



New York Diaries: 1609 to 2009

Teresa Carpenter (Editor), Racheline Maltese

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New York is a city like no other. Through the centuries, she's been embraced and reviled, worshipped and feared, praised and battered—all the while standing at the crossroads of American politics, business, society, and culture. Pulitzer Prize winner and *New York Times* bestselling author Teresa Carpenter, a lifelong diary enthusiast, scoured the archives of libraries, historical societies, and private estates to assemble here an almost holographic view of this iconic metropolis. Starting on January 1 and traveling day by day through the year, these journal entries are selected from four centuries of writing—from the early 1600s to the present—allowing New York natives and visitors, writers and artists, thinkers and bloggers, to reach across time and share vivid and compelling snapshots of life in the Capital of the World.

“Today I arrived by train in New York City, which I’d never seen before, walked through the grandeur of Grand Central Terminal, stepped outside, got my first look at the city and instantly fell in love with it. Silently, inside myself, I yelled: I should have been born here!”—Edward Robb Ellis, May 22, 1947

“My experience is that a man cannot go anywhere in New York in an hour. The distances are too great—you must have another day to it. If you have got six things to do, you have got to take six days to do them in.”—Mark Twain, February 2, 1867

“A Peregrine falcon just flew past my window.”—Johnny/Quipu Blogspot, February 5, 2003

“I had a lot of dates but decided to stay home and dye my eyebrows.”—Andy Warhol, March 11, 1978

“At ten we have Orders to march up the River for Mount-Washington. Adieu, New-York; perhaps forever!”—Philip Vickers Fithian, September 3, 1776

New York Diaries reveals intimate, whimsical, profound, sobering, and indelible reflections on such historical moments as President Washington's first State of the Union address, the death of Abraham Lincoln, the sinking of the *Titanic*, the end of World War II—even the first incursion of Europeans into the city's Upper Bay on September 11, 1609, a presage to our country's greatest catastrophe nearly four hundred years later. Featuring familiar faces and fascinating unknowns, these pages provide a rich mosaic that is uniquely New York.

With excerpts from the writing of Sherwood Anderson • William H. Bell • Albert Camus • Chad the Minx • Noël Coward • Dorothy Day • John Dos Passos • Thomas Edison • Allen Ginsberg • William B. Gould • Keith Haring • Henry Hudson • Anne Morrow Lindbergh • Judith Malina • H. L. Mencken • John Cameron Mitchell • Joyce Carol Oates • Eugene O'Neill • Philippe Petit • Edgar Allan Poe • Theodore Roosevelt • Elizabeth Cady Stanton • William Steinway • Alexis de Tocqueville • Mark Twain • Gertrude Vanderbilt • Andy Warhol • George Washington • Kurt Weill • Walt Whitman • and many others.

New York Diaries: 1609 to 2009 Details

Date : Published January 3rd 2012 by Modern Library

ISBN : 9780679643326

Author : Teresa Carpenter (Editor) , Racheline Maltese

Format : Hardcover 502 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, New York, History, Historical

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From Reader Review New York Diaries: 1609 to 2009 for online ebook

Tom says

Enticing review from NYT.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/20/boo...>

Jennifer says

This is not the kind of book that's going to appeal to everybody, but I LOVED it. I'd read a few pages at night, kind of like a book of meditations--often I got sucked in and couldn't put it down after just a few entries (like Lay's potato chips: "bet you can't eat just one...").

The diaries come from visitors and residents of New York over the past four centuries. They include notes by Henry Hudson and other early Dutch explorers, Revolutionary War rebels and Loyalists, politicians, celebrities, socialites, and artists, people both famous and unknown. There are surprises every few pages. Here's one from Jan. 25, 1880:

"[L]ast Thanksgiving I made a vow that win her I would if it were possible; and now that I have done so, the aim of my whole life shall be to make her happy, and to shield her and guard her from every trial... How she, so pure and sweet and beautiful can think of marrying me I can not understand, but I praise and thank God it is so." Who is this ardent and flowery writer? Theodore Roosevelt.

