



History of New York

Washington Irving

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Washington Irving (1783 – 1859) was born in New York City. Irving—to many scholars, the father of American literature—achieved international fame for his fictional works, including the stories Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, as well as for his biographies and historical writings. As a young man he studied law, and began to write essays for periodicals. Later, he travelled in France and Italy, but he returned to New York City to practice law. But his real calling was in writing rather than the law. As he pursued a literary career, he also became an advocate for writing, arguing for serious copyright protection for authors. His comic work, A History of New York (1809), written under the name of Diedrich Knickerbocker, propelled him to fame. In 1822 he went to Europe, living in Germany, France, and Spain, becoming later US ambassador to Spain. About A History of New York This humorous work was written with his brother Peter, as a parody of a then much in vogue ‘history’ of New York. More than a history, the book is a sociological work in which many topics are lampooned: customs, wars, etymology, family tress, and literary styles, among many others. The footnotes have been eliminated in this edition since many of them are fictional; a trick that Jorge Luis Borges—in the 20th century—was to use with great skill in his writings.

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