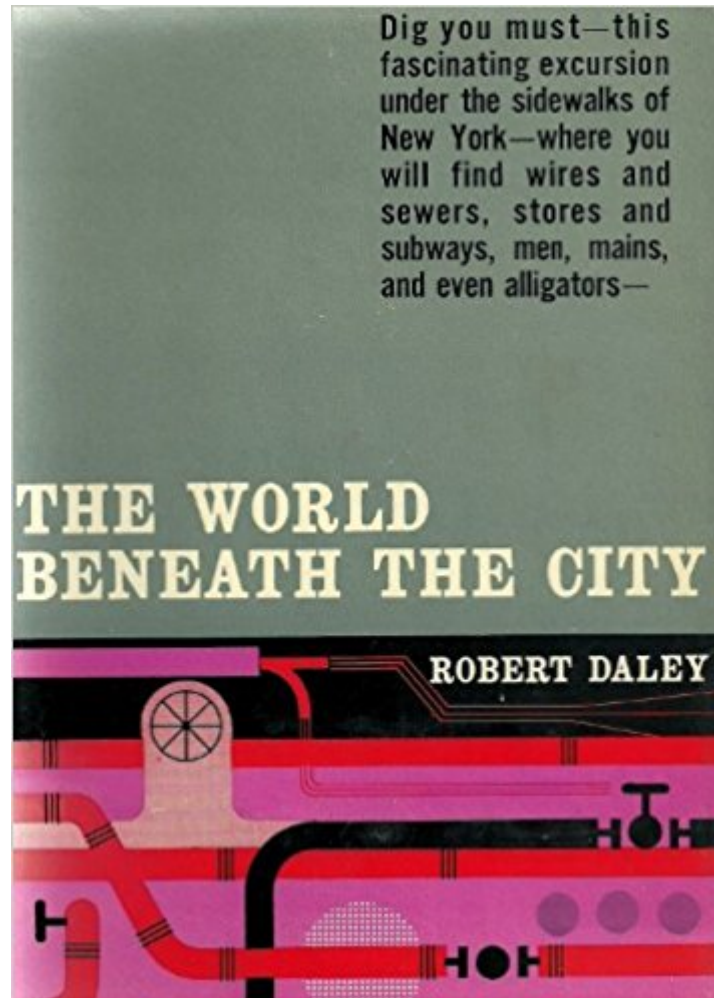




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World Beneath The City



Synopsis

"Odd things going on under the sidewalks of New York...strange universe of power lines, gas pipes, telephone wires, subways and such, as well as the wriggling animals that contentedly exist among these intricate surroundings...a world as fascinating as any found by an oceanic skin diver...among its notables are "Smelly" Kelly ("the Subway Sniffer") and Teddy May ("King of the Sewers")...Alfred Eli Beach, an intrepid and likable pioneer who in 1870 devised the idea of a pneumatic subway but had the misfortune to tangle with Boss Tweed, emerging from the struggle a broken man...Mr. Daley has a nice way with an anecdote, and these and other figures emerge as rare personalities...the author also has an eye on the past...the hour in 1842 when thousands cheered the surging of Croton water into the city's reservoirs..."The Day They Chopped the Poles Down" in 1888...In 1904 the IRT subway opened, another gala moment...Brings personality to these impersonal services...good humored...water, gas, electricity and subways have a romantic past--in New York anyway." --New York Times Book Review

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was asked by the New York Times Magazine to write a short article on whatever might be under the streets of the city--the magazine's idea, not mine, they were just being nice to me, for I was still largely unpublished. Since no one else was clamoring for my services, I agreed to do it. I got \$150 for it, but next day came a call from an editor at Lippincott. Would I care to expand the piece into a book? I refused, explaining rather pompously that I was actually a novelist. Well, I was sort of. I already had two novels in a drawer, where they remain to this day. Months went by, no one accepted anything I wrote. Finally I called the Lippincott lady and said I would do it. The advance was \$1,000. I had a wife, two children and a day job, so I wrote it mostly at night. Sometimes the

people upstairs pounded on the ceiling to make me stop. ã The book came out, achieved both sales and notoriety, much of the latter focused on the "Alligators in the Sewers" chapter, and nine months later came the first royalty check, \$1,700. I was so inexperienced I had thought the advance was the end of it. That check made me feel richer than I had ever felt up to that time.

Robert Daley, a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is the author of 17 novels and 11 non-fiction books, including *Prince of the City*, and *Portraits of France*.ã In 1971-72 he served as a New York City deputy police commissioner, a job and a year that turned out to be more intimate and more tumultuous than he had bargained for--much more. In the course of his career the author has managed to get deep inside, and to write about, a number of worlds, includingã the police of course, but alsoã wine, opera, pro football, bullfighting, grand prix racing, even treasure diving and, in *The World Beneath the City*, underground New York. Eight of his books have been sold to the movies, six of which have been filmed so far, including *Year of the Dragon*, *Prince of the City*, and *Hands of a Stranger*. His work has been translated into fourteen languages.ã He is married with three daughters, and divides his time between a house in Connecticut and an apartment in Nice, France.

I am a NY history junkie and wanted to know more about the building of the city (especially sewers, subways and the like). The book offers some fairly straightforward history but the focus is more on the personalities involved. The author seems to have done his research and tells the stories in an easy, entertaining way. It was a good read as far as it went. The book was written in the late 1950s, so don't expect more recent information and some of the allusions are now dated. Also, what I was most interested in, sewers, got relatively little attention but what was discussed was well done.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! I actually read most of it during a road trip back from my first visit to NYC. It's not the most up-to-date thing, since it was published in the 60s, but it has a lot of great stories about the goings on beneath the streets of NYC. Robert Daley can turn a phrase and really makes the book very enjoyable to read.

Well written, explained the history of what came to be under NYC for each system with just the right balance of details.

lots of interesting stories about old New York and all the characters that helped build the city that it

is today

A disappointment. I was looking for a book about the building of the NYC subways, but this certainly wasn't it. Very uneven in its writing and poorly focused. One chapter details the efforts to secretly construct a fan driven subway beneath the streets, another - longer - chapter tells us more than anyone would want to know about "Smelly Kelly", a subway inspector noted for his ability to locate sewer and gas line leaks (and the occasional infestation of decaying rats), with his remarkable nose. The author knows there's a fascinating story to tell about how the earth beneath NYC came to be filled with gas, water, sewer, steam, electric and subway lines; but he doesn't do a very good job of exploring his topic or sharing with the reader just how it came to pass.

This is not the type of book I would typically select, but my brother recommended it, and it was actually very interesting. This book was written in 1959, and it covers the history of what goes on beneath New York City, from its founding days to the present (well, 1959). There is information about water and sanitation, the subway (first subway was built in secret to avoid being shut down by Tammany Hall), to the people and creatures that have made the underground their home. You'll read about some interesting characters who worked underground and above, one of my favorites was "Smelly" Kelly who could identify countless smells and pinpoint their origin. I know nothing about New York City, so I may have enjoyed it more if I had any idea where all of the streets and buildings mentioned were.

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