

GATEWAY TO  
**AMERICA**

OFFICIAL GUIDES

# The New Amsterdam Trail

Henry Hudson &  
The Dutch Legacy  
in New York





## The New Amsterdam Trail

commemorates the legendary journey of Henry Hudson to New York in 1609, the entrepreneurial spirit of the Dutch and the important role they have played in the formation of the ideas and ideals that still shape New York and America today.

The tour is produced by the National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy and the National Park Service in partnership with the Henry Hudson 400 Foundation.



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## Manhattan circa 1609 and 2009

Eric Sanderson, senior ecologist of the Mannahatta Project of the Wildlife Conservation Society, applied computational geography to 18th century British war maps to visualize the original landscape of Manhattan in the hours before Henry Hudson arrived. "Right on the tip of Manhattan there would have been a sandy beach," says Sanderson. "One of the things that's common through a lot of the accounts is the description of the air. Apparently, it was very sweet smelling. You could smell it for hundreds of miles off shore. There were streams, over 66 miles of streams and about 21 fresh water ponds and salt ponds all over the island."



The original settlers, the Lenni-Lenape, called it Mannahatta or Island of Hills because there were over 500 hills, some as high as 270 feet. "If Mannahatta existed today as it did then, it would be a national park — it would be the crowning glory of American national parks," says Sanderson, also author of *Mannahatta: The National History of New York City*, with illustrations by Markley Boyer (Manhattan, circa 1609 and 2009 on this page).



# Step Into the Past

The New Amsterdam Trail is about a sweep of time in a city in which we keep company with Henry Hudson, the first New Yorkers the Lenni-Lenape, who nurtured the water and the land, and the Dutch traders who bought Mannahatta for 60 guilders to establish a rich commercial port. This step-by-step guide to eight important historic sites of the Dutch settlement tells how each place fits into the arc of New York City history. As you look at the map, the crooked streets of downtown evoke 17th century New Amsterdam.

■ In 1665, the famous Dutch mapmaker **Johannes Vingboons** painted this charming and now iconic watercolor of New Amsterdam, which he adapted from a far less complimentary sketch intended to portray a settlement in dire need of funds from the Dutch West India Company.

Nationaal Archief,  
National Archives of  
The Netherlands





## A Step by Step Guide

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 Approximate area of Lower Manhattan during the earliest Dutch settlement. The island was later enlarged through landfill.  
Map courtesy of the Alliance for Downtown New York

# 1

**Battery Park**  
Waterfront  
Promenade

## ‘A Very Good Harbour’

Four hundred years ago, you would be walking on water here in the Battery. The ground beneath your feet is all landfill.

### ■ In Fact:

Before it was named the Hudson River, the natives called it the **Mohicanituk**. Translated it means *The River That Flows Both Ways*—with a strong incoming tide and a current flowing outward toward the sea.

In September 1609, Henry Hudson and his crew sailed into New York Harbor looking for a new passage to Asia. Instead, what Hudson, an Englishman sailing for the Dutch East India Company, discovered was an unusually well-positioned harbor and a land rich for cultivation with native inhabitants willing to engage in the fur trade. An entry from the ship’s log described it as “a very good harbour for all winds.”

Hudson never found his shorter route to Asia. He died in 1611 when his crew mutinied and set him and his young son John adrift in a small boat in what is now Hudson Bay in Canada. Little did he know that one day a majestic river and a large bay would bear his name and that his voyages, though unsuccessful, would change history.

### Then



### Now

■ From this harbor vista, you can see four national parks: Governors Island, Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty and Castle Clinton.

■ “ They were in the outer reaches of New York Harbor, riding along the coast of Staten Island. Fish streamed thickly around them: salmon, mullet, wraith-like rays. They anchored and went ashore, marveling at primordial oaks and ‘an abundance of blue plums.’ Then, just like that, people appeared. ”

— Russell Shorto  
*The Island at the Center of the World*  
Painting by Gordon Miller



2

**Netherlands Monument**

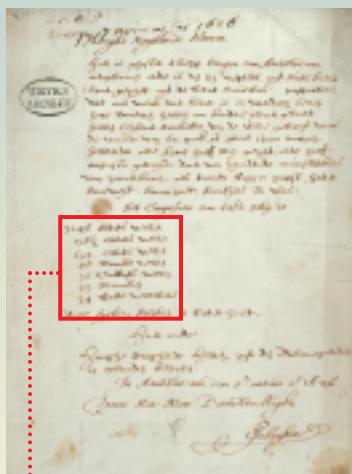
Northeast entrance to Battery Park

# Deal of the Century

This flag pole commemorates the tercentenary of the settlement of New Amsterdam.

