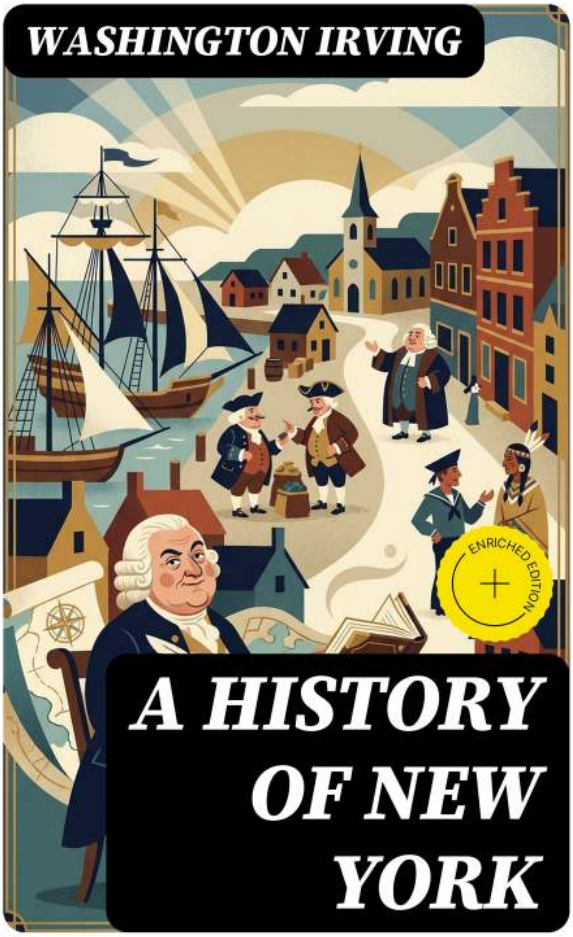
WASHINGTON IRVING

A HISTORY OF NEW YORK


WASHINGTON IRVING
ENRICHED EDITION
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Washington Irving

A History of New York

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Kenneth Gale

EAN 8596547007920

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction

Table of Contents

A restless young city discovers that the surest path to a past is through the brilliantly mischievous art of invention, and Washington Irving turns that discovery into a comedy about how history, pride, and memory conspire to make a metropolis.

A History of New York: From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty, published in 1809 in two volumes under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, is the audacious first major work of Washington Irving. Composed in the early American republic, it presents itself as a chronicle of New Amsterdam and its transformation into New York, yet it is a satire masquerading as scholarship. Its narrator is a fictional antiquarian whose voice, procedures, and pretended erudition expose the fragile boundary between recorded fact and civic myth without requiring prior knowledge of the episodes it burlesques.

The book holds classic status because it gave the United States its earliest sustained masterpiece of comic prose and established a distinctly American mode of literary play. Irving’s performance validated the idea that the new nation’s stories could be told with wit equal to European models while sounding unmistakably local. The work’s enduring themes—how communities remember, how leaders posture, how chronicles inflate ordinary events into grand sagas—continue to resonate. Its influence reaches beyond its pages, helping to shape New York’s literary self-image and setting a precedent for later American humorists and essayists who probe the authority of narrators.

Irving’s method is a tour de force of parody. He constructs a narrator with a full apparatus—prefaces, notes, citations, and sweeping claims—then lets that apparatus wobble delightfully under the weight of its own certainty. The style is mock-heroic, the scholarship is as elaborate as it is questionable, and the learned notes become a theater for comedy. By imitating and exaggerating the tone of pedantic historians, the book reveals how storytelling techniques can dignify trivialities and disguise biases, inviting readers to scrutinize the poses of historians as much as the histories they compose.

At the heart of the satire lies a meditation on civic identity. New York, the book suggests, is both a place and a performance, a city that invents traditions even as it forgets them. The Dutch founders become emblematic not merely of a past era but of the ways communities build legends from selective memory. Trade, ambition, and contention mingle with piety and prudence, and the emerging urban character takes shape as a mixture of bustle and bravado. Irving’s portrait is affectionate and exasperated at once, insisting that pride in origins is inseparable from the impulse to embellish them.

