique to other settlements founded on religious/utopian ideas

1623 The Neuw Netherland delivers 30 Protestant families to Manhatta.

Physical description of the tidal estuary now called the Lower East Side

Area bounded by 14th St. North, The Bowery West, Frankfort St. South, and East River East.

Salt marsh estuary-surrounded by hills (Spartina patens- Salt meadow cod grass) just north of the walled settlement of New Amsterdam

Canal street – swampy area that fed into Collect Pond-the site of Foley

Weckqeuasgeek (a Mahican tribe in Yonkers) Trail leads north across the Island– and later called the Bowery by the Dutch because of the 12 bouweries, (Dutch for farms) allotted to settlers along the road.

Area important for resources for native tribes and settlers

Two canals downtown, Heere Gracht and Beaver Gracht([Broad St.](#) and [Beaver St.](#) today)

1626 Peter Minuet purchases the Island of Manhattan from the Manatus Indians for the equivalent of \$24.00 in goods-wampum bead, blankets, knives & hatchets.

The City Emerges

1638 Twelve land grants to create villages to serve as centers of commerce
Corlear's Hook

1639 Dutch plantations lined the East river

Difficulty in attracting settlers to villages versus farms

William Keift Dir. Gen. sparks the "Year of Blood" – native uprising. This marked change in settlement from farms to villages. Keift recalled.

Development

1647 Pieter Stuyvesant replaces Keift as Governor of New Amsterdam and enforces strict rules cleaning up New Amsterdam.

New Netherlands developed into commercial trading port

1651 Stuyvesant purchases land in Lower East Side for farm

1663 Four bouweries developed to East River

Forging Alliances

1663 English take New Netherlands and rename it New York —there were 1,500 residents in the City at that time. The English Governor, Nicolls, asked inhabitants for allegiance and in exchange commerce and honoring of existing land grants keep status quo with original inhabitants. He continued the Dutch system of local government -the pattern of land grants and patroonships continued. Jews and Quakers were no longer actively persecuted.

1673 Dutch take colony back, call it New Orange

1674 Dutch trade New Orange to English for the colony of Surinam, valued for spice trade.

1682 Colonel Thomas Dongon, an Irish Catholic, succeeds Andros as governor and grants "charter of Liberties and priviledges" allowing an election to be held for an Assembly which would deliberate with the Council (appointed by the Governor) and the Governor. Province of NY divided into nine counties-New York (Manhattan), Kings, Brooklyn, Richmond, and Queens.

1683 First Roman Catholic mass held in NY.

1685 James II ascends the throne of England – NY transits from a proprietary colony to become a royal province. James refuses to approve Dongon's charter and forms a dominion of New England, sending Andros as Governor-general to Boston and Captain Francis Nicolson become Lieutenant Governor over NY. The governor makes all appointments even down to the clerk of the market.

1689 James the II overthrown by William of Orange. Andros is arrested, and Jacob Leisler, the richest man in NY, seizes control of Fort James in the name of William of Orange. He refuses to accede to the new Governor's

representative, Major Richard Ingoldsby.

1702-08 Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, becomes governor in New York. He was notorious for appearing in public wearing his wife's clothes. New Yorker petitioned the Queen for a new governor.

1715-1719 Governor Hunter settles most of the colony's outstanding financial problems and establishes a basis for cooperation and coalition, lasting for nearly 20 years.

Farms And Towns Over the next century the city moves north

Lower East Side due to swampy land remains bucolic. Dockyards built on East River

Delancey buys up Greenwich Village and much of Lower East Side.

Revolutionary War

1776 New York City is briefly capitol of the new country.

Bunker discovered on Avenue C and Eighth Street. Delancey has to relinquish his property because of his ultra-royalist sympathies during the American Revolution. Lower East Side subdivided into parcels and sold.

Bowling Green and Battery Park

Collect Pond – Fresh Water -1st battle over open space

Collect Pond is polluted by tanneries and potteries surrounding it's perimeter.

