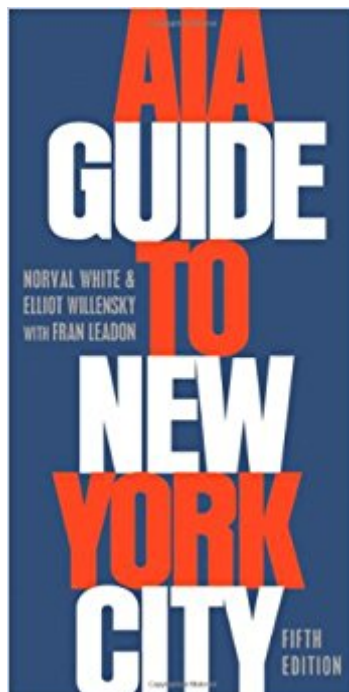


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# AIA Guide To New York City



## Synopsis

Hailed as "extraordinarily learned" (New York Times), "blithe in spirit and unerring in vision," (New York Magazine), and the "definitive record of New York's architectural heritage" (Municipal Art Society), Norval White and Elliot Willensky's book is an essential reference for everyone with an interest in architecture and those who simply want to know more about New York City. First published in 1968, the AIA Guide to New York City has long been the definitive guide to the city's architecture. Moving through all five boroughs, neighborhood by neighborhood, it offers the most complete overview of New York's significant places, past and present. The Fifth Edition continues to include places of historical importance--including extensive coverage of the World Trade Center site--while also taking full account of the construction boom of the past 10 years, a boom that has given rise to an unprecedented number of new buildings by such architects as Frank Gehry, Norman Foster, and Renzo Piano. All of the buildings included in the Fourth Edition have been revisited and re-photographed and much of the commentary has been re-written, and coverage of the outer boroughs--particularly Brooklyn--has been expanded. Famed skyscrapers and historic landmarks are detailed, but so, too, are firehouses, parks, churches, parking garages, monuments, and bridges. Boasting more than 3000 new photographs, 100 enhanced maps, and thousands of short and spirited entries, the guide is arranged geographically by borough, with each borough divided into sectors and then into neighborhood. Extensive commentaries describe the character of the divisions. Knowledgeable, playful, and beautifully illustrated, here is the ultimate guided tour of New York's architectural treasures. Acclaim for earlier editions of the AIA Guide to New York City: "An extraordinarily learned, personable exegesis of our metropolis. No other American or, for that matter, world city can boast so definitive a one-volume guide to its built environment." -- Philip Lopate, New York Times "Blithe in spirit and unerring in vision." -- New York Magazine "A definitive record of New York's architectural heritage... witty and helpful pocketful which serves as arbiter of architects, Baedeker for boulevardiers, catalog for the curious, primer for preservationists, and sourcebook to students. For all who seek to know of New York, it is here. No home should be without a copy." -- Municipal Art Society "There are two reasons the guide has entered the pantheon of New York books. One is its encyclopedic nature, and the other is its inimitable style--'smart, vivid, funny and opinionated' as the architectural historian Christopher Gray once summed it up in pithy W & W fashion." -- Constance Rosenblum, New York Times "A book for architectural gourmands and gastronomic gourmets." -- The Village Voice

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Covering each borough almost block by block, building by building, it is an extraordinarily learned, personable exegesis of our metropolis. No other American or, for that matter, world city can boast so definitive a one-volume guide to its built environment....The AIA Guide to New York City sees that what matters about buildings is not solely their window treatment or spandrels, but the life lived in and through them. The best city architecture is that which makes possible the world of the street." Phillip Lapote, *The New York Times*"Blithe in spirit and unerring in vision." *New York Magazine*"An architect's romp through five boroughs." *The Daily Record, New Jersey*"A book for architectural gourmands and gastronomic gourmets." *The Village Voice*"Over its more than four decades of existence, the guide has evolved into a New York institution, as much a city fixture among a certain crowd as Fourth of July fireworks over the East River."--Constance Rosenblum, *New York Times*"Reading [the AIA GUDIE] is a joy, and one immediately sees how anyone--the feverish real-estate broker, the stunned tourist, or the pontificating college historian--would love it."--Thessaly La Force, *newyorker.com*"Today in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, 20 people aimed cameras at a three-story row house, snapped photos, and cheered. Part of the reason for their excitement may have been that the building was once the home of Jane Jacobs, the writer and activist. More likely, though, is that the picture-taking session marked the official end of the lengthy research phase for the fifth edition of the AIA Guide to New York City, the wryly written block-by-block directory of landmarks that's become an essential reference for architects, planners, and developers, as well as residents."--C.J. Hughes, *Architectural Record*"The new guide, readers will be pleased to know, is a