The work’s cultural afterlife confirms its reach. The very name Knickerbocker, coined as the narrator’s identity, soon became shorthand for old New York, a tag taken up by periodicals, clubs, and civic rhetoric. The book’s success helped launch Irving as a central figure in American letters and gave New York writers a guiding persona—the wry urban observer—later associated with the so-called Knickerbocker literary circle. Its blending of mock scholarship and local color opened paths for American satire and for the comic chronicler who treats place and past as a stage for wit.

Its publication story is nearly as famous as the text. Before the book appeared, notices hinted at a missing Dutch historian whose manuscript had supposedly been discovered, a playful campaign that primed readers to question what they were about to read. The hoax underscored the themes of authority and authenticity: Who writes a city’s past, and to what end? When the volumes arrived under the name Diedrich Knickerbocker, the masquerade sharpened the satire, demonstrating how easily an air of learning and a plausible voice can secure credibility in the marketplace of printed history.

The central premise is grand and deliberately disproportionate: a sweeping history that begins at the creation of the world and narrows, with ostentatious seriousness, to the fortunes of a colonial outpost on the Hudson. This structure permits Irving to juxtapose cosmic scale with parochial detail, exposing the comic gap between the narrator’s ambitions and his subject. New Amsterdam’s governance, customs, and quarrels supply the canvas, but the true subject is historiography itself—the postures, priorities, and pleasures of telling the story of a place striving to be important.

Irving composed the work as a young New Yorker testing the possibilities of national literature, and its success announced an American writer capable of mastering and transforming European forms. By adapting Old World mock-epic and antiquarian parody to New World materials, he demonstrated that the United States could satirize itself with sophistication. The book also foreshadows concerns that animate his later career: narrators who assume masks, local landscapes rendered with literary finesse, and a taste for mingling fact with fancy to discover a deeper cultural truth beneath recorded events.

Readers return to this history because it remains astonishingly alive on the page. The sentences unfurl with urbane confidence, the footnotes wink at the main text, and the narrative voice turns bureaucratic solemnity into farce without bitterness. Even the archaisms serve the design, giving the fiction an antique varnish that heightens the satire. Beneath the play, however, lies a serious inquiry into how chronicles are fashioned, how power narrates itself, and how communities prefer comfortable legends when the record is uneven or incomplete.

For modern audiences, the book offers not merely amusement but a toolkit for reading public narratives. It reminds us to examine sources, to notice rhetorical flourishes that pass as evidence, and to recognize the seductions of origin stories in civic life. In an era saturated with competing accounts, Irving’s spoof of the learned historian feels timely: it invites skepticism without cynicism, curiosity without credulity. The city’s gusto, its self-promotion, and its readiness to turn anecdote into identity anticipate the ongoing negotiation between memory, marketing, and meaning in urban culture.

As a classic, A History of New York endures because it is both a love letter and a lampoon, celebrating vitality while puncturing pretension. It situates New York’s beginnings within a broader meditation on how nations invent themselves, offering language and laughter equal to the subject’s energy. By presenting the complete two-volume performance, this edition restores the full sweep of Irving’s experiment, whose questions remain urgent: Who speaks for the past, what forms does authority assume, and how does humor free us to see more clearly? The answers keep the book’s appeal vivid, its relevance undimmed.

Synopsis

Table of Contents

Washington Irving’s A History of New York: From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty (Complete Edition – Volume 1 & 2) is a mock-epic chronicle of New Amsterdam that blends humor with antiquarian zeal. First issued in 1809 under the persona of Diedrich Knickerbocker, it purports to narrate the city’s past from primordial times to the close of Dutch rule. Across two volumes, Irving mimics the mannerisms of learned historians while constructing a playful yet coherent overview of colonial New York, using elaborate asides, invented authorities, and a ceremonious style to examine how communities fashion origins and legitimize power through the writing of history.

The work opens with prefatory matter that establishes the narrator’s voice, learning, and supposed impartiality, while simultaneously poking fun at scholarly pretensions. Irving satirizes disputes among historians, the perils of partisanship, and the vanity of exhaustive footnotes. He frames the ensuing story as a corrective to careless annalists, promising fidelity to documents and eyewitness tradition even as the narrative indulges in comic overstatement. This framing sets the terms for a book that questions how historical knowledge is made, inviting readers to notice the gap between grand authority and the messy, often trivial particulars of remembered events.

