

Skyline trivia

Cool stuff about NYC buildings.



1 Paris has one triumphal arch; we've got three: Stanford White's structure at Washington Square, one at the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge, and Grand Army Plaza's Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch.

2 The eagles that adorn the 61st-floor corners of the Chrysler Building are replicas of 1929 Chrysler hood ornaments. The wing details on the 31st floor are modeled after radiator caps.

3 A 1771 wrought-iron fence surrounding the fountain at Bowling Green is one of the oldest architectural objects in New York. It's still intact, but the original decorative crowns were torn down by angry colonists in 1776, along with a statue of George III.

4 Washington Roebling, son of Brooklyn Bridge designer John Roebling and chief engineer on the project after his father's death, oversaw the construction from 1872 to 1883 by telescope from an apartment at what was then 110 Columbia Heights (now 124 Columbia Heights in Brooklyn). Why didn't he work on-site? He got the bends while helping to dig in an underwater caisson; his wife, Emily, pretty much ran things for him after that.

5 In 2008, architect Junya Ishigami designed the Yamamoto boutique at 1 Gansevoort Street by slicing an existing brick shed in two. One half is now a light-filled showroom, the other half provides storage and office space.

6 The area around Momofukuville had some badass beginnings: In 1901, Butch Cassidy lived briefly in a boardinghouse at 234 East 12th Street (between Second and Third Avenues), just before fleeing to Argentina.

7 The modern abode at 18 West 11th Street is known to many as the Weathermen house, because that's where three members of the group died in an explosion on March 6, 1970. Merrill Lynch cofounder Charles Merrill had lived there 50 years earlier, and Dustin Hoffman resided next door at the time the bomb accidentally went off. Look in the window of the redesigned domicile and you'll see a Paddington Bear plush toy whose outfit changes with the season.

8 Two planes collided over Staten Island on December 16, 1960. One of them crashed in Park Slope, slicing the cornice off 124 Sterling Place. You can still see the scars on the building; look for lighter-colored brick that replaced the sheared-off cornice.

9 The Brooklyn Historical Society was founded in 1863 as the *Long Island* Historical Society—one of the great reminders to cocky Manhattanites that technically Brooklyn and Queens are part of Long Island.
128 Pierrepont St at Clinton St, Brooklyn Heights

10 Brooklyn Heights, considered by many to be the nation's first suburb, was NYC's first landmark district (so designated in 1965). The area had more than 600 homes before 1860, giving it the highest concentration of 150-year-old houses in all five boroughs.

11 Every trendy shopper east of the river is aware that the Brooklyn Flea has moved into the lobby of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank (1 Hanson Pl) for the winter, but as customers glance up at the tower's giant clock to make sure they have enough time to fill their bags with artsy jewelry and silk-screened T-shirts, they should know that the four-faced timepiece was the largest in the world at the time the skyscraper was built (1927–29).

12 It was the Roebling family that designed and built the Brooklyn Bridge—and it was John Roebling who invented the steel-wire cabling system—but surprisingly the landmark was not constructed with cables from the Roebling Wire Company, but with inferior strings from competitor J. Lloyd Haigh. Haigh ended up in jail for fraud after a cable snapped, and the Roeblings added the now-famous diagonal cabling for added strength. You can find Roebling wire on the George Washington and Golden Gate bridges).

13 Poor little 40 Wall Street; twice it got shafted by bigger skyscrapers. In 1930, it famously lost the race to be the tallest in the world against the Chrysler Building thanks to a famously tricky feat during which the Chrysler crew cranked up that spire when the other guys weren't paying attention. Then in 1931, it had to give up its honor of having the highest public observation deck when the ESB arrived.

14 All-star abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher shook the pulpit from the still-standing Plymouth Church in Brooklyn Heights (*75 Hicks St at Henry St*). His sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fame, and his other sister was education pioneer Catharine Beecher. Unfortunately, Henry's career faltered after he was accused (and acquitted) of sleeping with someone else's wife.

15 Washington Park in Gowanus, Brooklyn, was the original home of the Brooklyn Dodgers and was refurbished for a rival team, the Brooklyn Tip-Tops, when the Dodgers moved to Ebbets Field in 1914. The Tip-Tops lasted a brief few years, but 94 years later, the stadium's entire outfield wall is still there.
Third Ave between 1st and 3rd Sts, Gowanus