1788 plan promoted to preserve pond and surroundings as parkland

L'Enfant commissioned to design park, but plan is defeated as it is thought that the pond even with a bridge, slows expansion and development of the

northern section of Manhattan.

1798 Outbreak of diphtheria is blamed on water from Collect Pond

1803 after twenty-year battle commercial interests prevail and pond filled- this is first public works project in NYC. The hills around what is now First and second Avenues were leveled and used to fill Collect Pond.

Lower East Side Resort Gardens built to offer out door entertainment to the public

Ranelagh Gardens located on Broadway between Worth and Duane which would have placed it on the edge of the Collect Pond (presently Foley Square) was built to copy the famous pleasure gardens in London by the same name.

Vauxhall Gardens located at site of present day Astor Place and the Cube. JohnJacob Astor- purchases large tracts of land on Lower East Side, including Vauxhall Gardens for development. He leases land to developers in the building boom to house the increasing flood of immigrants to New York.

Richmond

Early 1800's Lower East Side Stuyvesant's Meadows

Knoll on East 3rd St. between Ave. C & D. East River comes to Ave. D.

Shipyards-multiply along the East River's banks-along with any industry related to the shipping industry-chandlers, carpenters, iron works canvas/sail and rope makers, etc. Many of the Yankee clipper ships that captured trade for the US merchant's were built in these yards.

Stagecoach Lines-begin to cross the area making it more accessible

The Grid Plan – Establishment of Public Squares

1807 Commissioner's Plan—future development of entire island is laid out

1811 Grid Plan – Establishment of Public Pleasure Gardens

The Lower East Side 1820's-1850's A syndicate purchases Delancey farm and squares off lots to sell them.

1828 Broadway extends as far north as E. 10th St. and the Common Council orders it opened at E.14th St. from Bowery to North River

1829 Peter Stuyvesant, grandson of Pieter Stuyvesant offers City Tompkins Square property –previously known as Stuyvesant meadows and shown as the Market Commons extending from Ave A to the East River from E. 10th Street to East Seventh Street on earlier maps.

Entire marshy area is filled in and ship building industry takes off.

1834 Tompkins Square Park established and the City spent \$93,000 to purchase the swampy land from its owners, to drain, fill and grade it, and to plant trees and other vegetation. Higher taxes imposed on properties abutting the park were expected to reimburse the public treasury for its investment. The priority given development was well expressed in a report to the Board of Aldermen which warned that if work should 'be delayed for an indefinite period, then indeed will this already most unfortunate part of the Island be doomed to utter despair.' The city and local land owners anticipated that the rather elegant districts that have been developing a few blocks to the west—along Second Avenue and Lafayette and Bond Streets—would expand eastward, drawn by the new amenity.

1837 Panic of 1837 Instead, the housing market collapsed as the economic DEPRESSION swept the city and the nation. No grand homes would grace Tompkins Square until the late 1840s, and then only along its northern border, Tenth Street. But by mid-century, demographic changes in a 10-acre park, becomes a recreation site second in importance in NYC only to the

Battery.

1846 Mexican American war- Regiment uses Park as a Parade Grounds and encampment. Irish dockworkers settle in the area which becomes known as the "Dry Dock"

1847 Germans arrive in large numbers as political refugees from the aftermath of revolution that took place in Germany. They use Tompkins Sq. Park for music, sledding, skating, and develop Weisser Gartens (the Atlantic and the Winter Gardens and the area takes on another local name "Kleindeutschland".

1863 Civil War Draft Riots

1878 Olmstead begins redesign of park

Central Park and its impact on Residents and Parks in Lower East Side

Parks movement mid-century sweeps US

Creation of Public Pleasure grounds in City – Country's first was Central Park (as compared to Private pleasure gardens such as Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens in the previous century).

Remoteness and Lack of utilitarian design made park not usable by Lower East Side residents

Immigration in Lower East Side

During most of the 1840s, Europe underwent many difficulties. Bad harvests over several years, culminated in the potato blight of 1845-46, bringing widespread privation, causing many to starve, particularly in Ireland.

