



0. THE BOWERY - Story Preface

1. BACKGROUND

2. FIVE POINTS

3. LIFE IN FIVE POINTS

4. THE BOWERY

5. THE IRISH ARRIVE

6. GANGS AND TAMMANY HALL

7. DEAD RABBITS vs. THE BOWERY BOYS

8. BILL THE BUTCHER

9. MURDER OF BILL THE BUTCHER

10. MONK EASTMAN AND JOHNNY SIROCCO

11. 1863 DRAFT LAW

12. 1863 DRAFT RIOTS

13. REACTION TO THE RIOTS

14. HISTORICAL FACTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES

Before Manhattan Island—today one of New York City's five boroughs—was captured by the British, the place was owned by the Dutch and was called New Amsterdam. Although it's hard to image now, the lower end of Manhattan Island was once a pastoral place marked by windmills, farms (*bouwerij*, in Dutch) and sailing vessels. This image depicts an illustration portraying a panoramic view of Nieuw Amersterdam, circa 1640. Maintained by the New York Historical Society.

"The Bowery" plays a significant role in Gangs of New York. It is a part of the city which owes its name to the "boweries" (from the Dutch word *bouwerij*, meaning "farm" or "plantation") of early New Yorkers.

Famous for the Bowery House (and much later the "Bowery Boys" gang), the Bowery was once a pastoral place. The road (built over an old Indian trail) leading to the farm of Peter Stuyvesant, New Amsterdam's strong-willed, influential and autocratic 17th century governor, was called the Bowery.

After the English wrested control of Manhattan Island from the Dutch in 1664, and New Amsterdam became New York City, wealthy families built weekend retreats in the Bowery's rural area. But after poverty-stricken immigrants, fleeing catastrophic events like the 1845-48 Irish potato famine, streamed into New York, the character of the city—including the Bowery—changed.

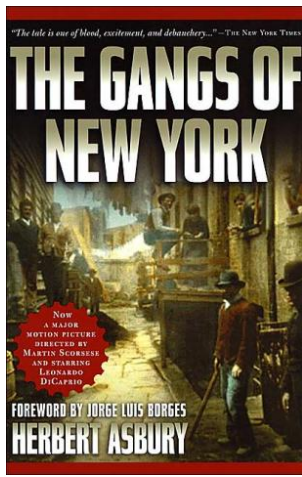
As New York City grew, wealthy people left the rural area of lower Manhattan in favor of Fifth Avenue and Washington Heights, farther north. By the mid-1800s, the Bowery road led to theaters and dance halls instead of farms. Nineteenth-century saloons (replacing seventeenth-century "plantations") were part of the landscape. Organizations, like the Bowery branch of the YMCA, provided shelter and food for young men who needed it. Some of those young men, living in lower Manhattan, were recent immigrants from famine-stricken Ireland.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-BOWERY-Gangs-of-New-York>

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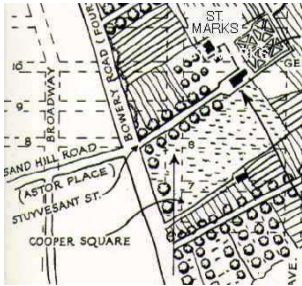
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Gangs of New York by Herbert Asbury

Image online, courtesy goodreads.com website.

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Bowery Road Leading to New Amsterdam Home of Peter Stuyvesant

Image included in "St. Mark's Historic District, Borough of Manhattan," New York, New York. Online, courtesy mediahistoryny.wordpress.com website.

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New Amsterdam - the Future Home of New York City

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