There is David Pieterz de Vries, disgusted by his countrymen's brutal attack on an Indian village in 1643: "In taking leave of Commander Willem Kieft, I told him that this murder that he had committed on so much innocent blood would yet be avenged upon him." And there is Andy Warhol, feeling snubbed in 1986: "Arnold Schwarzenegger was having a party for the Statue of Liberty at Cafe Seiyoken and I wasn't even invited. And I wasn't invited to Caroline Kennedy's wedding, either."

I had expected the book to run in chronological order, from the 1600s to the 2000s, so I was surprised that instead it follows the calendar year, beginning January 1; but in the end, I liked how this gave a sense of history shifting and changing. It was like stepping into a time machine every time I opened the book.

My only quibble: the editor's random use of brackets and "sic" in the entries. Why she feels compelled to explain that "NY" stands for N[ew] Y[ork] but lets stand without explanation some of the more idiosyncratic spellings of 18th-century diarists is beyond me. But it's only a quibble.

Lori says

I chose this book because I spent the months of June and July at the bedside of both of my dying parents. I knew that my capacity for reading and absorbing information would be fragmented and limited by grief, anxiety, exhaustion and a simple lack of time. New York Diaries provided a book that I could read in five or

ten minute segments and each entry stood alone. It was the perfect fit for me during this extremely difficult time.

The book is set up in chronological order, from January 1 through December 31. The author selected diary entries for each day of the year from a wide variety of diarists. Diary entries ranged from the earliest entries dating back to the early 1600s up into contemporary Post 911 America. All diary entries, as the title suggests, reflect the lives of New Yorkers.

This amazing city has sheltered the great and the humble...the highly creative and the also the pedestrian lives of millions of citizens. *New York Diaries* gives the reader a tantalizing sample of the Million Stories in the Naked City (as the old TV show once touted). At the end of the book, the author provides a brief profile of each diarist. I became interested in some of the diarists whose work and/or life story was previously unknown to me. I may find myself on a diary kick after reading this amusing book.

Here are a few of my favorite entries:

"Last night we were at Castle Garden again. Sat on the terrace and inhaled the sea-breeze, listening only at distant intervals to the not heavy music of *Ernani* {opera by Verdi}, and looked out on the bay and the stars above and the stars below--for the night was dark and nothing was to be seen an hundred yards off except the multitudinous lights great and small, near and distant, scattered over the surface of the bay, like another series of constellations below us. Now and then the white sail of a sloop drifting along glimmered faintly through the night and then dissolved out of sight again, in a ghostly manner; but at other times on seemed to be at the edge of the world-- the jumping off place -- looking up and down at the stars of both hemispheres." {George Templeton Strong, 24 Aug. 1851}

"Today is the Jewish New Year, and the downtown streets are empty and even clean. Orchard Street is black, cold and desolated. Only the children are kicking empty paper boxes along the street. All the shops are closed, all those little shops, clogged from door to door from wall to wall with rolls of cloth, drapes, shirts, neckties, caps, pots and pans and thousands of small, unnamable things for women and men--all of them are closed today. They closed their stores and they closed themselves in their dark rooms for Rosh Hashanah. Even the subway this morning was half empty...and I missed several faces which I had gotten used to seeing every morning of the the uptown Sixth Avenue F train. They are all sitting now in their dimly lit rooms and thinking about money, the new year, their usual family things, women, their closed shops. I never thought that people could still take their holidays so seriously. I keep forgetting that there are people with traditions, homes, that they have their families in this city, and their memories...And I stand here in my tiny 95 Orchard Street room, looking out the window, overlooking the street--the ceiling is peeling off, pieces of paint are falling down on the books--I am standing here, trying to let my roots grow into this city." {Jonas Mekas, Sept. 10, 1953}

