

A PROPOSAL FOR CREATING A NEW YORK CITY HISTORY CENTER AT GROUND ZERO

This material is arranged in three parts.

First, a description of the proposed History Center's core presentation.

Second, a description of possible alternative/ancillary presentations.

Third, an explanation of the scholarly historical narrative that underlies the core presentation.

I. TIME TRAVELING TO GOTHAM'S PAST: A FULL BELLS-AND-WHISTLES APPROACH TO AN OVERALL EXHIBITION

Let's imagine an exhibit design modeled on all those late night tv sci-fi movie orbiting space stations, with a hub in the center from which corridor spokes radiate out to pods arranged around the perimeter. In the central hub – the Grand Central Time Terminal – we get an overview of the whole story. Then we can proceed off down any of several corridors to the pods, which present particular time periods in depth.

What the hub and pod approach does is ease the straightjacket coerciveness of the march-through-time approach. Those who want to start with the more familiar recent past can do so. Others can start with the Lenape. But even those who head first for the 1950s might well then be encouraged to try other time zones (if only to fill up the blank spaces on their Time Passport: see below).

HUB

The proposed Grand Central Time Terminal is something of a cross between a bustling

depot for time travelers and a cosmic tourist agency. Here at different booths/stands/display areas you can get information about how to travel to particular points in New York's past and what you can expect to see when you get there. Time tourist brochures could be handed out, or audiotapes to take along on the journey, or one could view a short video that presented an overview of that period's allures in the form of a competitive sales pitch {SEE the draft riots! EXPERIENCE the first department store!}. These and other videos, by the way, could be used in television advertising, cassettes for schools and sale in the Museum store.

The overall decor could be modeled either on Castle Garden which, in the 1850s, did just this, directing immigrants to different States in the interior, with different counters at which clerks laid out maps and sold train tickets; or some great rail station of the past, Pennsy or Grand Central; or, of course, 90s ultra modern sleek. But the general approach would be: THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY: LETS VISIT IT!

Each of the Time Country booths -- four, or more if funds and space allow -- tries to make an immediate and splashy impact, competing for tourist dollars as it were. Each would employ a huge mockup of an emblematic building or buildings of the period (Federal Hall and Italianate Brownstones for antebellum; New York Stock Exchange for early 1900s; Chrysler building for 1920s, Lever for 1950s, World Trade Center for 1970s). Each would have large scale mockups of characteristic people of the period who will figure in the story line of that zone: Russian Jewish garment worker for 1880s, Dutch patrician for 1600s, black jazz musician for 1920s). These images would become the logos for the time periods, rather as Eiffel Tower = France, and be used as tags on all accompanying literature and signage.

Each booth would have a costumed interpreter behind the counter (1820s sailor, 1880s Edith Wharton, 1960s East Village flower child) dispensing information, maps, tapes, and answering questions. They might also hand out Time Passports, or, better yet, stamp logo-visas in Time Passports handed out on entry. These become souvenirs of the visit (and encourage visits to other time zones).

Each station would be playing period music (sea chanteys, ragtime, big band, hard rock) interspersed, depending on the era, with other sounds -- a Walter Winchell staccato radio commentary, an audio track featuring Ralph Kramden and Trixie, New York Stock Exchange

floor roar.

Each station would also have two predominating blowup graphics in its area. The first would be a cartoonish map (perhaps by Red Grooms?), done in the style of those New Yorker covers that show the world from the egocentric perspective of e.g., Manhattan, sketching in only those spots that register in the parochial geography map Manhattanites carry around in their heads. In this case, each station's map would represent the global order of the day and New York's place in it, sketching in the flow of people, commodities, ideas, capital, etc., constituting the network of relationships providing the context of that particular time. Thus the Dutch-colonial era global map might be centered on Holland's Amsterdam, showing prominently the Far East, Africa, Brazil (sources of the Empire's spices, slaves and sugar), and then -- a much smaller image, matching its irrelevance in the Dutch scheme of things -- New Amsterdam. Cartoon ships would be drawn in on the seas illustrating the movement of beavers, slaves, etc. Indians would be sketched in on the mainland (rather, in fact, as was often done in 16th and 17th century maps). In the 1840s, the center would shift to the city itself, showing connections to south and west by canal and rail, and to Europe by sea; now the boats would be shown carrying Irish and Germans, etc. It might be possible to employ push-button light-up devices like those used on old Paris Metro maps.

The second dominating graphic would be a huge outline map of the metropolitan area with the then existing extent of population settlement drawn in, and, perhaps, the location of then existing ethnic, racial pockets of population within the city indicated by some color code. So walking from map to map around the Terminal you could, e.g., watch the black community migrate from the Village, to San Juan Hill, to Harlem to Brooklyn.