Volume I proceeds from a mock-cosmogony to the European discovery of the region and the Dutch chartering of commerce. The narrator describes the selection of Manhattan as a strategic post and sketches the early fort

and settlement that became New Amsterdam. He dwells on the habits of the burghers, their domestic comforts, holiday observances, and a civic temper that favors order, prosperity, and repose. Irving’s humor arises from patient catalogues of custom and ordinance, suggesting how a small trading town imagined itself into a polity, all while parodying the lofty rhetoric that often cloaks modest beginnings.

Administrative history then organizes the tale. Under Wouter Van Twiller, a figure portrayed as ponderous and deliberative, the colony consolidates its position. Councils convene, resolutions are weighed, and modest public works mark a desire for permanence. Minor frictions with neighboring colonies and with regional peoples surface, but the emphasis falls on procedure and decorum. Irving uses this governorship to lampoon bureaucracy—its reports, committees, and ceremonious decrees—while still acknowledging the steady, practical labors that turn a precarious outpost into a functioning town.

William Kieft’s tenure introduces sharper conflicts and the perils of impetuous leadership. Seeking revenue and authority, the administration imposes new demands that unsettle inhabitants and strain relations beyond the settlement’s palisades. Disputes with surrounding Native communities intensify into violence, and the colony’s factions argue over policy and responsibility. Irving’s satire darkens here, turning from harmless pedantry to the costs of rash decision-making. Public meetings, petitions, and rival counselors fill the narrative, exposing how fear, pride, and commerce can distort governance and compromise communal safety.

With Peter Stuyvesant, Irving presents a more martial and exacting ruler, distinguished by energy, discipline, and a

strict sense of order. The narrative follows reforms in civic and moral regulation, renewed attention to defenses, and assertive diplomacy. Encounters with the Swedish presence on the South River, and contested jurisdictions more generally, allow Irving to stage proclamations, councils of war, and ceremonials of submission in a mock-heroic key. Through this portrait, the book explores the tensions between autocratic efficiency and local liberties, and between commercial pragmatism and honor-bound statecraft.

As the town grows, trade expands and a distinctive urban culture emerges. Irving lingers on market days, churchgoing, guild-like fraternities, and domestic prosperity, contrasted with neighboring colonies whose customs and ambitions differ markedly. Boundary disputes and commercial rivalries multiply, especially with English settlements to the east and north. The narrative juxtaposes everyday rhythms—smoke curling from rooftops, orderly streets, strict sabbaths—with debates over charters, patents, and the legal fictions of empire, suggesting how ordinary life persists amid geopolitical maneuvering.

The closing movement turns to mounting external pressure and the question of sovereignty. English claims harden, negotiations and remonstrances circulate, and the community weighs strength against prudence. Town meetings and councils rehearse arguments about loyalty, property, and security, while the narrator maintains a tone that is both comic and elegiac. Rather than dwell on battlefield minutiae, Irving emphasizes reputations, documents, and public sentiment, tracking how a colonial identity adjusts when imperial circumstances shift. The narrative carries readers to the end of Dutch authority while preserving the dignity and idiosyncrasy of its principal figures.

Across both volumes, Irving’s satire offers a lasting meditation on historical mythmaking, civic memory, and the fallibility of rulers and chroniclers alike. By transforming archival disputes into comic set pieces, he exposes the vanity that often accompanies national origin stories, yet he also affirms the resilience and cultural richness of a community that outlives regimes. The Knickerbocker persona became part of New York’s self-image, and the book helped shape American humor. Its enduring message is that the past is both earnest and absurd, and that telling it well requires humility about what history can truly prove.

Historical Context

Table of Contents

Washington Irving’s A History of New York: From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty is framed by two intersecting settings. The narrative evokes the seventeenth-century Dutch colony of New Netherland, centered on New Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan, governed by the Dutch West India Company and guided by the Dutch Reformed Church and municipal magistrates. At the same time, the book emerges from early nineteenth-century New York City, a fast-growing commercial republic shaped by partisan politics, expanding print culture, and antiquarian societies. Irving’s satirical “history” positions itself within and against these institutions, mimicking their voices while exposing their assumptions and pretensions.

