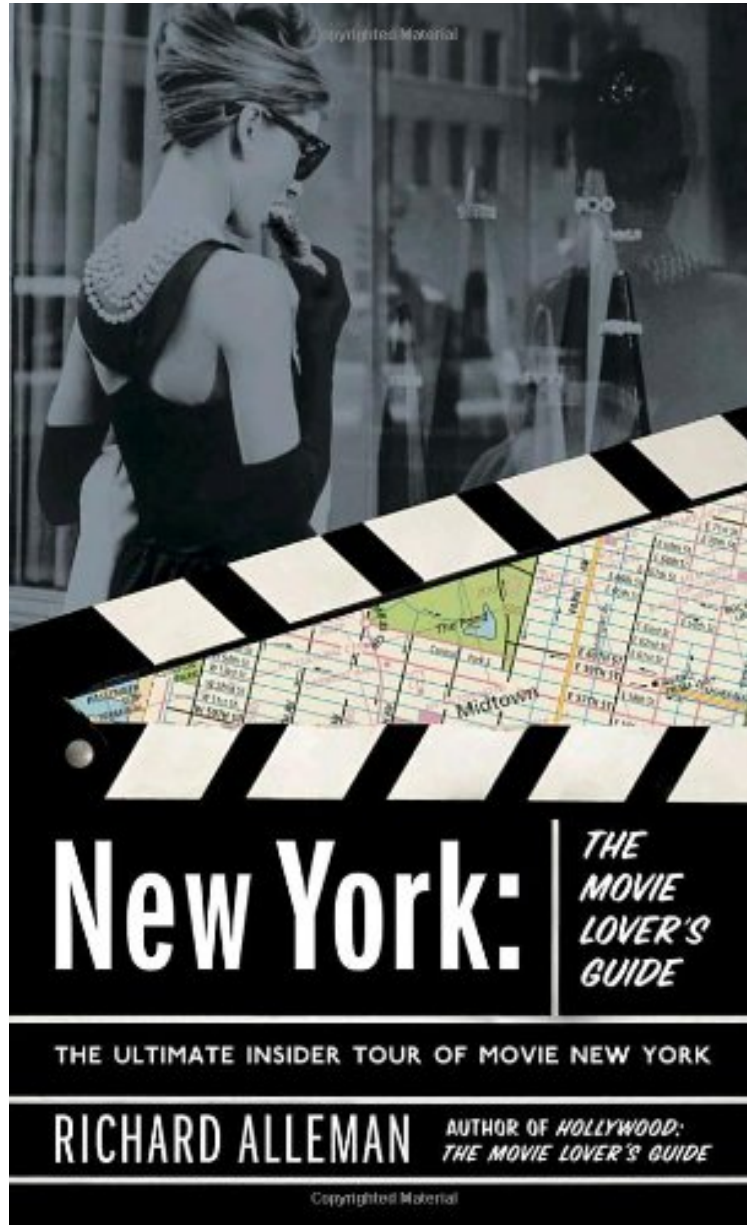


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# New York: The Movie Lover's Guide: The Ultimate Insider Tour of Movie New York

*Richard Alleman*

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The classic guide to who-did-what-where in New York, on- and off-screen, including: Classic film and TV locations: Marilyn Monroe's infamous Seven Year Itch subway grating . . . the deli where Meg Ryan famously faked an orgasm in When Harry Met Sally . . . the diner where Courteney Cox (in Friends) and Kirsten Dunst (in Spider-Man) waitressed . . . Men in Black's Manhattan headquarters . . . The Godfather mansion on Staten Island the Greenwich Village apartment where Jack Nicholson terrorized Greg Kinnear in As Good as It Gets . . . Ghostbusters Tribeca firehouse . . . Michael Douglas and Gwyneth Paltrow's A Perfect Murder palazzo . . . the landmark West Side building that housed Tom Cruise in Vanilla Sky and Mia Farrow in Rosemary's Baby . . . the Greenwich Village apartment of Friends . . . Will Grace's Upper West Side building . . . The All in the Family block in Queens . . . The Sopranos New Jersey mansion (and the real Bada Bing club) . . . Seinfeld's favorite diner . . . Sex and the City's sexiest haunts . . . and many more . . . Stars' childhood homes: Lena Horne's Bedford-Stuyvesant townhouse . . . Frank Sinatra's Hoboken row house . . . Barbra Streisand's Flatbush housing project . . . J.Lo's Bronx block . . . Humphrey Bogart's Upper West Side tenement . . . the Marx Brothers' Upper East Side brownstone . . . Apartments and townhouses of the silver screen's greatest legends: Joan Crawford . . . Marlene Dietrich . . . James Dean . . . Katharine Hepburn . . . Montgomery Clift . . . Rita Hayworth . . . Rock Hudson . . . and . . . Plus: Superstar cemeteries . . . major film and TV studios . . . historic movie palaces and Broadway theaters . . . star-studded restaurants and legendary hotels . . . For movie-loving New Yorkers, travelers and armchair film buffs, New York: The Movie Lovers Guide is the ultimate insiders guide to the Big Apples reel attractions.