We would also add to this a videodisc/computer display terminal that would allow visitors to Dial-a-Time. This would bring up on the screen the (contemporarily drawn but newly digitized) map done closest to the date picked. So someone asking -- ideally, via touch screen-- for the 1760s would get the Ratzel Map displayed, with, perhaps, an accompanying text on the order of Stokes' discussions of his graphics. More grandly, each Dial-a-Time terminal would have access to the Time Atlas -- which would interactively store cartographical data spanning the city's entire history. (Imagine in the beginning one of those blank outline maps showing the

city's topographical terrain; then as you advanced in time various Indian encampments would appear, followed by the Fort, streets, and houses of the Dutch settlers, and so on, with the city's development unfolding in three dimensions. Each social group moreover could be coded as per the previous paragraph, so that instead of walking around the Terminal you could simply select, say Irish-Americans, and watch their settlement centers shift from the Five Points to Gun Hill Road to various suburban communities in New Jersey and Long Island).

The existence of these maps/graphics would mean that the short-time visitor who wanted to get the quickest of handles on the city's development over time, could simply stroll around the room, listening, as an option, to an audiotope that elaborated on the graphics, and get a fast take on the Big Picture. Those who had more time could then choose which time period to time travel back to, get outfitted and geared up at the appropriate Time Terminal, and head off on their expedition.

PODS

Assume we've chosen a period: the LINK TO EUROPE (1789-1865) era. We now pass through a Time Lock and down a corridor. Along the walls would be graphics (like ads in subway corridors, but much more densely packed -- more like a mural, a dense melange of street scenes, people, events, echoing those we saw back in the Grand Central Time Terminal). These could either be emblematic (and date-labeled) images that move back in time to the point we are going to, providing a sense of time travel (so pictures, of people and scenes, in descending order, from the 1980s, 1970s 1880s, 1870s, 1860s); or graphics illustrating the period we're going to, on the model of a tourist, arriving in a foreign airport gliding along a moving walkway, watching ads. Again, we'd hear accompanying period sounds, ranging from bird noises taped in Jamaica Bay if we're doing an Indian trip to a babel of sounds -- rail locomotive, steamship/dock, foundry clanks, and Irish/German voices -- for our 1850s jaunt.

At the corridor's end, we go through a second Time Lock (employing a blowup of the emblematic logo-building). Here we're met by more costumed interpreters who are highly knowledgeable about the period and make themselves available to answer questions or point out possibilities. The interpreters might represent the different classes under discussion -- a Commodore Vanderbilt, a Kleinedeutschland furniture maker, a black washerwoman. These

guides could offer tips on how to explore this Time Country, send people on their way, or accompany them in small groups.

There should also be (in this orientation area just outside the Time Lock) video terminals (or perhaps a small screening area) that present a five-ten minute video/film that expands on the teaser presented back in the Terminal. This should give the Big Picture overview, stressing the city's links to the world, its political economy and demographic topography, the range of social actors alive in the period.

After leaving the Orientation Area one could choose to go to any or all of the thematic stations: *work, play, family, space, politics, reflections*. In each area we would see assemblages mixing objects from the sponsoring museum's (or, better, museums') collection(s), media from the period, dioramas, and video mini-presentations ranging from setting objects in motion (like the Smithsonian did with *Engines of Change*) to filmed "interviews" with people from the period in costume dress, shot on location somewhere in the city. Each theme station would incorporate perspectives of the different classes/ethnic groups of the period. (This doesn't mean that every class or ethnic/racial group must be incorporated into each station, but rather that, on the whole, the treatment is inclusive).

These stations could be simply assemblages, or, better still, large scale dioramas on the Disney model. What EPCOT does, essentially, is to make an entire room/node into a diorama into which people can enter. That's too grand, even for this grandiose vision, but one could have mini-spaces that recreate as much as possible the feel of the time/space in question.

This raises a methodological/philosophical issue: how crucial is the role of authentic objects to be? I'd vote to use them, but to mix them with reconstructions, media, and dioramas. The Museum of Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv is instructive. It went whole hog and jettisoned authentic objects altogether, substituting reproductions, imaginative reconstructions of objects and situations based on historical sources, computer programs, mini- cinemas, and dioramic displays, in a way that's worked. We don't think we have to go so far. Indeed we think only authentic objects can provide the magic of historic authenticity that remains a tremendous draw. But we would not be bound by those objects.

So, for example, consider the various theme stations as they might look in the 1800-1860

pod.

Work. The overviews will have made the point that this period is oriented around commerce (the South/West/England nexus), with associated developments in manufacturing, finance, and communication. So we might see a display on the world of the docks, that treated the roles of merchants, sea captains, instrument makers, sailors, longshoremen, cartmen, and whores. It could explore changes in the period: the beginning of the shift to the Hudson, the construction of the Atlantic Docks in Brooklyn, river edge landfill and pier construction, the warehouse boom that drove the wealthy uptown, etc. This station would make use of model ships, scrimshaw, paintings and graphics; and videobits, e.g., an interview with a sailor, shot on location at South Street. It could also be the place to bring in dock-area related subjects like, e.g., the 1835 fire and its consequences, which would allow for treatment of, etc., the Croton waterworks, volunteer fire companies and the fire insurance industry.

