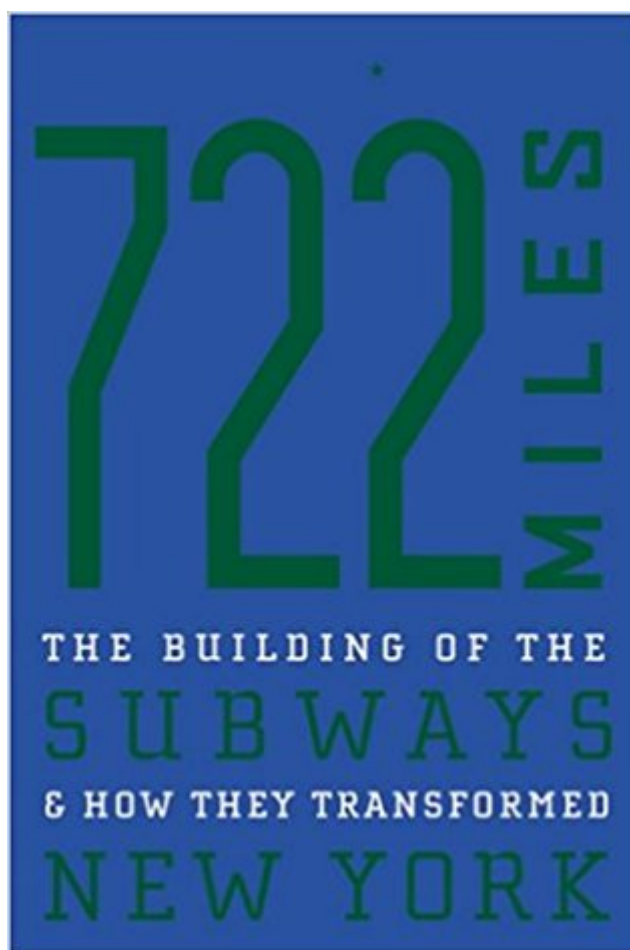


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722 Miles: The Building Of The Subways And How They Transformed New York



Synopsis

When it first opened on October 27, 1904, the New York City subway ran twenty-two miles from City Hall to 145th Street and Lenox Avenue—the longest stretch ever built at one time. From that initial route through the completion of the IND or Independent Subway line in the 1940s, the subway grew to cover 722 miles—long enough to reach from New York to Chicago. In this definitive history, Clifton Hood traces the complex and fascinating story of the New York City subway system, one of the urban engineering marvels of the twentieth century. For the subway's centennial the author supplies a new foreward explaining that now, after a century, "we can see more clearly than ever that this rapid transit system is among the twentieth century's greatest urban achievements."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"One of the best urban-transportation histories to come down the tracks in a long time."

"Clifton Hood's 722 Miles is the fullest and most authoritative account of the building and impact of the New York City subways, the most extensive system of urban transportation in the United States and perhaps the world." -- Nathan Glazer, Harvard University --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Having lived in NYC most of my life, I wanted to find a book which provided a comprehensive overview of the development of our public transit network, from the omnibus of the Civil War era to

the present period. This book does it, and without running to encyclopedic length (its about 260 pages, not counting about 50 pages of supportive notes/footnotes). A good deal of attention is given to the political machinations which were of such importance in building our current complex route system, including unfortunate gaffs, payoffs and a frequent lack of vision. (Editorial note: What we have is wonderful; what we might have had would be a marvel (like the rest of America, NYC has a history of periodic disdain for public transit infrastructure development, preferring instead to nurture a love affair with the automobile - think Robert Moses). The book also emphasizes the impact of subway extensions from lower Manhattan into the upper reaches of the borough (Washington Heights, Inwood etc), as well as Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. At least for a NYer, this is fascinating stuff, and the author uses examples, such as Jackson Heights in Queens, to illustrate the "before and after" impact of bringing multiple lines into what were farmlands and open fields just 100 years ago. The author provides lots of interesting and supportive statistics. There is also an excellent index along with over 50 pages of source footnotes. The only real failing of the book is a lack of decent maps and a curious avoidance of using current line designations (ie, E train, #7 line etc) to quickly identify line routes as they were built in spurts starting in about 1900), preferring instead to use the old general designations (like IRT, BMT, IND), which no one under 60 remembers. There are some photos, but they are few and of inferior quality. (See online sites like Museum of the City of NY, NY Historical Society, NYPL, NYC Transit Museum etc for great photo collections). There are also many books in print with photos of various facets of NYC transit history. Bottom line though, I highly recommend this work. If it had decent maps, I'd give it 5 stars.

Reading towards the end, the book skipped from page 207 to page 241! This made it a little hard to follow in the continuity of the timeline the book is about. Otherwise, the book merits three stars, as it reads like a dissertation (which it essentially is). The "updated" version does not add much. The missing pages are a printing error, not a physical error. has amazing customer service and accepted a return, even after the return period was past (four stars for customer service!).

The narrative of how New York went from horse drawn transit to "cinder-steam" to high speed electric is fully absorbing. Very engrossing story! The virtual overnight transformation puts a smile on your face. AND THEN, along came Mayor Hylan ... they named Hylan Boulevard on Staten Island for him. What a mess he made!

Bought it as a gift for my son, who lives in the Philadelphia suburbs but has a life-long interest in

the NY subways.

Social histories such as this are very useful compilations of the many disparate sources of info. Labours of love. Some readers might wish for full details of every type of rolling stock used, motor control gear, air brakes etc., but the social history is often neglected. 722 miles will stand comparison with "the Subterranean Railway" by Christian Wolmar, on the London underground.

Long on politics and organization but short on actual construction history. I would have preferred more detail about the techniques and trouble encountered along the way. After all, most of the construction took place a very long time ago technology wise.

This book is a good compliment to my other books on the history on the New York subway system.

this book mainly about how the transportation system evolved and stuff in NYC. Very informative...mostly a research of the past and such to now...like a research paper mostly book form. however, delivery from is horrible....took like 2 weeks to get here? so i was behind in reading for school.

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