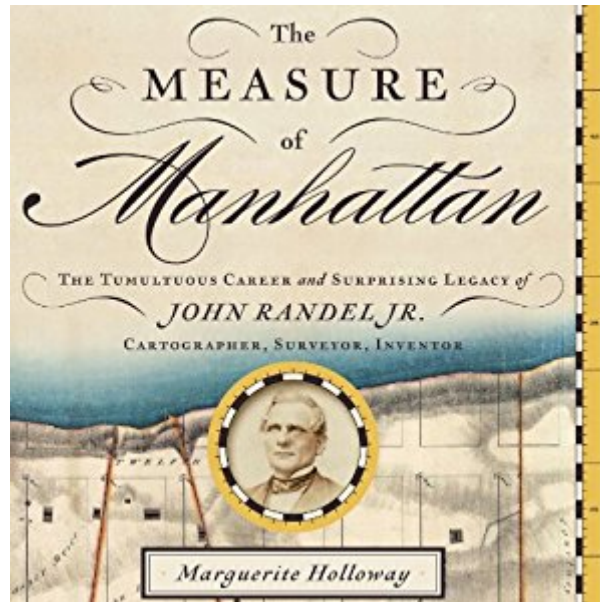




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The Measure Of Manhattan



Synopsis

The first biography of a 19th-century genius, the man who plotted Manhattan's famous city grid. John Randel Jr. (1787-1865) was an eccentric and flamboyant surveyor. Renowned for his inventiveness as well as for his bombast and irascibility, Randel was central to Manhattan's development but died in financial ruin. Telling Randel's engrossing and dramatic life story for the first time, this eye-opening biography introduces an unheralded pioneer of American engineering and mapmaking. Charged with "gridding" what was then an undeveloped, hilly island, Randel recorded the contours of Manhattan down to the rocks on its shores. He was obsessed with accuracy and steeped in the values of the Enlightenment, in which math and science promised dominion over nature. The result was a series of maps, astonishing in their detail and precision, which undergird our knowledge about the island today. During his varied career Randel created surveying devices, designed an early elevated subway, and proposed a controversial alternative route for the Erie Canal - winning him admirers and enemies. *The Measure of Manhattan* is more than just the life of an unrecognized engineer. It is about the ways in which surveying and cartography changed the ground beneath our feet. Bringing Randel's story into the present, Holloway travels with contemporary surveyors and scientists trying to envision Manhattan as a wild island once again. Illustrated with dozens of historical images and antique maps, *The Measure of Manhattan* is an absorbing story of a fascinating man that captures the era when Manhattan - indeed, the entire country - still seemed new, the moment before canals and railroads helped draw a grid across the American landscape.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From a hilly tree-filled forest to the most amazing city on the globe, this lovingly written book takes us on a very detailed journey through the evolution of Manhattan. The star of the book is the brilliant and eccentric cartographer and surveyor John Randel Jr. who plotted Manhattan's well-known grid. Holloway details Randel's amazing life story and in doing so, reveals the engrossing history of Manhattan's transformation from an island filled with hills, enormous rocks, and densely forested areas to highly functional and precisely grided urban metropolis. The writing is both scholarly and inviting, yielding a book rich in information and data, and with the feel of a great adventure unfolding with each page. This is history with a heart. A wonderful read, well recommended.

This was recommended by a friend and gave me a different view of how New York City was layer out on the grid. It personalizes the actual process of the grid being measured and the hardships that were involved. The later part of the book deals more with John Randel's life and works in Delaware and Maryland. His participation on the C&D Canal were my primary reason for reading this novel. I would definitely recommend this to anyone who is interested in the history of Delmarva or who is interested in the surveying and layout of New York.

I like books about old technology and this book is very interesting about surveying in general as well as surveying old Manhattan.

In truth, I liked it. But my dad, a retired engineer and New Yorker --and history buff -- loved it. Great story, well supported but much more about the development of engineering and surveying than Manhattan, per se.

Disappointment is unrealized expectations. From the title of this book, I expected to learn a great deal more about the Commissioners' Plan and the creation of the Manhattan Grid from concept to survey to excavation and implementation over the years. The Measure of Manhattan perfunctorily covers the survey for the grid and moves on to other episodes in John Randal Jr.'s life. It's a life that is, frankly, not that interesting. The author knows how to tell a story well so one is kept turning the pages even while one wonders why one is doing so. She also, to varying success, brings in related topics to flesh out the thin life story.

The book is splendidly written and the author has - with very considerable and justifiable assistance - made intensive research into the most interesting details of the subject and its environs. The book does not only concern itself with mapping Manhattan; there is so much well organized, stimulating and fascinating information contained in the book that provides an enduring and most satisfying understanding of the genius of the protagonist and indeed, of our ancestors and their technical and administrative achievements and environment - that people very much underestimate or of which they are simply unaware. The descriptions of the intensive interest, involvement and dedication of the various local administrations - and indeed which fully recognized the requirement for this - and other work is of the greatest interest; perhaps the book will also help to better illustrate those who blindly advocate for limited government and who may not clearly understand the objectives of government as the representative of the people. I also recommend the book to all who appreciate the incredible work done by our ancestors; to those of you who are much entertained and invigorated by the details of this, and who want to know more. It makes one feel rather small when we compare ourselves with them! And this is perhaps good?

This book is Informative, well-researched and beautifully written. I recommend it for anyone who has an interest in New York city history.

this is the first book I've purchased for my Kindle. The history of Manhattan as well as some areas of Upstate New York is interesting. The maps and illustrations are fantastic.

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