"A parade of school children is going on. I caught a glimpse of sections of them from the windows. Crowds of children merry-making always make me sad, rather undefined in origin -- perhaps it is the thought of this youth and happiness so soon to be worn away by contact with the social conditions, the grind and struggle for existence-- that the few rich may live from their efforts. The struggle to be one of the rich which makes the earnest working slave. Collier's phoned asking how the *Pirate* story pictures were coming on." {John Sloan, October 2, 1909}

"The Daguerrotype. I went this morning by invitation of M Francois Gouraud to see a collection of the views made by the wonderful process lately discovered in France by M. Daguerre...The reflection of surrounding images created by a camera obscura upon a plate of copper, plated with silver and prepared with some

chemical substance, is not only distinctly delineated, but left upon the plate so prepared and there remains forever. Every object, however minute, is a perfect transcript of the thing itself; the hair of the human head, the gravel on the roadside, the texture of a silk curtain, or the shadow of the smallest leaf reflected upon the wall, are all imprinted as carefully as nature or art has created them in the objects transferred; and those things which are invisible to the naked eye are rendered apparent by the help of a magnifying glass...How greatly ashamed of their ignorance the by-gone generations of mankind ought to be."

I believe there was a similar type of book published around the same time New York Diaries came out that features the diaries of Londoners. This book has whet my appetite for a similar tour of my favorite city.

Rachel C. says

I enjoyed this collection, which contains a good mix of famous people and regular people. I did find the organization a bit disorienting. The selected diaries are organized by day of the year, and then chronologically for each day. So for March 3 or whatever, you might read the diary of a Revolutionary War lieutenant, followed by Andy Warhol. I don't think strictly chronological would have worked either, but perhaps different fonts for each century?

September was tough.

My favorite entries were by Simone de Beauvoir, prompting me to add some of her novels to my to-read.

"[W]e saw a very good piece of ground: and hard by it was a Cliffe, that looked of the colour of a white greene, as though it were either Copper, or Silver Myne: and I thinke it to be one of them, by the Trees that grow upon it. For they be all burned, and the other places are greene as grasse, it is on that side of the River that is *Manna-hata*. There we saw no people to trouble us: and rode quietly all night; but had much wind and raine."

-- Robert Juet, Oct. 2, 1609

"Improved the day by leaving Wall Street early and set off with G[eorge] A[nthon] and Johnny to explore the Central Park, which will be a feature of the city within five years and a lovely place in A.D. 1900, when its trees will have acquired dignity and appreciable diameters. Perhaps the city itself will perish before then, by growing too big to live under faulty institutions corruptly administered... We entered the park at 71st St, on its e[ast] side, and made for "The Ramble," a patch just below the upper reservoir... it promises very well. So does all the lower park, though now in most ragged condition: long lines of incomplete macadamization, "lakes" without water, mounds of compost, piles of blasted stone, acres of what will be greensward hereafter but is now mere brown earth; groves of slender young transplanted maples and locusts, undecided between life and death, with here and there an aboricultural experiment that has failed utterly and is a mere broom stick with ramifications..."

-- George Templeton Strong, June 11, 1859

"Application from three infatuated young women for admission to Law School. No woman shall degrade herself by practicing law, in NY especially, if I can save her. Our committee will probably have to pass on the applications, pro forma, but I think the clack of these possible Portias will never be heard at Dwight's moot courts. "Women's-Rights Women" are uncommonly loud and offensive of late. I loathe the lot."

-- George Templeton Strong, Oct. 9, 1869

"Entered the Columbia Law School; I shall be there every day about six hours, from nine till half-past-three. Am having a lovely time at Aunt Annie's but miss Alice dreadfully. I am going to give her a diamond crescent a ruby bracelet and a sapphire ring - in all about 2500 dollars! I have been spending money like water for these last two years, but shall economise after I am married. Three weeks from today we are married! I hardly dare believe it; it is too good. Oh my darling, my darling!"

-- Theodore Roosevelt, Oct. 6, 1880

"Last night the [Alfred] Knopfs gave a box party at Carnegie Hall to hear Boston Symphony Orchestra, and a supper later at their city apartment, 400 East 57th Street, in honor of the conductor, Koussevitzky... Willa Cather surprised me by saying that [Mahler's Ninth Symphony] was too much for her, but that she liked the Ravel. The latter was a very cheap piece of trash..."