Another "work" site might focus on a mockup of AT Stewart's department store (again, assisted by an on-location shoot). This gets into retailing, advertising, women and consumption, window-shopping, peddling, exploited seamstress and artisanal production, and the transport connections that allow national distribution (to the California gold fields for instance) A third "work" site could be the Harper's Cliff Street book factory, which would allow for discussions of change in printing, new technology, unions, the impact of newspapers and mass magazines, the arrival of professional writers [especially journalists and 'scribbling women'] (and agents), and the city's ability to dominate the flow of information from Europe out to the hinterlands.

More generally, you could have videobits showing e.g. 18th century craftsmen at work, by taping some living history operation, Cooperstown or Williamsburg. Or you could deal with the Livingstons and Phillipses by shooting up at the Hudson manors. The living history museums and the re-creationists are a great potential source of cheap supportive footage. These can be highly effective: at the Statue of Liberty museum there's always a crowd around the video showing workmen using 19th century craft techniques rebuilding the statue's toe, and right next to it, is the toe (a special copy made for the exhibit), which you can touch. In later periods, archival film clips could be used: the Minnesota Historical Society draws on Bethlehem Steel's archives for films on work process, antistrike activities etc. Work sites closer to the present could

employ out takes from local TV station programming and video interviews with period survivors, rather as was done by the Smithsonian's Folk Life exhibition devoted to work in New York City. The demystification of production – and the relations of production – fascinates people.

These stations could also have interactive video consoles that would allow the exhibit-goer to ask (pre-prepared) questions of the characters displayed. So if you're at a Harper's plant exhibit, you could be given a menu that lists questions: about daily life, relations with foremen, how much was made in wages, etc., and then run the prepackaged answers. Video games are an obvious model and there are now tons of computer games along these lines. Or you could tape an actor in period dress giving the responses.

Then *play*. Here we look at varying class forms. The elite's Astor Opera, Yacht Club, Park Theater, beginning of organized baseball, summering in Saratoga, Central Park, and high class brothels. Then artisanal and laboring forms: Turner picnics, prize fights, minstrel shows, Bowery Theater melodramas, saloons, dance halls and working class brothels. (Again you could employ videobits shot on location in e.g. McSorleys.) A major focus might be Barnum's museum, with a discussion of the commercialization of leisure time, appropriation of popular forms from the street, the creation of celebrities, advertising again.

Note these stations' flexibility. In any given situation (play in the 1850s) there are dozens of different settings or stories that could be told. The point would be to extract one or two worth telling. These modular bits could then be changed periodically, without affecting, for instance, play in the 1920s.

Then *space*. Items that might be treated include Building the Squares: looking at the construction and settlement of Union and Gramercy Squares as the focal point for a discussion of the reorganization of class neighborhoods as the elite's own commercial/industrial expansion and the attendant arrival of immigrants sent the wealthy fleeing northward in search of defensible squares or out of Manhattan altogether to ferry/rail suburbs. (Brooklyn as commercial/industrial spillover zone and commuter haven.) Another angle might be to focus on horse cars, the transport developments that allowed this class differentiated expansion. Or to treat Croton as part of the range of infra structural developments - sewers, gaslights, street construction -- that

laid basis for the expansion. sewers, croton, public works. Or to look at Kleindeutchland as the first example of the ethnic ghetto form of organization that would become so critical.

Then *family*. Here we could use both the period rooms -- now taken from their old quarters and placed in their appropriate Time Pods -- and videobits. Consider, perhaps, a video interview with an Irish maid talking about what it takes to keep the displayed parlor clean, or describing how a typical genteel parlor visit goes. This videobit would incorporate the parlor itself: the maid might be shown moving about the very space the monitor is next to, doing what the visitor would like to, and also providing closeups of items the visitor cant reach. This would demand viewers focus their attention on the artifacts. The maid could also discuss her mistresses new devotion to cleanliness and her attempts to monitor her servants' behavior -- giving us the Downstairs take on the Upstairs world, illuminating both in the process. Alternatively, we could use a videobit shot on location at some other city site, e.g., the Old Merchants House, where a maid trudges up and down the stairs explaining the behind the scenes running of the place. (In general, the cost of production of such videobits, could be shared with the host institution and displayed in both sites. In addition, when one goes to a Time Booth back in the Terminal the guides can also hand out brochures about other tourist attractions that deal with or date from the period. Here a tie-in with the Convention and Visitors center could be fruitful.) Alternatively again, we could also make tapes of events held in the city by, e.g., the Victorian society -- have them tape one of their costume dress balls -- or maybe get some Revolutionary Society to enact a dinner in Fraunces Tavern. Or some Irish group, if one exists, to recreate the Hibernian Greens' defense of Old St. Pats from the nativists. Again: there are many ways to use the contemporary city as a stage set.