The colonial story begins with Henry Hudson’s 1609 voyage under Dutch auspices into the river that now bears his name, opening trade with Indigenous peoples and suggesting a northern route to Asia that never materialized. The States General chartered the Dutch West India Company in 1621, and by 1624–1626 the company established settlements at Fort Orange (near present-day Albany) and New Amsterdam on Manhattan. Fur—especially beaver—drove the economy. Irving mirrors and mocks this origin story by parodying epic foundations and “firsts,” lampooning the heroic tone of colonial chronicles and the desire to anchor New York’s rise in grandiose myths.

Colonial governance in New Netherland combined corporate and municipal authority. The Company’s directors appointed governors, while the Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions (1629) introduced patroonships, large semi-feudal estates

such as Rensselaerswyck along the upper Hudson. New Amsterdam received a city charter in 1653, creating a burgomaster and schepenen (magistrates). Irving burlesques this apparatus, turning debates over tariffs, ordinances, and fortifications into comic councils of solemn burghers. By exaggerating bureaucratic rituals, he reflects real tensions between Company control, local elites, and settlers who pressed for more representative institutions and predictable law.

New Netherland was notably diverse by seventeenth-century standards. Dutch and Walloon settlers lived alongside Germans, Scandinavians, English, and a significant population of enslaved Africans. A small community of Sephardic Jews arrived in 1654 after fleeing Portuguese reconquest in Brazil. While the Dutch Reformed Church held official status, the Company often tolerated other Protestants for pragmatic reasons; Governor Petrus Stuyvesant, however, tried to restrict Lutherans, Quakers, and Jews, and was rebuked at times by the Company's directors. Irving turns this mosaic into comic portraiture—pipe-smoking citizens and convivial taverns—while hinting at the colony's uneven, negotiated pluralism.

Relations with Indigenous nations were central. The fur trade depended on networks with Munsee- and Mahican-speaking peoples near the Hudson, and the Mohawk and other Haudenosaunee nations further inland. Conflicts flared: Willem Kieft's aggressive policies provoked Kieft's War (1643–1645), and in 1655 the so-called Peach Tree War brought raids into New Amsterdam. Stuyvesant sought both military responses and diplomacy. Irving satirizes the rhetoric of just war and the self-importance of colonial dispatches, echoing how official narratives often justified violence and territorial ambition while minimizing Native polities' agency and grievances.

Economic life mixed commerce and household production. Beaver pelts flowed to Amsterdam; wampum served as a medium of exchange; farms on Long Island, Manhattan, and the Hudson valley supplied grain, livestock, and dairy. Patroon estates leveraged tenant labor. Enslaved Africans, many owned by the Company, built fortifications, worked docks, and labored in households; some gained “half-freedom” in the 1640s, paying dues while living with families. Irving largely treats such structures as comic backdrops, a choice that exposes the limits of early national nostalgia and the period’s selective memory about coercion embedded in colonial prosperity.

Technology and infrastructure shaped daily life and defensive priorities. Dutch shipbuilding provided sturdy vessels for Atlantic trade; windmills dotted the landscape; palisades and a small fort guarded New Amsterdam. The colony lacked a local printing press—New York’s first press arrived under English rule in 1693—so law and policy circulated by proclamation, manuscript, and rumor. Irving gleefully lampoons the scarcity and bias of sources by inventing authorities and footnotes, a parody of learned apparatus that simultaneously points to genuine archival gaps in Dutch-era documentation and to the credulity of readers before the trappings of scholarship.

New Netherland existed within global rivalry. The First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) unfolded largely at sea, but it heightened anxieties in New Amsterdam. English settlers pressed westward from New England; Dutch claims in the Delaware competed with Swedes and later English interests. In 1664, during broader imperial tension, an English fleet compelled New Amsterdam’s surrender, and the colony became New York, named for the Duke of York. Irving’s mock-epic voice inflates councils and cannon to heroic scale, teasing the pomp of imperial contests while

recounting the very real vulnerability of a small, divided outpost.

