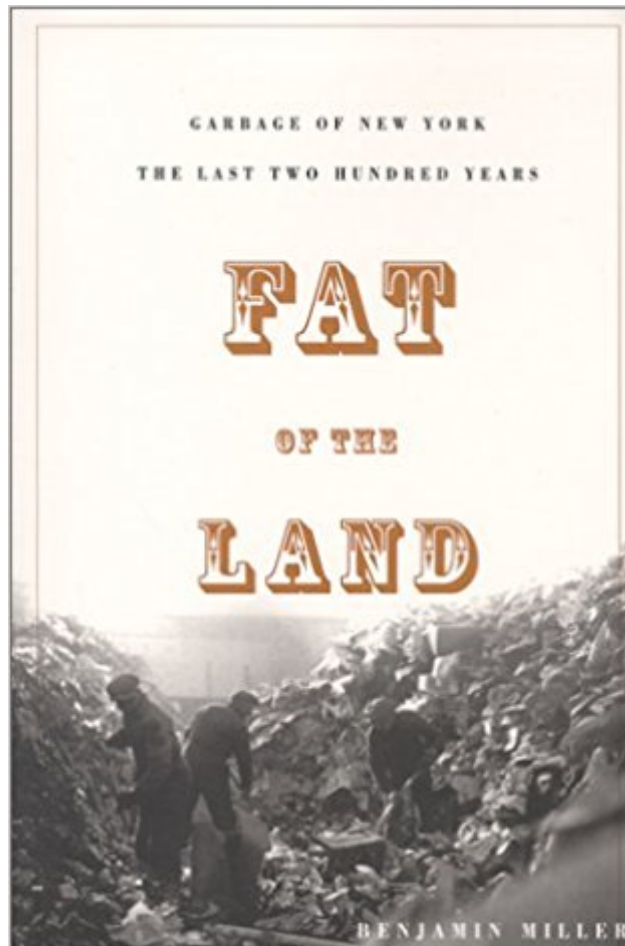


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Fat Of The Land: Garbage Of New York -- The Last Two Hundred Years



Synopsis

A city awash in garbage; rats skittering through heaps of rotting debris; disease spreading through choked waterways; citizens threading through piles of filth - urban nightmare or profiteer's dream come true? Benjamin Miller's panoramic view of New York's garbage takes us from the earliest antebellum collectors, to 19th-century barons trading in fertilizers and explosives, to the current feuding bureaucrats and environmentalists. *Fat of the Land* covers social and scientific theories of class and disease, in the process offering a richly textured history of urban development. The book reveals for the first time the plotting of power broker Robert Moses that gave birth to the controversial Fresh Kills landfill and examines the curious logic behind its untimely end. *Fat of the Land* brings to light an often hidden subject, assessing who gains and who loses in the endless battle over garbage.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The colorful and fetid history of waste makes for an enervating read. Miller has done exhaustive and meticulous research to share with us the forgotten tale of where the trash went and the distressing facts about where it goes today. There are many new, never-before revealed facts Miller has unearthed from the landfill of time-- he introduces us to an astounding and entertaining parade of bold scoundrels, do-gooder public health pioneers, social theorists, corrupt politicians, self-righteous environmentalists and a few good, clear thinkers tossed in for good measure. Miller himself is certainly one of them. He digs deep and leads us with a steady hand and a cool, observing eye to

the places where were planted the seeds of public policy that have brought us to the ruin we face today. This cautionary tale applies not only to New York, though New York, as in many things, stands as the example, good and bad, of how disposal works. Don't be put off by the subject or think this is an academic book. Miller is a superb prose stylist and his ability to summon vividly the characters and tenor of past times is often wonderfully Dickensian. This sleeper is a ripping good read. Enjoy! I've heard the author is going to be on NPR's Fresh Air in December. No pun intended, I gather...

As a former New Yorker, I'm enjoying this engrossing tale of money and politicians, public health and urban real estate moguls, and behind the scenes views of the forces that shaped the growth of one of the world's most dynamic cities. Good read for those interested in history and politics, but also has enough nitty-gritty gossip and well-researched tales of corruption to be entertaining for the general reader.

A richly rewarding read -- unrepentant, greedy politicians; real estate moguls of the Gilded Age; emerging awareness of public health needs; New York pathos. And a double espresso of gossip! History and political buffs will devour; anyone interested in how one of the world's most dynamic cities rose from the mud will find this fascinating. "Ragtime" but real.

We are certainly indebted to Benjamin Miller for writing this highly informative and fascinating history of NY City's waste management. It reminded me of William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. However, this book could have been better. I feel the book was hastily written and is too condensed. I wish Miller had written it in 3 or perhaps 5 volumes. So many people are mentioned in the book that I certainly would have benefitted if the book contained a section describing the dramatis personae. Miller uses NY-specific terms, such as Tammany, without explaining them. The book should have had a better map, pinpointing more locations mentioned in the story. I very much appreciated the photos and other illustrations in the book. I hope that Miller will bring out a revised edition, bringing readers up to date on developments with NY's waste management over the past decade (since the book was first published), and adding detail to the contents of the first edition. I expect that this book will be of great interest to all New Yorkers, and to everybody interested in solid waste management.

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