

Henry Hudson didn't name the Hudson River after himself, and generations would pass before people commonly spoke of the Nordt or North River as "the Hudson," but his role in opening the waterway to European exploration was indisputable.

Scholars know little about Henry Hudson's origins, but believe that he was born into a family of English sailors around 1570. The oceans were quick routes to wealth for young Europeans seeking newer, shorter trade routes to the luxury goods of China and India. Because Spain and Portugal controlled the best-known southern routes, countries like England and the Netherlands, both enemies of Spain, hoped to find shortcuts by sailing to the north.

Like many mariners, Henry Hudson first sought a northeast passage to Asia. Sailing for the English Muscovy Company, he probed Greenland and the Arctic reaches of Russia in 1607 and 1608 until ice fields blocked his way. When the Staats-Generaal of the Netherlands offered 25,000 guilders for the first captain to find a northeast passage, Hudson promptly went to work for the Dutch.

The Dutch United East India Company, history's first multinational corporation, paid Hudson in advance and provided him with a ship called the *Halve Maen* – the "Half Moon." He set out for the northeast in April 1609, but changed course under threat of mutiny the following month. The *Halve Maen* turned west for North America, landing at Penobscot Bay and sailing south as far as Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. Heading back north, Hudson reached a river mouth on September 3 that the Italian captain Giovanni da Verrazano had sighted during a French expedition in 1524.

Neither Verrazano nor the Portuguese captain Estevan Gomez in 1525 had tried to sail up the river, but Hudson saw the possibility of a *northwest* passage to Asia. He took the *Halve Maen* up what he called the "Great River of the Mountains," encountering Lenape-speaking natives along the way.

The Lenape called the river the "Mahicanitik." They lived in seasonal camps along the river, sustaining themselves by farming, hunting and fishing. They had already experienced incursions by Iroquois tribes from the west, who called the river "Cohateta," before the Europeans arrived. Some had already traded with French trappers who had traveled up the river on their own.

The first encounters between the natives and the *Halve Maen* were tense as Hudson's men suspected them of trying to steal their supplies. The natives had their suspicions as well. One group attacked one of Hudson's scouting parties on September 6. In turn, Hudson's men abducted two natives who had allegedly planned a raid on the ship.

On September 22, the *Halve Maen* reached the future site of the city of Albany. Hudson sent scouts north to present-day Cohoes, and learned that further navigation was impossible. The ship turned back, trading and occasionally fighting with different native groups along the way. Hudson's return trip across the Atlantic ended in England, where his crew was detained while the government seized his navigation charts. The English government forbade Hudson from sailing for

foreign employers again.

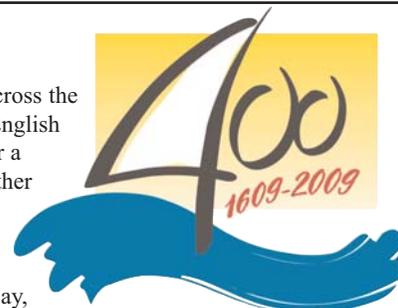
In 1610, Hudson set out across the Atlantic on the *Discovery*, an English ship. He resumed the search for a northwest passage, probing further north with an increasingly hostile crew. They mutinied in June 1611 after a winter frozen in what came to be Hudson's Bay, abandoning Hudson himself somewhere in Newfoundland. He was never seen again.

The Dutch explorers who followed Hudson up the river named his great discovery the Mauritius after Maurits

(Maurice), the Stadtholder of Holland and patron of the Dutch East

India Company. They built the first permanent European settlement on the river at Castle Island (near the present-day Port of Albany) in 1613, and formed the New Netherland Company in 1614 to control the region's rich beaver trade. The Dutch West India Company followed in 1621, ruling the Mauritius from Manhattan Island at the mouth to Fort Orange at the northernmost point of navigation. The river became the heart of the New Netherland colony.

Decades later, as English settlers began to colonize the land, and their government challenged Dutch rule of the river, they began to rename the Mauritius "Hudson's river" in honor of the Englishman who had first explored it. For many years after the English took over New Netherland in 1664 and renamed it New York, the river was named "Hudson" and "North" interchangeably until the 19th century, when Henry Hudson's place in history was finally made secure.



EXPLORE NY HUDSON • FULTON • CHAMPLAIN

Henry Hudson and the Hudson River

This is one of a 10-part educational series created by the NYNPA NIE Program © 2008

Newspaper Tie-ins to Today:

Are you planning your own "voyage" or trip? Look through the newspaper for articles or maps that could help you plan ahead.

The Dutch United East India Company was the multinational corporation that paid for Hudson's voyage. Look through the newspaper for a modern multinational corporation and find out what scientific exploration it is funding.

Hudson faced mutinous crew members as he attempted to lead them into uncharted territory. Look through recent editions of the newspaper (either in-print or online) for examples of modern leaders who face opposition to their plans or ideas. Are they successful in persuading people to change their minds? If so, why do you think they're successful? If not, what factors do you think are having a negative impact?

Photo: A replica of the Half Moon; image courtesy of Hudson River Maritime Museum. For more on Henry Hudson, Hudson River and the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial go to www.explore400.com.