

Chapter 1: The Discovery of the Hudson Valley

In April of 1609 the Dutch commissioned Henry Hudson to find a northeast passage to the Far East. The Dutch East India Company hoped to find a safer and shorter route to their holds in the Far East. The V.O.C. as the Dutch East India Company was commonly referred to as, wanted to find alternate route for they had lost many ships in the long route around Africa commonly used at the time. The loss of over 200 ships became extremely expensive, therefore a safer route became a necessity. The search for other routes did not come easily and was ultimately unsuccessful. However, Hudson's search for new routes found New York. [1]

His patrons gave him an ill-equipped ship, for they thought the crew, and Hudson were over-paid. Furthermore they were believed to be an inept team. Unfortunately Hudson was unable to prove them wrong. His ship, the Half Moon, hit rough icy seas while sailing north of Norway. His crew, on the brink of mutiny, begged Hudson to sail safer waters for the safety of all onboard. However Hudson was given specific directions to only look for a northeastern route to India. Despite these directions Hudson, taking advice from his subordinates, turned his ship around in search for a northwest passage to India and warmer weather. [2]

Henry Hudson never discovered the Northeast or Northwest passage to the Far East. After the Half Moon sailed over three thousand miles in the opposite direction Hudson discovered a "very good harbor for all windes.[3]" This land was North America and would prove to be quite lucrative for the Dutch.[4]

Hudson and his crew, during the summer of 1609, sailed south from present day Maine they sailed pass Cape Cod and continued this southerly route of the East Coast. By mid-August the Half Moon sailed all the way down to Maryland; however Hudson could not let go of his desire to find a route to the Orient therefore he turned his ship around. In September Hudson landed in New Jersey, by Sandy Hook. They then found a river, which Hudson hoped would take them to the Far East. It did not, but it did take the crew to present day Kingston, New York. Disappointed that he reached another dead end, Hudson turned around once more and headed home for Europe. The crew arrived initially in England. The British, who during the seventeenth century were enemies with the Dutch, grew suspicious of Henry Hudson and held him captive for three quarters of a year.[5]

Hudson's arrest for sailing for another nation did not reduce the enthusiasm that financial supporters had for him, especially that of Sir Thomas Smythe, Hudson's key financier. However this time he was able to pursue the elusive Northwest Passage. Henry Hudson and his crew set sail in 1610. Hudson's weak management came to a head in this fourth voyage and doomed the trip almost immediately[6].

Hudson attempted to explore the water north of the present day Canada in the Arctic Sea, however these waters are plagued by harsh currents and dangerous waters. Unable to navigate back through the area Hudson and his crew were forced to endure the harsh winter. The men had little food and poor relations with the native in the area. In the spring Hudson was ready to continue his exploration; however little food caused major problems for the boat's crew and eventually there was a mutiny. The voyage back to England was lead by Robert Bylot. Upon their arrival in England all the mutineers were exhaunerated.[7]

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- [1] “Henry Hudson” Henry Hudson 400 celebrating the history of Hudson, Amsterdam and New York, February 23, 2010, http://www.henryhudson400.com/hh400_story.php; “The History of the V.O.C.” The VOC Anniversary Shipwreck Project, March 2, 2010, <http://www.voc-flyinghart.co.uk/LMP-VHTHome.html>.
- [2] Hans Krabbendam, Giles Scott-Smith, Cornelis A. Van Minnen, *Four Centuries of Dutch- American Relations* (New York: State University of New York Press 2009) 74-75.
- [3] “Henry Hudson” Henry Hudson 400 celebrating the history of Hudson, Amsterdam and New York, February 23, 2010, http://www.henryhudson400.com/hh400_story.php
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ian Chadwick, “Henry Hudson’s Fourth Voyage in 1610: The Northwest Passage” March 2, 2010 http://www.ianchadwick.com/ HUDSON/HUDSON_04.htm#
- [7] Ibid.