**In Fact:**

In 1626, Pieter Schaghen, a Dutch government officer, wrote a letter to his superiors detailing the purchase of Manhattan Island. This document from the collection of the National Archives of The Netherlands, stands today as the only record of the transaction. Schaghen also reported: "... our people are in good spirit and live in peace there ... the women also have borne some children there." His other news included valuable items of trade, especially beaver pelts.

**The cargo:**

7264 BEAVER SKINS  
178 1/2 OTTER SKINS  
48 MINK SKINS  
36 LYNX SKINS  
33 MINKS  
34 WEASEL SKINS

In the years after Henry Hudson's voyage, the Dutch Republic laid claim to a wide swath of the eastern seaboard of North America. By 1624, the first group of settlers arrived in this area, spreading out across a vast region they named New Netherland. Their leader, the entrepreneurial Peter Minuit, recognized that there were too few people dispersed over hundreds of miles.

In a now legendary story, Minuit consolidated New Netherland at the tip of Manhattan and negotiated the 'purchase' of the island from the Lenape for 60 guilders worth of goods—calculated in the 19th century to be \$24.

It is believed by historians that the Lenape considered the act not as a sale, but as an alliance. Nevertheless, from that bit of cultural misunderstanding, New Amsterdam—and New York lore—was born.

**Then****Now**

■ The Netherlands Monument

■ Purchase of Manhattan Island by Peter Minuit. Unidentified artist. New-York Historical Society

# 3

**National  
Museum of  
the American  
Indian**

Across from  
Bowling Green  
Park

## Fort Amsterdam

This was the site of Fort Amsterdam, the first fortification built on Manhattan Island.

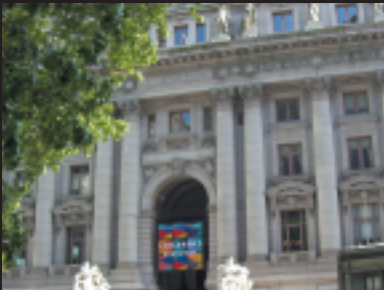
New Amsterdam's sweeping harbor invited commercial enterprise, but it also left the settlement vulnerable to attack. To protect the outpost, Fort Amsterdam was constructed at the tip of the island.

Unimpressive even for its day, the star-shaped sand and clay structure (left on the map below) was the epicenter of the settlement. One part defense against the local Indian tribes and European rivals and one part trading post, Fort Amsterdam contained a handful of barracks, a church, a house for the West India Company director and a warehouse for the storage of company goods.

### ■ In Fact:

The Castello Plan created in 1660 shows the early layout of the colony, including 332 buildings. The broad thoroughfare leading north (left to right) on the map below is today's Broadway. Wall Street got its name from the wall on the right.

### Now



■ Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. This building was the former U.S. Customs House, erected in 1907, where revenues from the port were collected.

■ Castello Plan, New Amsterdam in 1660, redraft by John Wolcott Adams. New-York Historical Society

### Then



# 4

**Pearl &  
Whitehall  
Streets**

Northeast  
Corner

## Stuyvesant & The Settlers

This corner was once the eastern edge of the New Amsterdam settlement.

### ■ In Fact:

Joris Rapelje and Catalina Tricot, two of New Amsterdam's earliest settlers, also made their home here on Pearl Street. Drawn to promising opportunities in the New World, they had exchanged six years of service to the West India Company for a small land grant. Here, they lived and raised 11 children. It is estimated that as many as one million Americans are descendants of Joris and Catalina.



■ 18th century descendants of Joris and Catalina.  
New York Public Library

By 1643, people from all over the world had moved to the bustling community. A French priest, Isaac Jogues, visiting New Amsterdam reported that he had heard as many as 18 languages at a time when the population numbered around 500. It was this multi-ethnic, free and diverse city that greeted Peter Stuyvesant as he arrived in 1647 to take his post as the new director of the settlement.

