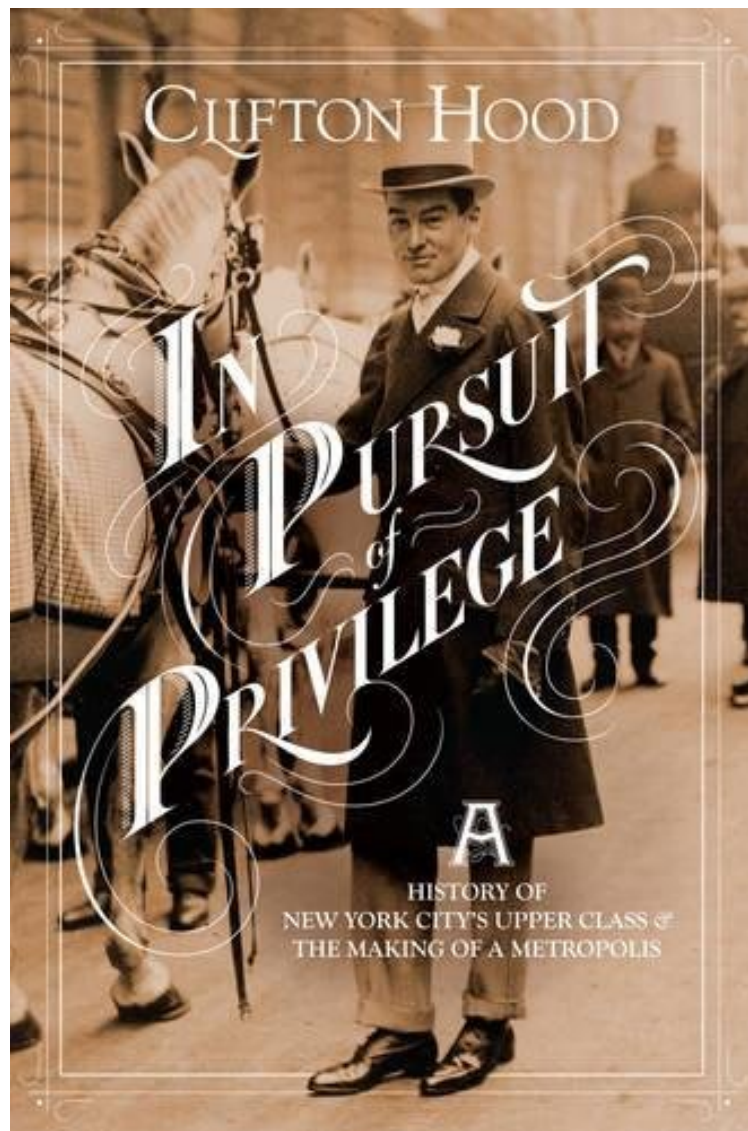


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## In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York City's Upper Class and the Making of a Metropolis

*Clifton Hood*

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**Clifton Hood : In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York City's Upper Class and the Making of a Metropolis** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York City's Upper Class and the Making of a Metropolis:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Pretty interesting history of NYCBy RosebudThis is a history of

NYC as seen through the experience of the social elite. The elite evolved as our country evolved. Most interesting is the last chapter as the author tries to explain the evolution of elite criteria from yesterday's family and inherited wealth to today's larger focus on accomplishments. The author is uncomfortable with the hereditary nature of merit in today's society; is it the same as the social norms of yesterday?

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An engaging, well written social history of New York City By James E. Black I read this book after reading "City of Dreams" (which I also enjoyed). This book hasn't gotten nearly as much press attention but is a worthy read and a great companion for "City of Dreams" - offering an alternative perspective on the history on New York City. Essentially, it is a social history of New York as told through the dynamic nature of it's elites, highlighting how the elites have shifted over the generations. The thrust of the story is well researched and very informative but I thought it was worth recognizing that it's a genuinely engaging read and great context for anyone living in or interested in New York culture.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. About the changes that occurred in the upper class of NYC in 1750 to modern times By Debbie "In Pursuit of Privilege" is a collection of essays about the New York City upper class covering 1750 to modern times. The author focused on seven time periods where major events created changes in the upper class, though he also talked about what happened between those times. Those time periods were: 1750s/1760s (changed by the 7 Years War), 1780s/1790s (by the Revolutionary War), 1820s (by major growth in NYC), 1860s (by the Civil War), 1880s/1890s (Gilded Age), 1940s (by WWII), and 1970s (by a financial crisis). Different topics were covered under the different time periods, but each covered what defined the upper class (lineage, wealth, etc.), what they valued (manners, wealth, power, etc.), and how they interacted. The author also described things like where they built their houses, their social diversions (like clubs), what role or social responsibilities they felt regarding the common people, what they desired in schools for their children, how they spent their wealth, and the development of the NY Stock Exchange. He also briefly compared the NYC upper class's values and behavior to those of the upper class in other major cities. The tone of the writing was distant, looking back at events with hindsight and clinically dissecting each topic. While some specific people were named, they're used as a brief example to make a point. As in, it's not a popular history that puts you in the time, focuses on specific people, or shows their behavior in context. While the tone was academic, the writing wasn't dry and I found the topics interesting. I'd recommend this book to readers interested in the changes that have occurred in the upper class of NYC. I received an ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.