From the Inside Flap The classic guide to who-did-what-where in New York, on- and off-screen, including: Classic film and TV locations: Marilyn Monroe's infamous "Seven Year Itch subway grating . . . the deli where Meg Ryan famously faked an orgasm in "When Harry Met Sally . . . the diner where Courteney Cox (in "Friends) and Kirsten Dunst (in "Spider-Man) waitressed . . . "Men in Black's Manhattan headquarters . . . "The Godfather mansion on Staten Island...the Greenwich Village apartment where Jack Nicholson terrorized Greg Kinnear in "As Good as It Gets . . . "Ghostbusters' Tribeca firehouse . . . Michael Douglas and Gwyneth Paltrow's "A Perfect Murder palazzo . . . the landmark West Side building that housed Tom Cruise in "Vanilla Sky and Mia Farrow in "Rosemary's Baby . . . the Greenwich Village apartment of "Friends . . . "Will Grace's Upper West Side building . . . The "All in the Family block in Queens . . . "The Sopranos' New Jersey mansion (and the real Bada Bing club) . . . Seinfeld's favorite diner . . . "Sex and the City's sexiest haunts . . . and many more . . ." Stars' childhood homes: Lena Horne's Bedford-Stuyvesant townhouse . . . Frank Sinatra's Hoboken row house . . . Barbra Streisand's Flatbush housing project . . . J.Lo's Bronx block . . . Humphrey Bogart's Upper West Side tenement . . . the Marx Brothers' Upper East Side brownstone . . . Apartments and townhouses of the silver screen's greatest legends: Joan Crawford . . . Marlene Dietrich . . . James Dean . . . Katharine Hepburn . . . Montgomery Clift . . . Rita Hayworth . . . Rock Hudson . . . and . . . Plus: Superstar cemeteries . . . major film and TV studios . . . historic movie palaces and Broadway theaters . . . star-studded restaurants and legendary hotels . . . For movie-loving New Yorkers, travelers and armchair film buffs, "New York: The Movie Lover's Guide is the ultimate insider's guide to the Big Apple's reel attractions. About the Author Richard Alleman, a longtime contributing editor at Travel + Leisure magazine, is a former travel editor of Vogue, where he is still a frequent contributor on travel and entertainment. Currently living in New York City, he has carried on a love affair with Los Angeles, where he lived for several years as an actor and writer. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1 New Jersey: In the Beginning For all intents and purposes, the motion picture as we have come to know it was born in the late 1880s some sixteen miles due west of the island of Manhattan at the Edison laboratories in West Orange, New Jersey. Recognizing that fact, we begin our movie lover's odyssey there. It wasn't just the Edison Company, however, that made New Jersey a powerful force in the early motion picture industry, because, from the very beginning, the state was home to scores of other ?lm companies. These included long-forgotten studios with names like Centaur, Nestor, Champion, Eclair, Victor, Solax, and Worldas well as many that are still familiar, like Fox, Metro, Selznick, Goldwyn, and Universal. All took advantage of New Jersey's then wide-open spaces and its pristine fields and forests for location shooting. The world's first Westerns were not done in Colorado or Californiathey were done in New Jersey. Needless to say, today's New Jersey is a very different place and tracking down traces of the state's early film history can be as challenging as working on an archaeological dig. But for the intrepid movie lover who knows where to dig and what to look for, the rewards to be unearthed along the west bank of the Hudson River are many. These range from ancient movie studios to famous and infamous silent film locations and

even to the world's first screening room. Easier to find are the sites and locales associated with New Jersey's current big comeback on the film and television front, especially with the popularity of shows like *The Sopranos* and *Ed*. This chapter also explores this exciting new New Jersey world.