A former military man, Stuyvesant brooked no opposition and imposed a strict rule of law. He prohibited the sale of liquor to the Indians and levied a tax on alcoholic beverages and furs. He also tried to limit religious tolerance in the colony, but encountered fierce opposition. Under Stuyvesant's governance the colony grew steadily.

### Then



■ Peter Stuyvesant, attributed to Hendrick Couturier, ca. 1660.  
New-York Historical Society

■ In 1658, Peter Stuyvesant built his home close to the water. Whitehall Street would derive its name from his white brick house.  
New York Public Library



# 5

## Dutch Reformed Church Plaque

North side  
Pearl Street  
near Broad

# Church & Company

This plaque on the building's facade marks the site of New Amsterdam's first church.

### ■ In Fact:

In 1657, English freeholders living under Dutch rule in Flushing and Jamaica, Long Island (now Queens, NY), sent Peter Stuyvesant this strongly worded protest—or remonstrance—when he sought and failed to prohibit the Quakers from holding religious meetings. The “Flushing Remonstrance” is considered by historians to be a foundation document in the fight for religious freedom in New York. The singed edges were a result of a 1911 fire that swept through the state Capitol in Albany.



■ Flushing Remonstrance  
New York State Archives

New Amsterdam was known for its religious tolerance. The Dutch Reformed Church was the focus of the settlement's worship. The Dutch had adopted tolerance as policy, not as a grand ideal, but as a way to deal with the mixed character of Holland's population. Their tolerance was rooted in the 16th century when the Dutch provinces suffered the oppression of the Spanish Inquisition.

The Dutch West India Company supported this religious pluralism. After all, their settlements were first and foremost trading posts and the company believed that nothing, including religious disputes, should ever hinder trade.

One of the most controversial leaders of the church was Everardus Bogardus. In the 1630's, Bogardus used his pulpit to decry the autocracy of the West India Company and to defend the spiritual rights of enslaved Africans. He clashed numerous times with Stuyvesant's predecessor Willem Kieft. Both were recalled to The Netherlands, but died when their ship sank off the Welsh coast.

## Then



## Now



■ Dutch Reformed Church Plaque

■ A church inside Fort Amsterdam.  
New York Public Library

# 6

**Pearl Street  
& Coenties  
Alley**

Northwest  
Corner

## From City Tavern to City Hall

This is the site of  
New Amsterdam's  
most famous tavern,  
the City Tavern.

### ■ In Fact:

New Amsterdam had a remarkable number of taverns and quickly developed a reputation for lawlessness. Full-fledged pirates were an accepted part of the community and prostitution was a mainstay. One of the legendary couples was a Dutch-Moroccan pirate named Anthony van Salee and the town's first prostitute, Griet Reyniers. In a microcosm of the way the colony grew through the hard work of its citizens, they married, had four children and became by the end of their lives, one of the principal landowning families of Brooklyn.

Immediately after Stuyvesant took office, he locked horns with a group of politically active New Amsterdammers led by lawyer Adriaen Van der Donck. Van der Donck questioned company rule and advocated strenuously for the newly evolving rights of individuals. So persistent was he that Stuyvesant threatened to have him executed. However, Van der Donck led a successful delegation to The Hague in The Netherlands, where he petitioned the Dutch Government to take over the settlement from the West India Company. He asked officials to recognize the value of the land they controlled, proclaiming that New Netherland could someday outstrip the homeland in power and influence.

In 1653, New Amsterdam was granted the status of an official Dutch city. The charter was the first of its kind in North America. The City Tavern was renamed the Stadt Huys—Dutch for City Hall.

### Then



■ Stadt Huys ca. 1664. New York Public Library

### Now

■ Today, on the sidewalk you can see the outline of the City Tavern's foundation marked by the yellow bricks.

# 7

**Pearl &  
Wall Streets**

Northwest  
Corner

## The Wall

Wall Street marks the northern boundary of New Amsterdam.

In 1653, fearing an imminent British invasion, the newly formed City Council called for the erection of a wall. The 14-foot high wooden palisade would run from river to river, the largest construction project in the colony up to that time. Every citizen was required to participate, including enslaved Africans. When the British finally did arrive in 1664, they came by sea and the wall proved useless. Seriously outnumbered and fearing for the city's property and possessions, the City Council convinced Stuyvesant to surrender New Amsterdam and the city became New-York—named for the Duke of York.