The English conquest did not erase Dutch legacies overnight. The Articles of Capitulation (1664) allowed residents to keep property and custom, and Dutch remained widely used. Briefly, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, the Dutch recaptured the city in 1673 and named it New Orange, only to cede it back by treaty in 1674. Irving’s narrative concentrates on the “Dutch dynasty,” culminating with the end of company rule and Stuyvesant’s era, but knowledge of this later whiplash adds context to his themes: the precariousness of colonial sovereignty and the persistence of local identity under changing imperial flags.

Transition to English administration brought new legal forms, land patents, and shifting alliances with Indigenous nations. Manorial estates expanded under English law, and commerce widened within the Atlantic system. Yet many municipal habits—market regulation, street keeping, church-centered community—endured. Irving uses affectionate caricature of Dutch civic order to critique his own age’s political fractiousness, implying that the slow-moving prudence of old magistrates, however comical, shielded the public from speculative excess and ideological zeal. His nostalgia is therefore a rhetorical device aimed at current debates as much as a portrait of the past.

The author’s immediate milieu was the early American republic. By 1809, when the book appeared, New York City was a bustling port shaped by Federalist and Democratic-Republican rivalry, the memory of the 1790s financial revolution, and the disruptions of the Embargo Act of 1807. Irving, from a merchant family, had honed urban satire in Salmagundi (1807–1808) with his brother William and James Kirke Paulding. He launched A History of New York under the

persona “Diedrich Knickerbocker,” a fictitious antiquarian, a choice that let him parody both partisan rhetoric and solemn historical writing while shielding the author from direct political reprisals.

Print culture amplified the performance. The 1800s saw rapid growth in newspapers, booksellers, subscription libraries, and theatres such as the Park Theatre (opened 1798). The New-York Historical Society, founded in 1804, encouraged the collection of colonial records and artifacts. Irving’s publisher floated mock “missing person” notices reporting that Knickerbocker had vanished, leaving a manuscript to pay his hotel bill—a publicity stunt that satirized the credulity of readers and the era’s hunger for antiquarian discovery. The book’s heavy-handed footnotes and orotund style mimic learned societies while gently pricking their self-importance.

New York’s economic ascent formed the background to Irving’s urban sensibility. Merchant houses, insurers, and banks, including the Bank of New York (founded 1784), linked the port to global markets. Dock labor, auctions, and warehouses structured everyday rhythms; periodic yellow fever epidemics in the 1790s exposed the costs of growth. Irving contrasts the measured pace of his imagined Dutch burghers with the harum-scarum bustle of modern commerce. The joke is multivalent: it lampoons nostalgia even as it expresses discomfort with speculative booms and the volatility that republican freedom, maritime trade, and party competition had introduced into civic life.

Irving’s satire also responds to contemporary historiography. Eighteenth-century historians often adopted grand narratives of civilizational progress, ornamented with classical allusions. In the United States, writers sought to craft national origins, sometimes borrowing European

models wholesale. Irving parodies this habit by assigning mock-heroic motives to minor colonial disputes, riffing on epic conventions from Homer and Virgil while nodding to the comic digressions of Swift and Sterne. His target is not only the colonial past but the temptation among American writers to inflate local events into universal sagas, mistaking style for substance and certainty for evidence.

Ethnic memory and civic identity in New York provided a ready archive of symbols. Dutch-descended families remained prominent in politics and commerce in the eighteenth century, and place-names, church records, and manor archives anchored a usable past. The book popularized “Knickerbocker” as a label for old Dutch New Yorkers and later, by extension, for the city’s culture. In doing so, it both celebrated and caricatured that heritage, reinforcing cozy stereotypes of thrift, conviviality, and obstinacy while smoothing over internal hierarchies, including gendered divisions of labor and the role of enslaved and Indigenous people in building the colony’s wealth.