vast improvement over its predecessor, beginning with a redesigned retro-'70s cover that replaces the widely loathed faux-metal version of the fourth edition. The new book is also trimmer than its predecessor, though its content is greatly expanded, thanks to a shift to a two-column page layout. A team of writers, led by White and Fran Leadon, has done extraordinary work combing the city, and not just Manhattan, adding entries for new buildings and providing 'necrologies' for the dearly departed."--Architect Magazine "Indeed, the AIA Guide is perhaps the finest-grained study of New York's built environment that exists, a guide in which no Italianate cornice, no Art Nouveau balustrade, no limestone carving or postmodern tempietto seems to go unremarked."--Wall Street Journal "While the majority of the book celebrates the good, the AIA Guide is at its most entertaining when applying its witty and pithy critiques to things considered by the authors to be crapitecture."--Curbed.com "The AIA Guide to New York City is an indispensable book that new readers will cherish . . . In fact, it is likely the most comprehensive guide to any city's buildings. The sheer volume of pictures and capsule discussions of building design and histories is one of the great publishing achievements of our time . . . Nobody should leave home for NYC without this book."--BeyondChron.com "The AIA GUIDE is a 1,055-page love letter to the city. It obsessively details the greatness of well-known neighborhoods, while luring the reader to bucolic corners of Staten Island and the hidden Art Deco grandeur of the Bronx."--Bloomberg News "A book that belongs in every New Yorker's library."--Dwight Garner, New York Times

Norval White is Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture, City College of New York. His architectural designs include the New York City Police Headquarters, among many other buildings. He is the author of *The Architecture Book* and *New York: A Physical History*. Elliot Willensky (d. 1990) was Vice Chairman of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission and the author of *When Brooklyn Was the World*. Fran Leadon is a registered architect and teaches at the School of Architecture, City College of New York.

A prospective reader may ask, "How is it possible to build an architectural survey of New York?" This book is the answer. This book is about breadth rather than depth. There are thousands of entries from all five boroughs, but Manhattan figures most prominently. Though important modern examples are included, the emphasis here is definitely on architectural history. Each entry includes a tiny black & white photograph and a sentence or two of descriptive text. Though it all sounds rather summary, it actually works quite well. The photographs are good enough to show you how each building looks from the street, and the text is surprisingly insightful. The somewhat snarky tone

of the author makes what could easily be a dry list of sites a really good book. There are maps and introductory essays for each neighborhood. About 50 sites that hold exceptional landmark status are featured with a more detailed description and a larger, more revealing photo. The book treats the World Trade Center site particularly well, including entries for what "was" and what "will be." Very nice. The authors are also sensitive to important lost landmarks, including them in separate sections entitled "necrology." I just love the wit and wisdom! The book is only loosely arranged in "tours," and is broken down into neighborhoods which can be explored on foot. New Jersey and suburbs are not part of the catalog. No city on earth even approaches the urban ensemble of 19th and 20th century architecture that is New York. It is truly a sight to behold. Here's a book that will introduce you properly, and provides the necessary foundation from which to extend your exploration. This is also the best reference work you are going to find on this topic.

One Customer Review says, "The latest edition, even in paperback, is so expanded and comprehensive that carrying it on a walking tour is unthinkable." Not true. I have toured New York four days during the past month since buying the book. Each day was twelve hours or more of walking with book in hand, constantly flipping from map to text-entry and back. Its tall narrow shape makes it handle like a small book. Both hands can support the spine while one thumb flips pages forward and the other back. Mine still looks new after 50 hours of this. The paperback edition's covers, and the pages, seem able to withstand outdoor use. Last Friday afternoon while I was taking a break in Madison Square a pigeon dropping splatted all over the back cover of my book. It was a minute at least before I could acquire some napkins, but when I did it wiped off cleanly. The mess did not even begin soaking through and there is no warping of the cover or discoloration. It didn't even smell. That same day I happened to cross paths with a New Yorker (I'm a tourist) who came up and spoke to me while I was standing, book in hand, looking up at 36 Gramercy Park East in the "Union Square to Gramercy Park" walking tour. He was carrying the very same book. He said he uses it regularly. I'm just saying, carrying this book is not "unthinkable." The walking tours are efficiently laid out. Sticking to them, I have found, saves steps. It's not easy for me to travel to New York so the days I can get there I start walking early, stay late, and try to cover as much ground as possible. Last Friday (Sept 16 2011) for example, I began the 71-site "Ladies Mile" walking tour at 7 am and finished at 2:30 in the afternoon, a rate of 10 sites per hour including a half-hour lunch. After my (necessary) nap in Madison Square with the pigeons perching overhead I continued on to the 38 sites of the "Union Square to Gramercy Park" walking tour, finishing at 7 pm, again a rate of 10 per hour. So in 12 hours I covered 109 sites and completed 2 of the book's walking tours. It is so nice to