1. Edison Laboratory, Main Street and Lakeside Avenue, West Orange

For the movie lover, this is probably the single most important site connected with the development of the motion picture in America. If not the world for it was here that, toward the end of the nineteenth century, Edison researchers perfected and successfully marketed a practical system for photographing and exhibiting moving images. Thomas Alva Edison is often credited as the inventor of the movies, but it is difficult to attribute this achievement to any one person since various inventors in America and abroad were experimenting with "moving pictures" at around the same time. And, indeed, even if we credit the Edison Laboratory with coming up with the first commercially viable motion pictures, it seems that Edison himself had relatively little to do with the project. The real force behind the endeavor was Edison's assistant, an Englishman named W. K. L. Dickson who, as early as 1889, came up with a machine called the Kinetograph that showed moving pictures backed up by synchronized sound provided by an Edison phonograph. (It is said that the main reason Edison gave his go-ahead to motion picture development was because he saw the new medium as a way to further enhance and thus further capitalize on his already immensely successful phonograph.) The big breakthrough made by Dickson's device, however, was not the fact that it employed synchronized sound, but the incredible realism of the moving images it recorded. To achieve this, Dickson had taken advantage of George Eastman's newly invented celluloid film, which was thin, tough, and flexible. Cut into continuous 35mm strips and perforated with four holes per frame, the film was fed through the Kinetograph by means of sprockets, another key design element because these regularly stopped the film for that fraction of a second needed to record the image on the frame. Today, more than a hundred years later, even with the rise of digital technology, most motion pictures still use 35mm film as well as this same basic stop-and-go sprocket mechanism.

In 1893, an improved version of this Kinetograph, dubbed the Kinetoscope and minus the synchronized phonograph, was unveiled at the Chicago World's Fair. Essentially a coin-operated peep show, the Kinetoscope was housed in a large wooden box into which the viewer peered to see a silent movie lasting less than a minute. Before long, Kinetoscope parlors started springing up all across the country, and Edison was in the motion picture business in a big way. To provide product for these Kinetoscope parlors, and later for storefront nickelodeons, where motion pictures were projected onto screens, Dickson built the world's first movie studio at the West Orange laboratory in 1893. It was really nothing more than a tar paper-covered shack with a roof that could be opened up and adjusted to let in sunlight. In addition, the bizarre structure was mounted on wheels so that it could be rotated to keep up with the sun throughout the day. The studio was dubbed the Black Maria, because it resembled the police patrol wagons of the period, which bore the same nickname.

What were the first Edison movies like? Directed by W. K. L. Dickson, they relied heavily on vaudeville and circus performers for talent and showed snippets of everything from animal acts, exotic dancers, and Gaiety Girls to 1890s superstars like Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill Cody. By the turn of the century, however, with the arrival of director Edwin S. Porter on the Edison scene, the company's films became longer and more sophisticated and started to tell stories. It was Porter who in 1903 directed what is considered the milestone of early story films, the eleven-minute-long *The Great Train Robbery*. Today, one of the treats in store for the movie lover who visits the Edison Laboratory site (now a museum administered by the National Park Service) is the chance to see *The Great Train Robbery* on a big screen in its entirety. Several less well-known early Edison films are also shown: One features the original Little Egypt doing her famous hoochy-koochy; another is a slapstick comedy centering on a husband and wife's attempts to swat a giant fly. There's even a bizarre sketch using trick photography about a barber who removes the heads of his customers, shaves them, and then replaces them!

For movie lovers, other highlights of the Edison Laboratory site are the full-scale mock-up of the Black Maria studio, a working Kinetoscope from the 1890s, and Edison's handsome private library and study. A grand wood-paneled room with two balconied stories and a huge chandelier, the library has been left exactly as it was, down to the half-smoked cigars on the rolltop desk when Edison died in 1931. Especially interesting is the little second-story projection booth that faces a large rolled-up screen suspended from the ceiling across the way. Edison's library, it turns out, was one of the world's first screening rooms.

