

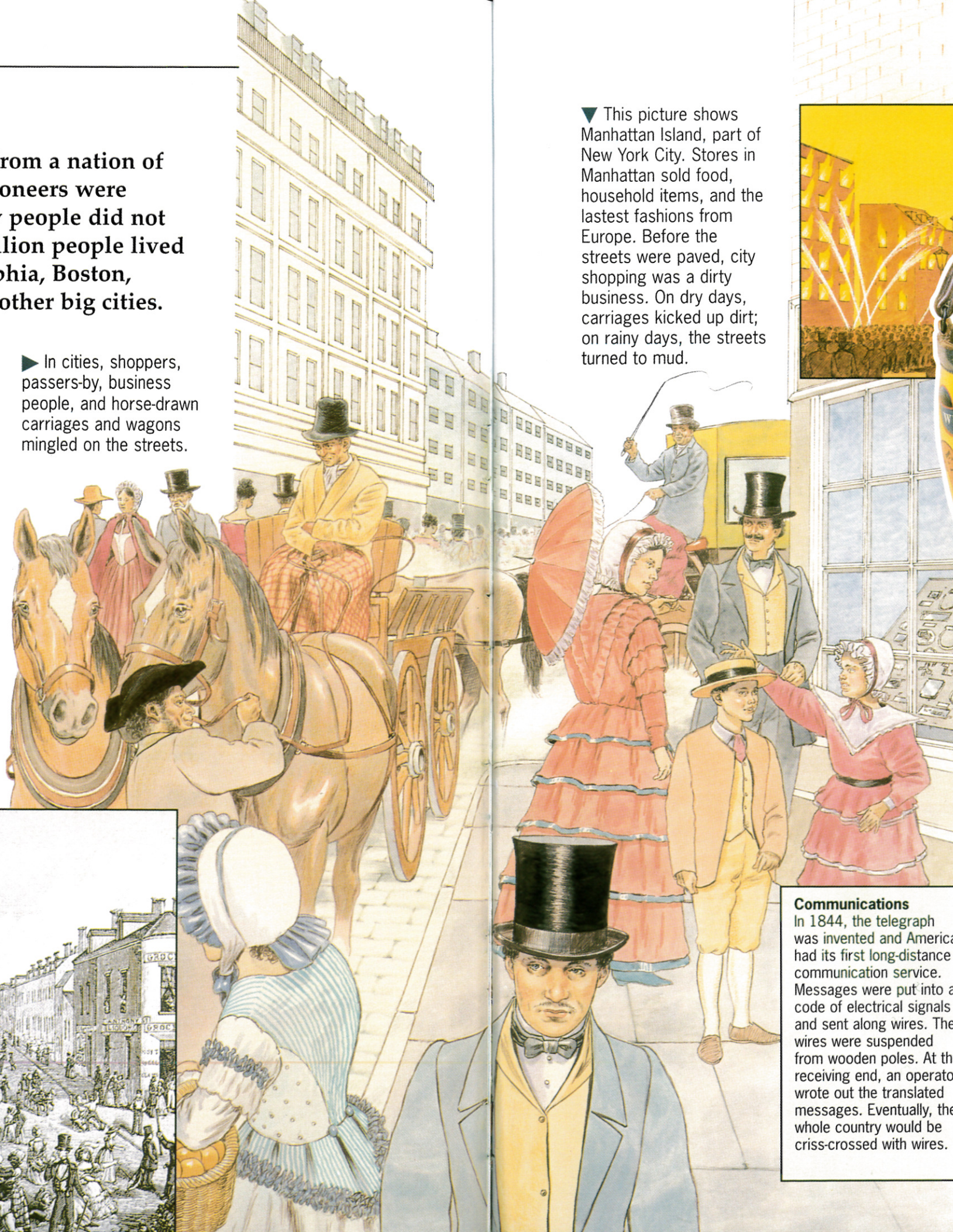
THE BIG CITY

America was beginning to change from a nation of farms to a nation of cities. While pioneers were interested in wide-open spaces, city people did not seem to mind a crowd. Nearly a million people lived in New York City in 1850. Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, and New Orleans were other big cities.

Many farmers moved to the city to escape the long hours and loneliness of farming. They took city jobs in factories, stores, and offices. **Immigrants** also moved to the cities to find jobs. Most of them came from Europe to escape wars, famines, and poverty in their homelands.

Cities were exciting places. Newspapers were published every day and sold for only a penny. Department stores were more than two stories high and sold many kinds of things in one building. They even had big show windows in front. Cities also had hotels, theaters, museums, and concert halls. Americans were proud of their cities.

► In cities, shoppers, passers-by, business people, and horse-drawn carriages and wagons mingled on the streets.



► One of the most run-down and dangerous areas of New York City was called Five Points. Five streets crossed at one intersection. Today, this area is part of the financial district of Manhattan. In this picture of 1829, the streets are filled with people shopping, **peddlers**, and horse-drawn carriages, as well as people fighting.



▼ This picture shows Manhattan Island, part of New York City. Stores in Manhattan sold food, household items, and the latest fashions from Europe. Before the streets were paved, city shopping was a dirty business. On dry days, carriages kicked up dirt; on rainy days, the streets turned to mud.



◀ Most city buildings were made of wood. Fires were a great danger. New York City had a terrible fire in the winter of 1835. The city's volunteer fire fighters raced to the scene in their horse-drawn fire wagons, but the water in the hydrants was frozen. Most of the city—700 buildings—burned to the ground.

◀ Fire fighters used leather buckets and leather protective hats like those shown here.



Bad housing, crime, and garbage
As cities grew, so did their problems. There was not enough housing. Poor people crowded into run-down buildings. Some poor people made shelters, called shanties, from pieces of cardboard or wood. Most cities did not have police forces. Along with hard-working people came robbers and pickpockets.

One of the worst city problems was dirt and germs. Cities had no garbage collectors. They depended on hogs, dogs, and birds to eat the garbage. There were no sewer systems to get rid of human wastes. Waste water from toilets, baths and sinks often went into open street gutters. Disease spread quickly. Cities slowly began to take care of their health problems, but not until 1900.

Communications
In 1844, the telegraph was invented and America had its first long-distance communication service. Messages were put into a code of electrical signals and sent along wires. The wires were suspended from wooden poles. At the receiving end, an operator wrote out the translated messages. Eventually, the whole country would be criss-crossed with wires.