Economic depression fueled the misery of discontent among the poor spreading to the middle class as well causing many to immigrate to America, particularly New York City, seeking safety and the opportunity for a better

life. In February 1848 an uprising in Paris turned became a revolution, ejecting the French king, Louis Philippe, who fled to Britain. The number of immigrants swelled as the spirit of revolution spread throughout Europe. Quite a few German and Austrian cities were torn asunder by crowds of the poor, students and members of the liberal middle class, who stormed palaces and government offices, demanding basic reforms. Berlin and Vienna were stunned by the Revolutions of 1848. Rulers of both cities caved in to the demands of their angry subjects and promising constitutions with representational governments. Conservative governments fell, with even Metternich fleeing to Britain. Liberals called for a national convention to draft a constitution for all of Germany. The National Assembly, consisting of about 800 delegates from throughout Germany, met in a church in Frankfurt, the Paulskirche, from May 1848 to March 1849 for this purpose.

1846-1848 Irish immigrants flood Lower East Side fleeing the Great Hunger

Grace Church designed by James Renwick and built in 1846 at the intersection of Broadway and East 10th Street.

1846 German Evangelical Lutherans found St. Marks Evangelical Lutheran Church at 350 E. 6th St. and purchase the Methodist church on the corner of E. 9th St. and Ave for Trinity Lutheran church(1848).

1848 The Irish Catholic immigrants purchase land from Julia Winthrop, a Stuyvesant heir to build St. Brigid designed and by Irish American Architect, Charles Patrick Keely, a student of Pugin. Using laborer from the Shipyards in the neighborhood. He memorializes them by using casts of their faces to represent the 12 apostles placed above the corbels between the interior arches.

German Catholic immigrants build Most Holy Redeemer on East Third Street between Avenues A & B, while the German Lutherans build St. Marks on East Sixth Street between First and Second Aves and purchase a Methodist Chapel on the corner of East Ninth Street and Avenue B which becomes

Trinity Lutheran Church. Neighborhood has many two story wood frames with small gardens and the neighborhood becomes unofficially known as Kleindeutchland. The Bavarians start a Cigar manufacturing business which is successful and later leads to later importing skilled Hispanic workers from the Caribbean islands-Cuba, Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo, to work in their factories on the Lower East Side in the 1870's.

1850 Tenements are built on the south side of Tompkins Square to house the rising population of immigrants from Germany and a German Jewish Congregation, Anshe Chesed, builds the largest synagogue structure in US, the first one for Lower East Side and the oldest surviving synagogue building in NYC at 172-76 Norfolk St.(today's Angel Orensanz Foundation)

1852 Beth Hamedrash Hagadol formed as first congregation of Russian Jews in US-(has occupied 60 Norfolk St. synagogue since 1885 which was designated as NYC Landmark in 1967).

1857 Depression & Panic-High rate of unemployment and homelessness-many gather in Tompkins Square park- march on Wall Street on November 6th, Workingmen's Committee formed and On Nov. 11th Bread Riot results.

1859-Pogroms (Anti-semitic riots) begin in Russian Empire-Odessa, Ukraine and increase in immigration of Russian Jews to New York as they flee the pogroms.

1863 Draft Riots occur in and around Tompkins Square Park.

White working class mobs riot against draft laws, which allowed working class to be conscripted while well to-do could purchase draft exemptions for \$300. The riots spread to the well to do areas of New York, with attacks on African Americans and well to do establishments. After the Civil War- English and Dutch abandoned area.

1865 Tompkins Square Park renovated after being used by fighting 69th as a

military encampment during the Civil War.

1866 NY State Legislature ordered NYC To remove all trees and obstructions removed from the Park for use as a Parade Grounds for the 7th Regiment National Guard –neighborhood residents still continues to use park for socialization/gathering place after work and on weekends

1870 More Tenements built to house new immigrants. Bavarians bring over Caribbean immigrants to work in the growing Cigar industry.

Italians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians and others arrive fleeing wars, pogroms and general political oppression throughout Europe.

