

# HOLIDAY

December, 1949: p. 126

## NEW YORK CITY WORDS

New York City's contributions to the American language go considerably further than a pronunciation of "avenyeh" for avenue or "erl" for lubricant. Peter Stuyvesant's village has made rich entries into our spoken and written tongue. A handful, culled from Dr. Mitford M. Mathews' *A Dictionary of Americanisms* (University of Chicago Press), follows.

**NEW YORK**, itself, as a prefix to everything from a cut of steak to a biscuit, has been in fashion for some time. Its most interesting use, perhaps, is in the *New York game*, an 1867 monicker for baseball.

**BROADWAY** and its more glamorous title the **GREAT WHITE WAY** have both moved out of Manhattan to become synonymous with main stems up and down the land. **BATTERY**, not so fancy but equally descriptive, has gone along into general use for a water-front street.

**TAMMANY**, the ancient and sometimes honorable Democratic organization, has survived through more than a century and a half of political fame, respect and obloquy. In its loose usage it can designate any backstairs political control group. Tammany was originally the name of a Delaware chief, famed for wisdom and friendliness toward whites.

**TENDERLOIN**, originally the police precinct that yielded the juiciest graft in late 19th Century Manhattan, now stands for the rough-tough Skid Road and bagnio section of any city. The story goes that a captain, on being transferred to the district, observed that whereas he had been eating chuck steak, now he would eat tenderloin.

**MANHATTAN** is a legitimate Indian word for the island containing the city's best-known borough. It has lent its name to a cocktail and, less extensively, to a variety of clam chowder.

**COCKTAIL** itself may well be a New York contribution. No reputable etymologist is willing to go out on a limb as to its exact origin—it remains as alcoholically hazy as anyone could wish—but Doctor Mathews records its first mention in print in a New York newspaper of 1806.



OldMagazineArticles.com