The family station could also deploy graphics on the Five Points slums, or on the changing position of women as Victorian rules take hold. Here could go information about child rearing, dolls houses, schools. The housing and family organization of different ethnic groups could be contrasted. {A political bit might also be smuggled in: such as the debate over the proposal to fund Catholic parochial schools and why that triggered such an explosion, but probably should be reserved for:....}

Politics. Here we treat some of the era's social tensions. We might explore workplace

issues: the emergence of unions and radical groups as the class accord of the early republic breaks down with the emergence of the capitalist organization of workshops and factories. Or we could treat the dramatic distinctions in life styles of different classes, with the upper classes differentiating themselves by housing, clothing, culture and -- especially -- family/gender organization and the backlash this provokes from a transformed predominantly immigrant working class. An emblematic and dramatic avenue into all this would be through a narrative of the Astor Opera House Riots. (Or from another direction, via the Womens Rights Conventions and the attendant riots of the 1850s). Then there are the racial strains, reflected in antiblack riots and antiabolitionism (in part a response to abolition of slavery in the state, and the beginning of the bumpy integration of blacks into the free laboring classes). There are also the debates over land use by the land reformers and the Tenant's League opposition to Astor and great landlords. (In general, one device for getting at these issues would have video representatives of classes/races debating one another: e.g., John Jacob Astor and Mike Walsh on property, rent and land reform in the metropolis.) Finally, as this pod incorporates the Civil War period, the Draft riots are the premiere avenue into the great debate on the war, and New York's place in the Union.

Reflections. Using both objects and mini-video dramatizations, here we offer analyses of the period by contemporaries. First, with Irving, the straining for a local voice. Then with the 40s 50s boom and the city's emergence as unquestionably preeminent over its northeastern rivals, those who capture the new sense of New York's being America's "metropolis". The civic booster guidebooks trumpeting the city's virtues. Whitman as the poet of the new sensibility, eulogizing the Broadway crowd. Dickens on the Five Points. The sunshine/shadow literature stressing social polarization between decadent new aristocrats and degraded immigrants as the most salient characteristic. The birds eye view posters and maps. Some flavor from the range of newspapers and magazines of the day. [In later periods we could have reflective bits from stage, radio, film, tv.]

NOTE: An entirely different way for a pod to organize much the same material would be in the form of tours of the daily life of representatives of different classes. So lets say our

costumed guides, whom we meet when we emerge from the corridor, were a merchant, an artisan, a black laborer. They would set our footsteps along a path that recapitulated what such a character would have done on a typical day. The merchant gets up in the morning and heads off from his uptown rowhouse by horsecar to work, then home for dinner where he catches up on the doings of his wife and household. Then he reads the paper and grumbles about current political issues. Then he's off to the opera for the evening. The German artisan walks from his tenement to a furniture factory, then home, reads a different paper, then heads for a beer hall with his wife. The black longshoreman walks from his cellar in the Old Brewery to work (where he clashes with the Irish), then home (meeting his wife back from her servant job), and they head out to a dance hall.

ANOTHER NOTE: these approaches assume relatively short time periods are being covered. If the pods have to cover several generations, we might want to reorganize them around the contrast between the lives of different generations of the same family (rather as T. C. Boyle's novel of the Hudson River area does). We might construct a Jakesian-soap opera saga of three multi-generation families: merchant/artisan/slave. The grandparents are immigrant settlers, parents mid 18c, grandkids in Revolution.

Finally, at the end of the pod, before reentering a time corridor back to the Central Time Terminal (either the same one, divided into going and coming, or a different one altogether), there is a bank of touchscreen videodisc display monitors (Time Tellers). Here one can ask questions (or see FAQs) about life in the period that were not answered by the exhibits. For instance: what did people do when they got sick? (answer includes common diseases, cholera epidemics, and different class routes to health -- Bellevue, home remedies and patent medicines, the new ethnic/religious hospitals). How were the streets cleaned? (badly, night soil dumped on corporation docks, place reeked, slow sewerage construction, better in rich areas). How did people get around the city? (horsecars for wealthy, feet for rest). Also data about people, churches, politics, etc. (The costumed interpreters could also answer questions).

For the earlier periods, Time Teller text would be accompanied by graphics -- here's a

way of circulating material from print and painting and photograph collections beyond those objects actually displayed. For later periods, this material could be supplemented with film snippets -- the first subway movies by Edison or in *Manhandled* (1924), *Macy's in Miracle on 34th St*, *Grand Central in Twentieth Century*, the automat in *Easy Living*, *Algonquin's Rose Room in Laura*, the Stork Club in *Daisy Kenyon*, a charity ball at the Plaza in *By Right of Passage* (1920), Times Square in *Glorifying the American Girl* (1929), Wall Street and the Roxy in *The Naked City* (1948), Bellevue in *the Sleeping City* (1950), the Lower East Side in *Hester Street*, the Statue of Liberty in *On the Town* (1949), the Dakota in *Rosemary's Baby*, etc, etc.

The data base for these Time Tellers might be fairly easy to set up (at least the text portion) if a link is made with Ken Jackson's Encyclopedia project. They have thousands of items of this sort; the material could be put on touchscreen videodisc, and -- from their perspective -- used as a teaser; people could then purchase the volumes in the bookstore.