arrive in the morning with one conception of New York and leave at night with a substantially expanded view. That's what this book does really well for me. Especially appreciated is the history-of-occupancy of buildings. Here's an example: "Onetime Manufacturer's Hanover Trust Company branch / originally New York County National Bank / now Nickel Spa for Men." (H14 on page 210 in the "Chelsea" walking tour). The book contains, by my quick count, somewhere around 1500 sites in Manhattan below 59th Street, 2500 sites in Manhattan as a whole, 900 in Brooklyn, 400 in the Bronx, and 350 in Queens. I'm only counting the numbered sites and not the lettered subheadings that sometimes occur under a number, and I'm not counting Staten Island. Every site is on one of the walking tours, of which there are around 200. Another Customer Review says, "... there are errors, both of omission and commission." (That reviewer didn't specify any). I can't speak for "omissions" but I do occasionally find minor errors. They have not been bothersome. I haven't found any that couldn't be figured out on the spot. Here are the seven I've found in my first four 12-hour walks covering eight of the walking tours:

Page 75: Site 36 on the "Civic Center" walking tour, 415 Broadway, National City Bank of New York. Should be located between Canal St and Lispenard St, one block north of where this map shows it.

Page 88: Site 8 on the "Chinatown/Little Italy" walking tour, First Shearith Israel Graveyard. Should be located between Oliver St and James St, one block north of where this map shows it.

Page 132: The heading at the top left of this page should read "The Villages" instead of "Lower Manhattan."

Page 206: At the southern end of the High Line, "Horatio St" should be "Gransevoort St" and "Gransevoort St" should be "Horatio St."

Page 207: Site 8 on the "Chelsea" walking tour. Should be located on the south side of West 22 Street instead of the north side.

Page 230: Site 12 on the "Ladies Mile" walking tour, the Westminster, 180 West 20 Street. The entry says the building is located "along 7th Avenue to 21st St" but it is actually located between 20th and 19th Street. The map on the next page shows it correctly.

Page 233: The picture labeled "L24" should be "L26."

The new (2010) edition, and just as useful and entertaining as the prior (2000) volume. A lot of new buildings have gone up in the past decade, many of them far more adventurous than the usual NYC norm, so it is definitely worth getting the new book. Architecture buffs and NYC aficionados will find this very useful on a walk, and great fun to leaf through at home. It doesn't have walking tour maps (I had forgotten that the earlier edition did) but I'd rather make up my own maps on Google, and throw in some shopping.

I love this book! Yes, it is too heavy - cheaper, more lightweight paper could & should have been

used, & it is kind of hard to lug around. But the information contained within is priceless, & makes tourists & locals alike see New York in a totally different light. Why aren't there similar books about other cities? I feel that it is quite indispensable. However, one small gripe: On page 281, the Republican founders of the Union League Club, reacting to the original Union Club's failure to expel Confederate sympathizers, are said to have been "on the right side politically", a statement I consider offensive - Southerners are humans too, & they too have feelings. Such statements, which have nothing to with architecture, should be avoided.

If this was a restaurant review, "AIA Guide to New York City" would no doubt be described as a succulent dish. Each of the 955 pages of maps and listings is filled with succinct wit, wisdom, photos - a rare blend of facts, opinion and history in an exceptionally well-organized package. The level of detail is amazing. The book also contains a helpful glossary (this is under the imprint of the American Institute of Architects, and uses an architect's vocabulary) and exhaustive subject and address indexes. Among the wonders of the AIA Guide, is that the volume works so well on so many levels. You can use it as a literal guide - 54 walking tours in Manhattan alone - or you can use it as a reference (when was the Woolworth Building erected?) - or you can read it as a history of New York's architectural evolution. As guidebooks go, "AIA Guide to New York City" is a skyscraper and a landmark.

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