After the concert... we went to [the] Knopf apartment... A lot of miscellaneous introducing. I got but one drink - a small straight Scotch. Dashiell Hammett, the writer of detective stories, came in drunk, and became something of a nuisance. After we left, so Blanche told me today, she had to get rid of him. William Faulkner, the Mississippian, who came in late also got drunk. At 4 A.M. Blanche and Eddie Wasserman decided to take him to a speakeasy to dispose of him. Unfortunately, all the speakeasies in the neighborhood were closed, so they had to haul him to his hotel. He still talked rationally, but his legs had given out, and he couldn't stand up."

-- H.L. Mencken, Nov. 27, 1931

"I drink orange juice at the edge of a counter, sitting in a polished booth on one of three armchairs raised on a little dais; little by little... the city grows familiar. The surfaces become facades, the solids turn into houses. On the pavement the wind stirs up dust and old papers. Beyond Washington Square, the grid begins to bend. The right angles break down; the streets are no longer numbered but have names; the lines curve and tangle together. I'm wandering through a European city. The houses have only three or four storeys and come in opaque colors somewhere between red, ochre and black. Sheets dry on fire escapes that zigzag against the facades. These sheets that promise sunshine, the shoeshine boys posted on the street corners, the rooftop terraces - they vaguely evoke a southern city, yet the worn red of the houses makes one think of the London fog. The fact is, this neighborhood is like nothing I've ever seen. But I

know I will love it.

The landscape changes. The word "landscape" suits this city that's been deserted by men and invaded by the sky. Rising above the skyscrapers, the sky surges through the straight streets; it's too vast for the city to tame, and it overflows - it's a mountain sky. I walk between the steep cliffs at the bottom of a canyon where no sun penetrates: it's filled with a salt smell. Human history is not inscribed on these carefully calibrated buildings; they are more like prehistoric caves than the houses of Paris or Rome. In Paris, in Rome, history has permeated the bowels of the ground itself; Paris reaches down into the center of the earth. In New York, even the Battery doesn't have such deep roots. Beneath the subways, sewers and heating pipes, the rock is virgin and inhuman. Between this rock and open sky, Wall Street and Broadway bathe in the shadows of their giant buildings; this morning they belong to nature. The little black church with its cemetery of flat paving stones is as unexpected and touching in the middle of Broadway as a crucifix on a wild ocean beach."

-- Simone de Beauvoir, Jan. 26, 1947

"There is really one city for everyone just as there is one major love. New York is my city because I have an investment I can always draw on - a bottomless investment of 21 years (I count the day I was born) of building up an *idea* of New York - so no matter what happens here I have the rock of my dreams of it that nothing can destroy."

-- Dawn Powell, July 6, 1953

Kate Childs says

Beautiful and compelling book about the stories that make up New York City. As a somewhat recent NYC transplant (three-plus years and counting), I found NEW YORK DIARIES to be fascinating. Walking around New York City is reminder enough of the city's heritage, but here was a new look into the city that I now called home. Culled from the diaries of some of the most famous (and not so famous) people to walk the streets of New York over the past 400 years, the entries in NEW YORK DIARIES are memorable and moving—much like the city that continues to captivate visitors and residents alike.

Brynn says

"Lately—due to not working and due, too, to observing how much more prestige and authority other people with less ability carry—It seems to me, now that I definitely want rewards during my lifetime, that given a good talent, its recognition and elevation to great are utterly dependent on exploitation and outside funny-business, the personal approach. If someone doesn't do this for you, you must do it yourself." Dawn Powell, 1935 (12)

"Lord, how these films do concern themselves with matter extraneous to the story for the sake of pictorial

effect!" Franklin P. Adams, 1922 (15)

"It was just dusk and it looked as if the buildings were a great dark mountain and the lights looked like gems among them." Naomi R. King, 1899 (23)

