

New York City History Presentations

by Edward T. O'Donnell

About the Presentations:

Today's students are visual and interactive learners – and so are their teachers. Consequently, this multimedia presentation is built around 75-100 unique and carefully selected visuals, including vintage photographs, etchings, maps, cartoons, and documents (samples appear on this page). O'Donnell uses them to enhance a lively and interactive presentation. Ample time is allotted for Q & A, but O'Donnell always welcomes questions at any time during the session.

Benefits for your teachers:

- a renewed and/or deepened awareness of topic's **essential content**.
- an enhanced understanding of the topic's critical **questions, concepts, and ideas**.
- new ideas for finding and using **primary sources** and developing DBQ's, simulations, projects, debates, and field trip preparation.

Programming Options:

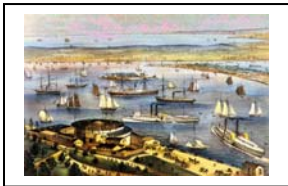
- Time Flexibility – all presentations and workshops can be tailored to meet your needs, from 1 to 3 hours.
- Pedagogy Workshops – O'Donnell also leads workshops on primary sources, DBQ's, simulations, projects, and debates.
- Walking Tours & Historic Site Visits - O'Donnell has led thousands—just ask!

Topic Options

The Making of the Multicultural City: Immigration and New York City – how and why so many millions have come to the U.S. and what challenges this tradition has posed to national identity, tolerance, and democracy. We'll explore the major immigrant groups (Irish, German, Chinese, Italian, and Jewish) who arrived in this period, the vibrant ethnic enclaves they established (i.e., Little Italy, Little Germany), the struggles they endured to earn a living, and the contributions they made to the city. This talk addresses many aspects of the immigrant experience, including tenement life, labor and the labor movement, and nativism.

Also available as: *Tolerance & Hate: America's Problematic Relationship with Immigration* (emphasis on nativism) or a focus on one particular ethnic group such as *The Asian Experience*, *The Irish Experience*, or *The Jewish Experience*, etc.

Walking Tour Option: Lower East Side | **Museum Options:** LES Tenement Museum or Ellis Island

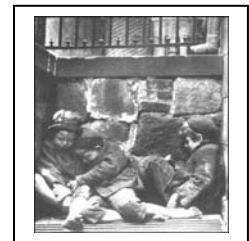


The Making of the Empire City: How NYC Emerged as America's Leading Metropolis – in 1790 New York City trailed Boston and Philadelphia in population and economic activity, but by 1850 it stood supreme. What happened in these years that allowed NYC to surge ahead of its competitors to become (and remain) the Empire City? This talk focuses on the impact of immigration, the Erie Canal, entrepreneurial culture, and urban problem solving.

Shedding the Light on Poverty: The Work and Impact of Jacob Riis – Jacob Riis was one of the most influential and effective Progressive Era reformers. This presentation examines Riis' pioneering investigative photography and book, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and how they led to greater public awareness of urban poverty and significant reforms in tenement housing laws.

Also available as part of a wider talk on urban reforms, including settlement houses, labor law, and public health.

Walking Tour Option: Lower East Side | **Museum Options:** LES Tenement Museum or Ellis Island

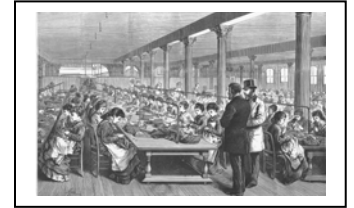


Brooklyn Bridge and Brooklyn Heights – Brooklyn, of course, was its own city until 1898. The presentation looks at the rivalry between Brooklyn and New York, the rise of Brooklyn Heights as the city's first commuter suburb, the monumental effort to build the Great Bridge (1869-1883), and the eventual creation of Greater New York in 1898.