A history that extends from the 1750s to the present, *In Pursuit of Privilege* recounts upper-class New Yorkers' struggle to create a distinct world guarded against outsiders, even as economic growth and democratic opportunity enabled aspirants to gain entrance. Despite their efforts, New York City's upper class has been drawn into the larger story of the city both through class conflict and through their role in building New York's cultural and economic foundations. *In Pursuit of Privilege* describes the famous and infamous characters and events at the center of this extraordinary history, from the elite families and wealthy tycoons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the Wall Street executives of today. From the start, upper-class New Yorkers have been open and aggressive in their behavior, keen on attaining prestige, power, and wealth. Clifton Hood sharpens this characterization by merging a history of the New York economy in the eighteenth century with the story of Wall Street's emergence as an international financial center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the dominance of New York's financial and service sectors in the 1980s. Bringing together several decades of upheaval and change, he shows that New York's upper class did not rise exclusively from the Gilded Age but rather from a relentless pursuit of privilege, affecting not just the urban elite but the city's entire cultural, economic, and political fabric.

This is the history of a small but hugely consequential group of Americans, whose access to economic resources provided them with unprecedented social, cultural, and political power. Clifton Hood's lively excursion into their world of social clubs and museums, dinners and finishing schools covers more than 250 years and shows persuasively how the upper class made New York and how New York constantly changed its upper class. (Sven Beckert, author of *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*) Every city has a social and economic elite. But as Hood shows, the New York elite has always been larger, wealthier, more fluid, and more powerful than in other places, enabling it to simultaneously perpetuate class inequality and create cultural institutions that are world-class in every field. Groundbreaking and comprehensive, *The Pursuit of Privilege* illuminates three centuries of the New York City elite's power and influence on city building. Bravo to Hood. (Kenneth T. Jackson, editor of *The Encyclopedia of New York City*) Hood's comprehensive, three-centuries-long survey of the experiences of New York City's upper class reveals both the dynamism and the tensions inherent in that ever-evolving group. His study extends from wealthy colonists in the 1750s through nineteenth-century entrepreneurs and nouveaux riches to those he dubs the contemporary 'antielitist elite,' mixing insightful general observations with telling portraits of particular men, women, or families who succeeded or failed to join the upper class. This book will interest anyone who wants to understand the origins of New York City's unique combination of economic, social, and cultural institutions. (Mary Beth Norton, author of *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*) Hood's revealing book provides us with a suggestive portrait of a

powerful and self-conscious elite that for over two centuries has maintained its position through its control over a constellation of exclusive organizations. He explores not only the self-conception of this elite but also its shifting relationship with its environs. No comparable study exists, making *In Pursuit of Privilege* a welcome contribution to historical writing on one of the world's great cities. (Richard John, author of *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications*) *In Pursuit of Privilege* is an impressive, detailed study of the upper class in New York over a period of more than two centuries. Written engagingly, the book distinguishes itself in the literature with its long-term view of New York's elite class, covering many of the major events in New York's history from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War draft riots to the rise of corporate America. An important contribution to the literature on the history of New York and elite society in the United States. (Susie Pak, author of *Gentlemen Bankers: The World of J. P. Morgan*) *In Pursuit of Privilege*, appropriately, is a wealth of information. And its primary-source materials—diaries, letters, memoirs, minutes, period fictions—are a true pleasure.... *In Pursuit of Privilege* is at its best as metropolitan history, assiduously researched, reminding us not only of New York's astonishing accomplishments but also of its inglorious past. (William L. Hamilton *Wall Street Journal*) [*In Pursuit of Privilege*] explores the blue blood that has coursed through the city's veins since before the American Revolution.... [Hood] earnestly places the well-traversed late 19th century in a broader historical perspective and identifies what distinguished New York's elites from the upper crusts of other cities. (Sam Roberts *The New York Times*) A nuanced and substantial historical survey of the city's upper class.... Much about the book feels fresh and relevant to conversations about privilege and equal opportunity. (Ada Calhoun *Times Literary Supplement*) This is a very-well-written, organized, extensively researched study that makes significant contributions to urban, social class, and US history. (Choice) About the Author Clifton Hood is professor of history at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. He is the author of *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York* (1993), and his work has appeared in the *Journal of Urban History*, *Journal of Social History*, *s in American History*, and the *New York Times*.