

**PROGRESS OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,  
DURING THE LAST FIFTY YEARS: WITH  
NOTICES OF THE PRINCIPAL CHANGES  
AND IMPORTANT EVENTS. A LECTURE  
ON 29TH DECEMBER, 1851. PP. 1-79**

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Progress of the City of New-York, During the Last Fifty Years: With Notices of the Principal Changes and important events. A lecture on 29th December, 1851. pp. 1-79 by Charles King

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**CHARLES KING**

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OF THE  
CITY OF NEW-YORK,

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WITH

NOTICES OF THE PRINCIPAL CHANGES  
AND IMPORTANT EVENTS.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MECHANICS' SOCIETY AT MECHANICS'  
HALL, BROADWAY,

ON 29<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 1851.

BY

CHARLES KING, LL. D.,

PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

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1852.



## P R E F A C E .



MANY applications having been made to me for copies of this address—and some interest having been expressed that it should be put into a more convenient and permanent form than that of a newspaper—I determined to reprint it from the *Tribune* where it appeared, and have taken the opportunity thus presented of adding some passages and notes prepared since the lecture was delivered, without omitting any that were then given.

It is a theme upon which, with more time, much more might be said—but such as it is, this memorial of New-York may have interest at least for its own residents.

C. K.

*March 2, 1852.*





## LECTURE.

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THE subject to which I wish to ask your attention this evening, is *The City of New-York, and its progress during the last fifty years*. Born myself in this City, and identified with it through all that period, by interest, association and affection, I very cheerfully acceded to the suggestion made to me by the Committee at whose instance I am here, to take New-York for the topic of my lecture.

You will readily apprehend that the difficulty in treating this topic lies not in the scantiness but in the superabundance of materials; and, with all my efforts to avoid what would be inevitable—if any thing like a detailed enumeration were attempted of the manifold proofs and illustrations of the City's growth and progress—the dryness and formality of a mere journal or record, I yet fear that I may fail to interest my hearers in what, nevertheless, is a most interesting theme. Without further preface, I enter at once upon it.

It is now 237 years since the passengers of a Dutch emigrant vessel landed on the point of the Battery, and laid the foundation of this proud and populous City. On its struggles, its vicissitudes and its triumphs, from that period to the commencement of the present Century, this is not the place nor the occasion to enlarge.

Passing at once to the year 1801, we find that feeble Dutch settlement already a goodly City, numbering about 61,000 people; and then entering fully upon the career of commercial greatness, which—favored by the wise national policy of Washington, and stimulated by the enterprise of intelligent freemen, whose own strong arms had, under the favor of Heaven, achieved the independence of their country—has gone on increasing, and to increase, so long as the descendants of those freemen shall be true to the character of their fathers, and to the glorious institutions bequeathed to us, their successors.

In this City had assembled the first Congress under the Constitution. In its ancient City Hall—then standing where the Custom-House now stands, at the head of Broad street—the Constitution had been accepted and sworn to by George Washington, the first President under it; and here the new Government was organized and set in motion. At the close of the second session of the First Congress, in December, 1790, the seat of Government was transferred to Philadelphia; and New-York, happily for her interests, was left to her own resources, and to the commercial pursuits especially for which her natural position and advantages are so great, without the frail and perilous dependence upon the too often corrupting patronage and expenditures of a Seat of Government.

The city in 1801 numbered seven Wards. Edward Livingston, since so renowned as a jurist and a statesman, was then the Mayor. Broadway, as a street, at that time terminated at Catharine street, now called Anthony street; and beyond was a hill-country, sloping on the one side to the fresh-water pond, or the Kolck, on the east, and to the lowlands of Lispenard's Meadows on the west. The limit of habitations, or streets in which there were buildings, was, on the North River, Harrison street; on the East River, Rutgers street; with very large spaces between, on which were no dwellings. The houses on Bowerie

Lane—as was the early designation of that wide and noble avenue—furthest out of town, were near Bullock street, now Broome street; and on either side of these houses was an open space to each river of cultivated grounds and orchards.

The outside street on the west side of the town was Greenwich street from the Battery up to Cedar street. There the encroachments upon the river had snatched from the waters, in the true spirit of our Dutch ancestors, the commencement of another street, now Washington street, and it extended, only partially built up on one side, to Harrison street, where the waves still broke upon the natural breach.

In Greenwich street, on the west side, near Morris street, stood, in 1803 and long after, a circular building, which had been used as a Circus by Rickett's Company; and but few houses existed on the west side of the street, between the Battery and Rector street. The water came up to the street, and boys bathed there. Greenwich street, from the Battery to Courtlandt street, was paved for the first time in May, 1802. In the fall of 1801, as late as October, the Yellow Fever reappeared in the City, but it lasted only about a fortnight.

A respected friend, then and now a resident of New-York, has furnished me with some very interesting recollections as to this early period, which (being then abroad with my father, who was Minister at the Court of England) I cannot speak about from personal knowledge. "In winter, we resided," said he, "at the time, 1802, at No. 125 Pearl street, formerly occupied by the Bank of New-York, and at Judge Lawrence's house during the summer. This summer-house stood on the line of Division street, and on the block now facing Grand street between Willet and Pitt streets. Col. Willet's country-seat—that house yet stands—laid a little to the northeast: and Wm. Laight's, on the bank of the East River, was directly in front of us—a lux-