Hidden mystery tour guide treasure hunt secret unknown stories buried strata augmented reality underground history unseen concealed

Palimpsest

I would like to make a connected documentary about the unknown stories of New York. The city is full of buried secrets and historically significant areas that we unwittingly overlook every day. From the 20,000 corpses still buried under Washington Square Park to the spot where the first photograph of New York City was taken. From the “Beautiful Cigar Girl,” who entranced the likes of Edgar Allan Poe and James Fenimore Cooper, and whose mysterious murder became a national sensation, to the etymology of the term “86ed,” which can be traced to a building on Bedford Street in the West Village.

The documentary would tell you the hidden story of the spot where you stand. I would like to use augmented reality so that documentary footage is intermixed with the area as it exists today. I also imagine that there could be a game component to the experience. It could be like a treasure hunt for secret stories. Perhaps we tell the user that there is a story in Bryant Park and give them clues about where to look. When they find the right spot, they unlock the video.

Washington Square Park Potter’s Field

* Potter’s fields were burial sites for unknown or indigent people
* Washington Square Park was a potter’s field from 1797-1826. They needed more burial space after outbreaks of yellow fever
* There are as many as 20,000 dead bodies still buried under the park
* City designated use of area as a public park in 1827
* Was bisected by 5th avenue until 1960s when it was closed off to traffic
* Remains have been found several times-- four bodies in 2008 and Gravestone of James Jackson was found during renovations

Resources:

[Gravestone of James Jackson found during park renovation](http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/28/gravestone-from-1799-is-found-in-washington-square-park/)

[Skeletal remains discovered in Washington Sq Park](http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/23/bones-evoke-washington-square-parks-past/)

First book printed in NYC

* *New-England’s Spirit of Persecution Transmitted to Pennsilvania* printed in 1693. Was printed by William Bradford. Press was in Hanover Square. (When did the Statue of Liberty, 5-6)

First Christmas trees sold on street corners in NYC

* First Christmas tree vendor on streets of NYC were sold by a Catskills woodsman named Mark Carr in 1851 on corner of Greenwich and Vesey Streets. World Trade Center eliminated street corner, but it may be recreated in renovations (When did the Statue of Liberty, 11)

First photograph of NYC

* “The first experiment crowned with any success was a view of the Unitarian church from the window on the stair case from the third story of the N York city University.” (When did the Statue of Liberty, 13)
* Photography was invented in 1839 (When did the Statue of Liberty, 12)

General Slocum disaster

* Deadliest tragedy in New York history before September 11, 2001.
* It was carrying the congregation of the St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church on its way to a picnic on Long Island.
* Steamship caught on fire. June 15, 1904.
* Of the 1,300 people on board, 1,000 died.
* Boat was retrieved, but sank again in 1911 for good (When did the Statue of Liberty, 55-56)

Two plane crashes in skyscrapers before September 11

* In 1946, a Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor crashed into 40 Wall St, the Bank of Manhattan Company Building.
* Blew a 10 by 20 foot hole in the building and killed the plane’s passengers instantly, but miraculously everyone in the building survived.
* In 1945, a Mitchell bomber crashed into the Empire State Building. 18 by 20 foot hole between 78th and 79th floors (When did the Statue of Liberty, 65-66)

The Doctors’ Riot of 1788

* In 18th century New York, body snatching was a common occurrence. Medical students needed access to cadavers for dissection, so they would steal freshly buried bodies.
* The story that is supposed to have precipitated the riot was when a little boy was caught watching a surgeon dissect a cadaver at New York Hospital. The angry doctor shooed the little boy away with a severed arm. When the child didn’t leave, the surgeon yelled, “It’s your mother’s!”
* By unfortunate coincidence, the little boy’s mother had just died.
* When neighbors heard the boy’s story, they stormed to the mother’s gravesite to find her body disinterred.
* Rioters ransacked the hospital and doctors’ homes looking for stolen bodies (When did the Statue of Liberty, 75-76)

Beautiful Cigar Girl, Mary Rogers

* Worked at a popular tobacco shop in the West Village. She was paid handsomely because her beauty attracted many customers
* Clients included James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allan Poe
* She first disappeared in 1838. Her roommate claimed to have found a suicide note, but it was determined to be a hoax. She returned to work.
* In 1841, she disappeared again. This time her body was found floating in the Hudson River.
* Theories include an abortion gone wrong or gang violence. The murder was never solved.
* Her death made national headlines. It inspired Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” the follow-up to the “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”

Shimon Attie Almstadtstrasse

resurrected