1873 NYC Parks department plants trees around perimeter of park

Lower East Side is composed of 1,400 acres or 450 city blocks with density of 330,000 per sq mile. ("Low Life" Luc Sante) Average 3-room apt. Housed 10-15 people

1874 On January 13th of that year, the Labor riot in Tompkins Square Park- 10,000 workers from all over New York City gathered in Tompkins Square Park to protest the economic hardships prevalent at the time due to unemployment. THERE WAS SERIOUS DEPRESSION IN 1873, WHICH WAS WHY THERE WAS SO MUCH UNEMPLOYMENT. They had originally been given permit to gather, then police rescinded permit when such a large number o people turned out. Protestors were beaten with clubs and driven from the park. Local legend has it that Eugene Debs hides in the basement of St. Brigid to escape police as they arrest protestors.

1876 June 3rd-5000 residents gather in Tompkins Square park demanding that Park be repaired and returned to the public. First Boys Club established across from Tompkins Square Park

1878 NY State Legislature- reinstates all 10 acres of Tompkins Square as Parkland-A Tompkins Square Union composed of local residents concerned

about the park was formed and the 7th Regiment leaves Park for good. Bialystoke Synagogue formed in Lower East Side (purchased the Willet Ave. Methodist Episcopal church in 1905 and have remained there)

1881-84 Pogroms-Tsar Alexander III assignation blamed on Jewish conspiracy, pogroms intensify across Russian provinces, particularly Poland and Ukraine. Many flee to US to settle in Lower East Side.

1884 Home for Newsboys built on the corner of East 8th St and Ave B across from St. Brigid by the Children's Aid Society.

1887 Eldridge St. Synagogue designed by Peter and Francis Herter (recently restored to its former glory) and operates as functioning synagogue and museum today)

1890 Jacob Riis, Danish born Newspaper reporter publishes a book of photographs, How the Other Half Lives shocking the world by showing the deprivation and poverty that many lived in on the Lower East Side.

1894 One of NYC's first Children's playgrounds established in Tompkins square Park built by the Outdoor Recreation League founded by Lillian Wald and Charles Stover.

1898 First Ukrainian Catholic Mass in US held at St. Brigid Church on Ave. B and E. 8th St.

Gardens

Early 1900s First creation of "playgrounds" and new Park movement

1902 Children's Gardening Movement –Fannie Griscom Parsons initiates Childrens' Farm Garden at De Witt Clinton Park and movement spreads throughout NYC. Reform era Vacant Lot Cultivation Associations.

1903 Seward Park- Children's Farm garden started

1904 June 15th- The Slocum Disaster-The St. Marks Lutheran Church charters The General Slocum, a steamboat, for the annual church picnic at Locust Point, Long Island Sound and 1,358 church members, mostly women and children board the ferry at the East Third St. docks. Fire breaks out on board by Hells Gate on The East River and the ferry cannot dock on the NYC side of the river without the fires spreading through the lumber yards and oil tanks. The ferry is beached on North Brother Island and 1,021 people are dead. Many of the fathers, husbands, and brothers were lining the shore as the disaster unfolded. Most of the Germans moved uptown after the disaster to Yorkville.

1905 Tomkins Square Library –was first Carnegie Library built in NYC overlooking the Park.

1910 Anshei Merseritz synagogue(e. 6th St. Synagogue) –built on E. 6th St. between Avenues First and A, around the corner from Tompkins Square Park.

1913 Children's Farm Garden opens at Corlear's Hook-3/4 acre garden with signs in English and Yiddish.

1918-1924 Alfred E. Smith and Robert Moses

Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, appoints Robert Moses NY State Parks Commissioner.

1927 Christadora House, a settlement house, builds 19 stories Art Deco high-rise on E. 9th And Ave B (supposedly first building in New York City built or floated on a cement platform rather than pilings) 1930's The Destruction of Tenements for Public Housing, Parkways, playgrounds and projects.

