



A Survey of London: Written in the Year 1598 (History/16th/17th Century History)

John Stow

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John Stow first published his "Survey of London" in 1598 during the reign of Elizabeth I. His detailed description of the city and its suburbs was an immediate success when it first appeared and has remained a popular classic of English history ever since. Born in London in 1525, John Stow lived through the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Elizabeth I and into that of James I. He was a tailor by occupation who took an active interest in the life and times of his native city, which had grown very quickly during his own lifetime. Spurred on by this rapid change, towards the end of the 16th century Stow began to set down all he knew of London's past history and its present state of change. The result was his "Survey of London", the first edition of which was published in 1598 with a second, revised, edition appearing in 1603. Stow's "Survey of London" is significant because it was the first of its kind ever to be published, and provides a valuable record of the city before the devastating effects of the Plague and the Great Fire. It is also a crucial source of information on the architecture and buildings to be found in Elizabethan London. In the opening chapters of his work, Stow draws upon oral tradition, his own observations and a degree of informed speculation to recount the history of the city from its ancient beginnings. He then describes each of the city's 26 wards, their social hierarchies, commerce and customs, sports, pastimes and personages, as they were in the time of Elizabeth. Also included are descriptions of the suburbs outside the city walls, including the City of Westminster.

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