

A History Of New York Washington Irving

A History of New York by Washington Irving: A Satirical Masterpiece and Enduring Legacy

Author: Washington Irving (1783-1859)

Washington Irving, a pivotal figure in American literature, needs no introduction. He was a prolific writer, essayist, biographer, and short story writer, celebrated for his masterful use of language and his ability to blend humor with insightful social commentary. His works significantly shaped the nascent American literary landscape, influencing generations of writers. Irving's early experiences, including his extensive travels across Europe, profoundly impacted his writing style and worldview, allowing him to view American society with a detached yet affectionate perspective, a characteristic strikingly evident in "A History of New York." He is considered a key figure in establishing American literature's independent voice, moving away from the heavy influence of European styles.

Keyword: a history of new york washington irving

A Hilarious Look at Early New York: Understanding "A History of New York"

"A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker" – often shortened to "A History of New York" – is not your typical historical account. Published anonymously in 1809, this satirical masterpiece cleverly disguises itself as a factual narrative, employing a faux-scholarly tone to deliver a witty and often irreverent commentary on the social and political dynamics of early New York City. Written under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, a fictional character serving as the book's purported author, Irving masterfully weaves a tapestry of fabricated historical events and exaggerated personalities, creating a humorous and engaging reading experience. "A History of New York Washington Irving" is less a dry recitation of facts and more a vibrant, comedic exploration of the city's beginnings, exploring themes of ambition, power struggles, and the clash between old-world traditions and the emerging American identity. The book's success lies not only in its humor but also its insightful observation of human nature and the burgeoning complexities of early American society. Understanding "a history of new york washington irving" requires recognizing its satirical intent and appreciating the author's clever manipulation of historical context.

The Significance and Relevance of "A History of New York Washington Irving"

The significance of "A History of New York Washington Irving" extends beyond mere entertainment. It holds considerable relevance for several reasons:

Foundational Work of American Humor: Irving's work established a unique style of American humor, characterized by its wit, irony, and playful exaggeration. It laid the groundwork for future generations of American humorists, demonstrating the potential of satire as a tool for social critique.

Shaping of American Identity: The book reflects the nascent American identity, grappling with the complexities of forging a distinct cultural heritage separate from European influence. By satirizing the pretensions and follies of early New York society, Irving implicitly critiques the process of nation-building, highlighting both its triumphs and its inherent challenges.

Literary Innovation: Irving's use of the fictional narrator, Diedrich Knickerbocker, along with his blending of fact and fiction, was innovative for its time. This approach laid the groundwork for later works that blurred the line between historical account and fictional narrative.

Enduring Cultural Impact: "A History of New York Washington Irving" has permeated American culture, influencing how we view and understand the city's early history. The very name "Knickerbocker" has become synonymous with old New York, embodying a sense of history and tradition.

Historical Contextualization: While satirical, the book provides valuable insights into the social, political, and economic realities of early New York. It offers a glimpse into the lives of its inhabitants, their beliefs, and their aspirations. Analyzing "a history of new york washington irving" allows us to understand the foundations upon which the modern metropolis was built.

A Deep Dive into the Narrative and Themes

The narrative of "A History of New York Washington Irving" unfolds through a series of interconnected chapters, each focusing on a specific period or event in the city's early history. Irving's satirical wit is evident throughout, as he pokes fun at the city's founding fathers, its political leaders, and its societal norms. Key themes explored include:

The clash between Dutch and English cultures: The book depicts the struggle for power between the Dutch and English settlers, highlighting the cultural differences and conflicts that shaped the city's development.

Political satire: Irving satirizes the political maneuvering and corruption that characterized early New York politics, exposing the flaws and hypocrisies of those in power.

Social commentary: The book offers a satirical commentary on the social customs, beliefs, and pretensions of early New York society. Irving's humor is often targeted at the hypocrisy and self-importance of the elite.

The creation of a national identity: The book indirectly explores the challenges of creating a distinct American identity, separate from European influences.

The role of folklore and legend: Irving seamlessly weaves folklore and legend into his narrative, enhancing the book's imaginative and entertaining qualities.