As a last element, why not include, either in the above data base, or in a separate touchscreen/monitor, information about: WHAT'S LEFT? (or MATERIAL REMAINS). Here visitors could find out what buildings, streets, built in the period are still here. This could also be a vehicle for discussing historic preservation as the text accompanying the picture of a remaining site would explain why it had survived (it was declared part of a historic district). Here the ready-made data base is the AIA Guide.

The scheme also includes a pod for time TRAVELING ahead. In the FUTURE FORUM we would present the hot issues that are now confronting contemporary New Yorkers, and set them in some historical perspective. We could also present various proposed solutions, perhaps by having short video presentations by alternative spokespersons on, e.g., waterfront land use policy (recreation or industrial), or garbage disposal (big burn vs recycle). At the end (cf EPCOT) one could enter one's vote into an ongoing computer bank which would display the percentages for any particular proposals.

There could also be exhibits that explore the question of where the city will be going in the next period, rather as each pod had dealt with its state of being in the past. Will the scepter pass to Europe? Will industry continue to move out? What do changing ethnic demographics

portend? We might make use of material provided by particular futurologist groups. And there could also be debates on where the city should be going.

Finally, we would have a separate section devoted to the history of Lower Manhattan over the entire four hundred year time span, both the story of its building and evolution, and its image (particularly that of Wall Street) in the country and the world. This would go some way toward helping develop some context for understanding why 9/11 hit New York and Washington, not Des Moines or Houston or even Los Angeles.

II: ALTERNATIVE/ANCILLARY APPROACHES

We think the full bells and whistles approach is the way to go, and the one most likely to succeed at generating attendance, revenue, and even investment capital. But should it prove impossible to muster the considerable capital investment required to create the world's best history center, we could consider a more modest (if commensurately less dynamic) version, cheaper to produce up front (if less remunerative over the long haul). Even a more sober and conventional museum exhibit, done right and done well, would be far superior to anything that currently exists in the city.

It would be relatively simply to extract such a stripped down version out of the preceding schema, by losing the glitz and media, and presenting the material in more traditional gallery fashion. Thus there would be an Orientation/Overview gallery, and four period ones plus Lower Manhattan, divided up into tracks as above. (An even more stripped down version would just do selected moments: 1760s, 1850s, 1910s, 1960s, or some such.) I'm less enthralled by such an approach, but it has its merits.

Another alternative would be to abandon the chronological for a thematic approach, picking a few subjects to explore in depth. Being somewhat old-fashioned in this regard, we prefer a chronological presentation because it allows us to see development, change, process; it allows people to grasp the way a congeries of past decisions have shaped our present, and to realize that their own decisions will have an impact on the nature of the future. We're aware that there are downsides to a narrative approach, not least being that it can straightjacket visitors, force them to begin at the beginning and then march through what will be a lengthy sequence all the way to the end. That's why we've opted for the hub and pod approach, which overcomes many of the limitations of the chronological form in a museum setting, allowing visitors to construct their own route through the presentation.

Thematic approaches, moreover, have problems of its own. A particular theme might attract some, but repel others: transport buffs would no doubt like *New York Transport Over Time*, but that would be a yawn for many others. A deeper problem with themes is that they tend to segregate audiences by their experience, to encourage the kind of consumer society

fragmentation characteristic of our magazine racks, where specialized publications for Volkswagen owners nestle next to those for Body Builders and Yachting enthusiasts. We have altogether too much fractionalization in this culture, and we'd prefer to encourage more holistic visions by emphasizing interconnections between different dimensions of experiences that take place simultaneously.

Still, thematic approaches have their virtues, so we offer some possibilities. There are a staggering number of themes that might be developed, but for the moment consider the following two sets. The first are essentially the seven subjects that explored in the pod structures above, now disembedded from their chronological settings. The second are more particularist in nature, and could also serve as models for outrigger or temporary exhibitions to supplement the more long-term presentations.

THEMES: SET ONE

The *City in the World* would deal with changing political economy, relations with planet and country, major immigration streams, using some of the techniques discussed in the Time Travel section.

Crucible of Mass Culture would explore the way immigrant and working class density and cultures both generated and made commercially feasible the development of entertainment forms that were then, literally, broadcast to the nation. Here we could treat the penny press, monthly magazines, theater, minstrelsy, fashion, amusement parks, baseball, tin pan alley, film, radio, tv. This exhibit would show how each new media built on expertise and conventions established by former ones. It might also incorporate the role of the reformers, who tried to censor most of these forms, for fear they would undermine the social order. The shift from street, to face-to-face commercial culture, to mass communication could be another subtheme.

Musical Chairs. Here we could examine the intersection of space and ethnicity, and treat questions of land use and territorial expansion. The focus would be on the way ethnic/racial/class neighborhoods emerge and are then reconfigured over time, via riots, planning, the marketplace, political action (1898 Consolidation). Subthemes would include land reform, developers, rent control, public housing, suburbanization.

Family & Gender. The rise and fall of the Victorian gender order might be one overarching theme (both in terms of feminist challenges and the role of consumer culture in undermining conventions). This would treat the private/public sphere material.

