



# Taxi!: A Social History of the New York City Cabdriver

*Graham Russell Gao Hodges*

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Naturally identified with the Big Apple, New York City cabdrivers hold a special place in the American folk culture writ large. Cabbies proverbially counsel, console, and confound, all the while flitting through the snarling traffic and bustling masses of the nation's largest city. Various seen as the key to street-level opinion, a source of reliable information, or mysterious savants who don't speak much English, the hacks who move New Yorkers have been integral to the city's growth and culture since the mid-nineteenth century when they first began shuttling residents, workers, and visitors in horse-drawn carriages. Their importance grew with the introduction of gasoline-powered cars early last century and continues to the present day, when more than 12,000 licensed yellow cabs operate in Manhattan alone.

*Taxi!* is the first book-length history of New York City cabdrivers and the community they compose. From labor unrest and racial strife to ruthless competition and political machinations, this deftly woven narrative captures the people—lower-class immigrants for the most part—and their hardscrabble struggle to capture a piece of the American dream. Hodges tells the tale through contemporary news accounts, Hollywood films, social science research, and the words of the cabbies themselves.

Whether or not you've ever hailed a cab on Broadway, *Taxi!* provides a fascinating new perspective on New York's most colorful emissaries.

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