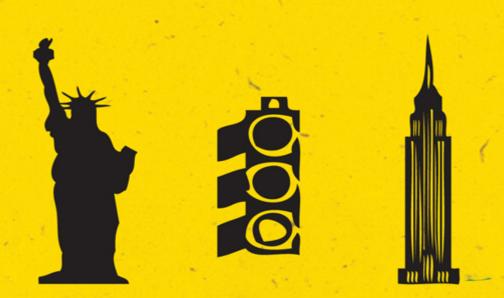
# I NEVER KNEW THAT ABOUT NEVR YORK

New York can inspire or destroy, invigorate or infuriate. But it will never grow boring.



CHRISTOPHER WINN

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# About the Book

**New York, New York**, so good they named it twice – find out why in this exciting new book that gets to the core of the Big Apple.

Christopher Winn digs beneath the gleaming towers and mean streets of New York and discovers its secrets and hidden treasures. Learn about the extraordinary people who built New York into one of the world's great cities in just 400 years.

New York is one of the most photographed and talked about cities in the world but Winn unearths much that is unexpected and unremembered in this fast moving, every changing metropolis where history is made on a daily basis.

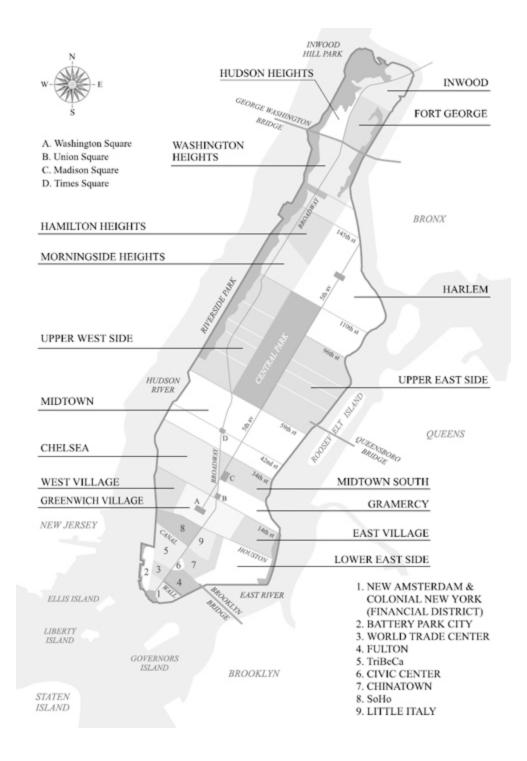
# About the Author

Christopher Winn has been a freelance writer and trivia collector for over twenty years. He has worked with Terry Wogan and Jonathan Ross, and sets quiz questions for television as well as for the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. He is the author of the bestselling *I Never Knew That About England*. Books in the same series cover Ireland, Scotland, Wales, London, Yorkshire and the Lake District and he has written further books on the English, Scottish, Irish, the River Thames and Royal Britain. He is married to artist Mai Osawa, who illustrates all the books in the series.

www.i-never-knew-that.com

#### ALSO BY CHRISTOPHER WINN

I Never Knew That About England I Never Knew That About Ireland I Never Knew That About Scotland I Never Knew That About Wales I Never Knew That About London I Never Knew That About The English I Never Knew That About The Irish I Never Knew That About The Scottish I Never Knew That About The Lake District I Never Knew That About The Lake District I Never Knew That About The River Thames I Never Knew That About Britain: The Quiz Book I Never Knew That About Royal Britain



Christopher Winn

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# I Never Knew That About NEW YORK



ILLUSTRATIONS BY Mai Osawa



For Joe and Jeanne New Yorkers through and through New York belongs to the world.

New York is known and recognised and talked about everywhere in the world, and is the most photographed and most filmed city anywhere in the world. The Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Central Park and Times Square are the world's most visited tourist destinations.