Publisher and Editor: Dissemination and Shaping of "A History of New York Washington Irving"

"A History of New York Washington Irving" was originally published by Inskeep & Bradford in 1809. Inskeep & Bradford was a prominent publishing house in New York City during this period, known for its publication of various significant literary works. While specific editorial details regarding the original publication are scarce, the success of the book suggests careful editorial oversight, ensuring the smooth flow and impact of Irving's satirical narrative. The lack of an explicitly listed editor underscores the fact that editorial practices in the early 19th century differed significantly from those of today. Later editions and reprints, however, would undoubtedly have involved editors who ensured the text's accuracy and accessibility for subsequent readers. The enduring popularity of "A History of New York Washington Irving" is a testament to both Irving's genius and the effective dissemination strategies of his publisher.

Summary of "A History of New York Washington Irving"

"A History of New York Washington Irving" is a satirical masterpiece posing as a factual account of New York City's early history. Written under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, it employs humor, exaggeration, and fictional events to critique the social, political, and cultural aspects of early New York. The narrative playfully chronicles the city's founding, its development, and the personalities who shaped it, highlighting the clash between Dutch and English cultures, the ambitions of its leaders, and the follies of its inhabitants. Ultimately, "a history of new york washington irving" is a witty and insightful exploration of nation-building, identity formation, and the human condition, solidifying its place as a cornerstone of American literature.

Conclusion

"A History of New York Washington Irving" remains a remarkably relevant and entertaining work. Its satirical wit continues to resonate with readers, its social commentary offering a timeless perspective on human nature and the complexities of societal development. By understanding the historical context and appreciating its satirical intent, readers can gain valuable insights into early New York City and the development of American literature itself. The enduring popularity of "a history of new york washington irving" underscores its place not just as a historical fiction but as a significant contribution to the canon of American satire and literature.

FAQs

1. Who is Diedrich Knickerbocker? Diedrich Knickerbocker is the fictional author presented by Washington Irving in "A History of New York." This persona adds to the book's satirical effect, allowing Irving to distance himself from the potentially controversial opinions expressed within the text.
2. Is "A History of New York" a factual account? No, it is a satirical work that uses historical events and figures as a springboard for humor and social commentary. While it touches upon real events, it significantly embellishes and exaggerates them for comedic effect.
3. What is the significance of the book's anonymity? The initial anonymity allowed Irving to present his satirical views without directly associating his name with potentially controversial opinions. It also added to the mystery and intrigue surrounding the work, contributing to its initial success.
4. What are the main themes explored in the book? The main themes include the clash between Dutch and English cultures, political satire, social commentary on early New York society, the creation of a national identity, and the use of folklore and legend.
5. How did "A History of New York" impact American literature? It established a unique style of American humor, paved the way for future generations of satirical writers, and showcased the potential for blending fiction and historical context in a creative and engaging manner.
6. What is the book's lasting legacy? The term "Knickerbocker" became associated with old New York, representing its history and traditions. The book's enduring popularity speaks to its timeless humor and insightful social commentary.
7. Where can I find "A History of New York"? The book is widely available in various editions, both in print and as ebooks, from major online retailers and libraries.
8. Is the book suitable for all ages? While generally accessible, the book's satirical nature and some outdated language might require some guidance for younger readers. Parental discretion is advised.
9. What other works by Washington Irving should I read? After reading "A History of New York," explore his other renowned works, including "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Sketch Book." These stories further showcase his mastery of storytelling and his unique brand of American humor.

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a history of new york washington irving: Knickerbocker's History of New York, Complete Washington Irving, 2019-11-19 *Knickerbocker's History of New York, Complete* is a historical work by Washington Irvin. Irving created the work under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, who allegedly was a Dutch historian. About the time of publishing, New York newspapers were buzzing with ads regarding the mysterious historian, and later it turned out that Irving posted those ads himself. The book is dedicated to the first New York settlers, which are described as the foremost traders of their time; but who has loved liberty with a more passionate devotion than they, and where does the genius of man interpret the soul of man with more commanding and searching power than on the walls of the galleries of The Hague, of Haarlem, and Amsterdam?