However, the Dutch influence endured. The British saw no need to interfere with a profitable town. Thus, the vigorous pursuit of trade and tolerant immigrant culture that took root in New Amsterdam would maintain their foothold in New York. This legacy ensured that as the city developed under English rule, it became a very different place from Boston or Philadelphia, where religious and cultural homogeneity was more often the norm.



### ■ **In Fact:**

The seal of the City of New York

depicts a sailor and a Manhattan Indian, beavers and flour barrels, the sails of a windmill and heralds 1625 as the year the city was founded by the Dutch. However, some historians believe the date has little historic significance, as the first settlers landed on Governors Island in 1624 and Peter Minuit did not make his famous "purchase" until 1626. Author Russell Shorto says that "a more official date would be 1653, when the Dutch formally chartered New Amsterdam as a city"—when the first local government was recognized as independent of the interests of the West India Company. The choice of 1625 as the founding year was not necessarily about glorifying the Dutch. In 1974, City Council President Paul O'Dwyer, a staunch Irishman, pushed through a bill selecting the year, some believe, to diminish the role of the British.

### Then



■ View of the wall and water gate, at the eastern end of Wall Street. New York Public Library

### Now

■ The city's diverse population today includes not only more American Indians, but more people of Dutch descent than any big city in America. Without the Dutch, there wouldn't be coleslaw or cookies, the names Brooklyn, Harlem or Staten Island.



# 8

**Federal Hall  
National  
Memorial**

Wall & Nassau  
Streets

**FEDERAL  
HALL**

# American Finance & American Democracy

Across the street,  
is the New York  
Stock Exchange.

## ■ In Fact:

This building erected in 1842 was the U.S. Customs House. Inside, the path used by ship captains, was so heavily trafficked that you can still see the indentations worn in the floor by their feet. Later, as the U.S. Sub-Treasury (image below), the basement vaults stored the country's reserves of gold and silver. Today, the building displays a stone from the balcony on which George Washington stood when he was sworn into office and the bible on which he placed his hand.

The concept of multi-national corporations and stock ownership developed in the 16th century when the Dutch were great shipping merchants. Since vessels were often lost at sea, successful sea captains would sell shares to investors to spread their risk. That formula led to the creation of stock markets.

In 1602, the world's first share of stock was traded in Amsterdam. Consequently, in 1638 when the West India Company gave up its monopoly on trade to its American settlements, privately-traded stocks became common in New Amsterdam. However, the first public auction of stock did not come until the 1790's, when the New York Stock Exchange was created.

Across from the Stock Exchange is where America—the America we know today—was born. On the site of what is now Federal Hall National Memorial, the first United States Congress met. Here the Bill of Rights was passed. Here too, George Washington took the oath of office as the country's first President and on the site stood the first capitol of the young republic—a republic steeped in ideas and ideals rooted in the city's Dutch legacy.

## Then



## Now

■ The statue of George Washington on the steps of Federal Hall National Memorial stands watch over the New York Stock Exchange.

■ U.S. Sub-Treasury, 1862-1920.  
New York Public Library



## The New Amsterdam Trail

is the first in a series of **Gateway to America Guides**. These official guides tell the story of the rich history and natural splendor of New York Harbor through the prism of its 22 national park sites.

The tour is also available as an audio download at [nyharborparks.org](http://nyharborparks.org) or [henryhudson400.com](http://henryhudson400.com).

It features commentary from National Park Service Rangers; Russell Shorto, author of *The Island at the Center of the World*; Eric Sanderson, ecologist and author of *Mannahatta: The Natural History of New York City*; and Andrew Smith, editor of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*.

You can also join a walking tour led by National Park Service Rangers by making a reservation at [nyharborparks.org](http://nyharborparks.org).



The National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy is a nonprofit organization in partnership with the National Park Service. **Visit the Sites:**

■ African Burial Ground ■ Breezy Point ■ Canarsie Pier ■ Castle Clinton ■ Federal Hall ■ Floyd Bennett Field ■ Fort Hancock ■ Fort Tilden ■ Fort Wadsworth ■ Gateway ■ Governors Island ■ Grant's Tomb ■ Great Kills Park ■ Hamilton Grange ■ Hoffman Island ■ Jacob Riis Park ■ Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge ■ Lower East Side Tenement Museum affiliated site ■ Miller Field ■ Sandy Hook ■ St. Paul's Church ■ Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island ■ Swinburne Island ■ Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace.

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