New York is also the shop window of America, vibrant, living, glorious proof that determined peoples from every land and every culture, every religion and every background, can join together and achieve spectacular things. In New York you will find Rome and London, Paris and Tokyo, Madrid and Dublin and Shanghai. You will find the world's biggest cathedral, biggest synagogue and biggest financial markets, the world's best theatres and museums and its most iconic skyscrapers.

But there is more to New York than just tall buildings and the most expensive shopping street on earth. New York has its small and hidden places, too, beautiful parks and quiet green spaces, homely villages, chapels, smart squares and fine, unpretentious architecture. And a fascinating history as a trading post, fortress, bustling port and America's first capital.

New York is compressed history. What took London 2,000 years to build, New York achieved in 400 years. New York sprang up on boundless spirit and on dreams. And lots of hard work.

New York has survived fire, pestilence, riots, terrorist attacks, hurricanes, blizzards and floods and each time has bounced back stronger, prouder, more dynamic and more indefatigable. New York can inspire you or destroy you. It can make you feel alive, or exhaust you and infuriate you. It will never bore you.

Think of *I Never Knew That About New York* as an entertaining friend, one who loves New York and can tell you some of its stories and its secrets, and you will discover that New York is quite simply, as Robert De Niro says, 'the most exciting city in the world'.

# Introduction

The focus of *I Never Knew That About New York* is New York Harbor and Manhattan Island, where New York began and which for 270 odd years was exclusively known as New York.

In 1898 five neighbouring cities, or boroughs, consolidated to form the City of Greater New York. They were New York (Manhattan), Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island. They all have their own unique history and their own vibrant character and each deserves its own book. To try and tell the story of all five boroughs in one book would be to do none of them justice.

In *I Never Knew That About New York* we walk along Broadway, New York's oldest road, its 'Main Street', from south to north, in the footsteps of the city's northward development, and as we go we tour the neighbourhoods that sprang up along the way.

Although each chapter is arranged as a walk it is not necessary to follow the whole walk or indeed to walk at all - each chapter stands alone as an interesting read about this most fascinating city and its history.

If you do decide to follow the walks you will find that each walk starts and finishes at a subway station, and always remains within easy reach of a subway station, so that you may leave or resume the walk at any point.

Finally, to distinguish city from state, the latter is referred to throughout the book as 'The State of New York' or 'New York State'.

# New York Timeline

- 1524 Giovanni da Verrazano becomes the first European to enter New York Harbor
- 1609 Henry Hudson becomes the first European to sail up the Hudson River

Captain Adriaen Block and the crew of the *Tyger* 

1613 construct the first European dwellings on Manhattan Island

New Amsterdam

Birth of New York. Thirty Walloon and Flemish families arrive on the *Nieu Nederland* and establish

- 1624 the first European settlement of New York on Governors Island. Captain Cornelius Mey becomes the first Director of the colony of New Netherland Dutch under Willem Verhulst establish the first
- 1625 permanent European settlement on Manhattan Island and work begins on Fort Amsterdam Peter Minuit, 3rd Director of New Netherland,
- 1626 purchases Manhattan Island from the Lenape Indians for trinkets worth \$24
- 1633 First church erected on Pearl Street
- 1647 Peter Stuyvesant becomes Director-General of New Netherland

New Amsterdam becomes the first legally chartered

- 1653 city in America. Wall is built to protect New Amsterdam against attack from the north
- 1655 Peach War

Colonial New York

- 1664 New Amsterdam is handed over to the British and renamed New York
- New York's first printing press set up on Pearl 1693
- Street by William Bradford
- 1698 First Trinity church dedicated
- 1700 First Federal Hall built on Wall Street
- 1720 First shipvard opened on East River
- 1725 New York's first newspaper, the New York Gazette,
- is printed by William Bradford
- 1732 New York's first theatre opens on Nassau Street
- 1733 Bowling Green opens as New York's first park
- 1735 John Peter Zenger's trial establishes freedom of the press
- 1754 King's College (later Columbia University) founded
- Sons of Liberty formed. Protests in New York 1765 against the Stamp Act
- Stamp Act repealed. George III statue erected in 1766 Bowling Green. St Paul's Chapel completed Statue of George III toppled. Battle of Harlem
- 1776 Heights. Washington retreats from New York, which becomes British headquarters during Revolution U.S. wins independence with Treaty of Paris. November 25, Evacuation Day, Washington re-enters
- 1783 New York and the British leave for the last time. December 4, Washington bids farewell to his officers at Fraunces Tavern