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a history of new york washington irving: Brooke Deborah Brooks Langford, 2018-12-08 *Knickerbocker's History of New York* is a satire on self-important local history and contemporary politics. Prior to its publication, Irving started a hoax akin to today's viral marketing campaigns; he placed a series of missing person adverts in New York newspapers seeking information on Diedrich Knickerbocker, a crusty Dutch historian who had allegedly gone missing from his hotel in New York City. As part of the ruse, Irving placed a notice--allegedly from the hotel's proprietor--informing readers that if Mr. Knickerbocker failed to return to the hotel to pay his bill, he would publish a manuscript Knickerbocker had left behind.

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December, 1809, with which Washington Irving, at the age of twenty-six, first won wide credit and influence. Walter Scott wrote to an American friend, who sent him the second edition—I beg you to accept my best thanks for the uncommon degree of entertainment which I have received from the most excellently jocose History of New York. I am sensible that, as a stranger to American parties and politics, I must lose much of the concealed satire of the piece, but I must own that, looking at the simple and obvious meaning only, I have never read anything so closely resembling the style of Dean Swift as the annals of Diedrich Knickerbocker. I have been employed these few evenings in reading them aloud to Mrs. S. and two ladies who are our guests, and our sides have been absolutely sore with laughing. I think, too, there are passages which indicate that the author possesses powers of a different kind, and has some touches which remind me much of Sterne. Washington Irving was the son of William Irving, a sturdy native of the Orkneys, allied to the Irvines of Drum, among whose kindred was an old historiographer who said to them, Some of the foolish write themselves Irving. William Irving of Shapinsha, in the Orkney Islands, was a petty officer on board an armed packet ship in His Majesty's service, when he met with his fate at Falmouth in Sarah Sanders, whom he married at Falmouth in May, 1761. Their first child was buried in England before July, 1763, when peace had been concluded, and William Irving emigrated to New York with his wife, soon to be joined by his wife's parents....

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ILLUSTRATED Washington Irving, 2020-07-08 A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty by Diedrich Knickerbocker is an 1809 book on the history of New York City by Washington Irving. The book is significant as early media describing what became modern Christmas traditions in the United States.

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literary talents. Irving was an American original and a citizen of the world.

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a history of new york washington irving: Knickerbocker's History of New York Washington Irving, 2017-10-13 Knickerbocker's History of New York is the 1809 work by the famous author, essayist, biographer, historian, and diplomat, Washington Irving. The book concerns the history of New York during the fifty year rule by the Dutch in the mid-seventieth century. Odin's Library Classics is dedicated to bringing the world the best of humankind's literature from throughout the ages. Carefully selected, each work is unabridged from classic works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama.

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a history of new york washington irving: The Island at the Center of the World Russell Shorto, 2005-04-12 In a riveting, groundbreaking narrative, Russell Shorto tells the story of New Netherland, the Dutch colony which pre-dated the Pilgrims and established ideals of tolerance and individual rights that shaped American history. Astonishing . . . A book that will permanently alter

the way we regard our collective past. --The New York Times When the British wrested New Amsterdam from the Dutch in 1664, the truth about its thriving, polyglot society began to disappear into myths about an island purchased for 24 dollars and a cartoonish peg-legged governor. But the story of the Dutch colony of New Netherland was merely lost, not destroyed: 12,000 pages of its records--recently declared a national treasure--are now being translated. Russell Shorto draws on this remarkable archive in *The Island at the Center of the World*, which has been hailed by The New York Times as "a book that will permanently alter the way we regard our collective past." The Dutch colony pre-dated the "original" thirteen colonies, yet it seems strikingly familiar. Its capital was cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic, and its citizens valued free trade, individual rights, and religious freedom. Their champion was a progressive, young lawyer named Adriaen van der Donck, who emerges in these pages as a forgotten American patriot and whose political vision brought him into conflict with Peter Stuyvesant, the autocratic director of the Dutch colony. The struggle between these two strong-willed men laid the foundation for New York City and helped shape American culture. *The Island at the Center of the World* uncovers a lost world and offers a surprising new perspective on our own.

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