"Love in NY is lights and dancing and restaurants and cocktails and the continual excitement of changing faces and new places." Winifred Willis, 1924 (86)

"There is much that is majestic but nothing that is gracious in this city—this huge, raw, functional skeleton, this fortress of capital, this jungle of absolutely free competition." Christopher Isherwood, 1939 (99)

"A trip to Staten Island...On the way back, in lower Manhattan, an immense geological dig between skyscrapers which stand very close to one another; we advance, overwhelmed by a feeling of something prehistoric. We eat in Chinatown. And I breathe for the first time in a place where I feel the expansive but orderly life that I truly love." Albert Camus, 1946 (140)

"Joe and I walked downtown crisscross the Square and MacDougal and West Houston toward Battery, crossing or turning whenever we saw sunlight or a curious building." Dawn Powell, 1955 (144)

"At dawn, New York is at its most spectacular. We stopped to see Adolph Giehoff's display paintings in the windows of Bergdorf Goodman's: landscapes with unicorns and satyrs. They were like the city: an atmosphere of dream into which real objects thrust pale shadows." Judith Malina, 1950 (209)

"Well, the Americans may have great reason to be proud of this day, and of the deeds of their forefathers, but why do they get so confoundedly drunk? Why on this day of independence, should they become so *dependent* on posts and rails for support?" Frederick Marryat, 1837 (212)

"Not drinking for a week gives the world a strange opium dream quality. I realize that I drink to make the fantasy rattle down to reality." Dawn Powell, 1944 (374)

"The trust is that in New York, a city of perpetual distraction—where superficial sense are perpetually forced to react to superficial impressions—the inner tragedies, no matter how intense, are viewed through the tawdry lace of New York life." Dawn Powell, 1935 (379)

Jim Blessing says

This was an interesting premise for a book, but was not all that interesting to read. It was New York City daily diary entries of various people between 1609 and 2009. The more famous people such as President George Washington and TR were of the most interest to me. Most of the rest of them, although informative of the times, were fairly boring and dry reading of diary entries.

Mario Collazo III says

It was interesting, just not as interesting as I thought it was going to be.

Lily says

Spanning four hundred years of diarists, Teresa Carpenter picked several entries each day from January 1 to December 31. There were poignant entries, entries where you look at it with our own historical hindsight and just shake your head, funny entries, sweetly mundane entries, and even one or two blog posts. It's interesting, diary writing is such a distinctly teenaged girl thing to do. But most of these diarists were men (and one hilarious teenager from the 1800s complaining about getting a new dress dirty.) Diaries from long ago were more like captain's logs. That is to say, rather boring and detailed accounts of war and Indians for posterity. Some of the entries that really pop out are Theodore Roosevelt and his absolute love affair with his wife (his really read like a teenaged girl), and anxious, agoraphobic Andy Warhol whose stream of consciousness writing style was a bit like Eloise at the Plaza. There were some really fascinating entries around September 11, Alexander Hamilton, the art world in the early part of the 20th century, the AIDS crisis, the lead up to the Civil War, and many other New York topics. Definitely a unique read.

Leanne says

Lovely idea, but I really missed context.

Context because I am not an American, and some of the historical dates don't mean that much to me. But also context because the random events from the lives of the writers weren't always that interesting without knowing what happened before, or would happen next.

liz says

I **really** wanted to like this book, because it's such a great concept... but honestly, I found it to be kind of boring. I gave it to my dad for his birthday, which was a great choice for him, but probably I should've just left it at that.

May 13

1997

*Dreaming of a more civilized place to raise my children, I swerve to avoid a cab that stops short, . . . whereupon a bicyclist calls me a cock and accuses me of trying to kill him. Meaning to explain that I had narrowly averted an accident and to inquire after his welfare, I say instead, "F-ck you, *sshole, I wish I had killed you." Rachel finds my behavior disturbing and wonders if I see too many violent movies. I am convinced it is the sugar from all those wedding cakes, or possibly the Tab.*

- David Edelstein

July 4

1837

Well, the Americans may have great reason to be proud of this day, and of the deeds of their forefathers, but why do they get so confoundedly drunk? Why on this day of independence, should they become so dependent upon posts and rails for support?