NEW YORK

- 1784 Alexander Hamilton founds Bank of New York New York named U.S. capital. New York's first
- 1785 Catholic church, St Peter's, opens on Barclay and **Church Streets**

- 1789 March 4, First U.S. Congress meets at Federal Hall. April 30, George Washington inaugurated as first U.S. President at Federal Hall. September 25, Bill of Rights adopted at Federal Hall
- 1790 Capital moves to Philadelphia. Fort George (Fort Amsterdam) demolished
- 1792 New York Stock Exchange formed

19<sup>th</sup> Century New York

- 1801 Alexander Hamilton founds New-York Evening Post
- 1804 Aaron Burr kills Alexander Hamilton in duel
- 1807 Robert Fulton launches first steamboat on Hudson River

Commissioners Grid Plan for Manhattan

- commenced. Castle Clinton constructed and forts
- 1811 built on Harbor Islands in preparation for war with Britain. City Hall opens
- 1812 War of 1812
- 1815 New York's first cathedral, Old St Patrick's
- Cathedral, opens on Mulberry
- 1822 Yellow fever outbreak. Many flee to Greenwich Village
- 1823 New York becomes largest city in U.S.
- 1824 New York's first tenement opens on Mott Street
- 1825 Erie Canal opens
- 1827 Slavery abolished in New York
- 1834 Henry Brevoort builds house on Fifth Avenue at Ninth Street
- 1835 Great Fire of New York
- 1837 Samuel Morse sends first telegraph signal
- 1842 Croton Aqueduct opens. New York Philharmonic play their first concert at the Apollo Rooms on

Broadway

1845 New York Knickerbockers chartered as first baseball team

Present Trinity church dedicated. America's first

- 1846 department store, A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace, opens on Broadway
- 1847 New York's oldest bar, the Bridge Café, opens on Water Street
- 1849 Astor Place riots
- 1851 New York Times launched. Brevoort Hotel, first
- hotel on Fifth Avenue, opens at Eighth Street
- 1853 New York hosts World's Fair Haughwout Building, first commercial building in
- 1857 the world to feature passenger elevators, opens on Broadway
- 1859 Central Park opened to the public. John Jacob Astor
- III builds house on Fifth Avenue at No. 350
- 1860 Lincoln gives his famous speech at Cooper Union New York Draft Riots, largest civil insurrection in
- 1863 American history, against corrupt draft system for Civil War
- 1866 First Broadway musical premièred at Niblo's Garden
- 1868 First elevated railroad opens on Greenwich Street Standard Oil founded by J.D. Rockefeller. Equitable
- 1870 Building, first office block in the world to feature passenger elevators, opens on Broadway
- 1871 Grand Central Depot opens. Tammany Hall's 'Boss' Tweed imprisoned
- 1872 Bloomingdale's opens
- 1879 St Patrick's Cathedral completed
- 1880 First street-lighting on Broadway. Dakota Building begins construction on Upper West Side.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) opens on Fifth Avenue

- 1882 W.K. Vanderbilt builds grand mansion at 660 Fifth Avenue
- 1883 Brooklyn Bridge completed
- 1886 Statue of Liberty unveiled
- 1889 New York's first 'skyscraper' the Tower Building completed at 50 Broadway
- 1892 Ellis Island immigration centre opens. Cathedral of
- 1892 St John the Divine begun
- 1894 World's first cinema, Holland Brothers Kinetoscope Parlor, opens at 1155 Broadway First moving picture to be shown on a screen in
- 1895 front of a paying audience shown at 153 Broadway. Olympia theatre opens on Longacre Square (later Times Square)