1934 Urban Reform Movement and Robert Moses -Moses' vision begins to shape the Lower East Side Robert Moses appointed NYC Parks Commissioner by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

1935 Lower East Side starts to de-populate except for low-income housing projects. FIRST HOUSES(1936), Vladeck Houses-(1940), Jacob Riis (1949), Lillian Wald Houses-(1949), La Guardia (1957), Baruch(1959). Residue from demolished tenements served as fill in the East River-in 1934 the East River Docks were on Ave D-captured by Bernice Abbott in her WPA photography project there is photograph of boats docked at Ave D and E. 9th St.

1936 Robert Moses orders renovation and redesign of Tompkins Square Park and drastically changes the appearance of the park employing a standardized design replicated in other park throughout the city-dividing passive park areas with trees and benching for seating and contemplation from northern area for active use such as handball, and basket ball courts. Renovations completed in 1942.

Park deteriorates during WW II due to lack of funding for upkeep.

1950's Juvenile delinquency, gangs and heroin usage become trademarks of Lower East Side and make the Park a battleground between competing groups.

1957 Angry local residents complain to Parks Department about park usage-kids play. Local residents demand larger role in determining park usage. Ball playing anywhere in the park, made it hazardous to sit on a bench. Plans for a ball field in the park were derailed.

1966 Band Shell completed on South side of Tompkins Square Park.

1967 June 30th-The hippies move into the Park, as in Haight Asbury in San Francisco-Love In's. Smoke INS', a riot breaks out between Latinos who want Latin music in the band shell rather than psychedelic. 38 arrested. Gangs, fires, and the neighborhood east of the park become drug infested; particularly E. 2nd Street and East 6th Street are known for heroin dens. (Yuri Kapralov "Once There Was A Village").

1978 The Plant-a-Lot Program-under the direction of Liz Christy, CENYC and a founder of the Green Guerillas, funds development of community parks and gardens such as La Plaza Cultural, All Peoples Garden, and El Bello Amanecer Boriqueño, working with organizations such as Charas el Bohio, The Real Great Society, artist Gordan Matta Clark, community garden organizers Olean Fore and Carmen Pabon.

1987 Homeless encampment in Tompkins Sq. Park A group of homeless set up an encampment in the park to draw attention to the many people made homeless by destruction of Tenements on Lower East Side.

1989 Riot breaks out on Ave B and in Tompkins Sq Park. Many are injured and sue NYC for injuries by Police.

1991 Riot-300 police came to evict the homeless from Tompkins Square Park. A riot ensues, an Ave A store is burned. The neighborhood is cordoned off for a week. The Band shell is demolished, the park closed for a year while it was renovated costing 3 million dollars.

Lower East Side Community Garden Coalition-supports community gardeners who have reclaimed vacant lots and turned them into gardens where local residents grow food, flowers and community. A garden subculture evolves in the Lower East Side with over 60 community gardens existing. They protest the destruction and sale of community gardens by Mayor Rudolph Guliani.

2001 Stipulation agreement signed by the NYOAG Elliot Spitzer and a new York City Corp Council to settle lawsuit brought by the OAG against NYC; 198 gardens are transferred to the NYC Parks department. Thirty six Lower East Side gardens remain of the original 60, saved for the time being(the agreement ends September of 2010).

Present day

Tompkins Square Park has never been more beautiful- the playgrounds have been renovated again, there is 1st Run, NYC's first dog run, now divided into two spaces-one for dogs over 23 lbs. the other for dogs under 23 lbs. Plantings abound around the dog run and the other areas, many serving as memorials to deceased friends and relatives.

The East Village Parks Conservancy

The East Village Parks Conservancy works to fund and restore areas of the park such as the Temperance Fountain by arranging for memorial tiles placed around the fountain. There are still many rock concerts, but there have been no riots since 1991. Art Around the Park and Howl Festival pay homage to the arts and artists who live in the surrounding area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Alex, William "Clavert Vaux: Architect & Planner. New York Ink, Inc. 1994

Auchinschloss, Louis The Hone & Strong Diaries

Black, Mary Louis Old New York in Early Photographs: 196 Prints, 1853-1901 from the Collection of the New York Historical Society. New York ; Dover Publications Inc. 1973

Burns, Ric & James Sanders. Louis New York: An Illustrated History. New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 1999.

