Staten Island is one of the five boroughs of New York City, in the U.S. state of New York, located in the southwest part of the city. Staten Island is separated from New Jersey by the Arthur Kill and the Kill Van Kull, and from the rest of New York by New York Bay. With a population of 468,730, Staten Island is the least populated of the boroughs but is the third-largest in area at 59 sq mi (153 km2).

The borough is coextensive with Richmond County, and until 1975 the borough was officially named the Borough of Richmond. Staten Island has been sometimes called "the forgotten borough" by inhabitants who feel neglected by the city government.

The North Shore — especially the neighborhoods of St. George, Tompkinsville, Clifton, and Stapleton — is the most urban part of the island; it contains the officially designated St. George Historic District and the St. Paul’s Avenue-Stapleton Heights Historic District, which feature large Victorian houses. The East Shore is home to the 2.5-mile (4 km) F.D.R. Boardwalk, the fourth-longest in the world. The South Shore developed rapidly beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, and is mostly suburban in character. The West Shore is the least populated and most industrial part of the island.

Staten Island used to claim the largest landfill in the world. It was closed in 2001, then shortly afterward temporarily reopened to receive the debris from the September 11th attacks. The landfill is being made into what will be New York City's second largest public park.

Motor traffic can reach the borough from Brooklyn via the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and from New Jersey via the Outerbridge Crossing, Goethals Bridge, and Bayonne Bridge. Staten Island has Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bus lines and a MTA rapid transit line, the Staten Island Railway, which runs from the ferry terminal at St. George to Tottenville. Staten Island is the only borough that is not connected to the New York City subway system. The free Staten Island Ferry connects the borough to Manhattan and is a popular tourist attraction, providing views of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and Lower Manhattan.

As in much of North America, human habitation appeared in the island fairly rapidly after the retreat of the ice sheet. Archaeologists have recovered tool evidence of Clovis culture activity dating from approximately 14,000 years ago. This evidence was first discovered in 1917 in the Charleston section of the island. Various Clovis artifacts have been discovered since then, on property owned by the Mobil Oil Corporation.

The island was probably abandoned later, possibly because of the extirpation of large mammals on the island. Evidence of the first permanent American Indian settlements and agriculture are thought to date from about 5,000 years ago (Jackson, 1995), although early archaic habitation evidence has been found in multiple locations on the island (Ritchie 1963).

Rossville points; a distinct type of arrowhead which defines a Native American cultural period which spans the Archaic period to the Early Woodland period, dating from approximately 1500 to 100 BC., are named for the Rossville section of Staten Island where they were first recognized, having been found in the vicinity of the old Rossville Post Office building.

At the time of European contact the island was inhabited by the Raritan band of the Unami division of the Lenape. The Lenape who spoke Lenape one of the Algonquian languages called Staten Island Aquehonga Manacknong part of the Lenape homeland known as Lenapehoking. The Lenape were known to the Europeans as the "Delaware" because they inhabited both shores of the Delaware River.

The island was laced with foot trails, one of which followed the south side of the ridge near the course of present day Richmond Road and Amboy Road. The Lenape did not live in fixed encampments, but moved seasonally, using slash and burn agriculture. Shellfish was a staple of their diet, including the Eastern oyster (Crassostrea virginica) which was abundant in the waterways throughout the present day New York City region. Evidence of their habitation can still be seen in the form of shell middens along the shore in the Tottenville section, where finding oyster shells larger than twelve inches (305 mm) is not uncommon.

Burial Ridge; a Lenape burial ground located on a bluff overlooking Raritan Bay in what is today the Tottenville section of Staten Island is the largest pre-European burial ground in New York City. Bodies have been reported unearthed at Burial Ridge during various periods in the 19th century from 1858 onward. After conducting independent research which included unearthing bodies interred at the site, ethnologist and archaeologist, George H. Pepper, was contracted in 1895 to conduct paid archaeological research at Burial Ridge by the American Museum of Natural History. The burial ground today is unmarked and lies within the confines of Conference House Park.

The first recorded European contact with the island was in 1520 by Italian explorer Giovanni de Verrazzano, who in the employ of the French crown, sailed through The Narrows on the French ship La Dauphine and anchored for one night.

In 1609, the English explorer Henry Hudson sailing for the Dutch sailed into Upper New York Bay on his ship the Half Moon. Staaten Eylandt (literally "States Island") was named in honor of the Dutch parliament known as the Staten-Generaal (see also Generality Lands for background).

The first permanent Dutch settlement of the New Netherland colony was made on Governor's Island in 1624, which had been used as a trading camp by them for over a decade before. In 1626 the colony transferred to the island of Manhattan, and was newly designated as the capital of New Netherland. Staaten Eylandt nevertheless remained uncolonized by the Dutch for many decades. From 1639 to 1655, Cornelis Melyn and David de Vries made three separate attempts to establish a permanent settlement on the island, but each time the settlement was destroyed in the conflicts between the Dutch and the local tribes. In 1661, the first permanent Dutch settlement was established at Oude Dorp (Dutch for "Old Village"), just south of the Narrows near South Beach, by a small group of Dutch, Walloon, and Huguenot families. Today, the last vestige of Oude Dorp exists as the present-day neighborhood of Old Town, adjacent to Old Town Road.