The work’s treatment of religion and morality reflects early national debates about virtue and public order. Irving’s Dutch elders fuss over Sabbath rules, market weights, and pipes, echoing contemporary disputes about civic virtue in a commercial republic. The Dutch Reformed Church, consistory courts, and catechisms stand in for broader institutions that policed conduct. By turning moral regulation into comedy, Irving questions whether rigid codes truly secure the common good, yet he also warns that unmoored appetites—political or economic—can imperil communal stability. The balancing act mirrors anxieties shared by Federalists and moderates wary of ideological extremes.

Diplomacy and war, central to colonial survival, become in Irving’s pages a theater for burlesque. The bombast of proclamations and the ceremonial apparatus of councils are exaggerated to highlight the gap between rhetoric and reality. Historically, New Netherland depended on negotiated coexistence with Indigenous nations and on the shifting European balance of power. Irving’s caricature of martial glory therefore critiques a wider early nineteenth-century tendency to romanticize conflict and leaders. By undermining triumphalist narratives, he invites readers to prize prudence, compromise, and local knowledge over imperial posturing and abstract doctrines of conquest or improvement.」「Everyday technologies and material culture also thread the satire. Irving lingers on pipes, windmills, and stout houses with stepped gables, objects that had real Dutch analogues in the colony and its transatlantic trade. He suggests how tools, foodways, and furnishings embody habits of mind: restraint, thrift, conviviality. At the same time, his exaggerations signal that material culture can be recruited into myth-making, transforming practical artifacts into emblems of a supposedly golden age. This double register—material accuracy wedded to comic overstatement—allows the book to speak to antiquarians and general readers at once, critiquing both credulity and cynicism.」「Reception and influence tied the book to New York’s civic self-fashioning. Published in 1809, it quickly associated Irving with a distinctively American humor and helped cement “Knickerbocker” as a cultural signifier. The persona reappeared in prefaces and as a byline in later pieces, and the book’s vocabulary entered local lore. Its play with sources and authorities influenced subsequent satirists and local historians who learned to signal, and to scrutinize, their own methods. By spoofing the apparatus of history while relishing archival fragments, Irving encouraged a more

self-aware historical consciousness in a city eager to narrate its own rise.」「The English takeover and the colony’s afterlife in memory provided a final axis of critique. The 1664 Articles of Capitulation preserved property, law, and language for many residents; Dutch churches and customs endured through the eighteenth century even as imperial, then national, structures changed. Irving’s closing focus on the “end of the Dutch dynasty” thus reads as an invitation to consider continuity beneath political rupture. In early republican New York, where rapid change was the rule, that lesson cut both ways: it validated local tradition and warned that institutional veneers—whether Company charters or party platforms—were fragile.」「Ultimately, A History of New York functions as a mirror held up to Irving’s era. By staging the Dutch past as comic pageant, it critiques speculative capitalism, partisan bombast, ethnocentric mythology, and uncritical antiquarianism. It is not a neutral chronicle; it is a satire grounded in verifiable events—the West India Company’s rule, patterns of settlement, wars, and surrender—deployed to interrogate how histories are written and why. The book’s enduring value lies in this doubleness: it preserves memory even as it exposes the narratives that power, pride, and nostalgia construct, inviting readers to laugh and then to look more closely.

Author Biography

Table of Contents

Washington Irving (1783-1859) was a pioneering American man of letters whose career bridged the early republic and the mid-nineteenth century. Essayist, storyteller, biographer, and diplomat, he became one of the first United States authors to earn a living primarily from writing and to sustain an international readership. Celebrated for the short tales gathered in The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., notably "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," he also produced influential histories and biographies. Irving’s polished, gently ironic prose connected British eighteenth-century models to emerging American Romanticism, helping to define a national literary voice while engaging readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Born in New York City, Irving read law and was admitted to the bar in the first decade of the nineteenth century, though literature soon claimed his energies. As a young writer he absorbed the urbane essay tradition associated with Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith, and he delighted in theater, coffeehouse talk, and the brisk periodical culture of the port city. His earliest pieces, the "Jonathan Oldstyle" letters, appeared in a New York newspaper under a pseudonym. Travel in Britain and on the Continent during his twenties broadened his tastes and introduced him to folklore and picturesque travel writing that would inform his mature style.