Sustaining the City (or the *Subterranean City*): this could treat the history of public works, water, sewer, electricity; or, more broadly, Conduits, looking at the connections the city made to the world via bridges, railroads, airports, harbor).

Architecture. Public and private spaces over time, relating styles to social, economic history of periods.

Work. The transformation from a commerce-based array of jobs (merchants, dockers, sailors, etc) to those generated by industry, finance, sales, and communication. Key subthemes are labor conflicts, capital flight, etc.

Reflections. The way that writers, photographers, playwrights, radio scripters, film makers, tv producers, have constructed the meanings of the metropolis. The analysis would pinpoint the transformation in ways of seeing over the centuries. It would draw on guidebooks, prints, paintings, theatrical material, silver carving, texts from writers, photographs. If not a standing show covering the whole spectrum, then perhaps a standing gallery, with rotating shows on that theme. Here, for example, a show on the history of guidebooks to the city would work well: there is a whole new and exciting literature on the history of tourism to draw upon.

THEMES: SET TWO

City of Exiles. The experience of exiles -- defined, perhaps, as those immigrants who either believe themselves be here only temporarily and direct the bulk of their political attention to events in the Old Country. Here we could deal with refugees from Santo Domingo in the 1790s, the Fenians, the German socialists, the Chartists, refugees from the Paris Commune, Italian nationalists, Cubans I (the Marti generation), Russian communists (Trotsky in the Bronx), etc etc down to contemporary Dominicans, Sikhs, Cubans II, Puerto Ricans, Armenians, Vietnamese, Russian Jews, etc., on down to the 1980s and 1990s Arab muslims. This could look at the kinds of institutions they develop (newspapers, political clubs, military organizations, restaurants), their relations with ethnic peers (esp the Catholic Church, upper classes), and their attitudes toward their adopted/host city and country (and vice versa).

Gotham at War. The military collection might be dusted off to form a part, but only a small part, of an exhibit that treated the impact of war on the city in the colonial era, the Revolution, 1812, the Civil War, WW1, WW2, Vietnam and the post 9/11 situation -- looking at the social and economic consequences of the fighting, the cultural spinoffs, the experience of those who fought and resisted. It could also treat the shifting of defense allocations to the south and west and the attendant impact of the rise of the gunbelt/sunbelt on the metropolis.

Festivals of Connection. As the permanent exhibit would make clear, the key to the city's history has been its ability to constitute itself as a vital nodal point on a global grid. But this has long been clear to New Yorkers. Indeed there are a remarkable number of occasions when the city turned out en masse to celebrate the establishment of yet another link to the outside world. An examination (using paintings, prints, graphics, on down to video) of the immense bashes the town put on for the Constitution's ratification, Erie Canal, the Croton Waterworks, the Atlantic Cable, the Erie (and other) Railroads, the establishment of relations with Japan, the arrival of the first steamship, the Brooklyn Bridge, Lindberg's flight, etc etc. This would also allow the discussion of a host of subsidiary issues, like the changing nature of parades (especially the shift from civic procession to managed spectacle).

Neighborhoods. The permanent exhibits are not likely to deal adequately with the more splintered, fragmented nature of urban reality. A Neighborhood Gallery with monitors that played short tapes presenting both a historical and current exploration of neighborhoods might fill the gap. The model here could be a variation of existing walking tours, incorporating videos of contemporary streetscapes, period graphics/film, and interviews with locals about their memories and their contemporary reality. These could also be sold, both in the store, and to neighborhood groups and schools, or aired on public television.

Memories. or, with a bow to Reds, *Witnesses.* A show that deployed videotaped oral histories to construct an entire exhibit that used memories as artifacts. These could be arranged in many ways. Old-timers could comment on events (as experienced from their perspective). These videobios could be used as central features in the neighborhoods show, next.

The City on the Stage. An exhibit dealing with New York productions that took city life as their focus, ranging from Big Mose, to Harrigan and Hart, On the Town, Plaza Suite, etc etc.

The City in Cinema. An exhibit that looked at the kinds of images of New York that have

been developed by the film and TV industries over time. The show could use short clips from movies (as well as posters, memorabilia) displayed on a slew of monitors to develop a variety of issues. The point here would be not to use media simply as adjunct to artifact, but as itself the artifact.

Such a show could look at how film and tv shapes national (and, even more, international) perceptions about and policies toward New York. It could play with the role of film in transforming architecture into icon by examining the repeated use of city locations -- Grand Central, Chrysler, Rockefeller Center, 21 Club, Waldorf Astoria, Radio City Music Hall, Horn & Hardart, Plaza Hotel -- and exploring the way film reflects and reinforces these metropolitan tokens. (And how the location and then departure and then reemergence of the film industry here, and the waxing and waning and waxing again of preference for location shooting over studio work, relates to the use of city images.)