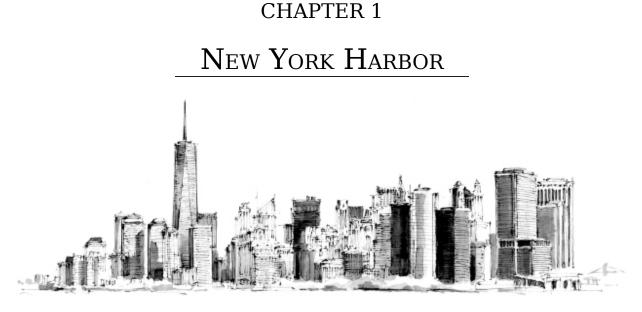
World's largest hotel, the Waldorf-Astoria, opens.

- 1897 America's first pizza parlour, Lombardi's, opens in Little Italy
- 1898 Five boroughs merge to form Greater New York, the world's second largest city

20<sup>TH</sup> Century New York

- 1900 Construction of New York's first subway begins
- 1902 Flatiron opens on Broadway. The world's largest
- store, Macy's, opens on Broadway
- 1903 Lyceum Theater, oldest Broadway theatre still in use, opens
- 1904 *New York Times* moves to Longacre Square which is
- renamed Times Square. General Slocum disaster
- 1907 Plaza Hotel opens
- 1908 First time ball drop in Times Square

- 1910 Pennsylvania Station opens
- 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire. New York Public
- Library opens
- 1913 Woolworth Building opens on Broadway
- 1916 New York adopts Zoning Regulations requiring setbacks in tall buildings
- 1925 *New Yorker* magazine launched Holland Tunnel opens. America's first cappucino
- 1927 served in Greenwich Village. *The Jazz Singer,* the first 'talkie', premieres at the Warners' Theater on Broadway
- 1928 The first talking cartoon, Disney's *Steamboat Willie*, premières at the Colony Theater on Broadway
- 1929 Stock Market Crash
- 1930 Chrysler Building completed as tallest building in
- 1930 the world 1931 Empire State Building opens as tallest building in
- 1931 the world
- 1939 Rockefeller Center completed. New York hosts World Fair
- 1946 United Nations Headquarters opens
- 1959 Lincoln Centre construction begins. Guggenheim Museum opens
- 1963 Pennsylvania Station demolished
- 1964 Verrazano Narrows Bridge opens. The Beatles play Shea Stadium
- 1967 Singer Building becomes tallest building ever to be demolished. *Hair* opens at Public Theater
- 1969 Stonewall riots
- 1973 World Trade Center completed
- 2001 Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center
- 2012 Hurricane Sandy hits New York



New York skyline from Staten Island Ferry

NEW YORK exists because of its harbour – although it is not officially called a harbour but rather Upper New York Bay. Five miles (8 km) long from Staten Island in the south to the southern tip of Manhattan in the north and four miles (6.4 km) wide from Brooklyn in the east to New Jersey in the west, the Upper Bay forms one of the largest natural harbours in the world.

Without doubt, the best way to approach New York is by boat. This is how the first explorers came and how, over the last four centuries, millions of immigrants came too. Even today, visitors choose to arrive in passenger ships and cruise liners, while sightseers and commuters continually criss-cross the bay in every kind of maritime craft.

# Skyline

Your first view of modern New York from the water is unforgettable. From the rough, windswept waves of the Atlantic Ocean you pass through a narrow channel between two islands into the calmer waters of the Upper Bay. Then on past the welcoming embrace of the Statue of Liberty, the ornate green domes of the Ellis Island immigration centre, and finally the grim brown walls of Castle Williams on Governors Island.