Irving’s first notable successes came with lively social satire. With collaborators he issued the periodical Salmagundi, a series of witty essays and squibs that commented on New York manners and politics and helped popularize "Gotham"

as a nickname for the city. He followed with the mock-chronicle A History of New York by Diedrich Knickerbocker, a playful send-up of antiquarian histories and a fantasia on Dutch-era New Amsterdam. The book’s pseudonymous frame and comic verve captivated readers and fixed "Knickerbocker" in the cultural lexicon. These experiments forged his signature blend of burlesque, local color, and affectionate nostalgia without sacrificing stylistic poise.

During the War of 1812 era Irving briefly edited the Analectic Magazine, honing his skills as an essayist and reviewer. In the mid-1810s he went to Britain to attend to commercial matters and, after business reverses, committed himself fully to letters. The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (issued in parts in 1819-1820) secured him transatlantic fame. Mixing travel sketches, holiday pieces, and short tales, it offered an elegant, reflective American voice at ease with European scenes. Bracebridge Hall (1822) and Tales of a Traveller (1824) extended the formula. Acquaintance with Walter Scott and broader Romantic currents reinforced his interest in folklore and narrative atmosphere.

In the later 1820s Irving broadened his scope to large historical projects, drawing especially on Spanish archives and settings. A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus (1828) and Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada (1829) presented polished narrative history for general readers, followed by Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus (1831) and the richly descriptive sketches of The Alhambra (1832). He also held a diplomatic posting in London during this period. Returning to the United States in the early 1830s, he explored the trans-Mississippi West in A Tour on the Prairies (1835), Astoria (1836), and The Adventures of Captain Bonneville (1837).

Irving’s international reputation brought renewed public service: he served as United States minister to Spain from 1842 to 1846, deepening his engagement with Iberian subjects. In mid-century he published studies on the rise of Islam—Life of Mahomet and the companion volume Mahomet and His Successors—and then turned to an American subject of national scope. From his home, Sunnyside, on the Hudson River, he devoted years to a monumental Life of George Washington (five volumes, 1855-1859). The work aimed to combine careful documentation with readable narrative, reflecting his long practice of writing history for a broad audience while maintaining a polished literary finish.

Irving died in 1859, by then widely regarded as a formative figure in American letters. His sketches and tales helped naturalize the short-story form in the United States and modeled a supple prose style that influenced authors from Hawthorne to later regionalists. He popularized images of the Hudson Valley and festive Christmas traditions, while his "Knickerbocker" and "Gotham" monikers entered the language of New York identity. Continually reprinted and adapted for stage, screen, and television, his best-known stories retain cultural currency. As a transatlantic mediator of taste who balanced satire with sentiment, he left a durable template for American literary professionalism.

A History of New York: From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty (Complete Edition – Volume 1 & 2)

Main Table of Contents

the contemporary clergy and authorities whose writings helped legitimize witch-hunt beliefs in New England.

45 Fort Casimir was a Dutch fortification established on the south bank of the Delaware River in the early 1650s; it later changed hands during conflicts between the Dutch and the Swedish colony and was renamed Nieuw-Amstel. The site became the nucleus of the town now known as New Castle, Delaware (sometimes called Newcastle in older writings).

46 Jan Printz (usually Johann or Johan Björnsson Printz) was governor of the Swedish colony of New Sweden on the Delaware River in the mid-17th century (approximately 1643–1653), based at Tinnekonk (Tinicum). The chapter’s account of his rivalry with the Dutch and eventual departure echoes historical tensions between New Sweden and New Netherland; Printz returned to Sweden and was succeeded by Jan Claudius Risingh.

47 New Sweden was a 17th-century Swedish colonial settlement along the lower Delaware River in North America, established in 1638. It encompassed parts of present-day Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and remained a distinct colony until it was absorbed by the Dutch colony of New Netherland in the mid-1650s (around 1655).

48 A "state galley" in 17th-century New Netherland referred to a government-owned armed vessel used for patrol, troop transport, and riverine operations; such craft were often propelled by both sails and oars. The phrase "duly victualed" that follows means the vessel was provisioned with food and supplies for the voyage.