While Edison's name is linked with many motion picture firsts, it is ironic how small a role his company played in the ultimate flourishing of the film industry. Immediately besieged by rival producers using what Edison considered to be pirated equipment, the Edison Company fought hard to retain supremacy in the movie business and summarily sued all competitors for patent infringement. Eventually some of these competitors became so strong that Edison stopped fighting and joined with them in 1908 to form the Motion Picture Patents Company. Effectively, this new organization was a business trust, and it was ruled illegal and dissolved in 1915. By that time, however, the competition from the outside was too strong and too innovative. The company that started it all was out of the film business by 1918. But at the West Orange laboratory, the movie lover witnessed beginnings, not endings. As this book goes to press, the Edison Laboratory is in the final stages of a major restoration program that began in 2003. Set to reopen to visitors in mid-2005, the facility will once again offer guided and self-guided tours of its 1880s factory complex, which will now feature both Thomas Edison's private laboratory as well as his Music Room, where he auditioned singers and musicians for his phonograph recording business. Nearby, Glenmont, Edison's spectacular twenty-three-room red-brick Victorian mansion, will also

be open to the public on weekends. For information, call 973-736-5050 and visit [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/curriculumkit/lessons/edison/4edison.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/curriculumkit/lessons/edison/4edison.htm).<sup>2</sup> Centaur Film Company Site 900 Broadway, Bayonne Strange as it may seem, Hollywood has its roots in Bayonne, New Jersey. In 1911 the Bayonne-based producer David Horsley took his company of New Jersey cowboys and Indians and relocated to the small Southern California community of Hollywood. While several other East Coast film companies had already discovered the sunshine of Los Angeles (as well as its convenient location some 2,500 miles from the strong arm of the Edison-led Motion Picture Patents Company trust), Horsley's was the first to set up a permanent studio within the borders of Hollywood proper. But back to Bayonne, where a storefront equipped with bathtubs for developing film was the Centaur Company's headquarters from 1907 to 1911. Specializing in Westerns, Centaur came out with such provocative titles as *A Cowboy's Escapade* (1908), *Johnny and the Indian* (1909), *Redman's Honor* (1910), *The Cowboy Preacher* (1910), and *Those Jersey Cowpunchers* (1910), which was a spoof on its own horse operas. When Centaur first came on the scene in 1907, unsophisticated nickelodeon audiences didn't know the difference between rural New Jersey and the wilds of Wyoming, but as directors started to shoot in the real West a few years later, a demand for more authentic locations soon arose. This prompted Centaur to move into other genres, including a series based on the Mutt and Jeff comic strip. It also prompted the company's 1911 move to the West Coast. Today, the spot where Centaur once had its Bayonne headquarters is occupied by a one-story brick-fronted dentist's office. While this is not the original Centaur office building, the clapboard structures on either side of it Vector Books and a party supply store respectively were around in 1907. In fact, much of this section of Broadway, Bayonne's main street, is made up of little wooden buildings that, in an odd way, do not look unlike those of a small town out west.<sup>3</sup> The Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor 52 Port Terminal Boulevard, Bayonne When the U.S. Army departed from Bayonne's Military Ocean Terminal in 1999, this vast 2.5-mile-long, 430-acre port was redeveloped for civilian uses with offices, storage areas, and a cruise ship terminal. In a move to cater to New Jersey's burgeoning film industry, two of its vast warehouses were turned into soundstages for movies and television. It was in one of these that HBO shot its prison series *Oz* for several seasons and where it recently lensed the Glenn Close TV movie *Strip Search* (2003). The busy new facility has also provided soundstages for the features *A Beautiful Mind* (2002), *Two Weeks Notice* (2002), *Far from Heaven* (2002), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), and *The Forgotten* (2004).