- Capt. Frederick Marryat

July 24

1910

Walked out for the Press and stopped a while in Madison Square where I surreptitiously left three copies of "The Appeal to Reason" Socialist Weekly (very rabid) on the benches in the fond hope of spoiling someone's peace of mind.

- John Sloan

October 9

1869

Application from three infatuated young women for admission to Law School. No woman shall degrade herself by practicing law, in N[ew] Y[ork] especially, if I can save her.

- George Templeton Strong

Okay, now I probably made this book sound awesome, but bear in mind the previous quotes were cherry-picked just for you out of 400+ pages! But then, you'll probably like it a lot if you're into this sort of thing.

Anna Maria Ballester Bohn says

This has journal entries from well-known and absolutely unknown people, from the first boats who bumped on the shore in 1609 to 9/11 and beyond. It's walks in the wind and food and dances and work and drink and glory and misery, it's absolutely fantastic and if New York has ever held the slightest bit of fascination for you, you should read it. Or if you like journals. Or if you like, you know, life, and history, and stuff like that.

Maura says

I love this idea! Diary entries from a whole bunch of New Yorkers (or people just visiting) throughout 4 centuries. I wish there were a way to be able to easily read the entries for one particular person in chronological order, but that's a minor quibble and not something you can really get around when dealing with books on paper. I strongly suspect I will dive back into this many many times in the future.

JT says

greetings new york

400 + pages later, i am still spinning with literary delight. i don't know how anyone with a sound & open heart would disapprove of this novel. it left a footprint upon my soul. there is so much to revere inside this hallowed pages. there are historical references. there are whimsical notes too. there are tragedies being accounted for as well. it's the characters that are the main stars as well. you have george templeton strong. never heard of him before. married to ellen strong. you have obscure writeers named jack kerouac, walt whitman, allen ginsberg, or e.,e. cummings. all deceased now. it was evocative how these players affected history such as President George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, & Elizabeth Cady Stanton. i dare thee to find a more fascinating diary in any genre. memories as such are extremely rare. i found andy warhol to be a very human, sensitive artist. yes there was the Factory, Studio 54, & the like, all that was material excess.

New York Diaries also had an account of 9/11 from such bloggers as Chad the Manx. it shakes us even today, the heartbreak & loss. there are so many other characters who follow this suit. for example, catherinine elizabeth havens is a young girl who offers an acute microscope into the lives of affluent, haughty new yorkers. anais nin, the infamous french writer demonstrates a complicated view of new york. she loathes it initially with its business & superficiality. she learns to enjoy the manic energy of the city. new york is the lead actress though. it is loud, overwhelming, quiet, somber. a contradiction in terms. just visit your local library or bookstore or download it via kindle or nook somewhere. be prepared for the journey however winding & tiresome. you will be rewarded. i recommend this to other new yorkers who live in the bright, vibrant pulse of the city. i also commend it for its emotional honesty. so buckle yourself & drive.

Stacy says

First, I have to out myself, I was one of the fact-checkers for this book. But I would have loved New York Diaries in any case. I only got to see the diarists I was checking so I'm reading the book now, luxuriating in all the other entries in the order Teresa Carpenter presents them.

The book is based on a calendar year. On any one day you might see entries from the four centuries Teresa Carpenter researched, and Carpenter picked the best of the best. For instance, April was a lovely spring month for some depending on the year, like for one diarist who escaped the Nazi death camps and was now safe in New York writing about the pleasure of sleeping on clean sheets. But in April 1912 the Titanic sank, and in 1861 the Civil War raged. I keep stopping because some of the entries are so fascinating I want to learn more either about the diarist or what they were writing about.

It gives you a real sense of time to jump around from century to century while staying on one day. While people who love New York history will adore this book, all sorts of people passed through New York City and wrote about it—I'm sure it will become a classic of American history as well.