49 Antony’s Nose is the name of a real promontory on the Hudson River in the Highlands; local Dutch-colonial folklore

(which Irving draws on) links the place-name to a legendary incident involving Antony Van Corlaer, the trumpeter. The story is folkloric rather than strictly historical, and Irving’s narrative intentionally mixes authentic place-names with invented or embellished legend.

50 A 'patroon' was a landholder under the Dutch colonial system (established by the Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions, 1629) who received large tracts and manorial rights in return for recruiting settlers (typically about fifty) to populate the estate. Calling someone 'patroon of Gibbet Island' indicates he held local lordship and economic/judicial privileges over that tract within New Netherland's semi-feudal framework.

51 Corlear’s Hook is a small promontory on the East River shore of lower Manhattan, in the area now roughly the Lower East Side/Two Bridges; the name dates to the Dutch colonial period. It was associated with the Van Corlear/Van Corlaer family and has persisted as a local place-name in New York City history.

52 Fort Christina was the principal post and settlement of the Swedish colony of New Sweden, established in 1638 at the site of present-day Wilmington, Delaware and named for Queen Christina of Sweden; its capture by Dutch forces under Stuyvesant in 1655 was a key event in ending Swedish colonial authority in that region.

53 Fort Christina (usually spelled Fort Christina) was the principal fort of the Swedish colony of New Sweden, established in 1638 at the site of present-day Wilmington, Delaware. It was the focal point of the 1655 Dutch campaign that brought New Sweden under the control of New Netherland.

54 Jan Risingh (often spelled Risingh) was the governor of New Sweden in 1654–1655 and commanded the Swedish forces defending Fort Christina during the Dutch assault. His defeat at Fort Christina led to the absorption of New Sweden into the Dutch colony in 1655.

55 The 'fortress of Christina' denotes Fort Christina, the principal settlement of the Swedish colony New Sweden, founded on the Delaware River in 1638 near present-day Wilmington, Delaware. In 1655 Dutch forces under Stuyvesant captured Fort Christina and much of New Sweden, incorporating the area into New Netherland and altering control of the mid-Atlantic colonies.

56 “stoep” is a Dutch word (often anglicized as “stoop”) meaning a raised porch or platform at a house entrance where people sat and socialized. In Dutch colonial New York this space commonly served public and semi-official functions, such as informal dispute resolution or a governor dispensing justice to neighbors.

57 Antony Van Corlear (often called Antony the trumpeter in period stories) is a figure from New Amsterdam lore associated with an episode during Kieft’s War (early 1640s) in which he is said to have tried to swim the Hudson to summon help and drowned. The story is celebrated in local legend and later writers like Irving popularized it, but aspects of the tale are regarded as partly legendary by historians.

58 In ancient Greece the Amphictyonic League (amphictyons) was an association of neighboring tribes or cities that cooperated for religious and political matters. Irving borrows this classical term satirically to describe the collective councils or confederated towns of New England,

giving those local assemblies an exaggerated air of solemnity and ancient authority.

59 Plymouth Rock refers to a boulder in Plymouth, Massachusetts, long celebrated in American tradition as the landing site of the Mayflower Pilgrims in 1620. The identification of this particular stone as the exact landing spot is a later tradition that became popular in the 18th and 19th centuries and is not firmly established by contemporary 17th-century evidence.

60 To be “tarred and feathered” was a form of extrajudicial mob punishment and public humiliation in early modern and colonial societies, in which hot tar was applied to a person and then covered with feathers; the practice could cause serious burns and injury as well as social disgrace. Irving’s comparison to the Tarpeian Rock (a Roman place of execution) underlines that the punished man was thereafter treated as a social outcast.

61 "Manhattoes" is an archaic spelling referring to Manhattan (the island) or to the Native people associated with it; 17th-century English and Dutch writers used several variant spellings. Here it denotes the region or its inhabitants in the colonial-era setting of the story.

62 A Dutch-derived municipal officer; in 17th-century New Amsterdam a burgomaster was roughly equivalent to a mayor or senior city magistrate. The term signals the colony’s Dutch legal and civic institutions distinct from later English administration.

63 An older spelling for the Harlem River, the tidal strait separating Manhattan from the mainland. Nineteenth- and earlier writers often used Dutch-influenced spellings reflecting the area’s New Netherland origins.