Burrows, Edwin G. and Mike Wallace. Louis Gotham: a History of New York City to 1898 new York, Oxford,: Oxford University Press 1999.

Cohen, Paul E. and Augustyn, Robert T. Louis Manhattan in Maps 1527-1995. New York Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. 1997.

Glcikman, Toby & Gene. Louis The New York Red Pages, a Radical Tourist Guide. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984.

Greengold, Jane, Fragments from the Journals of Charles Cooper 1984

Hoff, Barbara A. Louis "Greening The City Streets, The Story of Community Gardens Claridge Books 1990

Homberger, Eric and Alice Hudson Cartographic Consultant, Louis The Historical Atlas of New York City: a Visual Celebration of Newly 400 Years of New York City's History. New York Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Jackson, Kenneth T., Ed. Louis The Encyclopedia of New York City New Haven & London

Keating, Anne Durkin and Eugene P. Moehruibng and Joel A,. Tarr. Louis Infrastructure and Urban Growth in the Nineteenth Century Chicago: Public Works Historical Society

Kouwenhoven, John A., The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York: An Essay in Graphic History. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1953. New Preface copyright c. 1972 By John A Kouwenhoven.

Koolhaas, Rem Delirious New York, 197?

Landers, John.(from the collection of and commentary by) Twelve Historical New York City Street and Transit Maps, from 1860-1967. Flushing NY H&M; Productions II Inc., 1997.

McDonnell, Mary Tompkins Square, Past and Present, Tompkins Square News 1918

Miller Terry Greenwich Villager and How It Got That Way. Crown Publishers 1990

Newspaper/Magazine Articles (some unsigned from the Museum of the city of New York)

Water Pumped; Not Used, Aaron Burr's Waterworks Still Running Twice a

Week, May 26, 1903

Destinies of a Great Bank Depend Upon Aaron Burr's Old Tank 1889

City's old Creeks-Buried for Generations, They Still Flow Deep
Underground January/February 1900

The Water Question, The New York Mirror May 2, 1835

Bowery, Saturday Night, Harper's New Monthly Magazine 1871, Vol. XLI

Daley, Robert Amazing Maze Beneath The City, The New York Times
Magazine Section January 12, 1958

Harrington, John Walker Plan to Rename Square Recalls Governor's Role in
war of 1812 (no date or issue)

Harrington, John Walker Seek To Preserve Tompkins Square, New York
Times June 12, 1938

New York, A Knopf Guide New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994

New York, A Collection from Harper's Magazine New York City: Gallery
Books, An Imprint of W.H. Smith Publishers, Inc. 1991

Sanders, Ronald and Photographs by Edmund V. Gillon, Jr. The Lower East
Side: a Guide to It's Jewish Past in 99 New Photographs New York: Dover
Publications, Inc. 1979

Sante, Luc Lowlife: Lures and Snares of Old New York. New York: Vintage
Books, A Division of Random House, Inc. 1992

Shorto, Russell, The Island at the Center of the World, Doubleday, A Division
of Random House, 2004.

Silver, Nathan, Lost New York; New York: American Legacy Press, 1967

Stern, Robert A.M. Thomas Mellins, David Fishman and Robert A.M. Stern. New York, 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial. New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1995

Starr, Roger Fight to Save The City's Water, New York Times November 26, 1979

Stone, Andrew, "The Parks that Never Were" City Limits, April 1987 p.26-28

Swift, Michael Historical Maps of the United States. London: PRC Publishing, Ltd., 1998. United States: JG Press

Unger, Craig "The Lower East Side, There goes the Neighborhood" New York Magazine March 28, 1984

Valentine, David T. Manuals 1841-1870

Van der Zee, Henri and Barbara A Sweet and Alien land: the Story of the Dutch New York. New York: The Viking Press, 1978.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn and Bill Weinberg ed., Avant Gardening: Ecological Struggle in The City and They World. Brooklyn, NY Autonomedia, 1999.

The Historical Atlas of New York City (p. 16- 20)

[Water Courses under New York City: Broad Street Canal/Heere Graft, Manhattan](#)