And there it is – New York, the most spectacular urban landscape in the world, a forest of shining glass and steel, copper and gold, spires and turrets, tower upon tower stacked one upon another, reaching for the sky, marching in ragged rows down to the sea. Some of the towers appear to be dipping their toes into the water, while others gaze out brazenly across the bay, proclaiming their power and importance. It seems impossible that the flimsy, low-lying island of Manhattan doesn't topple over or sink under its own weight.

### Verrazano

#### The First European to see New York Harbor

It was a very much less frenetic scene that greeted the Italian navigator GIOVANNI DA VERRAZANO nearly five hundred years ago, when he anchored his ship, *La Dauphine*, in the narrow channel at the entrance to the bay, just off what is now Staten Island, on 17 April 1524. 'A very agreeable site located between two hills between which flowed to the sea a very great river' is how Verrazano described it.

He had been hired by the French to find a quick way through the American continent to the lucrative trade routes of the East, and it was in pursuit of this goal that Verrazano took a tentative small boat through the narrow channel and into the bay. Finding himself on 'a most pleasant lake', the Italian concluded that this was not the short cut he was looking for, and when 'a contrary flaw of wind blew up' he quickly returned to his ship and weighed anchor to continue the search along the coast.

Verrazano never did find his fast route to the Orient, and four years later he was eaten by cannibals on Guadeloupe, but he did find immortality as THE FIRST EUROPEAN KNOWN TO HAVE SET EYES UPON NEW YORK HARBOR, while his name lives on in the bridge that today spans the narrow channel at the harbour entrance where he anchored his ship.

# Verrazano Narrows Bridge

#### Longest in the World

The VERRAZANO NARROWS BRIDGE opened on 21 November 1964 and links two of Greater New York's five boroughs, Brooklyn and Staten Island. It has a central span of 4,260 ft (1,298 m) and when it was built was THE LONGEST SUSPENSION BRIDGE IN THE WORLD, until overtaken by the Humber Bridge in England in 1981. It is now the eighth longest suspension bridge in the world and still THE LONGEST SUSPENSION BRIDGE IN AMERICA.

Since every vessel that enters New York Harbor has to pass underneath it, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge has an impressive height clearance of 228 ft (69 m) at high water. Even this is only just sufficient for one regular visitor, the QUEEN MARY 2, flagship of the Cunard Line and THE LARGEST OCEAN LINER EVER BUILT. When she passes under the bridge there is sometimes only 10 feet (3 m) to spare – despite the fact that her funnel was made flatter than usual just so that she could make it into New York Harbor – her passage under the bridge can provide some heart-stopping moments for both spectators and passengers.



The Verrazano Narrows Bridge starred in a famous scene from the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever* where the film's lead character Tony Manero (John Travolta) and his buddies show off by clambering along the edge of the bridge among the suspension cables. The scene builds to a tragic climax when one of the boys, Bobby C, played by Barry Miller, falls off the bridge to his death.

The Verrazano Narrows Bridge is also the starting point for the annual NEW YORK CITY MARATHON, held on the first Sunday in November.

The name Verrazano applies only to the bridge and not to the channel that flows underneath it, which is simply called The Narrows.

# Hudson

#### An Englishman in New York



In early September 1609, the English navigator HENRY HUDSON entered the upper bay in his little ship the *Halve Maen* (Half Moon) and proceeded to explore along Verrazano's 'very great river'. Like Verrazano, Hudson was seeking a short route through America to the Orient, only in his case he was working for the Dutch rather than the French. Hudson had been told of this great river in a letter from his friend John Smith, the man rescued by the Indian princess Pocahontas, and leader of the Jamestown colony in Virginia. Smith had heard talk from the Indians of a river north of Virginia that led from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, and Hudson decided to survey it for himself.

