

Book Review

Mapping New York, © 2009 Black Dog Publishing Limited, London, UK and the authors, ISBN 978-1-906155-82-7.
— Reviewed by Bryan Catlin, PLS

Mapping New York is an interesting book of maps that is neither an atlas meant to be used to find your way around nor a technical book discussing cartographic technique. This 29 cm by 24 cm hardback is more of a catalog of maps on one subject, the City of New York. The book is divided into the following sections: Introduction (by Seth Robbins and Robert Neuwirth), The History of the City, Servicing the City, Living in the City, and Imagining the City. Biographies and acknowledgements are included.

The introduction gives a brief background of the growth of New York since its founding as a Dutch outpost. This leads into the four main sections of the book, each of which starts with a two-page description and contains a two-page listing of the maps in that section. Typically, a whole map is included along with a caption describing the map and giving the source of the copy reproduced in the book. Since many of the original maps are quite a bit larger than a book page or a spread of pages, some of the reduced maps are not legible, but with the sources of the maps provided, an interested reader can find more information at the original publisher's or mapmaker's site.

The History of the City section comprises maps from the time of European settlement of the area. One of the notable maps is an 1807 map—the Commissioners Map—which first laid out the streets that would eventually cover Manhattan.

Servicing the City mainly deals with “functional” maps which provide information about streets, other transportation systems, land use, and wards. The 1865 Sanitary and Topographical Map of the City and Island of New York, which depicts the shoreline and other water features in addition to the area's topography, is reportedly still used as a planning tool.

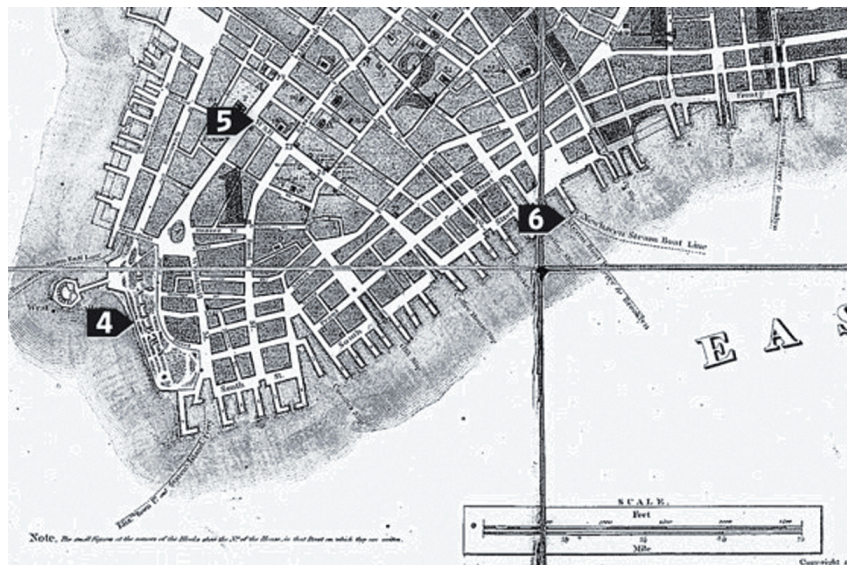
Living in the City mainly deals with maps routinely used by the public, i.e., analog street and subway maps, but the section also includes more modern creations such as a map of surveillance camera locations, a cycling map, and a map of

“green” resources in Manhattan.

Imagining the City is a collection of maps created as art, which reflects a more personal and fanciful relationship between the artist and the cartography of New York. Some of these, such as the Ork Posters boroughs and neighborhood maps are both visually pleasing and very effective in presenting information to the viewer.

While conceived as a book for the general public to leaf through and enjoy the images, *Mapping New York* provides a wealth of ideas on presenting graphical data in captivating ways. With the growth of GIS and other mapping tools available to surveyors, this is a timely help for a profession more used to presenting “just the facts” on a plat.

Mapping New York is a useful book for surveyors who wish



This detail of an 1817 map is significant because it's one of the first to show house numbers in New York City. 4. Battery Park has since grown to encompass a much larger area, as development has expanded Manhattan's shoreline. 5. Wall Street, where it still remains today. 6. One of several steamboat ferries to Brooklyn, before bridges were constructed from Manhattan. [Courtesy of New York Public Library.]

to see how mapping has changed over time and get a sense of what was considered important enough to place on a map in different eras. One minor quibble is the repeated description of “contours” in water features that appear to be form lines which give an indication of underwater topography but are not a true representation of underwater conditions.