



A Brief History of the Bronx: From First Settlers to Modern Megaprojects

From its earliest settlements to the megaprojects of the present day

BY [AMY PLITT](#) APR 11, 2016, 10:00AM



Though it's only been a part of Greater New Yorker (otherwise known as the five boroughs) since 1898, the Bronx has a much longer history than that—one that goes *way* further back than when Henry Hudson famously landed on New York's shores in the 17th century. (Heck, the New York Botanical Garden has [a forest that's thousands of years old](#) on its grounds.) If you're not familiar with the history of the borough beyond the Yankees and the birth of hip-hop, allow us to school you with this in-no-way-comprehensive timeline outlining the Bronx's fascinating, tumultuous, past.

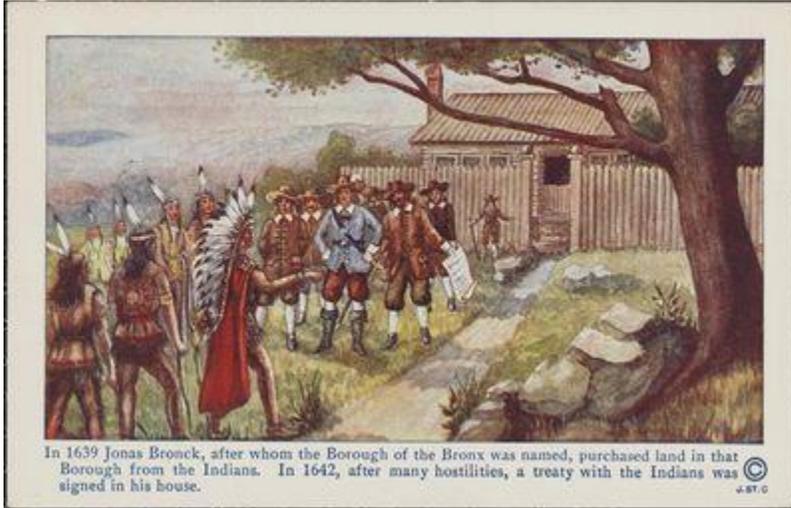
- Ca. 200 AD

Native American settlers make their home in the borough

In 2015, archeologists [uncovered hundreds of artifacts](#)—pottery, ceramics, and more—indicating that Native American tribes settled parts of the Bronx as early as 200 AD, *extremely* long before European settlers arrived in the borough.

- 1639

Jonas Bronck becomes the Bronx's first European settler



Scandinavian immigrant Bronck came to New York (then New Netherland) in 1639, settling in what's now Mott Haven. He helped broker a peace treaty between the Dutch and Native Americans in 1642, and died in 1643. In true 21st-century NYC fashion, his legacy lives on in a craft brewery called the [Jonas Bronck Beer Company](#).

- 1693

King's Bridge is built

The borough's oldest bridge was constructed in the late 17th century and connected modern-day Manhattan to the Bronx. The bridge is long gone, but its name [lives on](#) in the neighborhood of—duh—Kingsbridge.

- 1748

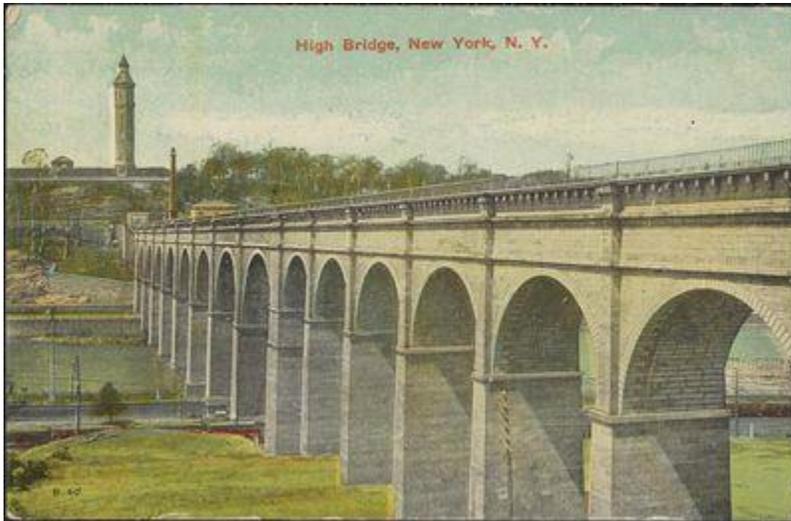
The Bronx's oldest home is constructed



The Bronx's oldest home is the [Van Cortlandt House](#), constructed in 1748 by Frederick Van Cortlandt. Its history is fairly illustrious—George Washington slept there during the Revolutionary War, and the city's records were hidden there in 1776—and it became a museum in 1897.