It could also track the intersections of cultural production with changing social demography, as in the way we moved from the old radio and early tv show set in New York through the 1950s move of sitcom families out to the suburbs -- the Ricardos and the Mertzes head for Connecticut in their 55 Pontiac -- and then back to the revival of the TV metropolis (Archie Bunker's Queens, Cosby's St. Luke's Place) in the 70s, as advertisers followed their prime markets out of and back into the city.

It could also track an innumerable set of cinematic themes, among them:

Apocalypse Here: Independence Day, King Kong, the Beast from 20,000 fathoms (53) with its monster wasting Wall Street and destroying the roller coaster at Coney, Wolfen (1981) in which a speculator destroying/gentrifying the Lower East Side is killed by wolves who live in a destroyed church in the South Bronx (on Charlotte Street no less), the wolves being spirits of the original Indian settlers, the speculator to be a descendent of the Dutch who turned them out of their land as he's now turning out poor people. C.H.U.D. (1984) another anti-gentrification parable pits mutants (homeless people deformed by nuclear waste kept in the subways) against Soho yuppies.

New York Noir: the Underground/Criminal City -- a continuation into modern popular culture of the 19c sunshine/shadow literature's fascination/fear of the subterranean (Deathwish, Blackboard Jungle, Young Savages, West Side Story, Warriors, Force of Evil, Naked City, The

Sleeping City, French Connection, Serpico, Godfather, Escape from New York, and now Gangs of New York.

Executive Suite: Wall Street, Network, Patterns, Executive Suite.

GlamourTown: Twentieth Century Limited, Thin Man, By Right of Passage, Glorifying the American Girl.

Decadent Gotham: Nothing Sacred (37) explored upper class foppishness in a comedic way; by the 70s decadence meant the dark side: Midnight Cowboy, Taxi Driver, Street Smart, Mean Streets.

Consumption Capital: Kleptomaniacs, Miracle on 34th Street, The Beautiful City (1925) about a man who steals nickels from the Automat.

III. UNDERLYING HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

To properly discuss how to tell the history of New York City we need to agree on what the lineaments of that history are. What follows is our sense of the most fundamental features, the ones that will allow us to reduce the saga to manageable proportions.

The key to telling New York's story is to set it in global and national context. It is impossible to grasp what happened in the city if you restrict your attention to its five boroughs. Rather we must understand how developments in the wider world -- war, economic conditions, population movements, cultural transformations -- provided the matrix of constraints and opportunities within which local actors, in conflict and compromise, constructed their city over time.

Gotham's history has been crucially shaped by its evolving relationship with a developing world order. Since its inception, New York has been a strategic nodal point on a global grid -- a vital conduit for the flow of cultures, commodities, capital, labor, and ideas. It has been, successively: a trading post perched on the periphery of a Dutch mercantile empire; a vital seaport link in a flourishing English imperial network; the mercantile, financial, and cultural interface between European industrialism and a burgeoning American agricultural hinterland; the facilitator of the continental and industrial development of the USA (and a manufacturing center in its own right); and the headquarters metropolis of an American-based multinational economy.

Over the course of four centuries, as it moved through this sequence, New York moved from the edge to the center of the world. One of the critical themes that separates New York from all other American cities is precisely this centrality, first as portal for and then as source of culture and capital. This ever more dominant position created a peculiar love-hate relationship between a country (and later a world) simultaneously dependent on, fascinated by, and angry at the big city.

This framework suggests a fruitful periodization – breaking the city's story up into segments organized around its relation to the wider world: Colonial Town (1500-1789); Link to Europe (1789-1865); Continental Capital (1865-1945); Global Capital (1945-2001). We also advocate a section on the Future.

Within each period, a rich-text narrative would address seven key aspects of contemporary life: 1) an overview of the city's political economy with particular attention to the consequent class/ethnic/racial structure (including patterns of immigration); 2) the nature of work and labor relations in the period; 3) cultural creativity; 4) family life (embracing wider issues of gender); 5) spatial relations (including but not limited to city planning, architecture and neighborhood development); 6) politics (not defined narrowly as something that happens between parties, but embracing the broader negotiations, between various social actors, over the direction of city life as a whole); and finally, 7) reflections, an examination of the meanings of the city as constructed and articulated by contemporary observers. Ideally all these themes should reinforce one another: connections should be drawn between work and play, family and architecture, politics and finance.

What follows next are ludicrously brief overview analyses of the four major time zones.

1. COLONIAL TOWN (1500-1789)

A narrative might begin with a discussion of the interaction between native tribes and the geo-ecology, in a way that illuminates the physical (and aquatic) terrain. It would then treat the establishment of New Amsterdam in the context of the rise of the Dutch Empire, making the point that in its epic struggle against the Spanish the Dutch accumulated a global domain -- spices in the Indies, sugar in Brazil, slaves in Africa -- alongside which the piddling outpost of New Amsterdam was inconsequential. A mere fortified trading post, on the model of those in the

Far East, the place attracted minimal immigration from Holland, rather adventurers from all nations. It was a rowdy frontier town a la Dodge City out at the edge of the civilized world.