<sup>4</sup> Stanley Theater Site 2932 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City Old-timers will remember the enormous rooftop sign that once proclaimed, "The Stanley . . . One of America's Great Theaters." And that it was. With 4,332 seats, the Stanley was one of the largest movie palaces ever built. Then there was its lobby, a spectacular space of faux-marble columns, grand staircases, cloud-painted ceilings, and glittering chandeliers. Finally, the house itself was a stunner with walls of backlit, three-dimensional Gothic facades, including a replica of Venice's Rialto Bridge spanning the stage. The Stanley opened its ornate brass doors back in 1928 with a mixed bill that featured a prerecorded welcome message by Norma Talmadge, a performance by the house orchestra, a stage show called *Sky Blues*, a newsreel, musical selections on the Wurlitzer organ, and eventually the film presentation, which was *The Dove*, starring the aforementioned Miss Talmadge and Gilbert Roland. The Stanley survived as a theater for fifty years and, despite its enormous size, never suffered the ignominy of multiplexing. When it finally closed down in 1978, however, it was a prime candidate for the wrecking ball. Luckily, it escaped this fate when the Jehovah's Witnesses purchased the building in the early 1980s to use as a convention center, bringing some 5,500 volunteers to Jersey City to help with its restoration. While most preservationists applaud the saving of the Stanley, some regret that the theater's original Willy Pogony murals, which featured scantily clad Greek gods and goddesses, have been replaced by biblical scenes. Nonetheless, the good news is that the Stanley still stands, and movie lovers who wish to take a peek at it can stop by on a weekend when thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses converge on the place for meetings, religious services, and baptisms. A far cry from Norma Talmadge, Gilbert Roland, and *Sky Blues*, however.<sup>5</sup> Loew's Jersey Theater 54 Journal Square, Jersey City Opened in 1929, this Journal Square landmark boasting a wonderful baroque facade with a mechanical statue of the mounted St. George that periodically slays a dragon was the most opulent movie palace ever built in New Jersey. Designed by the noted theatrical architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp, the dazzling gold Loew's Jersey auditorium seated 3,187 movie lovers who had first passed under an equally dramatic three-story lobby rotunda supported by jade green columns. Although triplexed in 1974, the Jersey retained much of its original splendor right up to the day it closed its doors in the summer of 1986. What followed were years of plans, schemes, and disputes about the theater's future--not to mention brushes with demolition. A happy ending eventually came when a preservationist group managed to get the theater de-triplexed, restored, and reopened as an entertainment and performing arts center for the Jersey City community. Today, a vital aspect of the theater's new life is its film program, which features classic films as they were meant to be shown on the big screen. For film program details, call 201-798-6055 and visit [www.loewsjersey.org](http://www.loewsjersey.org).<sup>6</sup> Our Lady of Grace Church 400 Willow Avenue, Hoboken It was the picture of 1954 an incredible collaboration of New York-based talent that brought together director Elia Kazan, screenwriter Budd Schulberg, composer Leonard Bernstein, plus a cast headed by Marlon Brando, and featuring Eva Marie Saint, Karl Malden, Lee J. Cobb, Martin Balsam, and Rod Steiger. And when Hollywood handed out the Academy Awards that year, *On the Waterfront* received no less than eight of them, including best picture, director, actor (Brando), and supporting actress (Saint). Not

bad for an independent, low-budget, made-in-New York film. Made in New York perhaps, but it was shot largely on location in Hoboken, the little town directly across the Hudson River from Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan. In the 1950s, Hoboken, like New York City, was a thriving port, and it provided an ideal setting for Kazan's hard-nosed look at the very real corruption that was an ugly fact of waterfront life in New York and New Jersey. (The film was based on a series of shock-ing newspaper articles by muckraking journalist Malcolm Johnson.) Today, the Hoboken docks and warehouses that served as backgrounds for *On the Waterfront* have been transformed into shops, offices, condos, and marinas. One important location from the film does survive, however: the Roman Catholic church where the crusading priest played by Karl Malden helped Brando's failed prizefighter-turned-longshoreman realize the forces of evil lurking in his union. For the church, Kazan chose Hoboken's historic 1874 Our Lady of Grace, a striking brick structure with a statue-studded Gothic facade and an ornate interior. Perhaps this interior was a bit too grand for Kazan, because a different, much more austere church (Hoboken's Sts. Peter and Paul at 400 Hudson Street) was used for the interior scenes.