At the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1667, the Dutch ceded New Netherlands colony to England in the Treaty of Breda, and the Dutch Staaten Eylandt, anglicized as "Staten Island", became part of the new English colony of New York.

In 1670, the Native Americans ceded all claims to Staten Island to the English in a deed to Gov. Francis Lovelace. In 1671, in order to encourage an expansion of the Dutch settlements, the English resurveyed Oude Dorp (which became known as Old Town) and expanded the lots along the shore to the south. These lots were settled primarily by Dutch and became known as Nieuwe Dorp (meaning "New Village"), which later became anglicized as New Dorp.

Captain Christopher Billopp, after years of distinguished service in the Royal Navy, came to America in 1674 in charge of a company of infantry. The following year, he settled on Staten Island, where he was granted a patent for 932 acres (3.8 km2) of land. According to one version of an oft-repeated but inaccurate myth, Capt. Billopp's seamanship secured Staten Island to New York, rather than to New Jersey: the Island would belong to New York if the captain could circumnavigate it in one day, which he did, according to the myth. Mayor Michael Bloomberg perpetuated the myth by referring to it at a news conference in Brooklyn on February 20, 2007.

In 1683, the colony of New York was divided into ten counties. As part of this process, Staten Island, as well as several minor neighboring islands, was designated as Richmond County. The name derives from the title of Charles Lennox, 1st Duke of Richmond, and an illegitimate son of King Charles II.

In 1687 and 1688, the English divided the island into four administrative divisions based on natural features: the 5,100-acre (21 km2) manorial estate of colonial governor Thomas Dongan in the northeastern hills known as the "Lordship or Manner of Cassiltown," along with the North, South, and West divisions. These divisions later evolved into the four towns of Castleton, Northfield, Southfield, and Westfield. In 1698, the population was 727.

The government granted land patents in rectangular blocks of eighty acres (320,000 m²), with the most desirable lands along the coastline and inland waterways. By 1708, the entire island had been divided up in this fashion, creating 166 small farms and two large manorial estates, the Dongan estate and a 1600 acre (6.5 km²) parcel on the southwestern tip of the island belonging to Christopher Billop (Jackson, 1995).

In 1729, a county seat was established at the village of Richmond Town, located at the headwaters of the Fresh Kills near the center of the island. By 1771, the island's population had grown to 2,847.

The island played a significant role in the American Revolutionary War. On March 17, 1776, the British forces under Lord Howe evacuated Boston and sailed for Halifax, Nova Scotia. From Halifax, Howe prepared to attack New York City, which then consisted entirely of the southern end of Manhattan Island. General George Washington led the entire Continental Army to New York City in anticipation of the British attack. Howe used the strategic location of Staten Island as a staging ground for the invasion.

Over 140 British ships arrived over the summer of 1776 and anchored off the shores of Staten Island at the entrance to New York Harbor, which was the largest armada to set sail until World War II. The British troops and Hessian mercenaries numbered about 30,000. Howe established his headquarters in New Dorp at the Rose and Crown Tavern near the junction of present New Dorp Lane and Amboy Road. It is here that the representatives of the British government reportedly received their first notification of the Declaration of Independence.

In August 1776, the British forces crossed the Narrows to Brooklyn and outflanked the American forces at the Battle of Long Island, resulting in the British control of the harbor and the capture of New York City shortly thereafter. Three weeks later, on September 11, 1776, the British received a delegation of Americans consisting of Benjamin Franklin, Edward Rutledge, and John Adams at the Conference House on the southwestern tip of the island (known today as Tottenville) on the former estate of Christopher Billop. The Americans refused the peace offer from the British in exchange for the withdrawal of the Declaration of Independence, however, and the conference ended without an agreement.

On August 22, 1777, the Battle of Staten Island occurred here between the British and several companies of the 2nd Canadian Regiment fighting alongside other American companies. The battle was inconclusive. Both sides surrendered over a hundred troops as prisoners, and the Americans withdrew.

British forces remained on Staten Island throughout the war. Most Patriots fled after the British occupation, and so local sentiment of the remaining population was predominantly Loyalist. However, the islanders found the demands of supporting the troops to be onerous. The British kept headquarters in neighborhoods such as Bulls Head. Many buildings and churches were destroyed, and the military demand for resources resulted in an extensive deforestation of the island by the end of the war.

The British again used the island as a staging ground for their final evacuation of New York City on December 5, 1783. After the war, the largest Loyalist landowners fled to Canada and their estates were subdivided and sold.

On July 4, 1827, the end of slavery in New York state was celebrated at Swan Hotel, West Brighton. Rooms at the hotel were reserved months in advance as local abolitionists and prominent free blacks prepared for the festivities. Speeches, pageants, picnics, and fireworks marked the celebration, which lasted for two days.

In 1860, parts of Castleton and Southfield were made into a new town, Middletown. The Village of New Brighton in the town of Castleton was incorporated in 1866, and in 1872 the Village of New Brighton annexed all the remainder of the Town of Castleton and became coterminous with the town.

The Conference House was built by Captain Christopher Billopp in 1680. This grand stone manor overlooks the Arthur Kill and Perth Amboy, New Jersey. His grandson, Colonel Christopher Billopp, owned the house when it was taken over by Admiral Lord Richard Howe, head of the British Forces in the Americas.