The Dutch Empire fell almost as soon as it had risen. Attacked on all fronts, thrown out of Brazil, challenged by rising English empire in Africa and East and North America, the Hollanders reevaluated and upgraded New Amsterdam. They sent in a crack manager from their Curacao operations and told the Marshal Dillon of the day to clean up the town. Stuyvesant whipped the place into shape, fixed up the fort and wall, reorganized the surrounding countryside, stomped the Indians, built up the slave trade as a new economic base. Then, whomp, the English came in and took over.

New York was now fitted, in a more central way, into a new Anglo-imperial matrix based on trade with the West Indian sugar islands, and its usefulness as a base for invasions of French Canada. The Brits built up a local aristocracy to stabilize their rule by handing out land and defense contracts. With the late 18th century crisis of empire, New Yorkers divided. The biggest merchants opted to stay. Smaller merchants, mechanics, and sailors pushed the city to join the rebel movement. New York became a major battleground, and the British occupied it for the duration. With triumph on Evacuation Day, the city emerged from the colonial period as master of its own destiny, a seaport of an independent republic.

2. LINK TO EUROPE (1789-1865)

Free, but with a shaky future. The old colonial sources of income -- slaving, the British Caribbean trade, military contracts -- were mostly shot. The town was rescued, ironically, by Britain. With England's industrial revolution demanding cotton for its mills and wheat for its workers, New York managed to insert itself between the three most dynamic zones of the 19th century global economy. It did so through initiatives in transport (packets, canal, steamship, rail), finance (banking and insurance firms underwrote trade with and development of the West and South further tying those regions into New York's extended hinterland), communication (telegraph, AP, Atlantic cable), and entertainment (theater). New York also became the entrepot, the distribution center for arriving European commodities and European peoples -- those immigrants disrupted by the transformations of the political economy. An industrial base developed as an adjunct to commerce: e.g., shipyards and foundries for steamships, rails, and capitalist production relations displaced artisanal ones in industries that seized on the

possibilities inherent in the rise to commercial preeminence.

Through it all the city's dependence on slavery deepened, even after it finally emancipated its own bondspeople in 1827. Not surprisingly it was believed that the rise of abolitionism and the drift toward Civil War threatened Gotham's economic base, and, until virtually the last minute, most of the city's whites united in opposing conflict with the South. Once war came, however, the elites turned to enthusiastic support for a war which phenomenally enhanced metropolitan wealth and cemented its centrality in the postwar economy. Many of the working people who fought and died and paid for the enterprise were less enamored, however, and the Draft Riots were another consequence.

3. CONTINENTAL CAPITAL (1865-1945)

The central fact of this period was the industrialization of the American Continent (comparable to the last period's industrialization of England). New York City provided the capital, becomes the headquarters of the new national corporations, provides professional and managerial cadre (in advertising, corporate law, accounting, etc), and continued to be the major portal for importing and exporting commodities and for the arrival of new immigrants heading to fields and factories of west. Building on developments in the last period, the city retained preeminence in the communication and entertainment fields. Toward the end of the period, the city's banks moved from being simply agents of European capital to becoming themselves the managers of the national economy; J.P. Morgan is the exemplary figure here. New York emerged as the de facto capital of the US, headquarters of the continental-scale corporations that dominated the nation's business arrangements, and the business-service and professional agglomerations – law, accounting, advertising, retailing – which served that corporate complex. In addition Gotham became the center of national communications, cultural production, media and entertainment, high society. Its very streets become identifying tags for national institutions – Wall Street, Broadway, Madison Avenue, Fifth Avenue (and the Bowery, too).

4. GLOBAL CAPITAL (1945-2001)

Although New York City became a crucial player on the global scene after World War I, when the United States went from being a debtor to a creditor nation, in the 1920s Gotham had

only begun to replace London as the center of the international capitalist economy. That process was completed only after Second World War when the US, alone among major nations, emerged with its powers enhanced, not depleted. As continental scale corporations expanded their operations abroad, New York sustained its position as headquarters town, hosting the multinationals and their attendant support services, though sharing its imperial position with Washington, which controlled federal and military resources.

But even as the city's emergence as an imperial center brought fresh triumphs in culture, it also brought an erosion in Gotham's broader base. Manufacturing fled out onto the planet; the port sagged badly; suburbanization undermined the tax and human resource pool; national and regional immigration strained dwindling resources. By the mid 70s, the negatives of global expansion outweighed the positives and, coupled with recession, generated near collapse. Resurgence in the 80s, punctured by recession at decade's end, was followed by a new spurt of development during the dot.com boom of the 90s, only to give way to recession again in 2001, a downturn exacerbated by the horrific events of 9/11. Throughout these end-of-century decades, Gotham tied its fate ever more tightly to the ever more volatile international financial complex, and to global-oriented business and media services, which in turn suffered from dispersion and disaggregation; at the same time remaining manufacturing and commercial capacity ebbed away. Set against these difficulties was the strength of culture and tourism, and the boost from a tremendous influx of immigrants from around the planet, who restored both numbers and energy to the metropolitan area.