- 1848

The High Bridge opens



The city's oldest surviving bridge was constructed over a decade in the 19th century, and helped bring water from the Croton Aqueduct into the city. After a years-long revamp, it's now a pedestrian pathway.

- 1894

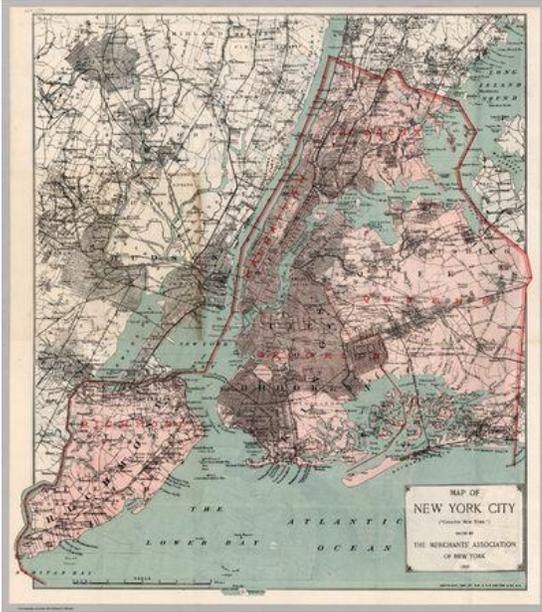
NYU opens its University Heights campus



Though it was established (and remains to this day) in Greenwich Village, New York University had a separate campus in the Bronx from 1894 to 1973. The buildings it once occupied—including a few McKim, Mead & White gems, like the one pictured here—are now part of the Bronx Community College campus.

- January 1, 1898

The Bronx becomes part of New York City



On the first day of 1898, New York's five boroughs—Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island—were officially consolidated as part of the plan for Greater New York, creating the city we know and love today.

- 1905

The subway extends to the Bronx



The Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT), New York's first subway line, began running in 1904, but it wasn't until 1905 that it connected to the Bronx. Today, the borough has 70 subway stations, some of which date back to its earliest days. (The West Farms Square–East Tremont Avenue station, pictured above in 1920, is one of those.)

- 1909

Grand Concourse opens to the public



The Bronx's grandest thoroughfare was inspired by Paris's Champs-Élysées, and after a decade of construction, it welcomed its first pedestrians (and horses, and automobiles) in 1909.

- April 18, 1923

Yankee Stadium hosts its first game



More than 70,000 people attended the first game at the House that Ruth Built in 1923; it was a match against the Boston Red Sox, which the Bronx Bombers won, 4-1. Babe Ruth hit a home run that day, and [according to the New York Times](#), "the biggest crowd in baseball history rose to its feet and let loose the biggest shout in baseball history."

- June 23, 1950

Pelham Parkway Houses is completed

The Bronx's first New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) development was completed in 1950, with 1,266 apartments spread out over nearly 24 acres. Now, there are dozens of NYCHA complexes with thousands of residents across the borough.

- 1963

The Cross-Bronx Expressway is completed



The 6.5-mile highway that slices through the borough was championed by Robert Moses, but also ultimately became one of the projects that marred his legacy. It's seen as the catalyst for the devastation of the East Tremont neighborhood in particular; in his seminal Moses biography *The Power Broker*, Robert Caro called it "tragic...to the people who lived in or near that right-of-way."

- 1971

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is founded



One of the borough's [premier cultural institutions](#) got its start in the 1970s, when exhibitions would be held in the rotunda of the Bronx County Courthouse. It opened in its current \$19 million home on Grand Concourse in 2006.

- August 11, 1973

Hip-hop is born on Sedgwick Avenue



On a hot summer night in 1973, DJ Kool Herc (then known by his given name, Clive Campbell) changed music forever. At his sister's back-to-school party, he introduced what's since become recognized as hip-hop to an *Extremely* enthusiastic audience. "Once they heard that, there was no turning back," the pioneer told *New York* magazine. "They always wanted to hear breaks after breaks after breaks."