They sailed up the river for about 100 miles (160 km), almost to where Albany now stands, at which point the water grew too shallow for the *Half Moon*. Hudson realised that while this was a noble river it was not a way through to the East and so he turned around and headed back to the coast. Hudson's crew-mate, Robert Ivet, writes in his journal that on 2 October the *Half Moon* anchored just above the mouth of the river, between high cliffs (now called the New Jersey Palisades) and the island 'that is called Mannahata' – thus making THE VERY FIRST WRITTEN RECORD OF MANHATTAN.

While they may not have found the fabled North-West Passage, Hudson and his crew had nonetheless discovered an outstanding natural harbour, described by Robert Ivet as 'a very good Harbour for all winds', and a new territory full of such promise that Hudson was moved to declare, 'Never have I beheld such a rich and pleasant land.'

When word got back to the Netherlands of Hudson's discoveries, Dutch merchants by the score were inspired to come and explore this bountiful new land for themselves. The treasure that attracted them above all else was beaver fur, and beavers were to be found in abundance along the Hudson. Their pelts were much sought after by the fashionable Dutch middle classes, who used the fur to trim their hats and coats, and BEAVER PELTS became NEW YORK'SVERY FIRST MAJOR EXPORT. So important was the beaver to the founding of New York that a beaver appears on the city seal, and since 1975 the beaver has been the official New York State Mammal.



The great river up which Hudson sailed soon became known as Hudson's River and then simply the Hudson River. The early Dutch settlers referred to the stretch of the Hudson bordering Manhattan as the North River, a name by which it is sometimes still known, but in 1909, during the tercentenary celebrations of Hudson's arrival, it became accepted to refer to the whole river as the Hudson.

#### Captain Block

One of the first Dutch merchants to follow Hudson was CAPTAIN ADRIAEN BLOCK, who made a profitable voyage to Manhattan in 1610, returning home to the Netherlands with a rich cargo of beaver pelts. In 1613 he made another trip and moored his ship the *Tyger* in the Upper Bay off Lower Manhattan. The *Tyger* was accidentally gutted by fire and Block and his crew were forced to spend the winter on Manhattan – the four makeshift huts they constructed for shelter on the southern tip of the island were the VERY FIRST EUROPEAN DWELLINGS ON MANHATTAN.

#### New Netherland

In 1621 the Dutch West India Company was founded to promote and administer Dutch trading activities in the Americas, and the company arranged to send a group of settlers, consisting mainly of Walloons and Flemish, to establish a permanent trading base in New Netherland. In the summer of 1624 the 30 or so families arrived on two ships and settled on the flat wooded island off the southern tip of Manhattan that controlled access to the Hudson and East rivers, now called Governors Island, but then known by the native Indians as Pagganck. CORNELIUS MEY, the captain of the lead ship, the *Nieuw Nederland* (New Netherland), became THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE COLONY OF NEW NETHERLAND.

# Governors Island

#### Birthplace of New York

GOVERNORS ISLAND covers 172 acres (70 ha) and lies half a mile (800 m) off the southern tip of Manhattan in the northeast corner of New York Harbor.

The colony established by the Dutch on Governors Island in 1624 was the first permanent European settlement in what would become New York, and the island is officially recognised as the birthplace of New York. In 1625, under a new director, WILLEM VERHULST, the settlers moved on to Manhattan Island and founded New Amsterdam.

When the British took over New Amsterdam and renamed it New York, Pagganck, which was by now called Nut Island, was set aside for the 'benefit and accommodation of His Majesty's Governors' and became known as the Governor's Island, although it was not officially named as such until 1784.

The oldest surviving building on the island, and one of the few 18th-century houses remaining in New York, is the Georgian-style GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, erected in 1708 for LORD CORNBURY and called 'The Smiling Garden of the Sovereigns of the Province'.

#### Through the Ages

In 1710 thousands of refugees fleeing from the devastation wrought by the French in the Palatinate region of what is now Germany arrived in New York and were held in quarantine for a few days on Governors Island. Among them was a 13-year-old boy who would go on to play a major role in the history of New York. His name was JOHN PETER ZENGER (*see here*).