Walking Tour Option: Brooklyn Bridge and/or Brooklyn Heights

Continued >>>

The Industrial Revolution and the Transformation of New York City – This presentation explores the extraordinary transformation of Gotham from a city of small-scale artisan production (cobblers, coopers, jewelers, etc) in the 1820s to a booming industrial metropolis by the 1890s. Particular attention is paid to the key factors in this process such as entrepreneurial culture and cheap labor, as well as the impact it had on workers, urban life, and civic values. **Also available as** *The Capital of Capitalism: The Great Entrepreneurs in NYC History* or *The Labor Movement in New York City*

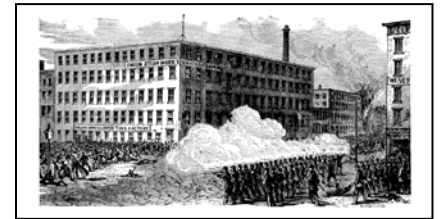


Walking Tour Option: Labor History Sites



The Struggle for Open Space: The Story of New York's Parks – the city planners who drew up NYC's famed grid plan in 1811 set aside only 3 percent of Manhattan island for parks. By the 1840s, city officials began to recognize this colossal error and commenced a program of park building. Central Park is the most famous effort, but equally important were the radical initiatives in the 1890s to knock down blocks of tenements in crowded immigrant neighborhoods to build parks for the masses. **Also available as** *The Making of Central Park* | **Walking Tour Option:** Central Park

Streets of Fire: The New York City Draft Riots of July 1863 – At least 118 people were killed, including a dozen free blacks who were lynched, when New York City erupted in the deadliest insurrection in American history in July 1863. This talk examines the key social, political, and economic conditions that underlay this dark but important chapter in Gotham's history. **Also available as** *Gotham Goes to War: New York City and the Civil War*



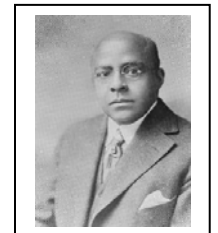
Walking Tour Option: Draft Riot Sites



The Rise and Fall of Tammany Hall, NYC's Notorious Political Machine – In this talk we trace the remarkable rise of Tammany Hall from a fraternal and charitable society founded in the 1780s to a political machine that dominated city politics from the 1840s to the 1940s. How did Tammany cultivate and hold onto the immigrant vote? What role did corruption play in its success? How did Al Smith manage to transform it into a pro-reform organization in the early 20th century?

Walking Tour Option: Lower East Side

Philip Payton and the Making of Black Harlem – Harlem was supposed to be an exclusive neighborhood for the city's upper class whites, but when the real estate bubble crashed after 1900, a vast stock of new housing was left unoccupied. This presentation examines the story of the young and enterprising African American named Philip Payton who overcame racist resistance to fill Harlem's empty houses and apartments with blacks. By 1910 Harlem was fast becoming the most important African American neighborhood in America, paving the way for the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. .



Walking Tour Option: Harlem



Ship Ablaze: The General Slocum Disaster of 1904 – Based on O'Donnell's book, *Ship Ablaze* (Random House, 2003), this presentation tells the extraordinary story of NYC's deadliest day before 9/11, the day a steamboat fire on the East River claimed more than 1,000 lives. It also led to the demise of Manhattan's Little Germany, as most of the victims lived in the neighborhood. It's a fascinating look at Progressive Era Gotham.

Walking Tour Option: The East Village / Little Germany

Other Talks include –

East Side, West Side, All Around the Town: The Story of the NYC Subway • ***Reaching for the Sky: The Making of the Empire State Building*** • ***Drop Dead: 1970s New York as a City in Crisis*** • ***Consolidation: How 40 Cities and Towns Merged to Form Greater New York in 1898*** • ***The Great Builder?: The Controversial Work and Legacy of Robert Moses*** • ***The Destruction of Penn Station and the Rise of the Preservation Movement*** • ***The Settlement House Movement***

Don't See A Topic That's Right for Your Group? Feel free to ask about additional offerings, or adaptations of the above.

Edward T. O'Donnell, Ph.D. is a professional historian, author, and speaker. He earned his Ph.D. in American History from Columbia University (1995) and currently is Associate Professor (tenured) of History at Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA. He is the author of several books and frequently publishes history essays in publications such as the *New York Times*. He has made countless teacher professional development presentations and served as lead historian for the Teaching American History grant, "Enlivening American History Through Primary Sources" (2001, Queens College). For a full c.v., please visit his website: www.EdwardTODonnell.com or contact him at 508 793 3730 or 508 826 1572 | eodonnell@holycross.edu