- October 5, 1977

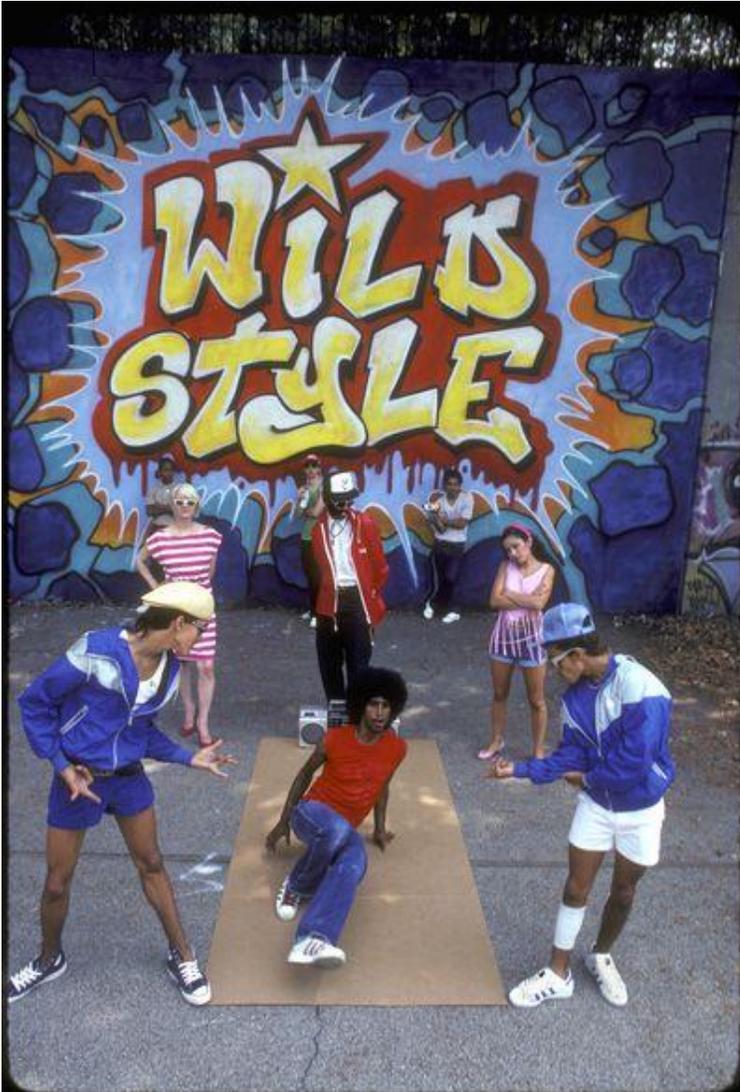
President Jimmy Carter visits a blighted Bronx



After a summer in which entire blocks of the Bronx fell victim to arsonists (getting its reputation as the borough that burned), President Jimmy Carter visited a desolate stretch of Charlotte Street in the South Bronx. Unlike his predecessor, who famously withheld funding for a bankrupt New York City, Carter vowed to help the blighted area—though that assistance was slow to arrive.

- November 23, 1983

Wild Style is released



Many of the Bronx's biggest cultural forces—hip-hop artists like Grandmaster Flash and the Rock Steady Crew, along with graffiti legend Lee Quiñones—appeared in this cult '80s flick, which brought the borough's nascent hip-hop scene to the masses. (Or, well, the people who saw the movie.)

- 1980s–1990s

The crack epidemic hits the Bronx

The South Bronx was one of the New York City neighborhoods hardest-hit by the prevalence of crack in the '80s and '90s. According to Jill Jonnes's *South Bronx Rising*, "between 1985 and 2000 about 5,000 Bronxites died of drug overdoses, while 12,460 died of AIDS," which was frequently contracted through drug use.

- 1992

Nos Quedamos and WHEDco are founded

The slow revitalization of the South Bronx was made possible, in part, through the efforts of community organizations like Nos Quedamos ("we stay") and WHEDco, both of which advocate for affordable housing, job creation, and other issues of importance to the neighborhoods of the South Bronx.

- April 3, 2009

The Yankees inaugurate their new stadium



The 85-year-old Yankee Stadium was taken out of service in 2008 and replaced with a brand new, \$1.5 billion luxury baseball palace. The first match held there was an exhibition game against the Chicago Cubs (the Yankees won), but in the first regular-season game on April 16, 2009, the team was trounced by the Cleveland Indians, losing 10-2.

- 2014

The Bronx Post Office becomes a focus for developers



Originally built in 1937, the Bronx Post Office—designed by Thomas Harlan Ellett, and named a New York City landmark in 1973—was acquired by YoungWoo & Associates in 2014. The firm plans to [revamp the historic structure](#), creating offices, community gathering spots, and even a rooftop garden in the old building. It's one of several big-deal projects that have the potential to reshape the borough, along with the Kingsbridge Armory redevelopment and the Bronx waterfront.

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