Troops were first stationed on Governors Island in 1755, British regiments consisting of American colonists, Swiss and Germans soldiers expert in forest warfare, and British volunteers, all recruited for service in the American colonies. They became known as ROYAL AMERICANS and established THE FIRST INFANTRY SCHOOL IN AMERICA on the island.

JOHN PETER ZENGER (1697–1746) was apprenticed to New York's first and only printer William Bradford before branching out to form his own printing business. In 1733 he was approached by opponents of the corrupt royal governor William Cosby to publish a newspaper in which they could air their views on Cosby, and so Zenger began printing the *New-York Weekly Journal*, in which articles critical of the governor appeared. It wasn't long before he was arrested for publishing seditious libel and thrown into jail, where he languished for ten months. When he was finally brought to trial Zenger was cleared of the charges, despite Cosby attempting to rig the proceedings. Zenger's defence lawyer was ANDREW HAMILTON from Philadelphia, the most famous lawyer in America, who argued that, while Zenger did not deny publishing the seditious articles, he could not be found guilty of libel if the facts in the articles were true.

This landmark judgement for the first time established THE TRUTH AS A DEFENCE AGAINST LIBEL, a cornerstone of the freedom of the press in America. It was often quoted in the debates that culminated in the American Bill of Rights in 1789.

#### Two Forts

After the Revolution, Governors Island became the property of New York State, who handed it over to the federal government in 1800 for military use. The island's defences were strengthened with the building of FORT JAY, a starshaped fort completed in 1808 on high ground in the middle of the island and named after the 2nd Governor of New York, John Jay. Later came CASTLE WILLIAMS, a semicircular red sandstone fort completed in 1811 in anticipation of the 1812 war with Britain. In the end, however, no shot was fired in anger from anywhere on Governors Island.



#### Morse and More

In October 1842 SAMUEL MORSE laid out a telegraph wire along the bottom of the sea between Governors Island and the Battery on Manhattan to find out if he could transmit signals along the wire underwater. He succeeded in transmitting three signals before a vessel that had been anchored between the islands lifted its anchor and brought the wire up with it – no one on board knew what it was and so they cut it.

In the 1890s material from the excavations of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel under the East River and the Lexington Avenue subway was used as landfill to enlarge Governors Island by 103 acres (42 ha), to its present size of 172 acres (70 ha).

#### Flying High

On 29 September 1909, WILBUR WRIGHT took off from the parade ground on Governors Island in AMERICA'SFIRST MILITARY PLANE, THE FLYER, and twice circled the Statue of Liberty at a height of 150 ft (46 m) before returning. As well as being THE FIRST EVER FLIGHT IN A MILITARY PLANE, this was THE FIRST FLIGHT EVER OVER WATER IN AMERICA, and as a safety precaution a red canoe was strapped to the underside of Wright's plane. On 4 October Wright made a 20-mile (32 km) round flight from Governors Island up the Hudson River to Grant's Tomb and back as part of the

celebrations marking 300 years since Henry Hudson's first navigation of the river.

The following year aviator Glenn Curtiss landed on Governors Island after flying down the Hudson from Albany, winning a \$10,000 prize from Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the *New York World*.

Wright and Curtiss are the first two names found on the Governors Island EARLY BIRD AVIATION MONUMENT unveiled in 1954 to celebrate the achievements of the first aviators. The bronze propeller on the monument was cast from one of the wooden propellers on Wright's *Flyer*.

Ironically, the Aviation Monument can be found just outside the vast LIGGETT HALL BARRACKS, which was built by the U.S. Army in 1929 supposedly to thwart an attempt by the City of New York to build a municipal airport on Governors Island. Liggett Hall, which almost covers the island from east to west, was at the time THE LONGEST BUILDING IN THE WORLD and THE FIRST BUILDING IN THE WORLD LARGE ENOUGH TO HOUSE AN ENTIRE REGIMENT.



Early Bird Aviation Monument

Coast Guard